Thank you for being a Birdathon supporter

What a banner fundraising success we have had due to your generous donations! The Birdathon campaign set an all-time record for January 1 to June 30. You donated a whopping $32,518 to benefit the birds of Central Indiana. With a challenge to fund 10 grant recipients for a total of $39,611, every dollar was crucial. Thanks to your generosity and to sufficient carryover funds from our first online auction, we met this lofty goal.

Projects you have made possible include habitat protection in Colombia, important for wintering neotropical warbler species. We funded three research projects—one on Cerulean Warblers, one on Saw-whet Owls, and the third on window strikes by birds. We supported a local native plant nursery as well as bird-friendly habitat restoration at the Marian University EcoLab. The purchase of 25 acres for the new Sargent Road Nature Park on the northeast side will be made possible by your gift. Your donation also supports education projects focusing on the importance of birds at The Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center, Camp Utopia and the Indiana State Museum.

As the vaccine allowed the return to more activities, Birdathon teams were able to go back to traveling together. The biking birders turned in another impressive species total, but this year a team scouring the state via auto tallied the highest species count of 162. Most impressive, however, was the Noddy Little Gulls team, which set a new fundraising record of $8,395!

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

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Janet Tuten, Birdathon Database Curator
Mary Ellen Gadski, International Projects Coordinator
Ted & Cindy Meyer, Report Editors
Allison Evans, Online Silent Auction Coordinator

Don McCarty, Birdathon Treasurer

2021 Birdathon Report

The Cerulean Warbler is one of the most imperiled songbirds in North America. It is listed as endangered in the state of Indiana.
2021 Wild Adventure
By Laurie Voss

What does a lit-up dashboard, a gas cap, rain, smoke, a volunteer fire department, and a reveal party have to do with a Birdathon? A lot if you were the Noddy Little Gulls this year. To find out more about our detour, you will have to ask one of us for this funny story.

The Noddy Little Gulls, this year consisted of Becky Heck, April Sterling, Laurie Voss, and Bill Murphy, who graciously subbed at the last minute for Lou Anne Barriger. We began our adventure at Lake Michigan on May 14 at 9:30 pm and ended on May 15, 24 hours later at Celery Bog. We had some wonderful birds in between such as a Lark Sparrow amidst a hillside of Lupine, a Western Meadowlark at Kankakee, and a Sedge Wren and a very late American Golden Plover at Pine Creek Game Bird Habitat.

We had some big misses this year including a very short warbler list, our nemesis owls, and even a Carolina Chickadee due to our 3-hour detour. However, with all that, we felt good about our 138 species.

We want to give a BIG thank you to the many people who sponsored us this year. Birdathon had a lofty goal this year and you all stepped up with your generosity. We are encouraged each year by your support to go out and try to make you proud. We are so proud of all of you as well. Thank you all and we look forward to new adventures next year.

“We had some big misses this year including a very short warbler list, our nemesis owls, and even a Carolina Chickadee due to our 3-hour detour.”

Sleeping In for a Change
By Janet Tuten

Something new this year. We headed South the night before our Birdathon so that we could wake up and start birding instead of driving. That worked for Keith and me. However, Marty was stuck back in Indy looking for a transmission that he misplaced. He’s planning on submitting his $4000 “in-kind donation” for his transmission cost. He’s got a receipt.

Greene-Sullivan was excellent this year and produced 27 warblers for us. We seem to have a problem with warblers, though. If we hear them, we have to find them. If we are looking at them, we can’t move on to the next spot, even if it’s the seventh American Redstart of the day. That didn’t bode well for racking up the species count, but come on, they’re warblers! Overall, we stuck to our schedule pretty well, hitting Goose Pond, Eagle Creek and finishing at Celery Bog where we had both the red morph and gray morph Eastern Screech-Owls. We managed to get all our Birdathon day “nemesis” birds, the ones that you can’t believe you didn’t see. We’re looking at you, Northern Mockingbird.

“...we fought for our first 100 species including 26 warblers. But, the first 100 species by bicycle are always the easiest, and it got harder from there...”
Las Águilas Arpias
Birds Rock!

by Jeanette Frazier

Team Las Águilas Arpias identified a total of 84 species over 9 eBird list submissions on May 22. Elcira Villarreal and Jeanette Frazier started counting in their yard in Hendricks County and located the day’s most interesting specimen across the street in a small wetland — a leucistic Spotted Sandpiper. Birding continued across northwestern Marion County to northeastern Marion County where they were joined mid-afternoon by Jill Carr. Last year’s team members, Betty Yan and Victor Chen, sent moral support via photos of species they were seeing. Fortunately, the team had also seen those species. Ultimately, the active trio needed a pause and were refreshed seeing. By Jeanette Frazier and Elcira Villarreal

EcoLab Team
Lots of Eyes Makes for a Record Year

by Dave Benson

It's the most wonderful time of the year. Seriously, there is nothing more fun than Birdathon. It's for a good cause — the conservation, knowledge, and enjoyment of the birds of Indiana. This year we had a lot of eyes on Team EcoLab, searching the properties at Marian University for avian life. We ended up with a record year, 85 species, including 4 Green Herons, the EcoLab Logo-bird. Thanks to all our sponsors for their support of team EcoLab! By Dave Benson

Brownsburg Railsitters
A New Record for the Big Sit

by Wes Homoya

On May 8th, 2021, the Homoya family, Mike, Barb, and Wes, had the privilege of running their 3rd annual “Big Sit” Birdathon as team “Brownsburg Railsitters.” We were stationed on the B&O Trail bridge over White Lick Creek. From just before sunrise through midday, we once again set a new record, this time with 86 species observed over the course of 7 hours at the site. Highlights included a whopping 19 warblers including below eye-level looks at our faves – Black-throated Blue, Bay-breasted, and Blackburnian. We also had a cooperative trio of foraging and singing Purple Finches, a dawn flyover of Pectoral Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs, a Green Heron that briefly perched high atop a tree above the bridge, a hen Wild Turkey crossing the creek, and the resident celebrity Barred Owl mama with her two adorable owlets. Another treat was having several local birding friends pop by later in the day to say hello and lend additional eyes and ears to the endeavor, including ABAS members Jeanette Frazier, Elcira Villarreal, Becky Heck, Mary Kay Pitts, Julie Jenson, and Nick Dwenger. Numerous trail users also stopped to chat and see what all the fuss was about, and several got to watch and enjoy some of the birds located by the team. The Homoyas would like to thank all involved with the creation and protection of the trail and creek and surrounding forest, as well as all of our generous sponsors. See you next year on the bridge! Good birding! Wes Homoya

Team Bishop
Starting A Big Day in a Hot Tub

by Mike Bishop

After postponing our 2021 Birdathon effort three times due to illness, we finally made it out of the house on May 19th. We began the day in the hot tub at midnight where we heard a Barred Owl after just a few minutes. After a night’s rest, we moved to Fort Harrison State Park, armed with tissues and cough drops, and began the search under overcast skies. We found Solitary Sandpiper and Acadian Flycatcher along the creek and picked up Blue Grosbeak in the walnut grove. Our next stop was Eagle Creek Park where we spotted a Common Loon and enjoyed close views of a Kentucky Warbler. After an unproductive visit to Starling Sanctuary, we drove north to Celery Bog Nature Preserve in West Lafayette where we added several species, including Pied-billed Grebe, Blackburnian Warbler, Eastern Phoebe, and Common Nighthawk. An evening drive through the country on the way back to Indianapolis added Horned Lark, American Kestrel, and Dickcissel to the list. Despite being a bit under the weather, we managed over 20,000 steps, a much more impressive tally than our bird list. Many thanks to our generous sponsors for their support, and ABAS for promoting bird conservation! By Mike Bishop

Species Count Champs:
Team Wild Birds Unlimited

Our Return to a Big Day

by John Schaust

How great was it to be back to a full-blown Birdathon Big Day? No separate cars, no masks, and no social distancing. Just lots of miles, lots of birds, and lots of fun!

With our recent taste of newfound freedom, we just had to go for another extreme big day, and once again, our north-to-south route did not disappoint. After a short night’s stay at Potato Creek State Park, Friday, May 21, started off with a bang at 2:30 am at Kingsbury Fish & Wildlife Area. With plenty of field and marsh birds singing and owls calling, it delivered the most enchanting experience of our entire day. Two hours later, with 23 birds tallied, we headed off towards Lake Michigan.

Michigan City Harbor produced our biggest surprise of the day, a Snowy Egret walking the beach in the early morning sunlight. A perenniel favorite, Indiana Dunes State Park seemed to be slower than in past years, but it did come through with a nice variety of warblers, vireos, and other woodland birds.

We worked Kankakee Sands hard and made a number of quick stops at other promising locations. With 135 species, we decided that a 165 total was a real possibility, as long as the birds continued to cooperate.

First, Owen-Putnam State Forest produced our much-needed southern warblers, giving us a 31 warbler day. Then on to Goose Pond which sometimes hands us lemons and sometimes lemonade. It did produce all anticipated species and a variety of shorebirds to help build our list to 162 species.

After 18 hours of non-stop birding and travel, 162 looked like a pretty respectable number to finish off our awesome day of birding.

Thanks to our families for the sacrifices of the time apart and for their unquestioned support of our passion for birding. A special thank you to all of our wonderful sponsors. We truly appreciate your support for our team and the important projects funded by the ABAS Birdathon! By John Schaust

Congratulations to all of our 2021 Birdathon teams, and a sincere thanks to all of their sponsors!
Team members (l-r): Ryan Sanderson, Aidan Rominger and Nick Kiehl

Horned Grebes A Shorter Route, but Lots of Birds
By Ryan Sanderson

The Horned Grebes Birday-thon team completed our Birdaython in a somewhat abbreviated route this year. We started at 5:00 am with a drive over the Ohio Road Bridge picking up Mute Swan in the dark, then headed to Eagle Creek Park adding a large number of warblers for the day. The highlight was a beautiful male Mourning Warbler at the skating pond. We headed south to Bloomington to get a few straggler woodland species, and then ended our efforts at Goose Pond. Our last bird of the day was an American Woodcock emerging from the side of the road just before midnight for a total of 158.

Aidan Rominger, Nick Kiehl and I would like to thank our sponsors for donating this year.

Team members (l-r): Susan Nawrocki, Jenna McElroy and Stephen Nawrocki

BirdQuesters A Wild Sparrow Chase
By Logan Lakins

For the 2021 ABAS Birdaython, the Birdquesters team was a dynam-ic duo. Kristina Lakins and I started our day by birding Goose Pond in the late morning sun. The Main Pool East provided - mudflats littered with over 12 species of shorebirds highlighted by Black-bellied Plovers in breeding plumage. After picking up the grassland species scattered throughout Goose Pond, we started our way towards Bloom-ington. The choice to chase the recently seen Clay-colored Sparrow on the IU campus proved to waste a large portion of the afternoon. We finished the day birding towards our house where we could refuel and head out the following morning. The rest of our 24 hours were completed at Eagle Creek Park to pick up as many warblers and woodland species as we could. The Birdquesters finished with 130 species which was a new record for the team. Thank you to our friends and donors and a major thank you to the other teams that continue to raise money for Indiana birds.

Team members (l-r): Becky Hek, Bill Murphy, April Sterling, Laurie Voss

Team members (l-r): Bud & Carl's Legacy Team: Keith Starling, Janet Tuten, Marty Williams

Our final tally was 99. Unfortu-nately, this year we were not able to permit any photographic evidence, as there are warrants out for some of us, due to high crimes and misdemeanors. The sun went down just as two Sandhill Cranes in breeding plumage crossed the horizon. Our last species was a Common Nighthawk circling the lights in Linton. Overall, we recorded 97 species, 17 of which were new for our year list, and about 14 wood ticks, which fortunately didn’t seem to like how we tasted.

Thank you sponsors so much for supporting our fun family day of birding and donating to the wonderful projects the ABAS Birdaython is funding this year!

Team members (l-r): Doug Shrew, Greg Steffen and John Munisower

Team Nawrocki Many Birds and a Few Ticks
By Stephen Nawrocki

Due to work obligations, Team Nawrocki could not schedule its Birdaython just very late, on May 23. Expecting that most of the migrants would be gone by then, Jenna, Susan, and I decided to just enjoy a day adding to our family’s COVID Big Year count. A Great Horned Owl, perched five minutes from our home in Greenwood, got the morning off to a good start. We then proceeded south and hit Lingle Road in Morgan County just after dawn. Although there was plenty of water in the flooded field areas, no shorebirds were present. We did, how-ever, pick up an unexpected Peregrine Falcon. After stopping for the reliable Purple Martins at the McDonald’s in Spencer, we did a quick tour through McCormick’s Creek State Park. There we heard and photoed Eastern Meadowlark and Warbling Vireo. We were then on to Goose Pond, where we spend the remainder of the day moving between the Goose Pond wetlands, and the forests of nearby Green-Sullivan State Forest. Even in the hot afternoon, the birds were fairly active, and we were surprised to get good looks at a pair of converging Least Bitterns on the Main Pool. We scored Grass-hopper and Henslow’s Sparrows, Yellow-breasted Chats, and a handful of shorebirds. The sun went down just as two Sandhill Cranes in breeding plumage crossed the horizon. Our last year list, and about 14 wood ticks, which fortunately didn’t seem to like how we tasted.

Thank you sponsors so much for supporting our fun family day of birding and donating to the wonderful projects the ABAS Birdaython is funding this year!