

BCN ExCom Meeting April 1, 2021 Online Video Conference

In Attendance: Sonny Cohen, Diane Hicks, Charlotte Pavelka, Rita Renwick, Tim Balassie, Tom Mulcahy

Sonny Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Cohen reviewed an abundance of activity in the past three months which has given BCN a fair amount of visibility and demonstrates that we are an active organization.

BCN Promotions

- Cook County Forest Preserves Monitor open house done by Zoom - Tim did a 5-minute presentation in early February.
- Wild Things – Oak Recovery Panel – Bob Fisher talking about Oaks & Birds (YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqZfvIvnsr4> Done live but now a utube recording.
- Wild Things – BCN streaming presentation on monitoring (YouTube) Secker, Pollock, Balassie in a 45-minute presentation. Currently on Cohen's link. <https://youtu.be/Zcs3AfAhxtU>
- This Week in Birding (Bob Dolgan) – Volunteers needed in Chicagoland this summer. BCN was featured. (<https://www.twibchicago.com/p/volunteers-needed-in-chicagoland>)

Action Alerts Three outreach action items were sent to 280 people. BCN was well represented.

- Building Design Witness Slips – March 2
- Stop Feral Cat Legislation Witness Slips (167 opposed, 67 for) March 14
- Wild Things Conference Information sent out by Pres. Cohen.

BCN Monitors Zoom presentation

Songbird Parents Evict Young - sent to monitors in January.

Chapter Updates

Prairie Woods Audubon has dissolved. Cohen reached out to their three reps, Burman, Robinson, and Stengren, thanked them for serving and encouraged them to become members/monitors in the future.

Pavelka stated that all organizations except Fort Dearborn paid dues by March 31.

Cohen will reach out to their President, Mark Luscombe.

Trends Analysis pledges have all been paid.

Prospective New Chapters Identified by Sonny are Sand Ridge Audubon which meets at Sand Ridge Nature Center in South Holland, IL and Dunes-Calumet Audubon which meets at Gibson Woods Nature Center (Lake Co. IN) and Indiana Dunes National Park Headquarters (Porter Co. IN) Mulcahy knows a contact in Sand Ridge, and Matt Igleski has a contact in Dunes-Calumet. Pavelka suggested other groups: Sinnissippi Audubon (Rockford), Northwest Illinois Audubon (Freeport, IL)

Some cities in northern Illinois are considering Bird City designation - a Wisconsin based organization that recognizes bird friendly cities.

Cohen commented that a positive outcome of Covid restrictions and the use of Zoom meetings is that we can reach out to people who are distant from our area.

Cohen suggested we change our January Annual Meeting to our April meeting. The April Annual Meeting could be held in a nice location with birding in the am followed by a 1 pm meeting. A change could also be made to hold two meetings via Zoom-January and October, with in person meetings April and October. By-laws would need to be amended. Perhaps Nancy Tikalski could advise on this. There were no objections to this proposed change.

Trends Analysis Update

Matt Igleski committed to working on the T.A. through 2020. Going forward in 2021, more assistance with more people involved is needed to get the project done. Valerie Steen (T.A. contractor) reported to Igleski that the project is going well with an abundance of good records. Some discrepancies in records need to be resolved, but Balassie and Pollock believe these are not numerous and will not skew records/results. Cohen stated that Pollock has asked for a prescription of proposed methods into the available models. A metric for payment to Valerie is needed. Cohen, after April 19, will work to find additional people to help with oversight and management to keep the project moving forward.

Bird Monitoring Activities

1) Training – Mulcahy has worked with FPDCC - Sagawau Env. Learning Center to encourage development of programs for bird ID training. They have offered waterfowl I.D. training to be followed by Zoom classes for Spring Warbler ID on Tuesday, 4-13 and Breeding Bird ID (in the development stage) on Tues. 5-18. 30 people have signed up for both with a capacity of 100 people. Existing BCN bird monitors have been notified, but this is geared more toward beginners. Balassie has a list of people not ready to monitor, but this would be a way to engage and encourage them to stay involved. It was suggested that we get this out to BCN reps to distribute to a general audience. Pavelka has already informed Thorn Creek Audubon via e-mail. For the Quarterly meeting we should have a take-away for member groups and share the training link.

Register here: Sagawauenvironmental.learningcenter@cookcountyil.gov

2) Monitor Recruitment - Hicks stated that Thorn Creek Audubon has a link for monitor recruitment that can be shared with BCN reps. It would have to be personalized and prepared to be customized for specific locations, but would be useful for groups to copy and paste into newsletters, etc.

Thorn Creek Audubon Sample Assets

<https://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org/news/volunteer-for-bcn-breeding-birds-monitoring-2021>

Balassie wrote and distributed a script to member reps to be adapted for their use to recruit monitors. This included monitoring sites for some groups. Cohen suggested we repeat distribution of this message.

3) County Coordinators Meeting - Balassie stated that yearly meetings are set, this year spring and fall, which provide opportunities to get together and discuss issues/problems still outstanding that effect monitoring so they can be resolved. Judy Pollock handles the data collecting side of monitoring, trying to pull data together from many sources with the goal of making information available to end users when completed. Balassie and Pollock have discussed forming a working group to examine glitches and find ways to make data processing more efficient. Cohen suggested it might be best to wait until the current Trends Analysis is completed. Chris Monaghan and Pollock are trying to provide value to the T.A. since other groups rely on us for this information. Because methods and participation vary by county, gathering meaningful data is challenging. Pavelka asked if it is possible to generate an automated report that would be in a standard format. Technology should make this possible. Cohen stated that this is a data management issue that ExCom cannot solve and a working group for the T.A. and for data collection is needed. Balassie will consider candidates for the group. Cohen will develop qualifications for a person who might coordinate and lead the group. Pavelka was asked to specify/clarify the challenge. A job description needs to be created with the goal of defining and solving current data collection issues. The proposed working group would address how our monitoring data is collected, warehoused, formatted, and distributed.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Cohen reported that Pollock arranged for representatives of the BCN/Chicago Audubon Working Group to speak at the March 24, 2021 MWRD meeting regarding reducing and timing mowing on MWRD property to protect nesting birds. The District is the second largest landowner in Cook County. Practices at Techny Basin were referenced. Commissioner Debra Shore sponsored their appearance. A BCN/Chicago Audubon Working Group Meeting will take place April 6. The District

is more concerned with preventing flooding, but land management practices are very impactful on bird life. This is an ongoing effort.

Miscellaneous

1) Montrose Expansion: Cohen reported that the request to expand land protection for returning plovers this spring has been getting lots of press and has the support of aldermen. Leslie Borns puts out newsletter that has received positive comments. Action is needed by April 15-20 to welcome back piping plovers.

2) Marsh Bird Monitoring Hub - Audubon Great Lakes

Stephanie Beilke will share her screen at BCN's April 10 meeting to discuss their new program - seeking involvement and contributions.

Announcing Audubon Great Lakes' new marsh bird monitoring

<https://gl.audubon.org/birds/marsh-bird-monitoring>

BCN Meeting: The next quarterly meeting will be on April 10, 2021 at 1 pm, via Zoom. An agenda and Zoom link will be forthcoming.

Cohen thanked members for attending. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Renwick
BCN Secretary