

## FINAL MINUTES

### **Bird Conservation Network Meeting April 7, 2018 Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, Lemont, IL**

Attendees: Mary Bernat (TCA), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Stephen Constantelos (CAS), Donnie Dann (TNC), Emma England (LCA), Dean Engle (Lake-Cook), Bob Fisher (IAS), Glenn Gabanski (DBC), Diane Hicks (TCA), Matt Igleski (IOS), Penny Kneisler (TCA), Vera Leopold (TWI), Judy Pollock (IOS), Annette Prince (CBCM), Diane Rosenberg (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Ron Skleney (DBC), Nancy Tikalsky (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA) **Guests:** Glenn Perricone (DBC), Janet Schleeter (WCA)

## QUARTERLY MEETING

Introductions

### **Administration**

The meeting was brought to order by Vice President Tikalsky (in the absence of President Terry Schilling) and a quorum was established.

### **Approval of January 20, 2018 BCN meeting minutes**

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the minutes of the January 20, 2018 meeting.

Moved: Dann

Second: Bernat

Action: Passed

### **Treasurer's Report – Glenn Gabanski**

2018 Income:

Dues:	\$1,970.00	
Donations:	\$500.00	Given by Jeff and Arlene Koziol
Total:	\$2,470.00	

2018 Expenses:

State fees:	\$25.00
Dues to other organizations:	\$200.00
New checks:	\$49.85
Postage:	\$14.05
Conference calls:	\$48.17
Total:	\$337.07

Net Income: \$2,132.93

Checkbook balance as of 4/7/18: \$9,110.55

Funds Balance as of 4/7/18: \$6,185.55. This is the BCN balance after subtracting the Trends Analysis Reserve Fund Balance of \$2,000 and known budgeted expenses not yet paid.

Federal tax Form 990-EZ and state form AG990-IL for 2017 were filed in February.

In February, Gabanski sent a letter to the Koziols acknowledging their donation and thanking them for their many years of support. Since 2006 they have donated \$5,280 to BCN. Dann asked if there is anything we can do to thank the Koziols for their support over the past 12 years.

BCN received a check for \$4.42 from something called DonateWell, drawn from the Wells Fargo Bank. DonateWell seems to be affiliated with Good Done Great and asks we sign up for more benefits. Leopold said the Wetlands Initiative got a check from them in the same amount yesterday. Good Done Great is a real portal, but many reps said this sounds like phishing. Hicks suggests waiting to see if anything bubbles to the surface and a call to Good Done Great. Tikalsky and Gabanski will check further into it.

### **Membership Report – Glenn Gabanski**

Dues renewal invoices were sent out to all members by 1/9/18. As of 4/7/18 all organizations and individuals have renewed except Prairie Woods. Reminder emails have been sent to their reps. They have until June 30 to pay before losing their voting rights.

Membership remains at 21 Organization and 2 Individual memberships.

### **Vote on Sonny Cohen joining ExCom as an At Large member – Nancy Tikalsky**

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves Sonny Cohen joining ExCom as an At Large Member.

Moved: Gabanski

Second: Fisher

Action: Passed

### **David Willard resignation**

David Willard's resignation as Past President announced by Tikalsky. Constantelos explains email from Willard explained he wanted to work more on CAS projects, particularly the Jackson Park issue.

### **Advocacy/Conservation Issues**

#### **Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann**

Dann reminded the group that we all must be advocates, whenever possible, signing petitions, contacting legislators, and otherwise speaking up for birds. Most importantly, meet face to face with your State Rep, your State Senator and your

Congressman/person and get to know him/her. Donnie challenged the reps present who don't know all three of these officials to learn their names before the next meeting. If possible, he'll be happy to accompany them if they meet with any of them.

Since the previous meeting, January 2018, BCN has advocated the following:

- Wrote Streets and Sanitation Commissioner Charles Williams, thanking him for his opposition to using feral cats to hunt rats. Cats do not kill adult rats—too big and tough.
- Signed on to the The American Prairie Conservation Act, a farm bill marker bill which would expand sodsaver nationwide to discourage the conversion of grassland to cropland.
- Signed on to the letter opposing weakening of the MBTA, H.R. 4239 – the so called “SECURE American Energy Act” – would change the law to cement this interpretation and permanently end the government’s ability to address major sources of bird mortality from industrial activities.
- Signed on to a resolution in the IL Senate opposing the Foxconn facility in Wisconsin. For background, see <https://www.wpr.org/wisconsin-foxconn-deal-waives-environmental-regulations> and <http://fox17online.com/2018/01/30/foxconn-wants-to-tap-7-million-gallons-of-water-a-day-from-lake-michigan/>
- President Schilling signed on to a letter opposing losing 60 acres of Chain-O-Lakes State Park to a sand mining operation. It's a pending proposal that has not gone through yet. Fisher said IDNR was going to hold hearings and was in favor of granting a variance. Openlands may be the ones on top of that issue. Dann will call the Openlands lawyer to see where the issue stands.
- Several other “no brainer” national and international letters of support and sign-ons.

Dann referred to a weekly phone call with the Illinois Environmental Council (Fisher has been active in this for a long time) covering transportation issues, and all broadly environmental stuff. They're a force in Springfield and publish a list of pending bills. Dann endorsed the “legislative alert” BCN project as a terrific addition to our advocacy efforts.

Dann also reported some asking him “Why do you call yourself the advocacy chair/committee, not the conservation chair?”

Gabanski recommended reading Cat Wars by Peter Marra, a scarier situation than we think and an incredibly researched book.

Dann recommended the April 5 WBEZ Worldview program on bird migration, where Judy Pollock and Josh Engel were guests.

**BCN “ask” on Jackson Park Watch/South Shore Nature Center/Obama Center – Sonny Cohen (document on file)**

Cohen met with members of Jackson Park Watch, Margaret Schmid, and Brenda Nelms, sign-carrying activists leading the charge for smarter development of Jackson Park. Cohen noted the golf course impinges heavily on the nature preserve and the offset lands are not nearly equivalent. He asked Jackson Park Watch to write a letter to BCN asking us to actively weigh in on the issues.

Cohen recommends we become a consulting partner and find a point person to monitor this for BCN.

Gabanski will ask Dave Willard if is willing to add representing BCN to the organizations he represents on this matter and to report for us if possible. There is a precedent for a non-BCN rep representing us, such as Vicky Sroczynski representing us on a proposed asphalt plant in southern DuPage County. BCN rep Christine Williamson (COS), who has already shared notes on a meeting on the subject with BCN is also someone to consider. Cohen will help with finding a rep and continue talking with Jackson Park Watch.

Motion: BCN finds a point person to represent us on this issue.

Moved: Dann

Seconded: Bernat

Action: Passed

### **IL Dept of Agriculture planning to spray for Gypsy moths in Northern Illinois – Sonny Cohen (documents on file)**

Cohen has been alerted that there are some expert concerns related to planned BtK spraying for gypsy moths over 11,000 acres in Kendall, LaSalle, Ogle, and Will counties. Not only the impact on all caterpillars but the impact of a caterpillar-free zone on migrating songbirds. Spray by helicopter in many places. Is there enough of a threat to justify this? What could the long-term effects be?

Cohen suggests approaching these four counties to learn their opinions on the spraying, the extent of the spraying, its timing, etc.

Reps discussed BtK and how it works, ideal timing/season, experiences in other counties, and recognizing it's a lose-lose situation where birds might not have food, but trees can be saved. The spray kills many small moths too, but they do eventually come back in some number. Engle and others point out that birds kill caterpillars too—but most (including warblers) don't eat gypsy moths.

Gabanski will ask the DuPage forest preserve about their experiences. Witkowski will ask contacts in Will County. Fisher will inquire of Ogle and LaSalle. Leopold will contact John McKee of Starved Rock Audubon (LaSalle Co.) and a contact at the Morton Arboretum. We might not be able to change much this time around, but we can learn more about and perhaps establish a position for future years.

### **Update from Thorn Creek Audubon (Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Plum Creek Forest Preserve) – Mary Bernat**

KANKAKEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND CONSERVATION AREA (only 66 acres, needs more land)

1. John Rogner retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service last week and plans to continue as a volunteer for the Refuge.
2. A farm was bequeathed to the Fish and Wildlife Service to benefit the Kankakee Refuge. The Butts Farm sold for over \$4.5 million last month. The money could be used to purchase land within the Refuge, but a news article reported that the Interior Department said the money can be used for land conservation instead, which would include habitat improvements and youth programs.
3. The Friends of the Kankakee, who donated the first 66 acres of the Refuge, will continue to purchase land for the Refuge.
4. Birders should continue to schedule field trips to the Kankakee Refuge Area, patronize local businesses and talk about what great opportunities for wildlife viewing there are, without mentioning the Refuge, which could be considered polemical.

Dann added when the Refuge opened last summer there were many people with signs in strong opposition, mostly Kankakee County people (farmers who fear losing agri land, losing ID as a farm area, losing tax income). Iroquois County people support it. There has been a lot of compromising already—small size, no refuge land in Indiana, hunting possible, etc. The TNC is buying all the land they can while the area develops.

#### PLUM CREEK FOREST PRESERVE IMPORTANT BIRD AREA

In February, Thorn Creek Audubon helped lead a bird hike that was organized by Audubon Great Lakes. It was followed by cutting and burning some of the autumn olive that is invading the IBA grassland. Last summer Bernat brought to BCN's attention that grass near the parking lot grew so long that bobolinks were seen in it. Then it was mowed during breeding season and bobolinks were not reported at Plum Creek after that. Also, the FPD of Cook County has in the past contracted with farmers to mow the hayfields at Plum Creek and other grasslands. This and all FPD of Cook County haying contracts have not been renewed and invasive brush is moving into the grassland, resulting in the loss of breeding habitat for grassland birds. Audubon Great Lakes is communicating with the FPD about managing hayfields at Plum Creek and other forest preserves.

Causes for concern in this area: farmers won't be mowing for hay, the untimely mowing practices of the forest preserve district, and illegal ATV usage. TCA will again make an attempt to contact the ecologist for the area about its concerns; he ignored a previous email. Tikalsky suggested Bernat share the TCA letter with other BCN orgs; Tikalsky will coordinate this.

#### **Projects & Initiatives**

##### **BCN Alert Road Map – Bob Fisher, Sonny Cohen, Eric Secker (documents on file)**

Fisher introduced a sample alert about HB5293, with tinyurl link, for filing a record of appearance. The bill essentially adds two farmers to the state endangered species board. He also talked about filling out witness slip for a bill being heard in committee or on the floor. The alert also included two other bills to watch: SB2270 (funding for rabies vaccines for feral cats) and SB2493 (feeding deer). Also, some good news: the

Shawnee parkway project is being cancelled (for now) and the Shawnee National Forest threat also dead (for now thanks to the Southern Illinois Audubon Society).

Cohen spoke in support of the BCN Alert, and the next step is to think about: governance (pulling trigger; who formulates and selects issues), how to find recipients (opt-in, alerting orgs, etc.), production of email (content, expertise, editor), email sending application (preferably free, able to monitor results/traffic).

Fisher and Secker fielded some questions and confirmed the alerts will be short and simple, that the geographic range of issues will be strongly local and state, and that those who sign on could likely choose geographies (e.g., counties) and topics of interest.

Motion to set up an email system as described by Fisher, Cohen, Secker, and the committee (the aforementioned plus Beilke, Leopold, Schilling).

Moved: Cohen

Second: Rosenberg

Action: Passed

### **BCN Survey App – Judy Pollock**

Pollock has been working on the Bird Conservation in the Forest Preserves of Cook County report and will be sending that report to the designers soon. The BCN survey app is next, created for us by Gary Morrisette. People can use it to request data BCN has collected. Would anyone else like to work with her and Secker on it? Reps and members of their orgs can contact her.

She also requests a letter to monitors and researchers from someone on ExCom, including a link for researchers to download BCN data. She will write it and Tikalsky will see that it gets sent.

### **Wild Things – Judy Pollock**

Next year, Wild Things will be on February 23 at the Rosemont Convention Center.

Would the BCN like to sponsor and put together a group of sessions with a bird theme?

Motion: BCN requests the Wild Things committee for a session track at the next Wild Things conference.

Moved: Pollock

Second: Secker

Action: Passed

Pollock asked for volunteers to work with her on developing the sessions. Hicks and Igleski volunteered.

### **Other Items**

#### **Bird Monitors Brunch – Emma England**

Will be held in DuPage County at Songbird Slough, Saturday July 7. Cindy Hedges helped a lot. An invite will be coming out in the next week or so.

### **BCN Housekeeping**

Tikalsky announced that Schilling has been working on many bylaws amendments—regarding the finance committee, sponsored memberships, and more—and they are forthcoming. Also, ExCom is sharing and storing materials on box.com. Constantelos reminded reps that ExCom meeting minutes are on the BCN page.

### **IOS Grants Program**

Igleski introduces the IOS grants program, which funds graduate student projects throughout the state. Nine applications are being reviewed now and announcements to applicants will go out at the end of April. Typically, IOS funds them all if it can, and is asking for sponsorships/donations from other organizations to help.

### **Dixon Waterfowl Refuge Events (documents on file)**

Leopold made the following announcements about the Wetlands Initiative tract of Dixon Waterfowl Refuge—the opening of a new tract called Sandy Hollow that she monitors and is filled with birds.

#### **Opening of New Dixon Waterfowl Refuge Tract**

A tract that the Wetlands Initiative acquired in 2014 and has been restoring will be opening to the public on June 15, 2018. It is located at the southeastern end of TWI's Dixon Waterfowl Refuge (Hennepin & Hopper Lakes). TWI originally was calling it the "Hickory Hollow" tract, but the official name will now be Sandy Hollow because TWI is restoring rare sand prairie and sand oak savanna habitats there. It's an upland tract that is really different from the habitats on the rest of the Refuge, and it will have nearly 3 miles of loop trails. Many birds of conservation concern can already be seen there, including Lark Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Sedge Wren, Orchard Oriole, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Harrier, and Wood Thrush. We will be launching a fundraising campaign this spring for the final year of Sandy Hollow restoration that will have a 3:1 match from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. *(Leopold will share the link to this campaign when they launch, if BCN is amenable.)*

#### **BioBlitz at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge on August 3-4**

The Wetlands Initiative will be holding its second-ever BioBlitz event at the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge on August 3 and 4, 2018. Teams of citizen scientists led by experts will be surveying the 3,000-acre site for as many species as possible (birds, insects, plants, bats, herps, fungus, etc.)! TWI's BioBlitz in June 2015 found 675 species, and we hope to learn even more about the site's biodiversity in 2018 by holding the Blitz during a different part of the season. Volunteer experts leading bird surveys will include Doug Stotz, Steve Bailey and Sheryl DeVore, Bob Fisher and Vicky Sroczynski, and Jeff Skrentny and Paul Sweet. The Initial Signup Form is on this page, where people can sign up to get more details and indicate their interest in the different activities: <http://www.wetlands-initiative.org/upcoming-events/bioblitz2018> They will then receive a follow-up registration survey in June to pick the specific surveys and other activities they'd like to participate in.

**Bird Collision Ordinance**

Pollock asked for ideas for a Chicago alderman we can ask to be a point person about the bird collision ordinance that is being developed.

**Event Announcements**

Pollock announced an International Migratory Bird Day event in Chicago, sponsored by the Cook Co Forest Preserve District on May 19 at LaBagh Woods. BCN played an important role in starting this event. Link: <http://fpdcc.com/event/international-migratory-bird-day-celebration/>

Tikalsky announced that the author of The Big Year (Mark Obmascik) will be speaking on April 12 at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum and that if people come early they can get into the museum for free and enjoy the Birds of Paradise exhibit that it still there. Link: <http://www.naturemuseum.org/plan-a-visit/calendar?date=04/12/2018&mode=day>

**Next Meeting**

**July 21, 2018 – location TBD**

**Adjourn**

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves adjournment.

Moved: Dann

Second: Pollock

Action: Passed