

Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club – Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, September 16, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
In person at FWG Resource Centre
Minutes

Chair: Jakob Mueller

Present: Ann MacKenzie, Annie Bélair, Janette Niwa, Elizabeth Moore, Eleanor Zurbrigg, Ted Farnworth, Lisa Chamney, Catherine Hessian, Jessica Sims, Diane Lepage, Owen Clarkin, Janet McCullough (representing Birds Committee)

Absent: Gordon Robertson, Susan Lehmann, Katriina Ilves, Ken Young, Derek Dunnett

1. Approval of the Agenda – the Agenda was approved as circulated
2. Acceptance of Minutes from June 17, 2024
Moved by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Diane Lepage, that the Minutes of the June 17, 2024 meeting be accepted. **CARRIED**
3. Acceptance of Minutes from July 26, 2024
Moved by Elizabeth Moore, seconded by Ted Farnworth, that the Minutes of the July 26, 2024 meeting be accepted. **CARRIED**
4. Business arising from the minutes
 - a) Research Grants – Owen reported that John Prescott has volunteered to manage a re-envisioned research grants programme. They are getting close to a final proposal. One-year grants would be awarded as previously. John has suggested also funding a stipend/contract. Fewer, but more substantial, grants might be considered. It was suggested that the programme should have closer ties with the Board, possibly reporting to the Board through Conservation or a Conservation sub-committee.
Moved by Owen Clarkin, seconded by Catherine Hessian, that John Prescott be approved as the proposed OFNC research grants programme manager. **CARRIED**
Owen hoped that they might be ready to implement the programme in early 2025.
 - b) Book Club – Jessica reported that the Book Club has launched with about 75 members. Those expressing interest had been asked to vote on a choice of three books and had selected “Entangled Life” by Merlin Sheldrake. 28 people have registered so far. The Club will meet on October 29 by Zoom. Ken has been assisting Jessica with Zoom planning. They will do a test run on September 25 with breakout groups. Fifteen minutes has been allocated for a speaker and Jessica asked for suggestions. Diane will give her some names. Jessica also asked who she should ask about promoting the Book Club. **Jakob will follow up with her.**

- c) Replacement of pond bridge at FWG - Ted reported that the person who had originally built the bridge had been approached and recommended repair rather than replacement. The wood-on-wood joints near the water that have rotted will be replaced with metal joints. He also recommended regular application of linseed oil to protect the wood. The new estimate for repair is approx. \$7,000 (compared to the \$25,000 previously budgeted for replacement). The work has commenced and should be finished soon.
- d) Gananoque Lake Nature Reserve property acquisition (Ontario Nature) – Jakob noted that funds towards this acquisition were approved at the July meeting, for which ON has expressed appreciation. A sign will be erected on the property acknowledging contributors.
- e) HCCA environmental assessment update – Jakob reported that the independent environmental assessment had confirmed OFNCs identifications and assessments of certain environmentally valuable trees. Some concessions have consequently been made by the developers.

5. Communications - nil

6. Treasurer's Report – on behalf of Ken, Ann requested that any expense claims for the year be submitted as soon as possible

7. Issues for Discussion

a) Budget

Ann reported that a proposed budget for 2024-25 had been distributed to directors a week in advance of the meeting along with a report from the Finance Committee (attached). The format of the budget had been modified slightly, showing interest at the bottom after a sub-total of the forecasted deficit. Any changes to the budget of the current year were also marked.

Ann walked through the committee expense items calling on each chair to present their plans for activities and related expenses for the upcoming year. As a result of these discussions a few modifications were made to the draft document with the details noted in relevant worksheets. Ann is going to check on the costs of the Promo card and refine that entry. A budget for research grants will be included in October when the criteria for the program are approved. We will also know by early October if the bridge repair at the FWG was completed in the previous fiscal year or if it will have to be carried over to 24-25. The \$1500 for Bug Day was removed since there will not be a Bug Day in the next year. Consideration of purchasing a tent will be considered on its own merits in the future.

Moved by Diane Lepage, seconded by Owen Clarkin, that the budget for transporting OCDSB students to the MacSkimming Outdoor Centre be increased from \$5,000 to \$7,000. This motion will be voted on at the October 21st Board meeting.

The budget will be open for modifications and discussion until being voted on at the October 21st Board meeting.

- b) Bug Day review, request for support – Bug Day took place on September 7th and was very successful. It was estimated that around 3000 people attended. This led to some overcrowding and Sophie Cardinal has asked that OFNC consider buying them another

- tent. The Board discussed who would own such a tent and where would it be stored? It was felt that more information was required (see also 7a) above). **Action: Jakob**
- c) External emails with comments/criticism and responses. Jakob noted that the Club has no formal procedure for forwarding and dealing with any critical emails that might be received. He asked that, unless a Board member receiving such a communication was very confident that they could give a measured response, such emails should be brought to the Board. Janette suggested that this should also be the case with respect to any critical comments posted on social media.

8. Committee Updates

- a) Awards – Eleanor advised that the call for nominations would appear shortly in the next T&L and on the website.
- b) Birds – Janet McCullough reported that Bernie Ladouceur is currently working on OFNC's historical paper data, trying to sort out what could usefully be input to eBird. At some point they would like funds to pay someone to input the sorted data.
Janet noted that shorebirds have declined dramatically recently, probably due to a combination of development and high water levels.
- c) Conservation – Owen reported the following:
New biodiversity:
1.
 - Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), one of eastern North America's most invasive woody plants, was documented to be fully defoliated via a "native" moth (thought to be an occasional vagrant from SE USA), the Variable Narrow Wing (*Magusa divaricata*). This moth is a specialist of the closely related native plant Carolina Buckthorn in the SE USA. This defoliation, representing hope regarding a major ecological problem, is the first observed of its kind in Canada, and was noticed simultaneously (July 27th) at two sites in eastern Ontario: at Robert Graham CA, and 60km northeast at Larose Forest by OFNC Conservation members.
 2.
 - Beach Heather (*Hudsonia tomentosa*) was rediscovered by OFNC conservation members at Constance Bay on August 17th following our public OFNC/ECSONG event tour, it was thought to be extirpated for decades. --> One pager for upcoming T&L
 3.
 - A New Woody Plant species for Ontario, Smooth Alder (*Alnus serrulata*), was discovered by OFNC conservation members on August 18th along the St. Lawrence River between Cornwall and the Quebec border, it is so far known from roadsides and two public locations (Cooper Marsh CA, and Charlottenburgh Park), and a 17km total stretch along the river. This may be the first new woody plant for southern Ontario (?) since Ohio Buckeye was discovered in the 1990s? An OFNC event will be held on Sept 28th at Cooper Marsh CA to highlight this discovery.

Spreading Invasive:

Elm Zigzag Sawfly, an invading species that OFNC Conservation has been gathering detailed data on since 2021, was found by us at Deep River last week as it continues to rapidly spread northwest, Deep River is 160km NW of Ottawa. This year it has now been observed 78km further northwest than last year's apparent limit (Bromley Ontario, to Deep River); in 2022 and 2023 the average spread per year was roughly half of this, approximately 40km. We plan to re-check Driftwood Provincial Park (30km NW of Deep River) for presence or absence before autumn (we looked at Deep River last year, and did not find it).

d) Education & Publicity – Gord had circulated the following report by email:

“Lloyd Mayeda has resigned from the committee and club. He wants to spend more time with his family, We thank him for his many contributions.

Hannah Delion has also stepped down since she has a new job at a Cree School Board in northern Quebec, congratulations. She will help with stories remotely but cant contribute to the Instagram page.

Only 1 late application to Youth Summit. It was too late to send to the camp but may apply next year.

Fall stories are posted around the FWG. Four new stories created.

Thanks to the 18 volunteers that helped at the Bug Day event. Two shifts of 7 people plus 4 to help Sophie Cardinal. 1500 people attended causing overcrowding but a big success. Thanks to Deb Doherty for setting up, Eleanor Zurbrigg for taking down, and Fenja Brodo for her insect slides. All items returned to FWG.

Talk by chair is scheduled for Friday at Chartwell Seniors Home Rockcliffe.”

e) Events – Jakob: nil to report

f) Finance – see 7 a) above and Appendix 1

g) Fletcher Wildlife Garden – Ted reported that the volunteers have been very busy this year and some drastic changes can be seen where they have been working. They have come up with a combination of native plants: Virginia Creeper, Goldenrod, Jewel Weed and Snake Root that together seem to be able to outcompete DSV.

The backyard birdfeeder which was attracting so many birdwatchers that the volunteers were being inconvenienced has been moved to a position along the laneway to the RC. This has resulted in a lot of criticism and they are considering moving it again.

CAFES Ottawa will be partnering with a 2nd year sociology/anthropology class from Carleton University, Fletcher Wildlife Garden and several local community associations to carry out the 4th annual CAFES & Carleton University Community Engagement Project

which will focus this year on pollinator gardens.

The lease with AAFC is up for renewal this year. They want to know if we have any concerns and they want proof of insurance. The RC is under stress and the storm windows are in poor shape. AAFC thinks they may be able to provide new storm windows. FWG has experienced a number of episodes of vandalism, particularly with stones from the driveway being piled up on the grass.

It has been a good summer with a number of additional volunteers. A lot of work has been done on the pond, particularly removal of coontail weed. Work is winding down now with two groups finished for the year.

Lots of young snakes have been seen recently but no turtle hatchlings have been seen yet. There are some caged nests.

FWG, Bird Friendly Ottawa and Ecology Ottawa have teamed up to try to get the City to address issues such as building codes, the tree canopy etc. to protect birds by preserving sensitive areas.

h) Macoun Club – no report

i) Membership - Lisa reported that she has brought Beth Jennings onto the Committee. **Moved** by Lisa Chamney, seconded by Ann MacKenzie, that Beth Jennings be approved as a member of the Membership Committee. **CARRIED.**

j) Ontario Nature – nil to report

k) Publications

Annie reported that she is about to collect the proof for the next T&L.

Jessica reported that they are close to publishing CFN Vol. 137(4) and hoping that it will be posted on-line by the end of the month. This may have implications for the budget.

l) Safe Wings Ottawa - Janette had circulated the following report by email:

“Financial Update:

- Ken has let us know about a few larger donations

Communications:

- Global Bird Rescue Week Team Sept 23-29th. Volunteers don't have to do anything different; just keep patrolling and entering data asap.
- Online Collision Reports page private; volunteer names won't show up in a Google Search. We can also now track the number of visits (clicks) to our website.

Volunteer Activities/Update:

- 3 orientations were held in August, 7 participants; training patrols were arranged

- New phone strategy is working well in terms of alleviating the backlog of messages during open shifts. Word has spread and people seem to be ok with finding their own rides. Volunteers doing better overall.

Advocacy:

- Still waiting for details on reported buildings
- 200 Kent: Feather Friendly treatment has started on the windows!! Doing 9 stories.
- CSE are replacing some of their Feather Friendly which has come off over the years.
- Will be posting on social media regarding Minto Place's new garden which will likely attract birds to their untreated windows
- Attending Lansdowne 2.0 consultation September 10 and OHS Roaming Cat consultation Sept 12

Migration / Patrolling Update:

- Fall migration has begun with vengeance; patrolling strongly encouraged
- Spring/summer: 153 birds (excluding ducklings) in care since January 1, 2024 (compared with 192 this time last year). This is partly due to the slower spring migration/2023 forest fires (?)

Bird-friendly Ottawa Update:

- Still working with the City to obtain Bird Friendly City Certification but meetings are continually postponed, Deb D is following up with a couple of City Councillors.
- Encouraged everyone to sign the Bird Friendly Ottawa petition put out by Ecology Ottawa and the OHS survey about out-door cats.

Events – volunteers needed:

- Sept 21 - Centretown Community Association's Trees and Greenspace, at Dundonald Park; Rain date September 22.
- Nov 20 - Scouts Ottawa 24th Elmdale Troop; 24 kids aged 5-7; presentation and discussion about preventing window collisions at home."

In particular, Janette highlighted the following:

- 200 Kent, estimated to kill 7,000 bird yearly, is currently being treated up to 9 stories with Feather Friendly – it isn't clear whether this is due to Safe Wings efforts but is a great step.
- Fall migration is underway and so far it's been pretty bad for window collisions - Kanata tech park is quite rough.

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

Secretary: Elizabeth Moore

Upcoming Meeting Dates

October 21, 2024 (Zoom)

November 18, 2024

December 16, 2024

Appendix

1. Finance Committee Report to the Board, September 16, 2024

Appendix 1.

The Finance Committee met on Aug 24 to review the budget estimates submitted and to discuss the budget to be presented to the Board at its Sept 16 meeting. The attached proposed budget for 2024-25 reflects that discussion and related adjustments.

Overall, the Committee noted that there is a tendency to underestimate revenues and overestimate expenses. The result is a projection of a much larger deficit than materializes at year end. The deficit projected in this budget is \$110k before interest income and \$72k after interest. This is a smaller projected deficit than the previous year but the actual deficit is likely to be relatively small when all expenses are included. Actuals shown in this draft budget are to Aug 29.

Budget Presentation

- a) **Interest Income** – Interest Income is not cash revenue like the other Revenue lines. Therefore, the Finance Committee decided to show a sub-total without it. It was felt that this presentation would better reflect the true picture of cash in and cash out. When more cash is required to pay the bills, the treasurer requests a cash transfer from our investment account. This may be more or less than the interest earned that year.
- b) **Modifications to the budget** – during the year the Board sometimes approves an expenditure that was not included in the original budget. The Finance Committee decided that an extra column showing this addition would be helpful in understanding when expenditures exceed the budget. The budget is then adjusted to include the addition.
- c) **Details** – The worksheets show the information provided to the Finance Committee in roughly the order of the budget lines.

Committee Expenses - Committee chairs are encouraged to provide a breakdown of the major categories of expenses included in their total estimate. The Board then has a clear idea if a project proposed part way through the year was in addition to the plans at the time of the budget. Once the budget is approved, the amount for each account gives the committee authority to spend up to that limit on the types of activities specified. For example, the OFO camp is in the Birds Cttee budget and would not need additional approval. If the expenses fall short of the budget estimate, then a review of the types of expenses forecast can help determine why there is the discrepancy (what changed).

Administrative Expenses – Administrative expenses are quite different from expenses related to the activities of committees. In these cases, the budget is just an estimate. Actual expenses will vary if prices are increased (e.g. bookkeeper, storage unit, PayPal charges, insurance).

Discretionary Expenses – The main discretionary expenses are the donations from the club to others. Given the size and nature of these donations they require individual Board approval noted in the minutes. Previous years we have put an estimate in the budget that included an amount for further donations. This year it was decided that only the on-going donation to the McSkimming Outdoor Centre be specified. We must be sure that even this has specific Board approval since it is a higher amount than previously approved. The donation to the Hunt Club Community Association for \$5000 might be included in the budget if it is not spent before the end of Sept.

Notes on Specific Issues

FWG Habitats – Finance committee created a breakdown of the major categories of expenses and, as a result, reduced the estimate by \$1,000. The bridge repair is shown as a separate activity in the budget. At the June Board meeting conditional approval was given for up to \$25,000. The quote received was for repair rather than rebuild and was only for \$5,500. A \$2,000 deposit has been paid. If this work is not completed by Sept 30th then a budget item will be needed.

Birds Committee – Many activities planned for 2023-24 did not take place and the amounts have been brought forward into the 2024-25 year. This may be re-examined if the activities continue to not take place.

Macoun Club – The Macoun Club is planning on issuing a Little Bear for the current year as well as catching up on previous years. These will be charged to the General Fund. Other expenses, such as hats and speaker fees, will be charged to the Macoun Fund

Education and Publicity and the Promo Card – It was decided that the expenses related to the Promotional Card being created by Annie should be included in the budget for the Ed and Pub Committee. Therefore \$1000 has been added to the expenses estimated by Gordon Robertson.

Research Grants – The draft budget includes \$12,000 for Research Grants. This program has been inactive for the past two years. Owen Clarkin and John Prescott will be making a proposal for the future of this program prior to the discussion of the budget. Finance Committee recommends that a budget for research grants should only be included once the Board has approved criteria for this program. If no criteria are approved, then the \$12,000 will be removed from the budget.

Zoom – The budget for #5620 – Club Admin includes an increase in our payment for Zoom to reflect the need to allow for more participants. This increase is from about \$215 to \$300. A further consideration of changing our Zoom account from one user to several users has also been proposed. However, this is a more expensive change and would need discussion and consideration by the board. As such it is a discretionary item and not included in the budget presented.

Website – No estimate was provided for our website. This line includes our domain name and annual fees. We are experiencing some problems with our provider and may have to change. We would also like to be able to send emails from our positions e.g. president@ofnc.ca rather than just receive at these emails. Therefore, the budget includes a small increase to \$500 (from current expenses of \$385) for some upgrades. Anything more major would require Board approval.