



# Bird Conservation Network

## Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Saturday, April 20, 2013  
Sagawau Environmental Learning Center

Attendees: Bobbi Asher, Dave Willard, CAS; Mary Lou Mellon, Annette Prince, Teri Radke, CBCM; Luis Munoz, COS; Bob Fisher, Glenn Gabanski, Linda Padera, DBC; Suzanne Checchia, Lloyd Davidson, ENSBC; Mary Anne Harrison, IAS; Joan Bruchman, IOS; Eric Secker, KCA; Diane Rosenberg, LCA; Valerie Lewis, Jean Sodemann, L-CA; Judy Pollock, Lee Ramsey, NAS Chicago Region; Bob Harrison, Thorn Crk Aud; Donnie Dann, TNC; Rita Renwick, Lee Witkowski, Will Cty AS.

President Mary Lou Mellon called the meeting to order at 1:07pm. A quorum was established with 23 representatives from 14 member organizations present. Mary Lou welcomed new Chicago Audubon Society representative Dave Willard. Luis Munoz arrived later as a sub from Chicago Ornithological Society.

Introductions were made around the room.

### ADMINISTRATION

1. The minutes of the Saturday, January 20, 2013, Quarterly Meeting at North Park Village were approved as posted on the website.
2. Treasurer's, Membership and Redstart Connection Reports--Glenn.
  - A. Prior to the meeting copies of the financial spreadsheet and membership report were distributed. As of April 20, 2013, BCN has a checkbook balance of \$9,549.69. Income this year is \$2,363.60 coming from dues and Redstart Connection Campaign donations. Expenses are \$4,086.75 with the bulk of it being the passing along of \$3,810 to the Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC) representing half of the money raised in the Redstart Connection campaign. Net income is a loss of \$1,723.15. Additional large expenses that are expected will be approximately \$5,300 for the Trends Analysis. At the end of 2013 our fundraising gave us a net gain of over \$7,600.
  - B. All members paid their dues by the end of March and BCN membership remains at 18 Organizational Memberships and 3 Individual Memberships.
  - C. Recently we received an additional \$100 corporate donation to the Redstart Connection that matched a donation from one of our pledgers. This arrived after the payment mentioned above was made to CCFC. An additional check for \$50 will be sent to CCFC. The final total for the campaign is \$7,718.76.
3. Bylaws Update--Mary Lou. Bob Fisher has amended the bylaws to add the Conflict of Interest Policy and the amended bylaws are posted on the BCN website.
4. President's Thoughts--Mary Lou. A review of member organizations' representative allotment (3) and explanation of substitute policy (yes) including no proxy voting. Reps are encouraged to develop a relationship with their own organization's leaders re voting on issues. It was explained that for policy-setting issues, time is

usually allowed after presentation of a subject to allow for reps to check with their boards prior to voting. We are always eager to hear of club's activities and initiatives re bird conservation; please respond when agenda items are called for. The BCN website [www.bcnbirds.org](http://www.bcnbirds.org) is recommended reading for all.

## FUNDRAISING

1. Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund Grant Application--Mary Lou. With considerable assistance from Glenn and Judy P., Mary Lou completed the application and mailed it before the April 1st deadline. We are hoping to get \$1100 to reprint the Birds of Concern brochure featuring our new data. The IDNR will notify us of its decision by July 31, 2013.
2. Redstart Connection--Mary Lou and Glenn. As of April 21st, 2013, the Redstart Connection campaign is completed. It was very successful! BCN is very happy to have raised more than the original goal of \$7500. Glenn mailed a check for \$3,810.00 to Community Cloud Forest Conservation in March. BCN received a very appreciative letter from Rob Cahill, director and founder of Community Cloud Forest Conservation in Guatemala, part of which was read at the meeting. See **Appendix A**.

Glenn sent all donors a thank you letter on behalf of BCN, which included Cahill's letter.

3. Kaiser Group meeting--Suzanne Checchia. Suzanne, Mary Lou and Lee Ramsey met with Mary Kaiser, President of Kaiser Group Inc. to discuss possible strategies for fundraising. While the Kaiser Group works with larger non-profits, such as the World Wildlife Fund US, the Field Museum, Center for Neighborhood Technology and Friends of the Forest Preserves, Cook County, Mary is willing to share ideas for increasing the effectiveness of future BCN fundraising projects. Mary suggested we research the application process for a number of foundations known to make grants to environmental projects. Mary also suggested we utilize our network to develop ideas/contacts and consider ways to raise additional funds within our constituency.
4. Trends Analysis--Glenn. The only response to our request for proposal was from Heather Secker, sister of Eric Secker. The Executive Committee was informed of a possible conflict of interest. It was determined that there wasn't any conflict as long as Eric does not vote as a BCN rep on any issue concerning the analysis. Heather said she would work without a contract and get paid only if we accept her work. If approved she will be paid from the \$3,800 budgeted for the analysis.

We also received a contract from Eric Secker for \$1,000 to update the Trends Analysis web site based on the results of the analysis. This is within our budget for that work. The committee did not seek anyone else to do this work as Eric created the Trends website and is the obvious choice to do the updates.

Heather has completed her work and the committee, in consultation with Eric who did the previous analysis, is discussing whether any additional analysis needs to be done. We hope to finalize this discussion soon and decide whether to accept Heather's work. If that happens then Eric can proceed with the next steps involving the updates.

## ADVOCACY

1. Letter to CC Board President Toni Preckwinkle and 17 Commissioners re Feral Cats--Donnie. The letter, which was drafted with the help of Bob Fisher, is available as **Appendix B** at the end of these minutes. No replies to the letter received as of the April 20th meeting.
2. Advocacy actions since January meeting--Donnie
  - A. 1-31, signed on to the ABC letter to Jeffrey Towner of FWS regarding the Environmental Impact Statement Needed for Merricourt Wind Power Project
  - B. 1-31, asked ABC to act on "Indoor Cats." re this link to Indoor Cat Chow Formula <http://www.catchow.com/Products/Indoor-Formula>

- C. 2-20, signed on to ABC's letter opposing eagle take permits
  - D. 2-25, urged support for Illinois SB 1418 requesting a moratorium on fracking
  - E. 3-11, joined our Kane County Audubon chapter in supporting Senator Noland's bill (SB 2484) which opposes forest preserve mining
  - F. 3-19, testified on behalf of BCN and CW at a hearing of the Cook County Board in opposition to TNR. In a follow-up letter to the entire Cook County Board, proposed an amendment to the present statute prohibiting TNR in and near forest preserves and similar bird rich areas
  - G. 3-28, signed on to support of Illinois SB 1042, which extends liability protection to private landowners providing them immunity from legal action by birders, etc.
  - H. 3-29, supported ABC's effort to provide funding for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
  - I. April, worked with Bob Fisher on Illinois offshore wind legislation: visited/corresponded with State Representative Robyn Gabel and asked her to modify her bill SB 2753 to conform to the Lake Michigan Offshore Wind Energy Advisory Council's recent report. An amendment was included in the bill that contained several specific changes we had advocated.
3. Motion re BCN Position on Trap Neuter and Release/Return--Donnie. Donnie's original motion was not approved. An amended version proposed by Joan Bruchman and Jean Sodemann was approved by a majority of the attendees. The approved motion: The Bird Conservation Network opposes Trap, Neuter Release/Return because it is an ineffective method of limiting the population of free-roaming cats.
  4. Offshore Wind Turbines and their impact on waterfowl, loons, grebes, and passerines. Bob Fisher presented a short PowerPoint (attached to these minutes as **Appendix C**) outlining the poor level of knowledge regarding the impact/threat of offshore turbines on birds.
  5. Collisions--Donnie and Judy Pollock attended a meeting called by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that included researchers, architects, conservation activists and green building advocates. They will likely be part of a group that will develop voluntary guidelines. New research is being compiled and added to a website which will be forwarded to Annette Prince for addition to the CBCM website. Judy is working with National Audubon Society to develop a toolkit for Audubon chapters across the country to use to start their own bird-safe buildings programs.
  6. Orland Grassland--Mary Lou. We've been attempting to assist the steward to persuade the FPDCC to consider avoiding the wetlands on the east side of the grassland when laying out the new bike path around Orland Grassland. Letters from BCN have been sent to Dave Kircher, CCFPD landscape architect, and CCFPC Superintendent Arnold Randall, with little success. Mary Lou and Joan Bruchman had a tour of the east side of the grassland with steward Pat Hayes and agree with the steward that the east edge would be better left untouched. A work in progress.

## PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

1. BCN Survey and New Monitor Protocols--Lee. This year marks 15 years of bird monitoring in Chicago Wilderness. Today there are approximately 165 monitors in 8 counties of Illinois and northwest Indiana, surveying more than 200 sites. Cook County has about 60 monitors and is issuing them credentials for identity, including ID badge, volunteer activity permit, parking permit and identification vest. The BCN Survey now has its own email address: [bcnsurvey@gmail.com](mailto:bcnsurvey@gmail.com). The official breeding season for the Survey, now and in the future, is the month of June (the whole month). We ask all monitors to make at least two visits to their site(s), at least a week apart. Many individual monitors continue to make a difference for birds. Walter Marcisz's Calumet data has been compiled and his recommendations will be incorporated into Millennium Reserve planning.
2. Monitors' Annual Outing, May 11th--Joan. As a thank you to BCN's monitors, an outing will be held, including bird walk led by Jon Duerr at the St. Charles Park District's Hickory Knolls Natural Area in Kane

County followed by a picnic lunch. This is a free event, but monitors are asked to register before May 4th to Joan Bruchman [pjbruchman@yahoo.com](mailto:pjbruchman@yahoo.com)

3. Lincoln Park Zoo Black-crowned Night-Heron Colony Chris Williamson could not attend our BCN meeting but she reports that she will meet next week with Keith Thompson of LPZ in the 3rd year of their working together to keep the South Pond Night-Heron colony safe. Chris reports that Keith appreciates having a rep from BCN/the birding community to work with.
4. Sponsorship of High School Student to Attend AOS/COS Meeting--Glenn. In August the Field Museum will host the annual joint meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) and the Cooper Ornithological Society (COS). BCN received a letter from Nick Block, Student Event Chair for the meeting, inviting us to sponsor a high school student to attend one day of the meeting. The cost of the sponsorship is \$130.

At the last BCN Executive Committee Meeting the committee voted to sponsor one student. Glenn will be the contact person and will arrange for payment. Sponsoring organizations will get their name and website displayed on the AOU/COS website and in the printed meeting booklet. Perhaps one of the sponsored students will give a report at a future meeting.

5. Red-headed Woodpecker Blitz--Judy. The blitz is well under way – county coordinators are in place and blitzers are being sought. <http://www.habitatproject.org/birds/birdblitz2013.html> .
6. Chicago Migratory Bird Alliance Final Event--Judy. Ideas for a final event to showcase the work of this Alliance were discussed .
7. CCFPD Recreation Plan Final--Judy. The final plan can be found here: <http://fpdcc.com/recreation-master-plan/> The plan attempts to quantify the amount of land that is currently not maintained as natural habitat and to limit that, which is good. Consultation about placement of recreational features at sites that have important bird habitat was done – for example at Miller Meadow and Camp Pine Woods. Other features were not what bird conservation people would prefer, such as 3 dog parks (where there is presently one). Overall, the plan had disappointingly little about engaging people with nature as a form of recreation, and a few troublesome suggestions that we will want to monitor such as zip lines/canopy tours, potential expansion of dirt biking, and the dog parks.
8. Lake County Audubon Update on Almond Marsh and Fishing Tube Covers--Diane Rosenberg. The 12 artificial platforms that were installed to provide nesting sites for the great blue herons that were displaced because the trees have fallen at Almond Marsh have been successful. In June 2012 the count was 16 tree nests with 46 young and 11 platform nests with 40 young!

This spring, LCAS, with the permission of the LCFPD, has installed extensions on one of the platforms as an experiment. Half way up the platform tripod, cross beams have been attached, and 3 nesting sites have been placed, one on each leg of the tripod. We are waiting to see if the herons will claim these potential nesting sites.

The platforms at Almond Marsh rookery are viewable mainly from a parking lot and the marsh area is manned by volunteers on Saturday mornings April through June. LCAS has hosted an April Welcome Back Herons hot chocolate/coffee and doughnuts event and a June evening Cheese and Crackers with the Herons to attract families, especially children. It is LCAS's opinion that the platform project has been instrumental in increasing the public's awareness of birds and the impact of people on habitat change.

LCAS was asked to work with the LCFPD to see if covers could be placed on the fishing line tubes in Lake County. The Cook County Fisheries Department information and cover design were sent to Greg Townsend, of the LCFPD, who, with his staff, designed and hand-cut the tube covers from truck flaps. The covers are attached by a bolt that allows the covers to swivel up and back down into place. The Lake County design is recommended, since it modifies the Cook County design in which the cap is more rigid. Townsend mentioned that another benefit of the covers is that the clean-out of the tubes is easier, because the closed covers also prevent bees/wasps from getting into the tubes.

9. DuPage County Fishing Tube Covers--Linda Padera. The DuPage County Forest Preserve District has evaluated the fishing line tubes with covers and has created its own design. The tubes with covers are presently being installed.
10. Lake-Cook Update on Barn Owl Nesting Boxes--Jean Sodemann. On November 11, 2012, after nearly two years of legwork by multiple Lake/Cook Chapter members, the first two Barn Owl boxes were installed in an effort to give state-endangered barn owls a place to call home in Lake County. A few weeks later, three more boxes were delivered to a private landowner who has agreed to install the boxes in barns on his property. All boxes were built, and the first two installed, by chapter member John Milburn and his partner Colleen Seep. Several organizations assisted with site identification including the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, Illinois Natural History Survey, and Conserve Lake County. Other installations are planned and John already has the next four boxes ready to go.

Barn owls are rare in the Midwest and are endangered in Illinois largely because of land use changes and particularly grassland disappearance that has severely limited voles, their primary prey. This is particularly true in Lake County where appropriate habitat is scarce. However, nest boxes elsewhere in the state have proved successful in attracting the owls, and the barn owl recovery plan approved by the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources and the Endangered Species Protection Board in November 2010 is encouraging box installation in suitable nesting areas. If barn owls do take up residence in any of Lake/Cook Chapter's nest boxes, we will have contributed to the state's initiative.

11. Window Collisions at NEIU--Annette Prince reported. Libby Hill is going ahead with the NEIU Birds and Windows Project, under the rubric of the Geography and Environmental Studies Dept., with the cooperation of the Facilities Management Dept., the NEIU grounds crew, the Biology Dept., which has loaned the use of a freezer, the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, under whose salvage permit they will work, and the Field Museum, which will be the depository of the frozen birds for research.

This is a spring pilot project, and they should gear up again in the fall. The students want to present their research at the annual research symposium next spring. They will be taking pictures and sending Libby the data for each bird.

#### **OTHER**

- Valerie Lewis announced the annual Smith Symposium at Ryerson Woods on May 18th at which Kenn Kaufman will be the keynote speaker. If anyone wants to hear Kenn and not attend the dinner and silent auction they can come just for dessert and the talk for \$25.
- Bob Fisher reported that with the help of donations (including some from BCN reps), IOS has been able to fund 14 of the 22 grant applications it received this year for bird conservation.
- Lee Witkowski noted that the annual Hummingbird Festival at Sagawau will be August 17th from 8am to 3pm.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next BCN Quarterly Meeting will be July 27th at a location to be announced.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Mellon  
President

**APPENDIX A**  
*Thank You Letter from Rob Cahill*

Mary Lou Mellon, President  
Bird Conservation Network  
1718 Sherman Avenue, #210  
Evanston, IL 60201

Date 3/12/13

Dear Mary Lou Mellon,

On behalf of Community Cloud Forest Conservation and on behalf of the villages that border the cloud forests of the central highlands of Guatemala and their inhabitants whose livelihoods are improving thanks to conservation efforts, we thank you! On February 27th, CCFC received BCN's contribution of 3,810.00 toward our reforestation project. Thank you! We are pleased to inform you of three major developments that coincide with this contribution. First, your contribution is being combined with \$1,979.91 that we raised before the Redstart Connection campaign began, which gives us a total of \$5,789.91. This fund allows CCFC to add 7.72 acres to our RR&R program (rescue, reforestation, and restoration). Second, we are thrilled to announce the establishment of a 55 acre reserve specifically dedicated to the conservation of neotropical migratory birds of special concern: Olive-sided Flycatcher, Wood Thrush and Golden-cheeked and Golden-winged Warblers. Thanks to a major gift by two anonymous donors, CCFC is able to place this 55 acre area under protection. Your 7.72 acres are within this new refuge in an area that had recently been illegally deforested and is now, thanks to you, being restored with native trees and plants. BCN's contribution is being used exclusively to rescue, reforest, restore and protect for perpetuity this 7.72 acre area of critical importance to migratory birds. Third, Ian Pope, graduate student at the University of Purdue and CCFC visiting scholar is including the BCN's reforestation area in his mapping of the cloud forests of Guatemala's central highlands. His study is producing interesting maps and analysis that will soon be available to BCN. With this letter of thanks comes a cordial invitation to BCN to visit this new reserve in person and / or on line through YouTube videos that are currently being edited.

Sincerely,

Rob Cahill,  
Director and Founder, CCFC  
Community Cloud Forest Conservation— 501c3 Not-for-profit Organization  
Community Cloud Forest Conservation  
Apartado 5,  
Coban  
Alta Verapaz, Guatemala  
T (502) 4010-0852  
[Rob@cloudforestconservation.org](mailto:Rob@cloudforestconservation.org)  
[www.cloudforestconservation.org](http://www.cloudforestconservation.org)  
Thanks

## APPENDIX B

### *Letter to Cook Country Board President Toni Preckwinkle re TNR*

Dear President Preckwinkle,

I send the attached letter on behalf of Mary Lou Mellon, President, Bird Conservation Network; and Judy Pollock, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Chicago Region.

Sincerely,

Donnie Dann  
Past President and Advocacy Chair  
Bird Conservation Network

President Toni Preckwinkle and Cook County Commissioners.

We write on behalf of Audubon – Chicago Region and the Bird Conservation Network.

Thank you for holding the March 19th 2013 hearing of the Legislation and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee to discuss feral cat management. Some of our alliance members had an opportunity to express their views; we appreciate that opportunity. We are writing to provide additional facts for your consideration.

It's vital to focus on what's at stake here. The following quote is by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, from the 2009 US Fish and Wildlife Service State of the Birds report:

“Just as they were when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* nearly 50 years ago, birds today are a bellwether of the health of land, water and ecosystems. From shorebirds in New England to warblers in Michigan to songbirds in Hawaii, we are seeing disturbing downward population trends that should set off environmental alarm bells. We must work together now to ensure we never hear the deafening silence in our forests, fields and backyards that Rachel Carson warned us about.”

We ask your help in safeguarding the thousands of rare and declining birds that nest in or visit Cook County. Our common goal should be to minimize interactions between cats (a non native predator) and our native birds. Control of feral cat populations and conservation of native birds and other wildlife support the goals of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan and the Chicago Wilderness Position Statement on Feral and Unattended Domestic Cats Outdoors.

([http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members/downloads/General/CW%20Feral%20Cat%20Position%20Statement%20FINAL\\_APPROVED.pdf](http://www.chicagowilderness.org/members/downloads/General/CW%20Feral%20Cat%20Position%20Statement%20FINAL_APPROVED.pdf) )

Both goals have been adopted and endorsed by the Executive Council of the Chicago Wilderness alliance.

We urge you to modify the existing TNR ordinance to ensure that cat colonies are far (a minimum of 0.5 miles) from habitats used by birds of conservation concern - the edges of forest preserves, Important Bird Areas, natural areas in parks, etc. We further urge the Board to give our native wildlife the same consideration as given to outdoor/feral cats, and commission an exhaustive study of the effectiveness of TNR in reducing feral cat numbers in the County. The attached appendices provide comprehensive background for these requests.

Sincerely,

Bird Conservation Network, Mary Lou Mellon, President  
Audubon Chicago Region, Judy Pollock, Director of Bird Conservation

## APPENDIX C

Bob Fisher's Wind Turbines and Their Impact on Waterfowl, Loons, Grebes, and Passerines Presentation

Offshore turbines  
and waterbirds –  
can they coexist  
in the Great  
Lakes?