

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting Saturday, July 17, 2021 Online Conference Call

Attendees: Bobbi Asher (CAS), Pat Andersen (TCA), Stephanie Beilke (GLA), Mary Bernat (TCA) Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (DBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Diane Hicks (TCA), Tamima Itani (IOS), Mark Luscombe (FDA), Lynne Mecum (ABC), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (CAS), Rita Renwick (WCA), Carla Schmakel (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Nancy Tikalsky (Lake-Cook),

Guests: None

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

Two new representatives were introduced-Lynne Mecum, American Bird Conservancy and Carla Schmakel, Lake County Audubon.

Administration:

Approval of April 10, 2021 BCN quarterly meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the April 10, 2021 meeting minutes.

Move: Dann

Second: Asher

Action: Approved

Membership and Treasurer's Report -Pavelka

2021 membership paid by 20 organizations/2 individuals

Prairie Woods has disbanded.

American Bird Conservancy has been invoiced. We have 20 paid organizations with Midewin being a reciprocal member.

Treasurer's Report (Document on File)

2021 Income - YTD:

Dues:	\$ 1,970.00	
Donations - General:	\$ 25.09	Donation- John Petoskey, Amazon Smile
Donations - Trends:	\$ 2,232.90	
Grant - Trends:		
Total:	\$ 4,227.99	

2021 Expenses - YTD:

Trends Analysis-1st/ 2nd Payment	\$ 6,000.00	
Annual Transfer to Trends:	\$ 500.00	
Dues to Other organizations	\$ 150.00	IEC
Printing		
Secretary of State – Annual	\$ 10.00	
Webhost & Retainer Fees		
Bank Service Charge	\$ 3.00	
Total:	\$ 6,663.00	

2021 Net Income - YTD: \$ (2,435.01)

Checkbook balance - 7/15/2021: **\$ 12,523.72** Total

Trends Analysis Reserve: \$ 4,066.60 Reserve + Grant/Donations

General Funds Balance on 7/15/21: \$ 8,457.12 Balance net of Trends Analysis

Government Reporting

State of Illinois Annual Report Submitted - 12/23/2020

Federal Tax Filing e-postcard 990N filed - 1/21/2021

Renewal application for Tax-Exempt status submitted - 6/24/21

Pavelka stated that we are in compliance with government reporting and if members need to purchase supplies, they can use the tax-exempt number.

Cohen thanked organizations and individuals who donated to the Trends Analysis and stated that we are in good financial shape.

Dann asked that Pavelka explain how members can benefit BCN

through Amazon Smile. Cohen brought up the BCN webpage explaining Amazon Smile which can be used as a reference.

Projects and Initiatives

BCN Survey-Monitor Activities

Cohen reviewed Balassie's report (below). He emphasized the lag time involved in the process. Chris Monaghan was commended for his efforts in refining data. Once completed, we will know how successful we were. This work is core to BCN's mission.

Progress Report-Balassie

Directly after monitoring season we're in a lull, so I don't have much, if anything, to offer about monitoring. We had 204 monitors signed-up for the program and 141 sites were scheduled to monitor. There is not a one-for-one match between these two statistics. Some sites are way too large to have a single monitoring route, some people monitor multiple sites, and many people team up with friends to monitor a single site.

Because of the lag in obtaining the data from Cornell, I can't address the question of how many people were actually out in 2021. We receive this file in the third quarter of the year, and our data guru Chris Monaghan needs to do some data refinement to weed-out the bad stuff and save the good.

Once done the data will be available to our land manager organizations, and our county coordinators will be working with them to get the data they need. With these results we can tell who monitored where and when.

Balassie earlier reported that there would be a Monitor Coordinator meeting August or September and 2021 results would probably be at the end of the 3rd quarter.

Training- Mulcahy

Cornell Lab Merlin Sound ID: Mulcahy reported that Cornell Lab of Ornithology will offer a free webinar July 27 explaining the Merlin ID sound feature. Google “Cornell Merlin Webinar” to find registration information. Find it here: <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/whos-singing-how-to-use-merlin-bird-id-to-identify-bird-calls/>

Although some report that ambient noise or distance interferes with the feature, Mulcahy and Pavelka spoke positively about it. An external mic can be used. Recordings can be saved. The program screens out people talking. Pavelka suggested that it has potential for new monitors and encouraged people to try it. To explore the science behind sound ID, search “Cornell Merlin Behind the Scenes” which features two researchers who developed it.

Sagawau ID Training Sessions: Three programs were offered at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in 2021; waterfowl, warbler, and breeding bird ID. About 25 people participated in sessions. Attendees had a mix of skills with some using it as a review and some attending for a second time. Two new monitors were gained through the programs.

BCN Trends Analysis

Cohen reflected that production of the Trends Analysis is a crowning achievement of BCN. It covers 21 years of data and this extended length of time makes data more reliable.

- Steen Report: Valerie Steen, our TA contractor and data analyst residing in Fort Collins, Colorado showed tremendous patience and cooperation and worked with Igleski and Pollock. The BCN committee was formed and met in-person, on Feb. 2, 2020; Igleski, Pollock, Monaghan, and Sirman (our in-house confirmer). Balassie, Cohen
- Distribution: Since receiving compiled information on June 19 and 21, Cohen has shared same with Judy Pollock and Bob Fisher as well as Science Advisors; Aubrey Sirman, Doug Stotz, Jim Herkert, Stephanie Beilke, Gary Casper, and Trixi Lange. The TA has also been shared with the BCN Committee (Sirman, Monaghan, Igleski, Balassie, Pollock, and Cohen as well as ExCom, Eric Secker, and Donna Kenski, who will get the information into a

format used for the previous Trends Analysis. The TA will be sent to the entire membership when minutes are distributed.

- Process for Review: Cohen shared the document on-line and stated that it was fairly complex with raw data on 105 species. Pavelka stated that this did not reflect data from 1999 to the present.

Pollock asked that people look at data to see what stories might be developed from information and how this can be used to publicize the good job that local land managers are doing to maintain habitat. Example observations by Pollock were that warbling vireo populations were up, Eastern meadowlarks were fairly stable, and summer tanagers have increased, expanding their range northward.

Pavelka observed that pileated woodpeckers had the largest expansion.

Cohen stated that one or two meetings will be held to gather input to develop an editorial to reflect our data collection and what it tells us to guide our actions.

Secker stated that findings may not be as dramatic as the last TA, but this further refines what we had and lends credibility. He expressed gratitude for those who worked on this and for hiring Valerie Steen and the hope that other groups around the country would undertake similar efforts. Also, that we will build a key around the document to make it easier to understand. Secker gave brief explanations to assist in interpreting data. Dann asked that Secker write a few sentences to include with the TA to assist members in understanding the report.

Publication: Cohen stated that we would work with Secker to get the TA published on the website.

- Payment Status: Cohen stated that the \$7,200 TA contract was raised in various ways-through member organizations and

individuals. \$6,000 has been paid to our contractor. \$1,200 has been held back to pay for a final write-up of the process. We will validate that our contract has been fulfilled. Two items need to be completed:

1. A process document that will be written by Valerie that will follow the model from the last analysis.
2. Any visualization that we would like done-either as part of the scope of work or outside of the scope which would cost us more.

Species of Concern

Cohen pointed out that the TA and Species of Concern are entirely different projects. Since 2019, Judy Pollock has been instrumental in writing up the Species of Concern proposal and working with science advisors to produce a final product. 3rd party resources were used. Donna Kenski compiled information into the document that will be sent to everyone for distribution and publication. Cohen asked Judy for her comments.

Pollock stated that she had a great committee of science advisors including Doug Stotz, Jim Herkert, Gary Casper, Trixi Lange, Aubrey Sirman and Stephanie Beilk. Other organizations' species of concern lists were examined including Partners in Flight, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Sources are listed at the bottom of the document. Individual members examined different groups' lists. Lists of birds in our region found in such documents were assigned 3 levels of priority. Donna Kenski was recruited to put all the input into one document (spreadsheet). U.S. Fish & Wildlife updated their list just recently and Kenski adjusted the compilation to reflect this. Her edits are in the document of record. Changes recommended by the committee include an RRE list (Rare and Recently Extirpated) and a separate list of birds subject to climate change. The goal of the project was to create a tool allowing anyone to realize the importance of bird species.

Cohen shared the document on-line. Dann asked for an explanation of the numeric rating. Level 1 is considered the highest level of concern-

the highest priority for conservation. Optimally-everything would be a 3.

Cohen commented that many people have been involved and this is another milestone for BCN - a huge achievement for those who have been involved. Pollock was the go-to person, but Pollock also credited others who were involved. Now Secker will be charged with getting the information on the website.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues

Report from Advocacy Chair-Donnie Dann

Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann applauded efforts of independent BCN member Mary Bernat who continues to champion the Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge. Unlike Hackmatack NWR, which was created with relative ease, such has not been the case for the Kankakee NWR and Conservation Area.

Cohen reported that 2017 BCN minutes noted that Bernat identified issues involving the Refuge. In 1999, US Fish and Wildlife approved a focus area largely in the dredged Indiana portion. It was formally established in 2016 when 66 acres was donated. There was no U.S. Fish & Wildlife director from 2017-2020. The Land Protection Plan being proposed consists of two units of conservation, a Wetland Planning Unit and a Prairie Oak Savanna Planning Unit. Wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and hunting are among planned uses for the refuge. Marianne Hahn with Friends of the Kankakee asked that groups be contacted to support the draft plan. The current plan only includes Illinois. Hahn asked that Indiana be included in comments. Cohen stated that BCN should do a letter of support. The Farm Bureau opposes the plan due to concerns about flooding, loss of farm property, etc., however, documents from U.S. Fish and Wildlife have debunked these concerns. Bernat stated that comments on the plan are more valuable than letters of support. Cohen said that he has talked to Bernat, Hahn, and Dann and feels that BCN should formally support the plan through a vote and that specific comments by organizations and individuals in support of the plan are valuable. Comments are due by July 30, 2021.

SUPPORTED:

- **Efforts to create a Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge, led by BCN member-at-large Mary Bernat and local resident Marianne Hahn (Motion Below)**
- **An Illinois House bill (which passed) that requires future state buildings to be built bird-friendly.**
- **City of Highland Park as they are building a new fire station requiring the use of bird friendly glass.**
- **A letter of thanks to Governor Pritzker for arranging to appoint a permanent executive director to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. (No exec. Director since 2015.)**
- **3 items authored by the Center for Biological Diversity relating to strengthening regulation of toxic chemicals like chlorpyrifos (deadly-on a plant or insect tiny amt. kills birds), malathion, and diazinon, found to be serious causes of bird and other wildlife mortality.**

Also:

- New Illinois law that strengthens the rules applying to the demolition of coal fired power plants.
- New Illinois bill that tightens the rules for the application of the insecticide class of chemicals known as pyrethroids.
- Shared our experiences with a team of graduate students at Georgia Tech University who were researching bird-safe policy advocacy.
- Openlands, Sierra Club, and The Nature Conservancy in signing onto a letter enabling the transfer of over 3,000 acres of Army land at Midewin to the U.S. Forest Service.
- A letter urging Pace to buy electric in lieu of diesel buses.

OPPOSED:

- An Illinois House bill that would permit natural gas pipelines through Pembroke township and aids residents in providing funds for conversion of appliances to use natural gas. It passed.

- An Illinois House bill dealing with an offshore wind project that ELPC also opposed. It failed.

Old Business:

New Officer Succession

Cohen stated that current officers that he recruited agreed to serve for one year. There are many heroes in BCN who have been involved for decades and now we need new people to step up and lead the mission. The TA and Species of Concern have been completed and we are a very respected organization. We now have the opportunity to carry BCN forward. Anyone taking a leadership position would not be alone, but would have the support of former leaders and members. He appealed to members to be involved and look into our organizations to recruit.

Methods of recruitment were discussed. Bernat mentioned DuPage Birding Club's graduated system where members stepped through a succession of roles. Tikalsky suggested looking to member organizations who might serve in leadership positions-pairing up with someone they enjoy working with.

Pollock suggested a Nominating Committee pursue candidates. Cohen stated that asking often results in refusal.

Dann commented that the difficulty is that some like to lead others are just along for the ride.

Cohen has been making calls and stated that everyone needs to solicit possible candidates for involvement. He asked if there were any volunteers to run for office? Silence.

New Business:

Motion in Support of the Kankakee National Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Area:

Whereas the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is moving forward with the planning of the establishment of the Kankakee National Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Area as amended in 2015.

And whereas, the current planning for the Kankakee National Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Area does not include any of the Indiana portion of the watershed or any of the approved 1999 focus areas in Indiana

Therefore, the Bird Conservation Network (BCN), an Illinois-based regional coalition of 20 organizations that promotes public awareness, knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of birds and their habitat and support of programs to protect, restore and enhance the natural environment and increase native bird populations has approved the following by a (insert “unanimous” if so approved) vote of its membership:

- BCN vigorously encourages the establishment of the Kankakee National Wildlife Reserve and Conservation Area as planned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as amended in 2015.
- Moreover, BCN also vigorously supports including the Indiana portion of the watershed as well as any of the focus areas approved in Indiana in 1999.

Discussion on the motion ensued. Itani asked if there are Indiana birding groups that are supportive. Bernat did not know. Bernat emphasized that letters of comment were being requested not necessarily letters of support and suggested an amendment to the motion. She suggested it include comments in support of the land protection plan, draft conservation priorities-comments that would specifically support the visioning document.

Cohen stated that the motion as proposed was what we would vote on today.

Tikalsky proposed two parallel documents be created. Once the motion is approved, comments can also be sent out on BCN's behalf. Cohen thanked Tikalsky for finding a way forward to both formally support the Refuge Plan as well as to submit comments.

Cohen asked that Bernat put together comments that would be sent by BCN. BCN Representatives were asked to have their groups send comments by July 30.

Move: Cohen

Second: Dann

Action: Unanimous

Meeting Take Aways for Member Organizations

- July 27 Cornell Lab of Ornithology seminar-sound feature Merlin Bird ID (Google: Cornell Lab of Ornithology Merlin Sound App Webinar) Find it here: <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/whos-singing-how-to-use-merlin-bird-id-to-identify-bird-calls/>
- Sign up for Amazon Smile by visiting BCN website: <http://www.bcnbirds.org/donate.html>.
- Comment info for Kankakee NWR
Comments in support should be sent by 7/30/21 to:

BY EMAIL

R3Planning@fws.gov

(Subject line "Kankakee NWR LPP Comment"),

OR BY MAIL

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ATTN: Refuges - Kankakee NWR Comment

5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990

Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

- New officers- reps are asked to look to their own organizations for possible BCN officer candidates

Announcements:

Nominating Committee

Tikalsky noted that BCN bylaws state that a nominating committee must be appointed 90 days before our election in January.

Cohen responded that since reps must vote to approve the committee, reps should watch for an email forthcoming before Oct. 16.

Meeting Adjourned 2:53 pm

Cohen thanked everyone for attending.

Proposed Next Meeting

October 16, 2021- Zoom videoconference

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Renwick

BCN Secretary