



# Why Can't We Just Stay Home: a Guide to Surviving Winter Birding in Indiana

by Amy Hodson, Communications Chair

It's that time of the year again. The days grow shorter, the temperature drops, and we huddle inside while watching our feathered friends visit feeders from the warmth of our homes. Some of us scour over our life lists planning next year's vacation. Others review their year list to see what species were missed. For some, cabin fever starts to set in.

Winter is not the easiest season to go birding, but it is definitely the best way to kickstart your year. If you are one of the brave souls who wants to enjoy birding in Indiana's beautiful winter wonderland, here are a few tips to make it through the season.

Wearing the proper gear is essential to winter birding. Make sure you layer up with "long johns," your favorite sweatshirt, and a nice parka. A thin layer of gloves underneath snow gloves can be a helpful buffer from the cold. If you feel ambitious and want to head up to Lake Michigan (those Glaucous Gulls won't wait on you forever), a balaclava face mask and parka pants can make or break a windy day. Don't forget your favorite hat or earmuffs to keep your ears toasty, as well as the secret weapon in any birder's car during the winter: hand and foot warmers. Keeping your fingers and toes warm will go a long way during a cold winter hike.

One of the best motivators to get outside any time of the year is to attend one of the many local bird hikes scheduled around central Indiana. Find one at your favorite park, meet a group of birding friends, or travel to each location for new experiences. Birding with others always brightens up any cold or dreary day. To find a list of the local bird hikes near you, check out the list at the bottom of our newsletters or our event calendar at [amosbutleraudubon.org/events](http://amosbutleraudubon.org/events).

If hiking in the cold is a little too much for your taste, try a few of these great locations where you can bird from the warmth of your car. Birding by car is a great way to enjoy winter birds and the beauty of Indiana's frozen landscapes.

- **Kankakee Sands** is located in the northwest portion of the state and is known for its population of wintering raptors. Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks are abundant. If you time your trip around sunset, you might even catch a glimpse of a few Short-eared Owls.
- **Universal Strip Mines** straddles Vermillion and Vigo counties, just north of Terre Haute on the west side of the state. Not only can you find wintering raptors in the area, but you could also have a chance to view Trumpeter Swans and waterfowl, as well as Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese by the thousands. It is truly an extraordinary sight to see.



Mark Welter and Aidan Rominger birding the lakefront in February 2015. Courtesy of Amy Hodson.

- **Goose Pond FWA**, located in Greene County, is another excellent site for waterfowl, swans, and raptors. You never know what you might find while birding the astonishing 8,064 acres of prairie and marsh habitat. One of the most exciting additions to the property is the new Visitor's Center, which features a beautiful observation deck, large panoramic windows, and restrooms. If you would like to make your first trip to Goose Pond on a guided tour, join Amos Butler Audubon Society for a field trip on January 6. Event details are included in this newsletter and on our website.

Aside from watching your feeders, joining a local bird walk, or embarking on a birding-by-car adventure, try setting a goal to challenge yourself. Track how many different species visit your home, your favorite local patch, or even how many you can see in the month of January. Keeping a winter list can help kickstart your year while anxiously waiting for spring's arrival. Who knows, maybe you can join the "January 100" club! Seeing 100 species in January can be a challenge, but a lot of fun. With the methods mentioned in this article, you could find yourself well on your way.

So, grab a cup of hot cocoa, layer on that winter gear, and get out there! I'll see you out in the field doing what we all love the most: birding.

# Upcoming Audubon Programs, Events, and Workshops

All programs are held at the Holliday Park Nature Center, 6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month unless otherwise noted. They are free and open to the public.



*Turquoise Jay, photo courtesy of Sabrewing Nature Tours.*

## Exploring the Incredible Country of Ecuador

**Tuesday, January 9, 7:30–9 p.m.**

**Presenter: Rob Ripma, ABAS President**

There may be no better country in the world for birding than Ecuador. The massive species list, over 1700, combined with a country only the size of Colorado makes this the perfect place to see a wonderful array of our beautiful feathered friends in just a short time. Typically, a two-week trip finds well over 500 species.

Join Rob Ripma, President of Amos Butler Audubon Society and owner of Sabrewing Nature Tours, as he shows us the birds and wildlife that you can expect to find while exploring the northern part of Ecuador. As we travel from the high Andes to the tropical rainforest, you're sure to learn about some exciting birds!



*Scintillant Hummingbird (sitting), and Black-bellied Hummingbird (flying) in Costa Rica. Courtesy of Chad Williams.*

## The Road to 1,000

**Tuesday, February 13, 7:30 p.m–9 p.m.**

**Presenter: Chad Williams, Program Chair**

By today's birding standards, a goal of seeing 1,000 species of birds seems somewhat trivial. But to some people, it's a big goal! With a family of 5 children, a full-time salaried job and all of the full-time tasks that go along with it, getting to the goal has been no easy task. Join Chad Williams as he takes you on a brief journey through some of his travels in the U.S., Mexico, and Central and South America.

Chad Williams has been actively birding since 2007, but has been interested in birds since the 5th grade. He loves nature and loves to promote the enthusiasm of birds and nature to others. He is the adult Chair of the Indiana Young Birders Club and is currently on the board of the Amos Butler Audubon Society. In addition to birding, Chad also grows and sells carnivorous plants and orchids. He is married to Carrie and has five children and two granddaughters.

## Goose Pond Area Raptor Field Trip

**Saturday, January 6, 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

**Kroger, 1930 East Main Street, Plainfield, IN**

Join Scott Enochs as he leads you to Greene County in search of migrating and wintering raptors. Goose Pond, and surrounding areas, in Greene County has become a prime wintering area and migratory stop-over for raptors such as Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Golden Eagle, and Short-eared Owl.

We will meet at the Kroger located at 1930 East Main Street in Plainfield at 10 a.m. and carpool to Goose Pond. The group will stop for lunch at the McDonald's in Linton before we begin searching Greene County for birds, then spend the afternoon and evening trying to find as many birds of prey as possible. We will remain in the area through sunset in hopes of seeing Short-eared Owls emerge from their daytime roost.



*Northern Harrier. Courtesy of Shari McCollough.*

Participants can expect to spend a lot of time driving in their vehicles until we find a raptor to study. The event is free and open to the public. Registration is not required, but is greatly appreciated. Please contact Scott at 317-850-4801 or msenochs@comcast.net if you have any questions.

## **Christmas Bird Count for Kids**

**January 6, 2018, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

**Zion Nature Center, Zionsville**

Have you ever done a Christmas Bird Count and thought it would be more fun if my kids could participate? Wanted to introduce your kid to birding, but didn't know where to start? Join Amos Butler Audubon Society as we host our second annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids (ages 6-15). The event will include birding on the trails of Zion Nature Center, a feeder watch, and an awards ceremony. Please bring a brown bag or cooler lunch and binoculars (otherwise binoculars can be provided), a field guide, proper walking shoes, and outer wear.

If you have questions, contact Jessica Helmbold at [jessica.helmbold@indy.gov](mailto:jessica.helmbold@indy.gov) or Zion Nature Center at 317-873-8950. Registration can be completed through the Zionsville Public Library.

## **Winter Lakefront Trip**

**Saturday, February 3, 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.**

**Dick's Sporting Goods, 6030 West 86th Street, Indianapolis**

Join Scott Enochs as he leads you to the Indiana Lake Michigan lakeshore in search of wintering gulls, waterfowl, and any vagrants that may be in the area. We will meet at the Dick's Sporting Goods located at 6030 West 86th Street at 6:30 a.m. and carpool to lakefront.

The group will spend the morning and early afternoon visiting various sites around the Indiana lakeshore. Little time will be spent hiking, though some hiking terrain would be considered moderate to rugged. Most of the time will be spent travelling to as many sites as possible to scan the lake. Some stops may require travelling on toll roads. Depending on weather conditions, an evening stop to Kankakee Sands could be added to the trip. In that event, we will break for lunch in the Gary/Chesterton area.

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is not required, but appreciated. Please contact Scott at 317-850-4801 or [msenochs@comcast.net](mailto:msenochs@comcast.net) if you have any questions.

## **Waterfowl ID Workshop**

**Saturday, March 17, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Eagle Creek Ornithology Center, Indianapolis**

Join ABAS Education Chair and waterfowl enthusiast Jessica Helmbold for a crash course on Indiana's waterfowl. After the course, we will have lunch in the park and explore Eagle Creek Reservoir for waterfowl. Then in following weekends, weather dependent, we will make excursions to Muscatatuck NWR and Goose Pond for further study. Details about the two additional field trip opportunities will be emailed to workshop participants, posted on our Facebook page, and added to our website. You may join us just for the lecture, any of the field trips, or all events. For details, contact [jessica.helmbold@indy.gov](mailto:jessica.helmbold@indy.gov). RSVPs are appreciated, but not required.

## **The Ornithology Center's Great Backyard Bird Count**

**Saturday, February 17**

**10 to 10:30 a.m. and 2 to 2:30 p.m.**

**Sunday, February 18, 2 to 2:30 p.m.**

**Eagle Creek Ornithology Center, Indianapolis**

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that allows bird watchers of all ages and skill levels to count birds. This creates a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Counts can be for 15 minutes or more on one or more days of the four-day event. Sightings are reported online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Come out and join us!

## **Local Bird Hikes**

### **Cool Creek Park**

**2000 East 151st Street, Carmel**

**2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesdays at 8:30 a.m. and every other Sunday at 8:00 a.m.**

**January 10, 14, 17, 24, 28, 31**

**February 11, 14, 21, 25, 28**

Birds are fascinating and watching them can be an awe-inspiring experience. However, catching a glimpse of these gorgeous creatures can be frustrating and learning how to identify all of them can be overwhelming. Join our naturalist staff and other guest leaders (when available) Sunday and Wednesday mornings and we will learn together. This will be a great opportunity for bird-watchers of all levels. You may begin anytime during the season and come as often as you like. Preregistration is not required. Don't forget your binoculars!

Meet in the parking lot at the bottom of the road by Cool Creek, past the Nature Center. For more information, call 317-774-2500 or visit [myhamiltoncountyparks.com](http://myhamiltoncountyparks.com).

### **Eagle Creek Park**

**6519 Delong Road, Indianapolis**

**Every Sunday, 9:00 a.m.**

**January 7, 14, 21, 28, February 4, 11, 18, 25**

Meet at the Ornithology Center. For more information, call 317-327-2473.

### **Holliday Park**

**6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis**

**The third Tuesday of the month, 8:30 a.m.**

**January 16, February 20**

Times vary depending on the month. Meet in front of the nature center. For more information, call 317-327-7180.

### **Strawtown Koteewi Park**

**12308 Strawtown Avenue, Noblesville**

**First Wednesday of each month, 9:00 a.m.**

**January 3, February 7**

Meet at the Taylor Center of Natural History. For more information, call 317-774-2574 or visit [myhamiltoncountyparks.com](http://myhamiltoncountyparks.com).

# Tuning in to Birds and the Birding World through Podcasts

by Whitney Yoerger, *LifeLines* Editor

When you're stuck indoors due to winter's chill and darkness, satisfying your birding fix can be a challenge. Daylight hours are limited – though ever slowly increasing – and with the new year, catching up on life maintenance after the holidays seems more pressing. The laundry basket is overflowing, your car needs an oil change, and the furnace is long-overdue for routine servicing – all of which are potential obstructions for getting outside with the birds.

For as much time as birders observe and talk about birds, there is almost no room for anything else. Birding can be all-consuming, and the outdoors are inextricably wrapped up in the experiences we stockpile and share online or in passing. If you find yourself restlessly calculating your free time throughout the week, the good news is you have options.

For as little as two minutes or as much as 45 minutes, you can listen to bird-related podcasts while accomplishing nearly everything on your to-do list.

Podcasts are a great way to stay engaged with birds, birding, and conservation because you can tune in whenever and wherever. For instance, a 30-minute commute is enriched with avian stories or entertaining trivia, and folding laundry is suddenly more bearable. I can attest to these claims because, in the last year, I've screened numerous bird-related podcasts and can recommend the best four to get you started. Here we go, in no particular order.

**American Birding Podcast** — Every other Thursday, Nate Swick of the American Birding Association (ABA) gives a brief rundown of recent rarities, like the Golden-crowned Sparrow that was discovered in Marion county last April, as well as ABA news and interviews with all sorts of birding characters – from ornithologists to big year birders. Episodes are previously recorded, edited down for clarity and flow, with a run-time between 25 to 45 minutes. Check out “How Photography Has Changed Birding,” published on Oct. 5, 2017. *Website: [blog.aba.org/aba-podcast](http://blog.aba.org/aba-podcast).*

**BirdNote** — Every day, BirdNote releases two-minute stories about birds, nature, and the environment. It's that comprehensive, covering everything from history to myth, migration to nesting, and plumage to vocalizations. With thirteen years of material, the podcast's success lies in its thoughtfully scripted yet digestible delivery. Birders of all ages and experience levels can enjoy BirdNote. Check out “What in the World is a Hoopoe?” (Sept. 2017). *Website: [birdnote.org](http://birdnote.org).*

**This Birding Life** — In *This Birding Life*, Bird Watcher's Digest editor Bill Thompson, III highlights a birding topic each podcast such as travel stories, birding festivals, and a visit to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Episodes are created once monthly and are approximately 45 minutes in length. There is also a visually enhanced version of the podcast on their website, which features images corresponding to the audio. Check out “An Interview with ABA President Jeff Gordon,” published on Sept. 25, 2017. *Website: [birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/podcasts/thisbirdinglife.php](http://birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/podcasts/thisbirdinglife.php).*



Photo courtesy of Whitne Yoeger

**Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds** — Headquartered in Massachusetts, Talkin' Birds first aired in 2006 as a live, interactive radio show and has grown in popularity thanks in part to Talkin' Birds ambassadors stretching across the country. Each 30-minute episode is broken into segments including a young birder's report, short interviews, backyard bird feeding tips, and a mystery bird contest where listeners are tested on their identification skills. Most importantly, the whole family can enjoy Talkin' Birds. *Website: [talkinbirds.com](http://talkinbirds.com).*

The aforementioned podcasts are some of the best available. To tune in, all you need is a computer or a smartphone to download or stream episodes online. As a bonus, podcast websites often feature links, visuals, and additional information in their show notes if you're interested in diving deeper into the content. And if you enjoy one podcast in particular, there are smartphone apps such as iTunes or Google Play where you can subscribe to have new episodes delivered straight to your smartphone.

Listening to podcasts not only helps you stay current with what's happening in the birding world while being productive during the downtime, but can also inspire the next time you lift your binoculars. Just remember: Even if you can't get outside, there is always time for birds.

# Relaunching Lights Out Indy

by Austin Broadwater, Lights Out Indy Chair

Since another migration season has passed, you may be thinking that Amos Butler Audubon Society, like the birds, has taken a break until the next season starts again. Far from it! We are restarting an important initiative from a few years back and are planning to launch it by spring migration 2018.

The initiative is Lights Out Indy (LOI). The goal is to encourage owners and managers of buildings, mainly focused in the downtown metropolitan area, to turn off or dim their lights during prime migration periods in the spring and fall in order to reduce avian collisions with skyscraper windows. Secondly, LOI aims to achieve significant reductions in our city's energy usage during the nighttime hours. Across the country, as well as in Canada, Audubon chapters have implemented similar programs that have been successful in reducing the perils of our feathered friends during their biannual journeys across the globe. In numbers, this program can work to save thousands of birds and thousands of dollars per year in energy savings – and that's in Indiana alone.

Amos Butler currently has several objectives in the works so LOI can once again get rolling. By the start of the New Year, a salvage permit will be acquired so we can continue our research on bird strikes around the city and even transport injured birds that are found during LOI surveys to the hands of locally certified wildlife rehabbers. Members of the LOI committee as well as volunteers will do outreach to work with buildings and encourage them to participate. Already, the Indianapolis Zoo has partnered with us in pushing this program forward and hopefully, we will continue to add more noticeable places downtown to our list.

It is also a goal of ours to create public outreach and education activities that we can provide to homeowners for bird-safe window alternatives that they themselves can use, such as window decals. Lastly, we will work side-by-side with the companies or buildings to come up with other ways they can help by promoting bird-friendly building designs and construction techniques.



*An injured American Woodcock found in downtown Indianapolis that was admitted to the Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic. Courtesy of Amy Hodson.*

This program is certainly not a one-man job, as I have stated earlier, so we in the LOI committee are looking for any of our members or others who would like to volunteer and make a good addition to our team. Whether that volunteering is through contacting building owners; walking our city streets in the mornings during spring and fall migration to gather specimens for our ongoing research; transporting injured birds to our local wildlife rehabilitation centers; performing educational programs or events; or various other opportunities, we would appreciate any and all help.

I am sure that nearly every person with glass windows in their home has had the experience of finding a bird that has struck their window. We believe you can help mitigate window strikes both in your home and around central Indiana. If you would like to volunteer or need more information, please contact me by email at [abroadwater1990@gmail.com](mailto:abroadwater1990@gmail.com) on how you can help us achieve our goals.

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## A Note from the President

By Rob Ripma, President

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and that 2018 is off to a great start! We ended 2017 with another wonderful Beers with Birders event at Metazoa Brewing Company and look forward to hosting these social events more frequently this year.

Over the next few months, we have a great schedule packed with a wide variety of programs, workshops, hikes, and field trips. We hope to see each and every one of you at one of these events. You can keep up with all that's upcoming via the calendar on our website.

Thank you for being involved in the conservation and protection of birds in the Central Indiana area. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without your support and generosity!

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## Annual Appeal

Each year in December we ask our members for a special contribution to support Amos Butler Audubon Society's amazing programs, field trips, publications, educational events, and outreach programs. You recently received a letter in the mail about our annual fund campaign. Please consider donating to our permanent fund for the long-run financial health of ABAS.

If you haven't done so, it's never too late to make a contribution using the return envelope or by visiting our website at [amosbutleraudubon.org/join\\_donate](http://amosbutleraudubon.org/join_donate). Online contributions are processed securely through PayPal, giving you the option to use your credit card for payment.

Thank you to all our incredible and supportive members!

## Meet the Board: Amy Hodson



*Courtesy of Amy Hodson.*

Amy Hodson is an avid birder from Indianapolis, Indiana. After picking up her first pair of binoculars in 2012, Amy fell instantly in love with birds and the habitats in which they live. She has a passion for all things that touch the birding world, and volunteers as a board member of Daubenspeck Community Nature Park (director) and Amos Butler Audubon Society (director of communications).

As an active member in the birding community, Amy leads hikes and is a member of the Wild Birds Unlimited Birdathon team, which fundraises for research and conservation initiatives. In the field, you can find her focused behind the lens of her Nikon camera or giving out high fives.

Amy enjoys traveling to experience new locations, continuously learning more about birds, and of course, having fun. Most recently, her adventures have taken her all over the state in 2017 to accomplish seeing 300 bird species in Indiana.

### ABAS Post-its

## What is a “Spark Bird?”

A “spark bird” is the species that you would credit with drawing you to pursue birding. While most birders would say, they have a spark bird, I can honestly say that I don’t have one. My family has been birding for a long time and after many trips, I developed an interest.

—Rob Ripma, President

**What’s your spark bird? Share your thoughts or submit a question for Rob at [info@amosbutleraudubon.org](mailto:info@amosbutleraudubon.org).**

## Beers with Birders

*By Joanna Woodruff, Recording Secretary*

ABAS has enjoyed sponsoring our Beers with Birders events over the course of this past year. Our events offer an informal and fun opportunity to gather together at various breweries across the city and to share in birding experiences and adventures. The events are open to the public with RSVPs through our website and social media.

Our last event was at Metazoa Brewing Co. on Dec. 7. We’ve also held events at Indiana City Brewing Co. and Ash and Elm Cider Co. Beers with Birders events are held quarterly and we plan to continue this trend. We’ve had between 10-35 people in attendance, including a mix of members and non-members, but we hope to gain more ABAS members through these events. Indianapolis breweries have kindly offered donations in which a portion of the proceeds from the night come back to ABAS.

We hope you consider joining us for our next Beers with Birders event!



## Call for Photos

Amos Butler Audubon Society is looking for great images of Indiana birds and regional birding adventures to share on our Instagram and Facebook feeds. Break out those hard drives and submit your photos to [info@amosbutleraudubon.org](mailto:info@amosbutleraudubon.org) for a chance at exposure!

## Amos Butler Audubon Society Chapter Supporter Membership

### Membership benefits:

- 100% of your dues support local Audubon educational programs and urban conservation projects
- *Audubon LifeLines*, the chapter newsletter
- Workshops and entertaining monthly program meetings

One-year individual membership \$25

Two-year individual membership \$45

One-year household membership \$40

Two-year household membership \$75

Lifetime individual membership \$500

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (please include) \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to: Amos Butler Audubon Society**

Mail to: ABAS Membership Chair

P.O. Box 80024

Indianapolis, IN 46280

e-mail questions to: [info@amosbutleraudubon.org](mailto:info@amosbutleraudubon.org)

## Amos Butler Audubon Society

### Officers:

Rob Ripma; *President, Executive Committee*

Ted Meyer; *Treasurer, Past President, Executive Committee*

Joanna Woodruff; *Recording Secretary, Executive Committee*

### Board Members:

Adam Barnes, *Volunteer Chair*

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Scott Enochs, *Field Trip Chair*

Jessica Helmbold, *Education Chair*

Amy Hodson, *Communications Chair*

Doug Sherow

Brittany Davis-Swinford, *Conservation Chair*

Chad Williams, *Program Chair*

### Committee Chairs:

Austin Broadwater, *Lights Out Indy Chair*

Donna McCarty, *Birdathon Chair*

Whitney Yoerger, *Newsletter Editor*

Visit our website:

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Sign up for the online *LifeLines* at  
[info@amosbutleraudubon.org](mailto:info@amosbutleraudubon.org)

## A Great Way to Support Amos Butler Audubon Society— AmazonSmile! What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support ABAS every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), you'll find the same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping experience as on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to ABAS.

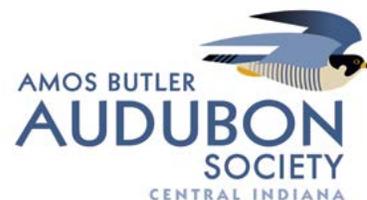
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Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), enter Amos W Butler Audubon Society in the search bar, and let your shopping be not just for your family and friends but also for birds like the Cerulean Warbler.

## ABAS Logo Gear

Have you noticed the snazzy ABAS logo shirts that many of the board members have been wearing lately? We recently set up an account with local apparel company, Concept Prints, to provide embroidered logo gear for our members and events. Whether it's one shirt to help you show your Audubon pride or an order of 20 for a team representing ABAS at an event, ordering is easy. Simply visit [www.conceptprints.com](http://www.conceptprints.com) and click the "Featured Catalogues" link to browse the wide variety of apparel offered. For pricing details, questions, or to place an order, email our account manager, Shiron Miller, at [shiron@conceptprints.com](mailto:shiron@conceptprints.com). Orders usually arrive within two weeks and can be paid for when received. A terrific new way to support ABAS!



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

**Amos Butler Audubon Society**  
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