

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting July 18, 2020 Online Video Conference

Attendees: Pat Andersen (TCA), Bobbi Asher (CAS), Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (AGL), Mary Bernat (Individual), Suzanne Checchia (ENSBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (DBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Dennis Endicott (PAS), Bob Fisher (IAS), Glenn Gabanski (DBC), Diane Hicks (TCA), Matt Igleski (IOS), Vera Leopold (TWI), Mary Lou Mellon (CBCM), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Glenn Perricone (DBC), Judy Pollock (CAS), Diane Rosenberg (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Nancy Tikalsky (Lake-Cook), Jenny Vogt (AGL), Christine Williamson (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA)

Guests: Tamima Itani

The meeting was brought to order by President Sonny Cohen at 1:05 pm and a quorum was established. Cohen thanked Balassie and Pollock and all others for their work on behalf of survey, which had another successful season.

Administration

Approval of April 11, 2020 BCN meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the April 11, 2020 meeting minutes.

Moved: Many

Second: Tikalsky

Action: Approved

Treasurer's Report – Pavelka (document on file)

2020 YTD Income:

Dues: \$1,767.50

Donations: \$165.36

[Donations received from Bob Dolgan, Amber Marino, and in honor of Donnie Dann's Birthday. Consider sending out request when amount needed for analysis known.]

Total: \$1,932.86

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 2020 YTD: \$1,626.63

Checkbook balance on 6/30/20: \$11,139.17

Trends Analysis Reserve: \$3,000.00

General Funds Balance on 6/30/20: \$8,139.17
[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 paid by 18 of 20 organizations. Dues outstanding by Fort Dearborn Audubon and Prairie Woods Audubon.

Projects & Initiatives

BCN Survey update – Balassie, Pollock (document on file)

BCN Survey Update

Our survey period runs from June 1 to 30, through 30 June, with an additional 15 days available, if needed. 2020 results should be available sometime in the third quarter of this year, with a dataset being provided by eBird/Cornell. Although results are not yet available, if all currently-registered monitors were able to get out for their twice-monthly visits, we could see results from:

<u>County</u>	<u># of Monitors</u>	<u># of Sites</u>	<u># of Owners</u>
Cook	98	81	2
DuPage	35	34	3
Kane	16	16	2
McHenry	13	13	1

Lake	27	24	1
Will	12	16	2

In the coming months ...

- Continue our efforts to strengthen BCN's relationship with land owner organizations. COVID-19 restrictions made face-to-face meetings impossible, we hope that as we re-open we will have more opportunities to collaborate.
- Recruitment of County Coordinators for DuPage and Will Counties, and the City of Chicago. Email Tim at bcnsurvey@gmail.com if interested.
- Recruitment/training of new monitors. More than a dozen contacts have come in through the BCN website and other avenues. Zoom will be handy in connecting with trainees.

Pollock shared an interesting recent request from Jim Herkert, who's conducting a review of citizen science data about the Henslow's Sparrow. Protected lands in the Chicago area are a stronghold for these birds. While eBird shows how widespread Henslow's are, BCN point counts importantly show a high level of persistence at a number of sites—the more we can do and share our data, the better for showing how important and valuable our data is.

**Vogt inquired about surveying at other times of year. Pollock says this has been considered before, and will be taken up again with the survey's scientific advisors once the trends analysis has been completed. Mulcahy added that he will look for more information about counts of migrating birds at the upcoming MMN conference.

BCN Trends Analysis Update – Igleski

The last trends analysis was in 2013, covering data from 1999 to 2012. We will now analyze 2013 to 2020 data, assigning conservation status for species, etc. Old data will be re-analyzed as well, to bring it into line with the current analysis.

The committee and its scientific advisers have agreed on one proposal from the five received—someone with a great deal of experience analyzing community science databases. The cost is \$7,200 and will include data, methodology details, the computer code for the data, and charts. The analysis will take six months or less.

Funding – Cohen, Pavelka (document on file)

BCN needs \$7,200 for trends analysis, with an estimated \$1,000 for related website revisions, plus some buffer for other expenditures (such as preparing and presenting our findings), for a total of \$9,000.

As our funds stand now, BCN can pay for this entirely if necessary. Some ideas for fundraising include: donations from member orgs, land managers, monitors, and online followers. Grants could be pursued. Gabanski noted BCN raised \$8,000 in matching pledges through Redstart Connection, half of which went to trends analysis. Pollock said funds from the Illinois license plate checkoff fund could be sought. Preparing publications and a program to publicize results would help generate funding.

Mellon suggested some of those buffer funds could be used to prepare and present our findings. Williamson suggested we should not print anything, only prepare digital versions unless there is a special need for printed materials.

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves expenditure of up to \$9,000 for the BCN trends analysis, with the understanding that fundraising will follow.

Moved: Williamson

Second: Fisher

Action: Approved; [Secker abstaining.]

**Fundraising details will be discussed later among ExCom and a special subcommittee. Fisher, Leopold, Williamson, and others expressed interest in joining this subcommittee. Email president@bcnbirds.org if interested.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues

Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

Since the previous meeting, April 2020, BCN has continued its advocacy, with all communications electronic. Since the last meeting we have advocated as follows:

- Joined the Center for Biological Diversity's effort to include language in the FY21 Interior-Environment appropriations bill that would rein in the unbridled power that Trump's June 4 executive order gives federal agencies. The order directs all agencies to waive compliance with some of our nation's bedrock environmental laws, ESA, MBTA, etc.
- Wrote the USF&WS strongly opposing their Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Proposed Migratory Bird Treaty Act Regulatory Changes. If enacted it seriously weakens the present MBTA.
- BCN signed on to a letter authored by the Western Watersheds Project. Its purpose is to provide significant funds for wildlife and public lands.
- Wrote in strong support of the Great American Outdoors Act. This bill has passed the Senate in a bipartisan vote and has two major components: fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and provides \$9.5 billion in funding to address a maintenance backlog at American national parks.

Passage very soon in the House is practically assured and the president has indicated he would sign it.

- Signed on to a letter authored by IEC urging the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to provide stronger enforcement of the environmental protections largely abdicated by the federal government.
- Congressman Quigley's Legislation to prevent bird collisions passes House and BCN is urging passage in the Senate.
- Our colleague, Bob Fisher, on behalf of BCN, proposed to IEC, that the name of their listserv be re-titled as "Wildlife and their Habitats," to go along with this web page: <https://ilenviro.org/wildlife-and-habitat/>. Their CEO, Jen Walling, agreed.
- The federal administration has just proposed major change in regulations that govern NEPA, severely weakening it—shortening the public comment period, who can make comments, etc. Earthjustice, the NRDC, and others will likely make legal challenges.

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

Great Lakes Wind-Wildlife Coalition and a Midwest Migration Network conference – Fisher (document on file)

BCN participates in the newly formed Great Lakes Wind-Wildlife Coalition (GLWWC) - part of the [Midwest Migration Network](#) (MMN). There is a science committee and a best management practices committee that are both still recruiting. With two countries, different states, and multiple lakes involved, the regulatory climate is not clear. Email bfisher928@aol.com for more information.

MMN is holding a virtual conference, **Connecting Birds & People in the Midwest**, July 21-23; a presentation by the GLWWC is scheduled for 7/22. Click for [conference program](#), [registration form](#), and more information [here](#).

The conference will highlight the latest findings in the world of migration science and conservation, advances in technology used to track migratory birds (from radar to telemetry), and how migration science is informing conservation actions.

The Great Lakes Wind Wildlife Coalition's mission is to ensure robust consideration of and protections for birds and bats as part of offshore and nearshore wind energy facility development in the Great Lakes. A diverse group of conservationists, academics, and government officials has identified two primary objectives to achieve GLWWC's overarching goal:

- Synthesize existing avian and bat movement data for the Great Lakes, and identify research gaps
- Prepare a best management practices document for offshore wind development in the Great Lakes

A stance on birding ethics? – Fisher

With increased access and use of audio recordings in the field, Fisher suggests taking a stand on ethical birding behavior through a clear and coherent statement that can be broadcast to member orgs, message boards, social media, birders, and photographers.

Many novice birders are unaware of birding ethics, but seasoned birders and trip leaders use audio perhaps more than is prudent.

ABC has some guidance on this, but has recently apparently changed their stance from “not” using recordings to “judiciously” using them. IOS may be looking into the issue too.

**There was consensus that the idea is worth exploring. A graphic PSA was one suggestion. Send ideas and comments to Cohen at president@bcnbirds.org.

Old Business

New Business

Mowing and Nesting Birds: Inventory of locations of concern – Cohen, Pollock

Our survey gives us access to many local property managers. Now that we have the ear of some, it might be time to address the timing of mowing for best nesting bird protection. One proposed idea, an inventory of critical locations.

Pollock and Itani cited Northbrook’s Techny Parcel and Bensenville Ditch as examples where communication with land managers produced results, but that results were not always carried out year to year, so annual communication and creation of a calendar are key.

Perricone cited Fermilab as a good example that managers are willing to discuss the issue. Fermi’s natural areas group and grounds crew built a mowing plan together.

Williamson suggested that our monitors could connect with their land managers, and that we could create a short position paper.

Secker suggested establishing a solid ecological ground for any stance we may take, taking into account net benefit for birds, restoration priorities, and various mowing (and non-mowing regimes), citing the Morton Arboretum and bike path practices. Jim Herkert would be a great resource for us on this.

Pollock referred to http://bcnbirds.org/greenpapers_files/RestoringLargePrairies.pdf (pp. 11-15) as a good basis for a white paper; we could add early mowing to the ideas.

**There was a consensus to further explore this issue. Cohen will take this back to ExcCm to see about action steps around this issue.

Member Groups: Innovative engagement during COVID-19 – Leopold, Cohen

Balassie—Kane County Audubon has begun club meetings on Zoom and re-started field trips, with limited numbers and masks and social distancing required.

Williamson, Itani—Chicago Ornithological Society has had virtual meetings and is striving to engage diverse communities, including the successful Piping Plover chick naming contest it held with local with partners

Rosenberg—Lake County Audubon created a bilingual self-guided walk of Waukegan's Municipal Beach, appearing on the city's website.

Fisher—Illinois Audubon Society has created online quizzes, especially interesting for new birders

Constantelos—The DuPage Birding Club has re-started field trips, created a YouTube channel with mini-tutorials, and built out its new website with local hotspots. Zoom has been good for club meetings and heightened board interaction.

Pollock, Asher—Chicago Audubon Society has a Zoom account that allows up to 500 attendees and is offering use to BCN member orgs. It's also been working more with other organizations and hosting "patch chats" where members bird a certain site and then meet on Zoom to discuss their findings.

Cohen—Lake-Cook Audubon didn't miss a beat, with Zoom meetings featuring speakers from all over the county, collaboration with the ENSBC, and a photo contest with a variety of creative categories

Announcements

Dann announced/reminded how useful and fairly easy it was to get to know your legislators; developing a personal relationship with them where you set up a meeting and present the issues you care about can be very effective.

Fisher reminded everyone to spread the word about the MMN virtual conference discussed above: **Connecting Birds & People in the Midwest**, July 21-23. Click for [conference program](#), [registration form](#), and more information [here](#).

Beilke sent a link to a free webinar on July 30 by Dr. Laurie Goodrich, Director of Conservation Science at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. The event is co-sponsored by the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, CAS, and COS. Register [here](#) or [here](#).

Next Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for October 17, 2020, most likely online.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:22 pm.