

FINAL MINUTES

Bird Conservation Network Saturday, October 22, 2022 Online Video Conference

QUARTERLY MEETING

Attendees: Pat Andersen (TCA), Tim Balassie (KCA), Mary Bernat (At-large), Diann Bilderback (DBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Donnie Dann (TNC), Dan Ellig (Lake-Cook), Bob Fisher (IAS), Robert Kusel (At-large), Vera Leopold (TWI), Charlotte Pavelka (LCA), Annette Prince (CBCM), Eric Secker (KCA), Chris Williamson (COS), Lee Witkowski (WCA).

Guests: None

Call to Order: President Secker called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. There was a quorum 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 July 9, 2022 Quarterly Meeting

Vera Leopold noted that she made minor changes after previously sending the minutes out, but there were no additional revisions to the final.

Motion: Approve the minutes of the July 9th, 2022 quarterly meeting as presented.

Moved: Chris Williamson

Seconded: Diann Bilderback

Action: Approved

2. Membership & Treasurer's Report (Pavelka)

1) Membership Report

Charlotte Pavelka reported that 2022 membership has been paid by 20 organizations and three individual members.

2) Treasurer's Report

Pavelka asked everyone to give a big thank-you to Glenn Gabanski for his substantial \$500 donation to the Trends Analysis (see attached Treasurer's Report). She later received a \$300 donation through Lake County Audubon, and Kane County Audubon has pledged to donate \$200, both for the Trends. Pavelka said we will be launching a fall fundraising campaign, and we are asking all organizations to consider giving to it.

Pavelka said a second round of fundraising is needed because we have incurred significant costs in 2022 for the new website, the Trends Analysis dissemination effort, and the TA video project. These were very appropriate projects to keep our organization thriving, but she feels our current budget level is too low. In the absence of more

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donations, our balance will be at \$2,000 by the end of the year.

Chris Williamson requested a document of a few paragraphs that explains why new donations are needed that reps can pass along to their boards. Donnie Dann asked what the fundraising goal is. These questions were deferred to the later agenda item.

Projects & Initiatives:

1. BCN Trends Analysis Dissemination Updates (Bilderback)

Diann Bilderback shared slides on the Trends Analysis dissemination accomplishments so far. She explained that since the June rollout, we have now been able to reach media that had longer lead times. A nice piece appeared in WTTW online interviewing Pavelka, and the TA results were featured on front page of the *Chicago Tribune* on July 18th! There was a story in *Living Bird* magazine, which is national and one of the most prestigious bird publications in the U.S. Finally, there was a nice feature in the *Daily Herald* with Jeff Reiter's whole column devoted to the Trends. Overall, we've received good local and social media coverage with some marquee regional and national coverage, and we should feel good about this investment in media relations.

There has also been a lot of presentation activity. We've gotten in front of several bird clubs and included reports from monitors on the experience. Judy Pollock participated in a Department of Interior workshop this week, in which they were interested in our monitoring protocol. They held up BCN's approach as a model for how we engage a volunteer workforce in land management! There were 117 people on that call.

Upcoming talks will be given to Kane County Audubon, a DuPage Forest Preserve District team, and to the Orland Grassland Volunteers among others. The Orland Grassland group wants to compare BCN's results with their own monitoring data. We also submitted two abstracts to the Wild Things conference in February 2023: one on the Chicago region as an important migratory corridor, and the other about land management practices that benefit birds.

To sum up, we have made a lot of "rolling thunder" over a 5-month period. In addition to publishing our findings, it reflects well on BCN as an organization that these media were interested enough in our story to devote "real estate" to telling it! This gives BCN a good reputation at the local and national level.

Secker thanked Bilderback for keeping this momentum going and all the hard work. He added he is happy with the work accomplished by Bob Dolgan, our PR contractor. A lot of outlets that picked up our story were thanks to Bob's efforts. In DuPage County and elsewhere, we are actually meeting with those doing on-the-ground habitat restoration.

Bilderback commented we have shown depth in the organization by having multiple presenters of the material (Fisher, Pollock, and Secker). We'd also like to integrate the monitoring story going forward to bring home the process of how the data is collected. Williamson asked about feedback received and general reaction to the talks. Bilderback responded that it has been very positive; we usually get a lot of questions and requests

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for the presentation afterward. Secker noted that in sharing past TA results, there were a lot of questions about methods and how data was collected. This time around, people were asking us advice and how best to do management, suggesting people now find credibility in BCN. The Science Committee and Valerie Steen, who we contracted with for the data analysis, all helped make this possible.

Dann asked if someone were interested to be a presenter, do you have a script or outline to cover the salient points? Bilderback said the introductory slides have notes, but we have not gone that far yet with the habitat content. We can make that happen if others are interested in joining the team!

Secker requested that reps let him or Bilderback know of any groups that might like to hear a presentation from BCN on the Trends Analysis findings. If your club is interested or you're connected with a local land management group, please let us know.

Fisher emphasized that the major target audiences going forward are the land management groups themselves. He suggested we need more direct contact with these land managers and forest preserve districts. The DuPage FPD meeting in November will be a "guinea pig" to see what responses and dialogue we get there. We would like to get a roundtable going with Cook Co FPD, Will Co FPD, and Chicago Park District. How can we adapt how we're gathering data and interpreting it to meet their needs? Secker added that we're not just coming to land managers with concerns, but showcasing results that support their efforts: Managed areas are doing better!

2. Potential Priority Trends Analysis/BCN Survey-Related Projects (Secker)

Secker stated that following up on previous discussions, the TA team and ExComm have both met to consider what next steps we want to take. We don't just want the TA data to be disseminated without any follow-up action. He would like to discuss some vision items for BCN over the next few years related to the Trends Analysis and things we do to impact land management. The two main objectives are to (1) work more closely with land managers and (2) make the TA data more accessible.

Secker then shared a list of five potential priority actions developed from these goals:

Potential Priority Trends/BCN Survey Related Projects

- **A. Research Projects:** Focus on best land management actions/adjustments for high-priority species within target habitats.
 - Bobolinks in Grasslands
 - Willow Flycatcher in Shrublands
 - Red-headed Woodpecker, Wood Thrush in Woodlands
- **B. Migrants Initiative:** Map priority sites and/or corridors, management recommendations and adjustments.

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- **C. Web/Database App:** Readily accessible data for land managers, researchers, and birders. Is generic data useful enough or is something more helpful and detailed needed? Sites, species, trends, birds of concern, GIS maps, land management.
- **D. Scorecard:** Tool to inventory species present at a site and score them based on concern level, abundance and/or other variables. Land Managers could use this alongside existing inventories of plants, etc. to more objectively make overall land management decisions.
- **E. Research Repository:** A repository of habitat and/or species-specific research related to land management for birds in the Chicago region.

The research projects item would build off specific questions raised by the TA data to further investigate what is causing population declines and what we can do to encourage change. Several species have been identified in habitats that need attention. The migrants initiative would give land managers guidance for priority sites where we could recommend strategies or adjustments to benefit migrating birds. The database app would allow land managers to access BCN Survey data more easily. The scorecard could tie in with the database app and aid land managers in determining which habitats to prioritize. Finally, the research repository would gather all existing research and land management recommendations to make this more readily accessible.

In discussion, ExComm and the TA team have been gravitating toward the database and scorecard ideas as the two first priorities to work on. Secker said we all felt the five items would be great to have and appropriate things that BCN could tackle; he thinks this list could provide a long-term roadmap (a 5- or 10-year plan) for BCN. Some will take more time and money than others.

Fisher commented that the more land manager groups we talk to about their perceptions and needs, the more effective we can be. Ideally, we need to have meetings with them in-person so we can more freely interact, not on Zoom. Pavelka said that in Lake County, the FPD has a whole team of ecologists, but some other smaller organizations (e.g., Lake Forest Openlands, Libertyville township, individual villages) have very limited staff. The scorecard would give them useful data and really be appreciated. She reflected it would be very attractive to monitors to have a scorecard so they can view specific info on their sites later.

Bilderback added we can work with the university system to carry out specific research projects. BCN doesn't have the bandwidth to conduct the research ourselves, but we can work with grad students. The IOS Research Grant program is one possible outlet to researcher contacts. Fisher pointed out the American Bird Conservancy is now part of BCN. Jim Giocomo has offered to help with ideas for creating the research repository.

Balassie said that we are providing a lot of data to forest preserve districts, and suggested we approach them with how we can fill a need rather than pressing on "what you should do." One of the first things they will ask is to see the data. We have some issues in determining what info is in the BCN Survey database and it is currently difficult

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to extract. Making the data accessible may be a more short-term need. We need to review how the data is stored and how we receive it from Cornell via eBird.

Leopold stated she agrees with the prioritization of the items. The scorecard and database app projects seem more urgent to be able to extract and understand data from the BCN Survey. We have the opportunity to partner with other groups to go hand-in-hand on research projects, the migrants initiative, and the research repository over the coming years, but BCN can work on those two priorities ourselves.

Secker said we should continue investigating the resources that will be needed to accomplish these projects.

3. Video Launch and Fall Donation Campaign (Secker)

Secker said that he envisions taking the five project ideas just discussed and presenting them as the vision for BCN over the next five years, focusing on the two scorecard/app projects as priorities. Then we could push out a donation campaign to raise funds to promote these projects and BCN overall. The new website and the Trends Analysis video are just about to roll out, so these can be part of a PR/fundraising campaign.

Discussion followed on the cost of project ideas and how it could be raised. Bilderback said she reached out to contacts about cost to make a robust database app, and they quoted a wide range of possible costs depending on what the app would do. Secker said the total might be \$15,000 to \$20,000 for the scorecard and database app. We will likely need to hire professionals for these projects to achieve continuity; we don't want to rely on one person as a volunteer.

Williamson commented that would be a large amount to raise from member groups. Foundations could be interested in this; can we make grant requests? She would like to see a professional 2- to 3- page writeup explaining the projects, plan, and needs that could be shared with COS, CAS, and others who may have a higher ability to give.

Secker clarified that an ask this fall would be somewhat separate, to offset expenses from the current TA work and the broader campaign would be in the future.

Balassie raised whether landowners might be willing to contribute financially to a broader campaign, since they would be primary beneficiaries for the scorecard and database app. Rather than a top-down approach, we should move to a partnership in which land managers provide specifications for a format. When offering a service to a client, you need to understand what they want/need from it first. Many FPDs already have the monitoring points loaded in their own GIS systems. Pavelka suggested showing land managers a scorecard prototype and getting their feedback.

Leopold suggested that during upcoming meetings with land managers, perhaps we can ask to identify point people within each land manager group or FPD to form an advisory group to let BCN know what could help make the data more accessible and useful for them. This would provide structure for gaining land manager input.

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Mary Bernat said the Forest Preserves of Cook County has a five-year plan that predicts what kind of money they'll need. We should think about the plan and timeline for BCN's vision. She suggested a formal document explaining the capital needs. She also suggested BCN could partner with a college and pursue grants that way; BCN would provide the data, and they could provide needed bandwidth for products we want.

Dan Ellig asked whether eBird is the repository for BCN Survey data. Secker responded eBird is the largest conglomerate of our data, but Lake and DuPage counties have their own management systems into which we input data separately. Chris Monaghan has created a BCN database (separate from eBird) where we store data from eBird and the other sources. When land managers have a data request for site(s), we can extract it for them. Ellig said not having all data in eBird is more complicated; citizen science projects anywhere could pull data for their uses. Fisher suggested a flowchart showing where data goes from the various agencies and where it is housed for the master TA.

Bilderback suggested creating a 3-year "business plan" for BCN in which one of the top-level goals is to build integrity into the database infrastructure. We want a robust, consolidated database, and from there we can build an app. First, we need a good understanding of the needs, i.e. a needs analysis through dialogue with forest preserves and land managers. Pavelka said we may need a consultant to understand all our data needs; what are BCN's own needs for a database in order to be a driver for bird conservation in the Chicago region?

On the fall donation campaign, Pavelka underlined we have a current need for \$4,000 to \$5,000 to build back up BCN's balance. In the Trends Analysis Reserve category, we stand at negative \$3,000. Leopold said the TA video and new website are compelling products to show what's been achieved and could help motivate donations. Secker said we approved spending more than we already had in the Trends reserve because we felt that was necessary to generate the quality product we wanted. One reason for sharing the new project ideas was to have an added value proposition when requesting additional funds: to share what we'll do next after building back up the Trends reserve.

Sonny Cohen said we don't want to have to go back to the well for fundraising when our additional needs become more focused. It seems premature to request from our organizations yet. Dann suggested appointing a subcommittee for fundraising, who would then come back to the group with their recommendations.

Andersen asked how the dues increase is factoring into the discussion. Pavelka said we voted at the July meeting to increase member dues from \$100 to \$150, to be paid in January 2023. Some member groups find giving more a stretch because there is a wide range of capability. The dues increase would mainly pay for ongoing expenses and not help much to restore the Trends reserve.

Secker said we do have a more immediate need to raise the \$5,000; given that, we will postpone the broader ask for funding and circle back to talk about the bigger project ideas and develop a more robust plan with a team. However, it's important to keep momentum going while our content is fresh in people's minds.

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Motion: To implement a short-term fundraising campaign to our membership focused on the needs for the Trends Analysis communication.

Moved: Pavelka

Seconded: Balassie

Motion carried with two nays.

4. BCN Website Revision (Secker, Cohen)

Secker announced the draft new website is now available to view at www.bcnbirds.org/redesign. They hope to be ready to launch soon. Andersen commented that it was fabulous and going in the right direction.

Advocacy/Conservation Issues:

1. Report from Advocacy Chair Donnie Dann

ADVOCACY REPORT (the top 3 items are local)

- Joined the Friends of the Forest Preserve of Cook County and other local conservation organizations in opposing a proposed road near the border of Wilmette and Evanston to develop houses in an area adjoining a small forest preserve.
- Opposed a Chicago Park District amendment allowing the Board of Commissioners to approve park events that will attract 10,000 or more.
- Since the Supreme Court announced it will hear a case challenging the wetland rules that have been in place for 50 years, I wrote my state legislators asking that they craft legislation that would protect Illinois wetlands.
- After passing in the House of Representatives this summer, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is about to become law if it passes the Senate. I wrote both our senators and they replied that they are in favor of the bill. If passed, the bill will provide a major funding increase for state, territory, and tribal conservation programs – **a huge win for birds** and other declining wildlife.
- Signed on to a letter opposing a rider that has prevented the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from taking action to protect the Greater sage-grouse under the ESA.
- EPA **did not** remove pesticide-coated seeds from inclusion under the Treated Article Exemption (TAE), a loophole which removes seed coatings from regulations described in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. Pesticide coated seeds are the #1 use of neonicotinoid insecticides, and ingesting a single seed can be fatal to birds. We requested the EPA to reverse their decision.

Donnie had no additional comments with his report.

2. Other Advocacy Issues

1) **Vote Yes for Clean Air, Clean Water, and Wildlife Cook Co ballot proposition**

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Williamson said there is a mix of organizations that have been encouraging their members to vote yes on the proposition. More details can be viewed at: <https://www.voteyesforestpreserves.org/>.

Bob Fisher said he and Bob Kusel have been working with state Representative Stoneback who introduced HB5204, the “lights out” initiative. The bill is expected to be reintroduced for a vote in the upcoming state veto session. Illinois Environmental Council supported it but hasn’t made it a priority. Fisher and Bob Kusel are meeting with IEC on Monday and cautiously optimistic. Secker said to please let us know if there is a good point at which BCN can comment or send out an action alert.

Williamson shared that Secker received an invitation for someone from the bird conservation community to work on a new framework plan for Washington Park. She checked with COS, and there are two members who bird there frequently and might be willing to participate. A lot of issues come up in the city with large festivals/concerts.

Old Business

1. Nominating Committee for 2023 (Secker)

Secker reported that he had recruited Bob Fisher and Diann Bilderback to comprise the Nominating Committee for 2022. He thanked them for stepping up and asked if anyone else was interested in serving. Bilderback noted their networks are a little narrow since they are both from DuPage County; please send any contacts or ideas their way.

Motion: Approve a 2022 Nominating Committee made up of Diann Bilderback and Bob Fisher as chairperson.

Moved: Donnie Dann

Seconded: Sonny Cohen

Action: Approved

The open leadership roles for 2023 are Treasurer and BCN Survey Coordinator. Survey Coordinator is not a position that is voted on as part of the official slate. Secker said we still need to confirm at-large ExComm openings we may have.

New Business

1. Exhibitor table at Wild Things – February 2023

Bilderback said an exhibitor table costs \$200 at the Wild Things conference to be held February 25, 2023. We need to put together an exhibit and monitor the table. Leopold commented this is a great opportunity to let more people know about what BCN is doing and to recruit new monitors. It’s a popular, very well-attended nature conference.

Motion: Approve having an exhibitor table for BCN at the 2023 Wild Things conference.

Moved: Tim Balassie

Seconded: Bob Kusel

Action: Approved

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Bilderback asked that anyone reach out to her who is interested in helping staff the exhibitor table. Cohen said that he has a display panel and stand-up piece that were previously used for tabling. He will take a picture and send to Bilderback.

Pavelka said she would like BCN to consider having a table at the IOS Gull Frolic. This would be a great place to recruit monitors because many active birders attend. The event will be held February 18, 2023. We don't know the cost to have a table yet.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Meeting Takeaways – Representative Communication

1. Let Secker or Bilderback know if your club or a land manager group you have contact(s) with would like to have a Trends Analysis presentation.
2. When the fundraising letter is ready for covering the 2022 Trends Analysis communication costs, share it with your member groups.
3. Let Bilderback know if you're interested in helping with exhibitor table at the Wild Things conference – February 25, 2023.

Next Meeting Date

Secker said he wanted to hold some quarterly meetings in-person in 2023 to bring back community. Possibly people could still Zoom in to these meetings. However, we will hold the January meeting on Zoom, as traveling tends to be hard with winter weather.

The first quarterly meeting of 2023 was set for **January 7th, 2023** on Zoom.

Adjournment

Motion: Adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Chris Williamson

Seconded: Vera Leopold

Action: Approved

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Vera Leopold
BCN Secretary*

Treasurer's Report - BCN Meeting – Oct 2022

1) Membership Report

2022 membership paid by 20 organizations/3 individual. 1 Reciprocal organization.

2) Treasurer's Report

Income	Budget YE 22	YTD - Q1/Q2	YTD - Q3	Proj. Q4	Projected YE 22	
Dues:	\$ 2,070.00	\$ 2,070.00	\$ 2,105.00	\$ -	\$ 2,105.00	
Donations - General:	\$ 100.00	\$ 224.11	\$ 239.11	\$ 15.00	\$ 254.11	Mchenry \$150, Johnson \$15, Fisher \$35, Guernsey \$19.11, Smile \$5, Kusel \$15
Donations - Trends	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 802.06	\$ 200.00	\$ 1,002.06	Lake County \$312, Glenn Gabanski \$490, Kane \$200 (Pledged)
Donations - Paypal prior yr transfer	\$ -	\$ 77.92	\$ 77.92	\$ -	\$ 77.92	
Annual Transfer to Trends from General:	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	
Total:	\$ 2,670.00	\$ 2,872.03	\$ 3,724.09	\$ 215.00	\$ 3,939.09	
Expenses						
Program Expenses						
Trends Communication	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,680.00	\$ 5,360.00	\$ -	\$ 5,360.00	Up to \$5000 approved at Oct '21 Mtg; RFPs came in slightly higher
Monitor Training & Recognition	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 620.08	\$ -	\$ 620.08	
Website Redevelopment	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 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	\$ -	\$ 100.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 300.00	Magic Stump, IEC \$150, Chicago Wilderness \$50
Administrative Expenses	\$ 150.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 18.00	\$ 10.00	\$ 28.00	
Transfer from General to Trends Analysis	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00	
Total:	\$ 6,950.00	\$ 4,698.00	\$ 8,098.08	\$ 2,310.00	\$ 10,408.08	
Net Income	\$ (4,280.00)	\$ (1,825.97)	\$ (4,373.99)	\$ (2,095.00)	\$ (6,468.99)	
Checkbook Date	1/1/2022	6/28/2022	10/18/2022		12/31/2022	
Checkbook balance	\$ 9,172.44	\$7,051.44	\$4,538.42		\$2,443.42	
Trends Analysis Reserve:	\$ (673.40)	\$ (1,353.40)	\$ (3,196.34)	\$ -	\$ (2,996.34)	
General Funds Balance	\$ 5,465.84	\$ 8,404.84	\$ 7,734.76	\$ -	\$5,439.76	
Total Balance	\$ 4,792.44	\$ 7,051.44	\$ 4,538.42	\$ -	\$2,443.42	TOO LOW!