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.

Your donation is creating more habitat for this Canada Warbler

Contributors of $100 or more:

- Ellen Aiken & David Hunt
- Sue Arnold
- John Bacone
- Barb Baker
- Bob & Jennie Beth Baker
- Lou Anne Barriger
- Dale & Barbara Benson
- Kara Benson
- Linda Bishop
- Mike Bishop
- Violet Bishop
- Tanya Bleker
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- Stephen Hoskins
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- Wendy Kindig
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- Kristina & Logan Lukins
- Joyann Lands in memory of Carl Weber
- Edward Lavagino
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- Richard W. Miller
- Sara M. Miller
- Steve & Elizabeth Mueller
- John & Marcia Manshower
- Polly Nicely
- Paul & Diane Oefinger
- John & Heather Panghurst

Volunteers who raised Birdathon donations of:

- $1,000 or more
- $500 to $999
- $100 to $499

- Mary Ellen Gadski
- Dave Benson
- Lisa Bishop
- Mike Bishop
- Donna McCarty
- Greg Silver
- Jennifer Jehman
- Brian Cunningham
- Henry Griffin
- Amy Hodson
- Cindy Meyer
- Deb Patrick

- Mary Bishop
- Barbara Jablonski
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- $1,500 Wild Birds Unlimited
- 4040 East 82nd Street

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- Mary Ellen Gadski, International Projects Coordinator and Report Editor
- Laurie Voss, Online Silent Auction Coordinator
- Don McCarthy, Birdathon Treasurer

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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 struggled 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 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.

“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 Covidiation

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.

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

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.

“We missed the strategizing on the road and the comradery of time spent traveling together, but any day birding is a good day.”
On May 13 our Big Day began! We were armed with face masks, separate vehicles, and walkie-talkies.

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.

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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!

Las Águilas
Arripas
A Non-avian Mascot
By Jeanette Frazier
Saturday, May 2, was a beautiful day to look for birds. Team Las Águilas Arripas 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!

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 residence 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 friends, families, and co-workers and commended Facebook posts.

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**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 eluded 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 Indianabirds!

“**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.**

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**Bird2020 Species List:**


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**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 shorebirds 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.

---

**Bird2020 Combined Total of all teams:**

138 Carbon Neutral: David Benson, Wes Homoya
131 Wild Birds Unlimited: Brian Cunningham, Amy Hodson, Rob Ripma, John Schaus
130 Westside Wonders: Henry Griffin
119 Bud’s & Carl’s Legacy Team: Keith Starling, Janet Tuten, Marty Williams
109 Noddy Little Gulls: April Sterling, Laurie Voelk
108 BirdQuesters: Logan Lakins, Kristina Lakins, Jonathan Oakley, Susa Oakley
104 Team Bishop: Mike and Linda Bishop
92 Community Hospital Team: John Munshower, Doug Sherow, Greg Steffen
81 EcoLab Team: David Benson, Allison Bryant, Debbie Patrick, Randy Patrick, Chandler Roberts, Stephanie Schuck
76 Brownsburg Railsitters: Barbara Homoya, Mike Homoya, Wes Homoya
57 Las Águilas Aarpías: Victor Chen, Jeannette Frazier, Elcira Villarreal, Betty Yan