

Bird Conservation Network Quarterly Meeting
Saturday, July 19, 2014
Heller Nature Center

Present: Bob Andrini (Kane Cty Aud), Kathy Andrini (Kane Cty Aud), Bobbie Asher (CAS), Joan Bruchman (IOS), Suzanne Checchia (ENSBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Bob Fisher (DBC), Glenn Gabanski (DBC), Valerie Lewis (Lake-Cook), Mary Lou Mellon (CBCM), Luis Munoz (COS), Judy Pollock (NAS-CR), Annette Prince (CBCM), Lee Ramsey (NAS-CR), Diane Rosenberg (Lake Cty Aud), Jean Sodemann (Lake-Cook), Terry Schilling (at large), Eric Secker (Kane Cty Aud), Nancy Tikalsky (COS), Chris Van Wassenhove (CAS), Christine Williamson (COS)

Guests: Steve Bailey, Bonnie Buol, Sheryl DeVore, Marion Miller, Rich Miller, Pegeen Soare

The meeting was called to order and a quorum was established with 20 members from 11 organizations plus one at-large.

Minutes

Motion: Approve April 27, 2014 meeting minutes

Moved: Tikalsky

Second: Checchia

Action: Passed

Treasurer's Report—Glenn Gabanski

Before the meeting a financial and a membership spreadsheet were distributed to the reps. For 2014 income is \$1,500 from dues and \$1,220 from donations for a total of \$2,720. Of note was a donation of \$780 from the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, half of the proceeds of sales of photos from the exhibit "Back from the Brink: Photographs by Arlene Koziol". Mrs. Koziol had stipulated that half the money from the sales be donated to BCN and the other half to the Brushwood Center. There were other donations of \$150 each from two individuals. One was given by Bob Fisher who donated his speaker stipend from a presentation he made to Sand Ridge Audubon Society. The other was made anonymously.

Expenses have totaled \$2,351.88. There were three expenses of note. The largest is the \$1,000 paid to Eric Secker for his contracted work on the Trends Analysis. Second was the \$425 donated to the McHenry County Conservation Foundation to pay for a fence at the Zion Common Tern colony. These funds were in response to an emergency request to BCN ExCom from Brad Semel and were paid to the foundation and then made available to Brad. Finally, \$167.16 was paid to Joan Bruchman to reimburse her for money spent for the Monitors Brunch.

As of July 19 the checkbook balance is \$5,838.85.

Membership Report—Glenn Gabanski

Since the April 12 meeting all organizations and individual members have now paid their 2014 dues. Membership remains at 20 organizations and three individuals.

Illinois Audubon Society's long-time BCN representative, Mary Ann Harrison, has resigned. Mellon expressed her gratitude for Harrison's contributions to BCN. Jo Fessett replaces Harrison. Prairie Woods Audubon's representative Brigitte Schmidt has been replaced by Sylvia Vassmer.

Donnie Dann suggested that Arlene and Jeff Koziol be recognized for their contributions to BCN with a letter expressing BCN's resolution, an honorary life membership to BCN for each, and a copy of the Illinois Natural History Survey's "A Century of Change." Christine Williamson will write the resolution on behalf of BCN, and Mellon will write the letter and get both to the Koziols.

Invited speakers – Marion and Rich Miller Chimney Swift Towers

Mr. Miller described the long-term decline in the Chimney Swift population in the U.S. and Canada, primarily because of deforestation. Many newer buildings don't feature the type of large chimneys that swifts use in the absence of appropriate trees.

In 1915, an artificial Chimney Swift tower was designed and proven to work well for nesting. Jerry Hope, a Kane County Audubon member, persuaded the group to start a Chimney Swift tower installation program. Partnerships were established with local community groups and municipalities, including the local veteran's conservation corps, which built four CS towers. The towers are 12 feet high and cost about \$750 each. They are made of plywood, insulation (to keep the interior cool during the nesting and roosting season) and vinyl siding. They need to be located in open areas, at least 10 feet from overhanging branches, and vegetation needs to be low to discourage ants (predators of nestlings). The towers were constructed on public lands in Kane County.

Kane County Audubon volunteers monitor use of the towers by nesting and roosting birds. The average number of sticks used by Chimney Swifts to build their nests is 268 twigs, which are sturdily glued together with the parents' saliva. It is not uncommon that the towers aren't used during the first season they were erected. But once the towers have been occupied, nest site loyalty is high for CS parents and their offspring.

In addition to providing nesting sites, local communities and residents can help preserve CS populations by avoiding the use of pesticides, keeping lakes and rivers free of pollutants, taking care with chimney cleaning, and replacing a chimney used by swifts that has been demolished with a new nest tower nearby.

Conservation issues: Advocacy Committee—Donnie Dann

- Signed on to letter to U.S. Department of the Interior to develop a Programmatic Wind Environmental Impact Statement to identify appropriate areas for wind energy development as well as areas where new projects should be avoided to conserve wildlife and sensitive habitats.
- Supported American Bird Conservancy efforts that oppose FWS 30-Year Eagle Kill Rule.
- Joined other local environmental groups to oppose the Illiana tollway, as proposed in the Tier 2 Draft EIS and the April 2014 Preferred Alternative Technical Memorandum.
- Expressed support of FWS' proposal to list the endangered subspecies Rufa Red Knot.
- Joined the National Petition Drive to President Obama for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation.
- Supported Citizens for Southernmost Illinois in their efforts in opposition to 66 Corridor.
- Requested that the Illinois Pollution Control Board implement rules that will provide greater protection of water resources threatened by coal ash disposal sites.
- Joined ABC in their successful effort to remove harmful rodenticides and in their opposition to the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.
- Signed on to Center for Biodiversity's effort supporting EPA's authority to regulate toxic lead in ammunition and fishing tackle under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

Christine Williamson mentioned that Sierra Chicago Group and COS in November will be co-sponsoring an educational panel discussion on the impacts of wind on wildlife. Speakers will include Dr. Michael Hutchins from the American Bird Conservancy.

Williamson asked whether the Advocacy Committee would comment on the proposal from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to change the definition of designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. Ditto regarding the Obama administration's recent regulation change regarding narrowing the critical habitat designation for listing new species as threatened and endangered.

Williamson will send details to Dann and Fisher.

The majority of Advocacy efforts were with Bob Fisher regarding the Sierra Club's policies but especially its position on wind energy. Fisher said progress has been made toward getting the Sierra Club on a national and regional level to change its offshore wind turbine siting policy. The current focus is on redrafting the Sierra Club's website pages about offshore wind siting issues. Results from the Great Lakes Wind Collaboration conference in May will be available soon and it should be very helpful for conservation advocates interested in wind issues.

Lake County Common Tern Relocation Project—Donnie Dann

The efforts to lure Common Terns to the Zion nuclear power facility were not successful, but the birds returned to Great Lakes Naval Base anyway. Between one and four birds likely were fledged. In 2015, efforts to improve the naval base will be made, especially increasing the height of the land to avoid flooding.

Bird Collision Monitors Update—Annette Prince

A consortium of groups involved in prevention of bird collisions, sponsored by National Audubon Society, met to set national goals, share ideas and to try to further spread collision prevention programs. The consensus was to develop basic guidelines for establishing new programs, in essence, to provide consulting advice. BCN representatives can direct questions about collision issues and bird safety from their members to the CBCM webpage: www.birdmonitors.net.

Judy Pollock said Audubon Chicago Region convinced the city of Chicago to include lights-out language in the proposal for a light plan for tourism.

The two glass walls in a natural area, part of the new Burnham Memorial proposed for the south end of Grant Park, are a terrible idea. Prince said Chicago Bird Collision Monitors would review the project. Ditto the Lucas Museum proposed for the Soldier Field above-ground parking lot.

DuPage County Forest Preserve District new master plan update—Bob Fisher

Fisher said two commissioners want to reduce the 90% natural areas, 10% altered lands ratio to 80%/20%. It's not clear whether the proposal will go forward; it is not currently included in the official master plan document.

Chicago Audubon Society Report—Chris Van Wassenhove

The 10th Biennial Birding America was held on Saturday, March 8, 2014 at North Park University in Chicago.

The 16th annual Dr. William S. Beecher Birdathon Cup Challenge was held on Saturday, May 17, 2014. The 2014 winning team, Field's Flickers consisting of Josh Engel, Ben Winger and Ethan Gyllenhaal.

CAS Eagle Optics Day is being moved to the fall this year and will be Saturday, October 11, 2014 at North Park Village Nature Center from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Grassland Bird Blitz—Judy Pollock

The blitz went well with between 40 and 50 of the available survey plots covered. Meadowlark populations are strong, but Dickcissels and other species were harder to find.

Red-headed Woodpecker Blitz—Judy Pollock

Students from Northeastern Illinois University are analyzing data about habitat used by RHWOs; they have made an interactive digital map of the results. The final results should be released soon.

Evanston Bird Friendly Ordinance—Judy Pollock

Pollock and others have been working with Evanston officials to draft an ordinance to require bird-safe building design. Efforts are moving fast and it sounds like it will be successful.

Audubon Chicago Region—Judy Pollock
Lakefront bird habitat enhancements

Ronan Park in Chicago, Miami Woods in Morton Grove, Gillson Park in Wilmette and a plot south of Northwestern University on the lake front are undergoing habitat restoration for migratory birds; in each case, birders and local community members are or will be involved.

The next Wild Things Conference is in the planning stages; the date is January 31, 2015.

COS Hackmatack Field Trip—Nancy Tikalsky

COS sponsored a field trip to the eastern end of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge for grassland birds and also visited the northern end of the area. Participants learned a lot about the creation of the refuge and its future.

2014 Year of the Passenger Pigeon—Nancy Tikalsky

Joel Greenberg has asked local birding groups to support an effort to get a Senate resolution making 2014 the Year of the Passenger Pigeon. Calls are needed to Senator Mark Kirk's office to persuade him to introduce the resolution. Senator Dick Durbin said he would co-sponsor the resolution.

COS/Sierra Club Beginning Birder/Nature Tours—Christine Williamson

Williamson and her husband Geoff Williamson have been leading these trips, mostly in Chicago, for four years and have hosted more than 400 people. DuPage Birding Club sponsors a similar series of beginner walks at Cantigny Park. Lake-Cook Audubon sponsors a beginning bird walk at Fort Sheridan once per year.

Lake-Cook Audubon Barn Owl and Purple Martin nest boxes—Jean Sodemann

The Purple Martin houses that LCA erected have been used this summer with good fledgling success. There are three nests in the martin house, including some young.

Lake-Cook has four more sites for Barn Owl boxes. Two will be installed this summer on the property of a school in Wadsworth. That will be followed by a church in Lake Forest, an organic farm operation in Libertyville, and Prairie Crossing School in Grayslake.

Northeastern Illinois University Bird Window Collision Project—Mary Lou Mellon for Libby Hill

CollidEscape film has been installed on two courtyard window walls as a trial.

Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary Master Plan—Luis Munoz

In the last six weeks, much activity has been going on with regard to proposed plans to change the Montrose Bird Sanctuary. Onsite visits with the landscape architects and Chicago Park District employees helped them to better understand where birds are nesting and feeding during migration. Munoz led an onsite trip to Montrose Point with the intent of improving security at Montrose, with a focus on (sex) cruising, drug use, drinking and violence. High-ranking officials from the CPD and the Chicago Police Department were in attendance. Some attendees refused to go into the biggest problem areas because it was "too buggy." The meeting was so unproductive that the site steward, David Painter, quit. One success is that points within the Montrose area will be added to the City of Chicago's 911 system, so police and other emergency services can be directed to the right place. Munoz has been asked to become the co-steward at Montrose Point. He said he would consider the idea. The Chicago Park District is amenable to the idea. In the past few days, someone has been mulching and putting up rope fences at Montrose, but there have been no communications from the landscape contractors or the Park District.

Munoz, together with Charlotte Newfeld (co-steward at the Jarvis Bird Sanctuary), will ask Illinois legislators for grant money to fund a private security service.

BCN Donations Committee—Mary Lou Mellon

Terry Schilling withdrew his proposal for changes to the BCN donations policy because of the many objections.

Mellon presented and explained details of the replacement policy, which was approved by ExCom on July 17. Schilling argued that the proposed guidelines are too liberal and might allow the ExCom to spend all of the organization's assets without a check from the full membership. Mellon countered that since the membership has the opportunity to review and approve each year's budget at the January meeting, such an outcome was unlikely. After discussion, the draft was amended as follows:

The following guidelines will be used in reviewing requests for donations from BCN.

- All donations made by Bird Conservation Network (BCN) must be aligned with BCN's mission and goals.
- Requests for donations must be made in writing to the president, who will refer the request to BCN's Executive Committee for research and review.
- The Executive Committee has the discretion to award donations, the total of which will not exceed the amount approved in the current year's budget. Requests that are in excess of the amount in the current budget must be approved by the majority of the representatives.

Motion: BCN approves the adoption of the donation policy as amended.

Moved: Fisher

Second: Dann

Action: Passed

Votes: Yes, 17; No, 2; Abstain, 1.

Projects & initiatives

Birds of Concern Brochure—Judy Pollock and Eric Secker

The bird list should be finalized very soon, and work then will commence on a multipage brochure with the list.

Other

Fisher said the BCN Advocacy Committee should write a letter to Senators Durbin and Kirk expressing regret that both voted for the Sportsmen's Heritage Bill. Consensus was in support.

Next meeting date—Mary Lou Mellon

October 25. Location: Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Ramsey, Secretary

Christine Williamson, Recording Secretary