



BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK

www.bcnbirds.org

BCN Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Saturday, October 23, 2010, 1-4 PM
Lincoln Park Zoo, Laflin Building

Attendees: Chris Van Wassenhove, Carolyn Marsh, CAS; Teri Radke, Mary Lou Mellon, CBCM; Christine Williamson, Nancy Tikalsky, COS; Glenn Gabanski, Bob Fisher, DBC; Susanne Checchia, ENSBC; Mary Anne Harrison, IAS; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Valerie Lewis, Jean Sodemann, Lake-Cook Aud; Diane Rosenberg, Lake Cty Aud; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS-CW; Joe Van Wassenhove, Peoria AS; Donnie Dann, The Nature Conservancy; Terry Schilling and Matthew Cvetas, Individual. Guests: Keith Shank, IDNR Div. of Ecosystems & Environment; and Dr. Steve Thompson, vice president for Conservation and Science Departments, Lincoln Park Zoo.

The meeting was called to order by President Joan Bruchman at 1:10pm (delayed start due to reps having difficulty parking). A quorum was established with 18 representatives from 12 member organizations and two individual members present. A welcome was extended to the new representative from Peoria Audubon Society Joe Van Wassenhove. Introductions were made.

Joan expressed sincere thanks to Steve Thompson, vice president for Conservation and Science Departments, Lincoln Park Zoo, who hosted BCN for the meeting at the zoo and arranged for free parking for attendees, and who also gave the reps who came early a fascinating tour of the newly completed and impressive \$12,000,000 renovation of the South Pond.

Administrative:

1. The minutes of the Saturday, July 17, 2010, quarterly meeting were approved as written. They are posted on the BCN website at www/BCNbirds.org.
2. Treasurer's Report: Glenn Gabanski. After not renewing the CD and transferring the \$3,000 balance to the checkbook BCN has a cash balance of \$3,257.86. A copy of the spreadsheet showing itemized amounts for income and expenses was distributed. I estimate we have about \$250 to spend this fiscal year to avoid paying corporate income tax. We are still waiting for payment of the \$1,200 from the IWPF Grant. (More about this in the Grant Program report)

Membership stands at 19 Organization Members and 4 Individual Members.

Guest Speaker:

Keith Shank of the IDNR Div of Ecosystem & Environment gave an extremely interesting presentation on the state of wind farms in Illinois. Wind farms are flourishing in Illinois primarily because there are no regulations on them--either state or Federal. IDNR is in an advisory position only. Developers are not required to do an environmental impact statement unless they have Federal funding, so the development continues unchecked. There wasn't a whole lot of good news for birds in this detailed presentation, though Shank did say that the turbines are believed to kill no more than

1 or 2 birds a year. With 1848 turbines already installed and 1500 more planned for 2011 that's a lot of bird kills.

Advocacy:

1. Great Lakes Naval Air Station Common Tern Colony--Donnie Dann. Donnie read portions of a letter written by Brad Semel, Wildlife Biologist with the IDNR, to Captain John Malfitano, Commanding Officer of the Great Lakes Naval Air Station. The letter commends the Navy for building a new fenced enclosure situated at the tip of the peninsula where it is safe from wave action, for a nesting area for the Common Tern colony. This is the only location in the state of Illinois where this endangered species has successfully bred, but the former nesting location had severely eroded and the enclosure was no longer usable. Semel proposed a dedication ceremony to be held in early April at the site to recognize the Navy's ongoing efforts to create a new permanent and safe nesting area. Press would be invited, National Audubon officials would attend and Great Lakes would be publicly recognized as an Important Bird Area.
2. Great Lakes Offshore Wind Power --At a meeting Judy, Joan and Donnie learned that developers look to European models, which have existed for 17 years. Currently there are 38 offshore wind farms in 9 countries, with 17 under construction. Wind over water is steadier and more consistent, but they can't build in water more than 30 meters deep. There are about 15 wind farms in the planning stages in the Great Lakes. It is felt that knowledge learned from oceanic or on-shore turbines cannot be applied to fresh water. The state owns the lake up to 3 miles out; beyond that the jurisdiction is Federal. There is a great deal that they don't know about how bird populations use the Great Lakes. One study of waterfowl 4-10 miles offshore in Lake Michigan from Evanston to Door County is currently under way. Judy, Joan, Donnie and Matthew Cvetas are working with this group to draft a consensus policy document. They will recommend 3 years of study of the site before construction.
3. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Meetings--Donnie. Chicago is the only major population center in the U.S. that doesn't have a National Wildlife Refuge nearby. USFWS has recently initiated a study to evaluate the possibility of establishing Hackmatack NWR in Lake and McHenry counties in Illinois and adjacent areas in Wisconsin. The review process is expected to take 1-2 years. More info at <http://hackmatacknwr.org>

Joan has sent a letter of support to the US Fish and Wildlife Service on behalf of BCN (see **Appendix A**). Joan also informed all that it is not too late for individuals to email comments to US Fish and Wildlife Service at r3planning@fws.gov. Or send by snail mail to : US Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of conservation Planning, Attn: Proposed Hackmatack NWR; BHW Federal Building, Room 540, 2 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

4. Bird-friendly Glass--Donnie and Judy. A representative from the German firm Arnold Glassworks presented Ornilux Mikado, a new type of glass with a patterned UV reflective pattern embedded that's visible to birds but invisible to humans. Small samples of the glass were presented. The glass is being beta-tested at the Bronx Zoo and is expected to be installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The manufacturer needs a market for the glass. More info at www.ornilux.de

5. O'Brien Lock & Dam CPD Firing Range--Carolyn Marsh, CAS. On May 20, 2010, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago board authorized the General Counsel to commence negotiations with the City of Chicago (Department of General Services) for a 39-year lease of 33 acres of District land located at O'Brien Lock and Dam and Whitford Pond in Lake Calumet area (2025 East 134th Street in Chicago). The City proposes to build an outdoor police firing range, training facilities, offices and storage for its officers and other Federal, state and suburban law enforcement officers. Description: Guns and rifles, 40-shooter capacity on 33 to 40 acres, open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week.

At the MWRD board meeting held October 21, 2010, presenting comments for the lease were two police chiefs, one from Chicago and another representing south suburban police association, Kimberly Worthington, Chicago DOE, and a representative from Huff and Huff on the noise study.

Six conservationists spoke against the lease for various reasons: Carolyn Marsh, CAS; Peggy Salazar, SETF; Judith Lihota, CEPA; Eleanor Roemer, FOTP; Joan Norek and Chuck Dieringer. The result was nine commissioners voted unanimously to defer any recommendation on the firing range lease to the Nov. 4 board meeting.

CAS's main arguments were that it was in the vicinity of an Important Bird Area and no wildlife survey was conducted after a heron rookery was discovered in Whitford Pond trees. It became clear that the firing range doesn't have to be built in the City of Chicago as was asserted at the previous MWRD meeting by Lt. Hamilton. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources offered a biologist to conduct a wildlife inspection to the MWRD and Chicago Police Department. BCN sent a letter to the MWRD board. Carolyn requested that the sentence "We are not opposed to the siting of a firing range in an appropriate site in the Calumet IBA" be deleted.

Chris Williamson, COS, proposed the BCN adopt the following motion: "BCN opposes the siting of a shooting range in the Lake Calumet region." The motion was seconded by Donnie Dann and was passed with a vote of 12 yes, 7 no and 1 abstention.

Projects/ Initiatives:

1. Grant Programs--Glenn Gabanski. As reported earlier, we are still waiting for the \$1,200 owed us for the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund (IWPF) grant, but we may be getting the money very soon. This is the result of recent efforts on my part to find out when we would be paid. I had sent in all the papers and reports to Dan Kirk (as per his instructions to me) at his IDNR Yorkville office and they were received at his office on 6/11/10. I have a US Post Office return receipt to verify that. He told me he would forward everything on to Springfield. Since it has been 4 months without any action I emailed him to find out the status of the grant. He replied he "had no idea." I then emailed Jennifer Aherin, Federal Aid Fiscal Review Manager, Special Funds Coordinator, IDNR, in Springfield. She wrote back she has not received anything and asked me to contact Mr. Kirk to find out when he sent the packet and to whom. I did as she instructed but received no reply from Mr. Kirk. Phone calls to his office were never picked up nor could I leave a message. At this point the ExCom suggested I send copies directly to Ms. Aherin and on 10/14 I spoke to her and she agreed that it would be best if I now sent a replacement packet to her. Fortunately I do have complete copies of everything I sent in and I spent a morning putting

together a new packet and going to the post office to send it by certified mail with return receipt. On 10/18 I received a call from Ms. Aherin that she had everything now and would "get something from Mr. Kirk" to complete the approval. She assured me that we would get our check within a week or two. I hope this is true, but will contact her after 2 weeks if we don't receive it.

2. Fund Raising--Bob Fisher, Donnie. This subject was deferred to the next quarterly meeting.
3. BCN Bird Survey--Lee Ramsey. Since August BCN monitors, land managers and others have been viewing and contributing to beebzz, a new Yahoo groups listserv. Subscribing and posting is easy. To subscribe send a message to beebzz-subscriber@yahoogleroups.com and put "subscribe beebzz" in the subject field.

Also since August, monthly news items have been posted on BCN eBirds. These are stories about some of the BCN monitors and the activities at their sites. Check them out by going to www.ebird.org/bcn. Be sure to click on the headline of the feature to see the full story and photos.

Survey documents have been revised for the coming year and are now available: BCN Survey guide to Monitoring; Instructions for Monitoring Protocols; BCN Habitat Categories; and Getting Started with BCN eBird. To get copies of any or all, email leeramsey@comcast.net.

Well over 100 BCN monitors are now surveying sites in seven Chicago-area counties. We want to add more monitors and more sites, particularly in Lake (IN), McHenry and Will counties. There will probably be workshops for new monitors in Will and Lake (IN) counties.

4. Give Back to Birds Day, Oct. 30, 2010, Hennepin/Hopper--Joan. As of 10/23, 25 volunteers have signed up for this bird walk/workday. DuPage Birding Club has not yet let us know how many volunteers they will be bringing, if any. The day will start with a waterfowl/bird walk. Seed collecting will start after the bird walk and break.
5. Give Back to Bird Day, Spring 2011, Donnie and Joan. On a Saturday in April 2011, date to be determined, the BCN Spring GBTB Day will take place at Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Following a bird walk of the station, the volunteers will be working to improve the conditions of the Common Tern's nesting area. Further details to follow after 1/1/11.

Other:

1. Nominating Committee. Judy Pollock, as immediate past president of BCN will head up the nominating committee for BCN officers for 2011.
2. Next Meeting--Joan. The next Quarterly Meeting of BCN will be January 22, 2011, at a location to be advised.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon
Vice President and Acting Secretary

Appendix A

October 17, 2010

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Conservation Planning
Attn: Proposed Hackmatack NWR
BHW Federal Building, Room 530
1 Federal Drive
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

Re: Proposed Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge

I am writing on behalf of the Bird Conservation Network (BCN) which is a coalition of 19 bird clubs, Audubon chapters, ornithological societies and conservation organizations sharing an interest in the welfare of birds and their habitat. The groups' members total more than 35,000 people living primarily in the Chicago area, but also throughout Illinois, northeastern Indiana, and southern Wisconsin. A wildlife refuge within an hour or two drive of one of the most densely populated areas of the United States would create exceptional recreational opportunities for birdwatchers, wildlife photographers, and outdoor enthusiasts not just from the Wisconsin/Illinois area but throughout the United States and the world.

BCN strongly supports the creation of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge in northeast Illinois and southeast Wisconsin. BCN feels this is an exciting opportunity in land and wildlife conservation in its own backyard. Having a wildlife refuge in the greater Chicago area closely parallels BCN's mission to conserve birds and the habitats they need to survive. The proposed refuge would serve to protect important regional ecological systems for thousands of resident and migratory birds and wildlife, including many federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species, which might otherwise be further threatened by encroaching human development.

BCN has been promoting bird conservation and preserving and restoring bird habitat in the Chicago region for more than a decade. Working with regional Forest Preserve Districts, BCN has helped to promote large-scale grassland bird restoration projects in Illinois at Bartel Grasslands in Cook County, Rollins Savanna Forest Preserve in nearby Grayslake, Lake County, and others. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge would significantly bolster the protection and restoration of rapidly disappearing critical grassland and wetland habitat in the Midwest.

BCN stands squarely behind the proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and offers its support in making this dream become a reality.

Joan Bruchman
President