

Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club – Board of Directors Meeting
Zoom Meeting - Monday January 18, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
Minutes

Chair: Jakob Mueller

Present: Ken Young, Ted Farnworth, Ann MacKenzie, Eleanor Zurbrigg, Annie Belair, Bob Cermak, Elizabeth Moore, Dwayne Lepitzki, Henry Steger, Owen Clarkin, Diane Kitching, Catherine Hessian, Janette Niwa (Safe Wings), Diane Lepage, Gord Robertson (from 7.30 p.m.)

1. Approval of the Agenda – approved as circulated with the addition of:
Item 3 - Business arising from the December minutes; and
Re-numbering of subsequent Items

2. Acceptance of Minutes from December 14, 2020
It was **moved** by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Eleanor Zurbrigg, that the minutes of the December 14, 2020 meeting be accepted. **CARRIED**

3. Business arising from the December minutes

5 g. Events: At the December meeting, Henry reported that only 11 subscribers to the OFNC's email notifications, which he sends using Mailchimp, had opened the last notification. Knowing how many people have attended our online meetings in the last months, Annie thought it was extremely unlikely that so few people open the notifications. She did a bit of research on Mailchimp and learned that in order to count the number of emails that are opened by recipients, Mailchimp embeds a miniscule image file in the email; when a recipient opens this email, the image is downloaded. Mailchimp can track this and then counts the email as read. However, when emails are read on smartphones or when email systems don't automatically download pictures when an email is opened, Mailchimp cannot register these emails as "read". Annie suspects that this is the reason why the number Henry reported is so low and concluded that we shouldn't be concerned with this. Jakob agreed by adding that he receives most of the registrations for events within hours, even minutes, of the notifications being sent.

4. Communications – Jakob noted that The Toronto Field-Naturalists had advised that they are no longer going to send OFNC a paper copy of their Newsletter because they are no longer printing paper copies. After discussion, and bearing in mind that the cost is minimal, it was felt that OFNC should continue to send TFN a paper copy of T&L.

5. Treasurer's Report (Ann) – nil to report

6. Issues for Discussion

a. Macoun Club Annual Report – in an email decision made since the last meeting: it was **moved** by Jakob Mueller, seconded by Owen Clarkin, that the Annual Report of the Macoun Club, as distributed on January 6, 2021, be accepted. **CARRIED**

b. ABM review & Zoom account – Ken reported the following:

“The meeting had to be re-started twice because of technical problems. Basically, the problem is that Zoom allows more than one person to join a meeting using the host user ID and password. Normally this wouldn't be a problem; in fact, I think I have noticed multiple “OFNC host” participants in previous meetings. It was curious, but didn't cause any problems. It turned out that it is a problem if you are trying to run polls. And the immediate solution, to have one of the hosts log off, causes the meeting to end. There is a way to prevent this directly, and other ways to prevent it indirectly, so it should not be a problem in future Zoom meetings. It appears that the impact, other than the disruption caused, was not too great. I think we lost about 10 participants after the crashes.

In terms of participation, the meeting was a great success. 89 members registered. 65 participated in the meeting. The actual number was undoubtedly higher as some of these involved multiple family members.

The polling seemed to work well, both for votes on motions and for conducting the quiz. The number voting was in the 50's up until the crashes (which occurred during Ted's and Owen's presentations), then dropped to 45.

I didn't mute people who were not speaking. In retrospect I probably should have. I've received informal complaints about distracting noises.

Screen-sharing seemed to work without any problems.

There are definite differences between a Zoom meeting and an in-person meeting. More people take part in an online meeting, but there are probably a few people who would have gone to an in-person meeting who did not join the Zoom meeting.

My impression is that there is less engagement in an online meeting. A 20-minute presentation that works in an in-person meeting can seem too long when done online. The presenter cannot judge the mood of the audience.”

Ann agreed that she found it difficult talking without an audience.

c. Investment Policy (Ethical Investing) – The subject of ethical investing had been raised at the ABM. Catherine advised that she did not feel comfortable with investments being at her discretion and would like a policy. After input from various members, Ken suggested discussing this issue at Finance Committee and reporting thereafter. **Action: Ken**

d. Signing grant agreements on behalf of the club – Ann reported that the club has no policy regarding who authorises grants. She noted that grant proposals are repeatedly submitted just before their submission deadlines and authorisation has been on a rather ad hoc basis. Jakob would prefer that authorisation stay at committee level, suggesting that it would be too cumbersome to get Board approval. Ken noted that the Board is actually responsible. In the

past, specific people have been designated to sign particular contracts. Alternatively, the Board can delegate to the Executive. The difficulty of dealing with requests that come up over the summer when the Board is not meeting was raised. Ann would be happy for Chairs to sign on the understanding that it is done in consultation with the President or Treasurer. **Ann will draft a proposal.**

- e. Delivery of committee reports – Jakob felt that Committee Reports always take too long at the end of the meeting and asked that, as far as possible, they be circulated by email in advance of the meeting, especially if there are no questions or discussion. It was suggested that reports be circulated by the Sunday preceding the meeting to allow Members to read them.
- f. Nature Conservancy of Canada property acquisition in Alfred Bog – At the December meeting, Owen had advised the BoD that the Nature Conservancy of Canada were planning to purchase a 200-acre parcel of land in a central connecting area of Alfred Bog. The cost of the land is \$320,000 and NCC is looking for \$75,000 to finalise the deal. It was **moved** by Gordon Roberson, seconded by Bob Cermak, that OFNC contribute \$10,000 towards the Nature Conservancy of Canada's purchase of a 200-acre parcel of land in Alfred Bog. **CARRIED** with one abstention.
- g. Club emails to members – The format and content of the Club's MailChimp emails to members was felt not to be very sophisticated. It was suggested that the Club should consider improving the quality of communication and the availability of information. Ted advised that he formats MailChimp for the FWG Newsletter but that it is not very user-friendly. Ted was asked to supply information about the FWG newsletter and Jakob will obtain information about the Macnamara Club's newsletter. **Action: Jakob and Ted**
- h. OFNC Wikipedia page – the Club does not have a Wikipedia page. Gord offered to create one. He noted that, if any club members have Wikipedia pages, they can be linked to the Club page. Annie offered to translate the page. **Action: Gord**

7. Committee Updates

- a. Awards – Eleanor reported that, immediately following the Board's December meeting, at which it approved 6 awards for 2020, recipients were notified of their award by the President (by phone). Five of the awards were accepted while one award was declined. As a result, the George McGee Service Award will not be given for 2020.

Citations are being drafted for each of the 5 awards. These citations will be circulated by email to Board members for review and approval later in January. Note that the citations will eventually be posted on the Club's website and published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*. Still to be determined with Events Committee: formal presentation of the 2020 awards is on hold until further notice. Potential venue suggestions have included a virtual presentation via Zoom, an in-person outdoors ceremony later in 2021, holding a joint 2020 and 2021 Awards Night in Feb. 2022, etc.

- b. Birds – Bob: nil to report

c. Conservation – Owen

The proposed Alfred Bog land purchase was discussed under 6f above.

It had been brought to Owen's attention by Nina Stavland that the National Capital Commission is planning further trail widening and extension around Mud Lake which is likely to bring more people into this conservation area. She had suggested that OFNC should contact the NCC about this. The BoD felt that it was not clear how it would be useful for OFNC to get involved in this matter.

Owen reported that Henry Robertson, whom he had previously mentioned at the November 2020 meeting and who lives on the Quebec side, had agreed to join the committee.

Owen asked the Board whether they felt any conservation field work should be carried out during the stay-at-home order. Owen advised that, in particular, he had been asked to give an opinion on an illegal clear-cut on a private rural property. The Board felt that he shouldn't be doing so on behalf of the Club. It was suggested that he might be able to give an opinion based on photographic evidence rather than visiting the site.

It was **agreed** that filling the OFNC bird feeders should be considered an essential activity and that they should continue to be filled during the stay-at-home order.

Owen is working on the summary of the six-month Voyageur Provincial Park study for completion at the end of January.

d. Education & Publicity - Gord reported that Sheilagh Stacey has volunteered to join the Committee. She works in HR for the government but is interested in educating the public about natural history. She has already created three story boards.

It was noted that Henry Robertson and Sheilagh Stacey will be voted onto the Conservation and Education and Publicity Committees, respectively, at the February BoD meeting.

e. Events - Jakob had circulated the following report by email:

"The biggest news from Events is that the YouTube channel is now live. We will post digital events there after the fact. We will leave a little time to incentivise membership and live participation. Also, it takes a bit of time to trim the Zoom recordings to get rid of the junk at the beginning and the end. The YouTube channel is also an opportunity for us to offer livestream events and produce other video content for the club.

The Events Committee will be scheduling a Zoom meeting in early February.

We have a Zoom presentation coming up on Friday the 22nd on poisonous fungi.

The speaker for our digital February monthly meeting will be David Seburn, who will talk about our Chorus Frogs - not all of them, just our local species, which has a contentious taxonomy (that Dave will touch on). The species has experienced sharp declines, and is designated as "Threatened" federally.

We have other digital events in the planning stages. I'm working on "Snakes of the Ottawa District".

There won't be any in-person outdoor events as long as the Stay-at-Home order remains in effect, or as long as Ottawa is classified as "Grey/Lockdown". At this point, it looks like meetings will be digital through June."

- f. Finance (Ken) – nil to report

- g. Fletcher Wildlife Garden - Ted reminded the BoD that 2021 has been declared a Big Year for birds found at FWG. This started on January 1 and has been advertised in various places including the Facebook Group. Four Volunteer Recognition Certificates have been awarded and will be delivered by Ted.

- h. Macoun Club - Rob reported by email that, after wrapping up its fall season of field trips in December, the Macoun Club cancelled all events going forward. Although the guidance related to Ontario's Stay at Home order makes an exception (as an essential activity) for getting exercise outdoors, and specifically mentions walking, tobogganing, cross-country skiing, and skating, and also provides for "outdoor organized public events and social gatherings" of up to 5 people, other aspects of guidance take away almost everything that has been approved.

Macoun Committee members remain ready to resume activities when the public health authorities give a clear signal that they can do so.

- i. Membership - Henry reported that there have been 16 new and returning memberships since the December Board meeting.

- j. Ontario Nature – Jakob will let ON know that Diane Holmes will be replacing him and will ask her to report any relevant items. She will be asked to fill out the ON form before their meetings. **Action: Jakob**

- k. Publications - Dwayne reported that he took CFN Vol. 134.3 to the printer a couple of weeks ago and hopes it may be out this week. Vol. 134.4 is progressing well and includes a tribute to Paul Brunelle, a dragonfly expert, and 7 book reviews. The journal has upgraded to a new on-line submit and review system but some glitches have been experienced. Six applications for research grants have been received and will be reviewed at a Zoom meeting on January 28.

- l. Safe Wings Ottawa - Janette reported that they are going to report 200 Kent and Kanata Research Park Corporation (KRP) for breach of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, the Species at Risk Act and/or the Ontario Environmental Protection Act. There are thousands of collisions a year with these buildings, including species at risk, and after repeated attempts no progress has been made with management of these buildings. Safe Wings has no direct legal recourse but will report to government and any next steps would be up to them. Their grant proposal was accepted for University of Ottawa to retrofit a building with bird-friendly glass - Safe Wings will be overseeing the project.

There is a cannabis greenhouse in Masson which is producing an excessive amount of night light. Safe Wings has received a number of complaints/concerns regarding the light. Anouk is going to contact the Quebec Ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks to see if she can get more details. Janette wondered whether this would be something the OFNC would look into. It was suggested that evidence that wildlife was being affected would be required for OFNC to have any meaningful input.

8. Adjournment
it was **moved** by Ann MacKenzie, seconded by Jakob Mueller, that the meeting be adjourned.
CARRIED.

Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Moore

Upcoming Meeting Dates

March 15, 2021

April 19, 2021

May 17, 2021

June 21, 2021

Jakob Mueller
President
Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Date

Elizabeth Moore
Recording Secretary
Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Date