



# Sycamore Warbler

Volume 44 Issue 4 Winter 2019

## Helpers for Christmas Bird Count Sought

It's that time again—not just for family and friends—but also for the oldest annual citizen science project—the Christmas Bird Count. There are two in our area this year and both can use more people to cover the CBC territory. Some places don't get covered at all or just get a quick drive thru. You don't need to be an expert, if you see a bird you aren't sure of make notes of size, pattern, how the bird is acting, sounds like, etc. and if you can, take a picture. Your help is appreciated—and even if you don't see anything unusual your data will still help fill in the birding picture. Another option is to pair up with someone with more experience. Two sets of eyes (and ears) are better than one. Live in the CBC? Area? Feeder counters can make important contributions too.

Ed Hopkins is the compiler for both counts. You can contact him (see below) OR come to the December 12th SAS meeting to get the forms and instructions plus your own territory to cover. There is a compilation 'party' at the Wild Bird Shoppe after the Lafayette count to add up all sightings.

Lafayette CBC Dec 14 & Willow-Slough CBC Jan. 2:  
Ed Hopkins 765-463-5927 birder4in@gmail.com



Northern Mockingbird: one of the potential species missed on last year's Lafayette CBC



## EPA Limiting Input from Scientific Studies

No, that's not a typo. The Trump administration just announced a new rule limiting the amount of science allowed at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The new rule bans the use of a huge range of scientific and medical studies that can be, and have been, used to set environmental and public health protections — including the most groundbreaking and important research ever done on the health risks of environmental pollution. This rule, perhaps the administration's most egregious attack on the environment, could gut some of our most important environmental protections.

Trump's new anti-science rule says that studies cannot be used unless researchers release all of the raw data, including confidential health reports — ruling out crucial science needed to stop dangerous air and water pollution. For instance, in 1993 Harvard University released a study of 22,000 people's medical histories and home air-quality data in order to definitively link air pollution with mortality. This groundbreaking study was the basis for many of the emissions regulations we have in place today.

But under Trump's new rule, this study can no longer be used in setting environmental rules.

That's because to gain the data, the researchers had to guarantee the data's confidentiality, which makes sense: people don't want their medical histories becoming part of the public record, and they won't participate in these studies if that's the case. Worse yet, this science rule can be *applied retroactively*, giving the EPA grounds to roll back regulations that have been in place for decades.

Current regulations for how much toxic waste an agribusiness can dump, how much coal ash can leak into groundwater, emissions levels from cars — all would be in question if this new rule is finalized.

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# CHAPTER NEWS

## Carry-in Dinner

A crowd of 17 people gathered for SAS's welcome-back carry-in meal before the September meeting. Thanks to everyone for all the tasty eats. The program was excellent too. Rick Read, Chuck Tuttle, John Skene and Dan Miller had exceptional slides of birds and more, and Larry and Becky Theller showed pictures taken on the *Birds of Spain* tour they went on earlier in the year.

## & Talking about Food..

As usual, the December SAS meeting is also the annual Holiday party. Bring something edible to share and get in the holiday mood. Beverages, cups etc. are provided. Come join us and meet other SAS members and enjoy the program.

## All Gobbled Up

Cooperative weather plus a cooperative grill equaled no turkey legs left at the end of the feast. In fact all were gone by 3 p.m. Sunday. A precise figure for how SAS did this year won't be known until the check comes from the Tippecanoe County Historical Society (estimate \$4,100!).



Thanks to everyone who helped out during the feast as well as the set up crew above: Connie Brown, George Kopcha, Chuck Tuttle, Susan Ulrich & Karen Griggs (taking the picture).

## Clothing for Feast

One thing SAS would like to improve by next year's feast is the amount of suitable period costume

items available for volunteers to wear at our booth.

SAS has several suitcases filled with stuff but many items aren't suitable for the period and there aren't enough of some types. One option is having a group make additional items. If you are willing to help with this (or have material that could be used) please contact Karen Griggs (see. p.11). Another is to loan or donate suitable clothing items you may have. If the latter, contact Barny Dunning.

## Fall Bake & Plant Sale

Fall 2019 was another great sale. Treasurer Jenny Tuttle reports we made \$810.61 plus one \$15 membership. The money will be used for various conservation and environmental education projects.

Many, many thanks to Patty Jones who took over the effort, and to all the others who helped her: Ann Piechota, Margareta Fong, E.J. Pheasant, George Kopcha, Karen Griggs, Jenny & Chuck Tuttle, Becky Theller, Mary Sue Waser, Rita Gertz, Connie Brown, and Joan Samuels.

And many thanks to everyone who donated plants and food items. The plants really went well. Not many left to nurse until next spring.

## Board Action

The board voted to purchase a kiosk for Celery Bog Nature Park to be used to update bird sightings and birding activities. Dan Dunten, the park manager, estimates the cost at \$1,500.

At their November meeting the Board of Directors voted to continue their \$500 sponsorship of the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival. The 2020

festival is May 15-17. Next year's keynote speaker is Scott Weidensaul.

## RIP Continues

The weather hasn't been kind to RIP's schedule—rain, snow and ice have cancelled several outings. Nevertheless intrepid RIPPERS continue to make progress at Ross Hills and Prophets Rock Parks. At the latter, one of the main culprits is Burning Bush (rethink that shrub in your yard or trim it after it blooms to prevent seeding). To get on the notification list email Patty Jones at [removeinvasives@inps.org](mailto:removeinvasives@inps.org)

## SAS Outreach

◆ Barny Dunning was part of a panel at **Greening the Statehouse**, the annual conference put on by the Hoosier Environmental Council (HEC). Over 600 people attended the event this year at least 10 from the Lafayette area. Barny's panel dealt with **Creating Resilient Communities in Indiana**. His specific area was "Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Adaptation." Laura Bowling, another Purdue Professor, was on the same panel. She covered "Conservation Farming".

◆ Jessica Outcalt presented a program to Wednesdays in the Wild in October. It was a summary of her research using weather radar to track bird movements during migration.

◆ Nov 4. Rick and Debbie Read presented Part 1 of their exciting excursion to Antarctica to the Rotary Club in Monticello. Rick and Debbie will be returning to present Part 2 to them this month.

◆ In September Susan Ulrich gave a short talk and led a nature hike at the Haan Museum nature area and also handed out Audubon materials at

## Early Bird Hikes Continue...

Join others on Thursday mornings at 8 a.m. at the gravel parking lot at Celery Bog for a short bird hike to see new migrants.

Duncan Hall's "Wild on Ferry Street" during the final *Mosey Down Main Street*. Other organizations present at the latter were the Indiana Native Plant Society, the Beekeeper Alliance, and Prophetstown State Park.

### Thank You's

SAS would like to thank the following individuals for their extra financial support of the chapter.

Richard & Doine Carson who gave a gift in memory of "Jean Carson age 93 & a half, who studied birds with Prof. Allen at Cornell & enjoyed your newsletter."

The Hanneman's for their donation in honor of Mark Arvin.

And Stephen and Carolyn Wood and Sharon Hale for their extra membership donations.

### Also Thanks To

The Community Foundation of White County for their \$500 grant which continues their support for the Audubon Nature Clubs at Twin Lakes elementary school.

### Congratulations Karen

Karen Grigg's photo of Ilex (winterberry) won third place in the Indiana Native Plant photo contest.



### IDNR Sandhill Crane Numbers for Fall 2019

- Nov. 19: 19,980
- Nov. 12: 11,231
- Nov. 4: 4,240
- Oct. 29: 4,334
- Oct. 22: 3,392
- Oct. 15: 5,420
- Oct. 8: 4,588

## WL Students Receive 1st Brilliant Firefly Award



For their effort to get the Says Firefly named at the Indiana State Insect— starting when they were in 2nd grade and continuing for 5 years until Feb. 2018 when they got their wish— eleven West

Lafayette students were honored with the inaugural "Brilliant Firefly" award. This new Indiana state award commemorates young Hoosiers for outstanding achievement and extraordinary community involvement. Congratulations!

## Protect our Kankakee River Basin (PKRB)'s CAFO Update

Jeanette Jaskula (PKRB), October 16, 2019

The group is still active and fighting the CAFO. It looks like early 2020 will be a busy time for them. Here is an update Jeanette just posted on the "No Beaver Lake Dairy Factory" Facebook page. If you have any questions, you can reach her at: [jmjaskula@yahoo.com](mailto:jmjaskula@yahoo.com).

*Despite all the construction you see at Natural Prairie Dairy's CAFO site, please know this fight is not over! Natural Prairie Dairy (NPD) is building at their own risk. We are fighting this factory farm at three levels of government and if we win, they will have to tear it all down. And it looks like 2020 will be busy for our three legal challenges. Here is an update on our legal work:*

1. Local level: Lawyers for both sides continue to discuss dates for the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) hearing on whether to revoke the zoning approval for the CAFO. That hearing will likely occur in February or March of 2020. Attorneys for both sides will present their case before the BZA. The BZA would then vote on whether to overturn the special zoning exception granted to NPD to build a CAFO.

2. State level: Depositions and discovery were ongoing this summer in our challenge of the CAFO permit issued by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). We will be seeking summary judgment on the case, but a hearing may be held in January 2020 before the Office of Environmental Adjudication in Indianapolis.

3. Federal level: Litigation is well underway in our Clean Water Act citizen suit for NPD's violations of the Clean Water Act. NPD filled nearly a half-mile of Bogus Island Ditch and filled, drained, and graded farmed wetlands on the project site without the proper federal permits.

## State of Indiana Waters Website Launched

Indiana is a state with generally abundant water resources, but that doesn't mean that water is always available when and where it is needed. The State of Indiana Waters website takes publicly available data on streamflow, groundwater, and reservoirs and puts the data into context relative to the most recent 30 years of observations. The Indiana Water Resources Research Center Purdue, has officially launched the State of Indiana Waters website:

<https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2019/Q4/purdue-website-provides-information-on-indiana-water-resources.html>

## Superstorms Help Fuel Coastal Extinctions

It is well-known that warm water multiplies the destructive power of hurricanes by increasing their intensity, rainfall and storm surge. A Center for Biological Diversity report identifies 10 species in the U.S. especially at risk from these superstorms. They include the Puerto Rican Parrot, Florida manatee, Perdido Key beach mouse & Schaus swallowtail butterfly. Shaye Wolf, the Center's climate science director, warns: "With each superstorm, coastal species already near extinction are blown away by brutal winds, drowned by floodwaters or left with decimated habitats. It will only get worse until we get serious about curbing climate pollution."

## Five American Birds Bear His Name. Who is He?

John Cassin. Carrying on the work of Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon, John Cassin described 193 new worldwide bird species. His life was cut short from years of studying specimens preserved with arsenic—but even so he was one of the most admired ornithologists of the 19th century. Birds

named after him include Cassin's Kingbird, Vireo, Finch, Auklet, and Sparrow.



Born in Pennsylvania, in 1813, Cassin was something of a prodigy—at the age of 17 he drew detailed images of flowers and identified new plant species not found in his **botany textbook. Eventually, he combined his naturalist's** eye with the meticulous attention of a scientist, bringing a new level of rigor and scientific method to American ornithology. At 21 Cassin joined the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia where he spent 26 years. Its collection of 25,000 bird skins was the largest then in existence. Known today as the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, it is the oldest natural history museum in the U.S. Cassin found African birds particularly fascinating and today four African species, including a honeyguide and a hawk-eagle, are named for him.

Ornithology was not a paying job in the 1830s, so to support his wife and two children Cassin managed a lithographing establishment where many of his works were printed. In spite of not being able to devote full time to science, he was prolific: his output included 3 books, some 15 articles, and reports of U.S. government expeditions abroad, some of which he accompanied.

## Indiana Bobwhite Numbers

Northern Bobwhite populations in Indiana have decreased drastically in **the past decades. It's been a decade or more since one was found on the Christmas Bird Count in Tippecanoe County. In recent years, the only CBC they've been found on is Willow-Slough and that irregularly.** Matt Broadway, small game research biologist with the IDNR, says that thanks to last **year's mild winter, the quail over-**winter survival rate appears to have been higher than usual. Increased spring calling numbers bear this out. In fact several areas in southern Indiana appear to have had 20 - to 30% increases in spring whistling male counts. Like other anecdotal data, he notes, these figures need to be treated with some caution, and high spring numbers do not guarantee numbers in the Fall.

Broadway points out that winter surviving birds had a rough spring. The heavy constant rainfall could have either helped by reducing predator activity or hurt by flooding nests and lowland habitat. However in the later part of the reproductive season much of the state had ideal conditions for the species. Given its high reproductive **potential he believes bobwhites may have compensated for any early season losses. His takeaway? "It's impossible to know for sure how all these independent populations will do."**

## Plasticrust

A strange new phenomenon is spreading along shorelines -- a plastic crust covering seashore rocks. First discovered on the Portuguese island of Madeira in 2016 -- it now covers 10 percent of the island's rocky surface and seems to result from all the plastic waste in the ocean.

Scientists have determined the crust is made of polyethylene —widely used in single-use food packaging and plastic bags —they hypothesize the crust is a result of years of plastic crashing on the shore, but research continues.

Looking like blue and white flakes embedded in the rocks, it is so similar to algae that it is likely a threat to organisms that live and feed off the sea rocks. Mollusks that live on sea rocks, such as sea snails, have been seen behaving the same way around the plasticrust as they do around algae -- indicating that they could be feeding on it and that it may be working its way up the food chain.



## Winter Sycamore Audubon Calendar 2019

- December 8  
Sunday Audubon at the Overlook. 2-4 p.m. **One of Audubon's visits to Prophetstown's overlook at the end of the Park Road to see what's around and interact with some of the park visitors.** A chance to learn a bit more before the Christmas Bird Count on the 14th. Gate fee should not be being charged at this time of year.
- December 12  
Thursday Program: *Billions Gone: What new research on North American Bird Populations Means for Conservation and Climate Change.* Barny Dunning, Purdue Department of Forestry & Natural Resources. Title says it all. 7:15 p.m. Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Park, WL. Free parking and refreshments. You can also sign up to help with the two local Christmas Bird Counts. Come at 7 p.m. and talk to Ed Hopkins, the compiler.
- December 14  
Saturday Lafayette Christmas Bird Count. See the story on page 1. There is an 8 p.m. *compilation party* at the Wild Bird Shoppe in the evening to tally all the data. Non-participants are welcome to stop by to hear what others found and where uncommon birds were seen. Bring something edible to share. Drinks, cups, etc. provided.
- January 1  
Wednesday First Day Hike. An annual event at Prophetstown State Park. Start the year off by getting outside and experience nature. Bring binoculars and wear appropriate clothing. Meet at the overlook at 10 a.m. Hike ends with hot chocolate.
- January 2  
Thursday Willow Slough-Iroquois Preserves CBC. See the story on p.1 and contact Ed **Hopkins to take part or come and see him and sign up at SAS's December meeting.**
- January 9  
Thursday Program: *Protecting Local Ecosystems with NICHES.* Sam Cody, NICHES Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator. Join Sam for a discussion about our local **land-trust's efforts to rehabilitate native ecosystems, restore landscape level habitat corridors, and invest communities in the natural places that surround them** 7:15 p.m. Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Park, WL. Free parking and refreshments.
- January 25  
Saturday The Birds of Winter. Winter is a time for Rough-legged Hawks, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Red-breasted Nuthatches & Snowy Owls. Some years these birds are easy to see in our area, while other years they are scarce (this winter appears to be very poor for wintering owls, for instance). We will spend a half day tracking down recent reports of wintering birds in the area, starting at Celery Bog then wandering where needed. Gather at 8:30 am at the gravel parking lot of Celery Bog.
- February 13  
Thursday Program: Restoring the Wabash River. Seth Harden, Director of the Upper Wabash River Project for the Indiana Nature Conservancy. The Wabash has suffered since settlement. Come see what TNC is doing to improve it and the important bird and wildlife habitat it provides. 7:15 p.m. Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Park, WL. Free parking and refreshments.
- February 29  
Saturday Leap into Spring. Look for waterfowl as they start their northward migration. Weather conditions and bird reports will dictate where we will go, but we will check Celery Bog, the Wabash River and other areas reporting water birds. Meet at 8:00 am at the gravel parking lot of Celery Bog. Half day trip.

## Nature Notes & News

●On Sept. 1st a pair of Mississippi Kites were seen soaring from the trees in the fields next to the West Lafayette Elementary School (old Cumberland Elementary) A kite was also reported & photographed earlier this summer at Celery Bog by Fritz Davis. The recent sightings included both adults and immatures. It seems the pair that nested for 3 years in a West Lafayette neighborhood may still be around. Although they weren't seen in the former breeding territory they may have nested nearby.

●Celery Bog was loaded with migrants the weekend of Aug 31/Sept 1. They included Yellow-throated, Canada & Blackburnian Warblers. By Thursday's early bird count the migrant numbers were down. Species still around included Common Yellowthroat, Chestnut-sided, Redstart & "bay-poll" warblers.

●Davis Balsler had an Olive-sided Flycatcher at Celery Bog the first week in September. This species is an uncommonly seen migrant through the area.

●On Sept. 11 Rick and Debbie Read drove to downtown Monticello to assess organizing a possible Swifts Night Out. They saw about 20 swifts flying but only 6 entered the chimney they were watching. As they left home, alarm calls of a Carolina Wren and its fledglings drew their attention. Turned out the wrens were taking exception to a Wilson's Warbler that was too close to their nest. This was the first Wilson's Rick had seen in their yard in years.

●The Sept. 14 Fall Migrant field Trip drew 8 people. Around 42 species were tallied at Celery Bog in two hours. There were multiple Blackburnian Warblers, Magnolia Warblers and American Redstarts, plus single Philadelphia Vireos and Bay-breasted Warblers. John Skene saw a Summer Tanager that didn't stay around. One highlight was a group of Cedar Waxwings leaping out and flycatching along the forest edge. At the end of the walk the

group met Ed Hopkins. He had seen an uncommon Flycatcher, a Yellow-Bellied. Since they aren't calling in the fall. Many flycatchers can be extremely difficult to tell apart.

●On the 19th, Ed Hopkins was again at Celery Bog. He discovered a Kirtland's Warbler in the wetland mitigation area adjacent to the WL Walmart Store & Celery Bog. He found the bird about 10:35 a.m. and it was still being seen at 5:30 p.m. and had been seen by at least a dozen birders, including some who drove up from Indianapolis. More amazingly, the bird was still there the next morning to the delight of a cadre of early-arriving birdwatchers. Unfortunately "No Trespassing" signs went up later that day.



Kirtland's Warbler

●Rick & Debbie Read along with their dog, Kali, drove their boat to Tall Timbers on Lake Freeman for an oil change, gear lube and fill-up on October 28th. When it was done, the three of them took a slow cruise before heading home. They were delighted to see both adult and juvenile Common Loons along with a Bonaparte's Gull mixed in with the more common Ring-billed Gulls.

●On October 15 Chuck Tuttle had a Bonaparte's Gull at Celery Bog. He also reported there were lots of Chimney Swifts along with Barn Swallows and Tree Swallows darting around.

●In late October/early November a number of migrants were reported at Celery Bog. Both Bonaparte's Gull and Northern Pintail were seen several times and Chuck Tuttle had a male Canvasback on Oct. 31.

None of those species were present on Sunday morning when Barny Dunning stopped by but there were good numbers of Ruddy Ducks (35), Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwalls and Northern Shovelers. He also had his first American Black Ducks of the fall and a lingering Wood Duck.

●At Pine Creek in Benton Co. Aidan Rominger had a Nelson's Sparrow and an American Bittern in early November. On Friday Barny Dunning went up He had a scattering of ducks on the southernmost basin; Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Green-Winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, at least four Pied-billed Grebes and a Wilson's Snipe. He heard a buzzy note that could have been the rare Nelson's Sparrow but he wasn't aware of any info on their singing during migration.

●Mark Arvin had a Northern Shrike at Prophetstown the morning of Nov. 11th. The bird was seen near the fen. He rediscovered the bird in the same area on Dec. 2.

●Del Arvin, Mark's father, has recently seen Northern Mockingbirds several times in the county. He also has a 'gimpy' winged Turkey Vulture still present. The bird's damaged wing may preclude it migrating. It survived last winter at his "carrion" feeder and is still a regular visitor.

●Trumpeter Swans came through Celery Bog on Nov 12 but they only stayed one day. They were seen as late as 3 pm but were not reported after that.

●SAS's early bird hike on Nov. 14 had the first Greater White-fronted Geese of the season – two birds up near Walmart. There were also a pair of Canvasback, four American Black Ducks and (as a surprise) 8-10 American Pipits. The latter flew in while participants were scanning the ice in the Walmart basin. The birds poked along the edge of the ice for a few minutes and then appeared to fly off to the north. continued on p. 7.

Send your Nature Notes to the editor at  
sueandtedulrich@msn.com

# CONSERVATION NEWS

## Bears Ears National Monument Under 2nd Attack

When the Trump Administration cut Bears Ears National Monument by 85% in 2017, it put more than a million acres of irreplaceable historical, archeological, and cultural sites at risk of looting and destruction. **Now, they've released their plans to open up what's left of Bears Ears National Monument to drilling and mining — ignoring the will of the majority of Americans who want to protect this undeveloped landscape.**

The Monument was designated to protect 1.35 million acres of lands rich with cultural heritage, flora, fauna, and recreational opportunity. Allowing any part of these lands — from the ancient cliff dwellings to the scenic buttes to the juniper forests — **to fall into the wrong hands will do irreversible damage to Utah's iconic landscape.** Yet, over 300 mining claims have already been filed within the original monument boundaries. The Natural Resources Defense Committee is working to build support in Congress for the Bears Ears Expansion and Respect for Sovereignty Act (H.R. 871). The Act will bar the administration from placing these public lands in the hands of corporations, expand the monument to 1.9 million acres, and restore protections for over 100,000 archeological and cultural sites currently at risk.

You can support this effort by contacting your congressmen and women. Doing so may sometimes seem like a black hole, but if enough people write or call, it can make a difference.

## Indiana's Environmental Bills Update

The Environmental Stability Committee of the League of Women voters of Greater Lafayette is hosting a public *2020 Environmental Legislation Event* on Thursday, January 30 from 5:30-7 p.m. at the West Lafayette Public Library.

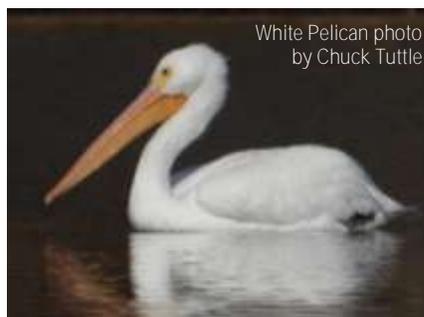
This League event is to inform and help educate the public on legislation affecting environmental issues still pending in the Indiana House and Senate — both the good the bad and the ugly. Amanda Shepherd, a Hoosier Environmental Council attorney, is providing information on the various bills that are still active. Questions and comments from the audience are encouraged. It is free to the public. Refreshments provided.

The Trump administration has just opened *725,500* acres of public lands and mineral estate across California's Central Coast and the Bay Area to new oil and gas drilling and fracking. **This is another example of the president's climate denial and loyalty to the oil industry . This action is already being challenged by environmental groups.**

### Nature notes, continued:

- Lisa Judge reported an American White Pelican at the north basin of Celery Bog on Nov. 19th. It was visible from Cumberland Ave.

- Two days later the pelican was still present. People who came to see it on the 20th reported finding Trumpeter Swans. Barny Dunning saw at least two (possibly more) of the swans while driving past on the Lindberg Road bridge. He also saw John Skene busy taking pictures of them.



White Pelican photo  
by Chuck Tuttle

## PAW & FIN Conservation Act

Rep Grijalva and Sen Udall have introduced bills that would officially restore all protections gutted by the Interior **Department's ESA rollbacks.**

The Protect America's Wildlife and Fish In Need Conservation Act of 2019 (PAW & FIN Conservation Act of 2019) could stop Interior's disastrous rollbacks for good -- but needs a lot of support in both houses.

[Wildlife can't wait -- Ask your members of Congress to Co-sponsor the PAW and FIN Conservation Act of 2019!](#)

Interior's attacks on the successful, bi-partisan Endangered Species Act (ESA) don't align with the best interest of our wildlife or the 80% of people in America who support this bedrock legislation. In 2018, 30 Tribal Nations, 34 US senators, and over 800,000 activists defended the Endangered Species Act, rejecting the rollbacks.

This year, tens of thousands more have taken action, attended town halls, made calls and shared their concerns on social media. Despite all this, Interior is plowing forward with the unpopular plans. These plans would leave threatened species totally unprotected, release agencies of accountability, allow economics to determine if a species should receive protection, and let development and extraction projects slowly chip away at critical habitat. The plans would also give up on species impacted by climate change. People who care about our wildlife and birds need to keep up the pressure and support this new legislation which would stop or mitigate these egregious attacks.

# H.B. 3742: A Potential Life Saver for America's Wildlife

*"An assessment of the best-known groups of United States wildlife and plants indicates that one-third of America's species are vulnerable to extinction and one-fifth imperiled and at high-risk of extinction."*

This 2018 assessment is the impetus behind H.B. 3742, introduced in the house on July 12, 2019.

The simple description of this bill is that it provides funding for (1) the conservation or restoration of wildlife and plant species of greatest conservation need; (2) the wildlife conservation strategies of states, Indian tribes, or territories; and/or (3) wildlife conservation education and recreation projects.

In addition, the Department of the Interior must use a portion of the funding for a grant program. The grants must be used for innovative recovery efforts for species of greatest conservation need, species listed as endangered or threatened, or the habitats of such species.

But it is far from a "simple" bill in what it would accomplish if passed. The Indiana Conservation Alliance, a unified voice advocating for public funding for land, water, and wildlife conservation here in Indiana, calculates that the bill will provide \$1.3 billion annually to the states for wildlife protection and recovery, focused on the species of greatest conservation need. The latter are fish and wildlife species listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern. Of the total, Indiana would receive around an additional **\$20 million a year under the bill's distribution formula**. This will be huge for wildlife as it will double what the state spends currently. One problem, to receive these funds, Indiana would have to come up with a matching amount of nearly \$7 million a year. The funds would allow the Indiana DNR to more effectively implement its State Wildlife Action Plan. You can access that plan at [www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/7601.htm](http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/7601.htm).

- \* The 50 state agencies have identified 12,000 species of wildlife and plants in need of conservation assistance in their federally-approved State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans would guide spending from the bill.
- \* Tribal Nations would receive \$97.5 million annually to fund proactive wildlife conservation efforts on tens of millions of acres of their land.
- \* At least 10 percent of the resources would be used to recover species listed under the Endangered Species.

A report published earlier this year documents that 96% of America's National Parks are plagued by significant air pollution. Some, including Joshua Tree and Sequoia, regularly struggle with levels comparable to those in densely populated cities such as Houston and Los Angeles.

## What Insect Freefall Means for Birds

Many people quip that they'd prefer a world without "bugs," but as the adage goes: Be careful what you wish for.

"The little things that run the world" is what biodiversity pioneer Edward O. Wilson called them. Insects not only anchor natural systems and provide valuable natural services as pollinators, scavengers, and predators, they are also protein-packed prey that sustains many birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals in virtually every of the **earth's terrestrial ecosystems**.

Yet insect diversity and numbers are plummeting in many places. Why? And what does insect declines mean for other wildlife?

A study out of Germany has raised even more eyebrows, standing out for its longevity, the many sites monitored, and its focus on sampling all flying insects. This wide-

ranging, long-term investigation, published in the online journal *PLoS ONE* in 2017, spans 27 years of collections. It shows a more-than-75-percent decline in the flying insect biomass at 63 different protected areas. The investigators used traps that channeled flying insects into a collection container. Collections made at these traps were weighed to gauge biomass for each reserve over the 27 years.

Dropping insect populations are a disaster for many birds. Except for seabirds, 96% of North American bird species feed insects to their young. Caterpillars alone are an important food source for at least 310 of **North America's bird species**.

Bird species that feed exclusively on insects, as you would suspect, are particularly hard hit. For example, the Eastern Whip-poor-will's is no



Eastern  
Whip-poor-will

longer heard calling in many parts of its previously mapped range.

After analyzing stable isotope signatures from Eastern Whip-poor-will museum specimens in Ontario, researchers wrote in the 2018 journal *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*: **"For aerial insectivores, a significant change in dietary isotopes of whip-poor-wills over the past 130 years adds to the mounting evidence that population declines for many of these [insectivorous] species may be related to changes in food supply."**

# Birding for Beginners

By Karen Griggs

Here are some tips that will help you get started as a birdwatcher in West Central Indiana. Most of these strategies will work in other locations, too.

First, get a field guide, an illustrated book of birds with detailed descriptions of the size and shape of each bird species with maps showing their winter and summer ranges. You may pick up a used field guide for the Eastern U.S. at a public library book sale for a dollar or two or check one out of their collection.

Binoculars are also needed. Photography experts at the Camera Outfitters store on Elmwood patiently taught me how to evaluate different types of binoculars before I bought a pair.

Next, schedule time in the field. I asked Wes Homoya, a well-known international bird guide, how he got such good photos. He said that it was not his camera that led to his success, but that he gets up close to the birds because he spends a lot of time outdoors in the habitat where the various birds live.

Find out about local field trips and other nature events. Joan Mohr Samuels publishes a free e-mail newsletter called *Native Roots* that covers birdwatching, beekeeping, nature preserve tours and other nature related activities and programs. Subscribe with a short, one-line message to her at mohrsamuels@comcast.net

Then start attending nature programs that interest you. *Wednesdays in the Wild* hosts a slide show, nature speaker, or field trip on nearly every Wednesday of the year, usually at the Lilly Nature Center in the Celery Bog Nature Park on Lindberg Road, West Lafayette. The series is arranged by local environmental groups including Sycamore Audubon, West Central Indiana Native Plant Society, NICHES Land Trust, Prophets-town State Park and both WL City and Tippecanoe Co. Park Departments. Hours are usually 1-3 p.m. or 7-9 p.m. Joan Samuels publishes an email listing of these, too. Just ask for it when you request *Native Roots*. SAS has binoculars at the Center for people to use for outdoor programs when they would be useful.



You can always bring your lunch (or just stop in) to use the viewing window at Lilly Nature Center. A cozy bay window near the bird feeders provides excellent close-ups. A poster showing about 20 common songbirds is right there in the lobby. The area features one-way glass so birds aren't frightened away by indoor activity.

Other programs of interest include Sycamore Audubon Society and Indiana Plant Society (INPS) programs. These are free public meetings arranged by the local environmental groups that bring in speakers from around the state and locally. Audubon programs are on the 2nd Thursday of every month from September to May at the Lilly Nature Center at 7:15 p.m. INPS programs are held on the 4th Monday of August to November and January to April at the Lilly Nature Center at 7 p.m. SAS also hosts *Early Bird Hikes* on Thursday mornings during migration at Celery Bog. The Bog is a local treasure for nature lovers and rated as the [4th best birding site in Indiana](#).

**Bring children along on events. If going outdoors, dress them appropriately and don't forget sunscreen. Children of any age, even in a papoose, can open your eyes to birds and other wonders of nature. "Look, a woodpecker!" Children quickly learn all about the birds, what they look like, what they eat and where they live.**

Become acquainted with local bird experts. December 14 is the 2019th Winter Bird Count in our area this year. If you tag along, a local expert can point out and identify birds that you will learn to know and enjoy. **Another special birdwatching day is the "Big Day in May," count so you can tag along and learn about spring migration, too. Don't be put off by the weather, "Bad weather means good birding," one expert said.**

Go with a buddy. There are county and city parks along with high quality nature preserves in our area that **are owned and managed by NICHES Land Trust. Indiana's Department of Natural Resources properties include the Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat, 45 minutes northwest of Lafayette, and Prophetstown State Park. You may see an owl or a shrike, a turkey or a hawk. That is a lot of fun, and it's not like watching your bird feeder.**

Excellent bird photography is possible at all these sites, but you may leave your camera home and develop your own powers of observation. You can enjoy birds along the edge of the marsh, in the woods, and on the prairie at every time of year.

## Artificial Shorebird Roosts

*Sea-level rise is keeping exhausted migratory shorebirds flying round and round like airplanes in a holding patterns with nowhere to land and rest. One idea: artificial roosts fashioned from oyster bags...*

The Geum Estuary, located on the coast of Seocheon, South Korea and abutting the Yellow Sea, has been recognized as a Ramsar site (a wetland of international importance). It regularly supports internationally significant populations of globally threatened shorebirds such as the Far Eastern Curlew (Endangered) and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (Critically Endangered).

Along the Geum Estuary, as with other areas along this imperiled flyway, roosting sites for migrant shorebirds have been, and in some cases still are, being destroyed by coastal development and sea-level rise. The birds which require these crucial roosting sites to rest during their long migration are continuing to lose **valuable habitat as a result.** "Observing 10,000-15,000 shorebirds desperately circling the coast at high tide is a **magical but disturbing sight,**" says Chris Purnell, the **Roost Trial Project Manager.** "It's like planes in a holding pattern: every moment they remain in the sky burns fuel they require to complete their onward journey."

The optimal solution is to effectively manage, conserve, and if possible restore the natural roosting sites for these migratory birds. However, when that is impos-

sible, another option is to try to build artificial sites. This can involve a significant amount of construction and possibly alter coastal ecology.



Far Eastern Curlew

But *Birdlife Australia* came up with a better idea after staff noticed shorebirds landing on infrastructure designed to support oyster aquaculture: use the commercially-available oyster bags and turn them into floating roosts. **Floating roosts have several advantages: they aren't affected by additional sea-level rise, they don't get submerged** when the tide changes, and they provide immunity from terrestrial predators. But would enough shorebirds really accept them?

Earlier this year artificial roosts using oyster bags filled with locally-sourced empty shells were towed into coastal waters near the Geum mudflats. Researchers crossed their fingers in hope. The first sign of success came on May 8th, when around 28 shorebirds were recorded using the roosts. Another 15 joined them when the tide receded. By the end of May the potential of the roosts could be seen. Footage captured the roosts with nearly 300 birds using them. More oyster bags roosts are now in the works to be installed both at Geum and elsewhere along the migration route.

## IDEM's Little Calumet River Fish Kill Report Reveals A Problem

On October 21st, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) released its investigation report on August's fish kill in the East Branch of the Little Calumet River. The kill was the result of a "catastrophic failure of a pump station that is an essential part of its blast furnace gas washing recycle system" at ArcelorMittal's Burns Harbor (AMBH) facility. A report from the EPA was issued shortly thereafter. Both reports include details on the incident and its cause, the response from IDEM, the EPA, and ArcelorMittal, plus the description of the violations that occurred.

From the reports, what Save the Dunes, an environmental group focused on Indiana's lakeshore, found most alarming, was that ArcelorMittal had full knowledge that the equipment failure would result in the "continuous release of thousands of gallons per minute of blast furnace gas washing wastewater, known, by the nature of its origin to contain pollutants including Cyanide, to a treatment plant not designed or equipped to treat Cyanide."

In response, environmental organizations including Save the Dunes, Environmental Law and Policy Center, Surfrider Foundation Chicago Chapter, Indiana Wildlife Federation, Hoosier Environmental Council, (HEC), Izaak Walton League and Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter issued a joint press release pointing out the problem exposed by this revelation.

Subsequently Save the Dunes staff met with IDEM Commissioner, Bruno Pigott, to discuss any new developments with the case. They also brought up and discussed the possible policy changes that may be needed in order to strengthen IDEM's capacity as a regulatory agency.

### WEDNESDAYS IN THE WILD

**Sycamore Audubon is one of the sponsor groups for the Wednesdays in the Wild Programming. These interesting and informative nature related programs are held on Wednesdays. Hours and locations vary. To get an email copy of the new schedule which starts January 15, contact Joan Samuels at [mohrsamuels@comcast.net](mailto:mohrsamuels@comcast.net)**

**Hardcopies are usually available at Lilly Nature Center.**





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## State Effort to Address the Problem of Invasives

Problems caused by non-native invasive species of plants, fish, insects, etc. continue to grow here in Indiana and elsewhere in the country. They negatively impact all of Indiana's flora and fauna. Indiana's SICIM Legislative Committee is gearing up for the 2020 short what role the state should play in supporting efforts to address invasive specilegisative session. Their aim is the creation of a legislative study committee to focus on invasives on private lands statewide. It is hoped that funding can be found to make the **Indiana Invasives Initiative** more sustainable as well as funds securing a full time administrative position for the Indiana Invasive Species Council.

Strategies include building a coalition with representatives from environmental organizations, the hardwood lumber industry, agriculture and the private sector to carry the message that non-native invasives threatened Indiana's ecosystems. The committee members will also pursue opportunities to meet with legislators at roundtables and town hall meetings. Those interested in serving on the committee or providing other support can do so by going to the SICIM website or contacting Ray Chattin, the Legislative Committee Chair, at [chattinryz@aol.com](mailto:chattinryz@aol.com).

A large number of non-native species now call Indiana home. Most have minor effects but others are quite destructive, such as the Emerald Ash Borer. When it comes to plants it is hard NOT to see the

impact that Bush Honeysuckles has had. The shrub is taking over woodlands and fence rows in area counties. The best defense it to prevent invasive species from reproducing. Major invasive plants in this area are Bush Honeysuckle, Autumn Olive, Garlic Mustard, Burning Bush, Privet, Wintercreeper, Vinca, Multiflora Rose, and Reed Canary grass. There are also new arrivals such as Japanese Stilt grass and Callary Pear which are starting to spread. Watch for an ID workshop.

