

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting October 5, 2019 North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago, IL

Attendees: Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (AGL), Mary Bernat (Individual), Suzanne Checchia (ENSBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (CAS), Donnie Dann (TNC), Bob Fisher (IAS), Matt Igleski (IOS), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Annette Prince (CBCM), Janet Schleeter (WCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Christine Williamson (COS) **Guests:** Lee Ramsey (BCN emeritus)

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 April 27, 2019 BCN meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the April 27, 2019 meeting minutes.

Moved: Fisher

Second: Mulcahy

Action: Passed

Treasurer's Report – Pavelka

2019 YTD Income:

Dues:	\$2070.00	
Donations:	\$ 313.52	No new donations in Q3.
Total:	\$2383.52	

2019 YTD Expenses:

State fees:	\$10.00	
Dues to other organizations:	200.00	Chicago Wilderness \$50, Illinois Env. Council \$150
Printing:	15.00	
Postage:		
Conference calls:	8.63	
Awards/Prizes/Donations		
Monitor Brunch	418.50	
BCN Webmaster Retainer		
Web Hosting Fee		

Total:	\$652.13
Net Income for 2019 YTD:	\$1731.39
Checkbook balance on 9/30/19:	\$10191.04

Funds Balance on 9/30/19: \$7691.04 This is the BCN balance after subtracting the Trends Analysis Reserve Fund Balance of \$2,500.

Membership Report – Pavelka

All dues have been paid in full for 2019.

Approved 2019 Budget:

Total income: \$2,570 (About \$200 more in donations estimated per budget)
Total expenses: \$2,235 (Not yet paid \$600 for web hosting and webmaster retainer, \$200 dues, ~\$100 Miscellaneous)

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Pavelka
BCN Treasurer

Dann commented, and others concurred, that the Trends Analysis Reserve of \$2,500 might not be enough for survey trend analysis, but with no fundraising activities planned and no other big expenditures on the horizon, some portion of the rest of our funds balance could be used for that purpose.

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

Former BCN rep for Thorn Creek Audubon, Mary Bernat, was nominated for Individual Membership at the April meeting. A consensus of members attending this meeting is required for approval.

Motion: Acceptance of Mary Bernat as a BCN Individual Member.
Moved: Dann
Second: Williamson
Action: Heartily approved

Nominating Committee – Cohen, Pavelka (for Schilling)

Schilling has reported that Diane Rosenberg (LCA) will chair the committee this year, and has also come up with a procedure for the committee which we will try out. Schilling will not be returning as president in 2020. The committee will seek prospective officers

and will be asking them about their goals and vision for the organization. Dann volunteered to be on the committee.

Motion: Diane Rosenberg, Donnie Dann, and a person to be named later will serve as the Nominating Committee.

Moved: Cohen

Second: Williamson

Action: Passed

**Anyone interested in serving on the committee, or serving as an officer in 2020, can contact Rosenberg at dbsr333@aol.com.

Recognition of Lee Ramsey's service to the BCN and bird conservation community – Beilke

On behalf of Audubon Great Lakes and the BCN, Beilke presented a Bobolink plaque and card to Lee Ramsey, a founder of the BCN. Bernat recounted Lee being instrumental in her becoming an effective, confident BCN monitor, hiking Sagawau together to establish points for her to monitor. Mulcahy and Dann also shared their memories and enthusiasm for Lee's work.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues

Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

Since the previous announcement in July, 2019, BCN has advocated the following. ITEMS IN CAPS ARE CURRENT COMMENTS ON ONGOING ADVOCACY MATTERS.

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. **I'M CURIOUS AS TO WHETHER ANYONE HAS DONE THIS.**

- Currently and most regrettably we're having to refight the battle to keep wind turbines out of Lake Michigan.

Dann and Fisher have long had its eye on the wind turbines in Lake Michigan issue—should they be in the lake, and if so where? 2013 legislation creating a task force on this issue went nowhere, with the task force never created and IDNR map of go and no-go zones never produced. Dann and Fisher worked up guidelines for this, but since nothing was done, no guidelines were considered.

The earlier legislation has been amended, and now the governor is required to name 16 public members of a task force by November 9, 2019, and to issue a report within a year. So far, no apparent progress has been made on this, but it appears [a task force](#)

would be comprised almost entirely of industry interests, with almost no input from conservation interests.

Fisher and Dann are keeping their eyes on this issue, and will be working with Assistant Director of IDNR, John Rogner, to get him to talk to the governor and get additional, conservation-minded people appointed to the task force.

Williamson also inquired about how BCN might feel about bladeless turbines.

******They will update BCN on this, probably in November. Fisher offered this tip on those who pursue advocacy work: if you look at a bill, don't trust the title or synopsis. The contents may not square with the title/synopsis.

- Wrote to oppose the U.S. Forest Service's efforts to severely weaken the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), one of our strongest environmental laws.
- Signed on to an NRDC letter opposing the Trump administration's effort to sell off large swaths of our coasts as well as portions of ANWR to oil and gas drilling.
- Signed on to an Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) letter opposing DNR's proposed rule on the recently enacted Stewardship Act, capping the grants at 10% which will counter the purpose of the Act. A percentage cap only limits the IDNR's discretion to mobilize Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF) resources when they may be most needed.
- Bob Fisher helped in writing a letter of support for Reinstatement of the Illinois Invasive Species Council.
- Bob also wrote to other BCN reps, including those downstate, for them to ask Congressman LaHood and Congresswoman Bustos to reach out to Fish and Wildlife to encourage that agency to free up funding for vital maintenance and repair at the NWR refuge complex at Chautauqua.

Fisher updated the group of his contact with BCN member Peoria Audubon and how we can speak and encourage others to speak on what USFWS does about the severe erosion trouble that is jeopardizing Chautauqua. Repairs are vital. A USFWS team is doing a survey of the levees now, and there has been no money for levee maintenance since 2012.

******A report is forthcoming and will be shared when released. Williamson suggested a statewide call to action.

- Bob also sent an action alert requesting BCN reps to pitch in and ask tower operators in their areas to change steadily burning lights to the type that flickers on/off.
- Signed on to a letter from TNC and others to express support for natural areas inclusion in a pending capital bill. It passed and Open Lands Trust was funded with \$10 million. **THESE ARE FUNDS THAT ARE CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE DNR FOR ALLOCATION, ALONG WITH NAAF AND**

OPEN SPACE LANDS ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT (OSLAD) APPROPRIATIONS.

- IEC traveled to D.C. in June and we asked Director Jen Walling to urge passage of the Quigley-Griffith Bird Safe Buildings Act (H.R. 919) of 2019. VIA ABC WE CONTINUE TO EXPRESS STRONG SUPPORT.
- An exchange with my Lake County Board councilman, Paul Frank, regarding bird-friendly building legislation: I wrote "Are we getting anywhere, Paul, as it's been months, going on years, or should I give up? He replied, "Hang with me Donnie, I am going to get this done." I CONTINUE TO BE REASSURED THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN, AND I CONTINUE TO FOLLOW UP.
- A Nature Preserves Commission colleague and I drove to Springfield to meet with Colleen Callahan and John Rogner, the new director and assistant directors (respectively) of the IDNR. Our urgent ask was to get a director appointed to the Nature Preserves Commission (NPC), a post which has been vacant for 3 1/2 years. Also, to get a sense of how quickly they will be buying land preserving lands that would qualify as Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves. EARLIER THIS WEEK ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROGNER ASSURED ME BOTH ISSUES ARE PROGRESSING BUT THE WHEELS OF BUREAUCRACY GRIND SLOWLY.

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

Other advocacy items – Cohen, Dann, Schleeter

****Cohen**, as at the April meeting, urged reps to find the “advocacy gene” within their organizations.

In addition to the above, Dann recently added BCN support to the American Bird Conservancy's ABC's efforts to help the Sage Grouse in the Great Plains, adding that a lot of orgs do good for birds, but ABC is one to focus on as they are solely devoted to protection of wild birds and their habitats in the Americas

****Go to abcbirds.org**, sign up for their action alerts, and get involved.

Will County Audubon's Schleeter noted the recent ExCom minutes, where ExCom took up Hanson Material Service's proposed relocation of six acres of wetland. Cohen confirmed that ExCom acted, commenting in a letter pointing out the proposed move not in keeping with the Clean Water Act. Schleeter shared an article from the Joliet Herald-News on the issue: <https://www.theherald-news.com/lists/2019/10/02/a42223b7af15476cb837b3722d9b7602/index.xml>.

Update on BCN email alert tool – Cohen

In the last quarter, we sent out one action alert, on the [3 billion birds lost](#), to the 59 people on the list. Twenty-six opened the alert, but thanks to forwarding about 400 people opened the alert.

For now, Cohen, Constantelos, Fisher, and Secker are on the editorial team, vetting potential alerts. Cohen, however, is the only one with the know-how to create and send them out, so we're seeking a BCN rep or member of a BCN organization to learn. Use of a template on Mailchimp is really all someone would need to learn.

****Williamson will check with the COS social media communicator, Edward Warden, to see if he is willing to help Cohen create and send these alerts.**

Another priority is putting these action alerts somewhere on the website—see below for more on the BCN website update project.

Cook County Forest Preserve Referendum – Pollock

****Cook County BCN reps are encouraged to share this link with their groups:**
<https://www.chicagoaudubon.org/blog/2019/10/1/action-alert-cook-county-forest-preserve-referendum>

The page includes a resource guide and the basics on efforts to increase funding for Cook's Forest Preserve District through a referendum. Williamson has also been working on this effort.

Projects & Initiatives

BCN Survey Data Plan – Cohen (document on file)

Cohen has been consulting with Judy Pollock and Balassie, and presented Pollock's listed members of an action team to get moving on this. Members: Balassie, Cohen, Fisher, and Pollock, plus The Wetland Initiative's Anna Braum (also a BCN rep), Loyola professor Aubrey Sirman, data specialist Chris Monaghan, and Declan Gallagher.

The group will convene and work out next steps, research questions we'd like to be able to answer, presentation methods, and so on.

Cohen reiterated that the survey is one of our most valuable and tangible BCN components, and so of critical importance. Our last trends analysis for our data was in 2012; hopefully in 2020 we'll have 20/20 vision on this.

BCN Monitor Breeding Bird Classes for 2020 – Mulcahy, Balassie

Mulcahy shared this with the group:

Tim Balassie has decided to pursue monitors with less than 3 years' birding/birdwatching experience; 3 was the old rule of thumb in recruiting monitors, thus expect the classes to

become a regular Cook Co FPD offering and for birders with a range of experience. Some will have no experience with bird song/calls, and others will be reviewing.

For 2020, Leslie DeCoursey (Sagawau) and I decided on two weekend sessions in May that will include classroom and field study, with emphasis on learning breeding-bird songs/calls. Already, Sagawau offers 2 warbler-class/ field sessions in early April, as well as weekly walks throughout April. I think BCN should recruit monitors early, because the warbler classes and April walks would be a good introduction to birders with little experience.

The next step is for Leslie and Lorrie Ward (L/L) to develop a course plan/outline this fall/winter for BCN/FPD to review/comment. I committed to provide L/L each the BCN CD on breeding bird songs/calls, and investigate producing more CDs for class handouts.

Although not discussed, I see the need for a third class with emphasis on breeding grassland birds, best held, for instance, at Orland Grassland.

In essence, we are exploring new recruiting methods for monitors, opening it up to less experienced birders, and testing out the efficacy of training courses. Last year 18 people attended one session, with three or four monitors resulting from it. Balassie is in touch with all the counties, who are all clamoring for data and each have their own rules for monitors on their preserves. We've lost some county coordinators and monitors, and we're working to implement training classes in and around each county.

Copious discussion ensued, from all present. Some ideas to implement:

****Several reps requested language to send out to their member orgs, put in newsletters, etc. The BCN Survey newsletter that already exists can be more widely distributed.**

****A mentor program is in effect, but could be expanded. Beilke offered to take new monitors out on her Bartel monitoring sessions. Williamson, although not a monitor at this time, would be happy to help new monitors in the field.**

****Efforts to reach out to those not in birding clubs should also be made. IBET, the IL Rare Bird Alert, and Facebook's Illinois Birding Network are good venues for this. Finding a way to contact active eBirders is another idea, as is leveraging the BCN Facebook page.**

BCN Website Update – Cohen

Every month, 500-750 people visit our site, with 4,500 total in 2019. But, the content is old and often outdated. Progress is being made. The website committee has looked at the website and has come up a list of relatively quick ways to improve the site short of the re-design, which is coming later.

****Before the January meeting, Cohen and the committee will prioritize the list and start implementation with Secker. Observations about the website, and other priorities to add, can be sent to Cohen at vp@bcnbirds.org.**

****If the committee decides to keep the Birder Tributes section of the website, Checchia offered to add a tribute to Craig Stettner to that section. Cohen will add that idea to his list.**

BCN also has a Facebook page that needs to be rejuvenated.

Chicago Bird-Friendly Building Ordinance Update – Prince (for Wolff)

The ordinance, introduced by Alderman Brian Hopkins, is still in the zoning committee, while the city discusses priorities about budgeting. Bird Friendly Chicago is waiting to do testimony to that committee. Meanwhile, the measure is gaining more co-sponsors (at least 10 now) and Mayor Lightfoot supports it; architects are asking for more information on bird-friendly design. The ordinance says January 2020 is the implementation date, and this may still be possible. Chicago is adopting many elements of the International Building Code soon, so we are hoping that that effort does not stand in the way of the Bird-Friendly Building Ordinance.

****A sample letter to aldermen and other ways to help can be found here:**

<https://birdfriendlychicago.org/volunteer-2>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BirdFriendlyChicago/>

Old Business

New Business

BCN Priorities & Vision: Planning and Goal Setting – Pavelka

BCN was founded 1998, and now seems like the right time to determine its future. At our next quarterly meeting, we will devote an hour to brainstorming the future of BCN as individuals and on behalf of the groups we represent. The overarching goal is to have more reps attending meetings, more people working with the network, and new or revitalized objectives.

At the January meeting, we'll break into smaller groups of four or five, then compile and share the ideas that we come up with, and then maybe survey reps afterwards in order to help prioritize and make decisions.

****Pavelka shared a plan and goal setting sheet, outlining items for reps to consider: areas needing an increase in emphasis (advocacy, birding, conservation, habitat, etc.), new big ideas, new smaller ideas, BCN practices to continue, BCN practices to drop/reduce/pet peeves.**

Williamson agreed it is time to decide what our purpose is, what goals we need to pursue, what we can offer the conservation community. She'd like to perhaps see a focus on leading campaigns, such as Red-headed Woodpecker conservation, restoring shrubland, and wind power, and possibly establishment of a BCN Conservation Committee that can take a landscape-view look at our region and its bird habitats.

****BCN reps can discuss this with their groups and so bring the viewpoints of their members to the January meeting.**

****Pavelka will communicate with all member groups to encourage attendance of the January meeting and will formulate a way to collect ideas before the meeting to get things started.**

Announcements

Rainbow Beach Give Back to Birds Day (Oct 19), walk and workday – Williamson

Rainbow Beach's dune is like a mini-Montrose, with cactus, and it's less-trafficked than its counterpart up north. Give Back to Birds Day is a bird walk followed by a habitat restoration work day (trash cleanup and possibly seed collection) on Oct. 19, 2019 starting at 7:00 a.m. The event is cosponsored by the Bird Conservation Network, Sierra Club Chicago Group, and Chicago Ornithological Society. Plenty of migratory birds, and other creatures, will be on hand.

****Registration and more information [here](#). Also contact Christine Williamson for more information, at birdchris@aol.com.**

Plum Creek Is For The Birds! (Oct 26), hike and workday – Bernat (document on file)

Located in the farthest southeast corner of Cook County, in an area with a less-instilled conservation mentality, Plum Creek is ripe for birders and restorationists. Plum Creek Is For The Birds is a workday and bird hike, on Oct. 26 starting at 7:30 am. This event is co-led by Laurel Ross and Mary Bernat, facilitated by Audubon Great Lakes (including Stephanie Beilke), and sponsored by: Forest Preserves of Cook County, Audubon Great Lakes, Illinois Audubon Society, The Field Museum, Bird Conservation Network, Chicago Audubon Society, Chicago Ornithological Society, Feminist Bird Club, Sand Ridge Audubon Society, and Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation.

Plum Creek is an Important Bird Area, with the 36 singing Henslow's Sparrows found this past June representing its signature species. A chainsaw crew will be coming out for the event, and licensed herbicides are needed to assist as well. Autumn Olive lopping will be another workday activity.

****RSVP large groups or send questions to Daniel Suarez at dsuarez@audubon.org.**

****Plum Creek is also in need of a BCN monitor.**

Chicago Is For Plovers Piping Plover monitor thank you event, Oct 17 – Beilke

This event is taking place at 6 pm at the Peggy Notebaert museum. Registration is full, but there is a waiting list and the event will be streamed. Click [here](#) for the registration

page. There will be a local panel of speakers, plus Dr. Francie Cuthbert, who leads the Great Lakes Piping Plover recovery program: <https://www.greatlakespipingplover.org/>.

The Perils of Bird Migration bird-friendly design event, Nov 3 – Beilke

From 1 to 3 pm, architects will be discussing how they incorporate bird-friendly design in Chicago buildings. Location: Chicago River Bridgehouse at Michigan Ave. and Wacker Dr. To learn more, click [here](#) and scroll down.

Next Meeting

January 18, 2020 – Heller Nature Center, Highland Park IL

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:24 pm.