

**Bird Conservation Network  
Saturday, October 26, 2024  
Location: Online Video Conference**

**QUARTERLY MEETING**

**Present:** Pat Andersen (TCA), Jeff Aufmann (McH), Tim Balassie (KCA), Diann Bilderback (DBC), Sonny Cohen (Lake-Cook), Donnie Dann (TNC), Bob Fisher (IAS), Donna Kubik (DBC), Vera Leopold (TWI), Annette Prince (CBCM), Rita Renwick (WCA), Carla Schmakel (LCA), Eric Secker (KCA), Aubrey Sirman (Loyola), Dave Taliaferro (Lake-Cook), Fred Thompson (Lake-Cook).

Laura Simpson of Citizens for Conservation joined the meeting at 1:45 pm.

**Call to Order:** President Diann Bilderback called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. Secretary Vera Leopold noted there was a quorum with 12 organizations represented.

**Administration:**

**1. Approval of minutes of July 13, 2024, Quarterly Meeting**

Bilderback asked for any edits or corrections to the quarterly meeting minutes of July 13, 2024. There were none.

**Motion:** Approve the quarterly meeting minutes of July 13, 2024, as presented.

Moved: Cohen

Seconded: Dann

Action: Approved

**2. Membership and Treasurer's Report (Kubik)**

Treasurer Donna Kubik reviewed the BCN financial report, including bank balance before and after several small transactions currently in process for the All-BCN get-together and other items (see attached). Our current bank balance is \$11,776 but will soon be \$11,562. We received a donation for the Trends Analysis from Glenn Gabanski, a donation from Fred Thompson, and \$26 in donations from the All-BCN event raffle. Other costs included web hosting and event promotion, including \$250 for the Urban Birding Festival sponsorship. In total, expenses for the All-BCN social event were \$540, very close to our budget of \$500 for Monitor Training and Recognition.

**3. Discussion and vote on proposed bylaws change**

Bilderback said that BCN leadership is advancing a proposed bylaws change as a means for people who are interested in BCN to show their support by providing a nominal fee to be a member. This would be similar to membership with other nonprofits, which is commonly offered by organizations such as American Bird Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy. As BCN's visibility is growing, more people are asking how they can "join" the organization and stay in touch. She explained that with the bylaws change, current representatives from BCN member organizations would be called Affiliate Representatives rather than "member reps" for clarity, and At-Large

## *FINAL MINUTES*

Representatives for those who are also voting members of BCN but do not represent an organization. Bilderback opened the floor for any questions or concerns.

Donnie Dann asked whether people have specifically approached BCN leaders asking for this category. Bilderback answered that yes, we have had requests from people who donated and asked if there is a member category who want to follow what BCN is doing. While there is not currently a huge demand, it will likely continue to grow because BCN is attracting the attention of a more general population. Dann asked what benefits representatives have besides the ability to vote; could this be a disincentive, i.e. a current representative might shift to just being a member? Bilderback responded that voting and participation in quarterly meetings is an important role of representatives because they have the power to influence the direction of the organization.

Annette Prince asked whether members of BCN would attend quarterly meetings. Eric Secker said that all quarterly meetings are technically open to the public, but we do not actively invite non-representatives to sit in. All the representatives participating in quarterly meetings essentially function as the board for BCN, which makes decisions.

Tim Balassie asked what membership benefits would be offered. Bilderback answered that members would receive our e-newsletter and other nominal membership benefits to be determined. She noted that BCN needs a fundraising initiative to achieve our future goals, and a community of members could potentially be donors on a higher level. Balassie commented the membership option is a way of getting BCN's name out there and collecting some extra funds. There is a difference between the governing board and membership in all organizations, and this is an extension of that model.

Prince asked whether monitors would automatically be made members. Bilderback said no, it would not be required, but they can become members if they want. Secker said that membership fees are not specified yet, as we need to establish the structure in the bylaws allowing for members first. ExComm will discuss the logistics of the member category further and make the decision on member fees in early 2025.

Discussion continued about the word choice of "member" versus "supporter" or another option. Sonny Cohen stated that BCN has been attempting for a long time to engage more people. He said he felt "member" is a more inclusive term than "supporter." These people might ultimately align with an affiliate organization and become a rep or a BCN monitor. Secker added that "member" gives people more identity as being part of BCN, while "supporter" connotes someone outside of the organization who is giving money but may not feel any true involvement. Secker noted that the "member" terminology is often used by the state of Illinois, so works from a legal standpoint. Rita Renwick pointed out that changing the wording would delay the bylaws change through another round of review and approval.

**Motion:** Accept the proposed bylaws change as presented.

Moved: Renwick

Seconded: Cohen

Action: Approved

**1. Introduction and vote on new organizational affiliate application: Citizens for Conservation ([www.citizensforconservation.org](http://www.citizensforconservation.org))**

Bilderback said that Citizens for Conservation has applied to become a new organizational affiliate of BCN. This is a volunteer-led nonprofit dedicated to restoring natural areas in the Barrington region. They currently maintain 777 acres and have been instrumental in helping establish several preserves. Secker said that he knows this group through monitoring; they are doing a lot of good work for habitat restoration with a strong bird focus. He commented they fit well with BCN's mission, similar to the Wetlands Initiative and other restoration-focused groups, and people involved in the organization are knowledgeable about birds.

**Motion:** Accept Citizens for Conservation as an organizational affiliate of BCN.

Moved: Dann

Second: Thompson

Action: Approved

**Kudos:**

**1. *Broken Flight*, a documentary featuring CBCM and Annette Prince**

Bilderback congratulated Prince and Chicago Bird Collision Monitors for being the subject of a new documentary that was shown at the Chicago Film Festival, called *Broken Flight*. Prince commented it is a nice film that supports our work very well. The film has been shown twice already and was selected from a very wide range of films. To have a film on a local topic selected for this festival is very special!

Balassie asked whether there are ways for BCN to promote the film. Leopold responded that we plan to feature it as an article in the November e-newsletter. If there is a way to watch it online, we will be sure to share that. More information can be found at <https://www.mitchellwenkus.com/broken-flight-film.html>.

Dann commented it would be great if the bird collision issue also was featured on a program like *60 Minutes* to reach a national audience.

**2. All-BCN Appreciation Event**

Bilderback reported that the all-BCN appreciation event last weekend went very well and thanked everyone who was able to participate. The event was organized by the ExComm team. It was a beautiful venue in Barrington at Citizens Park, which we will use again! Jeff Aufmann offered he has a screen and projector that could be used next time at that facility.

**Projects and Initiatives:**

**1. Database Team update (Secker, Bilderback)**

**a. Vendor review status**

Bilderback reported that the Database Team has been working to vet potential vendors for the database upgrade project using several criteria. They reviewed three possible vendors: Blue Raster, which has qualifications in the conservation space; Confluence

Software, which has strong credentials and builds very appealing front-end platforms, but is costly; and NatureCounts, which is a product of Birds Canada. Some BCN leaders saw this tool demonstrated at the Partners in Flight conference this past summer, and it has many of the features we are looking for.

The Database Team and ExComm both agreed that NatureCounts was the best and most practical platform. It is compatible with eBird and has a much lower cost to implement in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 range, while the others were in the range of \$40,000 to \$75,000! NatureCounts can also do custom updates if we fund that additional functionality. They are interested in expanding into the U.S., and a client gave a strong reference. We have a few more questions to resolve.

**b. Demo of Nature Counts ([www.naturecounts.ca](http://www.naturecounts.ca))**

Secker then demonstrated the Nature Counts platform:

<https://naturecounts.ca/nc/default/explore.jsp#map>

He noted we could also include BCN's Trends in the site. There is good functionality for people to select a specific area or dataset, e.g. land managers for certain preserves.

Balassie asked whether land managers can integrate data from NatureCounts into their own programs. Secker said yes, they could export data as needed. Balassie added the Survey data needs to meet the needs of several audiences, some who are using it at the granular level and some who want to drill down to specific locations. A plethora of other groups may want to use our data for scientific studies.

Bilderback said the Database Team intends to appoint a Science Committee of people who understand the data and how it would be used. We want to hone in on how the platform will be most effective for land managers and other users. She noted the database upgrade is a work in progress, and we need to raise some money before taking the next steps. This is a 2025 project that could go live in the same year.

**2. BCN Survey Team update (Kubik, Balassie)**

Bilderback reported that the BCN Survey Team did a deep dive into the screening criteria for monitors and how this process can be improved for both monitors and area coordinators. One goal is to develop a tool to let people self-evaluate their ID skills by both sight and sound.

Waivers and safety of monitors in the field was also discussed. Liability coverage for BCN will likely be a 2025 budget item. Meanwhile, a simple service agreement and waiver would protect us from liability of monitors getting injured in the field. Finally, it was agreed that when the Survey Coordinator sends out communications to monitors, the Area Coordinators would be notified first. Mass communications (e.g., inviting people to a social event or broad information) could be sent via the MailChimp system, but the Area Coordinators would be advised in advance. The goal is to streamline all Survey processes so onboarding of new monitors and communicating with all the volunteers is easier, and the whole program is strengthened.

**3. Communications Team updates (Fisher, Bilderback, Leopold)**

## FINAL MINUTES

Bilderback gave an update that the November quarterly newsletter is in process, and we now have 517 subscribers. This number is twice as many as our total number of monitors and representatives!

Bilderback said we are building a list of land manager contacts, and we would also like to know the critical leadership and communication contacts at your organizations (e.g., President, Vice President, Communications Chair or newsletter editor) to communicate with about “all things BCN.” Given that many groups have a low awareness of what BCN does, we would like to improve our profile with them. They can opt out if they prefer not to be added to BCN communications.

Please send important contacts for your group to Leopold at [secretary@bcnbirds.org](mailto:secretary@bcnbirds.org). These leadership contacts can be stored as a spreadsheet on the ExComm Google Drive. Balassie raised an idea for the Communications Team: Is there one email address where BCN can sign up for all affiliates’ newsletters, and multiple people can access it?

Bilderback also reported we will present and exhibit at the 2025 Wild Things conference on March 1; BCN submitted a story for Illinois Audubon Society on the BCN monitoring program; and there is a pending interview with Will County FP for their newsletter. Balassie suggested National Audubon could be another line of communication.

In terms of recent events, BCN exhibited for two days at the first-ever Urban Birding Festival in September. The event was busy and successful, and we talked to and signed up many interested people for BCN communications. *Meadowlark* featured a story on the Trends Analysis and citizen science in the summer issue, which [you can view here](#). Finally, thanks to Pat Andersen, BCN is now active on Discord!

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

#### 1. Advocacy Team (Dann, Fisher)

Bilderback announced that there was good progress at McCormick Place with the installation of bird-friendly glass to reduce bird collisions in time for fall migration, after advocacy efforts by BCN, Center for Biological Diversity, CBCM, and other Bird-Friendly Chicago members. Prince added that the installed window film is proving wildly successful; CBCM found more than 100 birds downtown today but almost no birds at McCormick. They are not consistently closing the curtains this season when companies are there, and they still need a more effective way to control light pollution, but Prince hopes we can keep pushing to get more retrofits implemented.

Bilderback noted the state wetland protection bill is awaiting action in the legislature. Leopold said that advocates hope it will be taken up in the veto session. Chicago Bird Alliance has initiated a petition to urge Chicago to reduce rodenticide after the deaths of a Great Horned Owl family at North Pond. You can find the petition and more information here: [Reduce Funding for Rodenticide in '25 Chicago Budget — Chicago Bird Alliance](#).

Prince described that the Bird-Friendly Chicago coalition is also providing opportunities to be trained to advocate for bird-safe choices at public hearings on planned developments, and they are working with aldermen and city officials to keep bird-friendly measures top of mind. *Requiring* new buildings to be constructed bird-friendly is still a goal that advocates are seeking for Chicago rather than options, as several bad-for-birds buildings have been built in the eight years that the coalition has been working on this issue. They are not really seeing many developers select the bird-friendly options, even with added incentives. One developer commented that if it is a needed element, it doesn't matter if it costs more because it will be incorporated with all other requirements (fire safety, etc.) for design proposals.

Finally, Dann said that bird-friendly construction is now required for non-residential buildings in unincorporated Lake County. The issue will be explored again by staff in early 2025 to apply to residential buildings. Lake County staff have truly been "converted" on this issue!

## **2. Grassland Research Project**

Bilderback said they are still working on writing the Grassland Research report, which will be finalized after some additional sites are described.

## **3. Black-crowned Night-Heron Project**

The Black-crowned Night-Heron Project is continuing in full swing. BCNH is one of the choices in the Chicago Ornithological Society's October "Chicago Bird Debate" at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

## **Old Business**

There was no old business.

## **New Business:**

### **1. Nominating Committee—members, open roles (Bilderback)**

Bilderback said the Nominating Committee is charged with identifying volunteers to fill open leadership roles for 2025. There are two members as of now—Judy Pollock and Vera Leopold—and we are seeking an additional person to serve. Tim Balassie and Donna Kubik are moving on from sharing the Survey Coordinator role, and we are seeking new Area Coordinators for Cook, Will, and southern Cook counties. Affiliate reps and monitors are often the best candidates for these roles, so please consider who might be a good fit. On the Executive Committee, there are two openings for 2025: Leopold is retiring as Secretary and Kubik as Treasurer.

Leopold commented that the Secretary role is fairly straightforward, especially if you already regularly attend meetings and take notes. The Secretary is a member of ExComm, also takes minutes at those meetings (four per year plus occasional special meeting), communicates with reps, and keeps an eye on bylaws and procedures.

### **2. Fundraising/Development Committee formation**

## *FINAL MINUTES*

Bilderback said that Giving Tuesday this year will be on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and BCN will use that date as a fundraising launch. We will be reaching out to representatives, monitors, new members, and any prior donors to BCN. We hope to offer a match campaign and will also eventually be contacting foundations that have an interest in conservation to seek grant opportunities. If you have experience in grant-writing, fundraising, and similar efforts, please consider joining this team, which will be formed in the next month.

### **Announcements**

Leopold reminded representatives to send her any story ideas for the BCN e-newsletter. The target send date is November 15.

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

1. Send key leadership contacts from your organization (name, email, and phone for President, Vice President, Communications Chair, and/or newsletter editor) to Vera Leopold at [secretary@bcnbirds.org](mailto:secretary@bcnbirds.org) so they can be invited to receive the BCN newsletter and other communications.
2. Suggest candidates for the open leadership roles of Secretary, Treasurer, and Survey/Area Coordinators (or volunteer for one of them!).

### **Proposed Next Meeting**

January 11, 2025, via Zoom

### **Adjourn Quarterly Meeting**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

# Treasurer's report for Quarterly Meeting

26Oct2024

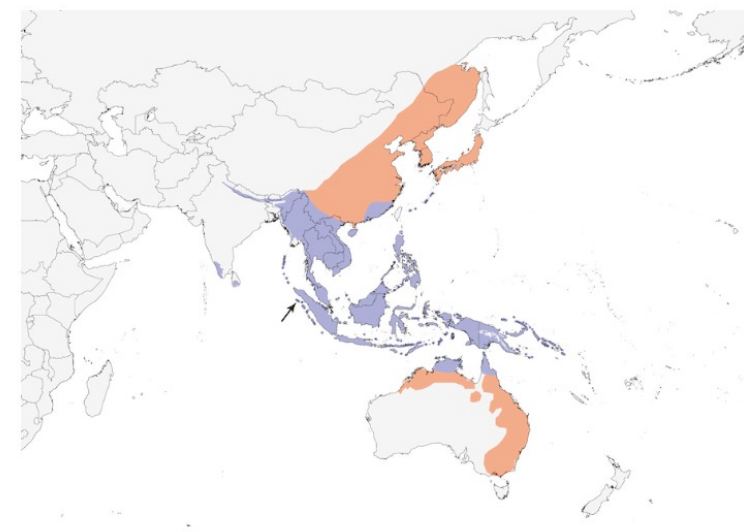
Donna

Trivia question:  
What is a treasurer's favorite bird?

## Dollarbird, *Eurystomus orientalis*

Heavily built, flat-headed dark blue bird with a short bright red bill.

In flight has a characteristic white circle, resembling a 'silver dollar', on each underwing, which are very prominent in flight.



Year-round

Breeding

Migration

Non-Breeding

+ Enlarge

**Distribution of the Dollarbird**

# Current bank balance

**BEFORE** reimbursement \$239.88 worth of checks for All-BCN Get-together clear bank

2024 Proposed Budget for Bird Conservation Network 17-Jan-24				Budget Update 26-Oct-24	
	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fund	Total	17 Jan 2024 to 01 Oct 2024	
<b>INCOME</b>					
Membership Dues	\$3,205.00		\$3,205.00	\$2,826.61	All member dues paid! Note: LCAS paid early, so not included in 2024 income**
Trends Donations to BCN		\$800.00	\$800.00	\$242.45	Trends donation from Glenn Gabanski (\$250.00)**
General Donations To BCN	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00	\$667.80	Past donations from 10 individuals
Grasslands Research Project Donations to BCN	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Donation from COS
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$12,705.00</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>\$13,505.00</b>	<b>\$5,736.86</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
Database & Scorecard Dev.	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00		
Grasslands Research Project	\$4,000.00		\$4,000.00	\$3,000.00	Paid \$3000 to Jim Herkert
Monitor Training & Recognition	\$500.00		\$500.00	\$300.00	Oct 19 BCN event; for Jewel pavillion rental
Mailchimp email	\$336.00		\$336.00	\$111.18	Mailchimp (6 months)
Promotion At Events	\$800.00		\$800.00	\$826.63	Gull Frolic \$150.00, Chicago Wilderness \$250.00. Urban Birding Festival @250.00, Printing BCN Borchures \$176.63
BCN Web Site Hosting	\$203.88		\$203.88	\$303.88	Website hosting + WPForms Plug-In Fee
Dues/Fees to other organizations	\$200.00		\$200.00	\$200.00	Chicago Wilderness \$50; Illinois Environmental Council \$150
Administrative Expenses	\$200.00		\$200.00	\$219.00	State fee, etc.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,739.88</b>		<b>\$13,739.88</b>	<b>\$4,960.69</b>	
<b>NET INCOME = TOTAL INCOME - TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>-\$1,034.88</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>-\$234.88</b>	<b>\$776.17</b>	
	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fu	Total	Total	
Beginning Balance	\$10,549.80	\$450.54	\$11,000.34	\$11,776.51	Bank Balance Jan 17, 2024 Current Bank Balance: Oct 26 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		
<small>*19 Organizations@\$150, Fort Dearborn@\$50, Midewin(reciprocal), 4 At-Large@ \$35.00</small>				<small>** Note: Sevice fee deducted for payments via Square</small>	
				<small>***Check:: Bank Bal today = Bank Bal Jan 17, 2024 + NET INCOME today</small>	
				<small>\$11,776.51 = 11,000.34 + \$776.17</small>	

# Projected bank balance

**AFTER** \$239.88 reimbursement checks for All-BCN Get-together clear bank + \$26.00 raffle donations

2024 Proposed Budget for Bird Conservation Network 17-Jan-24				Budget Update 26-Oct-24	
	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fund	Total	17 Jan 2024 to 01 Oct 2024	
<b>INCOME</b>					
Membership Dues	\$3,205.00		\$3,205.00	\$2,826.61	All member dues paid! Note: LCAS paid early, so not included in 2024 income**
Trends Donations to BCN		\$800.00	\$800.00	\$242.45	Trends donation from Glenn Gabanski (\$250.00)**
General Donations To BCN	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00	\$693.80	Past donations from 10 individuals + 26.00 (BCN event raffle)
Grasslands Research Project Donations to BCN	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	Donation from COS
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$12,705.00</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>\$13,505.00</b>	<b>\$5,762.86</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
Database & Scorecard Dev.	\$7,500.00		\$7,500.00		
Grasslands Research Project	\$4,000.00		\$4,000.00	\$3,000.00	Paid \$3000 to Jim Herkert
Monitor Training & Recognition	\$500.00		\$500.00	\$539.88	Oct 19 BCN event; for Jewel pavillion rental (\$300.00) + Food & supplies (\$239.88)
Mailchimp email	\$336.00		\$336.00	\$111.18	Mailchimp (6 months)
Promotion At Events	\$800.00		\$800.00	\$826.63	Gull Frolic \$150.00, Chicago Wilderness \$250.00. Urban Birding Festival @250.00, Printing BCN Brochures \$176.63
BCN Web Site Hosting	\$203.88		\$203.88	\$303.88	Website hosting + WPForms Plug-In Fee
Dues/Fees to other organizations	\$200.00		\$200.00	\$200.00	Chicago Wilderness \$50; Illinois Environmental Council \$150
Administrative Expenses	\$200.00		\$200.00	\$219.00	State fee, etc.
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,739.88</b>		<b>\$13,739.88</b>	<b>\$5,200.57</b>	
<b>NET INCOME = TOTAL INCOME - TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>-\$1,034.88</b>	<b>\$800.00</b>	<b>-\$234.88</b>	<b>\$562.29</b>	
	General Fund	Trends Analysis Fu	Total	Total	
Beginning Balance	\$10,549.80	\$450.54	\$11,000.34	\$11,562.63	Projected Bank Balance: after BCN event reimbursemetns + raffle donatins clear bank***
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		
	*19 Organizations@\$150, Fort Dearborn@\$50, Midewin(reciprocal), 4 At-Large@ \$35.00				
	** Note: Sevice fee deducted for payments via Square				
	***Check:: Bank Bal today = Bank Bal Jan 17, 2024 + NET INCOME today				
	\$11,562.63 = 11,000.34 + \$562.29				

## Changes to Financial Report since last quarterly meeting

- Donation from Glenn Gabanski for Trends Analysis (\$250.00)
  - THANK YOU, GLENN!
- Donation from Raffle at All-BCN Get-together (\$26.00)
- Cost for All-BCN Get-together (\$539.88)
  - Includes pavilion rental, food, supplies
  - Note: \$500.00 was budgeted for Monitor Training and Recognition
- Mailchimp, fee for 6 months (\$111.18)
- Promotion at Events
  - Urban Birding Festival (\$250.00)
  - Printing BCN brochures (\$176.63)
- Website hosting and WPForms Plug-in fee (\$303.88)

## Cost of All-BCN Get-Together

- All-BCN Get-Together
  - Debits
    - Rent Jewel Pavillion: \$300.00
    - Food, supplies: \$239.88
  - Credits
    - Income from selling raffle tickets: \$26.00
  - Net cost of All-BCN Get Together
    - \$513.88