

Minutes from the Bird Council Meeting: 2 July 2026

(by Rich Schwartz)

Members Present: Pete the Parakeet (chair), Billy the Bluebird, Elly E. Eagle, Stella Ostrich, Raymondo the Raven.

Proposers Present: Flamboyo (Owl), Agnes (Meadowlark), Crawford (Crow)

Topics Discussed:

- A proposal for colonizing the moon.
- A proposal for the destruction of Las Vegas.
- A proposal for shunning the kites.

Pete: Order, order! All members are present and this meeting is now open. Let us first hear from Flamboyo concerning his proposal about colonizing the moon.

Flamboyo: Thank you Pete! The other owls and I ...

Stella: Wait. What is this ‘moon’? What are we talking about here?

Elly: Silly! The “moon” is that luminous disk that we see each night when the sunlight ends. You know, it is the thing that floats in the sky amidst the tiny dots of light.

Stella: Oh. Right. I know what you are talking about. Proceed then, Flamboyo.

Flamboyo: As I was saying, the other owls and I have studied this problem for a long time. We have made our calculations and we have considered the problem from all sides. The ‘moon’ is not just a shining disk. It is more like a vast hanging fruit, illuminated and ever-changing in some way we do not understand. But we know it is vast!

Billy: Preposterous! We can all see that it is small, no bigger than a plant.

Stella: That's how it has always looked to me. I move to dismiss this proposal on its *prima facie* absurdity.

Billy: Second the motion!

Pete: Order! Please, hear him out.

Flamboyo: We reasoned thus: Many objects appear to us quite small when we are at some distance from them, and then grow in size as we draw nearer to them. Consider, for instance, a pond. Viewed from a great height, it looks tiny, but then we can perfectly well fly up to it and land on the water. So, after all, the pond is much bigger than we are.

Raymondo: Well enough, but I've never seen the moon get any bigger as I fly towards it. Let me share some of my nocturnal experiences with you. Sometimes I leave the nest and fly high above the tree at night, trying to reach for that thing, but it never seems to change its size. I have flown high above the trees, flown until my wings felt like dropping off. I have never seen it get any bigger..

Flamboyo: That is exactly it. To continue with the pond example: If you are far from the pond it takes quite some time for the pond to change its apparent size. The farther you are, the slower the change. The moon must be so far that all our attempts to reach it are as nothing. They hardly bring it closer at all. And also, therefore, as a corollary: It must be enormous to appear to us even moderately sized at such an enormous distance.

Stella: I can't follow this reasoning at all. I've never noticed things getting smaller or larger.

Billy: That's because you've got your head in the sand most of the day Stella. I've heard it said that you never leave that little clump of trees you like so much.

Stella: Pete! Billy is out of order! I will not suffer personal attacks from that shrimp.

Pete: Agreed. Billy, please watch yourself. But, Stella, his point is well taken. Many of us have observed the phenomenon that Flamboyo has so perceptively outlined. Let us grant his claim about the size and distance of the moon. Flamboyo, why do you propose that some of us settle there?

Flamboyo: We owls have worked out an important principle, the Principle of Continuation of Conditions. Everywhere we go, we seem to see the same panorama of trees and pond, grass and bushes. We reason that the same things we see here continue right up to the moon. We can practically feel the delightful warm air embracing the moon, the lush trees and gardens, the crystalline ponds. All of this can be our dominion. We just need the will to undertake the colonization of the moon.

Raymondo: No, I have a different experience. It is true that the trees and ponds and other things we see around us stretch far off in the distance. But I have heard tell of other parts of the world that are filled with solid structures, cubical in nature, with squares cut into them —

Pete: Yes, if I may interrupt here, I think that some of us in the council have a wider experience than you. I have seen these cubical structures and their square cutouts. Those cutouts seem to be the work of a demon. They are extremely hazardous.

Elly: Yes, I remember! Some years ago the council resolved to ban those things. I did not realize they were still in existence.

Pete: Yes, they are. It seems that our directive has not yet been put into practice. Frankly, we lack the jurisdiction to enforce it. How can I describe this awful experience to those of you who have not had it? You seem to be flying through an open hole and then suddenly, WHAM!, something unexpected slams against you and you find yourself falling downward. This happened to me once, and fortunately I survived. But there are many cases where this sudden smack ended the lives of our fellow birds.

Billy: That sounds awful. I move to revisit the ban on the square cutouts in the cubical structures!

Flamboyo: Please, I have traveled some distance to make my case. As

I was saying, the warm atmosphere surrounds the moon and protects it, nourishes its lovely trees and gardens and crystalline ponds. We have heard of these cubical structures but we conjecture that none will be on the moon. It is hard to argue for this, so I appeal to your guts. Given the beauty and luminosity of the moon, its ethereal constancy, we guess that only the best of our world will continue there. We think that the moon may even have a moon of its own, an even more remote haven of beauty and luxury...

Raymondo: I think that Flamboyo makes a strong case here. As I said, I have tried myself to reach the moon. I have not succeeded yet, but I feel that this is only because I have not yet tried to be completely systematic. I have tried late in the night, alone, and always I was mindful of returning to the nest before sunrise. Given a dedicated team of birds, and additional resources, how hard could this be?

Elly: Well spoken Raymondo! I, for one, am persuaded by these arguments. And, also, what is the harm in trying? If we find that the moon is too far we will just turn around and there is no harm done. But if we succeed...

Stella: Seems like a waste of time and resources to me! I, for one, do not want to make the journey.

Flamboyo: And there is no need for you to go, honorable Stella. We propose a small expeditionary team to start with this, done strictly on a volunteer basis.

Pete: This sounds quite sensible to me. We have other things on our docket this morning. So, are we prepared to vote on Flamboyo's proposal?

Council Members: Aye!

Council Vote: 3 Aye, 1 No, 1 Abstain. Proposal passed. Resolved: A small exploratory team will set out for the moon, with a view towards its eventual colonization.

Pete: Next, we shall hear from Agnes, on her proposal for the destruction of Las Vegas. Agnes ...

Stella: I'm sorry. I hate to be a stickler for details, but what is "Las Vegas"?

(there followed several minutes of silence.)

Pete: It seems that none of us knows what "Las Vegas" is. I suppose we should just hear Agnes out and presumably we will learn what it is.

Agnes: Thank you Pete! It is an honor to be here in front of the council. Last month, during my annual migratory flight, I was blown off course by a gale. One minute I was soaring pleasantly across a vast desert and the next I found myself tumbling towards the ground in wild curlicues, giant loops and spirals. Dark at first, the world around me suddenly took on the aspect of a kaleidoscope, wild colors, streaks of light. When I finally righted myself I flew through an opening and came to rest in front of a row of monsters!

Elly: Monsters! My heavens! Oh, you poor dear. Please tell us what they were like.

Agnes: They were as large as Stella —

Stella: Are you calling me a monster? This is out of —

Pete: Please, Stella, let Agnes continue.

Agnes: As I was saying, they were as large as Stella, but they had a different shape. They seemed to be hard, shiny, with flat sides. They had huge heads with three spinning eyes. A few had four or even five spinning eyes. They had one arm on the side...

Raymondo: Good lord! Were they hostile to you? Did they chase you?

Agnes: No, this is the part that is hard to understand. Some of you must know that we share the world with a different kind of creature. These others are giants and they cannot fly. They walk on two legs. I have seen them during my migratory flights. They control vast swaths of land, far from us. I daresay that they are responsible for those cubical structures and their cutout squares that the council has previously talked about.

Stella: I have never heard...

Billy: Not again! The council has considered many proposals related to these other creatures. We do not understand them. Of course we have all heard tales of encounters with these others. We know that these encounters rarely go well, that these others are capricious and hazardous, also systematic. Let Agnes continue with her story.

Agnes: The monsters had two mouths, a small one for eating and a large one, lower down, for vomiting. The other creatures – and I have never seen them up close before – fed the monsters through their little ravenous mouths. The whole thing had the feeling of a ritual. The creature puts a shiny disk into the monster’s mouth, pulls down the arm, and watches the spinning eyes. The eyes come to a stop and there is a crazy pattern in them - different shapes, fruits, sometimes squiggles that I couldn’t understand. And then repeat! Repeat!

Pete: And the purpose of this activity?

Agnes: I don’t know, but after a while I got the idea that it had something to do with making the creatures vomit. Sometimes, unexpectedly, the creature would vomit a few of these disks out of its large mouth at the bottom. This happened quite at random, with the size of the expulsion varying. This had a kind of rhythm to it, and I found myself getting hypnotized. But then suddenly one of the monsters had a really prodigious vomit. Its spinning eyes stopped and the squiggle was the same in all three eyes and then the coins came out and out, spilling over onto the floor. And lights on the top of the monster started flashing, and a siren wailed, and other creatures came over. A huge commotion ensued. This snapped me out of my hypnotic state and I flew. I flew erratically through rows and rows of these monsters.

Raymondo: Did they chase you?

Agnes: I had the feeling that they were chasing me, but I don’t really know. It was all a blur of spinning and flashing lights, and then suddenly I was outside again. More lights, flashing, sirens wailing and then up! up! Again I was in the cool night sky, steady at last, feeling the calm air stream

along side me. Guided by the calm pinpricks of light above me, I flew and flew. I never looked back. I learned later, from talking to other migratory birds, that this is a place called “Las Vegas”. Its purpose is unknown, and until now we did not know that it is filled with these monsters.

Pete: So now you are proposing the destruction of this place, ‘Las Vegas’.

Agnes: Yes, yes, a thousand times yes! I can only surmise that these other creatures are raising an army, an army that needs to be fed constantly, an army that eats so ravenously that sometimes it must vomit back what it has eaten. Think what this army will do when it leaves Las Vegas and sets its sights on us.

Elly: But why don’t the other creatures stop the army?

Agnes: We don’t know. We think that the monsters have these other creatures in their thrall. They are slaves to the monsters. They feed them compulsively. I can only guess that the monsters put them in a state of deep hypnosis and that is what keeps their food source coming. I experienced it myself, the rhythm of the arms, the spinning eyes, the expectation of the vomiting. It would put any of us in that compliant state.

Billy: OK, fair enough! I think you have plainly made the case that these monsters are a dangerous menace.

Stella: Yes, absolutely terrifying! I move that we resolve to destroy Las Vegas.

Elly: Second.

Pete: Is the council prepared to vote?

Council Members: Aye!

Council Vote: 5 Aye. Proposal passed. Resolved: A committee will begin investigating the means with which we shall destroy Las Vegas.

Pete: The final item on the agenda is the proposal for shunning the kites.

It seems we are a little short on time. Crawford, take it away. Let me forestall Stella's usual questions and say in advance that kites are those bird-like imposters we have heard rumors about. I've never seen one. Crawford, have you?

Crawford: Indeed, many! They come in many colors and shapes and sizes. On the ground they are silent, inert, seemingly dead. But then they come alive in the wind, dancing on its eddies and whirls, attached to a long thin line.

Raymondo: What kind of creature is dead on the ground and alive in the sky?

Crawford: We don't know much about them. I think that they might be a new kind of life form, one that needs external forces like the wind to be alive. You could say that it is a kind of parasite, a creature needing a host. But what beautiful and graceful parasites. I have seen them gliding through the wind like the most artful amongst us, darting, dipping, suddenly soaring. They are like us, but more so – dancers, acrobats, artists. The stronger the wind the more furious their life force, the more beautiful –

(There is a pause for several minutes while Crawford regains his composure.)

Elly: You are amongst friends here, Crawford. Please take your time –

Pete: Yes, Crawford, please take your time, but please also arrive at the point.

Crawford: Graceful and beautiful. And then I saw *her*. She was the most graceful and beautiful of them all. She had a glorious pattern to her, blues and purples and greens woven into a tapestry almost like tree bark, and giant luminous open eyes that never blinked – eyes a vivid purple surrounding yellow pupils. I saw her soar high into the sky, caressed by the wind. I flew to her, struggling against the strong currents. I did not know if she could speak, but nonetheless I spoke to her. She replied in the language of motion, dips and feints and whirls. I could tell she understood me. I must say it, we communed. I never learned her name...

Billy: I see! And what did your *mate* think of all this. Surely you have one. All of your kind –

Raymondo: Oh, knock it off Billy! Who among us has not occasionally indulged—

Stella: Raymondo! This kind of speculation is highly irregular. I move that we omit this from the council records.

Pete: I'm sorry, Stella. You know that council policy is to record *all* statements made during our deliberations. Crawford, please continue, if you may. Maybe you can let us know what you are driving at.

Crawford: I never knew her name but I called her Olympia. Yes, yes, I have a mate – my poor suffering mate, bonded to me for life. But please hear me out. I could not help myself. Olympia and I met every day for several weeks. My poor mate did not ask where I was going but I am sure she intuited what was going on. Those days were the most glorious of my life, dancing in the wind with Olympia, riding the currents. And then it was over!

Elly: What happened? Did your mate finally confront you?

Crawford: No, it was different. Something awful happened. I needed to take a long trip one day – business – and I came to a meadow that was filled with kites. Curious, I flew over to look. Then it happened. I was shocked to see, amongst the huge flock of kites, many copies of Olympia.

Elly: That isn't so shocking. Maybe she came from a large family, had many siblings.

Crawford: No, not siblings, copies. Identical copies.

Elly: There probably were subtle differences, like in any family.

Crawford: No. I know what you mean about large families where the young ones all look alike. But that is not what I am talking about. I have an eye for this, I'll tell you. I can spot flies and worms and such at a great

distance. I live by seeing subtle fluctuations in patterns. They were all the same. Just the same.

Pete: And so? So what?

Crawford: I thought I had found my unique angel, my Olympia, the counterpart of my soul, but suddenly I became aware of her alien nature. What kind of creature is copied? My mind turned. I felt a kind of revulsion. Parasite, seductress, copy, *alien*. She broke my heart, she ruined my harmonious domestic life, and finally she turned my stomach.

Pete: And therefore your proposal...

Crawford: These kites should be shunned. I propose that the council ban the birds from fraternizing with the kites. The kites are going to make the birds go astray.

Billy: As you did?

Crawford: Uh, yeah, exactly.

Pete: OK, I think that the council has heard enough about this. Any comments from the council members?

Raymondo: Clearly Crawford has had a misadventure here, but I don't think that our council is in the business of mandating personal avian relations. I'm sorry to say this, Crawford, but the foolish mistakes of one bird should not dictate policy on how other birds should proceed. Birds should be relied upon to exercise good judgment in these matters.

Stella: I agree with Raymondo for once. This seems like a personal matter. Just be more careful next time, Crawford.

Billy: I disagree. These kites seem like a threat. It seems mighty ominous that they are dead sometimes and alive other times. Crawford has done a good job outlining their peculiar and seductive powers. Maybe it is our business to consider cases like this.

Elly: Oh Billy! You idiot. Even we sleep at night! Are we dead when the sunlight ends and then alive when it starts again?

Billy: It's not like that, Elly. Some birds are flying around at night, like Raymondo here. With the kites it is an inflexible rule: no wind, no life. That situation —

Pete: OK, I think that the council has talked enough about this. We're out of time and also pretty clear on this one. To wrap up, let's have our final vote of the meeting. Is everyone ready to vote?

Council Members: Aye.

Council Vote: 4 Nays and 1 Aye. The council resolves not to do anything at this time about the potential menace of the kites. However, the council also thinks that these strange animals deserve further study and should be approached carefully.

Pete: Meeting adjourned. All rise.