



2020 BIRDATHON REPORT

*Your donation
is creating more
habitat for this
Canada Warbler*



Thank you for your unexpectedly generous support

This has been a year like none of us has ever seen with uncertainty about our health, the economy and a new normal that is anything but. At the beginning of the 2020 Birdathon campaign, we just didn't know what to expect; the prediction was that donations would most likely be down and possibly very significantly. As it turned out, we were wrong. Thanks to your generous support, donations totaled \$25,888, slightly more than last year.

Your generosity enabled all six grant requests to be fully funded, benefitting the birds of Central Indiana. Projects included two local, bird-friendly habitat restorations, one at the Marian University Nina Mason Pulliam EcoLab and the other at the Sarah T. Bolton Prairie of Poetry in Beech Grove. Your donation supported enhanced care for birds of prey at the Indiana Raptor Center and the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center. Due to the pandemic, the Camp Utopia summer camp, which inspires youth to consider careers in conservation and wildlife, has been rescheduled for 2021.

This year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of our collaboration with the America Bird Conservancy in Latin America. We are particularly pleased to return to Colombia to help again with efforts to enhance habitat for the Cerulean and several other warbler species. The planting of 18,000 native trees will help create corridors of habitat and enrich forest fragments around coffee farms. The ultimate goal is to produce and plant 100,000 trees.

Stay-at-home orders, park closures and social distancing wreaked havoc with Birdathon teams' Big Day events. Teams were forced to drive in separate cars, cover smaller geographic areas and use bicycles to access some parks. Ultimately though, nothing could deter them from going out and counting birds. The top species count champs did their Big Day exclusively on pedal power.

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.

Contributors of \$100 or more:

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Volunteers who raised Birdathon donations of:

\$1,000 or more	\$500 to \$999	\$100 to \$499	
Mary Ellen Galski	Dave Benson	Linda Bishop	Randy Patrick
Wes Homoya	Barbara Jablonski	Mike Bishop	Rob Ripma
Donna McCarty	Greg Silver	Brian Cunningham	John Schaust
Janet Tuten	Keith Starling	Jeanette Frazier	Doug Sherow
Laurie Voss		Henry Griffin	April Sterling
		Amy Hodson	Elcira Villarreal
		Cindy Meyer	Marty Williams
		Deb Patrick	

Corporate Sponsor:

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

Special Contributors:

Janet Tuten, Birdathon Database Curator
Mary Ellen Galski, International Projects Coordinator and Report Editor
Laurie Voss, Online Silent Auction Coordinator
Don McCarty, Birdathon Treasurer

1st-Place Fundraising Champs: Bud & Carl's Legacy Team



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

We Really Missed Those Tenderloins

By Janet Tuten

How do you plan for socially distanced team birding? We normally get together over pork tenderloin sandwiches and a beer at Muldoon's, but that was out. Route planning had to be done via email, texting and messaging apps. Of course, Eagle Creek was the main attraction. Too bad we couldn't drive into the park, and it's hard to bird Eagle Creek on foot in a timely manner. On the positive side, we were able to sleep later than normal because we were starting in Indy. Another big plus, since we all drove separately, there was no garlic bologna in my car without Keith.

We finally got a Screech Owl on our Big Day, but apparently, we had to trade in any other owl sightings to get it. Some years we struggle to see (and sometimes miss) a Hairy Woodpecker. This year we had about a half dozen. That probably means no more Hairy Woodpeckers until 2025. Although we are happy to look at any bird, we were sad that rarities are missing from our list this year. We decided our bird of the day was the White-crowned Sparrow. He showed up late in the day as we were lamenting our struggle to find birds. He landed right in front of us in a parking lot and pretty much said: "What about me?" We missed the strategizing on the road and the comradery of time spent traveling together, but any day birding is a good day.

Thank you to our donors and our families and to the ABAS Birdathon Committee. We couldn't do it without your support. ☞

"We missed the strategizing on the road and the comradery of time spent traveling together, but any day birding is a good day."

2nd-Place Fundraising Champs: Noddy Little Gulls Team



Team members:
Laurie Voss and
April Sterling

Big Day Becomes a Covidathon

By Laurie Voss

Here are the numbers: 24 hours, 27,146 steps, 12.8 miles walked, 10 miles biked, 103 miles driven, 15 sites visited, and 109 species seen. That sums up this year's Noddy Little Gulls' exhausting but great adventure with Bill Murphy's excellent assistance on the first afternoon.

Due to the challenges of Covid, we drove in separate cars, rode our bikes through Eagle Creek, and limited our birding to Central Indiana. We faced all of the challenges because we know the Birdathon supports great programs and we want to honor the generosity of our donors. We give a big shout-out to our supporters who make our efforts worthwhile.

We began birding the afternoon of May 12, a sunny spring day, and ended on the afternoon of May 13. We were grateful for Bill's help in finding a Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, and Greater Scaup in a pond behind Terry Lee Honda and for finding a Bobolink in a field off SR 37. We then almost ran over a Horned Lark in the parking lot of Weaver's Restaurant. We felt good about our 72 species for the day, and we were confident to find many birds at Eagle Creek and surrounding areas the next day.

What a difference a day makes. The morning of the 13th was cold, damp, windy, and cloudy. It was the kind of day that the birds, especially the warblers we sought, stayed in bed. We rode our bikes through the park and missed some of the expected birds we had seen during our scouting. We were struggling to find a Rock Pigeon when each of us saw one under a bridge on I-465. We were amused by a Northern Mockingbird harassing an Osprey perched on a satellite tower.

Our team would like to dedicate this year's Birdathon to Martha Davis, a founding member of the NLGs, who passed away on May 4, 2020 at age 76. She was a valuable team member who was amazingly creative, coming up with our name and designing our T-shirts. As a gifted photographer, some of her photographs were published in a book about types of developing techniques. In the past several years, her health kept her from participating in the Birdathons, but we will remember Martha for her contributions from past years and for her love of birds and the natural world. ☞

3rd-Place Fundraising Champs: Carbon Neutral Team



Team members:
Wes Homoya and
Dave Benson

Dancing Warblers

By David Benson

The Carbon Neutral Team planned its Birdathon for May 9 and 10. We then changed that plan nearly 20 times based on horrible weather forecasts that were mostly wrong. By the 19th change, having jobs and responsibilities, Whitney and Jonathan Yoerger gracefully bowed out. As the rain poured on the night of May 17, I tried to bow out, too! I ended up being happy that I didn't because, as wet as we got, the birds rained down even harder.

Wes and I started on the afternoon of May 17 at Coxhall Gardens in Carmel, picking up four shorebirds and Virginia Rail. We continued to Boone County where we added Great Horned Owl, Least Bittern, and a good selection of forest species before storms chased us inside. The next day storms left me hiding in the corner under a blanket at 5 a.m. when Wes and I were supposed to begin biking to Eagle Creek. I suggested that proper social distancing would require that Wes ride in the rain by himself and call me when it stopped. Wes won the argument, and both riders got soaked heading to the Biggest Day in Birding at Eagle Creek Park.

Hundreds of warblers and other migrants were dancing in the trees at the marina and elsewhere. David would yell out "Blackpoll Warbler." Wesley would shout "Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Connecticut, Mourning," one new species after another. Then I would yell "another Blackpoll, and another Blackpoll!" Incredible numbers and great diversity led to a final 24-hour count of 31 warbler species (including Chat), all the vireos, nine flycatchers, and our record-smashing total of 138 species! Thanks to our great sponsors for their support. ☞

"I suggested that proper social distancing would require that Wes ride in the rain by himself and call me when it stopped."

Honorable Mention: Wild Birds Unlimited Team



Team members:
Rob Ripma, John
Schaust, Brian
Cunningham and
Amy Hodson

The Show Must Go On!

By Amy Hodson

After a virtual meeting this spring, we knew one thing for sure: a global pandemic wouldn't stop Team Wild Birds Unlimited from participating in the 2020 Birdathon! The logistics of how to do so safely was the real question. A local route around the Indianapolis area made the most sense. So, we drew up our plans, set a date, and got to work!

After placing third in 2019 for fundraising efforts, we really wanted to keep the momentum. We sent emails soliciting donations to our friends, families, and co-workers and commenced Facebook posts.

On May 13 our Big Day began! We were armed with face masks, separate vehicles, and walkie-talkies. After a great morning at Scott Starling Nature Preserve and surrounding areas, we had tallied 100 species by 10:00 am. Some highlights included Kentucky, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers!

We made our way around the city and stopped by a residential pond where a special bird had been visiting: a Least Bittern! The next push of new birds came from the Terry Lee Hyundai mudflats in Noblesville, where we found 11 new species, including eight species of shorebirds.

After visiting Fort Harrison State Park, the day ended with one last stop at team member John Schaust's backyard. We added Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Cedar Waxwing to our total, while enjoying Baltimore Orioles at John's feeders. Our Big Day ended with 131 species, great memories, and too many laughs to count!

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

"On May 13 our Big Day began! We were armed with face masks, separate vehicles, and walkie-talkies."



Team members (l-r): Allison Bryant, Chandler Roberts, Randy Patrick, Deb Patrick, Stephanie Schuck (David Benson not pictured)

EcoLab Team A Fitting Start with Our First Bird

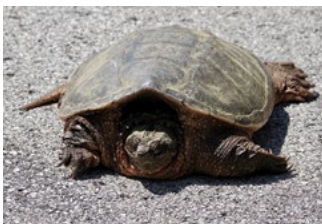
By David Benson

Social distancing while birding in large teams is problematic. This year the EcoLab team had a wonderful number of great birders: Chandler Roberts, Allison Bryant, Stephanie Schuck, Deb

and Randy Patrick, and me. What happens if a person at the back of the socially distanced group sees a bird and calls the others to see it and the bird flies? We did exceptionally well; but just think what our total would have been without coronavirus restrictions!

Deb Patrick sighted the first bird of the day, which just happened to be the EcoLab logo: a Green Heron! At that point, we knew this year was destined for greatness. Before nightfall, we found several interesting species including Golden-winged Warbler and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. The following morning the only night bird we could find in our sleep-deprived stumbles was a Common Nighthawk. But things picked up a bit when we heard a Mourning Warbler song around the corner. It turned out to be Aidan Rominger playing a recording, so unfortunately it didn't count. We slowly but surely saw species after species including Magnolia Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, and Red-headed Woodpecker until we reached 81 species – an excellent total for a small property in the middle of the big city.

Thanks to all our dedicated sponsors! 🐦



Team members (not pictured): Betty Yan, Victor Chen, Elcira Villarreal and Jeanette Frazier. Team mascot: a large snapping turtle

Las Águilas Arpías A Non-avian Mascot

By Jeanette Frazier

Saturday, May 2, was a beautiful day to look for birds. Team Las Águilas Arpías was fully equipped with face masks while practicing appropriate social

distancing. At a private nature preserve in northern Marion County, Elcira and Jeanette joined Betty and Victor to walk the trails and identify birds for the community preserve list. We enjoyed many wildflowers in addition to our avian friends. We added more birds from a Hendricks County location, bringing our total count to 57 species.

Since we forgot to take our team photo this year, we contribute this image of the team mascot. We observed this snapper

during the count and estimated its weight at 10 pounds. Big!

We want to send a big thank-you to our sponsors. We so appreciate your help in assisting us in supporting bird conservation efforts both near and far. The natural world needs all the help we can provide at this time in history! 🐦



Team members: Mike and Linda Bishop

Team Bishop Out of Our Bunker on a Beautiful Day

By Mike Bishop

After being hunkered down for months, we ventured out on May 12 for our 2020 Birdathon. Because Eagle Creek Park was closed due to the pandemic, we had to change our usual routine. We started at Fort Harrison State Park, where we encountered a good variety of songbirds including Black-throated Blue Warbler and a very close Veery. A lunchtime stop at Ritchey Woods yielded a tight flock of Blue Angels as well as Blue-headed Vireo and a very cooperative Ovenbird. Heading east through the Geist area, we picked up Forster's Tern and Great Egret, but no cormorants. Driving through rural Hancock County supplied a few species, including a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers. Cool Creek Park contributed only Eastern Wood Pewee to our total. At Eagle Creek Airport, we saw an American Kestrel; with a quick scan of the reservoir, we found American Coot, but still no cormorants. Our last bird of the day was Common Nighthawk at Castleton Square Mall.

While we didn't compile a big list, it was refreshing to be out of our bunker on a beautiful day. We would like to thank our sponsors for their generous support, and Amos Butler Audubon Society for promoting bird conservation! 🐦



Westside Wonders team-member Henry Griffin with girlfriend Tian Qin

Westside Wonders Finding a Life Bird for a Friend

By Henry Griffin

On May 23, I covered northern Indiana, starting from Michigan City Beach and ending at Miller Beach. Intermediate stops included the Heron Rookery of Indiana Dunes National Park, Cowles Bog, Grant Street Marsh, and Wolf Lake. My favorite bird was probably a Black-billed Cuckoo, which was a life bird for my friend Kim Habel who joined

me for the morning. It's always cool to find someone a lifer! I ended with 130 species and enjoyed a fantastic day! 🐦



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

Brownsburg Railsitters A Barred Owl on the B&O

By Wes Homoya

On May 13, my folks, Barb and Mike Homoya, and I conducted our second annual "Big Sit" Birdathon as team Brownsburg Railsitters, stationed on the B&O Trail bridge over White Lick Creek. From just before sunrise through midday, we noted a new record of 76 species, including 13 species

of warbler, flyover Osprey, and a huge surprise of an active Barred Owl nest at eye level just a few feet from the platform!

We're already looking forward to next year, when we'll hopefully be post-pandemic and able once again to have our big checklist and engage safely with trail users. A shout-out to all of our generous sponsors. Good birding! 🐦



Team members Kristina and Logan Lakins. Not pictured: Jonathan and Susa Oakley

BirdQuesters One Year Wiser, New Mistakes Made

By Logan Lakins

On Saturday, May 23, The BirdQuesters started the afternoon at the Evansville Regional Airport in search of the local nesting pair of Western Kingbirds. The rare kingbirds proved elusive and forced the team to move on empty-handed to Cane Ridge WMA. There we saw Least and Caspian Terns along with a lone Lesser Scaup. As the team headed back north, Goose Pond was the next stop on the list. The exciting find of the day came in the discovery of a Cattle Egret associating closely with a herd of livestock.

The next morning, the Oakleys joined us at Eagle Creek Park where the team picked up a number of warblers, orioles and tanagers. Our Birdathon effort was an improvement on last year's results, but the decision to wait for Eagle Creek to open back up to the public caused us to miss many birds that were abundant just a week before. Thank you to our family and friends for their support. Here's to next year when we plan to shoot for the top spot while supporting Indiana birds! 🐦

"Our Birdathon effort was an improvement on last year's results, but the decision to wait for Eagle Creek to open back up to the public caused us to miss many birds that were abundant just a week before."

Congratulations to all of our 2020 Birdathon teams, and a sincere thanks to all of their sponsors!

2020 Birdathon Species List:

(geese, swans, ducks) Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck; (loons) Common Loon; (grebes) Pied-billed Grebe; (cormorants) Double-crested Cormorant; (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; (rails, gallinules) Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Gallinule, American Coot; (plovers) Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer; (stilts, avocets) Black-necked Stilt; (sandpipers) Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, American Woodcock; (gulls) Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull; (terns) Least Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern; (pigeons, doves) Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove; (cuckoos) Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-bellied Cuckoo; (owls) 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, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker; (flycatchers) Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird; (vireos) White-eyed Vireo, Bell's 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) White-breasted Nuthatch; (wrens) House Wren, Sedge Wren, Carolina Wren, Marsh Wren; (gnatcatchers) Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; (kinglets) Ruby-crowned Kinglet; (thrushes) Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin; (mimids) Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher; (starlings) European Starling; (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, Pine 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, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat; (sparrows) Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper 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, American Goldfinch; (Old World sparrows) House Sparrow

Official combined count total of all teams: 181 species

- 138 **Carbon Neutral:** David Benson, Wes Homoya
- 131 **Wild Birds Unlimited:** Brian Cunningham, Amy Hodson, Rob Ripma, John Schaust
- 130 **Westside Wonders:** Henry Griffin
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- 76 **Brownsburg Railsitters:** Barbara Homoya, Mike Homoya, Wes Homoya
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Team members (l-r): Doug Sherow, Greg Steffen and John Munshower (2019 photo)

Community Hospital Team Riding Apart, but Birding Together

By Doug Sherow

At 7:00 a.m. on Friday, May 22, two vehicles arrived out of the chilly fog at the Eagle Creek Ornithology Center. Due to the impact of Covid-19, my daughters had directed me to shelter in place. The only way they allowed

me out was to promise to drive my own car without another person on board. Greg and John were operating under no such edicts, so they agreed to go together with Greg driving and John riding shotgun. While we started out in less than perfect conditions, fortunately the weather improved throughout the day.

We drove through Morgan Monroe Forest as well as south-western Indiana including Goose Pond and Beehunter areas. The overabundance of water in all the places we birded prevented us from seeing a variety of waterfowl and shore-birds this year. We did see 300 Redwing Blackbirds. At various points we stopped to confirm and record sightings and positive IDs from calls. We socially distanced at lunch by each eating in our own cars.

As always, we are grateful for our generous sponsors who contribute to Birdathon on our behalf. 🐦