

## **FINAL MINUTES**

## **Bird Conservation Network Meeting**

**Saturday, April 10, 2021**

**Online Conference Call**

**Attendees:** Pat Andersen (TCA), Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (GLA), Mary Bernat (TCA) Suzanne Checchia (ENSBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (DBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Bob Fisher (IAS), Diane Hicks (TCA), Vera Leopold (TWI), Mark Luscombe (FDA), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (CAS), Annette Prince (CBCM), Rita Renwick (WCA), Nancy Tikalsky (Lake-Cook), Jenny Vogt (AGL), Christine Williamson (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA)

**Guests:** None

President Cohen called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm and a quorum was established.

### **Administration:**

#### **Approval of January 23, 2021 BCN annual and quarterly meeting minutes**

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the January 23, 2021 meeting minutes.

Moved: Dann

Second: Mulcahy

Action: Approved

#### **Treasurer's Report - Pavelka (document on file)**

2021 Income - YTD:

Dues:	\$	1,835.00
Donations - General:	\$	-
Donations - Trends:	\$	2,232.90
Grant - Trends:		
Total:	\$	4,067.90

2021 Expenses - YTD:

Annual Transfer to Trends:	\$	500.00	
Dues to Other organizations	\$	150.00	IEC
Printing			
Secretary of State – Annual			
Webhost & Retainer Fees			
Total	\$	650.00	

2021 Net Income - YTD: \$ 3,417.90

Checkbook balance - 3/31/2021:	\$ 18,366.63	Total
Trends Analysis Reserve:	\$ 9,366.60	Reserve +
General Funds Balance on 12/31/20:	\$ 9,000.03	Grant/Donations
		Balance net of Trends
		Analysis

State of Illinois Annual Report Submitted - 12/23/2020  
Federal Tax Filing e-postcard 990N filed - 1/21/2021

Pavelka stated that we are registered as an Amazon Smile recipient and should receive \$100 soon. She will get a link to advertise this to members so we can receive ½ % on purchases.

**Membership Report - Pavelka** reported that 2021 membership dues have been paid by 18 organizations/1 individual. Midewin Alliance is a reciprocal member. Fort Dearborn was able to pay 2020 dues in November. Prairie Woods has disbanded.

### **Projects & Initiatives:**

Cohen stated that BCN may be remote in people's minds between meetings, but we have been quite involved during the past quarter.

- A 45-minute YouTube presentation about BCN's survey/monitoring program featuring Balassie, Pollock, Secker, Cohen, and others was developed for the virtual Wild Things Conference in February. Cohen encouraged reps to share this with member organizations, since it informs about BCN. It can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaP1SK0fhFQ> Watching at 1 ¼ speed helps.
- Bob Fisher took part in an Oak Recovery Panel for the Wild Things Conference.
- BCN was featured in *This Week in Birding* (Bob Dolgan)-Volunteers needed in Chicagoland this Summer. (<https://www.twibchicago.com/p/volunteers-needed-in-chicagoland>). It was suggested that members subscribe to Dolgan's *This Week in Birding*.
- Wild Things Conference Info was sent to member groups by Cohen
- A BCN Monitors Zoom presentation: Songbirds Parents Evict Young was sent to monitors in January.

## **BCN Trends Analysis**

Cohen stated that we are not at our projected completion date for the Trends Analysis due to challenges in the fall of '20 in trying to pull data from our e-bird repository to get to our consultant Valerie Steen in Ft. Collins, CO. Her immediate deliverable to us will document her process, which she will test and run through her on-line community to validate - then send to us and get our approval before moving on to produce final data. No payment has been issued to date and this is not a concern to Valerie.

Balassie stated that we are covering an abundance of property, but data is lacking from some counties. Processing data that is not uniform is a challenge.

Cohen emphasized that we have raised money for this project, and it is a key effort of our organization. He is comfortable that we are doing what we need to do.

Fisher asked if we would see the output of the Trends Analysis in 2 months. Cohen stated that there are many moving parts and contingencies, but the projection is that we would have the final Trends Analysis, at the earliest, in 2 months. Cohen hopes BCN has a product by June, so we can do something by fall. Cohen stated that we are a volunteer organization so things do not always progress quickly. Once we have the TA, Eric Secker can get it on the website.

The Birds of Concern list will be in Igleski's hands. This can also go to Secker and be put on the website.

Pollock stated that the Birds of Concern list has been developed and Valerie can use that for the Trends Analysis rather than the TA be used to develop the Birds of Concern list. Pollock has sent the list to Matt Igleski to refine, then it would go to Secker for inclusion on the website. Christine Williamson will work with Cohen to set up a small working group to help with the roll-out of both publications.

## **BCN Survey-Monitor Activities**

### **Training - Mulcahy**

Sagawau Environmental Learning Center (FPDCC) has developed Bird ID on-line training programs for monitors/prospective monitors: Winging it with Waterfowl, Tuesday 3/30 1-3 pm; Spring Warbler ID -Tues. 4/13 1-3 pm; Breeding Bird ID-Tues. 5/18 1-3 pm. This opportunity was developed at Mulcahy's suggestion, to recruit new monitors/for review of existing monitors and does not have a link for the public through the FPDCC website. You do not have to be a FPDCC volunteer to access the training.

To register for the Bird ID courses:

- email Sagawauenvironmental.learningcenter@cookcountyil.gov
- Enter the course title in the subject line. If you are registering for multiple sessions, type "Multiple Bird ID Sessions" in the subject line and specify which courses in the body of the email
- Type your name and phone number in the body of the email

Registration will close 2 days prior to the course and Zoom links will be emailed the day before. For additional information, call Sagawau at 630-257-2045. If after these classes you feel ready to monitor, visit our website to get connected with the Bird Conservation Network or other monitoring opportunities.

Williamson noted that this would be easier to share if it were on a website.

Balassie stated that candidates qualified to monitor would not need to undergo a training but should already be able to ID birds by sight and sound, which takes a few years of experience. Of 15 responses to an appeal for monitors, only one was viable. But retaining and shepherding people to become better birders is worthwhile. He sees this as more of a bird club function than a BCN function. Mulcahy and Balassie have developed material describing what it takes to be a monitor. Training is not a part of this. Publicity to recruit monitors is important, which perhaps Sagawau could do.

Fisher noted that on-line bird ID programs do not have to be considered as training but can serve as a supplemental refresher and should be encouraged. Coordinators should keep lists of possible monitors and maintain contact with all.

Balassie stated that membership is where the core group of birds are, and recruitment is constantly ongoing.

### **County Coordinators Meeting-Balassie**

Balassie noted that he has distributed the BCN Monitors Spring Newsletter to monitors, officers, and members which has pertinent information for the 2021 monitor season. An early March meeting with county coordinators was held. Tim has been refining monitoring methods and procedures and meeting with land manager groups and other partners to build strong relationships and keep lines of communication open.

### **Monitor Recruitment-Hicks**

Diane Hicks emphasized the need to be more active in recruiting for monitors and recognized Pat Andersen for developing information to recruit for Thorn Creek Audubon. An email newsletter was sent out via Mail Chimp. Two new and one unqualified response resulted. Member groups can customize and edit this sample to include their county coordinator and monitor sites. Cohen did this for Lake Cook

Audubon and added it to their webpage with Pavelka borrowing the template for Lake County Audubon.

A link to the Thorn Creek Audubon Sample to be customized for reps to disperse:  
<https://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org/news/volunteer-for-bcn-breeding-birds-monitoring-2021>.

### **Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Land Management – Pollock**

Judy Pollock spoke at a March 24, 2021 meeting of the MWRD to discuss land management/mowing practices under the district's control. They are the second largest landowner in Cook County and their land, adjacent to riparian corridors, is important habitat for nesting and migrating birds. Commissioners asked for a summary of land use, with Commissioner Debra Shore encouraging the district to develop a more unified policy to support habitat and environmental values. Pollock, Tamima Itani, and Sally Stone were asked by Shore's staff to address mowing issues at Techny Basin. While spot mowing took place 2 years ago, last year there was massive mowing at Techny North. Habitat restoration proponents wanted mowing to eradicate teasel. Bird habitat representatives wanted management to protect nesting grassland birds. The two groups met and will try to determine if spot mowing is successful for both purposes. Another meeting is planned to come up with recommendations for this year.

Lee Witkowski asked about land leased by MWRD. Pollock stated that leases that preserve habitat are usually very inexpensive. Covenants spell out restrictions on use. Land along the North Shore Channel is restricted for habitat uses. Where General Iron is located, land along the river is classified as industrial.

### **Advocacy/Conservation Issues**

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

Dann stated that advocacy demands continue despite a change in political climate. A recent issue is Illinois Senate Bill 1673, sponsored by State Senator Linda Holmes-42<sup>nd</sup> District which proposes that rules and regulations dealing with feral cats be under the purview of the USDA. Entities responsible for protecting natural resources/native populations - IDNR, state parks, nature preserves would not have jurisdiction. Dann proposes that we reach out to her constituents from our birding organizations to oppose her actions. This bill has been amended three times due to public outcry-from us and others, but still exists.

BCN has  
Supported:

- Increased funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for our nation's endangered species and natural ecosystems.
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act.
- Restoring Migratory Bird Protections
- Defending the Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- Bird Safe Building Design
- Preventing Future Pandemics Act

Opposed:

- Retention of the Graue Mill dam
- Placing all feral cat control under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture
- Discontinuation of the Cook County Forest Preserves Police Department

### **Other Advocacy Notes**

- **Montrose Expansion**-Christine Williamson expressed her excitement over the approval of the expansion of protected bird habitat at Montrose Harbor. Leslie Borns should be congratulated. Christine is willing to share Leslie's message about the expansion of the Montrose Beach Nature Preserve ([birdchris@aol.com](mailto:birdchris@aol.com)). Cohen stated that Leslie has been an advocate for two decades and effectively got the community behind the effort as well as her alderman. This is a huge win with everyone hopeful that the plovers come back. Itani located Monty in Texas.
- **Witness Slips:** Building Design, March 2, Feral Cat Legislation, March 14

Cohen thanked Dann for his advocacy work on a national level and information sent out-regarding Montrose, feral cat legislation, and bird friendly building design. It is important that legislators hear from us to oppose or support positions, especially from those in their districts.

Dann responded with two points: the squeaky wheel gets the grease and relationships. Cohen echoed with: activism.

### **Old Business-none**

## **New Business**

### **Meeting Protocol**

Cohen began a discussion about possible changes in meeting protocol. ExCom had discussed having two in-person meetings and two Zoom meetings in the future, January-July meetings virtual and April-October meetings in-person. If so, Cohen thought a January Zoom meeting would be good because of possible unsafe travel conditions. He thought the annual meeting, when we elect new officers, might be held in April - a good time to meet in-person. This would require a by-law change. Cohen asked for comments.

Tikalsky thought Zoom meetings have better attendance-a positive for an Annual Meeting which happened at our Zoom Annual Meeting this year.

A hybrid meeting where both in-person participation and a Zoom connection is offered was discussed. But some meeting locations (nature centers, etc.) might not have internet capacity, and Mary Bernat stated that in hybrid meetings, people attending in person who want to communicate must have headsets because of feedback.

Williamson does not favor going back to in-person meetings. Virtual is not difficult and lots of people participate. Fisher also likes virtual.

Dann likes in person meetings. Cohen stated that you could open the virtual meeting 15 minutes before and 15 after for a personal connection.

Pollock suggested we have one maybe two in-person meetings a year to meet new people. Pavelka suggested one such meeting per year to meet others.

Leopold suggested that we could do a short Google Form survey with people's preferences for in-person/virtual meeting. Cohen stated that since 2021 would continue to be virtual for everyone's safety, we did not have to do a survey yet. He agreed with Tikalsky's suggestion that the virtual Annual Meeting garnered better attendance so we could keep this in January. Williamson pointed out the advantage of not having to drive. This topic can be reconsidered in the future.

## **Announcements**

### **Marsh Bird Monitoring Hub-Audubon Great Lakes-Stephanie Beilke**

Beilke announced Audubon Great Lakes' new marsh bird monitoring hub. Results on the hub are useful for land managers and the public. She scrolled through the website to illuminate a vast amount of data and web tools which include photos of species and their calls, info about their surveys, an ArcGIS dashboard, monitor sites, maps, water gauge data, occupancy estimates, etc. It also lists number of monitors, routes, time spent, and has a recruitment element. Some information is private for land managers only, to keep sensitive information from the public.

Marsh surveyors use playback to detect secretive marsh species which is different from BCN protocols. Stephanie can be contacted for more information. [sbeilke@audubon.org](mailto:sbeilke@audubon.org)

Pavelka asked about the cost of setting up the Hub. Beilke stated that the data coordinator worked in-house for Audubon Great Lakes. Fisher stated that one of the weakest components of the TA is marsh birds and this data would provide a good overlap, complimentary to our data. Balassie concurred. Bielke suggested further discussion after the Trends Analysis was completed. Hub website: <https://gl.audubon.org/birds/marsh-bird-monitoring>

### **Bird Friendly Building Design for Chicago-Annette Prince**

Prince submitted the following report and presented this information in person: Bird Friendly Chicago is working with the Chicago Department of Planning to finalize what will become required bird safety design measures for any building that submits a plan under the city's Sustainable Development Policy. An informational packet is being developed by Bird Friendly Chicago to illustrate how these bird-friendly design features and products can be incorporated by architects and developers when they are in the planning process with the hope that examples and references will make it easier for them to understand the objectives they need to achieve. Not all projects go through the Sustainable Development Policy application process, so eventually we want these designated bird-friendly design measures to apply to a broader range of areas and buildings as well as what might be implemented regarding retrofits of existing buildings. Williamson asked if Beilke or Pollock could write up a paragraph for member groups. Cohen stated that other counties have undertaken similar efforts.

### **Illinois River Valley Crane Count-Vera Leopold**

Leopold submitted the following report and presented this information in person: A late breaking opportunity: With the Middle Illinois River Conservation Collaborative (MIRCC), the Wetlands Initiative is helping to plan the pilot year of an Illinois River Valley Crane Count to be held on Saturday, April 17. It is an exciting expansion into new areas of the International Crane Foundation's Midwest Crane Count already conducted in other counties on the same date. The goal is to learn more about sites that Sandhill Cranes may already be using for breeding, as part of assessing the IL River Valley's crane habitat for future improvement efforts. Vera Leopold of TWI is the coordinator for a Hennepin-area cluster of sites including the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge.

To participate, you arrive at a pre-chosen point by 5:30 am and count any cranes seen or heard until 7:30 am. Two or more people can count at the point together (part of the same household or following COVID precautions). We still have open slots for volunteers; spend an early morning helping us learn how Sandhill Cranes are doing in Illinois! To sign up, please email Vera at [vleopold@wetlands-initiative.org](mailto:vleopold@wetlands-initiative.org).

### **Chicago Audubon Blitz of the Upper Des Plaines River-Pollock**



Participants are to visit one site or two once every two weeks March through July and a few times in Nov. and Dec. - a fun project to highlight the importance of the sites to FPCC.

The Chicago Audubon Native Plant Sale is taking place. Orders may be picked up at the North Park Village Nature Center May 23.

### **International Crane Foundation Midwest Crane Count-Balassie**

The International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, WI is holding a crane count that covers 9 states. This ties in with the count that the Wetlands Initiative is doing to cover the expanding range of Sandhill Cranes.

### **Back to Bird Days & Promoting BCN-Mary Bernat**

Bernat suggested member groups get involved in Give Back to Birds volunteer days especially for Bartel Grasslands, Plum Creek, and Orland Grasslands.

Also, when signing e-mails addressing conservation issues, add BCN Monitor or BCN Individual member after your name to promote BCN and encourage more involvement.

### **Westleigh Lake Project (Lake-Cook Audubon & Openlands)-Tikalsky**

Lake Cook Audubon is participating in a project with Openlands at Westleigh Lake. Purple martin houses will be readied and Openlands will begin restoration at the site. This area will become a BCN monitor site.

### **Comment on Give Back to Birds Days -Williamson**

Williamson stated that Give Back to Birds days are not successful. Maybe it will be safer in the fall, but people are not going out. Birders like to bird but are not necessarily into restoration.

### **BCN's Future-Cohen**

Cohen reflected that although he is buoyed by BCN's achievements and projects, the existential problem is the lack of prospects to take over leadership in the coming year. He will not continue to serve as an officer in 2022 and there is no one in place to take over. Other officers may not serve in 2022. At the January 2022 meeting, we may have no officers, so we face a challenge.

Leadership may not come from current members. Chapters are having the same problems.

**Meeting Take Aways for Member Organizations**

- Monitor Recruitment: Graphic and Text Assets from Thorn Creek  
<https://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org/news/volunteer-for-bcn-breeding-birds-monitoring-2021>
- BCN representative and Officer Recruitment
- Sagawau Training-See BCN Survey-Monitor Activities, Training-Mulcahy in minutes above
- BCN Video on U-tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaP1SK0fhFQ>
- Marsh Bird Monitoring information to view from Stephanie Beilke  
<https://gl.audubon.org/birds/marsh-bird-monitoring>

Meeting Adjourned 3:28 pm

**Proposed Next Meeting**  
**July 17, 2021 – Zoom videoconference**

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Renwick, Secretary