

## FINAL MINUTES

### Bird Conservation Network Saturday, July 9, 2022 Online Video Conference

#### QUARTERLY MEETING

**Attendees:** Pat Andersen (TCA), Tim Balassie (KCA), Stephanie Beilke (AGL), Diann Bilderback (DBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Donnie Dann (TNC), Diane Hicks (TCA), Vera Leopold (TWI), Mark Luscombe (Ft Dearborn), Mary Lou Mellon (CBCM), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Judy Pollock (CAS), Annette Prince (CBCM), Eric Secker (KCA), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Lisette Zaid (CAS).  
Mary Bernat (At-Large), Bob Fisher (IAS), Rita Renwick (WCA), and Carla Schmakel (LCA) joined after the meeting was called to order.

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** President Secker called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. A quorum was present with 11 organizations represented. Everyone introduced themselves with their name and organization(s) with which they are affiliated.

#### Administration:

##### **1. Approval of minutes of April 16, 2022 Quarterly Meeting**

**Motion:** Bird Conservation Network approves the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting on April 16, 2022, as presented.

Moved: Sonny Cohen

Seconded: Judy Pollock

Action: Approved

##### **2. Membership & Treasurer's Report (Pavelka)**

###### **1) Membership Report**

Charlotte Pavelka reported that everyone is paid up on dues for membership.

###### **2) Treasurer's Report**

Pavelka reviewed BCN's year-to-date expenses (report attached). All dues have come in, and we have so far paid half of the needed expenses for the Trends Analysis media relations and videography projects. The second half is due when projects are complete. Our expenses are exceeding our dues this year, which started out on the lower side.

In looking at BCN's projected balance, roughly \$3000 more in income is needed to get the TA communications out to people. Pavelka proposed that we solicit donations from member groups to help cover the expense for the two Trends Analysis dissemination projects: \$300 suggested for larger organizations and \$100 for smaller member groups. There would not be a set amount, but what you think is doable for your group.

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Pavelka also said that an increase in membership dues is desirable to cover BCN's expenses. However, ideally, we don't want any group to feel they can't afford the dues or would need to seek a waiver because of not having the financial capacity. Discussion followed about the level of dues increase that all members would find feasible. Some reps said they might need to seek a waiver if dues increased from \$100 a year to \$200.

Annette Prince said doubling the membership cost seemed like a lot at once for some organizations; BCN should seek to raise additional funds we want to spend. Considering how successful the TA rollout was, hopefully BCN would find it easier to successfully solicit donations.

**Motion:** Raise the dues amount for BCN member groups to \$150, taking effect in the 2023 cycle.

Moved: Judy Pollock

Seconded: Lisette Zaid

In discussion, Cohen suggested tabling the decision so organizations not on the call can weigh in the dues increase. Pavelka suggested it was better to know the dues increase now so groups can decide how much they can give for the extra donation.

Action: Approved

In the next month we will send a communication asking for donations for the TA projects and sharing the need to increase dues. Secker said we should include in the communication that if any groups have a financial hardship with the higher amount, reach out to us to discuss. It is more important that everyone stay involved and be represented here.

Donnie Dann suggested we should emphasize our accomplishments so far with the Trends Analysis in the letter soliciting donations. Pollock added that there is very little funding available for long-term monitoring programs like BCN is doing. This is a unique and all-volunteer effort.

### **3. Consideration of new at-large member Robert Kusel (Secker)**

Secker said that Robert Kusel was announced as a potential new at-large member of BCN at the April quarterly meeting, and it is now time to vote on his membership.

**Motion:** Approve Robert Kusel as a new individual at-large member of BCN.

Moved: Donnie Dann

Seconded: Tim Balassie

Action: Approved

Secker added that Kusel is excited to be part of our group and quite active in advocacy.

### **4. ExComm update (Secker)**

Secker announced that Ted Wolff has moved to Arizona, so he has stepped down as an at-large member of the Executive Committee. As of now we do not have plans to add another at-large ExComm member.

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### Projects & Initiatives:

#### 1. BCN Trends Analysis and RFP Updates (Bilderback)

Diann Bilderback said that the Trends Analysis findings were formally announced on June 7<sup>th</sup>. They were warmly and enthusiastically received with great media coverage in the first week: radio interviews on *The Mike Nowak Show* and *Birdy Bunch*, digital and print stories in the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Birdwatching Daily* magazine, Chicago Wilderness newsletter, and more. There was also a great buzz on social media. She encouraged member groups to share the info on their websites and/or feature it in a newsletter to get the word out (see attached list of media coverage and presentations).

We have a commitment from American Bird Conservancy to include a brief in their publication; this organization has a great reach and prestige. *Birdwatching Daily* plans to do a longer piece next summer, probably focusing on Henslow's Sparrow. A pending interview with Pavelka will run any day now on WTTW. All these are good wins both regionally and nationally. We have bylines (articles with someone's name attached to it) pending with Illinois Audubon Society, Indiana Audubon, and *Chicago Birder*. There has also been interest from *Daily Herald* and *Living Bird* magazine, and we will follow up.

Bilderback said that the team (Secker, Pollock, Cohen, Fisher, and herself) are managing an active presentation calendar. She shared a list of all talks given by BCN leaders so far. We have also started to reach some land managers, a critical audience. Half a dozen additional meetings are scheduled. We will be presenting about every month through January. The amount of interest is very encouraging. Secker added that the Chicago Wilderness Café had a lot of participation, and land managers were involved. When it was split into breakout groups, there was an exciting dialogue to the point that when time ran out, we added more to continue the discussion!

The news release and 13-page report addressing the TA findings are both posted on the current BCN website (<https://www.bcnbirds.org/trends21/>) and will be prominent on the new website. The TA video is also nearing completion. As next steps, we are working on securing presentations with county land managers and other conservation partners; these are the groups we want to collaborate with in the future. We're looking for coordinators and monitors' help in reaching the appropriate contacts. The TA rollout has a long tail, and we will likely go well into next year with media and presentation opportunities. Bilderback added that Orland Grassland volunteers are interested in comparing their data with our data, offering a first collaboration opportunity.

Secker then screened the nearly final cut of the TA video, filmed at Nelson Lake/Dick Young Forest Preserve in Kane County with the video group that BCN hired. After the viewing, Secker recognized many people who have been involved with BCN from the beginning. This video is a testament to our strength as a collaborative of groups! **Please reach out to Bilderback and Secker if you have comments or feedback on the video.**

Pollock said congratulations! Many points were raised during the CW Café meeting that can be followed up on, and we should think about next steps. There is an important role

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for us to play in sharing this information out. Monitors were happy to contribute to the next presentation; talks given to clubs should focus on trying to get new monitors.

Pavelka shared feedback on the order and content that worked well for previous talks. It's good to feature a "newbie" to monitoring and not just a very experienced monitor, to make it more accessible/less intimidating.

Bob Fisher said one of our main target groups to collaborate with is professionals and county forest preserve districts. Bird clubs can help us get in front of the right people. Secker added that we are actively engaging land managers with the data. The PR is promoting saving more habitat for birds, supporting shrubland, and preserving more open space that is not currently protected. Some land managers already work very closely with BCN, and we are still building the relationship with others.

Discussion continued on other contacts we should reach with the TA messaging. Secker said we are trying to pull together a broader list. There is the potential to plan monitoring programs in the future where they don't currently exist. Pavelka suggested reaching out to land managers of state parks, even though we are not monitoring there, as well as municipalities or some of the lakeshore communities. Fisher said we also want to reach Midewin groups and state-owned properties in Will, Lake, and McHenry counties. The Forest Service does a lot of its own monitoring at Midewin.

Pollock thanked Bilderback for all her work convening meetings, assembling the report, etc. Everyone on the committee has worked really hard and brought a lot. Secker also said he was grateful for the time everyone has spent; it's really making a difference! Finally, he thanked all the monitors, as we wouldn't have the data without them.

### **2. BCN Survey Update and Bird Monitor Brunch Plans (Balassie)**

Balassie said that we are wrapping up the 2022 monitoring season. Most of the people on this call are monitors themselves! Balassie has been in touch on proper accounting in the eBird portal to make sure the results are in Cornell and tagged properly. He announced Cathy Stevens as the new county coordinator for Will County. Balassie noted that Midewin does have a bird monitoring program administered by The Nature Conservancy and Illinois Audubon. We pull in that data for the Trends Analysis.

There will be a monitor appreciation event this year. Pavelka has put together a separate event for Lake and McHenry counties; Balassie is working on something for the rest of the counties' monitors, which will probably be held in Cook County in late August. It is not determined yet what the event will look like, but it could be what we did in the past: a catered lunch preceded by a nature walk.

Balassie reviewed rough numbers for total monitors and sites. Approximately 199 individuals are registered as monitors for BCN across the 6-county region. Not all are currently active or assigned a site. About 142 sites are monitored, but several of these sites are large and are split up to be covered by multiple monitors. There is an average

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of eight monitoring points per site. We do not have definitive numbers on how many people were out monitoring in the field in 2022, as this is difficult to calculate.

This is Balassie's last year serving as Survey Coordinator. He is interested in talking to people who might want to assume the position! If you're interested in learning more about Balassie's role or what county coordinators do, please connect with him or anyone on ExComm.

### 3. BCN Website Revision (Secker, Cohen)

Secker said that he and Cohen now have a pretty good mockup of the new website, and the project is progressing well. We should be able to launch it in a month or so, which will coincide well with the increased TA promotion. The new site will offer a better opportunity to share action items and other news more easily. The existing website is almost 20 years old, so it's hard to utilize it the way a modern website should be used.

Cohen recognized that they have been talking about the new website for several months. He is cognizant that much of their volunteer bandwidth was taken up by the TA rollout, but this was definitely the right priority. After addressing some blocks on the website, the project is moving forward well.

### Advocacy/Conservation Issues:

#### 1. Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

- Bob Fisher gave an excellent response to the IIPD Board regarding the proposed "Illinois International Port District Master Plan". Most significant was the preservation of the woodland portion (where bald eagles nest) that was intended to be cleared for an RV park.
- Excellent "advocacy" has been done on the Trends Analysis by Diane, Bob and others and they deserve our appreciation and thanks!
- Signed on to a letter supporting passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act ("RAWA"), which we believe offers the best chance to address the extinction crisis and loss of biodiversity occurring in this country. Congress routinely underfunds endangered species conservation through the annual appropriations process, securing \$1.4 billion in dedicated funding by passing RAWA will be a once in a generation opportunity and will define wildlife funding for decades to come. It has passed the House and we are hopeful it will also clear the Senate.
- Signed a petition to ban agricultural pesticides on National Wildlife Refuges.

Dann said that the Illinois International Port District Master Plan issue turned out to be a success! The plan concerns the redevelopment and development of Lake Calumet. In the original plan, there was a design to clear the woodland on one of the "fingers" of land that extend into Lake Calumet. Bald Eagles are nesting there, and many other flora and fauna are present. Through our efforts and others', that plan was stripped out of the final proposal version. We asked for some other things such as limits on speed of boaters, etc. but will still have to see how that shakes out.

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Fisher mentioned a “hiccup” with the Great Lakes Wind and Wildlife Coalition, the main purpose of which is to develop standards for off-shore wind turbines in the Great Lakes. The departure from American Bird Conservancy of one contact and death of another contact temporarily slowed their progress. However, it has been an orderly transition, and ABC is actively looking for a replacement. BCN is active in this coalition.

The Illinois legislature shelved a bill in the regular session that would have fast-tracked the utility-scale wind turbine array in Lake Michigan, but it is likely to be brought up again in the special session when called with a possibility it will pass. There are some legal questions associated with the bill, in particular the public trust, but apparently many legislators are interested in seeing wind turbines installed in Illinois waters in Lake Michigan. Secker asked if there were any action items for individuals at this time? Fisher said not yet, but probably later this year when the special session is called.

Balassie asked whether plans have been shelved for the Carvana tower near Harms Woods preserve due to the company’s financial problems. Lisette Zaid said that Carvana is no longer on hold in Illinois and can again operate, but the Skokie project seems to not be moving forward. BCN reps applauded this great news.

Links shared about the Carvana project:

- ABC7: [“Carvana’s dealer license suspended in Illinois; Skokie will no longer review request to build tower.”](#) May 17, 2022.

- WTTW: [“Carvana’s Back in Business in Illinois, Sort of, But Skokie Tower Still on Hold.”](#) May 27, 2022.

## 2. Other Advocacy Issues

1) **Lake Calumet Master Plan** – Dann covered this in his advocacy report.

2) **Montrose Dunes**

Secker raised the back-and-forth issues with Montrose Dunes stewardship and asked for updates on our connections with the Chicago Park District. Discussion followed about BCN members’ conversations with CPD around future stewardship. Secker said Leslie Borns has done incredible work at Montrose over the years. It would be great to coordinate with Chicago birding clubs to do something to recognize all her work.

## Old Business:

### 1. Quarterly newsletter/Adding general members (Secker)

Secker said we have discussed a long-term goal of allowing the general public to join BCN through membership or a mailing list. This was an item that Terry Schilling (an earlier BCN President) attempted to update with the bylaws that was not completed. Bird clubs have general members, whereas BCN representatives constitute the board for the organization. Should we also add general members who pay dues?

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He reported that ExComm discussed this topic again at their last meeting and decided adding general members seemed too confusing or convoluted. They concluded it was a better fit for our organization to invite people to “join BCN” as a donor and/or by receiving a quarterly BCN newsletter. We want to find ways to better reach a broad audience that we can pull in to get involved.

### **2. Advocacy issues that arise between meetings (Bernat)**

Are group emails sent from a BCN member to other members the most efficient way to promote action alerts and other urgent matters? In addition to BCN being the provider of a mailing list for such purposes, could or should BCN's future new website be a clearinghouse for such matters? Could or should BCN be expected to post positions on matters in order to facilitate members taking action? Sample letters? Sample comments? How to file a witness slip? How and by whom would issues be vetted?

This has been an ongoing discussion on how BCN reps can best communicate between meetings about advocacy issues. Bernat requested ideas, as she said the communication link is broken between meetings. Last year it had been suggested she send out an email to all representatives about action they can take on a time-sensitive advocacy issue; is this desired or would it clog the email list? Bernat said a value-added item for BCN might be to have a clearinghouse on the website for time-sensitive advocacy issues that can't wait three months for the next BCN meeting.

Cohen said the BCN President is a focal place for content. As issues arise, it's up to the President to communicate them to the Executive Committee. If appropriate, there can be a quick ExComm meeting to discuss what action to take, then bring the issue to the larger group. Since BCN is a volunteer organization, leadership needs help with assembling the details/instructions for an issue brought up by an individual.

Leopold said we seem to be discussing two different types of advocacy: 1, major conservation issues that BCN can act or weigh in on as an entity; and 2, time-sensitive issues that we as individuals can act on like signing a petition, contacting a village council, etc. What is the process for communicating about those time-sensitive individual action alerts?

Several ideas were discussed for BCN members sharing advocacy actions/alerts. There could be a directory on the BCN website of advocacy actions that are being promoted by different member groups. A discussion board or list-serv for sharing news from BCN members was another idea. BCN position statements could be posted on the website along with the action(s) we are recommending.

Pollock suggested scheduling a discussion at a future meeting to set a policy. Chicago Audubon Society has come up with guidelines about which issues to act on. They have a webpage listing advocacy issues/positions: <https://www.chicagoaudubon.org/issues>. The various positions are approved at CAS board meetings.

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Bilderback asked what the vetting process is for items that BCN needs to get involved with, versus issues that are outside our scope. Many issues get funneled to Secker. There needs to be some kind of filtering process in place. Secker said we need a better process to determine which items get elevated to which level. Advocacy issues can be regional, statewide, direct local impacts, or more ancillary. We want to make sure important issues don't get overlooked if people are inundated with emails. He said we should find it easier to send out emails after the new website launches. More news can also be communicated through the website.

Leopold asked for clarification on whether individual BCN members are encouraged to send out action alerts to the full BCN list, or whether they need to be vetted by the President/ExComm first. She would like to know clear direction on how to use the BCN member list for this purpose. Cohen commented that he finds it desirable to limit bureaucracy and empower reps to directly provide the details on issues they find important and actions they're seeking. Secker stated there needs to be a balance between directly encouraging reps to take action on something time-sensitive but also making sure we are working collaboratively. As a team we can enact more change.

Bernat said she was interested in a meeting or discussion to learn more about CAS' vetting process/policy on advocacy issues. Bilderback and Leopold expressed interest in participating. Secker said he will send an email to start this discussion.

Fisher pointed out that he and Dann already form the BCN Advocacy Committee and said we don't want to reinvent the wheel. There is the need for a screening process on advocacy issues, and that was the original intent for the advocacy group to determine if they were within the scope for BCN and whether BCN could take a useful action.

Secker asked reps to follow up by email with any further thoughts or discussion.

### **New Business:**

#### **1. Nominating Committee for 2023 (Secker)**

Secker said that it is time to get started with forming a Nominating Committee and gathering names of interested people. BCN will have a couple leadership positions open. If anyone is interested in helping, please let him know.

### **Announcements:**

#### **1. Update about the Kankakee Refuge, FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife (Bernat)**

The Kankakee Refuge has followed a long, uphill road strewn with political boulders of local, state and federal origin since it was authorized in 2000 as a bi-state refuge in IL and IN to restore and protect the wetlands along the Kankakee River and the oak savannas and sand prairies to the south of the wetlands. In 2016 it was officially established in IL only, but then came the political climate in Washington that was unfavorable to land and wildlife protection. Last year the Refuge got on track again when the FWS sought comments on a draft Land Protection Plan. BCN sent one of the more than 800 comment letters that the FWS

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received. FWS has produced a final Land Protection Plan and—after yet another pause due to searching for a new refuge manager after the previous one moved on—is expected to proceed with land acquisition from willing land owners now that a new manager was installed this week.

Bernat thanked BCN for the support on this issue.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife is a FWS program that helps landowners and land managers improve habitat to benefit migratory birds and T&E and at-risk species. With a focus on habitats of conservation concern, the Partners program provides technical and financial support on projects that range from a wetland of a few acres to a grassland several hundred thousand acres in size. I spoke with them at an open house on the Kankakee Refuge and thought the program would be an interesting presentation for a group.

### Meeting Takeaways – Representative Communication

- 1) Share any feedback on the Trends Analysis video with Secker and Bilderback.
- 2) Connect with Balassie if interested in Survey Coordinator or County Coordinator roles.
- 3) Watch for a letter regarding BCN dues increase and donations for TA projects.
- 4) Let Secker know if you are interested in serving on the Nominating Committee or in a BCN leadership position.

### Proposed Next Meeting

October 22, 2022– Zoom videoconference?

### Adjournment

**Motion:** Adjourn the BCN quarterly meeting.

Moved: Diann Bilderback

Seconded: Rita Renwick

Action: Approved

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Vera Leopold  
Secretary*

Treasurer's Report - BCN Meeting – July 2022					
<b>1) Membership Report</b>					
2022 membership paid by 20 organizations/2 individual. 1 Reciprocal organization.					
<b>2) Treasurer's Report</b>					
2022 Income	Budget YE 22	YTD - Q1/Q2	Proj. Q3/Q4	Projected YE	
Dues:	\$ 2,070.00	\$ 2,070.00	\$ -	\$ 2,070.00	
Donations - General:	\$ 100.00	\$ 224.11	\$ 30.00	\$ 254.11	Mchenry Audubon \$150, David Johnson \$15, Bob Fisher \$35, Casey Guernsey \$19.11, Amazon smile \$5
<b>Donations - Trends</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,000.00</b>	<b>Goal is \$4000 to keep fund in black but this is a more realistic projection</b>
Donations - Paypal prior yr transfer	\$ -	\$ 77.92	\$ -	\$ 77.92	
Annual Transfer to Trends from General:	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	
Total:	<b>\$ 2,670.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,872.03</b>	<b>\$ 2,030.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,902.03</b>	
2022 Expenses					
Program Expenses					
Trends Communication	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,680.00	\$ 2,680.00	\$ 5,360.00	Up to \$5000 approved at Oct '21 Mtg; RFPs came in slightly higher
Monitor Training & Recognition	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	
Website Redevelopment	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 3,000.00	Approved at Oct '21 Mtg
BCN Web Site Hosting	\$ 600.00	\$ -	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00	
Dues/Fees to other organizations	\$ 200.00	\$ -	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	IEC \$150, Chicago Wilderness \$50
Administrative Expenses	\$ 150.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 68.00	
Transfer from General to Trends Analysis	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	
Total:	\$ 6,950.00	\$ 4,698.00	\$ 5,530.00	\$ 10,228.00	
2022 Net Income	<b>\$ (4,280.00)</b>	<b>\$ (1,825.97)</b>	<b>\$ (3,500.00)</b>	<b>\$ (5,325.97)</b>	
Checkbook balance -6/28/22		\$7,051.44	\$3,551.44	\$3,551.44	
Trends Analysis Reserve:	\$ (673.40)	\$ (1,353.40)	\$ (2,033.40)	<b>(\$2,033.40)</b>	
General Funds Balance	\$ 5,465.84	\$ 8,404.84	\$ 5,584.84	\$5,584.84	
Total Balance	<b>\$ 4,792.44</b>	<b>\$ 7,051.44</b>	<b>\$ 3,551.44</b>	\$3,551.44	