

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting April 27, 2019 Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, Lemont, IL

Attendees: Mary Bernat (TCAS), Tim Balassie (KCA), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (CAS), Emma England (LCA), Bob Fisher (IAS), Glenn Gabanski (DBC), Diane Hicks (TCAS), Vera Leopold (TWI), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (IOS), Diane Rosenberg (LCA), Lee Witkowski (WCA) **Guests:** None

QUARTERLY MEETING

Administration

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

Approval of January 26, 2019 BCN meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the January 26, 2019 meeting minutes.

Moved: Fisher

Second: Witkowski

Action: Passed

Treasurer's Report – Pavelka

2019 YTD Income:

Dues: \$1570.00

Donations: \$ 284.48

(Marilyn Schmidling, Abbie Medina, PEO Sisterhood/Mary Lou Mellon, DuPage Birding (in Memory of Karen Fisher).)

Total: \$1854.48

2019 YTD Expenses:

State fees: \$ 10.00

Dues to other organizations: 200.00

(Chicago Wilderness \$50, Illinois Env. Council \$150)

Printing: 15.00

Total: \$225.00

Net Income for 2019 YTD: \$1629.48

Checkbook balance on 4/23/19: \$10089.10

Funds Balance on 4/23/19: \$7589.10
(This is the BCN balance after subtracting the Trends Analysis Reserve
Fund Balance of \$2,500.)

Membership Report – Pavelka

Dues renewal invoices were sent out to all members by 1/8/19. Membership dues have been paid by 16 of 21 organizations (Midewin is reciprocal and thus net 0) and two of two individual memberships. Memberships outstanding are Chicago Audubon, Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, Chicago Ornithological Society, Fort Dearborn Audubon, and Prairie Woods Audubon.

Approved 2019 Budget:

Total income: \$2,570 (\$2,070 from dues, \$500 in estimated donations)
Total expenses: \$2,235 (\$335 for fees and dues; \$250 for Monitor Brunch; \$600 for web hosting and webmaster retainer; \$500 for Trends Analysis Reserve Fund; \$550 for miscellaneous expenses in several categories.

Account Name Changes:

PNC Bank - With the election of a new treasurer an update was needed to the three names that were on the BCN checking account. Glenn Gabanski stayed on. Charlotte Pavelka and Diane Rosenberg were added to the account.

State of Illinois – Registered agent was changed from Glenn Gabanski to Charlotte Pavelka, treasurer, as of 2/20/19.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Pavelka
BCN Treasurer

Nomination of Mary Bernat as a BCN Individual Member – Constantelos (for Schilling)

Outgoing BCN rep for Thorn Creek Audubon, Mary Bernat, was nominated for Individual Membership. In accordance with the bylaws, this will be approved at the next quarterly meeting.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues

Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

Since the previous meeting in Jan 2019, BCN has advocated the following. My repeated reminder: Advocacy is not just this committee's job; we all must be advocates at every opportunity, signing petitions, contacting and getting to know your legislators, and otherwise speaking up for birds. Meet face to face with your State Rep, your State Senator, and your Congressman/person and get to know him/her. If possible, I'll be happy to accompany you.

- Working with ABC to fight SB61, which would further allow TNR colonies to flourish and have the blessings of protection for their “caretaker/owners.” ACTION ALERT!!! (see below for further discussion)
- Requested my legislators to support the Saving America’s Pollinators Act of 2019 (HR1337).
- Asked my senators and congressman to co-sponsor the Albatross and Petrel Conservation Act.
- Again expressed support for Federal Bird-Safe Buildings Act, re-introduced in both the House and Senate — HR2542 and S1920. Also urged IEC to back it.
- Signed on to effort to significantly increase funding for endangered species conservation and recovery.
- Continued opposition to new efforts to add a farm bureau rep to the Endangered Species Protection Board. All of you and the reps not in attendance should have received an ACTION ALERT on this. It’s essential that we all act if the ACTION ALERT system is to have influence.
- Continued the fight against eliminating longstanding protections for birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- Asked ELPC’s CEO to condemn the use of a Lake Erie, especially the western part of the lake, as a giant wind farm.
- Wrote to the Monroe County Commissioners, requesting that they oppose the building of a wind farm on the karst substrate underlying the area.
- Requested my congressman to be a co-sponsor of HR919, Bird-friendly federal buildings legislation.
- Signed on to Nation Wildlife Federation’s campaign to protect wetlands.
- Continued efforts for a bird-friendly building ordinance for Lake County, and have a conference call scheduled.

Respectfully,
 Donnie Dann
 Past President and Advocacy Chair
 Bird Conservation Network www.bcnbirds.org
donniebird@me.com

Fisher commented further on SB61, on trap-neuter-release programs for feral cats, couched in terms of saving colleges from liability for having such colonies on their property. The bill proceeded through the Senate and moved onto the rules committee in the House, and Dann and the American Bird Conservancy have sent letters of opposition.

**If BCN, IEC, and individuals continue to oppose this, it might be stopped. This is a good candidate for another Action Alert.

An interesting perspective from Australia on feral cats:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/magazine/australia-cat-killing.html>.

****Other bills that continue to be of immediate concern include, HB1633, which proposes new, punitive restrictions on peaceful assembly and free speech. For more and to express your opinion: <https://ilenviro.salsalabs.org/hb1633/>.**

****HB2425 / SB1336 roll back Illinois' endangered species protections, allowing, among other things, the federal government to override the state and remove "incidental takings" permit requirements. For more and to express your opinion: <https://ilenviro.salsalabs.org/hb2425/>.**

Further Advocacy Discussion – Fisher, Cohen

Much discussion ensued among all present about the above and the role of BCN and its member organizations in advocacy. Cohen sees survey data/monitors as our greatest asset, along with advocacy—but it needs structure, ongoing discussion encouraged, priorities to set, etc.

Pavelka agreed many in the member orgs would support these issues, but we need to be judicious about action alerts—maybe one a month or less, focusing on local/state issues? Cohen said each item on list above needs a home to live in with more content, so people can take action—on our website, with a link to an actionable step. Cohen reminded all present that nonprofits can indeed lobby for bills, but not for particular politicians.

****Pollock suggested that a list of BCN member groups and their advocacy structure and capacity would be useful. Rosenberg added that it may be worthwhile to try to have one person from each BCN member group link together and dive deep into their orgs and how they might coordinate advocacy among their members.**

Fisher added that we are member of Illinois Environmental Council, and we have a strong voice there—and they have a larger reach than we do.

Cohen shared some data and thoughts about the BCN website. Most who visit it are new arrivals, but that two of our most important roles—the survey and advocacy are somewhat buried in the site. It was suggested updating the site with action alerts would be useful, and that if some actions were elevated to email action alerts, there could still be a home for many other issues on our website.

Witkowski inquired as to if BCN's advocacy work represents all of its member organizations. It was confirmed, that this is indeed the case, but that advocacy by member groups and individuals in those groups makes the case even stronger.

The language on the BCN letterhead was also discussed. The 21 member organizations are mentioned and listed, but number of possible voters covered by all the BCN orgs (upwards of 35,000) is no longer mentioned due to recalled objections from some member orgs.

****The suggestion was made to have Donnie Dann, and possibly others, do a presentation on advocacy for BCN reps.**

Hicks and others commented on how useful the guide to filing witness slips was. Here is the link from the BCN homepage:

http://www.bcnbirds.org/greenpapers_files/HowToSlip-Electronically-Jul2018.pdf

Leopold mentioned attending an Environmental Lobby Day down in Springfield. Here's one link: <https://ilenviro.salsalabs.org/2019registration/index.html>.

England mentioned the Audubon national site has a lot of training available online. Here are a couple of relevant links: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/advocacy>
And: <https://naaee.org/eeopro/resources/tools-engagement-toolkit-engaging-people>

And, a link that helps people find their state reps: <https://www.illinoispolicy.org/maps/>

Update on BCN email alert tool – Cohen

We have sent out three test alerts this year to BCN reps only, who were then free to pass it along to anyone they wished. Here are some stats:

- 1/10/19, Chicago Bird-Friendly Building Ordinance: 39 opened, 155 shares/total opens, 34 action taken.
- 2/18/19, vs. HB2425 / SB1336 IL, Endangered Species Protection Board: 38 opened, 1534 shares/total opens, 236 action taken.
- 4/3/19, vs. HB1633, Nonprofit liability for peaceful assembly/protest/free speech: 29 opened, 59 shares/total opens, 30 action taken.

One issue that needs to be ironed out is that when an alert is forwarded and someone opts to unsubscribe, this unsubscribes the BCN rep who forwarded the alert in the first place.

****Sonny will trial this for another 90 days and is eager to train a BCN rep or someone in one of the member organizations to help do this, and to use Mailchimp. Email him at sonny1@gmail.com.**

Projects & Initiatives

BCN Survey Data Plan – Pollock, Balassie, Cohen (documents on file)

Pollock, Balassie, and Cohen shared a document that provides an outline of a plan for collecting, organizing, storing, retrieving, analyzing, and sharing BCN Survey data, including tailoring it to best support scientific research and distinguish it from other resources. With five-minute point counts at a specific location with a long stretch back in time, we indeed have something unique to offer. How can we make the data more accessible for various local groups, like the grassland and oak task forces? Pollock shared the plan in some detail, listing potential BCN reps and scientific advisors, including enthusiastic past consumers of the data (like Jim Herkert).

Pollock also showed the group the new “Partnering for Birds” booklet, produced by CAS and the FPDCC. The booklet uses BCN Survey data and includes maps and data with habitat by habitat looks at birds of concern, migration information, success stories, best practices, etc. The booklet will be shared with BCN monitors, land managers, and site stewards. Perhaps other counties can create similar reports. Here is a link to it: https://chicagoaudubon.org/sites/default/files//docs/BCD_charts_Digital_Sgl.pdf.

**It is now planned to provide BCN monitors with a printed copy of the booklet at the annual brunch.

Tim Balassie who leads on handling recruitment and maintenance of monitors, spoke on survey monitor training. With thousands of acres waiting to be monitored and many entities inquiring about monitors, he is getting out to all six counties for more training sessions and has proposed a mentor program where an experienced monitor takes a new one who's not ready to monitor alone under their wing.

**Email Tim to get involved in any aspect of this: bcnsurvey@gmail.com.

Oak Ecosystem Recovery (OER) group update – Leopold (documents on file)

As was shared at our last meeting (see the 1/26/19 minutes), over the past year, some BCN members have been participating in meetings of the Chicago Wilderness Oak Ecosystem Recovery Group (OER), seeking to unite the previous Red-headed Woodpecker priority species work with their goals, since oak recovery efforts dovetail closely with efforts to benefit woodpeckers.

BCN was invited to help spread the word and do outreach at our first Oak Ecosystem Recovery event: Shannon Burns of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County is partnering with the Woodridge Park District to host an “Evening for the Oaks” from 6:30 to 7:30 pm in Woodridge on May. Attendees will hear from experts on how to plant and care for oaks with a Q&A and free oak seedlings given out. She invited BCN to have a table there with some resources, and Bob Fisher and I volunteered to do that. We are working on a handout about Red-headed Woodpeckers and oak woodland to have available at the table. We hope for this event to be a model for other events incorporating messaging about benefits to birds with oak recovery efforts. A link for the event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/woodridge-park-district/an-evening-for-the-oaks/413283956156270/>

Migrating warblers are other species of concern for OER as well. And Pollock suggested use of the migrant bird habitat study, as it shows the importance of oaks to many birds: http://www.bcnbirds.org/greenpapers_files/migranthabitatstudy.pdf.

**For information on OER county-by-county projects email Vera at vleopold@wetlands-initiative.org.

Update on the LCAS Sharing Our Shore-Waukegan program – England

England, with Rosenberg and Pavelka, shared the following: Volunteers have been trained for Lake County Audubon Society's Sharing Our Shore-Waukegan Beach Stewardship Partnership with the City of Waukegan. We have 32 volunteers including 6 members of the Lake County Audubon Society Board. 10 volunteers are Bird Monitor Beach Stewards and 22 are Public Outreach Beach Stewards. Volunteers have been provided with a binder of information on the program, beach passes and branded t-shirts, hats, and name tags. [These were passed around the room and impressed all present.]

The program begins on May 4 with a kick-off event at 1-3pm at Waukegan Beach. The Mayor of Waukegan will hopefully be attending to unveil two signs that we have had made to be installed on the beach. One is an informational sign about the program. The second sign features 6 pieces of Piping Plover and Common Tern artwork that were drawn by students from Cooke Magnet School in Waukegan. [These were also shared with meeting attendees.]

The Mayor will also be the first person to take the Plover Pledge. The City of Waukegan has been very supportive and helped with setting up the program and the training session. LCAS has partnered with Comcast for Comcast Cares Day and on May 4, 8am-1pm there will be a beach clean at Waukegan Beach. Emma England will be speaking to the volunteers about the Sharing Our Shore-Waukegan program.

There are hopes to expand the program and add a boardwalk and other places to observe the birds. Emma shared that through the Waukegan citizens' advice group she met members of Waukegan's park district, which in turn led to contacts with local schools. She also credited Audubon's coastal bird stewardship toolkit with aiding in Lake County Audubon's efforts. Here's a link:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/coastal-bird-stewardship>.

[England, Rosenberg, and Pavelka were given a round of applause after sharing all of the above information about the amazing work LCAS has done.]

Bird Friendly Chicago Update – Pollock

The Bird Friendly Chicago committee met with Chicago's building commissioner Judy Frydland. She was quite positive, wants to try to pilot the ordinance in areas especially dangerous to birds. The ordinance can then be tweaked and then hopefully more broadly instituted. This past Wednesday, the group appeared before the city's Health & Environmental Services Committee, but only the ordinance's sponsor, Brian Hopkins, and the chair of the committee showed up. Having created an 110-page book and lined up many experts the group is now prepared for any future hearings. The ordinance has been sent to the zoning committee and soon Bird Friendly Chicago will meet with new aldermen, and the building commissioner will put together a committee of stakeholders. BCN rep Bobbi Asher was very helpful in helping the organization gain access to the Chicago Tribune's editorial board where the ordinance has been backed; it is also receiving other local news coverage.

Learn more and get involved here: <https://birdfriendlychicago.org/>.

Proposed June Event: Breeding Bird Count Along Plum Creek – Bernat

The FPD of Cook County would like birders to help it learn what birds breed in the riparian area of Plum Creek in the SE corner of Cook County. Just by following the existing woodland trails and walking the grassland, birders know this forest preserve as the one place in Cook County to find such uncommon summer species as White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Henslow's Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Now let's bushwhack to find out what's inside the remnant woodland along the stream itself.

We only need a total of eight or so birders, and would likely go out in two teams. Ideally, this would be done in June of this year, or in 2020 if need be. Mary has sent a letter to the site ecologist that asks for his input about any protocols he would like to be followed and for a map of the area he is interested in learning about.

**Pollock will publicize this idea with CAS, it was also suggested we try contacting Kankakee's Audubon Society.

**BCN member organizations are encouraged to contact their members for volunteers. Contact Mary Bernat at mbernat@fastmail.com.

Old Business

New Business

Announcements

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie birding events – Witkowski

Upcoming Midewin events. There will be a Northern Shrike survey on May 6. On May 7-8, there will be a grassland bird survey, with Jim Herkert present in the lead. For more information, email Lee at leewitkowski@comcast.net.

There are bird tours scheduled for the first four Saturdays in June. More information here: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd614357.pdf

Will County Audubon's next meeting will feature kestrels. More information here: <https://www.willcountyaudubon.org/>

Remembering Dick Thomas – Bernat

Thorn Creek Audubon Society lost three active members in the latter half of 2018. One, Dick Thomas, embodied devotion to habitat conservation to such a degree that he will be honored at three separate events this year:

- On Earth Day, Monday, 4/22, Dick Thomas's employer, Lake Katherine in Palos Heights, named a trail after him, and a bench, oak, and native shrubs will be dedicated to him;

- Orland Grassland Volunteers planned to dedicate 4/27 Earth Day workday to Dick; and
- In September, the volunteers of the FPD of Will County will honor Dick on National Public Lands Day, his traditional workday, and are purchasing a bench in his honor.

Dick Thomas was “just” a volunteer, but he had an extraordinary impact. Here's a link to a short WBBM Newsradio feature in both written and audio form:

<https://wbbm780.radio.com/dick-thomas-honor-earth-day-nature-center>

World Migratory Bird Event at Sagawau, May 11 – Bernat

Sagawau Environmental Learning Center will be hosting a World Migratory Bird Day event on May 11 that includes bird hikes, activities, and presentations. Mary Bernat will be leading a bird hike there and presenting a birding by ear program (“‘Whoo's awake? Mee too' and other backyard bird sounds”).

Illinois Audubon Society Spring Gathering hosted by Lake-Cook Audubon (May 17-19) – Cohen

There will be many programs and 26 field trips. More information + registration (deadline is 4/28/19!): <https://illinoisaudubon.org/annual-spring-gathering/>

Next Meeting

July 20, 2019 – location tbd

Adjourn

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves adjournment.

Moved: Witkowski

Second: Pollock

Action: Passed