

Meeting of the Board of Directors (BoD) of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club
Monday September 21, 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, Bob Cermak, Jakob Mueller, Elizabeth Moore, Diane Holmes, Dwayne Lepitzki, Anouk Hoedeman, Gord Robertson, Diane Kitching (from 7.30)

Absent: Henry Steger, Bev McBride,

1. Approval of the Agenda – approved as circulated
2. Acceptance of Minutes from June 15, 2020 and Special meeting on September 1st.
moved by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Owen Clarkin, that the minutes of the June, 2020 meeting and the Special meeting on September 1, 2020 be accepted. **CARRIED**
3. Treasurer's Report – Ann reminded the BoD that September 30 is the end of the Club's fiscal year. Any outstanding claims related to this year should be sent to her promptly.
4. Issues for Discussion/Decisions
 - a. Budget 2020-2021: Ken presented the proposed 2020-2021 budget. A draft had previously been circulated by email. Ken thanked those who had made comments and some changes have been made in response to those comments. The last year has been an odd year with COVID. Expenses have been affected and, to some extent, revenues also. It is difficult to make predictions for the coming year. Actual figures for the current year have not been included, having been distorted by the pandemic. In many instances, the budget figures for last year have been repeated. The proposed budget was reviewed line-by-line and some items of note were discussed.

Income: Sales at monthly meetings may continue to be affected. The FWG plant sale is planned to go ahead in 2021. Budgeted donations to the FWG have been increased, reflecting recent donations. The Club has not been advised of any upcoming bequests. CFN revenue from subscriptions and author charges for publishing articles is predicted based on revenues received recently. There will be no Pelee trip in 2021, so no Pelee Trip income. Catherine is predicting interest from investments at \$41,000.

Expenses: CFN budget reduced to \$60,000 because of reduced layout costs. FWG budget assumes similar expenses to last year. Ann noted that this year, to date, FWG habitats expenses have only come in at about \$2,000. Ted advised that he was not aware of any unclaimed expenses. Awards night expense budget assumes in-person awards night. Safe Wings has extra costs because of COVID. Anouk will contact Ken regarding these. The Macoun Club is expecting only minor expenses. There will be no Pelee expenses. Education & Publicity is budgeting the same as last year. Events budget is greater on the assumption that they may require a Zoom/Webinar package for

monthly meetings. Research grants budget is the same as last year. This will be the last year of the 5-year School Board donation agreement. Any renewal and on what terms will have to be discussed. Last year's advance donation could not be used for its intended purpose (school bus expenses for trips to the Outdoor Education Centres). The BoD agreed to let the money be used to build a dock. Ann is holding off on this year's donation, waiting for Kevin Wallace to get back to Diane L regarding this school year. Ann is reluctant to spend the money this year if it's not going to be used for its intended purpose. Most operating budget expenses are the same as last year. Ted noted the increased budget for Paypal & Bank Charges and asked about the value of Paypal. Ann advised that Paypal was more cost effective than any alternatives, offering reduced rates for non-profits. It is also used for CFN at no charge which is a great benefit. Any Facebook honorarium expense is being dropped in agreement with Bob. Ann noted that there may be an increase in bookkeeper fees.

In conclusion, the Club is budgeting for what the Finance Committee feels is a manageable deficit.

Bob remarked upon the expected investment interest of \$41,000 and queried whether the Club should be giving more of this away, say 50%. Jakob pointed out that the deficit would then be greater and felt that we shouldn't be running a deficit that can't be supported in years to come. He suggested that the Club should, rather, be protecting the opportunity to protect land. Ken pointed out that we are required by the Canada Revenue Agency, in any case, to spend the Club's bequest capital over a period of time. The Club actually spends more than required. Ken will review the proposed budget and may modify it in response to comments. The Budget will be tabled at the October meeting for a vote. If anyone has any further ideas before then, they should contact Ken. Diane thanked the Finance Committee for its efforts.

- b. New book by Gray Merriam – Diane L had received details of the book from Robert Betcher. She had asked Gord to put the information on the website.

5. Committee Updates

- a. Safe Wings: Anouk reported that the team has been very busy. Although there have been fewer calls from downtown, there has been a large increase in calls from people working and spending time at home because of COVID. A recent spike in the number of collisions involving chickadees has been noted. A subcommittee has been set up to focus on outreach and advocacy which is working well. Meetings with various different companies have been arranged. A large project concerns LRT stations which, as anticipated, are proving very dangerous to birds. LRT 2 stations are now being discussed. The Communication Security Establishment (CSE) building on Ogilvie Road, which has been a particularly bad site for collisions, is to have Feather Friendly installed over the whole building. The City of Ottawa is finalising a bird safety plan and the NCC is also considering plans. It has been suggested that working in Gatineau should be explored as there are many bad buildings there. The team has a lot of new volunteers. Ann noted that there have been a significant number of donations to Safe Wings.

b. Publications: Dwayne reported that Vols. 133.4 and 134.1 of CFN have been mailed. Vol. 134.2 will be posted online today and Vol. 134.3 is well on its way. The publication schedule is, therefore, being caught up with. The James Fletcher Award for the best paper in Vol. 133 has been announced. A new Birds Associate Editor has been appointed. The on-line journal system is being upgraded. Annie reported that she picked up the latest issue of T&L today and it will be mailed out by the end of this week. The issue is 72 pages, the first time the last of issue of the year has been the biggest. This may be COVID related. Annie noted that 3 people who got grants in 2018 and 5 from 2019 have not yet submitted their reports. She is trying to contact them.

c. Macoun Club: Rob Lee sent the following report by email:

“The Macoun Club held no formal activities for the six months from March 7th to Sept. 12th. During that time, some Club leaders accepted the personal risks involved and made themselves available for informal family outings. This was the opportunity to develop, test, and refine a COVID-appropriate protocol and COVID Consent form. When field trips resumed in September, about half the Macoun Club membership had already been trained in the new protocol.

A reduced, field-trip only schedule was laid out for 2020-2021. For younger members there will be two field trips a month, and for older members, just one. On the first two trips, compliance with the protocol was excellent among the older Macoun Club members and adults, but some completely new members in the younger group required training.

In June, the Chair of the Committee, believing a replacement could take over in September, announced that he intended to step down from the leadership. Following a final two-hour interview, however, this plan had to be abandoned. The former Chair is staying on as Acting Chair in order to find, interview and screen new volunteers.”

Diane K noted that there didn't seem to be any problems with people getting their own transport to the study area.

d. Finance: Ken – see 4a. above. Nil else to report

e. Fletcher Wildlife Garden: Ted reported that, after a slow start due to COVID, there have been a lot of new volunteers. Encouragingly, significant diversity has been seen amongst the younger volunteers.

Isabel Nicol has resigned from managing the Backyard Garden. Chris Mark has taken over with the assistance of a couple of other volunteers. Diane L has written to Isabel thanking her for her services.

Elizabeth Gammell had done a trial run of her Pollinator Workshop over two days. Everybody seemed to enjoy it. Elizabeth may make some changes in response to feedback. The number of visitors over the summer has increased dramatically as a result of COVID. Once again, there have been some problems with dog walkers. About three weeks ago, one volunteer observed a pack of 6-7 dogs off-leash entering from the Arboretum. The dogs ran through the flower beds causing significant damage. When the volunteer drew this to the attention of the three dog walkers who subsequently appeared, they responded with unpleasant language. There have been several similar occurrences. Ted has approached AAFC and the City in an attempt to determine who has the authority to enforce the dogs-on-leash requirement. Both have denied that they are responsible. If a volunteer is actually threatened, farm security can be contacted and they will phone the police. Gord advised

that he had previously run into a City By-Law officer who said he could enforce the by-law. Action: Gord will discuss with Ted. Jakob suggested some media publicity about the dogs might have some effect.

Bob inquired whether the FWG is accessible to those with disabilities. Ted responded that only the Backyard Garden is accessible. The Management Committee has discussed this issue previously but concluded it would be very difficult to make the rest of the wildlife garden accessible.

- f. Events: Jakob reported that a Zoom “mushrooms for beginners” event had been held by Brett Stevens last Thursday which had good feedback. 40 people had registered and 35 people logged in. The following day there was a beginner mushroom hunt, limited to four people, which went quite smoothly. Interest has been expressed in having more events like this. Jakob held a general hike with ten people on a closed road, the Dolman Ridge Road, which offers a wide pathway. This went fairly smoothly and the feedback was generally positive. He had to turn some people away. Jakob thinks 10 people is the maximum number of people that can be accommodated in view of COVID and the attendees agreed. Jakob noted the recent spike in COVID cases which may impact future plans. Bob advised that he was thinking about a bird trip and asked Jakob to keep him informed about the Events Committee’s comfort with field trips.

Owen expressed the opinion that doing outdoor meetings is to be encouraged. He wondered whether other events are being considered, e.g. repeating “Ask a Naturalist”. Jakob responded that he would like to do this but time is an issue and two members of the Committee are not currently able to contribute.

- g. Education & Publicity: Gord reported that a third new story board has been sited in the ravine, making a total of 11 throughout the FWG. A group of Brownies is coming to the FWG on September 26. They will break into three groups and follow three separate “alternate trails” that have been marked. They will be given trail maps with different things to look for. The Committee has created two more wildlife quests, for Mud Lake and Strathcona Park, and will create another one for late summer at the FWG. Rob Alvo led a tour at Mud Lake for an alternative school.

There were no applicants for the Youth Summit.

- h. Conservation - Owen reported that he has been busy with lots of field work and some conservation events with other organisations. He had recently conducted a radio interview with CKCU in which he described to them what OFNC-Conservation has been up to lately, in terms of active fieldwork. He has been visiting a red spruce site at Voyageur Provincial Park monthly and will prepare a report for January 2021. Last weekend Jakob noticed a huge rock elm which is the largest example on public land in North America. They noted the high mortality of garter snakes along the park road which they reported to park staff. They have agreed to do a monitoring study of the Carp Barrens with the Friends of Carp Hills. Owen met with Janet Mason, Chair of FCH, and agreed to visit, on average, twice a year to take note of changes occurring. He noted the vast use of the area by bikers, hikers etc. despite the access road being closed. He has made an unofficial agreement with Susan Aiken of the Museum of Nature to study rock elm and look at the death rate of the species over time to determine whether it is endangered. Other activities in progress include: looking at forthcoming Flora of Ottawa list changes since 2005; disseminating results of several studies e.g. American hazelnut, red spruce and *Euonymus nanus*. The Committee is also

considering advocacy with respect to the Ontario Government's proposed increases to the numbers of wild raptors that can be captured for falconry.

- i. Birds: Bob reported that the Committee has committed to birding surveys at Carp Barrens. They will go in on three occasions to document eastern whip-poor-wills and common nighthawks. The Ottawa Women Warriors' Healing Garden had contacted OFNC through the Committee. They offer certified personal support to minority groups of military veterans. The BoD was supportive of the initiative although it is not clear how birding would fit in. The Seedathon had attracted only 15 participants. It is likely that, in future, the Committee will go back to the previous method of asking three dedicated birders to participate and using their results. The Committee has been offered an aluminium purple martin nesting house. They propose to offer it to Innes Point. If they don't have any use for it, it could be advertised on Facebook. After monitoring the Hilda Road birdfeeder last winter, the Committee did not support the request for OFNC to take over the feeder. The group who had made the request had been advised accordingly. The Committee may review the issue in a few years. Gord noted that is hard to find volunteers to refill these community feeders. With respect to the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, a preliminary email has been sent to some parties they know will be interested with a view to evaluating their skills. The Committee would like to send an email to all OFNC members from Aaron Hywarren. Henry will be asked to do this. The Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 20. They will probably not hold a physical compilation.
 - j. Awards: Eleanor reported that the Committee had discussed whether Awards were indicated in view of the reduced activity of the Club but decided, at least, to go ahead with a call for nominations which will be in T&L. Eleanor noted that there is an opening for an Honorary Member.
 - k. Membership: no report
6. Adjournment – Diane Lepage **moved**, seconded by Jakob Mueller, that the meeting be adjourned. **CARRIED**