

Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
Monday June 15, 2020 – 7:00 p.m. Minutes
held through Zoom video conference
during COVID-19 global pandemic

Chair: Diane Lepage

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

Absent: Diane Kitching,

1. Approval of the Agenda – approved as circulated
2. Acceptance of Minutes from May 11, 2020 – **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Fenja Brodo, that, subject to correction under item 6 i) of “Ontario Rare Bird Alert” to read “Ottawa Rare Bird Alert”, the minutes of the May, 2020 meeting be accepted. **CARRIED**
3. Communications
Two issues of the Toronto Field Naturalists newsletter had been received. The newsletter of the Rideau Waterway Land Trust had also been received. A letter had been received from Ontario Nature thanking OFNC for its gift to support Gananoque Lake protection. The Vankleek Hill and District Nature Society had thanked OFNC for its support of their Burnt Lands Alvar protection initiative.
4. Business Arising from Minutes
 - a. Ad Hoc working group – Bev reported that the group was working well. Seven or eight volunteers are participating. They have organised two events in addition to the test meeting. A Facebook based nature quest organised by Elizabeth Robson-Gordon was going well and an “ask the naturalist” event also went well with about 10 participants. About half of the participants asked questions. Favourable feedback was also received from those who did not ask questions. The group is planning either a seminar style event or a live field event next.
 - b. Macoun Club – it had been reported that the Club had had one field trip on June 13. (Rob Lee subsequently advised Diane L that this was a family group outing and not a Macoun Club meeting.) Rob had, however, circulated an email suggesting that the Club consider restarting field trips. He provided some data in support of his suggestion. See discussion under 6 a.
5. Treasurer’s Report – Ann reported that, with the recent publishing of another issue of the CFN and T&L, the club’s cash situation is getting low. Therefore, when we have an investment mature in July, we will be holding back some cash for our bank account rather than reinvesting it. This is expected and normal for this time of year.

Eric Cohen passed away on May 13th. His family asked for donations in his memory to be sent to the Heart Institute or The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club. Ann provided his widow with the information regarding how payments could be made. To date we have received one donation in his memory.

All the research grants approved by the Board in March have been paid out. Some of the recipients have advised us that the pandemic may prevent them from carrying out their research on the original schedule. Since the 2018 grants, recipients have been told that they will receive 75% of their grant initially and the final 25% when they submit a final report. If the report is not submitted by the end of April of the subsequent year then they will not be eligible for the final payment. This arrangement can be modified in extenuating circumstances. We anticipate having to grant extensions on the final payment, possibly by as long as a year, for some of the recipients.

6. Issues for Discussion/Decisions

a. Club activities/COVID-19 new regulations

Jakob noted that, from an events perspective, the province has approved two separate entities: (i) social circles of 10 people with no need to distance and (ii) gatherings of 10 people required to distance. In theory, OFNC could have controlled events requiring registration but people tend not to respect this requirement. They often bring friends or turn up without signing up. Jakob would prefer to wait for larger numbers to be allowed before reintroducing events.

After discussion, it was **moved** by Ken Young, seconded by Owen Clarkin that the covid-19 policy of OFNC is to not have any physical gatherings until further notice. The policy will not be reconsidered until Ontario Stage 3 opening commences. The motion was put to the vote and **CARRIED** by majority with Ted Farnworth abstaining.

Action: Diane L will telephone Rob, and follow up in writing, advising him of the above decision.

Ted raised the possibility of advertising a dog-strangling vine blitz at the FWG. The BoD felt that this would not be acceptable under the policy agreed above. It was noted that individual volunteers were carrying out various maintenance activities at the FWG.

b. Racism and Diversity issues in the birding community – Bob noted that racism and diversity issues had become a topic of conversation within the birding community in recent weeks and that many organisations are publicly stating that they welcome all individuals. He wondered whether OFNC should make a statement affirming that we fully support diversity. Jakob had prepared a proposed statement:

“The conservation of nature is universally important to all people, and the appreciation of nature and pursuit of knowledge should be open to everyone. The OFNC opposes discrimination or exclusion based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ancestry, or any other aspect of personal identity. The OFNC believes in making nature and natural history universally accessible, and welcomes members from across our diverse community.”

The BoD discussed the importance of following through on any such statement. It was noted that one special event for new Canadians had been held previously. The requirement for volunteers in order to move forwards was recognised. Under current covid-19 restrictions it would be difficult to organise appropriate activities. Diane L suggested that Jakob's statement be adopted now and appropriate action should be considered when restrictions are lifted.

It was **moved** by Jakob Mueller, seconded by Fenja Brodo, that the OFNC adopt as policy the statement of our commitment to diversity as circulated. **CARRIED**

It was agreed that the policy should be added to the OFNC website. Adding the policy to the constitution was also discussed. Ken advised that it is time that the constitution and bye-laws are reviewed and this suggestion will be considered in any such review. It was felt that it was not necessary to add this to the Club mandate printed in T&L.

7. Committee Updates

- a. Awards – Eleanor: nil to report
- b. Birds – Bob sought input on when OFNC weekly sightings reports should be resume. He thought it likely that OntBirds reports would resume within 1 to 2 weeks. It was **agreed** that OFNC should resume reporting when OntBirds does so.
- c. Education & Publicity – Gord reported that the committee had met. They had decided to create another wildlife quest. They were also considering labelling some of the notable trees at the FWG with the common name of the tree in French and English, the species name, and possibly qr codes and url links to our website. Expansion of descriptions on the webpages and links to other relevant scientific sites were also being considered.
- d. Events - see 6a. above
- e. Finance – Ken noted that a number of issues have come up which require a review of the constitution and bye-laws. The Club had previously delayed this review awaiting Ontario government changes to legislation but this has not yet occurred. Ken suggested that the Finance Committee take this up and come back to the Board with some proposals. This was **agreed**. Diane L offered any necessary help from the Board. Ken confirmed that they will consult where appropriate.
- f. Fletcher Wildlife Garden - Gord reported that the FWG management committee had met. The plant sale has been cancelled. Plants are being put outside the Resource Centre and are available to take. Sandy is giving some plants to groups who are paying but otherwise there is no obvious facility for donations. A number of volunteers have been coming to work. Gord is not putting any more seeds in the bird feeder but it appears that someone else is filling it.

- g. Membership – Henry was asked by Jakob whether there had been a decline in renewals. Henry responded that renewals are currently similar to usual. New membership had been slower from October to January but has picked up now. Henry had been asked about access to Shirleys Bay. **Action:** Bob will discuss access with Chris Traynor.
 - h. Publications – Annie reported that the next issue of T&L is at the printers. Dwayne advised that they are close to getting the first 2020 issue of CFN out. Fenja complimented Dwayne on the new cover of CFN. Dwayne advised that the new layout artist was responsible for the new look.
 - i. Safewings – Anouk reported that she had been contacted by Via Rail who want to do a pilot project on making stations bird friendly. They may expand this initiative across the country if the pilot is successful. Safewings has been supplementing the feeding of three chicks by a red-tailed hawk male at Carleton University where the female died after a window collision. One chick did not survive but the other two young have fledged.
 - j. Conservation - Owen reported that on May 31 he, Jakob and Diane went on a hike at Alfred Bog and found an extensive patch of *Rhododendron canadense* in the area previously noted by Henry. They have uploaded the data to iNaturalist. While there, they noticed a beetle that was extensively eating the leaves of sheep laurel. The beetle has been identified by Hume Douglas with confirmation from a New Brunswick authority. This may represent a native sheep laurel beetle having become locally invasive. There are pending fieldwork agreements for studies in Alfred Bog and Voyageur Provincial Park. *Euonymus nanus* has been identified growing invasively in Gillies Grove. Potential collaboration between OFNC, the Ottawa Stewardship Council and Carleton University has been proposed. Carleton U is seeking project ideas to design a course
- Owen advised that there was an upcoming bioblitz at the new Gananoque Lake property. Anyone wishing to participate should contact him.

8. Adjournment – there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Moore

Upcoming Meeting Dates

September 21, 2020

October 19, 2020

November 16, 2020

December 21, 2020