



Audubon Identifies First Important Bird Areas in Indiana

by James Cole
Indiana Important Bird Areas Coordinator

The National Audubon Society, which is celebrating its centennial year of protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitats that support them, announced this fall the designation of the first 13 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the state of Indiana. The IBA program is Audubon's lead conservation initiative and is part of a global partnership striving to identify and inventory key areas throughout the world that are critical to the survival of birds, and to promote the conservation of these areas in order to maintain healthy bird populations.

The nearly 150,000 acres of land encompassed by Indiana's first identified IBAs range in size from the approximate 55,000 acres of the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge near Madison, Indiana, to the relatively smaller 700 acres of the Pine Creek/Robert Feldt Marsh in Benton County. Habitats included within the IBAs are equally diverse, such as the tallgrass prairies of The Nature Conservancy's Kankakee Sands (Newton County), the dunal ridges and blowouts of Indiana Dunes State Park (Porter County), the restored wetlands of Beehunter Marsh (Greene County), and the beautifully forested riparian corridor of the Sugar Creek valley (Montgomery and Parke Counties).

Perhaps more significant is the abundance and diversity of birds supported by these newly designated areas. Birds of conservation concern which can be found at the various IBAs include such Audubon WatchList species as Bell's Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow. The IBAs also provide critical habitat for species listed as endangered or threatened by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, such as the Sandhill Crane, Black Rail, and Hooded Warbler. In fact, more than 40 species of threatened or endangered birds utilize these Important Bird Areas during breeding, non-breeding, or migratory seasons.

With the assistance of the IBA coordinator, the Indiana Important Bird Areas Technical Committee evaluates and identifies the state's IBAs according to a rigorous set of standardized selection criteria. Potential areas must support at least one of the following in order to qualify: (1) species of conservation concern (e.g. Cerulean Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, etc.); (2) species that are vulnerable because their populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome (e.g., Wood Thrush, Dickcissel, etc.); (3) an outstanding example of a rare or representative habitat type (e.g. Sedge Meadow, Oak Savanna, etc.); (4) species, or groups of similar species (such as waterfowl or shorebirds), that are vulnerable because they occur at high densities due to their congregational behavior.

While the IBA program confers no regulatory status for designated areas, the information gathered

about each site can create model ordinances for local governments, and serve as the basis for educational materials and programs to increase public awareness and stewardship of habitats critical for bird populations. Other opportunities generated through the identification of IBAs may include direct conservation measures, such as public acquisition, conservation easements, and guides for property managers.

Currently, work is underway to prepare nominations for the second-round of IBA evaluations. Examples of properties that may be analyzed by the technical committee include the Hoosier National Forest, Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center, Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge, and Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, plus a few smaller, more local areas such as Bendix Meadows in St. Joseph County and the Scott Starling Sanctuary or Fort Harrison State Park, both of which are located in Marion County. Audubon members and interested birders who would like to nominate a site as an Important Bird Area can contact James Cole, Indiana IBA coordinator, for a nomination sheet and instructions (email: jcole@audubon.org). For a full review of Indiana's Important Bird Areas, please visit www.audubon.org/bird/iba and click on the state of Indiana.



Beehunter Marsh in Greene County. Photo by Lee Sterrenburg of *Sassafras Audubon Society*.



(Above) Looking towards Cane Ridge in Gibson County.



(Left) Sugar Creek as viewed from Shades State Park.

November Program: Birds of Hawaii

Miriam Langsam is a retired professor of social and intellectual history and former dean of students for the School of Liberal Arts (IUPUI). Jean Oswalt is lawyer who worked for the state in various aspects of social services. Both are retired, able to travel, bird, and take pictures.

Their program features slides from Hawaii of numerous well-known birding areas such as Volcano Park, Parker Ranch, and the infamous Saddle Road. Hawaii is losing many indigenous birds to introduced species. The presentation will provide information on when birds were introduced and will raise the question of when should established birds be included as part of the "native" populations.

Time and Date: **7:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 8**

Location: **Holliday Park Nature Center**

December Program: Joint Holiday Party With the Heartlands Sierra Club

Plan on joining us for a festive holiday evening hosted by the Heartlands Group of the Sierra Club and Amos W. Butler Audubon Society. Bring your favorite side dish or dessert, the main dish and beverages will be provided by the hosts. The Sierra Club will raffle off donated items such as downtown carriage rides and sporting event tickets. AWBAS will have silent auction items to make your holiday shopping easy. Sierra Club calendars and James Cole note cards will be available for sale. (Note: the party will take place on Thursday)

Time and Date: **6:30 p.m., Thursday, December 8**

Location: **Holliday Park Nature Center**

January Program: A Naturalist in Africa

Join Paul Thomas, naturalist, photographer, and world traveler, on a photographic safari through seven African countries including Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, and Uganda.

The presentation is based on the best of his images of the fauna and flora obtained on trips to the area during the last 30 years. See the biodiversity in rivers, forests, grasslands, and savannas of national parks and reserves. This digital presentation showcases the best of his images originally captured with 35mm print and slide film and most recently with a digital camera.

Paul started birding 52 years ago and has been able to bird on all seven continents. He obtained BA and MS degrees from the University of Nebraska in zoology and ecology and a PhD from The University of Kansas in entomology. He also spent five summers at biological stations of the University of Minnesota, University of Michigan, and Duke University.

Time and Date: **7:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 10**

Location: **Holliday Park Nature Center**

Marian College EcoLab Activities

The Marian College EcoLab is beginning a series of activities in cooperation with the Amos W. Butler Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program that are free (unless noted) and open to all. The EcoLab is on the north end of the Marian College campus at 3200 Cold Spring Road in Indianapolis. Enter at the northern-most entrance (at a large, blue "Civic Theatre" sign). The Colonnade will be on your right, next to Allison Mansion, and Marian Hall is the large hall on your left with "Marian College" written across the front.

Bird Hikes at the EcoLab every Saturday at 8:00 a.m. Explore the Marian College EcoLab while identifying and learning about the birds we encounter in this historic and natural landscape. As we search for birds, we'll also be recording our sightings as census data to monitor avian populations. This is a great way to enjoy bird-watching while contributing as a "citizen scientist." Meet James Cole at the Colonnade.

Autumn Animals, 10:00-11:30 am November 8 and November 29

Come learn about what animals do in the autumn to get ready for winter. Each week will feature a different animal. This program will include a story, craft, and walk in the EcoLab. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Call Jen Smidebush at 317.997.8087 to register or for more information. Meet at the Cold Spring School, Environmental Resource Center, \$5.00 per child.

Stewardship Days, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Saturdays November 12 and December 17. Join the crew of the EcoLab for a fun and physical introduction to the hands-on field of restoration ecology.

Work will be followed by a tour of the EcoLab. Bring work clothes, gloves, and garden tools if you have them. Water will be provided. Call Jen Smidebush at 317.997.8087 for more information. Meet at St. Francis Colonnade.

Owl Prowl: 5:00 p.m. Saturday, November 19, and Wednesday, December 7. Be sure to bring a flashlight as we'll be looking and listening for Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, etc. Meet at the Colonnade.

Weekday Fall and Winter Bird Hikes at the EcoLab, 8:00 a.m. every Thursday morning beginning November 3. Meet at the Colonnade at Allison Mansion on the campus of Marian College.

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James Cole Important Bird Area Field Trips

Fall "IBA" Field Trip: Lake Michigan shoreline and Jasper-Pulaski FWA. Meet at Marian College on **Sunday, November 13**, at 6:30 a.m. We'll travel to some of the key spots along the lakefront in Lake and Porter Counties in the morning and arrive at Jasper-Pulaski in the afternoon to enjoy the sight of 10,000+ cranes arriving to roost in the marsh. Participants should bring a lunch. For those interested in visiting Jasper-Pulaski only, we hope to arrive at the crane observation deck between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.

Winter "IBA" Field Trip: Chinook FWA and Mine. Meet at Marian College on **Sunday, December 11**, at 7:30 a.m. We'll be traveling to the reclaimed strip mines of Clay County to look for hawks — Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and Rough-legged Hawk are all likely. If interest persists, we'll venture to Hawthorn Mine in Sullivan County in the afternoon in search of owl species.

Contact James Cole at jcole@audubon.org for more information.

Panama Audubon Thanks AWBAS for Latest Land Purchase in El Chorogo

Dear All,

On behalf of all the members of the Panama Audubon Society, please pass on my sincerest thanks to all of your Birdathon organizers, contributors and participants for the wonderful support they have been giving to nature conservation in Panama for the past six years. We cannot overemphasize the importance of securing the survival of the El Chorogo forests, on which so many species — both resident and migrant — depend for their future.

We are really excited that with the vital support of the Amos W. Butler Audubon Society we have finally been able to purchase 95 more hectares (235 acres) of land. In our visits there we have found both primary and secondary forest, the headwaters of the San Bartolo River and a small swamp on this former farm. We know that the forests house all the endemics and migrants we so want to protect — and for that reason alone the purchase is more than justified — but what else is there remains a mystery. There are now some 280 hectares (692 acres) of land secured in private nature reserves in El Chorogo, of which Audubon holds two thirds, but there is still a long way to go.

I know that running the Birdathon every year is no easy task and I appreciate the work that you have put into it. At this end we were also working hard, because purchasing land in Panama is a bit more complicated than going to the store for a dozen eggs. We had to deal with a new government with new people because of recent elections, and so there was some confusion before we could get all of the proper forms filled out, but eventually had everything in order and have been celebrating ever since. We were very fortunate to have some very dedicated volunteers working on this, and I would

particularly like to thank Bill Adsett, the driving force behind this project. I would also like to thank George Wallace of the American Bird Conservancy for his patience and guidance.

In the next 12 months we plan to put meat on the bones of a strategic and management plan, and make another purchase. There are several possibilities for the latter, ranging in price from some \$16,000 to \$40,000 per property. There are a lot of challenges for us in the future and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this.

The Baird's Trogon, the White-crested Emerald, the White-throated Shrike-Tanager, the Red-backed Squirrel Monkey and all the other endemic wildlife of El Chorogo wish to thank you for saving their home and their lives. The Amos W. Butler Audubon Society should be as proud as we are of the growing nature sanctuary that is now set up in one of the last remaining patches of Pacific lowland forest in western Panama.

Rosabel Miró R.
President
Panama Audubon
Society



(Editor's note: This letter was sent by Rosabel to be read at the annual Birdathon party held to thank donors and volunteers.)

Bill Adsett, Rosabel Miró, and Mr. Jurado (former owner) with the deed of the new plot of recently acquired land.

106th Christmas Bird Count

Participate in one of the longest running citizen science projects. All levels of expertise are encouraged. These counts are an excellent way for new bird watchers to team up with experts, meet new people, and get to know their area in a different way. It also is a way to continue the long traditions of Christmas counting and build on over 100 years of data. Many of the counts in Indiana share in this long history. We look forward to seeing you. Be prepared for the weather as all counts take place rain or shine, snow or ice.

Saturday, December 17: Indianapolis/Ft. Harrison State Park

Meet at the Nature Center at 8:05 a.m. (gates open at 8). Call Kevin Strunk (257-3323) or Steve Duncan (251-8834) for field assignments outside of the park. Chili served at the Nature Center at noon.

Saturday, December 17: Hamilton County

Meet at the Cool Creek Park Nature Center at 8:00 a.m. or contact Art Jefferies (844-1686) for more information.

Sunday, December 18: Indianapolis/Eagle Creek Park

Contact Sue Arnold (falarn@indy.net) for assignments or meet at the park Nature Center at 8:00 a.m. Pitch-in lunch at the Nature Center at noon.

Monday, December 19: Johnson County

Meet at the Fox Den in the Johnson County Park near Edinburgh at 7:00 a.m. Contact Jack McNutt (jack@emr.net or 933-2424). Make sure to pack your lunch.

Other counts in Indiana:

Saturday, December 17

Big Oaks NWR	Jason Lewis	812-273-0783
Fort Wayne	Jim Haw	jhawillet@aol.com
Lake Monroe	Don Whitehead	whitehead@indiana.edu
Ohio River	Joe Bens	513-353-4229
Terre Haute	Peter Scott	pscott@indstate.edu

Sunday, December 18

Spring Mill State Park	John Castrale	jcastrale@dnr.IN.gov
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Tuesday, December 20

Patoka Lake	John Castrale	jcastrale@dnr.IN.gov
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Wednesday, December 28

Pokagon State Park	Fred Wooley	260-833-2012
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Saturday, December 31

Elkhart County	Ronda DeCaire	574-293-5070
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Sunday, January 1

Muscatatuck NWR	Donna Stanley	812-522-4352
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Audubon LifeLines

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Amos W. Butler Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 80024
Indianapolis, IN 46280

*Our mission:
To promote the enjoyment and stewardship
of birds of central Indiana*

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**Audubon Information Line:
317-767-4690**

**Visit our web site:
www.amosbutleraudubon.org**

Calendar of Events

Programs are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at Holliday Park Nature Center (unless noted). All programs are free and open to the public.

November 8: Birds of Hawaii. Miriam Langsam and Jean Oswalt, both amateur photographers and birders, will share their photographs of a recent trip with Field Guides to three Hawaiian Islands.

Thursday, December 8, 6:30 p.m. Joint Holiday party with the Heartlands Sierra Club (Note time and date). Bring your favorite side dish or dessert, the main dish and beverages will be provided. Raffle and silent auction. Sierra Club calendars and James Cole note cards will be available for sale.

January 10: A Naturalist in Africa. Join Paul Thomas, naturalist, photographer, and world traveler, on a photographic safari through seven African countries including Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa and Uganda.

Field Trips (See details on page 2)

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Marian College EcoLab Activities

See article on page 2 for details on programs and activities.

Amos W. Butler Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Membership includes:

- Quarterly issues of *Audubon* magazine
- *Audubon LifeLines*, the bi-monthly chapter newsletter
- Workshops and entertaining monthly program meetings
- An opportunity to unite with other individuals to advocate protection of the natural world

Special Introductory Offer \$20

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Make checks payable to: Amos Butler Audubon Society

Mail to: Steve Duncan, Treasurer
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