



2019 BIRDATHON REPORT

*Funding research
for the endangered
Cerulean Warbler*



Thank you for supporting the 2019 Birdathon

Our gratitude for your sponsorship of the 2019 Amos Butler Audubon Society Birdathon knows no bounds. Whether you are one of our loyal, long-time donors or made your first gift this year, you have played an important role in the continued success of this 32-year-old event. Thirteen teams, including two new ones, competed for fundraising champs and species-count honors. Their efforts and your donations raised a total of \$25,256, bringing our grand total since 1987 to \$782,621.

We funded nine grants covering a variety of projects to fulfill our mission to promote the enjoyment and stewardship of the birds of Central Indiana. Our almost two-decade-long partnership with the American Bird Conservancy is still going strong; this year our grant promotes habitat restoration in an important bird flyway in Guatemala while supporting local farmers' ability to generate income from bird-friendly crops. The state-endangered Cerulean Warbler will benefit from the data generated by two Ball State University research projects. Opportunities to engage public awareness of the importance of birds include: additions to the exceptional taxidermy exhibit at the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center; the development of an Indiana Birding Trail; a week-long summer camp for children focused on birds; and a new bird viewing area at Ft. Harrison State Park. Grants also supported the work of the Indiana raptor rehabilitators and hands-on habitat restoration at the Marian University Nina Mason Pulliam EcoLab.

We extend a sincere thank you to all of our Birdathon donors from Donna McCarty, Birdathon Chair, members of the Birdathon Committee, and the board of directors of the Amos Butler Audubon Society.

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Volunteers who raised Birdathon donations of:

\$1,000 or more	\$500 to \$999	\$100 to \$499	
Mike Bishop	Lou Anne Barriger	Stephanie Beilke	Cindy Meyer
Mary Ellen Gadski	Dave Benson	Jonathan Bontrager	John Schaut
Donna McCarty	Brian Cunningham	Henry Griffin	Doug Sherow
Janet Tuten	Jeanette Frazier	Wes Homoya	Amanda Smith
Laurie Voss	Amy Hodson	Barbara Jablonski	April Sterling
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	Marty Williams		

Corporate Sponsor:

\$1,500 Wild Birds Unlimited, 4040 East 82nd Street

Special Contributors:

Janet Tuten, Birdathon Database Curator
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 Don McCarty, Birdathon Treasurer
 Bill Murphy and Mary Ellen Gadski, Report Editors
 Melissa Upchurch, Gift Bag Coordinator

#1 Fundraising Champs: Noddy Little Gulls



Team members (l-r): Laurie Voss, Lou Anne Barriger, Wendy Kindig, Cindy Meyer


The Rain beneath Our Seats

by Laurie Voss

The “Noddy” Little Gulls didn’t come by our name for nothin’, as you can see from our group photo. While other teams have their pictures taken in the field, we had ours taken by the bartender at a local pub. This, however, was due to the fact that there were no people out in the field to snap the picture. The day was cold (40s), rainy, and miserable, but we “Gulls” prevailed, even though many of the birds were smarter than us and stayed home in bed. As usual, we had a great time with many stories to tell.

The team this year consisted of Lou Anne Barriger, Cindy Meyer, Wendy Kindig, and myself. We ventured north on May 11 to hit all the hotspots on our way north to the lakefront. We detoured into the small town of Morocco to find some feeder birds. Imagine the concern of the woman who came out of her house to check on the strange car parked across the street, with four people with binoculars staring at her neighbor’s house. After some reassurance and some good birds, we moved on.

Our most unusual find was while driving north on I-65. After spotting our first Ring-billed Gull of the trip, we were on alert to check all the birds flying around. I looked across the car and saw a bird with a black cap and a large bill flying alongside of the car, basically keeping up with us. I asked my teammates to check the bird because I thought it was a Caspian Tern. In fact, it was a Black-crowned Night-Heron, right there flying along I-65!

The stories we could tell are endless, and the camaraderie, great birds, and good times overshadowed the bad weather. We managed to find 129 species of birds, a total of which we are proud. Each year we are encouraged and appreciative of the many donors for their generous support of the Birdathon. Your support makes it worthwhile, and we know we are helping to benefit the birds we love to see. 

#2 Fundraising Champs: Bud & Carl’s Legacy Team




Team members (l-r): Keith Starling, Janet Tuten, Marty Williams

Down Four Eyes for Our Big Day

by Keith Starling

The Bud and Carl Legacy Team had another great Birdathon in 2019. We decided to try the northern route again to see if we could hit better weather and more species of birds than last year. Our Big Day started out rough as we again had two team members call off at the last minute, one with a family emergency and the other with a physical ailment that precluded a rigorous 24 hours of birding. We did manage to set out on time but were down four eyes for spotting birds.

The day got better from there as we birded Beverly Shores, Dunes State Park, Willow Slough, and Celery Bog, as well as Eagle Creek Park and a number of other spots in Central Indiana. The weather was better but a littler cooler than we hoped for. We think we missed peak migration by a day or two. The song was not what we hoped, but overall it was an excellent day. It is funny how birding goes, for on many Birdathons we’ve missed Black-throated Blue Warbler, and this year they were everywhere. We ended up with 134 species, just like last year. We are already plotting our course for next year, planning on making the route a little more suited to our likes, skills, and familiarity. A big thanks to our team members, donors, Donna and the Birdathon committee, and our bodies for holding up another year. 

#3 Fundraising Champs: Wild Birds Unlimited



Team members:
John Schaust,
Amy Hodson,
Brian Cunningham

A New Focus


by John Schaust

Due to work and personal commitments, Team WBU realized almost a year in advance that the timing for our 2019 Big Day would not lend itself to another “Lakefront to Goose Pond” record-setting attempt. Besides, it was time for a new focus — spend less energy on our birding plans and more energy on our fundraising efforts.

Our Big Day plan was simple: stay in Central Indiana and focus on major birding venues such as Eagle Creek Park and Fort Harrison. Our renewed fundraising focus was on “strong-arming” ... I mean, gently soliciting our friends, families, and work colleagues while also boosting our Team’s Facebook page postings.

The fundraising efforts worked! The Big Day plan — not so much. We are very pleased to have stepped up our game this year by moving up to be the third-place fundraising team! As for placing eighth with our species count of 102, let’s just say it is our lowest count ever during our nine years as a Birdathon Team.

So our focus for 2020? Seek balance! More fundraising dollars and MORE birds, too.

A special thank you to all of our donors. We truly appreciate your support for our team and for the important projects being funded by the Birdathon. We would also like to thank our families, friends, and especially Wild Birds Unlimited for making our Big Day possible through its generous support. 

*Congratulations to all of our 2019 Birdathon teams
and a sincere thanks to all of their sponsors!*



Carbon Neutral Biking for Birds

by Dave Benson

On May 7, Wesley Homoya and David Benson started their carbon-neutral Big Day in Starkey Park in Zionsville at 4:20 p.m., hoping for some migrants. We were not disappointed! We came across several flocks that included Blue-winged Warbler, Black-

Team members: Wes Homoya and Dave Benson

and-white Warbler, multiple Cape May Warblers, and our best bird of the day, an Orange-crowned Warbler. We left Starkey Park with a stunning 76 species to bike over to Browning Marsh, just north of I-465 off Michigan Road. There we picked up another 12 species including four Hooded Mergansers and a Gadwall. We rode back to Starkey Park in the dark to look for owls, picking up American Woodcock along the way. Then, after a short night's sleep at Dave's house near Starkey Park, we were back on our bikes, arriving at the skating ponds in Eagle Creek Park before dawn. Other than missing our target birds at the skating ponds, we had a great morning at Eagle Creek, including sightings of a Black-throated Blue Warbler and a rare Worm-eating Warbler. Then on to Scott Starling Sanctuary and Eagle's Crest, where we picked up several new species including Prairie Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow. From there we hit the road, clocking almost 50 miles on our bikes altogether, finding Vesper Sparrows and Bobolinks but striking out on almost all shorebirds. We finished with 129 species and the traditional choriqueso and cervezas at El Rodeo. Thanks to all our sponsors! 🐦



EcoLab No Rain and Great Fun

by David Benson

For the week preceding our scheduled Big Day, the forecast was for rain, rain, rain, but when April 30 arrived, the weather ended up being perfect,

Team members (l-r): Randy Patrick, Deb Patrick, Paul Evans, David Benson, and Chandler Roberts

leaving us with a total of 84 species, just short of our record. Starting on April 30 in the afternoon, David Benson, Chandler Roberts, Paul Evans (who flew in all the way from Oregon), and Deb and Randy Patrick birded the Marian University Nina Mason Pulliam EcoLab on the Marian University campus on 30th and Cold Spring Road. Our afternoon of birding went well, as we picked up several migrant species such as Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Black-throated Green and Nashville Warblers. Deb Patrick also caught the EcoLab's logo, the Green Heron, flying along the Jens Jensen Pond. The next morning

we added a Barred Owl, Hairy Woodpecker, and Swamp Sparrow but then hit a lull until Randy brought us Long's Donuts. On the subsequent sugar high, we had great fun with flocks that included Summer Tanager, Northern Waterthrush, and Palm, Magnolia, and a beautiful Blackburnian Warbler. No rain, just great fun with friends. Thanks to our loyal sponsors for their support! 🐦

Community Hospital A Perfect Day for Birding

by Douglas K. Sherow

When the Community Hospital Team tallied up our count made on May 20, our final species list totaled 112 birds. Greg Steffan, John Munshower, and I covered approximately 285 miles, predominantly in south central and southwestern Indiana. We accomplished this task in 12 hours. Our day turned out to be perfect for birding, unlike the days that followed.

On behalf of the Community Hospital Team, I thank all of those who sponsored our team. 🐦

Team members (l-r): Doug Sherow, Greg Steffan, John Munshower



Team members: Linda and Mike Bishop

Team Bishop A Serendipitous Barred Owl

By Mike Bishop

Juggling weather forecasts and work schedules, we settled on May 14 for our 2019 Birdathon. As usual, we began our day at Eagle Creek Park, starting at the marina, where we got a good start with Golden-winged Warbler and Summer Tanager among other species. There was quite a bit of activity at the Skating Pond, where we added more birds plus another Golden-winged Warbler for good measure. A pit stop at the Nature Center yielded a calling Fish Crow. A trek through the north end of the park contributed a few more species, including Broad-winged Hawk. Next was Scott Starling Sanctuary, where we observed a man in a kilt. Driving toward Goose Pond through the country we saw Kestrels and a couple of Red-headed Woodpeckers on telephone poles. Goose Pond was very quiet—we somehow missed out on shorebirds, but we added a few ducks, Wild Turkey, and Northern Bobwhite. As the light was dimming, we heard Least and American Bitterns. After a long drive, we arrived home at 11:45 and were unloading the car when a serendipitous Barred Owl startled us with its call just a few yards away.

A big THANK YOU to our generous sponsors for their continued support, and thanks to Amos Butler Audubon Society for its tremendous efforts for bird conservation! 🐦



Team members (l-r): Elcira Villarreal, Jeanette Frazier, Betty Yang, Victor Chen

Team Águilas Arpiás Finding Birds and Bird Nests Too

by Jeanette Frazier

Team Águilas Arpiás birded together for about four hours in the late afternoon of May 8 on its first day, busily catching up on personal activities and life changes.

While visiting, we found 53 species. On the second day, due to personal schedule changes, only half of the team participants were able to attend the late-morning start after rainfall subsided. We recorded an additional 33 species, bringing our total to 86 in our 24-hour period. We observed a total of five different nest sites. Best birds included two handsome male Scarlet Tanagers and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. We thank all of our tremendous supporters. Your financial assistance will help many important efforts of the 2019 Birdathon! Go Team Águilas Arpiás! 🐦

Westside Wonders Best Bird Comes Last

by Henry Griffin

On Tuesday, May 21, Jonathan Bontrager and I attempted an Indiana Big Day. Considering the conditions—slightly past peak migration and a steady soaking rain in the morning—we did pretty well, with 126 species plus two “dirty” birds. These were two birds which one, but not both, of us observed; according to the rules, they did not count. Jonathan heard a Summer Tanager I missed, and I got a Wood Duck that he missed. Starting in the Dunes area, we picked up Whip-Poor-Will and Barred Owl quickly and then trekked over to Michigan City Harbor pre-dawn. Migrants abounded on Beverly Road right after dawn, when the morning-long rain first began. Morning highlights included Cerulean, Canada, and Prothonotary Warblers. We were also elated to hear both Virginia Rail and Sora immediately after getting out of the car at Cowles Bog. Apart from a Common Gallinule, Grant Street Marsh in Gary was quiet. Kankakee Sands delivered plenty of open-land species, with all three gamebirds, Lark and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Bell's Vireo. The highlight at Willow Slough was a nesting pair of Trumpeter Swans. After a long drive, we discovered that Goose Pond was mostly dead. Cane Ridge proved to be more productive, with Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and a few Least Terns at the Cane Ridge colony. Our final bird of the day was the best, as we heard the clear, hair-raising screech of a Barn Owl on a country road north of Evansville. The birding had been challenging at times, but patience, hard work and a little prayer paid off with a nice species count for this late in May, and great memories. A big thank-you to all of our sponsors, including Wild Birds Unlimited Avon! 🐦



Team members: Henry Griffin (top) Jonathan Bontrager (below)



Parks Peeps A One-Half Big Day Ends a Busy May

by Will Schaust

May is always a very busy time for Indy Parks! The Parks Peeps team was able to get out for a half day of birding on May 31 around Eagle Creek Park, including Scott Starling Nature Sanctuary and Eagle's Crest, managing to pick up 70 species. It was a clear, sunny day that forced us to work

for many of the bird species that we got. Highlights for the team included Blue Grosbeak, Cerulean Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow. This year, in addition to Jenna McElroy, Brittany Davis, and myself, we were happy to welcome Ornithology Center Seasonal Naturalist Stefany Boleyn to the team. Volunteers Kevin Carlsen and Wayne Bivans helped in the morning as well. Thanks to all our sponsors who help make Birdathon so great! 🐦

Team members (l-r):
Will Schaust, Jenna
McElroy, Brittany Davis



Brownsburg Railsitters A Big Sit Family Affair

by Barbara Homoya

The Brownsburg Railsitters, Wesley, Barbara, and Michael Homoya, participated in the inaugural B&O Big Sit on Saturday, May 11. At dawn, a curious and cooperative Great Horned Owl greeted us at our Big Sit spot on the White Lick Creek Bridge. With five dozen donuts (provided by Hilligoss Bakery

Team members (l-r):
Wes Homoya, Barbara Homoya,
Mike Homoya

— thank you!), we were well provisioned and awaited the runners, bikers, and birders who use the trail. Many folks stopped, and we had fruitful opportunities to share our interest in birds (and donuts!). Trail and Amos Butler Audubon Society friends stopped by to cheer us on and to admire our checklist sign, provided by John Lindsey. In our forested environment we were pleasantly surprised by fly-over Double-crested Cormorants, Killdeer, and Osprey. Big misses included a previously observed Bald Eagle, sparrows, and Chimney Swift. After eight hours of birding from the 100-foot-long bridge, we were pleased with our total of 72 species. We look forward to improving our count next year!

We thank our sponsors for their support. 🐦

BirdQuesters A New-found Respect for the Record Birdathon Counts

by Logan Lakins

On May 4th, the BirdQuesters started the morning in pouring rain at Goose Pond in Linton, IN. We were greeted by the pumps of American Bitterns and Sora flying away from our soaked footsteps. For the next four rainy hours, we stayed in our vehicle, from which we were rewarded with views of Lesser/Greater Yellowlegs, swallows, and a flock of Great Egrets. The best moment of the day was when Susa spotted a Northern Bobwhite in a tree just off the road. We finished the night at the Indiana Dunes State Park, where we saw multiple species of gulls, mergansers, and loons just off shore. A short trip into the trails led to sightings of many different warblers, woodpeckers, and sparrows. We spent the morning hours slowly driving back towards Indianapolis. Despite many



Team members (l-r): Jonathan Oakley,
Susa Oakley, Logan Lakins, Kristina
Lakins

nights of practicing, with good results, we did not record a single owl or nocturnal bird this day. Overall, the first Birdathon count of 89 was deemed a success for the BirdQuesters, and we are already planning to get next year's count higher. We would like to thank our friends and family for donating to a good cause in Central Indiana. We also have a new-found respect for the record Birdathon counts in years past. 🐦

2019 High Count Champs: Dunes Day Birders

by Donna McCarty

This new Chicago-based team was inspired by the Indiana Dunes Festival. In fact, they were so inspired they are the 2019 Species Count Champs tallying 135 on May 14.



Team members: Caleb Putnam,
Stephanie Bielke

2019 Birdathon Species List:

(geese, swans, ducks) Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck; (game birds) Northern Bobwhite, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey; (loons) Red-throated Loon, Common Loon; (grebes) Pied-billed Grebe; (cormorants) Double-crested Cormorant; (pelicans) American White Pelican; (herons) American Bittern, Least Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron; (vultures) Turkey Vulture; (hawks, kites, eagles) Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk; (falcons) American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon; (rails, gallinules) Yellow Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, American Coot; (cranes) Sandhill Crane; (plovers) Killdeer; (stilts, avocets) Black-necked Stilt; (sandpipers) Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Short-billed Dowitcher, American Woodcock; (gulls) Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Greater Black-backed Gull; (terns) Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern; (pigeons, doves) Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove; (cuckoos) Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo; (owls) Barn Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl; (nightjars) Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will; (swifts) Chimney Swift; (hummingbirds) Ruby-throated Hummingbird; (kingfishers) Belted Kingfisher; (woodpeckers) Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker; (flycatchers) Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird; (vireos) White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo; (jays, crows) Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow; (larks) Horned Lark; (swallows) Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow; (chickadees, titmice) Carolina Chickadee, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse; (nuthatches) Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch; (wrens) House Wren, Sedge Wren, Carolina Wren; (gnatcatchers) Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; (kinglets) Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet; (thrushes) Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin; (mimids) Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher; (starlings) European Starling; (pipits) American Pipit; (waxwings) Cedar Waxwing; (warblers) Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat; (sparrows) Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow; (grosbeaks, buntings, tanagers) Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager; Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel; (blackbirds, orioles) Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole; (finches) House Finch, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch; (Old World sparrows) House Sparrow

Official combined count total of all teams: 189 species

- 135 **Dunes Day Birders:** Stephanie Beilke, Caleb Putnam
- 133 **Bud's & Carl's Legacy Team:** Keith Starling, Janet Tuten, Marty Williams
- 129 **Carbon Neutral:** Dave Benson, Wes Homoya
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- 83 **EcoLab Team:** Dave Benson, Paul Evans, Debbie Patrick, Randy Patrick
- 71 **Brownsburg Railsitters:** Barbara Homoya, Mike Homoya, Wes Homoya
- 70 **Park's Peeps:** Stefany Boleyn, Jenna McElroy, Will Schaust, Brittany Davis Swinford