

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Meeting Saturday, October 23, 2021 Online Video Conference

Attendees:, Pat Andersen (TCA), Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (GLA), Mary Bernat (Individual), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Steve Constantelos (DBC), Donnie Dann (TNC), Dennis Endicott (PeoriaAS), Diane Hicks (TCA), Libby Hill (ENSBC), Tamima Itani (IOS), Vera Leopold (TWI), Mark Luscombe (FDA), Lynne Mecum (ABC), Mary Lou Mellon (CBCM), Tom Mulcahy (DBC), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (CAS), Annette Prince (CBCM), Rita Renwick (WCA), Carla Schmakel (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Christine Williamson (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA)

Guests: None

President Cohen called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. A quorum was established with 17 member groups represented. Introductions took place.

Administration:

Approval of July 17, 2021, BCN quarterly meeting minutes

Motion: Bird Conservation Network approves the July 17, 2021, meeting minutes.

Move: Donnie Dann

Second: Diane Hicks

Action: Approved

Membership & Treasurer's Report - Pavelka

1. Membership Report – 2021 membership paid by 20 organizations/2 individuals
Prairie Woods has disbanded.
American Bird Conservancy has joined.
2. Treasurer's Report

We have received a few donations. Pavelka thanked John Petoskey and John Lang and asked that others thank them if they know them. 2021 income was \$4,405.91. Most Trends funds came in last year. We have paid dues to IEC and will pay \$50 in dues to Chicago Wilderness in December. We still owe web posting and retainer fees. There is still a reserve of \$900 for additional communication for Trends Analysis. The general funds balance is \$9603. Of that, \$650 is committed, which leaves about \$9,000 uncommitted. Pavelka stated that she feels that \$4,000 to \$5,000 should be kept in the general fund. The remainder could be used to move BCN forward regarding the Trends Analysis or improvement of the website. There were no questions or comments regarding the treasurer's report.

2021 Income - YTD:

Dues:	\$ 2,070.00	
Donations - General:	\$ 103.01	John Petoskey, Amazon Smiles, New - John Lang
Donations - Trends:	\$ 2,232.90	
Grant - Trends:	\$ - \$	
Total:	4,405.91	

2021 Expenses - YTD:

Trends Analysis- Data - 1st/2nd	\$ 7,200.00	
Trends analysis - Website Update	\$ 1,740.00	
Annual Transfer to Trends:	\$ 500.00	
Dues to Other organizations	\$ 150.00	IEC, Chicago Wilderness \$50 in Dec
Printing	\$ -	
Secretary of State - Annual	\$ 10.00	
Webhost & Retainer Fees	\$ -	\$600 Due in Dec
Bank Service Charge	\$ 3.00	
Total	\$ 9,603.00	

2021 Net Income - YTD: **\$ (5,197.09)**

Checkbook balance - 10/20/2021:	\$ 9,683.72	Total
Trends Analysis Reserve:	\$ 926.60	Reserve + Grant/Donations
3) Government Reporting		

State of Illinois Annual Report Submitted - 12/23/2020
Federal Tax Filing e-postcard 990N filed - 1/21/2021
Renewal for Tax-Exempt status received - 9/1/2021

Advocacy/Conservation Issues:

Report from Advocacy Chair – Donnie Dann

The Lake County Board is working on an ordinance to make buildings in unincorporated Lake County bird friendly. Donnie has been supporting them with sample ordinances. He also issued a statement from BCN in support of the preservation of Bell Bowl Prairie, a rare 5-acre prairie in the footprint of the Rockford Airport - threatened due to airport expansion.

- **I attended a virtual meeting of the Public Works, Planning and Transportation committee of the Lake County Board. The meeting is available on video and includes the section where direction was given to staff to proceed with drafting an ordinance requiring bird friendly construction in unincorporated Lake County.**
- **Strongly supported the establishment of the Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area.**
- The pending reconciliation bill includes a provision in support of wildlife recovery and public lands restoration funding, which we signed on to support.
- Urged Interior Secretary Haaland to issue the proposed secretarial order that would set concrete actions that the Department of Interior can immediately take to protect biodiversity, stem the extinction crisis, and restore abundant wildlife and plant populations both in the United States and around the world. The main components of the order include:
 - Restoring and protecting healthy ecosystems
 - Recovering endangered species and rebuilding wildlife populations
 - Integrating climate change into endangered species recovery
 - Combating wildlife exploitation and bolstering enforcement

Cohen asked for other comments.

Bernat thanked Pollock and Dann for comment letters regarding the Kankakee NWF and Conservation Area. Over 800 letters were received. Donnie asked if there was a sense of total comments-positive vs. negative. Bernat responded that Todd Boonstra, refuge manager, gave no indication or comment on results.

Projects and Initiatives:

Trends Analysis - Cohen:

Website: We have completed compilation of data and published it on the website.

Contractor Payment: Valerie Steen was very patient with the process, is completely done, and has been paid in full. Eric Secker put Trends Analysis data on the BCN website, went above and beyond to make adding future data easier and less costly, and has been paid in full.

Structured Conversations: Opportunities to engage monitors in discussion about Trends Analysis data occurred in two sessions. Aubrey Sirman moderated on Thursday evening, October 14 and Stephanie Beilke moderated Saturday afternoon, Oct. 16. Results were discussed habitat by habitat. There were 27 attendees plus hosts and moderators. Recordings of conversations and feedback forms were sent via email to this year's 188 monitors and BCN reps - over 200 mailings in all. 181 sites were monitored in 2021. Stories are beginning to be revealed.

Bob Dolgan wrote about the Trends Analysis in his weekly newsletter, *This Week in Birding*.

Both discussions have been recorded and can be viewed at double speed (lower right-hand corner). Here are the links:

Conversation 1: <https://bit.ly/BCN-conversation1>

Conversation 2: <https://bit.ly/BCN-conversation2>

Recognition: Cohen thanked the Science Advisors, the BCN Steering Committee and Reps Bob Fisher and Eric Secker for their added insight and advice. Data analyst, Steen brought passion to the project-all resulting in a good outcome.

Next Steps:

Cohen stated that visualization of Trends Analysis website data is needed to get our story out to member groups and the public. Fisher is on the program to have a 10-minute presentation for Partners in Flight. IAS would like one for their Spring Meeting. Currently, a presentation does not exist.

Cohen stated that he is not confident that volunteers can get this done in a timely manner and that Treasurer Pavelka, in her report, alluded to the fact that we have sufficient funds to advance BCN goals. We can tell the origin story of BCN-trying to influence land managers-telling and advising as best we can as an advocate for birds. We could ask member organizations to donate again or set aside a sum of our existing funds, perhaps \$3,000, to be used judiciously to advance our story. We could use this to get a grant or have someone develop methods to get our story out. He stated that he hoped to come away from today's meeting with an action step.

Donnie Dann stated that he envisions a PowerPoint that describes habitats, birds that are thriving and how land should be managed for sustaining and creating habitat for birds that need it.

Pavelka stated that Audubon Great Lakes is doing this with wetlands, and we might collaborate with them. Beilke concurred.

Williamson suggested engaging freelancers who understand our cause (Sheryl DeVore, Bob Dolgan).

Witkowski asked who our audience is.

Cohen stated that land managers are a major target. They do not always listen to individuals, but BCN can talk and carry a bit more weight. Our other audiences would be the monitors who have such enthusiasm for the work they do, member groups, and the public since we have an educational function. Birds in decline are important. Apparent success stories like that of the pileated woodpecker in woodlands perhaps due to Emerald Ash Borer catch the public's attention. Stories reach more people than spread sheets and data bases.

Cohen suggested we start with a communication plan-talking points and distill this into specific presentations. He emphasized that we have current information and momentum and need to move ahead in a timely way-suggesting that money be set aside to look for a person to accomplish our goal – good communicators, good writers who know birds. The first step is making a commitment to dedicate funds for this purpose. Once we do that, we can get a bid for what we want done.

Donnie Dann questioned limiting funds to only \$3,000.

Discussion ensued about what we want done.

Cohen stated that we need to think of creating “assets” and what we want to say. These assets would include PowerPoint presentation, brochure (perhaps only in PDF form, press release, etc). The scope of the effort determines the price, and it would be a disservice to BCN if we do not reach out to the public, member groups, etc.

Williamson stated she could help with press releases. She suggested WBEZ, NPR, WTTW are some general media that would be interested in upper-level detail and highlights.

Dann asked to keep our objective in mind. If land managers are the goal, then land is the emphasis-what we want to change should determine the design and content of the asset.

Itani thought that the funding amount was excessive.

Hill stated that many people do not know about BCN. Evanston North Shore Birding Club used BCN’s Birds of Concern to create a mural which provides publicity for BCN and our goals.

Cohen responded that raising the visibility of bird well-being is important.

Witkowski asked if we have a list of land managers and Balassie responded that we have intimate contact with every government unit that we monitor on an annual basis if not more during the year.

Pavelka suggested we might use our Trend Analysis assets to reach out to other land managers that we are not working with, increasing monitor opportunities.

Balassie added that in his experience all units welcome more bird data, and the state would welcome bird monitoring and expanding

would be a great tool, but we are struggling to provide monitors for the areas we already have. We do not have a list of lands not being monitored or of their managers. We have been recruiting, but we cannot overpromise and must be cognizant of our limitations.

Williamson stated that even though our primary target is land managers, we need to get this out to the public, bird clubs, etc. and to share this broadly. We should include more about climate change.

Cohen summarized that this effort has multiple objectives, and we should try to reach more audiences by proceeding to allocate a budget to seek a grant writer, someone to do the work, or both.

Motion: Allocate a budget of up to \$5,000 to further communication efforts and engage parties to move the Trend Analysis publicity forward.

Moved: Williamson

Second: Dann

Action: Approved, with one person opposed

Itani asked if members would be solicited for funding and Cohen responded that we have money in our account.

Bernat asked about the process for engaging a person for the project.

Cohen responded that now that BCN has agreed to fund the effort, we now can seek proposals and see what we can get. Everyone in BCN will have the opportunity to weigh in on this effort. ExCom will review and then we will hold a special meeting or send out email communication and seek feedback.

Pollock suggested putting out a Request for Proposals so we can go forward.

Bernat stated that she would lead the effort to create an RFP and Pollock and Leopold agreed to help

Motion: To create an RFP to develop and execute a communication plan for disseminating the Trends Analysis data.

Motion: Witkowski

Second: Endicott

Action: Approved

Old Business:**New Officer Succession**

Cohen stated that a Nominating Committee needs to be appointed and he has selected Fisher, Pollock, and Leopold to serve with Leopold serving as Chair.

Motion: Accept the Nominating Committee of Fisher, Pollock, and Leopold

Moved: Pavelka

Second: Bernat

Action: Approved

Cohen has worked on recruiting candidates since spring with no success. He asked that reps reach out to members of our organizations to see if there is interest in positions. The work is not that onerous, and Cohen is hopeful that candidates will step up.

New Business:**Cook County Forest Preserve District Covid Protocol Compliance Letter**

The CCFPD sent a compliance statement for Cohen to sign. Monitors must adhere to CDC guidelines - maintain a distance of 6 ft. apart outdoors. If closer, wear a mask. If these practices are followed, monitors working outside will not have to be vaccinated in 2022. Balassie will include a blurb in the monitor newsletter asking that they follow CDC guidelines. We must agree that BCN as an organization will do so. Cohen will sign and return the letter to the Volunteer Program Specialist with the CCFPD.

BCN Website Redevelopment Proposal

BCN has an opportunity to redevelop our website. Eric Secker has been our contractor and we have talked about improving the site for a few years. The site is barely viewable on mobile devices. Secker would do this for \$3,000 although the scope of this effort is greater than this budget. This will be a redesign and redevelopment of the platform. New content creation may be desired and can be done after

the site is built. Cohen will work on the project pro bono, volunteering his time. He thinks we can do this in 2022-within the next 6 months. We would remove old content that is no longer current and build the site on a platform to allow non-technical modification of the site (WordPress). This would streamline input and allow more current information on the site. No RFP is being put out. Reps agreed that no one would do the work involved for the amount discussed.

Motion: Hire Eric Secker to redesign the BCN website for \$3,000

Moved: Williamson

Second: Pavelka

Action: Approved with Secker abstaining

Since Secker may have a leadership role in 2022 while this work is being done, he wanted membership to know he would be acting as a no-bid contractor on the project.

Pollock asked who can have input in updating the website.

Secker stated that he would take input from anyone. If dealing with similar content, mock-ups will be done and feedback sought. There will be updates for content. Cohen said that WordPress is the tool and content can be added or removed easily.

Announcements:

Bernat asked how people are chosen for ExCom.

Secker stated that he was not sure how it was done. The by-laws state: "The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, Past President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and any other members so designated by BCN." Perhaps the President chooses other members, and they are voted on by BCN? By-laws are not very specific.

Cohen reported that to benefit IEC, Bob Fisher (on behalf of BCN) auctioned himself off to be a bird trip leader for \$150.

Mary Bernat acted as a tour leader at Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and listed herself as a BCN member.

Donnie commented on IEC 's effectiveness in Springfield - that they have become an effective champion for environmental issues.

Williamson expressed gratitude for expansion of the birding community. There are now 500 members in COS. New people are being attracted. The group posts and get tons of likes. Conditions due to Covid are helping people get into nature.

Take Aways for Member Organizations

Plans for a new website

Plans to communicate the Trends Analysis to our member organizations.

Forward above info to group ExComs suggested

Proposed Change in Meeting Protocol

Cohen asked about scheduling meetings on weeknights in the future. Responses were mixed. An evening time of 6 p.m. was mentioned.

Next Meeting: Annual and Quarterly Meeting Saturday, Jan. 29, 2022, Videoconference

Adjourned: 3:18 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Renwick, Secretary