

## **BCN July 2022 ExComm Meeting – July 8, 2022**

**Present:** Vera Leopold, Eric Secker, Charlotte Pavelka, Tim Balassie, Diann Bilderback, Aubrey Sirman

Meeting started at 10:05 a.m.

### **1. Updates on the Trends Analysis rollout**

Diann Bilderback reviewed a list of the media coverage that the Trends Analysis has received since the news announcement on June 7<sup>th</sup>. There have been short segments and longer interviews on radio stations, an article in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the Trends have been featured many other places. An interview with WTTW will soon be published. There is a commitment for future coverage by American Bird Conservancy and invitations to submit content bylines from several newsletters. In addition, many member organizations featured it on their website, and there was a lot of coverage on social sites. Overall, we have received very good local and some national coverage.

Six presentations on the Trends Analysis have been given so far, and we have invitations to present through the rest of the year and into 2023. The talks will be tailored to groups' specific interests. The news announcement and Trends Analysis are also posted on the BCN website.

The next steps are to close out outstanding media opportunities and work on securing presentations with county land managers and other conservation partners. We would like the help of the survey coordinators and county bird clubs to get in front of the right people. The goal is to convert some of this interest into collaboration opportunities! Tim Balassie said that he can help pursue the agency contacts with survey coordinators and build a prospective audience.

Eric Secker said the Chicago Wilderness Café talk went really well, and land managers were very interested. The time for the breakout groups was extended because there was so much dialogue! With the wealth of knowledge from land managers, we want to continue the discussion for recommendations on how to manage habitat.

ExComm members discussed how to continue the conversation with land managers and engage them in collaboration. Balassie pointed out that all the "major players" already collaborate with each other on management practices; we want to make sure we're not telling them things they already know. Additional data interpretation to get results down to the county level would be useful. We can offer support for how they can manage for specific bird species or gaps in habitat management, such as shrublands. Secker agreed we should find out what would be most valuable for land managers to get from BCN.

Secker then shared the draft of the Trends Analysis video so far. ExComm members provided some feedback and comments on word choice and appearance of the video. Bilderback commented that the video needs a place to be hosted, such as on a BCN YouTube page. The video will likely be completed in the next week. Content emphasizes collaboration and the utility of data collection and monitoring.

## **2. Bird monitor brunch plans, BCN Survey updates**

Balassie said that he would like monitor appreciation lunches to be split up into smaller geographic areas so more people could attend. Charlotte Pavelka is going to hold an event for Lake and McHenry counties. She is discussing some new ideas such as an evening or afternoon get-together where people can drop in rather than an all-day commitment. There was not much enthusiasm for additional events. Balassie is going to plan something for Cook/Will/DuPage/Kane counties, probably set for the last week of August. He is working on a location where most people can easily attend.

ExComm discussed that some survey points in Lake County are very challenging for monitors to reach due to being off-trail, in brambles, etc. The survey protocol also varies by county. There may be ways to work with the counties on adjusting these points. We should also recognize volunteer monitors who make the extra effort with difficult sites.

## **3. Reviewing the budget and discussion of fundraising for the additional expenses approved for the trends**

Pavelka reviewed the 2022 budget against expenses to date and projected expenditures through year-end. She estimated we should raise at least \$2000 in donations over the next quarter to help cover the additional Trends Analysis rollout expense. This would allow BCN to end the year with about \$3500 in the bank. Without any additional donations, we would be ending the year with about \$1500, which in her opinion would be cutting the budget too short. Ideally, the fundraising goal would be \$4000, but \$2000 may be more realistic.

The last time BCN solicited donations from member groups was roughly two years ago to complete the Trends Analysis itself. BCN received about \$7000 in donations, but this fell short of what was needed for the whole project, including the PR/communications effort and the video project.

Over the next quarter, we will solicit all member orgs to consider a donation to help cover the Trends Analysis rollout. For larger groups, \$300 is a suggested donation level to consider, and \$100 for smaller organizations. It is up to the individual groups to decide what they may be able to give.

Pavelka proposed an increase to member dues, as this has not been done for several years and additional funds are needed. From 2003 to 2015, dues were \$75. This

increased in 2016 to \$100. She asked ExComm to consider an increase of \$125 or \$150.

Balassie asked about the possibility of an annual appeal to raise additional funds per year on top of dues. Other groups do this; it is an idea to explore.

After discussion, ExComm concluded that a dues increase to \$125 seemed like a reasonable increase. Given the different sizes of member groups, there are differing abilities to pay, and we do not want to cause any financial difficulties for groups to remain BCN members.

**Motion:** Increase the dues for BCN member organizations to \$125 in 2023, with at-large members of BCN remaining at the same \$35 level.

Moved: Pavelka

Seconded: Balassie

Action: Passed

#### **4. BCN Survey data flow and reporting**

This discussion was tabled for a separate meeting.

#### **5. Adding General Members to BCN**

ExComm discussed adding general members to BCN who would pay a nominal membership fee. General members could eventually add more income, but some expense may be needed for a platform to attract and sustain their membership. Secker said that general members would provide a new avenue for more people to get involved and serve, beyond our current small pool of reps.

Pavelka raised concerns about having enough volunteer energy to provide additional programming to general members. Balassie did not feel comfortable making specific solicitations to monitors since they are already giving a lot of volunteer time and effort to BCN. Bilderback pointed out that membership management can be time-consuming in terms of tracking and soliciting annual renewals.

ExComm then discussed the value of adding an annual membership fee for general members versus increasing regular communications to interested people, which could then lead to soliciting donations via a quarterly e-newsletter. Audience for a newsletter would be monitors, reps, other donors to BCN, plus a sign-up link on the BCN website. Member groups could let their members know about it. Solicitations would be included with other content, but hard to know how many donations would be generated.

Bilderback suggested the idea of hosting a presentation by a prestigious speaker that could be a fundraiser. Secker also brought up an event or conference with land managers. However, it feels too soon to hold any large in-person events due to the pandemic.

Bilderback said the language used matters to avoid confusion. General members wouldn't have voting privileges. Monitors would feel that they are already a member of BCN! A better name could be "friends of BCN," "followers," or "contributors." People could see their name as the "Friends of BCN" acknowledged in an annual letter.

Secker said this discussion will be tabled for now.

**6. Officers and Committees for 2023, Nominating Committee**

Secker noted that it is time to think about officers for next year. We also need to identify a new Nominating Committee. This will go on the agenda for the quarterly meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11:55 a.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Vera Leopold  
Secretary*