

**Bird Conservation Network  
Meeting Agenda – Saturday, January 20, 2024**

**Location: Online via Zoom**

**Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/BCN2024>  
Or phone in: (312) 626-6799 Meeting ID: 838 3362 7822 Passcode: 808425**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**Attendees:** Jeff Aufmann (McH), Mary Bernat (At-large), Diann Bilderback (DBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Donnie Dann (TNC), Dan Ellig (Lake-Cook), Brian “Fox” Ellis (IAS), Bob Fisher (IAS), Jim Giocomo (ABC), Libby Hill (ENSBC), Donna Kubik (DBC), Amy Lardner (IOS), Vera Leopold (TWI), Judy Pollock (CAS), Annette Prince (CBCM), Rita Renwick (WCA), Carla Schmakel (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Aubrey Sirman (Loyola), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Chris Williamson (COS).

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** The annual meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. and everyone introduced themselves. There was a quorum present with 15 organizations represented. Libby Hill and Brian “Fox” Ellis joined later, bringing the count to 16 member groups.

**1. President’s Remarks/Year-End Review**

Eric Secker stated that the fundraising campaign for Giving Tuesday went well and that he is excited for BCN’s continued growth. He stated we have a great group leading the Communications Team and a lot to look forward to with the Database Team, improvements to the BCN Survey, and how we’re tracking monitors.

Secker said he would like everyone to think about ways we can continue to grow, bring in new volunteers, and interface better with the individual clubs. Perhaps BCN leadership can meet with your boards or find other ways to be better connected. How can BCN best help the clubs and issues going on in the various counties? Can we change attendance for meetings so others who want to get involved can join? It is important to sustain the organization to accomplish all the work we’re planning.

Secker announced that due to personal conflicts, he will be changing leadership positions with Diann Bilderback: Bilderback will step up to serve as President in 2024, while Secker will move to the Vice President role.

**2. 2024 Officer Nominations/Election**

The nominated slate of BCN officers was announced as follows:  
President – Diann Bilderback

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Vice President – Eric Secker  
Treasurer – Donna Kubik  
Secretary – Vera Leopold  
Past President – Sonny Cohen

At-Large – Bob Fisher (Communications Chair)  
At-Large – Aubrey Sirman  
At-Large – Jim Giocomo

Secker requested any other nominations from the floor. There were none. Jim Giocomo asked that we thank everyone for their leadership within BCN; it is hard work to carry this group on a volunteer basis. BCN is doing excellent work for an all-volunteer group that has put together an important and valuable long-term dataset.

**Motion:** Accept the slate of officers and at-large Executive Committee members as presented.

Moved: Chris Williamson

Seconded: Bob Fisher

Action: Approved

**Motion:** Adjourn the annual meeting of January 20, 2024.

Moved: Rita Renwick

Seconded: Donnie Dann

Action: Approved

The annual meeting adjourned at 1:19 p.m.

## QUARTERLY MEETING

The quarterly meeting was called to order at 1:20 p.m.

### **New President's Comments**

Secker thanked Diann Bilderback for stepping in as President. Bilderback said she was honored to take on the role and feels there is strong momentum to build on with BCN. She stated her appreciation for the leadership team and everyone involved with BCN.

Bilderback said that BCN had a very productive year in 2023. We did 24 Trends Analysis presentations and recruited 50 new monitors. We initiated a Grassland Research Project, and BCN carried out ongoing advocacy efforts thanks to Donnie Dann, Bob Fisher, and others. We have a brand-new website and new materials to help promote the organization's agenda. We also launched the BCN newsletter, an important communications tool that will be built upon in 2024.

Bilderback reviewed 2024 priorities for BCN: redesign of the Survey database, additional training content for new monitors, support of the Grassland Research and Black-crowned Night-Heron projects, focusing attention on the needs of migratory birds in the Chicago region, and continued advocacy and outreach.

### **Administration:**

#### **1. Approval of minutes of October 21, 2023 Quarterly Meeting**

No additional edits or changes were noted to the minutes.

**Motion:** Approve the minutes of the October 21, 2023, quarterly meeting as presented.

Moved: Donnie Dann

Seconded: Sonny Cohen

Action: Approved

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

Donna Kubik reviewed the proposed budget for 2024 (see attached). The budget overall has remained stable with the 2024 final balance approximately equal to the beginning balance. BCN has \$11,000 in the bank today. The Executive Committee chose to increase the line for promotion at events given several anticipated 2024 event opportunities, and administrative expenses were slightly reduced due to savings.

Chris Williamson commented that Chicago Ornithological Society would donate \$2000 to support the Grassland Project if needed, and their board voted on this. If any of their funds are not needed, they could be returned, but COS wants to help get the project off the ground. Judy Pollock said that Chicago Bird Alliance is also willing to pay up to \$2000 for this project depending on needs.

**Motion:** Accept the annual budget for 2024 with the comments from COS and CBA

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about their funds availability for the Grassland Research Project.

Moved: Bob Fisher

Seconded: Rita Renwick

Motion: Approved

Kubik shared a reminder that she will be sending out invoices for membership dues by the end of January. As was done last year, BCN is using the Square processing system for invoices; an email will come through Square. Groups can then pay via credit card, ACH transfer, or a check mailed to Kubik's address. Please contact her at the Treasurer's email address with any questions ([treasurer@bcnbirds.org](mailto:treasurer@bcnbirds.org)).

### 3. BCN Survey Updates

#### a. Plans for New Monitor Recruitment

Monitor recruitment will kick off in early spring through opportunities such as the Gull Frolic where BCN will be visible and seek to identify new volunteers. The Communications Team will lead a new monitor training as they did last year. The Comms Team also plans to develop a third training module for monitors addressing point identification and eBird reporting.

Bilderback noted we have an opening for Survey Coordinator, as Tim Balassie wants to step aside. This is a critical role that provides oversight for county coordinators and the monitoring program, so if anyone has some bandwidth to contribute, please let us know. Vera Leopold added that the Communications Team stands ready to support someone who might be interested in the Survey Coordinator role and would work closely with them. This person would have the support and benefit of new ideas and tools already deployed by the larger team. Bilderback agreed it would be structured in a manageable way. **Reach out to Bilderback if you are interested in the role or want to learn more.**

### Projects & Initiatives:

#### 1. Communications Team Updates (Bilderback, Fisher)

##### a. Summary of November–January Updates

BCN was a sponsor of the Chicago Wilderness “Celebration of Conservation,” held on January 17 at the Morton Arboretum. Bob Fisher reported that the Chicago Wilderness Alliance, which BCN is part of, is stronger than it has been for some time. BCN's Trends Analysis is also the go-to source of information for many, and this was discussed at the event.

##### b. Winter/Spring Outreach Events

Fisher shared that he and Secker will be giving a talk about migrating birds and the importance of Chicago-region habitat for them at a Chicago Wilderness Café session, probably in early to mid-April. [The CW Café has now been scheduled for April 4: [https://www.chicagowilderness.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1830147&group=.](https://www.chicagowilderness.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1830147&group=)] They feel this is the best time to get the message out at the start of the new migration season.

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Fox Ellis commented that Illinois Audubon Society is launching a “Nature Talks” speakers bureau. They are seeking a range of intriguing speakers on environmental and conservation topics.

### c. BCN Newsletter

Bilderback said the next BCN newsletter issue is coming out in February. She asked for contributions for an article on what groups are doing to reconnect with their members in the post-pandemic environment. Have you introduced new or creative ideas to encourage people to re-engage? Please send Diann your quick notes or links by email.

Vera Leopold is the newsletter editor. Going forward, please share items with her from your groups that you would like to see highlighted in upcoming issues. Ellis commented that it always helps for people to see things multiple times across multiple channels.

Bilderback also stated that the Communications Team would like to connect with member groups’ leadership and newsletter editors. We would like to add them to our MailChimp list for BCN communications and establish multiple avenues of communication with the member orgs.

## 2. BCNH Project (Lardner)

Amy Lardner shared that the project team is entering the second year of an effort to advance conversation of Black-crowned Night-Herons in Illinois through tracking of their movements. They are trapping both juveniles and adults and getting important insights into how the birds use the Chicago area for foraging and how they disperse. Decoys painted to look like BCNH will be paired with vocalizations in the field to attract them. The goal in 2024 is to triple the number of birds trapped and start earlier in the season while continuing social attraction efforts.

A series of free Zoom talks sponsored by Illinois Audubon Society will be held about BCNH conservation in Illinois. *[Details on the talks were circulated to member reps and can be found here: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/bcnh-project-zoom-information/>.]* The first presentation is on January 23. **Please share info on the talks widely on social media.**

The project is gaining a lot of media attention and continuing to grow. IAS has stepped up with funding, and the project team is looking into longer-term fundraising strategies. Lardner said BCNH can play a great ambassador role for bird conservation. Challenges for nesting waterbirds will only increase. How can we encourage them to re-nest and how does that relate to wetland restoration efforts? What needs to happen to enable urban rookeries to be successful and for urban populations to accept them?

## 3. Database Team Update (Secker)

Secker said that the Database Team needs some outside groups to assess our Survey database and tell us how it could be upgraded, then we will put out an RFP. We need to make sure the comprehensive database we develop is convenient and sustainable. It should be easier to pull data, look at data within sites, and investigate how bird

populations are changing in various areas. The broader vision is to come up with ways that people can see which sites should be prioritized, the Birds of Concern present there, etc., via some type of scorecard or evaluation tool.

#### **4. Grassland Research Team Update (Pollock)**

Judy Pollock provided an update on the Grassland Research Team. They are investigating Cook County grasslands, compiling land management notes, and trying to tie the BCN Survey data to some possible trends on the ground with management practices. This project will demonstrate the power of our data in the hopes of enticing researchers to do a more in-depth look. Mary Bernat, Chris Williamson, and Pollock are all working on writing the report up. Once preliminary results are assembled, they will be circulated to monitors and land managers to gather their insights, then a final report will be created. Sonny Cohen is assisting with some maps of points. The target is to complete the report in early March.

Bilderback noted this project is an important way to actually use our BCN Survey data and gain more insights into our grassland birds. University researchers could potentially take up some of the questions and explore further.

#### **Advocacy/Conservation Issues:**

##### **1. Advocacy Reports (Fisher, Dann)**

Donnie Dann provided an update on the proposal to install wind turbines in Lake Michigan breakwater areas. Dann said a proposed “icebreaker project” in Lake Erie near Cleveland was shut down, as it was not economically feasible. That is good news for birds in terms of displacement and impact. However, Fisher noted offshore wind proposals and legislation are still at risk of moving forward in Illinois. A report from the Illinois Power Agency making recommendations on wind turbines in Lake Michigan should be coming out soon. BCN submitted comments, but haven’t yet seen the report.

Dann also shared that Lake County is closer than ever to passing legislation requiring new buildings to be bird-friendly. Hopefully by the next BCN meeting, this will be finalized! The legislation would apply to all new buildings in unincorporated Lake County including private residences.

##### **2. Other Advocacy Issues**

Annette Prince gave an update on the push to reduce bird collisions at McCormick Place. Chicago Bird Collision Monitors met with McCormick Place officials and gave some recommendations; USFWS also met with them and provided recommendations. McCormick has made a commitment to extinguish lights or draw shades if lights cannot be out beginning in the spring 2024 migration season. We are cautiously optimistic that they will follow through on some glass applications that will make the exterior safer for birds. Pollock added that McCormick Place has a bid out for bird-safe window film.

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Pollock shared a survey link from the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development, which solicits feedback on the city's Sustainable Development Policy: <https://chicagobirdalliance.org/blog/2024/1/16/your-help-needed-to-prevent-bird-collisions-in-chicago>. She requested that everyone fill it out, ranking bird-friendly buildings as the highest importance, and share widely through your groups. Template language for survey comments is on the CBA webpage. Pollock said we hoped to be reporting that the City of Chicago sustainability checklist was in place, but there has been another delay, likely caused by developers. Lardner inquired if anyone had connected with Ciere Boatright, the new Chicago DPD commissioner recently appointed.

Discussion followed on ways to support the bird-friendly buildings initiative. Chicago residents can contact their alderman. Dann said he would get guidance from Lake County leadership that could be circulated to BCN. Sonny Cohen encouraged reps to share the survey and comment on their groups' platforms if possible. Pollock shared CBA and some other groups are working on an upcoming project with an artist to visualize birds impacted by building collisions, likely in summer. There will be potential tabling opportunities. Lardner asked whether Master Naturalists' Conservation @ Home has bird-friendly components as part of its certification, or whether that could be incorporated as a requirement.

### 3. Fundraising

Bilderback said that a fundraising campaign is in its nascent stages. Our Giving Tuesday outreach yielded almost \$1000, and she thanked those who donated. We expect to have a more extended fundraising effort in 2024 once we better understand the scope and need of the Database development project and can provide that content in funding requests. Bilderback also noted that this winter BCN sent an update letter to the Paul and Dottie Foundation of DuPage Foundation, requesting a renewal donation. They donated almost \$1800 to us unsolicited a year ago, likely after seeing one of BCN's Trends presentations or media hits.

Cohen asked whether contributors are acknowledged personally and whether donors can be recognized on the BCN website in some way. Kubik responded that thank-you notes are sent for each contribution received. We also forwarded a nice report of what BCN had accomplished over 2023 to DuPage Foundation. Secker added he has sent personal notes for generous donations. Bilderback said ExComm has discussed website donor recognition, but we need to clarify people's permission to be listed. As we formalize our fundraising efforts going forward, that will be part of the process.

## Old Business

### 1. BCN History/Timeline on the Website

At the previous quarterly meeting Libby Hill offered to write up a brief history of BCN's accomplishments. Leadership is enthusiastic about completing this. **Please send Hill important historic elements about BCN you think should be included.** Chris Williamson

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suggested that Geoff Williamson be contacted, as he wrote up a lot of BCN procedures. Hill requested an agenda item for the next meeting to report on the outcome.

Bilderback noted that we are approaching BCN's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Could a history document be part of the celebration?

### **New Business**

#### **1. BCN Table at the Gull Frolic – February 17**

BCN will have a table at the IOS Gull Frolic on February 17<sup>th</sup> at Winthrop Harbor. The primary goal will be to recruit monitors and share info about BCN. We are looking for volunteers who could contribute 30 minutes to an hour to help cover the table. Pollock said she was available.

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Meeting Takeaways – Representative Communication:**

1. Contact Diann Bilderback if you are interested in contributing to BCN's Survey Coordinator role or learning more about it (email [president@bcnbirds.org](mailto:president@bcnbirds.org)).
2. Let Vera Leopold know ([vleopold@wetlands-initiative.org](mailto:vleopold@wetlands-initiative.org)) if you have a newsletter item to share from your organization, or if you have input on how your group is "getting people back together" creatively after the pandemic.
3. Complete and widely share the City of Chicago survey on Sustainable Development Policy, ranking bird-friendly buildings a top priority (context from Chicago Bird Alliance at this link): <https://chicagobirdalliance.org/blog/2024/1/16/your-help-needed-to-prevent-bird-collisions-in-chicago>
4. Share the free series of Zoom talks on Black-crowned Night-Heron conservation in Illinois with your organizations and on social media: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/bcnh-project-zoom-information/>.
5. Email Libby Hill if you have any BCN historical info or documents of interest ([libbyhill@comcast.net](mailto:libbyhill@comcast.net)).

### **Proposed Next Meeting**

The next quarterly meeting was set for **April 27, 2024**.

Mary Bernat volunteered to find out if Sagawau Nature Center was available on that date for BCN to meet in person.

### **Adjournment**

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**Motion:** Adjourn the quarterly meeting.

Moved: Eric Secker

Seconded: Bob Fisher

Action: Approved

The meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Vera Leopold  
BCN Secretary*

2024 Proposed Budget for Bird Conservation Network

17-Jan-24

	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fund	Total	
<b>INCOME</b>				
Membership Dues	\$3,205.00		\$3,205.00	Assumes 20 organizations @ \$150, Ft Dearborn @ \$100, Midewin (reciprocal), and 3 individuals @ \$35
Trends Donations to BCN		\$800.00	\$800.00	Estimate based off previous years
General Donations To BCN	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00	Fundraising goal for Database and Scorecard
Grasslands Research Project Donations to BCN	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$12,705.00</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>\$13,505.00</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Database & Scorecard Dev.	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00	Expect \$1000-\$2000 1st quarter. Remainder later in 2024.
Grasslands Research Project	\$4,000.00		\$4,000.00	\$3000 to Jim Herkert, \$1000 for report write-up
Monitor Training & Recognition	\$500.00		\$500.00	
Mailchimp email	\$336.00		\$336.00	For example, used to send newsletters to members.
Promotion At Events	\$800.00		\$800.00	Table sponsor fees, materials (for example, signage)
BCN Web Site Hosting	\$203.88		\$203.88	Bluehost web hosting fee \$203.88
Dues/Fees to other organizations	\$200.00		\$200.00	Chicago Wilderness \$50; Illinois Environmental Council \$150
Administrative Expenses	\$200.00		\$200.00	Printing, Postage, \$10 State Fee, Misc.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,739.88</b>		<b>\$13,739.88</b>	
<b>NET INCOME = TOTAL INCOME - TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>-\$1,034.88</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>-\$234.88</b>	

	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fund	Total	
Beginning Balance	\$10,549.80	\$450.54	\$11,000.34	Current Bank Balance: Jan 17, 2024
Net Income	-\$1,034.88	\$800.00	-\$234.88	
Transfer from General to Trends Analysis	-\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
Final Balance 12/31/24	\$8,514.92	\$2,250.54	\$10,765.46	