

BCN Executive Committee Meeting

March 31, 2020

Online Video Conference

In attendance: Sonny Cohen, Matt Igleski, Charlotte Pavelka, Steve Constantelos, Emma England, Vera Leopold, Tom Mulcahy

Not attending: Tim Balassie

Sonny Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm and wished everyone good health as we navigate this new landscape.

Monitoring program. Balassie and Pavelka had a productive meeting with Lake County Forest Preserve District officials as Balassie continues to communicate with land managers and recruit county coordinators.

Balassie's current work includes: 1) understanding the relationship between the BCN Survey and land managers of the sites we monitor, to try reconcile the needs of both as best he can—some counties are using BCN data, others are not; 2) recruiting monitors (now by email thanks to COVID-19), with the goal of visiting BCN member groups individually to promote the survey and recruit (County Coordinators could also do these visits); 3) expanding training programs beyond Cook (currently Lake and McHenry are offering free venues for this); 4) further recruitment of County Coordinators (Will, DuPage, City of Chicago in particular); 5) reviewing data, and making sure data for all monitors is obtained; and 6) determining the ability of volunteers to conduct monitoring, subject to restrictions on sites and the status of “volunteers” on those sites.

Monitoring in the age of Covid. Cohen posed the question that, although our focus is monitoring in June, should we be trying to make efforts to access areas that are now closed to the public? A consensus answer was “no,” but that we can keep an eye on the situation and even move monitoring into early July if we must. There is some precedent for this, as Lake County monitors some of its sites at that time, even though the birds are quieter at that point. Hopefully, sites will open up in time for normal June monitoring.

Monitor training. Mulcahy said seven people signed up for the Sagawau training sessions, and work is being done to hold these sessions via Zoom. He has about 100 copies of the songs disk, and would like to store the files (135 MB worth) somewhere online, ideally where he could share them easily with trainees and monitors. Dropbox was suggested as was eBird, and Mulcahy will explore those options further.

Trends analysis. Igleski, Cohen, Judy Pollock, and others completed an RFP. Igleski is now seeking suitable places to post the RFP in hopes of getting trends analysis completed sometime this summer. The document has been added to our files on Box and will be shared with BCN reps.

Box.com access. Cohen is now the “owner” of our account and will add Balassie soon so all of ExCom will have access. ExCom agreed that Box.com will work for our purposes.

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 is still part of Hine’s Emerald Dragonfly critical habitat, but only for adults. Will County Audubon’s Greg DuBois did a write-up, and in the end, 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.

Obama Presidential Center. 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. Cohen posed questions about whether BCN should engage in this issue any further and whether we should broaden our concerns to the siting of the center itself. Consensus was reached that BCN will not act any further at this time.

Birding America exhibit panels and marketing materials. Cohen showed exhibit panels he created using Canva that can be used for table events; these will be shared with BCN reps soon. Discussion on how to adapt these to other platforms, like Facebook, was suggested. Balassie has some presentation materials we could also adapt, and we could generate new marketing materials.

Web conference tool. The pluses and minuses of freeconferencecall.com and Zoom were discussed. A consensus was reached that freeconferencecall.com will work for our quarterly meeting.

Cohen thanked everyone for attending and the meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Constantelos
BCN Secretary