

**BIRD STUDIES CANADA / ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX CANADA**  
**Maritimes Consultation Meeting**  
Middle Sackville Baptist Church  
November 16, 2002

Present:

Edgar Barrington	ACAP Cape Breton
Judy Beaton	CLLS Loon Ambassador
Laurel Bernard	Nature Conservancy of Canada
Joey Bernard	Owl Survey Volunteer
Bill Billington	Owl Survey Volunteer
Eileen Billington	Owl Survey Volunteer
Bob Blake	Moncton Naturalists' Club
Doug Bliss	Canadian Wildlife Service
Arnold Boer	BSC Board Member
Suzanne Borkowski	Project FeederWatch Volunteer
Michael Bradstreet	Bird Studies Canada
Kate Bredin	Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre
Sandy Burnett	Christmas Bird Count Volunteer
Dan Busby	Canadian Wildlife Service
Roland Chiasson	Club de naturalistes de la Péninsule acadienne
Alain Clavette	Observatoire d'oiseaux de Memramcook bird observatory
David Christie	NB Bird Records Committee
Gilles Cormier	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Gilles Cormier	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Jacqueline Cormier	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Michel Cormier	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Rosemary Curley	PEI Dept. of Fisheries, Aquaculture & Environment
Joan Czapalay	Federation of NS Naturalists
Denis Doucet	Université de Moncton
Richard Elliot	BSC National Council
Tony Erskine	Canadian Wildlife Service
Trina Fitzgerald	Atlantic Bird Observatory
Beth Flanigan	Dalhousie University
Diane Griffin	BSC Board Member
Andy Horn	Nova Scotia Bird Society
Bethsheila Kent	Cape Breton Beached Bird Survey Volunteer
Mary Knockwood	Fort Folly / Project FeederWatch Volunteer
Roy Lapointe	Club d'ornithologie du Madawaska
Charlotte Lapointe	Club d'ornithologie du Madawaska
Bernadette Leblanc	Association des naturalistes de la baie de Bouctouche
Mike Leblanc	NB Federation of Naturalists
Francis LeBlanc	Observatoire d'oiseaux de Memramcook bird observatory
Roger LeBlanc	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Yolande Leblanc	Club de naturalistes de la vallée de Memramcook
Scott Makepeace	NB Dept. of Natural Resources
Rose Alma Mallet	NB Federation of Naturalists
Dan McAskill	PEI Natural History Society
Anna McCarron	NS Piping Plover Guardian Program
David McCorquodale	University College of Cape Breton
Bob McDonald	Halifax Field Naturalists
Dorothy McFarlane	Nature Trust of New Brunswick
Kevin Middel	Stora Enso Port Hawkesbury Ltd.
Bill Montevecchi	BSC National Council
Susann Myers	Cape Breton Nocturnal Owl Survey
Lea Olsen	Études d'Oiseaux Canada
Richard Perm	BSC Volunteer
Catherine Poussart	Études d'Oiseaux Canada

Walter Regan	Sackville Rivers Association
Martin Roncetti	Owl Survey Volunteer
Marco Scichilone	Owl Survey Volunteer
Jon Stone	Environment Canada
Becky Whittam	Bird Studies Canada
Renee Wissink	Fundy National Park

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Arnold Boer (Chair, BSC Board Member)

Boer introduced all BSC Board Members (Diane Griffin, himself), BSC National Council Members (Richard Elliot, Bill Montevecchi) and BSC Staff (Michael Bradstreet, Léa Olsen, Catherine Poussart, Becky Whittam) present at the meeting.

Whittam spoke about logistics, and also mentioned that name tags generally only reflected one affiliation per attendee; however, she recognized that many people have multiple affiliations.

Boer then spoke about the importance of volunteers and the role of volunteer-based organizations in wildlife conservation. He gave the three-fold purpose of the meeting: 1) to outline what has been accomplished in last few years by BSC Atlantic; 2) to promote effective partnering with other organizations in this region; and 3) to develop effective ways to promote dialogue amongst conservation organizations in Atlantic Canada.

Mallet asked that the Francophone community be welcome in French; Boer asked Poussart to say a few words about French content at the meeting. Poussart (speaking in French) began by welcoming people to the meeting, and outlining her role, which was to facilitate discussion in both languages, to help translate questions when necessary, and to apply what she learned through this meeting to her position in Québec. She also noted that all slides shown at the meeting were bilingual, although all presentations would be made in English (with opportunities for French questions and discussion).

Everyone attending the meeting introduced him/herself and spoke a few words about their interest in birds and bird conservation.

### 2. INTRODUCTION TO BIRD STUDIES CANADA: Michael Bradstreet (Director and Chief Executive Officer)

Bradstreet gave a 10-minute introduction to Bird Studies Canada. All slides shown during Bradstreet and Whittam's (see below) presentations were provided to participants as a handout.

### 3. BIRD STUDIES CANADA IN THE MARITIMES: Becky Whittam (Atlantic Canada Program Manager)

Whittam gave four presentations on BSC programs in the Maritimes, two of which occurred after lunch due to time constraints. These were:

- Atlantic Canada Nocturnal Owl Survey
- NB Forest Hawk and Spring Woodpecker Survey
- High Elevation Landbird Program
- Cape Breton Beached Bird Survey

Some questions arose concerning random route selection (especially of owl survey routes); Mallet inquired as to why her club (Les Amis de la Nature) had not been allowed to select their own route in their region, also noting that club members, if approached, could provide much more information on owls than the owl survey protocol allowed. Whittam, Bradstreet and Christie responded by discussing the value of random route selection from a scientific perspective. Whittam also noted that several other individuals and/or groups had approached her with similar concerns, and she had accommodated them by randomly selecting new routes in their region. Lapointe also noted that his club (Club d'ornithologie du Madawaska), selected some routes of their own (non-randomly) for club members to run. While data from these routes are not yet included in the NB survey, it's possible that they could be (and simply coded as

“nonrandom”). This would allow BSC to study differences between randomly and non-randomly selected routes.

#### 4. LUNCH

Participants were encouraged to mingle and view displays provided by attendees representing various conservation groups across the region (NS Bird Society, Piping Plover Guardian Program, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service Species At Risk, NB Federation of Naturalists, ACAP Cape Breton, PEI Natural History Society, etc.).

#### 5. DISCUSSION

The discussion began with Mike Leblanc and Joan Czapalay, as presidents of the NB Federation of Naturalists (NBFN) and Federation of NS Naturalists (FNSN), respectively, speaking about Canadian Nature Federation (CNF)'s “Nature Power” meeting in June and plans for “Future Search” in Atlantic Canada. The NBFN and FNSN hope to hold 3 meetings between March 2003 and June 2003 of representatives from naturalists clubs and others groups across the Atlantic region to discuss how to improve communication amongst the “Nature Network” through things such as education (young naturalists); political influence; greening of society, etc. McAskill mentioned that preliminary planning was underway for environmental educators in Badeque Bay PEI; perhaps one of the Future Search meetings could link with this event.

Boer then led a discussion based on questions posed in the agenda, beginning with:

*1. How can BSC ensure adequate liaisons are made and maintained with other important naturalist/bird research groups in the Maritimes? What is BSC's role in the “Naturalist Network”? What are the greatest strengths that BSC has to offer to this network?*

The discussion began with a question on existing liaisons between BSC and other national environmental organizations. Bradstreet responded by outlining the following relationships:

- Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) – Canadian co-partner in Birdlife International; formal governance relationship between BSC & CNF (including exchange of board members). BSC does bird research, while CNF does advocacy and public outreach.
- Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) – no formal relationship with BSC, but an informal relationship exists in that directors of both organizations communicate regularly.
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) – BSC is completing the bird section of WWF's assessment of biodiversity in Canada.
- Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO) – represented on BSC's National Council.
- Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) – represented on BSC's National Council; provides office space and logistical support to four regional program managers; represented on regional program management committees.
- Provincial governments – relationships vary across the country.

Borkowski suggested that she would like to see a BSC representative in each naturalists' club or region

Whittam responded that the model exists informally as a result of relationships that have been built with keen volunteers (for example, Lapointe promotes BSC programs amongst his club members).

Clavette noted that adding layers of volunteer work doesn't necessarily simplify things.

LeBlanc noted that the NBFN could work more closely with BSC

McAskill noted that the power of BSC is analyzable data sets and interpretable data (e.g. merging data from various sources such as CBCs, owl surveys)

A lively discussion ensued concerning volunteers paying fees to submit data to BSC and other groups. The discussion centred around Christmas Bird Counts, whereby each participant is asked to pay \$5 in order for counts to be submitted to the North-American wide BSC/Audubon count. A number of participants disagreed with the idea that people should have to pay to “volunteer.”

Christie gave a brief history of Christmas Bird Counts, noting that the fee is a long-standing issue that began with National Audubon Society, who couldn't afford to run the large-scale program without charging money. People were unhappy because they saw nothing for their money (there was no online database at this time). Two years ago, BSC became the Canadian partner in Christmas Bird Counts, managing the program in Canada for the National Audubon Society. As a result, participants are now beginning to see more feedback for their money in the form of tax receipts, regional reports (which all participants receive) and the North-American-wide report (which all BSC members receive). Further, the online database, which is maintained by Audubon, is an extremely valuable tool that allows participants to see their data used in trend analyses etc.

Elliot pointed out that BSC now has one membership fee (\$25) which covers all programs (including Christmas Bird Counts), such that BSC members who participate in Christmas Bird Counts do not have to pay the \$5 fee. Elliot also noted that BSC and Audubon are working on a way to incorporate historical data (from counts which have not traditionally submitted their data to the wider count) into the database, although this would probably first require the relevant counts to begin submitting their new data into the database, and paying the participant fee.

Bradstreet also noted that BSC is actually losing money on the Christmas Bird Count. For each participant who pays \$5, one-half of the fee goes to Audubon for maintaining the database. The remaining \$2.50 is used to process/write and mail tax receipts and regional reports to all participants, as well as to produce and mail kits and other materials to all participating compilers.

Whittam noted that she and Dick Cannings had published an “Open letter to Christmas Bird Count Compilers and Participants” in the latest issue of the NB Naturalist that outlines the value of submitting data to the North American count. She encouraged everyone to read the paper to gain a better understanding of the issue.

A number of people were still expressing displeasure with the \$5 fee at the end of the discussion.

Boer then led the discussion to question 2 on the agenda:

*2. What would you like to see BSC do better? New program ideas? Enhanced communication of current programs?*

One participant noted that BSC could develop an email distribution list so that interested individuals and/or groups could receive updates on BSC activities by email. Bradstreet pointed out that the “Latest News” section of BSC's website (<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/bscnews.html>) could serve this purpose. The Latest News is updated about every two weeks. BSC could create a distribution list consisting of people interested in receiving Latest News updates. Members and volunteers could be invited to subscribe to the list in an initial email.

Another participant suggested that BSC could develop a fundraising effort whereby bird merchandise could be purchased in bulk by BSC, then made available to local clubs as a fund-raising venture. For example, Czapalay noted that she could more easily collect \$25 per participant for a Christmas Bird Count t-shirt than she could the \$5 participant fee.

Borkowski asked if there could be “BSC-affiliated” clubs that would receive certain benefits through bringing in new BSC members. Bradstreet responded that such a model would have to coordinate carefully with other organizations with which clubs are already affiliated (e.g. CNF).

It was also suggested that BSC make better use of existing publication sources (such as naturalist newsletters) to publish BSC results. Bradstreet asked how unique articles have to be; i.e. can they be the same (or summarized) versions of articles in BirdWatch Canada (BSC's newsletter)? Most people agreed that this would be fine. McAskill suggested that BSC provide online stories/press releases/clipart on their website that could be downloaded by clubs and/or media for use in newsletters and papers.

Knockwood asked about individual communication, suggesting that since not everyone (herself included) is a member of a naturalist group, that BSC should be concentrating more on communicating to individuals (she only happened across Project FeederWatch by seeing a BSC poster in the Canadian Wildlife Service building in Sackville). Bradstreet noted that BSC does fairly well at individual communication, but probably less well at group communication.

Doucet gave a short history of problems that the New Brunswick Federation of Naturalists saw with BSC's initial foray into Atlantic Canada. He pointed out that the NBFN felt that initial communication in Atlantic Canada was lacking and that regional groups were not consulted in the process. Whittam, however, pointed out that an initial consultation meeting had been held (on 23 Sep. 2000 in Prince Edward Island; minutes are available upon request). The NBFN had been invited to this meeting but was unable to attend (although there were various representatives from local groups across NB).

It was pointed out that consultations may be required on a provincial, rather than a regional, level, especially when promoting new programs. It was suggested that BSC's consultation meetings could perhaps link with the annual meetings of the NS, NB and PE naturalist federations (with advance notice).

McAskill noted that BSC's name change 5 years ago may have contributed to the current visibility issue (BSC arose from the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) in southwestern Ontario; LPBO still exists as a program of BSC). McAskill, however, also commended BSC for hosting this meeting as well as the original PEI meeting in 2000, and for gathering valuable data.

Boer led a discussion on items that BSC could do better, or add to its current programs. These included:

1. The Christmas Bird Count could include gathering data on seed abundance (to link with winter finch abundance);
2. BSC could provide a "Toolkit" for point-sampling systems that could allow relatively inexperienced people to record valuable data that could be analyzed by experts with sonograms (particularly valuable in remote areas);
3. BSC should provide reciprocal web links with regional groups. Bradstreet pointed out that BSC already maintains "Bird Links to the World" (<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/links/links.jsp>) with 15,563 links, and that additional links can be added by contacting the webmaster;
4. BSC should develop an email list of participants and affiliations (from this meeting?) so that these group can continue to converse;
5. BSC could conduct research on softwood supply issues and associated bird communities;
6. BSC could coordinate volunteers to help develop protocols for monitoring indicator species;
7. BSC could gather information on bird sightings from nature listservs across Canada (many people don't like having to report things in a particular format, but won't hesitate to send an email detailing their sighting);
8. COMMUNICATION. Make sure current reports are going to the right people and "information overload" doesn't occur (too many reports, too much information).

Potential New Program Ideas?

1. Redo Maritimes Atlas (starting 2006).
2. Checklist program. Christie pointed out that "E-bird" is a new North American checklist monitoring program that is just starting through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; the beta-test is online, and Canadian input was solicited in developing regional lists. Someone asked if E-bird will make publications like *Nova Scotia Birds* redundant. Christie replied that we will simply have to wait and see. His understanding of the project is that it will be a freely-available online database.

Boer led the discussion to the final question on the agenda:

### *3. How to facilitate dialogue amongst naturalist groups/other NGOs and Bird Studies Canada*

It was generally agreed that annual (or so) BSC meetings such as this one were adequate in order to exchange ideas. These meetings could be considered something of a "Nature Forum."

BSC was encouraged to attend the Annual General Meetings of existing naturalist organizations in the region as a method of connecting with people on a provincial (rather than regional) level.

BSC was encouraged to continue to send reports to federation newsletters.

Some discussion centred around the need for specific versus general meetings (e.g. the Atlantic Canada Owl Monitoring Workshop which was held in 2001, versus the consultation meeting held today). Horn noted that he felt that general meetings are probably a better forum because groups can provide more input.

It was suggested that BSC could link with the Nature Network meetings that are being held between May 2003 and June 2004; i.e. BSC could host specific workshops on owls/birds in forested landscapes just before or just after the official meeting.

BSC could link with bird feeder/bird seed companies to reach individuals; Whittam pointed out that this is already done, at least to a small extent, through partnering with Yule-Hyde Inc. (who distribute Project FeederWatch flyers in hundreds of thousands of bird feeders each year).

BSC could develop more ambassadors who could speak to clubs or be present at meetings or bring displays to events. Power point presentations could be provided to clubs, thereby using volunteers to reach volunteers.

One participant advised that volunteer burnout is a problem, and advised caution on the number of meetings held.

McAskill noted that BSC could provide a guest speaker for the PEI Natural History Society workshops (clinics on bird ids, acoustical birding, etc).

**The conclusion to the discussion on regular regional/provincial meetings was that BSC should continue to hold one general regional meeting once per year, plus attend provincial Annual General Meetings of naturalist federations.**

It was suggested that BSC needs to improve its communication and consultation about Christmas Bird Counts in particular. There has been a lack of communication with individual compilers and organizations re: merging of Christmas Bird Count efforts. It was also suggested that BSC could develop a standardized program into which we can put CBC data for "unregistered" counts.

One participant asked about fundraising, and whether BSC has a coordinator or a consultant hired for this purpose.

Bradstreet pointed out that there are three basic "legs" to BSC's fundraising strategy:

1. Members, volunteers who provide individual donations;
2. Project funding (monies specific to particular deliverable projects);
3. Foundation and corporation fundraising (BSC has been relatively unsuccessful thus far; usually based on building relationships)

Bradstreet noted that thus far, most funding comes from #2, but that the organization isn't sustainable on project funding alone.

### 6. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 4 pm with an understanding that a similar meeting would take place in fall 2003 or spring 2004.