

Introducing the 2019 Birdathon Teams!

By Amy Hodson and Donna McCarty

It's that time of the year! Spring migration is upon us, and with it comes the 32nd annual ABAS Birdathon season. Since 1987 the ABAS Birdathon has been on a mission to promote the enjoyment and stewardship of the birds of Central Indiana. Birdathon is the organization's premier fundraising event. A notice is sent out in early January requesting grant submissions for conservation and education projects. The grant requests which are determined to be the best candidates for fulfilling our mission are selected for funding. Each year teams of avid birders conduct a "Big Day" event in the spring to locate as many species as possible in a 24-hour period to raise Birdathon funds. We began with just one team, but now over ten teams participate in this event.

Let's meet the 2019 Birdathon teams!



Team Bishop: Linda and Mike Bishop

Helping to fund the much-needed research and conservation projects supported by the ABAS Birdathon is a perfect rationale for being self-indulgent. What could be better than spending a beautiful spring day birding during peak migration? We get to have fun all day long and feel good about it! — *Mike Bishop*

Noddy Little Gulls: Laurie Voss, Lou Anne Barriger, Wendy Kindig, Cindy Meyer



I had heard about the Birdathon from other teams and thought it would be fun to do. I was hoping someone would invite me to be on a team when Donna McCarty said, "you could form your own team". What a great idea. That was the birth of the Noddy Little Gulls in 2011. — *Laurie Voss*



Las Águilas Arpías: Elcira Villarreal, Jeanette Frazier, Victor Chen, Betty Yan

Donna encouraged us to have a team so we did and we intend to have a lot of fun! — *Jeanette Frazier*



Parks Peeps: Adam Barnes, Dan Boritt, Will Schaust, Jenna McElroy, Brittany Davis Swinford

We founded a Birdathon team to represent Indy Parks and help show the residents of Marion County what their local green spaces have to offer. It's also a great chance for us to get out and explore the resources we manage! — *Will Schaust*



Team Wild Birds Unlimited: Brian Cunningham, Rob Ripma, Amy Hodson, John Schaust

Our reason for being: Donna McCarty was "relentless" in encouraging John to field a new team that would represent Wild Birds Unlimited. Our reason for continuing to our 9th year: It's one of the best days of the year for all of us and our team takes pride in what ABAS has accomplished with Birdathon proceeds! — *John Schaust*



Bud & Carl's Legacy: Janet Tuten, Keith Starling, Amanda Smith, Marty Williams

The Bud and Carl Legacy Team was created and named to carry on the legacy of the first Birdathon team for the ABAS, Bud Starling, Carl Weber, Ted Test, and Scott Grimmel. This original team was the first and only team for a number of years and started a fundraising tradition that has lasted to this day and contributed over a half million dollars for bird education. I remember the enthusiasm and joy Dad and his team generated each year as they planned and prepared for their Big Day. I have tried to capture this original enthusiasm with the legacy team which is made up of a number of birders who "cut their birding teeth" with Dad in earlier years complemented by a few newcomers. Our team is honored to help carry on this tradition and play a little part in bird habitat conservation and education. Our team consists of Jerry and Marty Williams, Amanda Smith, Janet Tuten and Keith Starling. — *Keith Starling*

Continued on page 9.

Upcoming Audubon Programs, Events, and Field Trips

All are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.

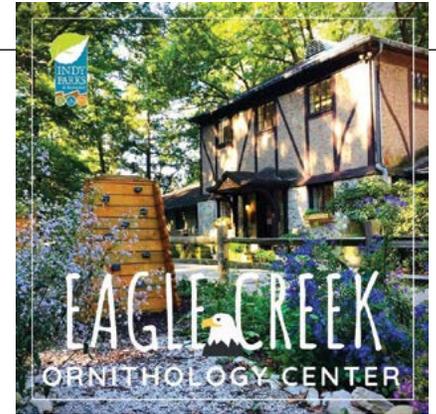
Ornithology Center Celebrates Ten Years!

Tuesday, May 14, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Holliday Park Nature Center, 6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, IN

For 10 years, the Eagle Creek Ornithology Center has provided top-notch bird-based education to the city of Indianapolis and beyond.

Join Ornithology Center Manager Will Schaust as he updates members on improvements to the center, ABAS funded projects, the 10 year anniversary of the "OC", and answers your questions.



Bird Photography Walk at Eagle Creek Park

Sunday, May 26, 8:00 am to 10:00 am

6515 Delong Road, Indianapolis, IN

Join Amy Hodson on a walk at Eagle Creek Park to photograph birds. All levels of photography are welcome, especially beginners! Don't have camera gear quite yet, but still want to learn? This will be a great opportunity to learn about the basics of bird photography.

The group will meet at the Ornithology Center to practice shooting at the feeders. We will then head into the park to see what lingering spring migrants and resident nesting birds we can find!

Registration is required. Please RSVP for this event by emailing info@amosbutleraudubon.org. Although there is no fee for this walk, park entrance fees apply.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher courtesy of Amy Hodson

Beers with Birders!

Thursday, June 20, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm



Metazoa Brewing Company
140 South College Avenue, Indianapolis, IN

Join ABAS for an evening at Metazoa Brewing Company. We will meet from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm to collectively share our birding experiences and adventures at this informal gathering.

This event is open to the public. Please email info@amosbutleraudubon.org or RSVP to our event on Facebook if you plan to join us so we can be aware of how many will be attending.

Kankakee Sands Nature Preserve Summer Sparrows Field Trip

Sunday, June 30, 6:00 am - 3:00 pm

Join Mark Welter as he leads you on a trip to Kankakee Sands in search of breeding sparrows. Kankakee Sands Nature Preserve is a birder's paradise for nesting prairie species. The 7,000+ acres are actively being restored to a natural prairie habitat under the protection of The Nature Conservancy. Targets for the trip will include Song, Field, Vesper, Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Lark Sparrows. We will seek out additional species known to nest at Kankakee Sands such as Orchard Oriole and Blue Grosbeak!

We will meet at 6:00 am at the Dick's Sporting Goods located at 6030 West 86th Street in Indianapolis and carpool to Kankakee Sands. Since the majority of this trip will be done birding by car, walking will be minimal, and we will likely stay close to the roads.

Participants can expect to return to Indy around 3:00 pm. Contact Mark at shooter2_indy@yahoo.com if you have any questions. This event is free and open to the public. Registration is not required but appreciated.



Henslow's Sparrow courtesy of Mark Welter



EAGLE CREEK PARK
2nd ANNUAL
BIRD FEST
MAY 4th 2019
ORNITHOLOGY CENTER



*Jenna McElroy with resident Peregrine Falcon
courtesy Eagle Creek Ornithology Center.*

Eagle Creek Birding Festival

Saturday, May 4, 7:00 am to 4:30 pm

6515 Delong Road, Indianapolis, IN

Join Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center for their Birding Festival! This is an all-day event where registrants will experience the wonderful birding opportunities that our park has to offer. Join us for an expert-led birding canoe excursion, van tour, and hikes! We will have a special guest lecturer during a catered lunch. No birding experience is required. Park admission and lunch are included in the cost. Canoes and life jackets will be provided. Binoculars will be available for checkout.

Festival prices:

Single Adult Ticket: \$45

Multi-Adult Tickets (2+) : \$40 each

Youth's Ticket (10 – 16 years): \$30

Call (317)327-2473 or follow the Ornithology Center on Facebook for more details. Register at the Indy Parks website: apm.activecommunities.com/indyparks/Activity_Search/special-event-eagle-creek-birding-festival-ecp/13233.



Birds & Beans Talk at Garfield Park

Thursday, July 11, 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm

2432 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis, IN

Jessica Helmbold, ABAS Education Chair, loves coffee. Most people love coffee, though are most people as obsessed with coffee as she is? Jessica presents the history of coffee, and how to select and brew the best coffees. Clearing land for the production of staple crops such as bananas, pineapples, and coffee is one of the biggest threats to our rainforests. Coffee can grow in harmony with the rainforest. Learn how the small choices we make can make a difference.

Garfield Park Swift Watch

Friday, August 16

8:30 pm to 9:30 pm

2432 Conservatory Drive
Indianapolis, IN

Learn about Chimney Swifts as the sun sets with ABAS Education Chair and Park Naturalist Jessica Helmbold. Bring lawn chairs or blankets, binoculars or scopes to observe an active colony at Garfield Park Arts Center, plus several other bird species that are active at dusk. RSVP at info@amosbutleraudubon.org.



Fountain Square Swift Watch

Saturday, August 17, 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm

1111 Prospect Street, Indianapolis, IN

Join ABAS Education Chair and Park Naturalist Jessica Helmbold for bites, drinks, and Chimney Swifts at Fountain Square Theatre. From the Rooftop Garden Cocktail Lounge, mingle with ABAS members while observing an active swift colony, plus Common Nighthawks. RSVP at info@amosbutleraudubon.org.

Local Bird Hikes

Starkey Park Spring Walk

667 Sugarbush Drive, Zionsville, IN
Saturday, 8:00 am to 9:30 am May 25

Meet Jonathan and Whitney Yoerger at 8:00 am at the parking lot located on Sugarbush Drive. Email whitney.yoerger@gmail.com for more information.

Spring Migration at Cool Creek Park

2000 East 151st Street, Carmel, IN
Most Saturdays in May, 8:00 am to 9:30 am
May 4, 18, 25

Meet Keith Starling in the parking lot at the bottom of the road by Cool Creek, past the Nature Center.

Cool Creek Park Beginning Bird Hikes

2000 East 151st Street, Carmel, IN
Walks are 8:30 am to 10:00 am
May 5, 8, 15, 19, 22, 29 and June 2, 12, 16, 19, 26, 30

Most Sunday and Wednesday mornings meet in the parking lot at the bottom of the road by Cool Creek, past the Nature Center.

Eagle Creek Park

6515 Delong Road, Indianapolis, IN
Every Sunday at 9:00 am to 11:00 am
May 5, 12, 19, 26; June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
July 7, 14, 21, 28; August 4, 11, 18, 25

Meet in front of the Ornithology Center.

Holliday Park

6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, IN
Third Tuesday of each month 8:00 am to 9:30 am
May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20

Meet in front of the Holliday Park Nature Center.

Strawtown Koteewi Park

12308 Strawtown Avenue, Noblesville, IN
First Wednesday of each month, 8:30 am to 10:00 am
May 1 and June 5

Meet at the Taylor Center of Natural History. For more information, call (317) 774-2574.

Fort Harrison State Park

6000 North Post Road, Indianapolis, IN
Sundays in May, 8:00 am to 10:00 am
May 5, 12, 19, 26

Meet Don Gorney at the northeast corner of the Delaware Lake parking lot.

Southeastway Park

5624 South Carroll Road, New Palestine, IN
Tuesdays in May, 9:00 am to 11:30 am
May 7, 14, 21, 28

Meet at the Nature Center at Southeastway Park. For more information email Theresa at tconwilson@gmail.com.

Garfield Park Urban Bird Walks

2432 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis, IN
Saturdays, 8:00 am to 9:30 am
May 11, June 15, August 17

Meet at the Conservatory entrance. A limited number of binoculars will be available.

Greenfield Birders Hikes

Second and fourth Saturdays of most months
All hikes 8:00 am to 10:00 am
See locations and dates below

Stay up-to-date via facebook.com/groups/GreenfieldBirders. For more information, contact Adam Wilson at NikonBirdHunter@gmail.com.

Beckenholdt Family Park

2770 North Franklin Street, Greenfield, IN
May 11, June 22, August 10

Thornwood Nature Preserve

1597 South Morristown Pike, Greenfield, IN
May 25, July 13, August 24

Brandywine Park

900 East Davis Road, Greenfield, IN
June 8, July 27

Great Blue Heron Rookery Programs

25440 Scherer Ave, Arcadia, IN
Sunday, May 5, 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm
Tuesday, May 14, 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm
Saturday, May 25, 9:00 am to 10:30 am
Saturday, June 1, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Join a Hamilton County Park Naturalist at the Great Blue Heron rookery in Hamilton County. Meet at the Stoops Observation Deck. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, and photography equipment. Some equipment will be available. The event is free though pre-registration is preferred. Register by calling (317) 774-2574 or emailing amanda.smith@hamiltoncounty.in.gov.

Local Hike Kudos!



“I want to praise bird guide Theresa Wilson who led us in Southeastway Park on Tuesday. She was excellent in recognizing sounds as well as knowing her birds. I also loved the fact she knew about screech owl roosting in nearby Franklin Township Park. What a valuable resource! Thank you for having her guide us newbies.” — Judy Miller

*Local bird hike leader
Theresa Wilson*

Behind the Lens: Mike Timmons

By Amy Hodson

Mike Timmons, a well-known bird photographer from Indianapolis, agreed to a Q&A session about some of those burning questions we all wonder when looking at a beautiful photograph of a bird. Whether you take photos with a cell phone, a point-and-shoot camera, or a telephoto lens, here are some of Mike's thoughts about the wonderful world of bird photography.



Left: Blue Grosbeak
Below: Sedge Wren both courtesy of Mike Timmons.

1. When did you know that you were going to pursue capturing photographs of birds?

I don't think it was a conscious decision. Like a lot of people, it was just a combination of interests. I've always been interested in photography. I've always been a birder. "Always" sounds like a bit of a stretch, but I feel it's pretty accurate. My grandfather was a bander, so my brother and I were raised as birders. As a kid, I got a Kodak 110 Instamatic camera for my birthday. I loved it, and it sparked my interest in taking photos. I tried taking pictures of birds back then. In high school, I was in the photography club. In college, I took a photography course. I've had a camera most of my life. I've just "always" been interested in taking pictures and birds.

2. Were there specific species that "sparked" your interest in photography?

Not exactly, but I can tell you about the first "good" photo I took. It was about 5 years ago, and I was at Goose Pond. I ran across a Blue Grosbeak sitting in some yellow flowering parsnip along the edge of the road. The bird actually let me stop the car, get out, and photograph it. When I got home, I was amazed at how good the photos had turned out. To be honest, I didn't really know why. Ever since then, I've been working towards improving and learning about my equipment. I didn't want any more accidental good photos. That's when I stopped taking photos and started trying to be a photographer.

3. What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of bird photography?

All of it? Your photos should have the bird's head within a certain range of angles. The whole eye must be sharp. "Good

light" is a thing ... There's just a lot of technical things to keep in mind while the bird is bouncing around in front of you. Like a lot of people, birds have zero interest in having their picture taken. Finding a bird outside of a controlled environment (e.g. a seed pile) that you can get a good picture of is difficult. A lot of it really comes down to patience, and that is probably the biggest challenge. You cannot force a photo. You have to get the photo on the bird's terms.

4. Spring Warbler migration is upon us. What is your favorite spot for photographing warblers in central Indiana? What is your favorite spot for photographing warblers in the midwest?

For warblers in Spring, I'll go with Eagle Creek Park. Anywhere in the Midwest? Well, there's only one choice in my mind – Magee Marsh in northwestern Ohio.

5. What was the most impactful tip you have learned about bird photography? Feel free to list more than one if you can't pick one! :)

Ha! Ummmm.... Disclaimer: I'm not a professional. There are a lot of easy quips that could be said here, but I'll answer with the two things I'm still working on, instead. First, you need to be conscious of where and what you are shooting. By "where", I mean what is in front of and behind the subject, and where is the subject in relation to the light. "What" refers to the bird itself. Is it a sandpiper on the beach and you need to get lower? Is it a bird in flight, and you need a higher shutter speed? Being conscious means constantly evaluating the subject and knowing when you want to take a shot, need to move for a better shot, or sometimes just put the camera down. The other thing I'm working on is watching the light. Even in a fixed position the light changes. The day progresses or clouds move in and out. It affects how you should have your camera set up to get the best photo. Walking around makes it even more challenging. I'm learning to pay more attention, and I'm getting some better-exposed photos. That leads to a lot less grain and blown highlights. I'm also messing up some photos, but I'm learning.

6. What photograph are you the proudest of, and why?

Finally, an easy question. Not long after taking the Blue Grosbeak photo mentioned above, I set a goal for myself. I wanted to make the Top 100 list in the Audubon Photography contest. Last year, I finally made it. I submitted a photo of a Sedge Wren in some cattails at The Burn in Montgomery County. It's the only bird photo I have hanging in my house.

7. What is something you wish you had known as a beginning photographer that you know now?

I'll answer this one with an easy quip – how expensive it can get.



Amos Butler Audubon Society BIRDATHON 2019

Birdathon will be
funding research on
the state-endangered
Cerulean Warbler



Make a Difference, Make a Pledge

Enhancing Wintering Habitat

Continuing our longtime partnership with the American Bird Conservancy, this year's project focuses on restoring habitat in the Caribbean BirdScape of Guatemala, an extremely important migratory flyway. Local partner FundaEco will be doing a large-scale planting of native trees in the Santa Marta Biocenter, located in the buffer zone of the Cerro San Gil Reserve. Here they will demonstrate principles of agroforestry with bird-friendly crops like black pepper and cacao. Our funding will have a multiplier effect when it serves as ABC's match for the program Southern Wings.

Research To Save a State-endangered Species

Cerulean Warblers are in serious decline in Indiana. Ball State University has been conducting research since 2005 gathering data with the potential to be used to reverse this unfortunate trend. This year we are very enthusiastic about two new projects to track the needs of this declining species. One will address the size requirements of the Cerulean's home range and territory. The second ground-breaking project will use geolocators attached to the birds to identify key areas of migration stopover and wintering sites.

Community Outreach

In order to ensure their future survival the public must have opportunities to learn and care about birds.

- The Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center boasts one of the finest taxidermy exhibits in the nation. The Birdathon grant will add a number of new specimens.

Birdathon grants will also fund the following projects:

- The Indiana Audubon Society's Indiana Birding Trail website, signage and printed materials to introduce residents and visitors to our state's premier birding hotspots.
- Camp Utopia's week-long experience for youth ages 10-12 with opportunities to learn about habitat, endangered species, conservation and wildlife careers.
- A bird viewing area with a blind at Ft. Harrison State Park enabling visitors to get close to native birds with minimal disturbance.
- Two new intermediate flight cages for the Indiana Raptor Center's new Lawrence County facility increasing its ability to care for injured raptors.
- Habitat restoration at the Marian University Nina Mason Pullman Ecolab exposing thousands of young volunteers to the need restore places for birds and other wildlife.

Birdathon Teams Will Be Out Counting

Birdathon teams will be scouring Indiana during May to count the maximum number of species possible in a 24-hour period and asking donors to sponsor their efforts. If you don't know a team member, you could choose to make a donation directly to the Birdathon. Either way, your dollars will go far to ensure the future of the birds of Central Indiana.

START PROTECTING OUR BIRDS TODAY. CUT HERE AND MAIL YOUR PLEDGE OR GO TO WWW.AMOSBUTLERAUDUBON.ORG

AMOS BUTLER AUDUBON BIRDATHON 2019 PLEDGE

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

YES, I'LL SUPPORT YOU WITH MY PLEDGE OF:

_____ (.10, .25, .50, \$1) per species for a total of _____

- Bud & Carl's Legacy Carbon Neutral Community Hospital
 Horned Grebes EcoLab Noddy Little Gulls Team Bishop
 Wild Birds Unlimited Las Agulias Harpias
 Team member _____
 My gift of \$ _____ is enclosed, payable to Amos Butler Audubon. *Your gift is deductible as allowed by law.*
 Free Amos Butler Audubon Society membership. **First-time members only.** \$20 or more donation required.

Thank you for sponsoring the Amos Butler Audubon Society Birdathon. Your donation will go toward:

- Wintering habitat restoration for Indiana's migratory birds
- Cerulean Warbler research
- Local bird-friendly habitat restoration
- Community outreach about the importance of birds

Return to Donna McCarty, Birdathon Chair, 7492 Runningbrook Ct., Indianapolis, IN 46254-9770

Volunteer Spotlight: Donna McCarty

By Ted Meyer

It's hard to know where to start with Donna's volunteer activities with ABAS and other organizations, or her numerous awards and accolades. Most of us associate her with the incredibly successful Birdathon fundraising. There's a full list of activities and awards at the end, but let's start at the beginning.

Like most of us, she has always been interested in nature and the outdoors. One winter in the mid-1970s Donna and her husband Don were living in an apartment and developed a case of cabin fever. They saw a notice in the Indianapolis Star about a bird hike at Eagle Creek Park and thought it would be fun. As Donna told me, "at the time, we didn't even own a pair of binoculars. The leader of this hike was the irrepressible Bud Starling. We enjoyed the hike and it really opened our eyes to the number of bird species which could be seen here in central Indiana."

At Bud Starling's encouragement, in 1975 she joined the Amos W. Butler chapter of the National Audubon Society (NAS). She joined the Board for the first time in 1978 and served at various times as Program Chair, President, and Conservation Chair. It was during her time as Conservation Chair that she started Birdathon in 1987.

At the time, NAS was promoting the Birdathon idea, providing support and prizes, and encouraging chapters to participate. Jim and Nancy Carpenter were on the Board and had just returned from a trip to Costa Rica where they learned the Monteverde Cloud Forest had land for sale for \$25 an acre. Mary Ellen Gadski and Carl Weber were also on the board at this time supporting the first Birdathon and they had a very tangible project for fundraising.

The first year there was one team, Carl Weber, Bud Starling, Ted Test, and Scott Gremel. They were able to conserve 109 acres at Monteverde in Costa Rica with a \$2,700 grant. Birdathon continued to support the Monteverde area for six years conserving 671 acres.

Since that first year, Birdathon grew quickly under Donna's guidance. In 1990 they raised over \$10,000. In 1991 fundraising exceeded \$20,000, and in 2011 they raised over \$30,000. Of course, Donna didn't do this alone. There are dozens of key people who have helped over the years – committee workers, Big Day birding teams, and most importantly, the donors. Donna and all of us at ABAS can't thank everyone enough.

Birdathon is still going strong and Donna is still leading it. To date, Birdathon has raised well over \$700,000 and supported dozens of conservation, research, and educational projects.

If you don't know what Birdathon is, see our website at www.amosbutleraudubon.org. I would be remiss at this point if I didn't encourage everyone reading this to head to the website and make a donation to your favorite team or a general donation. Donna never misses an opportunity to promote Birdathon and I am happy to follow her wonderful example.

While Birdathon is her favorite position among many at ABAS, Donna has also volunteered at a number of other organizations. She has volunteered at Central Indiana Land Trust and most Sunday afternoons and Tuesdays you'll find her volunteering at the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center. She also helps out there with almost any special



Donna with 2013 Volunteer Award recipient, Barbara Jablonski.

event or group programs where they need assistance. In 2017 Donna was awarded a certificate at the Eagle Creek Volunteer Appreciation picnic for logging in the most volunteer hours in 2016 – an impressive 380 hours.

In 1981 Donna organized a Clean Air Conference held at IUPUI to educate the public about acid rain and the consequences of large amounts of sulfur dioxide emissions originating in the Midwest, particularly Indiana. In 1993 Donna received the Sagamore of the Wabash, Indiana's highest citizen honor. More awards are listed below.

Donna was a member of the Hoosier Audubon Council in 1983 and was active in that until 1998. This group represented 12 Indiana Audubon Chapters. She was a founding member of the Hoosier Environmental Council in 1983. She's served on other Boards including Indiana Audubon Society, Eagle Creek Park Foundation, and the Nature Sanctuary and Center, Inc. Governor Bayh appointed her to the Pollution Prevention Board in 1992 (now Clean Manufacturing Technology Board).

In recognition of her outstanding service to ABAS, the Board of Directors established the Donna McCarty Volunteer Service Award in 2011, and Donna was the first recipient.

Donna "was very humbled and honored. I still find it hard to believe that James Cole was willing to part with his painting of a flock of Cedar Waxwings as an appreciation gift."

I'll end with Donna's reflection on what volunteering has meant to her. "It gives me fulfillment and purpose. I have always enjoyed being outdoors since I was a kid. Then as a young adult, I became concerned about the extinction of species. When I became involved with Audubon, it gave my concerns a voice."



Donna being presented James Cole painting by Don Gorney.

Awards

- Izaak Walton League's Ted Falls Memorial Environmentalist of the Year – May 1982.
- Indiana Audubon Society's Earl Brooks Award for Advancement of Conservation of Natural Resources in Indiana – May 1990.
- Sagamore of the Wabash, Indiana's highest citizen honor – February 1993.
- National Audubon Society's Meritorious Service Award – May 1993
- East Central Indiana Audubon Society's Robert and Esther Cooper Conservation Award – November 1993
- National Audubon Society's William Dutcher Award for outstanding service to the Audubon cause at the regional level – July 1995.
- Winning design for the Indiana Environmental license plate, a special plate issued in 1993 to raise money for the state's Heritage Trust program
- ABAS's Donna McCarty Volunteer Service Award – 2011

Choose Your Own Birding Adventure

By Whitney Yoerger

On a recent BirdNote® podcast episode, I heard the aphorism “birding is often best in the least likely places.” The two-minute story was a reminder to look beyond the most well-known nature parks because simply put, birds are where you find them. Birds are literally everywhere – in backyards, near parking lots, on the sides of highways, in and along man-made retention ponds. What’s more, unusual locations – sewage treatment plants, landfills, and cemeteries – often yield unusual finds. It doesn’t matter where birds temporarily land, so long as there are suitable habitats and food sources.

On the human side of things, our very deliberate urban planning efforts dictate where we should and shouldn’t go looking for birds. So, we tend to look for them in the expected places: wherever there’s remaining green space. But birds don’t care about man-made borders differentiating parks versus neighborhoods, public versus private property, cities versus counties, and so forth. They’ll cross our paths regardless. With that in mind, if birds are everywhere and birding is truly best in the least likely places, then why frequent the same celebrated destinations where everyone else goes birding?

Last year, I began wondering how many birds go undiscovered and unreported elsewhere. My hypothesis is that there are many. I don’t have extraordinary birding anecdotes (yet) about rarities found in nearby parks or my 6,055-square-foot yard. However, I can share three easy practices to help you “zen out” on birding experiences of your own making while enhancing your observational skills.

1. Explore everything your county has to offer birds.

The first recommended practice is to go birding within your county lines. Even though birds don’t see borders, county birding is a great way to gain insights on their movements in your geographical region. Rather than driving several hours to visit prime destinations, try investigating different places within your county for birding potential. Attempt a Big Day by starting at the farthest corner of the county and working backward. Do some Big Sits at various city and county parks. Deviate from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s eBird hotspots altogether and find unmapped locations. Your approach to county birding can be big or small.

2. Get creative by limiting your birding to a five-mile radius.

When I need a break from county birding or have limited time, I go birding in and around downtown Zionsville — specifically, within five miles of home. Five-mile-radius (5MR) birding is a new craze — consider it birding for locavores. Similar to county birding, the key to 5MR birding is to discover and accumulate new patches. The only ruling principles are where “home” begins and your circle ends. You can include your yard, neighborhood parks, multi-use paths, the cemetery down the street, and so much more.

The challenge is to round out your 5MR list as best as you can, given the limitations. For instance, your 5MR might include great stopovers for waterfowl and wood warblers, but certain sandpipers and owls may be harder to find. The perpetual pursuit of new 5MR species will keep you searching. While you’re at it, you could also keep a “green” list of species seen/heard without the use of fossil fuels.

3. Learn the seasonal ebb and flow of birds by birding every day.

If you really want to find birds where no one else is looking, then get outside each and every day to look for them. It’s pretty straightforward: You can either choose to go birding on the weekends when you have spare time or spend anywhere from three minutes to three hours per day looking for birds. Birding doesn’t have to be a grand endeavor; you can do it any time, any place, and with as little or as many of life’s obligations.

Exploring my county, staying local, and birding every day have significantly changed the way I think and go about birding. As a result, my sense of place has deepened. I’m also relying more on my own instincts than on eBird alerts and Facebook groups. I’m slowing down, birding more thoughtfully, and tuning out all that’s unnatural. Most importantly, I’m taking written and mental notes on what I find throughout the seasons.

Narrowing your focus or range through one of these practices can actually broaden your birding horizons. Give one or all a try to see what works for you, then embrace the routine. Over time, the corollary to all three practices is that you will develop a greater awareness of bird distributions, their seasonal movements, and habitats.

Donations

In memory of Edward “Pete” Drum

By Sue Arnold

By Celtic Motion

By Patricia Dorson

*By friends & neighbors August Ebeling
& Jennifer Nolting*

By Robert and Mary Ellen Gadski

By Kristin Hoffman

By Don and Donna McCarty

*By Bill and Frances Overman, their sons Jim,
Dave, and Rick, and their families*

By Jim & Sharon Vandivier



Lights Out Indy Still Needs Volunteers

Lights Out Indy is looking for volunteers to help in several aspects of our initiative:

- Contacting building owners to encourage them to participate in our initiative to turn off/dim their lights during nighttime hours to reduce bird collisions during migration.
- Developing ideas for education and promotion.
- Networking with nonprofit organizations, businesses, societies, etc., to create partnerships.
- Contacting public officials to encourage bird-safe building legislation.
- Surveying for birds fallen victim to window strike. This volunteer position will involve walking routes downtown to document bird strikes in the early morning hours, as well as rescuing injured birds.

If you are interested in any of the above opportunities, please contact Austin Broadwater at abroadwater1990@gmail.com.

Volunteer Training Program

Holliday Park Nature Center

6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, IN

All Sessions are Wednesdays, 9:30 am to 11:00 am

ABAS is making it even easier to volunteer by introducing our new Volunteer Training Program! Each session will focus on a different topic designed to provide volunteers with hands-on opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills needed to help with chapter programs and events. No experience needed, open to individuals, ages 16+.

May 15: How to Lead/Assist with a Bird Hike and Spring Migrant Review

July 17: Birding Tech: Crash Course in E-Bird, Bird Cast, Merlin Bird ID and more!

September 18: Bird Banding Demonstration with Wild Birds Unlimited Chief Naturalist John Schaut

November 20: Topic TBD

These sessions are free and are open to the public. Register by emailing: Abarnes@HollidayPark.org.

Volunteer Training Session Recap

By Adam Barnes, Volunteer Chair

We had a great turnout for our inaugural Volunteer Training session on March 20th. The group enjoyed a discussion about the history of ABAS, talked about our goals for the training program, and brainstormed topics for future sessions. We also took a leisurely hike and enjoyed spotting a variety of woodland birds as well as a flyover by a pair of wood ducks.

If you are interested in learning how to volunteer for ABAS, be sure to check out one of our additional training sessions listed in this newsletter!

Birdathon Teams! *Continued from page 1*

Horned Grebes: Ryan Sanderson, Jeff McCoy, Aidan Rominger, Ryan Hamilton, Nick Kiehl, Mike Maxwell

My team enjoys getting out and the camaraderie and challenge of the day. Each year we try to beat our numbers from the previous year, both in numbers of birds, and number of laughs. Hopefully, the money we've helped raised has been beneficial in ABAS's conservation efforts. — *Ryan Sanderson*



Carbon Neutral: Wes Homoya, Dave Benson

This team was formed to illustrate that a Birdathon Big Day event could be accomplished without the use of fossil fuels. The team is headed by Dave Benson initially included his non-birding brother (who would report species such as "Common Flappy Birds") and later with more serious biking birders like Wes Homoya. Last year it tallied an impressive 128 species. — *Donna McCarty*



EcoLab: Randy Patrick, Dave Benson, Debbie Patrick

This team was also founded by Dave Benson. Its purpose is to highlight the Marian University Nina Mason Pulliam Ecolab where the Big Day event takes place primarily on the 55-acre property. The Birdathon has been awarding grants for native habitat restoration since 2002. — *Donna McCarty*



Community Hospital: Doug Sherow, Greg Steffen, John Munshower,

Community Hospital Neurologist John Munshower fielded this team to highlight what a team of "mature birders" could tally on a Big Day event with birding by car. — *Donna McCarty*



Brownsburg Railsitters: Wes Homoya, Mike Homoya, Barbara Homoya

A new team for 2019, Wes Homoya and his parents Mike and Barbara are doing a Big Sit in Brownsburg on May 11 to bring awareness to the B&O Trail, and thought they'd "kill 2 birds with 1 stone" (pun intended!) and make it a Birdathon event at the same time. — *Donna McCarty*

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

Amos Butler Audubon Society

P.O. Box 80024

Indianapolis, IN 46280

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