

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting April 11, 2020 Online Video Conference

Attendees: Bobbi Asher (CAS), Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (AGL), Mary Bernat (Individual), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (DBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Bob Fisher (IAS), Glenn Gabanski (DBC), Diane Hicks (TCA), Libby Hill (ENSBC), Matt Iglecki (IOS), Vera Leopold (TWI), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (CAS), Diane Rosenberg (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Nancy Tikalsky (Lake-Cook), Jenny Vogt (AGL), Christine Williamson (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA)

Guests: None

The meeting was brought to order by President Sonny Cohen at 1:05 pm and a quorum was established. Zoom protocol was covered (everything went very smoothly throughout the meeting). Thank you to Lake-Cook Audubon for graciously allowing us use of their Zoom account.

Administration

Approval of January 18, 2020 BCN meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the January 18, 2020 meeting minutes.

Moved: Dann

Second: Bernat

Action: Approved

Treasurer's Report – Pavelka (documents on file)

2020 YTD Income:

Dues:	\$1767.50	
Donations:	\$ -0-	<i>No new donations since Q1 2019. Consider sending out request when amount needed for analysis known.</i>
Total:	\$1767.50	

2020 YTD Expenses:

Dues to Other organizations	\$200.00	Illinois Env. Council \$150, Chicago Wilderness \$50
Printing	\$96.23	Bird monitor recruiting tabletop
Secretary of State – Annual	\$10.00	
Total	\$306.23	

Net Income for 2019 YTD: \$1461.27

Checkbook balance on 4/4/20:	\$10851.67
Trends Analysis Reserve:	\$3000.00
General Funds Balance on 4/4/20:	\$7851.67 This is the BCN balance after subtracting the Trends Analysis Reserve.

Tax-Exempt Status - Bird Conservation Network is a tax-exempt organization. If you are planning to have any future expenses which will be taxed, please contact the treasurer in advance and I will send you the tax-exempt letter which you can provide to your vendor.

Membership Report – Pavelka

Dues invoices sent to all members on 1/3/2020 by email. Dues paid by 17 of 20 organizations. Dues outstanding by Fort Dearborn Audubon, Peoria Audubon, and Prairie Woods Audubon.

Projects & Initiatives

BCN Survey process and update + Q&A – Balassie

Cohen kicked things off, thanking Balassie for his hard work. Balassie explained his work in balancing “supply” of monitors with “demands” from regional land managers for monitoring their valuable sites. He’s been re-introducing BCN to land managers and sharing this information with Cohen and ExCom.

He has been updating the list of active monitors and email lists, making sure he has a central repository of site points, reconciling data we have with assigned monitors, evaluating the county coordinators’ role, and plans over time to expand our reach to other counties for birds of concern, for example having preliminary talks with Winnebago County and the [Natural Land Institute](#). Emphasis has been on getting the details of our existing program clarified and managed.

Some suggestions were made about new monitoring sites, such as prairies near McCormick Place and the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, and new types of land managers to reach out to were suggested (Openlands, state parks, city park districts). Email Balassie (bcnsurvey@gmail.com) with ideas for properties to be monitored, especially priority sites where we may be missing something statistically.

**Pollock will share further existing records that Lee Ramsey and others worked on.

Anyone who would like to assist in all of this work is urged to contact Cohen or Balassie at president@bcnbirds.org or bcnsurvey@gmail.com respectively.

BCN protocols and land managers

Dann inquired about how we reconcile BCN protocols with ones those used by land managers. Balassie is working on these issues on a micro-level, and Pollock added

that, in the case of Lake County, we've been able to collect what BCN needs and what the county would like.

Monitor recruitment and enrichment – Cohen, Balassie, Mulcahy

The original plan was for Balassie and other monitors to present to BCN member orgs; Balassie has a PowerPoint presentation for this purpose. Now that many BCN member orgs are not meeting in person, reps can share recruitment materials that are being developed by Balassie and Cohen. These will be shared when ready.

Balassie views recruitment and training monitors as an all-year, ongoing process, and Cohen emphasized that we should focus on what we *can* do given our circumstances.

Even if we cannot monitor this year, or if we have to monitor in limited fashion, or if we won't be able to train many new monitors, there was good discussion and general consensus that we should continue our recruiting efforts. Some new monitors may require little training and be able to contribute right away.

As long as we don't raise expectations too high, this is a good time for learning remotely as people are re-evaluating priorities and have time to learn about birds either through solo birding or online. Pollock pointed out that for new sites (and new monitors) it's been good practice to get to know a site the year before setting up points and doing the actual monitoring. We could make progress on this front.

In sum, we will go forward as best we can, and member orgs can promote this as they wish with the help of forthcoming marketing materials. Anyone who would like to contribute to marketing efforts should contact president@bcnbirds.org.

Monitor training

Balassie thanked Mulcahy for his hard work in monitor training. A presentation was rolled out for the Cook County FPD in 2019, and Lake and McHenry counties have offered us training venues free of charge.

BCN does not have a standardized Bird ID class (although we do have audio CDs/files). If interested in creating one, or recommending an existing one, contact bcnsurvey@gmail.com. Some monitors (Williamson, Mulcahy, Vogt, Pollock, etc.) are also happy to consider mentoring new monitors when once we're free to do so.

Public event outreach

Participating in public events, tabled events, etc. is part of our outreach plan. Plant sales may work, for example Sagawau's on June 6. Cohen is developing a handout for these occasions, and we have panels for display on tables. BCN reps and monitors can staff these events for BCN. If you hear about an event, let Balassie or Cohen know: <http://www.bcnbirds.org/contact.html>.

COVID-19

Many public areas closed or have their volunteer programs suspended. Since many monitors are registered as official volunteers, whether we will be able to monitor this year with our established protocols is an open question.

Some districts seem open to informal data contributions, so if monitors can collect data with rules set out by land managers, they may be able to do so as private citizens, not official volunteers.

Advice from Pollock, Fisher, and others generally agreed that we should work hard to keep to our usual June dates and times of day for monitoring. Above all else, we should make sure data is from designated points that have stood over time and were established with great care, and that areas that may be off limits should simply reflect “no data” as opposed to providing observations from a different location.

There was discussion which led to general consensus that monitors should refrain from asking for special, individual exceptions, as people who look the other way for us could be liable, not to mention safety and other issues—the land managers have enough to worry about at this time. Lake and Kane counties gave a flat “no” when probed recently about the issue. Referring to a recent ExCom meeting’s consensus, Cohen said we as an organization will inquire but will not press for exceptions from land managers, and that if we were allowed to monitor we would have to go strictly by the book with written permissions, etc. if need be.

**ExCom will continue to monitor the situation and make decisions down the road, keeping reps in the loop.

BCN Trend Analysis update – Igleski

Igleski, Pollock, and others completed an RFP and it will soon be widely distributed. We hope to be talking to candidates for the trend analysis in May so we can move forward in getting it done this summer.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues

Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

Since the previous meeting, January 2020, BCN has continued its advocacy, but like most activities, since early last month these efforts have practically ground to a halt. The state and federal agencies as have all of us been consumed, understandably, by the focus on the virus. Prior to early March, we have advocated the following.

- As of this writing the governor still hasn't made appointments pursuant to the Lake Michigan wind energy legislation that was passed last year. The best guess is that he likely will not in the near future.
- My 58th District legislator, State Representative Bob Morgan, through my urging introduced legislation in the General Assembly that would require any future state

buildings to be bird friendly. There is a problem with the language that Bob told me he'll make an attempt to correct. Filed a witness slip as a proponent.

- In my absence, Bob Fisher wrote to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency opposing the issuance of a permit to the Pine Creek Mine as it would seriously pollute the Big Muddy River in SW Illinois.
- The Trump administration's relentless attack on NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the MBTA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, is being opposed by a coalition of several environmental organizations who have joined in suing the administration. We have signed on at every opportunity in support of the plaintiffs' efforts.
- Signed on to a letter sent by the American Bird Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, and others which asked for increases in funding for migratory birds.
- Signed on to a letter authored by Openlands opposing the Council for Environmental Quality's effort to weaken NEPA.

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

Bird-friendly building updates

**In reference to the Bob Morgan legislation above, [IL House Bill 4476](#), making state buildings bird-friendly, Cohen requested that Dann, or other advocates, alert BCN if they are aware of a call for witness slips on any relevant state legislation and BCN will issue an action alert when it's a good time to start advocating and filing witness slips.

Dann also reported a phenomenal development at the federal level. U.S. House member Mike Quigley (IL-5th) managed to make sure that the requirement that new federal buildings and renovations will need to be bird-friendly will have the force of law through the CARES Act that recently passed and was signed by the president. Here is the relevant passage:

"BIRD COLLISIONS ON FEDERAL PROPERTY Collisions with glass kill up to one billion birds per year in the United States. All agencies under the jurisdiction of this Act are directed to monitor visitor and nature centers and office buildings for bird collisions with glass during spring migration (April 1–June 1) and fall migration (September 1–November 1); determine the scale of collisions; and assess whether retrofits to windows will reduce collisions. At a minimum, all agencies are directed to take low cost or no cost action, such as turning off interior lights at night or applying films or other adhesives to glass windows to reduce bird collisions.

This is evidently thanks to Congressman Quigley. Agencies have 180 days to say how they intend to comply. So far we only know that some regions of the Park Service are moving forward with plans.

ABC is drafting a letter to agencies to remind them of the deadline and suggest ways that they can comply, and will be submitting the following for the second round, to follow in 2021:

Preventing Bird Collisions with Windows

The FY 2020 House Interior report included language encouraging federal agencies to reduce bird collisions with the buildings they manage. We support this House-approved building collisions report language, and urge addition of the following in the FY 2021 bill:

All agencies under the jurisdiction of this Act are directed to consider bird-safe building design and materials for the structures they manage, build, or retrofit. In addition, agencies are directed to take low cost or no cost action, such as identifying problem windows and buildings that routinely cause collision, turning off interior lights in those buildings at night, and applying films or other adhesives to glass windows in those buildings to reduce bird collisions."

More information on this will follow as it is received.

Old Business

Obama Center update

Cohen reviewed that BCN involvement focused on reducing bird collisions and that he, Annette Prince (CBCM/BCN), and Bryan Lenz (ABC) met with Obama Center officials in late February. He was satisfied that on-the-ground decision makers, like the construction manager, will be taking a second look at building plans after learning more at this meeting.

Hanson Materials Service update

Lee Witkowski (Will Co. Audubon/BCN) and a couple of others attended an informational tour of the site by HMS and consultant Applied Ecological Services. The current parcel of land is crawling with phragmites and buckthorn, but a small portion is still feeding grounds for adults of the endangered Hine's Emerald Dragonfly. That feeding area will be moved and its new area will be restored to make more, better-quality habitat. Tour attendees were satisfied that the mitigation/remediation efforts will be an improvement (for the dragonfly and other native species) to leaving the land as it is and doing nothing.

New Business

Announcements

BCN Facebook page

Cohen and others have been adding interesting items—events, findings, requests received by email to help researchers, etc.—to the BCN Facebook page. More people have been joining the past several months. To view, like, follow, and contribute to the page, go here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bcnbirds/>.

Next Meeting

July 18, 2020 at Sagawau or online.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.