

Bird Conservation Network

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Saturday, July 27, 2013

Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington

Attendees: Bobbi Asher, Chris Van Wassenhove, Dave Willard, CAS; Mary Lou Mellon, Annette Prince, CBCM; Luis Munoz, Nancy Tikalsky, COS; Bob Fisher, Glenn Gabanski, DBC; Suzanne Checchia, Libby Hill, ENSBC; Mary Anne Harrison, IAS; Eric Secker, KCA; Diane Rosenberg, LCA; Valerie Lewis, Jean Sodemann, L-C Aud; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS Chicago Region; Bob Harrison, Thorn Creek Aud; Donnie Dann, TNC; Lee Witkowski, Will Cty AS; Terry Schilling, individual member.

President Mary Lou Mellon called the meeting to order at 1:10pm. A quorum was established with 21 representatives from 12 member organizations and one individual member present.

Introductions were made around the room.

ADMINISTRATION

1. The minutes of the Saturday, April 20, 2013, Quarterly Meeting at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center were approved as posted on the website.
2. Treasurer's Report – Glenn Gabanski. Prior to the meeting a financial spreadsheet was distributed to the reps.

As of 7/27/13, income has been \$2,963.60 and expenses have been \$4,545.47. Since the last quarterly meeting there were two major transactions: \$110.47 spent for the Monitors' Brunch in May and a very generous donation of \$500 from Jeff and Arlene Koziol. This is the fifth year since 2007 that the Koziols have shown their support for BCN with similar donations. BCN greatly appreciates their support. A thank you letter was sent by President Mary Lou.

Cash balance in the checkbook is \$9,690.97. Major expenses yet to be paid are for the Trends Analysis (see Fundraising below).

SPEAKER: ANNETTE PRINCE, Director, Chicago Bird Collision Monitors. CBCM – A Resource for Bird Collision Prevention. Annette's presentation featured CBCM's monitoring information and new products and techniques that are helping to make buildings and windows safer for birds. Of great interest was the as-yet-unproven but very promising clear CollidEscape film for use on the exterior of windows.

FUNDRAISING

1. Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant – Mary Lou Mellon. We were notified in early July that we have been awarded the \$1100 grant that we applied for to fund the new Birds of Concern brochure based on the new data. Mary Lou has subsequently filled out the Grant agreement and returned it to the IDNR. Eric Secker will design the new Birds of Concern brochure. Nancy Tikalsky and Bobbi Asher agreed to work with Judy and Partners in Flight to determine what species will be featured in the new brochure. Also possibly migrants will be used this time.
2. Trends Analysis – Glenn Gabanski and Eric Secker. Following the work done by Heather Secker, the Trends Analysis committee had phone discussions with Eric about the results and what will appear on the website. Agreements were reached and a contract was made to pay Eric \$1,000 to update the website and to transform Heather’s output from the TRIM software into graphs and charts, a task which Eric has the skills to do. Some results were promised for the meeting.

After seeing the results produced by Eric the committee will make a decision whether to pay Heather for her work from the \$3,800 budgeted for the statistical work.

Eric indicated that the new data were very promising, nearly doubling the amount of data that we had formerly. Also many species for which we had too little information now have robust results for him to use.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

1. May 2013 Bird Monitors’ Brunch – Lee Ramsey. A successful outing on May 11th had better weather than the 2012 event. About 24 attendees enjoyed an informative walk led by John Duerr and a brunch provided by Joan Bruchman at Hickory Knolls Natural Area in St. Charles.
2. Next Year’s Bird Monitors’ Brunch – Lee Ramsey. This is in the planning stage, but nothing is definite yet.
3. ENSBC eNews – Suzanne Checchia. Previously Evanston North Shore Bird Club had no effective way to share time-sensitive notices, such as conservation action alerts, public comment periods, events and workshops, with its members. Suzanne conducted an informal survey of BCN reps from other member organizations and found that many share the same problem.

The solution for ENSBC was to create an eNews to supplement its quarterly newsletter. It wasn't very difficult to set up. The time it takes to write it is more than offset by the service it provides to members. ENSBC eNews started in March and has received only positive feedback.

An added benefit to ENSBC is that along with publicizing BCN initiatives, the club now has a vehicle to reach its members quickly with any last-minute program cancellations, field trip changes and other important club announcements.

If other BCN member orgs would like to try this model, Suzanne would be happy to assist.

4. GBBBD Emiquon – Joe Van Wassenhove. TNC offered planting gallon plugs on one of the last two Saturdays of September. They would provide a guided walk and/or a presentation on the creation of Emiquon. It would likely be an overnight trip for most. There were too many conflicts for this to work, so Joe will be contacted to see what the project might be for October. Suzanne suggested that Illinois Young Birders might enjoy participating in BCN's GBBDs. When we have a date and location we will contact them and see if they are interested.
5. Mayor's Committee on Nature and Wildlife – Bobbi Asher. The meeting that was convened to consider The Great Googa Mooga at Montrose didn't know that Googa Mooga would be canceled, which it has been.
6. River Restoration Project and Chicago Wilderness Grassland Bird Task Force – Judy Pollock. Audubon will be working with the Chicago Park District, Cook County Forest Preserves, bird monitors and stewards to create two restoration sites along the Chicago River that demonstrate migratory bird habitat. An experts meeting was held to solicit advice, sponsored by Chicago Wilderness. A number of monitors and BCN members attended.

Audubon is spearheading the Chicago Wilderness Grassland Bird Task Force, an effort to increase the population of grassland birds in Chicago Wilderness. BCN monitors and their data are very important to this process. Data will be used to create an accurate map of current grassland bird habitat, and monitors will be invited to collect data about changes to grassland habitat.

7. FPD Cook County Open Houses for Improvements at Thatcher Woods, Dan Ryan Woods, Miller Meadows and Eggers Woods – Nancy Tikalsky. Nancy attended the Open House for Miller Meadows where boards showing the planned improvements were posted. Comments were accepted. Nancy recommended using soft paths (as opposed to asphalt) and paths narrower than 8 feet wide. Boards are posted at <http://fpdcc.com/siteplans>. Comments are to be sent to Kindy.kruller@cookcountyil.gov by July 31, 2013.
8. Meeting with Adam Schwerner, Director Department of Natural Resources, Chicago Park District – Mary Lou Mellon. At Schwerner's request, Joan, Judy, Jill Niland and Mary Lou met with Adam at his office to open a dialog between the Park District and the birding community. It was a cordial meeting and it was agreed that we would attempt to continue to meet twice a year. Adam will attend the fall BCN Quarterly Meeting to explain what the Chicago Park District is doing. Future issues to be considered from the birding side are a protocol for the protection of Montrose and the dunes during the many city events at Montrose, birder access to Montrose during these events and notification to birders of limited access. A committee of Chris VW, Donnie and Mary Lou will work on these issues.

9. Status of BCN Survey – Lee Ramsey. The Survey has been functioning since 1998. The data accumulated are providing excellent information to stewards and restoration people and for the new Trends Analysis that is in progress. Since May 2013 we have been sending a monthly email (“BCN Monitors Monthly”) to update monitors as opposed to the former annual letter sent in the fall. This has been well-received. There are now approximately 170 monitors in 9 counties of Illinois and Indiana.
10. Red-headed Woodpecker Blitz – Judy Pollock. The data are still coming in so not much to report so far, though Lee noted that two pairs have been located nesting within 250 feet of each other at Deer Grove. Suzanne inquired if her suggestion to contact golf courses had produced any success. Mary Lou responded that after getting permission to enter from the manager and grounds supervisor of Skokie Country Club she has documented a nesting pair of RHWOs on the 14th hole.
11. Lake-Cook Audubon Projects – Jean Sodemann. Barn Owl Nesting boxes: Two boxes have been installed – one in the North Unit of IBSP, one in the South Unit. To date, there are no occupants.

Also Lake/Cook Audubon Chapter received a \$1,000 donation from a charitable foundation, which the chapter donated to the Preservation Foundation of the Lake County Forest Preserves for the purchase, installation and maintenance of a purple martin house at Lakewood Forest Preserve. A small plaque will be posted to indicate that the chapter donated it. The box will be maintained by the active purple martin program already in place where 9 out of 10 boxes installed there are regularly occupied.

12. Lake County Audubon Society Projects – Diane Rosenberg. At Almond Marsh only 8 of the 12 artificial nesting platforms were occupied this year; 28 young fledged. In 2012, 11 platforms were occupied and 40 young fledged. Also the tree nest count (8) was down this year from 16 in 2012, with 25 fledged (vs. 46 in 2012). Speculation as to why the reduced usage of the nesting opportunities at Almond Marsh ranges from weather, to other nesting sites taking priority, to disease at the wintering sites. Also two differently designed nesting additions to two tripods were utilized by double-crested cormorants.

Black-crowned night herons numbers seem to be increasing at Almond Marsh. They are using a small island in the marsh.

The chapter’s community outreach to increase public awareness and interest in birds and the environment, especially among children, in the form of the spring “Welcome Back, Herons” doughnut and cider event had 65 attendees. Their end-of-the-season “Cheese and Crackers with the Herons” had 71 attendees. Children were heard asking their parents to make return visits.

BYLAWS REVISION

Terry Schilling: BCN Bylaws, Article V, Section 4. The current language states, “A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of either of the two: President, and Vice-President, plus one other committee member.” Terry said that this wording is unclear and the number required for an Executive Committee quorum is too small.

The following rewrite was proposed by Terry: “A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of at least one-half of its members, and must include either the President or Vice-President, and a second elected BCN officer.”

Donnie moved to accept the proposal and Judy seconded the motion. The issue will be discussed and voted on at the next Quarterly Meeting.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy actions on behalf of BCN by Donnie Dann, Chair, Advocacy Committee, since April 2013 meeting:

- Signed on to a letter urging increased protection for threatened Marbled Murrelet, to President Obama. ABC request.
- Sent a letter to the editor of the *L.A. Times* commenting on the outrageous decision by the USF&WS to permit the “taking,” meaning killing, of California Condors at a Terra-Gen Power wind farm in California as reported by the Times on May 10, 2013. ABC request.
- Asked BCN reps who live in the 5th District to praise Congressman Quigley for his reintroduction of the Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act and asked his Congressman to be a co-sponsor.
- Reported on the passing of the Recreational Liability bill in the Illinois General Assembly. Years of advocacy preceded this success.
- Signed on to a letter to IDOT in opposition to the Illiana Expressway. Planned to speak before the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) on Tuesday, 7-30-13 in opposition to this planned expressway. [As it developed, Doug Stotz of the Field Museum asked the people from Openlands (who are organizing the opposition) to speak about the bird issues and subsequent to the meeting Bob and Donnie agreed that he would best represent BCN. Doug agreed to do this.]
- Called Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon to request his support for the Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet. ABC request.
- Wind Turbines in Lake Michigan – HB 2573, regulating the installation of wind turbines in Lake Michigan, was signed by the Governor and is now law. Due to efforts by BCN and others, the final language provides IDNR an open-ended time window for evaluating what areas in the Illinois waters of Lake Michigan would be suitable (or unsuitable) for placement of wind turbines. IDNR is given the regulatory authority to be the final arbiter of where or

whether turbines can be placed in the Lake. So it's a good law, from a wildlife perspective. Of course, different politicians with a different mindset could amend or even revoke IDNR's regulatory authority in the future. There is clearly a conflict between those who favor and promote wind vs. those who are concerned about the impact of poorly sited wind farms on wildlife.

- Worked at considerable length and time with Bob Fisher on urging a re-evaluation of Sierra Club's wind energy policies. The Sierra Club has campaigned heavily for wind energy and in our view is ignoring many of the adverse environmental impacts on birds and bats. We are conducting an educational campaign with the Club's leadership via one of the Club's 15 board members who is a friend. This effort is in progress.

OTHER

Lee Witkowski reminded everyone of Will Country Audubon Society's Hummingbird Festival at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, August 17 from 8:30am to 3pm.

NEXT MEETING

Mary Lou announced that the next meeting of BCN is to be Saturday, Oct. 19, 2013 at Donnie Dann's home in Highland Park, 1 to 4pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon
President & Acting Secretary