



BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK

www.bcnbirds.org

BCN Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Saturday, July 17, 2010, 1 – 4 PM
Spring Valley Nature Center, Schaumburg, IL.

Attendees: Matthew Cvetas, At Large; Chris Van Wassenhove, Bobbi Asher, CAS; Annette Prince, Mary Lou Mellon, Teri Radke, CBCM; Sigrid Schmidt, Christine Williamson, Nancy Tikalsky, COS; Bob Fisher, Eric Secker, DBC; Suzanne Checchia, Lloyd Davidson, ENSBC; Mary Anne Harrison, IAS; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Bob Birnberg, Cici Birnberg, Lake-Cook; Diane Rosenberg, LCAS; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS-CW; Brigitte Schmidt, Louis Vassmer, Prairie Woods; Donnie Dann, TNC; Lee Witkowski, Will County Aud. In addition, Drew Carhart, the guest speaker from ICOL, the Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting (and 2 members from the ICOL board) were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order by President Joan Bruchman at 1:00PM. A quorum was established with 24 representatives from 13 member organizations. Introductions were made. Joan Bruchman appointed Matthew Cvetas as an at large member of the ExCom and thanked him for his willingness to serve in this capacity. The Secretary's post continues unfilled. Diane Rosenberg agreed to take minutes of the July 17 meeting.

Administrative:

The minutes of the Saturday, April 10, 2010, quarterly meeting were accepted as written. They are posted on the website at www.BCNbirds.org.

Treasurer's Report:

In Glenn Gabanski's absence the treasurer's report was read by Judy Pollock. As of 7/13/2010, income is \$2,135.17 and expenses total \$1,537.05. The checkbook balance of \$371.55 and a \$3,000 CD give the BCN cash assets of \$3,371.55.

On 7/13/10, \$500.00 was sent to POSSIBILITY PLACE NURSERY in Monee to help pay for plants used in the Johnson Bird Oasis Project. The decision to donate this money was made at the 6/20/10 ExCom Meeting.

Including accounts payable BCN has an estimated \$250 to spend this year to avoid paying any corporate tax.

The final Report and Financial Statement for the IWPF Grant was sent to the state on 6/10/10.

A total of \$2,087 was spent. BCN spent \$1885.86, \$1,200 of which will be reimbursed by the grant. NAS-CR contributed \$201.60 as in-kind personal support. It's not known how long it will take to receive the \$1,200 grant money reimbursement.

Because the checkbook balance is low and the interest rate on the CD is minimal, ExCom also decided not to roll the CD over when it matures on 9/8/10.

Membership Report: As of 6/29/10 all organizations and individual members have renewed for 2010. The membership remains at 19 organizational members and 6 individual members.

Grant Report: On 6/29/10 Judy Pollock, Mike Ward, and Glenn Gabanski met to explore other sources for funding BCN survey analyses. Since funding is difficult, the group decided to focus any analyses on the most endangered habitat ie. grasslands and shrublands. BCN has good data and needs to find people who want to work with the data using their own resources.

One suggestion was to make BCN data available to Katie Koch who is coordinating a grassland birds regional study for the Midwest Coordinated Bird Monitoring program. Another idea was to formulate good questions that our data might answer to obtain funds via grants for both our monitoring program and for the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS). Mike Ward will continue to work to find funding sources.

Guest Speaker: Drew Carhart, executive board member from ICOL, the Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting (www.illinoislighting.org) described some of the ways that man made light affects ecosystems and listed practical approaches to mitigating night light. His presentation began by pointing out that, though we don't usually think of "night" as a natural environment, for 4.5 billion years most of earth's organisms have been evolving with half of the time spent in darkness. Night is an active ecosystem. Circadian rhythm (except for deep marine organisms and others within caves for their entire life the span) is critical in regulating the physiological and behavioral functions of the majority of organisms. Seasonal changes in light, even the slight changes that occur at the equator, are important factors in flowering and fruiting.

Does manmade light affect systems? Drew Carhart gave examples from a German study of the number of insects killed by roadway lighting and the possible impact that has on, not only insect species but, other species that depend on insects. Migration is another critical area of animal behavior that is affected by night light.

Satellite photos show that there has been an immense and rapid explosion of light. In addition to losing the natural level of darkness, other aspects to consider are increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from coal burning plants that generate the energy for night light and the waste of this energy for non-essential lighting. Carhart mentioned his personal concern for children growing up without a dark night sky and the loss of connection to nature. He also stated that his BCN presentation didn't focus on the effects of light on humans, though much information is available.

The Barrington, Illinois night light ordinance was brought up. Carhart said a different organization was working on that, the Dark Sky Association. He said that there are many misconceptions about safety issues and lighting and showed slides of how properly designed downward facing fixtures and housing styles can be effectively and efficiently installed. Overall, there is very little light generated by residences. Solutions to the night light problem exist but there is a lack of information and education is really needed. President Bruchman thanked Drew Carhart for his presentation and the information he distributed.

Projects/Initiatives:

Judy Pollock explained how BCN is working with the Kane County Forest Preserve District to make

a plan that demonstrates steps to increase bird populations through improving the quality of habitat. Judy will give a more detailed report at the next BCN meeting.

Judy mentioned that there are now 26 new Illinois Important Bird Areas (IBA) and passed out a list which itemizes the newly accepted IBAs. She mentioned the value of involving local community leaders, politicians and citizens in establishing and then celebrating IBAs. She urged local chapters to become involved with IBAs and said that Audubon will help local chapters with this effort and with establishment and dedication events. A number of people mentioned the 7/14/10 Tribune article written by Cheryl DeVore, and the positive publicity the article generated for IBAs.

Bob Fisher noted that there's a lack of knowledge about the IBAs and suggested a power point presentation be developed for presentation to interested groups and organizations. Judy would like to have IBAs included on the agenda for a state wide meeting. Chris Williamson suggested that in 2011 bird clubs be asked to do 12 months of IBA trips to recognize various IBAs. Bob Fisher recommended that a committee be formed to promote and brand this project. A committee of Bob Fisher, Judy Pollock, Joan Bruchman, and Chris Williamson was formed to follow through with these suggestions. Chris Williamson will chair the committee.

Annette Prince described an issue with the Cook County Forest Preserve fishing line disposal containers. In at least at 4 lake locations, tree swallows have become trapped in containers and died tangled up in fishing line hooks and discarded bobbers. Forest Preserve District staff had good intentions when installing the containers but the unintended consequence is tree swallow death. The design of the container was changed to a hinged lid at the request of Friends of the Forest Preserves, and the Forest Preserve District has asked birders to monitor the effectiveness of the fix. The possibility for people to not close the lid properly, or to overstuff the container, (it's not known how often the forest preserve empties the containers) still exists. Annette and Judy Pollock will work together to explore what might be done to alleviate the problem with the containers.

Joan Bruchman reported on the Chicago Park District border collie project. The collies are used to disperse the gulls that contribute to E.coli contamination on beaches. At present collies are used on the 63rd Street beach from dawn to dusk and at the 57th Street beach for 4 hours each day. Though it seems likely that the collies disturb shore birds as well as the gulls, it's necessary to monitor and track the shore bird populations at those beaches and collect data. Only with evidence can we convince the Park District to reevaluate the gull hazing program. To date, no volunteers have been found to monitor the sites. Joan will continue to seek monitors.

Bob Fisher reported that there is nothing new on the potential gravel mining operation at Brunner Forest Preserve in Kane County. The likelihood that a private company might be given the right to mine gravel on forest preserve property is still remote.

At the 6/10/10 ExCon meeting, a thank you letter from Walter Marcisz for support from BCN for the Indian Ridge Marsh Ecological Restoration Project was read. Walter and Carolyn Marsh were successful in getting a commitment to remove a proposed trail which would have threatened nesting Black Crowned Night Herons.

Annette Prince, and Chris Williamson reported on the Black Crowned Night Heron nesting populations at Lincoln Park Zoo. The nesting area around the South Pond is closed off and being

protected but some nests remain outside the protected area. Chris mentioned the resilience of the species and noted that the adult birds are now found all along the lake front and river pilings. Annette recommended prohibiting public events from being held in that area during nesting season. Though the adult herons may be safe, there's concern for the fledglings. Judy Pollock noted that this Black Crowned Night Heron area has been added to the lake front IBA.

Lee Witkowski passed out information regarding the Hummingbird Festival at Camp Sagawau and asked member organizations to forward the pdf file on the event to their local members. The festival is co-sponsored by Will County Audubon Society and the Cook County Forest Preserve District. Vern Kleen, one of only two licensed hummingbird banders in the state of Illinois, will conduct the capture and banding operations. In addition to the hummingbird activities, there will be tours of the area by Camp Sagawau staff. More hummingbird festival information may be found at www.illinoisaudubon.org.

Joan Bruchman noted that there is now an improved Illinois Birding Calendar which can be accessed though the BCN, IOS, and IAS websites.

Advocacy:

Donnie reported that after 6 drafts, The Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee gave final recommendations to Secretary of the Interior Salazar on placement and operation of wind turbines. He noted that the document is about as good as it could be but because the guidelines are voluntary they are essentially meaningless. ABC has written a strong letter supporting mandatory guidelines and BCN has endorsed the letter by a majority vote.

Donnie reported that Fish and Wildlife is starting to focus on unrestrained cats through use of the Endangered Species Act and the International Bird Migratory Treaty. Donnie will continue to keep BCN informed.

Mary Lou Mellon reported on the Bird Conservation Alliance Roundtable in Washington, DC on 6/9/10. At this event, member groups were asked to bring up issues with which they would like help from BCA. Wind energy and how to persuade the Administration to make the wind turbine guidelines mandatory was a priority issue. A suggestion was made to tie tax credits for wind turbines to adherence to the guidelines.

At the formal Bird Conservation Alliance meeting at the National Zoo on 6/9/10, Conserving Endangered Ecosystems was the theme. The State of the Birds 2010 Report on Global Warming was presented by Paul Schmidt, director of Migratory Bird Program, USF&W. Past reports have shown troubling declines of species with the exception of waterfowl. This year's report projects how all bird species will be affected by climate change. Twelve other speakers presented at this conference. Their talks may be viewed at http://www.abcbirds.org/birdconservationalliance/bca_meeting_agenda_100609.htm.

Mary Lou also reported that American Bird Conservancy and its partners have a new web site that identifies lodges that contribute to bird conservation in the Americas. The lodges are run by local conservation groups. Staying at the lodges, which are supported by ABC, provides great birding and supports the long-term protection of habitat for rare birds. Access the website at www.conservancybirding.org.

Judy Pollock reviewed the situation at the Johnson Birding Oasis/Pullman Historical Society in the Lake Calumet area. To help with the effort to create bird habitat in the area BCN contributed \$500.00, Pullman \$400.00, and the Historical Society, \$100.00. Shrubs will be planted soon and bird feeders have been put in place. Judy will continue to work with the Pullman Historical Society birding group and will keep BCN informed.

Christine Williamson gave an update of the Montrose 4th of July security situation. This year Chicago decided to have the fireworks at three sites; Montrose, Navy Pier, and 63rd Street. Megan McDonald, from the Mayor's Office of Special Events, was liaison to the birding community. There was some conflicting information and confusion regarding what would be done to provide crowd control and adequately fence environmentally sensitive areas. Aside from a small patch of an Illinois endangered reed, the Montrose site was protected. The lack of environmental damage was due, in part, to the attention and considerable pressure of the birding community. To prevent problems next year, the Mayor's Office could consider setting up a central information clearing house.

Joan Bruchman, Mary Lou Mellon and Judy Pollock met with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to discuss the long term planning strategy for the Chicago region. (See www.goto2040.org) The plan suggests sustainable transportation and development and 100,000 acres of new green space is also envisioned. Joan Bruchman noted that IBAs have been taken into consideration in the development of centralized common areas and that open spaces are recommended to be connected. Staff members from Go To 2040 will be meeting with different municipalities and offering incentives to work with the plan.

BCN Bird Monitoring:

Judy Pollock reported that she's been working with 4 students from Northwestern University who designed a great web site for making the bird monitoring data easily available. The site will make it possible to better access and link information and make spread sheets, tables, and graphs. The site is now linked to BCN but, to date, is not quite ready.

Lee Ramsey reported that this is one of the best years for monitor recruitment and estimates that there are between 200 – 250 monitors who are cooperating in some way with the BCN Survey covering 150 sites in the greater Chicago area, 6 counties in Illinois, and 1 county in Indiana. Lee was thanked for his superb efforts in organizing the monitoring program.

Regarding updating the current trends analysis database and report, Judy Pollock said that she'd talked to Mike Ward regarding a proposal for funds to support this project but that the likelihood of funding is bleak. Bob Fisher suggested BCN self fund this project by raising money through various methods – reaching out to Bird Monitors for donations, seeking organization's who might match individual donations etc.

Tentatively the Bird Monitors' Brunch is planned for late September/early October at the Nelson Lake Marsh Forest Preserve in Kane County. The brunch will be preceded by a bird walk. There was discussion of the possibility of another brunch in the Spring or Summer of 2011 at the Schaumburg Road Grasslands.

The April 24th Give Back to the Birds at Bartel was successful (30 species of birds were seen and over 680 wetland plugs were planted) though the weather was unfavorable. There was a lengthy discussion of possibilities for the Fall 2010 Give Back to the Birds. The fall event will be held at Hennepin and Hooper Lake on October 30. More details about this bird walk and seed collection are available at: <http://www.habitatproject.org/webdocs/birds/GiveBackToBirds2010.pdf>. Chris Williamson suggested that BCN also promote the Great Lake Alliance Beach Sweep which would like to partner with an organization like BCN to work with city children for dune walks.

(Addendum: Since the 7/17/10 BCN meeting, it was decided that due to conflicts with other fall events, the Monitors' Brunch will be postponed until Spring 2011.)

The meeting adjourned promptly at 4PM.

The next meeting will be Saturday, October 23, 2010. It is tentatively set for Lincoln Park Zoo. Pending confirmation from the Zoo, a tour will precede the meeting and arrangements for parking will be made ahead of time.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Rosenberg, Acting Secretary