

Bird Conservation Network Quarterly Meeting
Saturday, April 12, 2014
Sagawau Environmental Learning Center

Attendees: Suzanne Checchia (ENSBC); Donnie Dann (TNC); Glenn Gabanski (DBC); Valerie Lewis (Lake-Cook); Mary Lou Mellon (CBCM); Linda Padera (DBC); Judy Pollock (NAS-CR); Annette Prince, Teri Radke (CBCM); Diane Rosenberg (Lake Cty); Jean Sodemann (Lake-Cook); Terry Schilling (individual member); Eric Secker (Kane Cty Aud); Nancy Tikalsky, Christine Williamson (COS); Lee Witkowski (Will Cty Aud). Guests: Mary Hennen, Chicago Peregrine Project; Mary Bernat, Sagawau bird monitor.

Introductions

A quorum was established with 15 representatives from 10 member organizations and one individual member present.

Minutes

The Jan. 18, 2014 minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report - Glenn Gabanski

Income YTD is \$1,365. \$1,250 of this is from dues and \$115 from donations.

Expenses YTD are \$759.72.

Checkbook balance as of 4/12/14 is \$6,076.01.

One major upcoming expense is paying Eric Secker \$1,000, as per contract, for his work on the Trends Analysis report.

Membership Report - Glenn Gabanski

As of the meeting date, three organizations and one individual have not renewed their memberships by the March 31 deadline. The organizations are: Audubon Chicago Region, Illinois Ornithological Society, and Peoria Audubon Society. The individual is Dawn Smith. Donnie Dann will call Peoria Audubon to remind them.

In addition to the notices sent in January, a reminder was sent on March 19. A late notice will be sent if the dues are not paid at the 4/12/14 meeting and, as according to the bylaws, another one will be sent after 60 days of non-payment. After that an organization or individual then has 30 days to pay before losing their voting rights and being removed from the membership roster until the dues are paid.

Invited speaker

Mary Hennen, Collections Assistant, Bird Division, Field Museum, and Director of Chicago Peregrine Program

Hennen gave a well-received program about the status of breeding Peregrine Falcons and the Chicago Peregrine Program. Over the 26 years that Hennen has been involved in the Peregrine Program, breeding pairs of falcons have gone from zero to one to 20 pairs today and 27 territories. Hennen estimated that Illinois historically likely did not have more than six to eight pairs because the state has few cliffs, the preferred nesting

site of the species. In the early years, Hennen said 95% of her job was focused on science; now, 95% of her job is people management, because of the consternation that nesting Peregrines occasionally cause to building residents. Chicago adult Peregrines tend not to be migratory. During migration, many additional falcons pass through Illinois. Peregrines start nesting in March. Males and females brood eggs and nestlings, but males do most of the hunting for the family. Food stashing is common. Baby Peregrines usually hatch around Mother's Day in May.

Hennen and her crew find all the Chicago area nests and band each chick. As baby falcons fledge and leave the nest, there usually is a human monitoring crew to be sure the fledglings are safe. It's often hard to know where any given Chicago-born bird goes unless it gets into trouble or is found dead. On the state level, Peregrines are slated to be downgraded to threatened status later this year. A post-delisting Peregrine management plan is in the process of being approved. Hennen doesn't count within the overall population any of the chicks that she has to hand-assist with flight or hunting. She said these birds are more vulnerable to health or survival problems and if she has to record their deaths, it will reduce the population numbers. More information about the Chicago Peregrine Program is available online: <http://fieldmuseum.org/illinois-peregrines>

BCN Donations Committee – Terry Schilling

Schilling said he had a hard time researching Internal Revenue Service archives online regarding the use of donations by 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. The rules are opaque and hard to find, mostly because rules tend to be refined in tax court. Online consensus was that non-profits can give donations to other 501(c)3 organizations with similar missions and goals. In-kind donations of employee/volunteer time, meeting rooms and other goods and services are permissible. It is not permissible to make donations to individuals or for-profit organizations.

Nancy Tikalsky said donations to non-501(c)3 groups is acceptable if those groups have similar missions and goals as BCN. Schilling said even in the absence of straightforward IRS guidelines, it should be possible to write BCN donation guidelines. Draft donation recommendations will be distributed to BCN members two weeks before the next meeting, said Mellon.

Conservation issues

Advocacy - Donnie Dann

- Wrote various letters in support of the conservation titles in the Farm Bill.
- While Dann was away Bob Fisher signed on to Wisconsin's Bird Conservation Initiative's effort to have Northwestern Mutual Life build their new building to be bird-friendly.
- Wrote to oppose logging Spotted Owl habitat.
- Signed on to several letters of opposition to the construction of the Illiana Toll Road.
- Wrote or signed on to several letters of opposition to poorly sited wind turbine projects, including Camp Perry, Ohio.
- Joined in opposition to 30-year take permits for wind energy farms in Golden Eagle habitat.

- Signed the Prairie Rivers Network's petition to remove or properly close the old coal ash dumps along the middle fork of the Vermillion River.
- Asked my State Senator and State Rep to support adding the American Black Bear, Cougar, and Gray Wolf to the protected species list in Illinois. This would prevent people from being able to shoot these animals without cause. Apex predators are incredibly important to recovering ecosystems, which of course helps birds. The bill has passed the Illinois Senate and awaits passage in the House.
- Worked extensively with Bob Fisher to influence the Sierra Club regarding its wind energy policy and practices.
- One advocacy issue that Dann said he did not act on was Idaho legislation that would permit a cull of Ravens in the state because they predate on the eggs of the Greater Sage Grouse. Because the Raven is low on the list of threats to the grouse, Dann asked for and received agreement to sending a letter to the governor of Idaho protesting the Raven cull.

Lake County Common Tern Relocation Project – Donnie Dann

Dann said the previously successful Common Tern colony at Great Lakes Naval Base has not been able to fledge a single chick over the past several years due to the presence of PCBs in Lake Michigan food sources. Illinois Department of Natural Resources heritage biologist, Brad Semel, received permission from the now-closed Zion Nuclear Power Plant, to relocate the colony there. Toxicology reports showed that Lake Michigan fish found north of Waukegan Harbor are safe for tern consumption. Using decoys and tapes, Semel will lure the adult Common Terns to the Zion site, which will be protected by an electric fence.

Lincoln Park Black-crowned Night-heron Colony – Christine Williamson

Williamson reported that the Chicago Park District has removed approximately 80% of the trees in the Lincoln Park allee where Black-crowned Night-herons have nested for the past few years. Not many BCNH have returned yet to the area, but those that have returned are setting up territories outside the allee, specifically within Lincoln Park Zoo. Zoo personnel will monitor the area to make sure BCNH nests are protected.

BCN Population Trends Breeding Birds of the Chicago Region 1999-2012 –

Eric Secker urged BCN members to check out the trends analysis page on BCN's website. One highlight in the new analysis is that the number of species that show significant trends increased to 67 from 30 in 2007. Species that have shown significant or moderate population increases include Bobolinks, Henslow's Sparrow, Dickcissel and Cooper's Hawks. American Kestrel populations have fallen and Grasshopper Sparrows are just holding their own, Secker said. The addition of bird habitat data also could help stewards and land managers develop management plans for species that are in decline.

The database has been improved to reduce errors and is easier to use to predict trends. Secker warned that the data has become so numerous that management issues may have to be addressed in future. Secker said the next analysis should optimally be done in the next three to four years. Terry Schilling said improved database management tools

such as Mongul will make data analysis much easier. More attention can then be focused on data interpretation. Judy Pollock said PhD Mason Fidino will be tapping BCN monitoring data to spot trends between different guilds of birds.

Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary Master Plan - Mary Lou Mellon

Mellon, Bruchman, and a number of others attended a public meeting on this issue Feb 3, 2013. The Chicago Park District says a new plan is needed because it hasn't been revised for 10 years. Mellon was so concerned after the meeting that she wrote to Cathy Breitenbach, new director of Cultural and Natural Resources of the Chicago Park District. Breitenbach replaced Adam Schwerner, who spoke at BCN's fall meeting. Jason Steger is Breitenbach's right hand man, replacing Mitch Murdock, who also left when Schwerner departed for Disneyworld. Breitenbach suggested a meeting. Mellon, Bruchman, Tikalsky met with Breitenbach and Steger to express concerns that landscape design firm has no knowledge of or even any interest in landscaping for migratory birds. The meeting was successful to some extent.

Mellon was appointed to the Montrose Stakeholders Group, which had already had two fairly unsuccessful meetings. Other BCN reps who are stakeholders representing various organizations include Pollock (NAS), Jill Niland (Lincoln Park Advisory Council), Terry Schilling (Jarvis steward) and Luis Munoz (COS).

Mellon attended the third stakeholders meeting. Doug Stotz from the Field Museum also attended. Other attendees were Charlotte Newfeld and stewards from Jarvis and Montrose. The meeting began with Steger saying the timeline needed to be extended because Conservation Design Forum can't have a final plan ready to present to the public by June 1. The deadline now is in September. There will be more Stakeholders Meetings before another Public Meeting. The meeting was constructive, but still troubling. Conservation Design Forum wants to go to Montrose to see what the birds are using and how they are using it. Montrose separated into blocks that will be designed and the designs implemented over time.

After the meeting, Mellon wrote a letter to Steger and David Yocca, head of the project for Conservation Design Forum, congratulating them on a more successful meeting. She suggested that CDF aren't birders so when they go to Montrose to see what the birds are using and how, they won't know what they're seeing. She offered to get some top Chicago birders to go with them and point out the birds and what they are using. In reply, Steger indicated that extending the contract is taking a lot of time, but that they would definitely like BCN to find some birders to walk Montrose with CDF. Mellon replied to Steger that migration is happening: CDF needs to get out there pretty quickly. Radke said it was obvious that the landscape designers had been "blindsided by their client," the Chicago Park District. She was reassured at the meeting that the firm now has a much better sense of what's needed at Montrose.

Projects & initiatives

Great Blue Heron Nesting Platforms at Almond Marsh - Diane Rosenberg

Lake County Audubon Society continues its work on Almond Marsh. In March, several volunteers erected four single tree and one double tree stands (tree stands are wooden platforms attached to a tree trunk). The herons began arriving in mid-

March and as of last week, 18 nests were counted. Three new tree platforms were occupied by herons. More herons are returning each day. On April 5th we hosted our annual Welcome Back Herons event and had the largest turnout ever - 108 people.

The Almond Marsh Rookery will be open every Saturday from April to June from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon (except on May 24, Memorial Day weekend) and is staffed by volunteers who are able to provide information, binoculars, and bird id books. There is also a spotting scope and a stepstool available for younger visitors.

Black-crowned Night-Herons also are found at Almond Marsh; last year a larger than usual number of juveniles were observed. LCAS reviewed information on the nesting habits of the BCNH and got permission from the Lake County Forest Preserve District to erect four rectangular platforms about three feet off the ground on the small island in the marsh.

As the breeding season progresses we intend to monitor the BCNH as well as the Great Blue Herons. Double-crested Cormorants also are nesting at Almond Marsh. Bald Eagles were seen at the marsh last week, Rosenberg reported.

Chicago Bird Collision Monitors Update – Annette Prince

Prince said the winter was very busy for CBCM because of diving ducks that suffered from starvation problems because of lake ice. CBCM did a number of educational programs over the winter to schools. Loyola University's northern campus may – finally – treat the dangerous windows of its athletic building with CollidEscape. ABC collision-prevention flyers with CBCM contact stickers were available for everyone to distribute.

Northeastern Illinois University Bird Window Collision Project—Libby Hill

The NEIU Bird Collision Monitoring Team has persuaded the administration of Northeastern Illinois University to do a trial bird collision prevention project. The team is made up of students and faculty who are working together and with the president and vice president of NEIU. After a series of e-mail conversations, the Collision Team met with the university's vice president, and that resulted in an agreement to treat one deadly glass corridor with standard white CollidEscape film. This will allow faculty and students to see the treatment and determine if it should be used at other collision hot spots on campus. This initial application on the single corridor will also allow administrators to know if the treatment works to reduce energy costs, save birds and still be aesthetically pleasing to the student community.

Woodcock Survey for University of Arkansas - Mary Lou Mellon

Lee Ramsey passed information about a survey by the University of Arkansas about migratory routes of American Woodcocks from January 15 through April 9 in 2014 and 2015. Ramsey's recruitment attracted more than 40 birders who went out to listen for woodcocks on display grounds. Mellon suggested that next year's woodcock monitors enter their data into the eBird database as point counts as well as sending their data to UA.

Bird Monitor's Outing and Brunch - Mary Lou Mellon

May 3 is the date for the Bemis Woods event, which will start with a 7:00 a.m. bird walk, followed by brunch. Only 14 RSVPs have been received to date, Mellon said. More invitations will be sent soon.

University of Chicago's new Laboratory School Arts Hall - Mary Lou Mellon

The new building as proposed utilizes a lot of glass and could be dangerous for birds from collisions. Mellon wrote to the firm that produced the building renderings, Visualized Concepts. Thorsten Bosch responded, identifying architects Valerio Dewalt Train and FGM. Bosch advised that bird safety has been an important question in the construction documentation process and has been addressed. Mellon wrote to the architects and to the president of the University of Chicago, Robert J. Zimmer, but has not received responses.

2014 Summer Grassland Bird Blitz – Judy Pollock

Five species have been targeted for the grassland bird blitz: Bobolink, E. Meadowlark, Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow and Sedge Wren. Dann noted the absence of the Upland Sandpiper on the list of focal species. He suggested that monitors should be sent out to find possible habitat, such as short-grass prairie or areas that could be transformed into this habitat type. Pollock said Upland Sandpipers are included in the overall conservation goals of the blitz project, despite not being on the focal species list. New maps will be drawn up for the upcoming blitz and monitors will be able to target some areas where there is little data about these grassland species. The blitz will take place in June; training sessions are being planned now. Recruitment has started and flyers for the blitz were distributed.

Birds of Concern Brochure - Judy Pollock

Pollock said the brochure is in progress. Mellon said she thinks the grant received for this project requires that it be completed in 2014.

Wind Energy – Donnie Dann and Bob Fisher

No discussion.

Great Lakes Pelagic Bird Stakeholder engagement workshop – Mary Lou Mellon

May 29 – 30, Weber Inn, Ann Arbor, Mich.

This workshop will both share the latest research available about pelagic birds and potential impacts of Great Lakes offshore wind development and ask participants to help identify research gaps. Great Lakes offshore wind will be an important clean energy source for our region and it's important that it's developed in a way that protects and minimizes impacts to wildlife. This meeting brings together researchers to discuss and identify what additional research may be needed and share information about what research we already have that can help provide guidance for siting policies and best practices. The fees of local birders wishing to attend the workshop may be paid by Citizens' Greener Evanston. This workshop is sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Registration for workshop is \$30, plus approximately \$130 for lodging.

Other

Schilling said 13,000 plants will be planted in the area north of the Jarvis Sanctuary enclosure on April 26. All are welcome to plant.

Next meeting date – Mary Lou Mellon
July 19. Location TBD.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 :50.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Williamson, Recording Secretary