

Meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
Monday, March 16 – Tuesday March 17, 2020
Minutes
conducted by email exchange

Chair: Diane Lepage

Participating: Jakob Mueller, Ken Young, Ann MacKenzie, Bev McBride, Henry Steger, Anouk Hoedeman, Diane Kitching, Elizabeth Moore, Eleanor Zurbrigg, Catherine Hessian, Bob Cermak, Edward Farnworth, Owen Clarkin, Fenja Brodo, Annie Belair, Gord Robertson, Diane Holmes

1. Acceptance of Minutes from February 2020 - **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Jakob Mueller, acceptance of the minutes of the February meeting. **CARRIED**

2. Business Arising from the Minutes

a) Colacem l'Original Cement Plant - Diane L reported that, on February 18, she and Lynn Ovenden drove to l'Original court during a snowstorm. Gord was unable to attend because of the driving conditions. The only business that occurred was the Judge asking the lawyer when they would be available to meet again. A November date was eventually agreed. Diane and Lynn had lunch with the Vankleek Hills club members who had attended and were able to learn more about the case. A few days later Diane received another e-mail from Daniel Cloutier.

"I just received news from Mrs. Ramjaun that, contrary to the December text that we have received, the judge has decided that they will not accept new participants to the hearings."

Effectively, anyone could go but only as observers. Diane advised that she would not attend. Gord confirmed that he will attend.

b) MVFN - Burnt Lands website – Diane L reported that she had been planning to go to the meeting in Almonte with Henry, Bob and Paul Catling plus his partner Brenda. After long discussion with Tinike, Diane found out the meeting would be to discuss only the website. Paul, Brenda, Henry and Diane decided not to join her. Bob did go. Diane spoke to Ken Allison and they will speak further later on regarding organizing a joint outing.

3. Communications - nil

4. Treasurer's Report – Ann: nil to report

5. Issues for Discussion/Decisions

a) OFNC Trip Policy – Ken had circulated a draft Trip Policy, prepared by the Finance Committee, to deal with Club activities such as the Pelee Trip. Several issues had arisen in responses to the draft. One comment was that the proposed surcharge for non-members was likely to be higher than the membership fee, such that participants should be encouraged to become members. A suggestion was made that trips that fall under this policy be limited to OFNC members. Ken **moved** that OFNC trips that require advance payments (deposits) be

limited to members. The motion was not seconded so it did not pass. Jakob noted that this would have implications for members of other FNCs, such as those of the MVFNC who had been welcomed on the last trip. Fenja felt that it was undesirable that the policy would exclude family members and friends from out-of-town who had been included in previous years. Another discussion was regarding the suggested inclusion of a clause offering refunds at the discretion of the trip organizers. Ken felt that this should not be incorporated noting, as suggested by Ann, that an appeal to the Board would remain an option. **Action: Ken will present a revised policy to the Board at the next meeting** having regard to the comments made and having sought further input from the Finance Committee and the Events Committee.

b) Director's Handbook - Table of Contents: Ann had sent out a Dropbox link to the Director's Handbook 2020 on February 12 along with the Table of Contents. For this Board meeting she had again sent out the Table of Contents because it is important that the Directors know what is in the Handbook for their reference. Directors were asked to advise Ann if they are having any difficulties accessing the Handbook.

c) Eastern Ontario Representative for Ontario Nature: The BoD **agreed** with Jakob replacing Gord as the Eastern Ontario representative for Ontario Nature.

d) Research Grants: Jeff Saarela, chair of the Publications Committee, had circulated a summary of funding recommendations from the sub-committee responsible for reviewing submissions to the OFNC Research Grant competition. The committee comprised Dan Brunton (lead), Paul Catling, Tony Gaston and Jeff. Of the seven proposals received, the committee recommends funding 6 of these in the amounts given in the summary and rejecting one. **moved** by Fenja Brodo, seconded by Ted Farnworth, acceptance of the sub-committee's recommendations. **CARRIED**

Ken suggested that, looking forward, two points should be considered:

i) a common request is for money to pay for gas. At the November, 2018 Board meeting we agreed that we would use 1/2 of the Government of Canada rate. Ken suggested that should apply to research grant proposals. For 2020, the Government rate is \$0.59 per kilometre. Rates are given at <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenueagency/services/tax/businesses/topics/payroll/benefits-allowances/automobile/automobile-motor-vehicle-allowances/automobile-allowance-rates.html>.

ii) in the future we should tell proponents in advance that they will not receive future grants if they do not honour the terms of previous grants.

6. New Business

a. Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais (COO)

Claire Charron, a member of the Club des ornithologues de l'Outaouais (COO) had sent an email to Diane L. Claire is currently working with 2 colleague ornithologists on a project in Gatineau (supported by the COO) in order to raise awareness in the community (and with the city of Gatineau) with regards to a pesticide that is sprayed in many wetlands and lakes in their region: *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti). This pesticide, used to destroy mosquito and black fly larvae, is also sprayed in certain areas of Ottawa. The COO is hoping that OFNC, like their club, will start looking into this important issue that has demonstrated negative impact on biodiversity, including fish, bats and birds.

Ken felt that COO should make a presentation to the BoD to clarify exactly what support they are seeking. Bev cautioned that, since it is likely that people in the affected areas will continue to insist on steps being taken to reduce mosquitos and black flies, other measures could have worse effects. Henry had similar reservations.

7. Committee Updates

- a) Events – Jakob noted that obviously COVID-19 has implications for club events. As it stands, there are already no trips or public meetings between now and April 5. This is inadvertent, but it overlaps and exceeds all of the public closures (schools, services, businesses, etc.) that have been announced to date. The plan is for Events to finalize its planned slate for the spring, in anticipation of being able to resume public activities. However, they also expect to cancel events as needed, taking their cue from public responses.
- b) Awards – Eleanor: nil to report
- c) Birds – Bob reported the following:
 - Aaron Hywarren has agreed to be the Ottawa area Regional Coordinator (RC) for the 2021-2025 Ontario Bird Breeding Atlas
 - Gregory Zbitnew has volunteered to update two bird records documents, by Dave Britt now on our website (Birds/Reference Documents of Interest): Annotated Checklist (2015 - species that have occurred in the OFNC area) and Rare Birds Catalog of Occurrences (2013)
 - the bird feeder at Mer Bleue has been stolen, NCC will replace it eventually
 - Birds Committee member Nick von Maltzahn will replace Remy Poulin as Bird Records subcommittee recording secretary
- d) Conservation: Owen – nil to report
- e) Education and Publicity: - Gord reported that the committee met on 20 Feb. The three new members were introduced and brought up to date on the committee's activities. Gord was added as an Administrator for the webpages. Since then Dean Beeby has taken over the Twitter account and Gord added the link to the webpages. Emily Shearer has taken on the role of editing and updating the Conservation webpages. She was added as an Editor by Sandy and was introduced to how to edit the website by Gord. Owen was informed of her new role. Lloyd Mayeda accepted to be a judge at the Ottawa Regional Science Fair. The committee was still looking for a francophone judge but it could be academic as the Fair is unlikely to go forward (Gord subsequently confirmed that the Science Fair has been cancelled). Kathy Conlan who judged at the Fair for many years asked to be replaced. Lynn Ovenden registered the OFNC for a Jane's Walk on Sunday 3 May. They will also do their annual Open House.
- f) Membership Committee – Henry: nil to report
- g) Publications - Annie reported that, as a result of time taken away in association with the passing of her father, the April-June issue of T&L will be published slightly late. In addition, inclusion of the items on Awards Night will be deferred to the July-September issue.

h) Safe Wings – Anouk provided the following report:

“Most of Safe Wings’ news relates to event cancellations, most significantly our annual bird display and the launch of the Ottawa Bird Strategy planned for March 26 at the Canadian Museum of Nature. We are considering making the Bird Strategy available online as planned on March 26, and holding an official launch later, possibly on International Migratory Birds Day in May. The options for presenting the bird display at a later date are more complicated:

- If we simply postpone it to later this year, it would likely have to be in November, because the rest of the year is either too busy for volunteers, or too hot to display frozen birds.
- We could combine the 2019 birds with the 2020 ones for a double display in 2021, but we’d need to secure longer-term storage at the specimen bank, and we’d need extra space for the display.
- We could just forget about displaying the 2019 birds, but that would be disappointing to volunteers, and the loss of our best opportunity every year to raise awareness of collisions.

Opinions and suggestions welcome.

Several other events have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic:

- Safe Wings orientation sessions for new volunteers in early April **(We’d like to set up online sessions instead , if anyone has advice on how to do this, please let me know.)**
- Enviro fair at Carleton on March 14
- Rotary Club talk at the end of March
- A presentation and booth at the Conflux green building conference in May (postponed to Nov.)

Other upcoming events that are not yet cancelled/postponed but might be:

- River Ward Earth Day on April 18
- Earth Day event at Dundonald Park on April 25
- Under our Wings fundraiser on April 25 (organized by Peggy Blair in support of Safe Wings and the WBCC)
- CSE Bird Event on April 23 (Communications Security Establishment)
- Jane’s Walk May 2-3

In other news, Ted Cheskey of Nature Canada and I had a photo op with the mayor recently to present him with the Bird Strategy, and we met with his assistant afterwards to discuss ways the City of Ottawa can support the strategy’s recommendations. We planned to use the photo on social media on March 25 to give the bird display and launch of the strategy on March 26 a boost. We will still be able to use the photo to announce the release of the strategy.

We do not expect our spring building monitoring to be affected by the pandemic. Volunteers should be back out patrolling by early April, although there may be changes to the usual routes and schedules if many people are still working from home.

And the City of Ottawa has at long last completed a draft of its bird-safe design guidelines, which we are currently reviewing.”

i) Finance Committee – Ken: nil to report

8. Adjournment – Diane Lepage adjourned the meeting at 8.15 p.m. on March 17, 2020.

Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Moore

Upcoming Meeting Dates

April 20, 2020

May 11, 2020

June 15, 2020

September 21, 2020

October 19, 2020

November 16, 2020

December 21, 2020

Addendum

Fletcher Wildlife Garden – Ted provided the following reports post adjournment of the meeting:

i) Pollinator Workshops at FWG

“The FWG management committee has been asked to approve of a proposal that will involve using the FWG as the site of a series of workshops that will be offered to the community to promote the establishment of pollinator friendly home gardens. Using grant money from the City of Ottawa 4 workshops of ~6-8 hours with the theme **‘Design your Own Pollinator Garden’** will be offered throughout the coming summer. To support this program FWG would contribute the resource of its meeting room (with furnishings, AV. equipment and washroom/kitchen) for the duration of the sessions. The idea for this workshop series has come from the Wild Pollinator Partners. Elizabeth Gammell is leading the grant application proposal, with the support and input of Sandy Garland.

Because of the structure and the relationship of the FWG with the OFNC, it will be the OFNC that will actually be responsible for logistics of obtaining grant money from the City of Ottawa, and the financial oversight of expenses related to this project. It is anticipated that the grant application will be for \$4500; money to pay for small items needed to run the workshops and a salary for a landscape designer for one hour on-site consultations with one client (\$125/hr x 8hrs = \$1000 x 4 workshops).

The proposal has been circulated to the FWG Management Committee. The committee agrees that the workshops are worth doing, and is aware that the OFNC will have to be the signing authority. One question was raised about insurance for such an event held at the FWG Resource Centre.

Because of the relationship of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden within the OFNC, and the needed involvement of the OFNC in the financial arrangement of this grant proposal, approval of the OFNC is required before the grant application is made by March 31.”

- **moved** by Ted Farnworth, seconded by Ken Young, that the OFNC approve of the application for a grant to carry out pollinator workshops at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. **CARRIED**

ii) Canadensis

“A meeting was held on March 12 between two representatives of the Ottawa Canadensis group and five representatives of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and the OFNC (including Diane Lepage). We learned that in 2012 the Canadensis group presented the NCC with a business plan document that outlined in broad terms the goals, objectives, physical description, and business plan for the proposed Canadensis project. At that time the NCC gave tacit approval for the project and encouraged the Canadensis group to develop a master plan that the NCC could then use to make more concrete plans and approval. It is noteworthy that the Canadensis group has a “letter of understanding” with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, unlike the Fletcher/OFNC, they are not tenants in the sense that the Fletcher is, and are not members of the Central Experimental Farm Advisory Committee (like the FWG and Friends of the Farm).

Using outside expertise, the Canadensis group has now finalised the stages of a master plan, and are reaching out to interested parties such as the FWG and the Friends of the Farm for feedback, before their next meeting with the NCC that they hope will happen later this year. Their goal is to have a limited property/facility open in 2022 that may include displays in the former skate shacks that the NCC used on the Rideau Canal during skating season.

Points that were discussed that would impact on the Fletcher Wildlife Garden:

1. The Canadensis property would be charging an admission fee; the NCC emphasized that no government money would be forthcoming for planning or operation
2. There would be a fence separating the Canadensis property from the FWG and NCC property along the canal
3. A parking lot would be on the property but is nowhere near the capacity they anticipate they will need; they estimate 500,000 visitors / year who will arrive by tour bus, public transportation (OC transpo, LRT) and water taxi
4. There will be theme gardens, ponds, an open-air theatre, exhibit buildings, and a restaurant on the property
5. The Red Barn would become a staff building for Canadensis
6. Canadensis would like the current traffic light at the intersection of the canal lock road and Prince of Wales Drive replaced with a traffic circle, and a traffic light put on Prince of Wales Drive and the road into the Red Barn
7. Parking, noise from the theatre, the fence between our two properties, the use of the Red Barn were items that those in attendance felt needed more discussion

Due to technical problems we were not able to see their whole proposal. But the consultant who is working on the Master Plan will be in Ottawa sometime in April and it was suggested we could meet again when he is present to get a better picture of their plans. The map of the site that they showed us still needs a lot of work. We did not receive any idea how much all of this would cost. The atmosphere at the meeting was friendly and we all agreed we needed to talk more as this project progresses.”