

**Bird Conservation Network Meeting  
October 29, 2016  
Crabtree Nature Center, Barrington, IL**

**Present:** Bobbi Asher, CAS; Jeff Aufmann, McHenry County Aud; Mary Bernat, Thorn Creek Aud; Suzanne Checchia, ENSBC; Donnie Dann, TNC; Emma England, Lake County Aud; Bob Fisher, IAS; Glenn Gabanski, DBC; Vera Leopold, TWI; Lisa Maier, McHenry County Aud; Mary Lou Mellon, CBCM; Steve Mitten, Loyola IES; Tom Mulcahy, DBC; Debra Nord, McHenry County Aud; Annette Prince, CBCM; Teri Radke, CBCM; Lee Ramsey, Audubon Great Lakes; Diane Rosenberg, Lake County Aud; Terry Schilling, At Large; Eric Secker, Kane County Aud; Ron Skleney, DBC; Jean Sodemann, Lake-Cook Aud; Dave Taliaferro, Lake-Cook Aud; Nancy Tikalsky, COS; Louis Vassmer, Prairie Woods Aud; Dave Willard, CAS; Christine Williamson, COS.

President Dave Willard called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. A quorum was established with 27 representatives from 16 member organizations plus one at large member present.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Introductions were made around the room.

**ADMINISTRATION**

**1. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion:** The Bird Conservation Network approves minutes of the July 16, 2016 meeting at Camp Sagawau, Palos as posted on the website.

**Moved:** Mellon

**Second:** Dann

**Action:** Passed

**2. Treasurer's Report - Glenn Gabanski**

**Income and expenses for 2016 total:**

Income YTD (Oct. 29, 2016): \$18,466

Dues: \$2,070

NFWF grant: \$16,396

Expenses YTD total: \$15,303

NFWF Grant: \$14,735 (pass-through)

BCN operating expenses: \$568

**Net income: \$3,163**

Checkbook balance as of 10/29/16: \$24,724

Funds Balance as of 10/29/16: \$4857 (includes known amounts receivable and payable)

Trends Analysis reserve Fund Balance: \$1,000

Correction to the 2016 BCN Budget: \$2,000 was left out of the NFWF expenses for 2016 when the budget was presented last January. This is money that is held out from the bulk of the 2016 grant expenses as a final payment to the project coordinator and was inadvertently overlooked when the budget was prepared. Financial reports now include the omitted expense.

In September, BCN received \$16,396 from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County for the funding of the second year of the NFWF grant.

**3. Membership Report – Gabanski**

Membership as of 10/29/16 is 21 organizations and two individuals.

**4. Nominating Committee - Dave Willard**

Dave Willard appointed Bobbi Asher and Mary Lou Mellon to serve as the nominating committee to prepare a slate of 2017 BCN officers.

**5. BCN Administration – Willard**

Willard announced the appointments of Tom Mulcahy and Vera Leopold to the Executive Committee.

Member organization Audubon Chicago Region has been expanded is now named Audubon Great Lakes.

**PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES**

**1. BCN Survey – Emma England**

At the Oct. 1 BCN Survey Council meeting, monitor training was discussed, with a particular focus on learning common bird songs. It is hard to know if a person knows enough songs so a list will be made that people need to learn in order to become a monitor. It will be by habitat and we will also try to have a video to accompany it. In the future we will invite Geoff Williamson to do a workshop for monitors.

We plan to hold a training session for monitors at Wild Things.

We will work on preparing a presentation on BCN monitoring that can be shared with new monitors and can be used at the training sessions.

**2. Urban Treaty Grant – Judy Pollock (Pollock not present; report read by Mellon)**

**A. International Migratory Bird Day event:** This year’s IMBD event will take place at LaBagh Woods on May 20, 2017 from 8:00 -11:00 a.m. Planning will begin this winter. All the partners from the 2016 IMBD event have been notified of the date. A BCN rep is sought to be on the planning team.

**B. Monitoring:**

A successful monitoring season was completed at Montrose.

The fall monitoring at LaBagh was discontinued because two of the monitors (half) were discouraged about the bike trail installation and stopped monitoring. (The bike trail does not impact the monitoring sites or the plantings, but it did have a much bigger construction footprint than expected. In addition, although COS had been furnished with a map well in advance, the group was not asked whether the route would impact bird habitat. Meetings were held with the CCFPD and the communication issues were discussed.) We will recruit new monitors for the spring.

We are working with the CPD to institute a training session for monitors at Burnham Wildlife Corridor for community members, because it has been difficult to recruit monitors there.

Volunteers for any of the three sites are needed and welcome - one morning every week or every two weeks in spring and fall. After the spring season, all the data will be sent to the Urban Wildlife Institute for analysis. A subset of the data was analyzed after the spring season to determine whether the foraging portion of the protocol yields useful data, and it was found that it does.

### **C. Shrub Planting:**

- **LaBagh** – The 1000th shrub will be planted on Oct. 29 at LaBagh Woods. Benjamin Cox, Margaret Frisbee and Cathy Geraghty will attend, representing partner agencies. The fencing money in the budget has been spent and the shrub money for LaBagh is essentially spent. COS secured a second grant and will continue plantings next year. Discussions are proceeding well with the CCFPD re replacing the habitat that was removed for the bike trail installation.
- **Makeover Applicants** – Three migratory makeover sites applied for the three openings – Douglas Tomb Migratory Oasis, Sacred Keepers Youth Garden and the Migratory Bird Garden at Garfield Park Conservatory. Applicants for these grants are interested in herbaceous plantings along with shrubs and small trees, and the selection committee that visited the sites agrees that this will improve the bird habitats. The herbaceous plantings were not available this past spring, so the makeover plantings are postponed until spring 2017.

## **CONSERVATION**

### **1. Advocacy Report – Donnie Dann**

- 7-26 Again wrote opposing the Illiana Highway.
- 8-3 Opposed the use of Douglas Park for music festivals.
- 9-22 Supported Openlands in opposing the construction of huge water mains through the Illinois Beach State Park.
- 10-20 Joined in sign-on letter by ABC to keep migratory birds from being trapped in oil pits, electrocuted by power lines, and dying from other preventable causes.
- 10-20 Joined a sign-on letter by ABC from various scientists in support of Migratory Bird Incidental Take Permitting Process.
- 10-21 Signed on to a letter from many conservation organizations to President Obama opposing anti-Endangered Species Act riders.

**Continuing:** Fighting Senate Joint Resolution 53, the effort to use state funds for feral cat colonies. Dann said he is looking for constituents in Senator Don Harmon’s district (including Oak Park and surrounding communities) to lobby the state legislator and urge him to drop his co-sponsorship of SJR 53. Representative Sarah Feigenholtz is the other co-sponsor and chief supporter of funding feral cat initiatives in the state legislature. Dann has found several people he will contact about the lobby effort and asked that BCN reps send him contact details for other possible lobbyists.

**Concluded:** Bird-friendly building legislation in Highland Park seemed to be on track for passage by the Highland Park village council, but at the last minute, the council voted to add the bird-safe building recommendations to village code as voluntary guidelines. Dann characterized the vote as “a partial victory.” Shortly after the council vote, the developer of a large building to be located in Highland Park made the decision to use bird-safe glass in the structure, which Dann said showed that public education efforts about bird-friendly building design is having a good impact. Dann offered to provide advice and to recommend resources to BCN member organizations that wish to pursue bird-friendly building legislation or guidelines in their communities.

### **2. BCN Free-roaming Cat Position – Willard (attached)**

Dann and Willard provided updates about the state-level actions about feral cat state funding. Representatives from several BCN member groups said their members are divided about opposition to Trap Neuter Release programs because they fear cat euthanizations may result.

After discussion, a sentence was added to the adopted position to say that feral cats are not effective in controlling rat populations. Rabies was added to the list of diseases feral cats may pass to humans.

**Motion:** The Bird Conservation Network approves the changes as described to its Position on Free-roaming Cats

**Moved:** Dann

**Second:** Tikalsky

**Action:** Passed

**3. Chicago Smart Lighting Project – Annette Prince**

The city of Chicago is switching to LED lights for energy and cost savings. Communities around the country also are considering the same move, but critics are worried that the blue-spectrum form of LED is too bright for humans and birds. Chicago will set up four lighting demonstration areas of the city in December. For bird and human safety, BCN should support lighting that minimizes the blue-rich spectrum; the use of <3,000K with an S/P ratio of 1-1.2; full cut-off (shielded) lighting designs that direct light downward.

**4. Chicago Sustainable Development Project – Willard and Prince**

COS, CAS, CBCM and the Field Museum have been working together to urge Chicago to adopt sustainable building practices that incorporate bird-friendly features such as non-reflective glass and subdued lighting. Chicago is reviewing its sustainable building guidelines now and a bird-friendly menu has been added to the draft guidelines. Willard read a statement that Carl Giometti from COS drafted, iterating bird-safe building guidelines.

**5. Lock Box Ballot Referendum – Dann and Bob Fisher**

Vote no on this ballot initiative that would require that any income brought in from transportation-related fees (license plates, drivers licenses, etc.) be directed only to road-related issues, depriving state agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources, of vital funding. BCN member groups were asked to urge their members to vote no on the lock box ballot referendum.

**6. Illinois Pollinator Protection Plan – Fisher**

An update was provided about BCN's participation with the Illinois Environmental Council in reviewing and commenting on the first draft of the Illinois Pollinator Protection Plan (PPP), produced by the Illinois Department of Agriculture. In 2014, President Obama directed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to engage state agencies in developing PPPs to mitigate risk to honey bees and other pollinators.

**7. DuPage County Forest Preserve District and Illinois Audubon Society/Audubon Great Lakes grassland habitat initiatives – Fisher**

Fisher provided updates on the DuPage County FPD's five-year one million dollar plan to improve grassland bird habitat on 650 acres at the Mallard Lake, Greene Valley and Blackwell/Mt. Hoy landfills.

IAS and Audubon Great Lakes are collaborating on a draft five-year plan for habitat protection and restoration for Bobolink and Henslow's Sparrow in the Chicago Wilderness area as part of the CW Priority Species effort.

**8. Chicago bid for the 2019 – 2021 Summer X Games and Impact on Calumet Big Marsh – Willard**

The City of Chicago has said it will bid for the 2019 – 2021 contract for the Summer X Games. The games usually are held within an arena. Nancy Tikalsky said it's unlikely that the games will be held at the Calumet region's Big Marsh, but the event will undoubtedly attract many bikers to the Chicago area and they likely will use the Big Marsh bike park for practice, recreation, etc.

Mary Bernat raised concerns about rumors that other large-scale biking events will be held at Big Marsh. She also has the following concerns about the impact of the bike park on Big Marsh: Absence of a buffer between the bike park and the marsh; a ramp to the marsh has been cut into the vegetation and now exposes a formerly completely secluded corner of the marsh that is used by birds of concern; the ramp may drain storm water and snowmelt from the parking lot area into the marsh. Also, the area of the site that became the bike park had been covered with vegetation prior to development. Therefore it was not "unusable." The east side contains a more or less barren slag area. When and if single tracks are built on the east side, that will add about 20 more acres of dirt biking facilities to Big Marsh for a total of around 60 acres, not just 40 acres as is commonly believed.

Willard said a Chicago Park District representative would be invited to the next BCN meeting to give a presentation about the Big Marsh that hopefully will answer many questions about the CPD's intentions for the site.

Nancy Tikalsky read an announcement sent by Judy Pollock to ExCom regarding the opening of the newly rehabilitated Big Marsh area, set for Nov. 6.

## **OTHER**

### **1. Give Back to Birds Days – Williamson and Willard**

**Rainbow Beach** – The August workday was a washout due to very heavy rain. The birding before the planned work day was very good, despite the downpour, including sightings of a Neotropic Cormorant and a Yellow-headed Blackbird.

**Bill Jarvis Migratory Bird Sanctuary** – The October 8 GBBD was well-attended. Co-leaders Dave Willard and Jill Niland tallied a good bird list on the bird walk at the start of the morning. At the restoration workday that followed, volunteers removed a large number of aggressive and non-native plants and deadheaded lots of Canada goldenrod and white snakeroot.

### **2. Wild Things Conference – February 18, 2017**

John Elliott, Chicago Audubon Society Board Member, volunteered to serve as the organizer of the bird track presentations at the conference. The conference will be held in a new location, the UIC Forum. Registration opens November 15.

### **Next Meeting – Willard**

The next BCN meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2017, location to be determined.

## **Adjourn**

**Motion: The Bird Conservation Network approved meeting adjournment.**

**Moved:** Fisher

**Second:** Sodemann

**Action:** Passed