



Sycamore Warbler

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Audubon NEWS



NEPA Suit

National Audubon Society has joined a coalition of groups to sue the White House over its regulations that would gut the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Losing NEPA would reverse decades of protection. It was one of the first laws establishing a broad national framework for protecting our environment. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the government must issue an environmental impact statement for federal actions that significantly affect the environment, and must fully analyze these impacts and consider a range of alternatives.

On another front Audubon was part of a group that won a legal victory last week for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (see below). It is something to celebrate. Audubon will continue working to ensure this bedrock law remains intact and protecting the birds we care about.

"Dinner & A Show..."

..at the outdoor amphitheater at Celery Bog is SAS's October meeting plan. It should be dark enough by 7:15 p.m. & the weather isn't expected to be too cold (supposed to be a mild Fall).

People should bring their usual 5 minute presentations to share with the group. As for food, each person/group desiring to eat can bring their own picnic at 6:30 or simply come for the program which always has great photos of nature, travel, etc. taken by members and Friends such as the picture above of a Great Blue Heron from an earlier year.



SAS president Barny Dunning, program chair Chuck Tuttle, and the board agreed that SAS will not schedule a set of fall/early winter meetings. Lilly Nature Center won't open until January at the earliest, so another venue would have to be found. Most people are hesitant about indoor meetings. This new format for October's outdoor meeting is a compromise.

The board is looking at other options such as Zoom, Teams, and Facebook. Except for the early bird walks and Audubon at the overlook not many people have come for field trips. As things change and develop members can be notified if they sign up by email. See p 2 for the new MailChimp option.

Court Rejects Reinterpretation of MBTA

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is a 100-year-old law that protected over 1,000 bird species. A recent reinterpretation of the act by the Trump administration would have upended decades of enforcement and let industry polluters off the hook for killing birds. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf would have had no financial consequence for BP under this new interpretation. National Audubon Society, the American Bird Conservancy and their partners challenged this reinterpretation in court back in September of 2018.

On August 11, 2020, a federal court agreed and overturned the reinterpretation. The U.S. District Court Judge wrote that "if the Department of the Interior has its way ... migratory birds that delight people and support ecosystems throughout the country will be killed without legal consequence." The ruling is a much

needed win for migratory birds and the millions of Americans who enjoy them. The MBTA is one of the nation's most important environmental laws. Among other things, it has spurred industry innovation to protect birds, such as screening off toxic waste pits and marking power lines to reduce bird collisions. This key decision to uphold the Act's strength by blocking the injurious reinterpretation comes at a key time for declining bird populations.

A bill now before Congress, known as the **Migratory Bird Protection Act. (MBPA)** would make such future reinterpretations moot as well as add new innovations to the century-old law. It passed the United State's House and is currently under consideration by the Senate. Public comments were overwhelmingly in favor of this act. David Yarnold, president of National Audubon Society says, "It's time for Congress to answer the public's call and move to reinforce these critical protections by passing the Migratory Bird Protection Act."

Inside This Issue	Page
SAS Chapter News	2
Indiana Birding News	3
Local Nature Notes	4-5
Wednesdays in the Wild	6
Conservation	7
Recycling No-No	8
IN TNC & Bee Certified	9
Del Arvin & Vultures	10
Miscellaneous & Tidbits	11
SAS Fall Calendar	12

CHAPTER NEWS

Feast Update is "No Date for 2020"

There will be no feast for SAS to sell turkey legs at in 2020. Our thanks to all of you who helped out in earlier years. Hope next year is a 'go' for us and the Feast.

New Option for the Latest SAS News: MailChimp

If your email is on Barny Dunning's *Birds on the Fly* list or Susan Ulrich's *Warbler* email list, you have gotten notifications of changes in SAS programming in the past. Now SAS has an even better option—use Mail Chimp. Because of program uncertainties, Chuck Tuttle set up a MailChimp account for SAS.

It's easy. If you want to be notified by email of changes in SAS programming which is in flux right now, all you need to do is send a message asking to be put on the MailChimp account to:

sycamoreaudubon@gmail.com

Chuck monitors that account and will add your info to the SAS MailChimp list. He notes that a person one is able to take themselves off that list anytime they choose to do so. MailChimp allows SAS to send members updates such as date or time changes, additional events or cancellations.

This is not replacing the *Birds on the Fly* list which sends out notices of unusual birds in the area, nor the *Warbler email* list to receive the color PDF version of SAS's newsletter.

Bird Seed for Lilly

Even though the Lilly Nature Center hasn't reopened yet, SAS has arranged a \$500 account for the Center to pay for its bird seed.

Since the Wild Bird Shoppe closed, the account is now at Buckles.

Interesting Data

Board member, Jessica Outcalt, looked into how many Indiana bird are migratory (not including rare occasional species or accidentals). She found there were 300 such species, 262 were migratory. That means only 38 (or 13%) of species stay here year round. She did not quantify the 262 species as to how many were long distance migrants which spend part of their year south of the U.S. border or simply moved a bit south within the U.S.

Rick Read emailed back that this was nearly the exact opposite of a statistic he learned on his and Debbie's trip to Australia: only 15% of Australia's birds are migratory.

Jessica replied, .."it is a really interesting phenomenon (I think 80% of North American birds are migratory). But the roughly 38

species year-round is only birds that truly aren't migratory" and not species such as the American Robin which is migratory but we see them year-round."

4-H Birding Spark Club

Amanda Beheler, who formed the Warren County 4-H Bird Spark Club a few years back, let us know that as a substitute for having no in person birding walks this year due to Covid-19, she put together ***Backyard Birdwatching Kits*** for the thirteen Warren County 4-H families whose children (19 in all) were in the Bird Spark Club.

Using funds from a grant SAS gave her, kits included humming-bird feeders, Sibley pamphlet guides, nyger seed socks, suet feeders and cakes, along with bird bath/feeder plus Charley Harper post cards, and a variety of handouts from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, BirdWatcher's Digest and her own activities.

New at eBird Info from Rick Read

If you haven't stumbled across the recently revised eBird website, you can now display your "profile". Pick a region like the "World" below; it shows countries where I have submitted lists. Change to United States and it shows by state; Indiana and it shows by county. Hover over something with color and it gives you the number of bird species seen there.



Adopt an Indiana Shrike

Indiana Audubon Society is partnering with the Indiana DNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Indiana Shrike Working group to provide shrubs for nesting shrikes through the Adopt-a-Shrike program.

In Indiana, Loggerhead Shrikes are an endangered species. They feed on large insects, small birds and small mammals. The species is known for using thorns and barbed wire as hanging larders to "store" excess food for later (see photo). Back in the late 1980's there were roughly a 100 breeding pairs of Loggerhead Shrikes in Indiana. Today there are fewer than 10 breeding pairs.

The current nesting pairs are found primarily on small farms with overgrazed pastures and barbed wire fences in some of Indiana's southern counties. The sites also have the shrubs the birds prefer for nesting. The pastures provide ideal hunting sites, the fences hunting perches, and the shrubs the nest sites. The DNR hopes to increase the number of breeding shrikes by planting appropriate shrubs in otherwise shrike-friendly areas. Many fence rows are mowed or lack suitable shrubbery. For \$50 people can adopt a shrike. In return they receive a "Never met a shrike I didn't like" T-shirt, plus an adoption certificate highlighting shrike research and conservation work being done in Indiana, along with an annual report of the year's shrike banding efforts. Go to

indianaadubon.org/adopt-a-shrike

to learn more. The encouraging news is that new family groups of shrikes were found in 2020, perhaps an indication that Loggerhead Shrike recovery efforts are working. Another indication is that a Loggerhead Shrike was seen in the SAS area for the first time in several decades just this month.



October Big Day

If you enjoyed Global Big Day in May, you might like the eBird count held **Saturday, October 17**. It is another day-long celebration of birds. This event is during eBird's Global Bird Weekend.

Submit at least one eBird checklist on October Big Day to help eBird beat its goal of 5,000 participants! And send your list via email to Susan Ulrich for local compilation to go in an upcoming issue of the Warbler.

LOCAL Shrike: On September 9 at just after 5 p.m. Mark Arvin saw a very obliging Loggerhead Shrike on the wire along 500W in extreme southern White County (500W is what Morehouse Road eventually turns into when it crosses the Tippecanoe-White county line). The bird was between 1200 and 1250 S . It was quite cooperative, but Mark had just left work and didn't have a camera.

Barny Dunning sent out a notice of the find to the *Birding on the Fly List*. He himself was able to get to are area within half an hour of Mark's email and found the shrike still in the same location.

Birding on the Fly List...

This list is for notification of unusual bird sighting nearby or around the state. People on the list will get an email from Barny Dunning about any rare species so they can pursue the bird by themselves or often via a carpool. Contact him to be added to the list. See last page for contact info.

Indiana Audubon's Solar Challenge

An Indiana Audubon Society member from ILLINOIS(!) offered \$30,000 towards building a 10- kilowatt photo-voltaic system to be built on top of the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary's maintenance shed. The donation covers half of the \$60,000 cost for the project. The system is projected to pay back the \$30K still needed in ten years and has a warranted lifespan of 25 years.

As a result, the Indiana Audubon Society is looking for contributions to cover the \$30,000 needed to match the donation. It is estimated the project will save 750,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions over its lifespan. If you would like to contribute and make Mary Gray more environmentally friendly plus save the Indiana Audubon Society money by reducing their electric costs, send a donation to Carl Wilms, Resident Co-Manager. Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, 3499 S Bird Sanctuary Rd, Connersville, IN 47331.

Nature Notes & News

● SAS went ahead with the June 6 field trip to Prophetstown State Park led by Barny Dunning. One sighting was a singing Sedge Wren carrying nesting materials. Barny commented that this was unusual and checked *Birds of The World* at the Purdue Libraries. It revealed: 1. only males sing (so it was a male) and 2. the males alone construct the outer shell of the nest, while the female adds the inner lining.

Nine people went on the trip. The wren plus a Blue Grosbeak were the highlights with supporting roles played by Red-headed Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Willow Flycatcher, and innumerable Dickcissels. Chuck Tuttle heard a Northern Bobwhite calling while driving into the park.

● Mississippi Kites are back in the news although no nest was found this year. Chuck Tuttle had one the morning of June 8 at Celery Bog Nature Park in West Lafayette. The bird was reported by other people in subsequent days including Fritz Davis who saw it on June 12.

Barny noted this species is typically seen flying just over the tree lines or soaring overhead. For several years, a breeding pair of kites nested in the neighborhood behind the Fresh Thyme store in West Lafayette. They did not appear to breed there last summer, but there were sightings in the area (Celery Bog being one). Given the presence of the kite for most of this June week, people should keep an eye out for a possible nest in the surrounding neighborhoods.

● By June 12 nearly all migrants had disappeared so that mostly only breeding birds were left. But, there were a few noteworthy species being reported regularly such as a Common Gallinule which spent most of a week in the area of Celery Bog. Previously called the Common Moorhen, the bird was seen most consistently in the retention pond at the intersection of Cumberland Drive and Northwestern Route 52. John Skene saw it still there several days later. This species has bred locally in

the past but not the recent past..

● Another species of interest seen in early to mid-June was Bell's Vireo. It is primarily a western species and has a very distinctive song. The bird set up territories in several spots, most notably in Prophetstown State Park. They were also reported at Celery Bog (western edge of the northmost pond), and at Trailhead Park on Cumberland not far from the former Wild Bird Shoppe.

● John Skene found a Bells Vireo at NICHES Black Rock Barrens property on June 14, just one of 49 species he encountered there that day. A Black-billed Cuckoo, 4 Blue-winged Warblers, a Prothonotary Warbler were also on his list.

● June 19, Larry and Becky Theller went to the ebird location on N 850 West where Drew and Ed saw an Upland Sandpiper earlier. After 30 or



Upland Sandpiper

more minutes of looking around the fields and getting some nice views of horned larks, they started to leave. As they did, an adult sandpiper and at least one chick walked out into the road. Luckily Becky was able to warn

Larry before he ran them over. The adult posed for photos but the chick (s) hid in the corn.

● June 27 Larry and Becky Theller had a nice look at a Mississippi Kite floating over them at Prophetstown State Park. They noticed the bird was carrying some unidentified food but not eating it as it drifted over the trees toward the Battle Ground golf course. Possible nest??

● On the July 9 Early Bird Hike participants got a quick look at the Mississippi Kite that has been there for some weeks. The bird has mostly been reported from the clearings around the nature center.

● That evening 13 people stopped by the **Audubon at the Overlook**

event at Prophetstown, Altogether, Barny Dunning and Chuck Tuttle documented 39 species in spite of the 88 degree heat - a total which Barny notes is actually more than found on the morning Thursday bird walks at Celery Bog. Highlights were three Sandhill Cranes flying by, a Northern Bobwhite calling throughout the period and a young male Orchard Oriole seen on the drive in.

● August started off with a bang. Fritz David had an immature Little Blue Heron at Celery Bog on the morning of the 3rd. The immature of this locally uncommon species is mostly white. The bird flew off to the north of the bog around 9 a.m.

● Gary Overdorf found a Mississippi Kite SE of Cumberland & Salisbury in West Lafayette on August 9. Ed Hopkins saw it later that day in a dead tree. He noted that this was his second sighting of a bird near here and he assumed it was a different bird than the one being seen at Celery Bog. The bird was seen in the same dead tree the next day by others including Ed & Lise Schools, Karen Griggs, and Barny Dunning. Ed saw it again in the same tree on the 11th and noted it was a juvenile.

● On August 17 & 18, Fritz Davis & Peter Dy-Liacco found a pair of White Pelicans at Celery Bog.

● On August 20 Barny Dunning along with a group of Purdue Wildlife students and Chuck Tuttle, visited the Purdue Wildlife Area N of SR 26 just past 750W. They encountered a number of migrants, some unusually early for 'fall'. Birds found included Black Tern, American Redstart, Ovenbird, and Brown Creeper (the last 3 seen/heard by Davis Balsler and Aidan Rominger). In addition, Jerry Zhou found a dead Red-breasted Nuthatch on campus.

● Many people are reporting Red-breasted Nuthatches at their feeders this Fall. It looks as if 2020 is a major invasion year, quite a change from last year's poor showing. The birds are also much earlier than usual. Chuck Tuttle reports that in his neighborhood in West Lafayette four were present on September 14.

● August 31 Susan Ulrich was delighted to see 12-15 migrating

Common Nighthawks swooping and feeding over a pasture off 500 N in Warren County. As she started to leave, a dog flushed 4 Wild Turkeys out of the same field. A few days later she had a flock of 200-300 noisy migrating Common Grackles in the trees around their yard.



- Hundred of Common Nighthawks were seen by Dan Miller September 2nd feeding over Celery Bog.

- Sept 9 Barny Dunning went for a walk at Celery Bog. He had multiple Tennessee Warblers, Redstarts, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green and Blackpoll Warblers, plus Red-eyed Vireos and a young male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Birders on the 8th reported Nashville, Black-&-White, Canada, Golden-winged, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue and Palm Warblers, among others. Fritz Davis has been seeing an Olive-sided Flycatcher consistently from the park's north west bench at "the point" in late afternoon.

- Lucas Wilson had some of the largest numbers of migrants he's seen this fall at Celery Bog on Sept. 16. Included in the many flocks were showy Blackburnian and Canada Warblers, but his "crown jewel" was the much rarer Connecticut Warbler. Marsh Wrens were also present as was a pair of Least Sandpipers.



Finished and ready for spring. Note the new shape and location of entry holes.

Saga of a Purple Martin House

Rick Read and his experience in Monticello.

One of my Covid-era activities was to try to attract Purple Martins to the martin house erected in Voight Park several years ago. This is a large, all-wood construction by Bud Weidner. He did a great job. It is located beyond the outfield fence, close to an open pavilion (see picture). The house has been used by non-native European Starlings, preventing use by potential martins.



Attracting martins around the lake is easier - put it up and they come. Returning adults go back to last year's house. But first year adults, returning about a month after their elders, are looking for housing. We needed to attract them to the Voight area to have a chance of them using the house. I borrowed audio equipment SAS had supplied to Purdue for calling in Saw-whet Owls during migration from Barny Dunning. Saw-whet migration is over before the martin season begins, so no conflict. I had to obtain the morning song of the Purple Martin and used my laptop to load it onto the caller.

Then I turned it on maximum volume (with ear plugs), placed it in a Ziplock bag to protect it from rain, then placed it in a mesh bag and hung it under the martin house. That way it was close to the house, pointed skyward and out of reach of thieves & vandals. I also placed decoy martins on some dowel rod perches to provide another attractant. The caller needed to be working very early in the morning and run constantly for hours. I let it run about 7 hours when the batteries would run down. The challenge was cranking the hoist 60 times to lower and 60 times to raise the house to hang the caller. Then repeat later in the day to take it down and recharge the batteries. I did this over a 10-day period..... It did not work.

The starlings kept coming back. So, I closed the compartments with some fascia board on the inside of the holes. But the starlings were still roosting and feeding nearby. By then, the likelihood of the starlings not returning was slim and the window of opportunity to attract the martins was narrowing. We decided to suspend the effort.

I researched the Purple Martin Conservation Association's website and learned that some alterations to the house could increase chances of success. So, I numbered each door and compartment to make sure everything would fit when reassembled and drilled drain and ventilation holes for each compartment. Then I modified the doors to accommodate SREH (Starling Resistant Entrance Holes) and covered the previous entry holes. SREH is a plastic plate with a half-moon entrance less than 1.5 inches high and 3" wide at the base. It is set at the floor level or less than a quarter inch above the floor. This changed the nest entrance from a 2" hole in the middle of the nesting box (see picture to left).

I then did some repairs, repainted and reinstalled all the parts and delivered it to the Altheer Nature Center for safe-keeping over winter. We will try again next spring.

Hopefully, unhappy Starlings, happy Martins.

WEDNESDAYS in the WILD September-October 2020

Natural History Talks/Workshops/Field Trips:1-3pm OR as Noted!. REGISTRATION is required by noon on Monday prior to the program: 765-567-2993 or mcutler@tippecanoe.in.gov. All programs are outside only. Like us on Facebook at “Wednesdays in the Wild”

SEP 23 1-3pm *From Cows to Now: Hiking in the Footsteps of David Ross*—Mary Cutler (Naturalist, Tippecanoe Co. Park & Rec. Dept.) will lead a hike through the hills and hollows of Ross Hills Park, the former summer home of David Ross: Purdue benefactor, inventor and gentleman farmer. Tour “the house that David built” and then discover the special features of the oak woodlands and Wabash River bottomlands on this unique property. Moderate hiking; wear sturdy shoes and bring trekking poles, if you have them. Limit 25.

SEP 30 1-3pm *Ross Biological Reserve: A Gem of Natural Heritage & Laboratory for Ecological Study for over 70 Years*-Established by Alton Lindsey and colleagues in 1948, the Ross Reserve is one of the best studied forests in the Midwest. Kerry Rabenold (Prof. Emeritus Purdue Biological Science Dept.) will lead a stroll down toward the Wabash, revealing a surprising diversity of habitats. The changes that have occurred there over several time scales illustrates both the resilience and the vulnerability of forest ecosystems. Moderate hiking; wear sturdy shoes and bring trekking poles, if you have them. Limit 15.

OCT 7 1-3pm *Prophetstown Fen Nature Preserve* --Bring State Park pass; otherwise pay \$8 park gate fee. This Fen and seep wetlands were important repositories for unique plants and animals, and utilized historically by Native Americans in a variety of ways. Much of this flora and fauna is now rare in our state. Join Bob Naimestnik (Botanist, Div. of Nature Preserves, IDNR) to explore this restored fen at our local state park and learn about the wildflowers in the area. Limit 15.

OCT 14 6-8pm *Canid Co-Existence & Conservation*--Wolf Park members can bring their card; otherwise pay \$10 program fee. Wolf Park staff members will discuss co-existence with foxes and coyotes in our area. Following the presentation, participants will tour Wolf Park and learn about conservation practices at the park and efforts to educate Wolf Park visitors on conservation efforts they can practice at home to maintain backyard ecosystems favorable to wildlife. NOTE: this is a 6-8pm evening program. Limit 25.

OCT 21 1-3pm *Using Fire as a Tool: NICHES Land Trust Controlled Burn Program*---Caravan will leave Lilly Nature Center at 12:15 pm. Hike with Gus Nyberg (NICHES Land Trust Executive Director) at NICHES diverse Weiler-Leopold property in Warren County and learn how and why NICHES uses controlled burns to manage natural areas. The hike through the restored prairie and oak savanna woodlands will showcase the positive impacts that fire can bring to! Limit 12.

OCT 28 1-3pm *Prophet's Rock Ramble*—Explore a local landscape shaped by fire and ice which was important in local legend and lore, Naturalist Mary Cutler (Tippecanoe Co. Park & Rec. Dept.) will lead this moderate hike featuring both human and natural history. Wear sturdy shoes and bring trekking poles if you have them. Limit 25.

LOCATIONS NOTE: limited number of participants so RSVP is REQUIRED by noon on prior Monday!

Bryan Woods Nature Preserve :Meet 1pm at the preserve (4751 N Co Rd 450W, Frankfort, IN 46041) OR join 12:5 pm caravan from the Tippecanoe Battlefield parking lot off North 9thSt. in Battle Ground.

Celery Bog Nature Area. Meet 1pm at Celery Bog Amphitheater(1620 Lindberg Rd, between Northwestern & McCormick, WL

Granville Sand Barrens. Meet 1pm at property parking lot (www.nicheslandtrust.org) in Tippecanoe County.

Weiler Leopold: Meet at 1pm in Weiler-Leopold parking lot around 900 N 1100 E in Warren Co (see www.nicheslandtrust.org) OR join 12:15pm caravan from Lilly Nature Center —1620 Lindberg Rd, West Lafayette

Prophetstown State Park. Enter via Swisher Rd (off North Ninth St. just south of Battle Ground). & go to Prairie View Picnic Area.8 fee or Indiana State Park pass.

Ross Hills Park. Take South River/Division Rd past Ft. Ouiatenon. Go past Granville Bridge; turn left on 875 W (at Ravines Golf Course). Follow signs to the entrance. Ross House is the first left after entering the park. Meet there at 1 p.m.

Ross Biological Reserve. Meet 1pm at the Biological Reserve: (451 .875W)., Tip Co. Almost to Ross Hills Park but entrance sign left off 875W. . .

Wah-ba-shik-a Nature Center. Meet 1pm at the Nature Center off North Ninth St.in Battle Ground.

Wolf Park. In Battle Ground, take Main to Jefferson (becomes Harrison Rd). Turn onto gravel road 800 N & follow Wolf Park sign to parking lot.



Oct 14
Wolves



Sept 23 Ross House



Oct. 21 Fire

CONSERVATION NEWS

Roadless Area Conservation Act

Action is needed. Tell your congressman to protect the Tongass National Forest. Protecting this area has been an Audubon goal for many years. The Trump administration wants to open the area up for mining and clear-cut logging. Congress needs to step up. Tell your Representatives and Senators to protect the Tongass and other forests by passing the Roadless Area conservation Act (H.R. 2491 and S.B. 1311).

Tongass's incredible wildlife is largely kept intact by the Roadless Rule which protects national forests from extractive industries in 39 of the 50 states. However the Trump administration seeks an exemption for the Tongass. Carving roads through this wilderness for logging and for mining extraction and then logging its ancient trees—part of the only North American Rainforest—for pulp and timber would eviscerate the forest ecosystem and its value to wildlife.

Public comments submitted last fall overwhelmingly opposed (by 24 to 1) the administration's plan to exempt vast swatches from roadless rule protections. Yet industry allies in the administration continue with their plans. Congressional action is needed. Encourage your congressmen to support the roadless rule. If they doesn't check out their environmental records. If one or more is poor, perhaps you need someone new in Washington D.C. who reflects your desires better.

From the Warren Co REMC

Electric vehicles (EV) not only improve human health and are better for the environment, they use energy much more efficiently than gasoline-powered vehicles. EV's convert an average of 77% of the energy stored in their batteries into horsepower while gasoline-powered ones only convert up to 30%. Quite a difference.

Fracking & Plastic

According to the non profit, **Food and Water Action**, hydraulic fracturing is powering the plastics bonanza. The two industries rely on one another to prop up their business models, both of which add significantly to pollution. Fracking needs a new demand source to sop up excess gas to justify more drilling, and the plastic industry needs a source of low-cost ethane, a fracking biproduct, to manufacture its plastics.

Much of this fracking-driven plastic production ends up polluting the oceans and surface waters resulting in potentially irreversible destruction of aquatic habitats. Fracked gas supercharges production, contributing climate altering emissions along with unnecessary plastic. The global plastics industry is expected to increase production by 40 percent over the next decade. Once created, plastic lasts for hundreds to thousands of years. The toxic remains of plastic pose serious challenges. Mega-tons of plastic end up in land fills where they can leach toxins harmful to human health and the environment.

A Winning Strategy

More and more people who have studied the topic, are coming to the conclusion that we need to protect at least 30% of the planet's land and oceans in order to address the alarming collapse of the natural world.

New research shows that the economic benefits of doing so outweigh the costs at least 5 to 1. The conclusion: protect the planet and the Global Economy wins.

From National Geographic

Bird Safe Buildings Act

The Bird-Safe Building Act (H.R. 919) passed the U.S. House in July as part of H.R. 2. This bill would reduce bird mortality by calling for federal buildings to include bird-safe building materials and design features. It will soon be introduced in the Senate but no vote is expected there until after the November elections.

The bill would require the General Services Administration to apply bird friendly designs where practical on all new and existing federal buildings.

H.R. 2 also includes the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. It would be a major advance for wildlife conservation, providing \$1.3 billion yearly to the 50 state wildlife agencies and prioritize conservation of endangered species such as the Loggerhead Shrike here in Indiana (see p 3.)

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit effectively outlawed the widely used herbicide **dicamba**, ruling that the EPA "substantially understated the risks of its use."

Waste Insights: Setting Your Recyclables Free

From Amy Krzton-Presson,
Tippecanoe Solid Waste District Recycling Educator

Birders are no stranger to citizen science and the value of data collection through volunteers. The Christmas Bird Count, Big Day, and the Great Backyard Bird Count are valuable sources of data and they provide volunteers with hands-on experience in the field.

The Tippecanoe County Solid Waste Management District took a similar approach in 2019 and early 2020 by working with Purdue Ecological and Environmental Engineering students and volunteers from our own Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to measure the amount of contamination in our recycling bins.

Materials were hauled out of the dumpsters, sorted into categories (good recyclables, contaminated recyclables, and non-recyclables), and weighed to estimate both the amount of contamination in our bins and the most common issues. The results show that the most common issue in the Solid Waste District's recycling bins are **recyclables that are tied up in plastic bags or sealed in cardboard boxes**.



In February, Solid Waste's Citizen Advisory Committee took a field trip to one of the facilities that sorts our mixed recycling in Indianapolis. There, we learned that the materials are sorted both by machines and by hand. The whole **system relies on recyclables being loose and un-bagged** so that they can be quickly and accurately sorted. Plastic bags can get tangled in the machinery, clog the system, damage the machines, and endanger the workers that have to cut the tangled materials loose.

To avoid this risk, workers try to **pull all bagged materials off the line quickly and they get sent to a landfill**. Not only do these bagged materials cause problems in the sorting process, but they take up more room in the bin causing it to fill up more quickly. When plastic jugs, glass bottles, and metal cans are dumped in loose, they can fit in the small gaps between and underneath flattened cardboard boxes. Leaving your recyclables loose and un-bagged will help you, your neighbors that also use recycling drop-off bins, and the workers at the recycling sorting facility. Not only that, but you can re-use your container to haul your recyclables in each time instead of wasting trash bags and money! (ed note: we all know plastic bags kill, so less of them is good for bird & wildlife, too)



Massive Bird Kill in Western US

The discovery of a large number of dead birds at the US Army White Sands Missile Range and White Sands National Monument on August 20 was just the tip of the iceberg, thousands more dead birds were found elsewhere in New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and further south into Mexico. Martha Desmond, a professor in New Mexico State University's department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology, reports: "The number is in the six figures. Just by looking at the scope of what we're seeing, we know this is a very large event hundreds of thousands and maybe even millions of dead birds, and we're looking at the higher end".

Birds were seen acting strangely before they died. Birds normally found in shrubs and trees were spotted on the ground looking for food and chasing bugs. Many were lethargic and unresponsive. A large number of

these latter were hit by cars. On the missile range's golf course, swallows, which are aerial insectivores that don't even walk, were sitting on the ground and letting people approach them.

One factor biologists believe contributed to the deaths were the huge wildfires burning in California and other Western states. The fires may have forced the birds into early migration before they were ready and lengthened their migratory pathways, leaving them short of fat needed to survive. Inhaled smoke may have also contributed by causing lung damage. The dead birds will be sent to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory in Oregon for necropsies to determine their cause of death. That determination will likely take weeks, given the number of birds to sample and test and the variety of possible causes.



Buffalo calf
at TNC's
Kankakee
Sands

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Conservation Goals for Indiana

Larry Clemens, TNC's director for Indiana writes: "We are entering our seventh month of a COVID-infused world, and it's clear that people need nature now more than ever. We are seeing record numbers of visitors to natural areas in Indiana and across the country. Studies show that as few as 15 minutes spent in nature can slow your heart rate, decrease your blood pressure and lower the levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) in your brain. Getting a "nature fix" is a smart thing to do!"

To accommodate this increased demand, he notes that TNC is investing in ten "**Flagship Preserves**" around the state. At those properties, TNC is busy making improvements to trails, parking, and signage. The aim is to provide access that is inviting, useful and safe. In addition, Indiana's TNC has two major statewide goals:

Goal One: acreage by 2025

TNC achieved its goal of protecting 100,000 acres in Indiana by the bicentennial, and has set a new goal to protect an additional 40,000 acres in the next five years. This effort will be aided by Congress having passed the **Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)** this past summer.

The act provides up to \$9 billion over the next five years to fund deferred maintenance work at national parks and other public lands. Second, it guarantees \$900 million/year for the **Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in perpetuity**. The LWCF helps fund four federal land programs and provides grants to state and local governments to acquire land for recreation and conservation. The LWCF, established in 1964, is funded by royalty payments from offshore oil and gas drilling; however, most years, Congress has appropriated *less than half* of the intended \$900 million. LWCF funding will help TNC reach the goal of protecting those additional 40,000 acres over the next five years. TNC needs to bring matching dollars to the table when applying for the funding.

Goal Two: soil health by 2025

TNC wants to improve water quality in Indiana by influencing soil health practices aimed at reaching a goal of 50% of row crop acreage planted in cover crops by 2025. This is an ambitious goal which will be helped by a \$1.125 million grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.

This grant is for expanding TNC's work in the headwaters of the Upper White River Watershed (Delaware, Henry, Madison, & Randolph counties). It will allow TNC to 1) explore water quality trends by targeting various conservation practices; 2) pioneer an innovative program to incentivize the planting of cover crops, which hold soil and nutrients on farm fields during fallow winter months; and 3) use submerged aquatic vegetation to restore habitat for fish.

Better for the Bees and the Birds

Responding to requests from a variety of food companies the Xerces Society (an invertebrate conservation not-for-profit) developed a certification program to verify pollinator conservation practices on farms.

The aim is to provide consumers with a transparent way to both recognize and differentiate food products that are produced in ways that are better for bees (and that means better for insects and



thus birds).

What it came up with is the **Bee Better Certified logo**. If you see this logo on a product you buy, it certifies the site provides both abundant sources of pollen and nest sites as well as protection from pesticides. The farms whose products carry this label are inspected to ensure consumers can be confident about the products they produce.

A Good Year For Vultures: an interview with Dr. Delano Arvin By Karen Griggs

Large dark-colored vultures are often seen locally, coasting on the wind, while they look for dead animals such as roadkill (carrion). I particularly notice them when they perch side by side on the ridge pole of a house on Happy Hollow Road or perch on a roosting tree just before sunset in a creek valley north of Buck Creek, Indiana, or most often, when a few are eating from a carcass along the roadside. These are Turkey Vultures which nest in the area and usually show up in February, and depart in late November each year.

A wood carving of bird silhouettes on the exterior wall of Lilly Nature Center in Celery Bog Nature Park compares the relative size of the Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, and Red-tailed Hawk. The artist is Ms. Randy Schmidt. In the carving, shapes of the Bald Eagle are overlaid with the Turkey Vulture and other birds. The vulture wings span almost six feet. With its black body, **two-tone wings** held in a 'V' while soaring, and a longish wedged-shape tail, the Turkey Vulture is well-known to birdwatchers.

Another vulture seen in Indiana, is the Black Vulture. It has a short blunt tail. It is easy to identify a Black Vulture when it flies overhead, because of the short "squared off" tail shape and **dark** wings. Its wingspan is almost five feet, and its legs are longer and whiter than the Turkey Vulture according to Roger Tory Peterson in his *Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*. Its head is gray, not red.

According to Dr. Delano Arvin, a rural Tippecanoe County bird expert, both species of vultures were observed in West Central Indiana by his family in 2020. His daughter saw the uncommon Black Vulture on the southwest side of Lafayette near Shadeland. He has seen both the Turkey Vulture and the Black Vulture this year. The latter "don't stay long, a day or two at a time, or three days, then they go breed in Ohio or southern Indiana", he said. Reports of this species are becoming more common as the Black Vultures range moves slowly northward. The Black Vultures are expected to eventually become a local nester.

Dr. Arvin and his family moved to their remote rural home in 1971, so he has seen a lot of wildlife. Many, many birds come to his bird feeders. He uses bare tree limbs on his big 2 by 4 foot bird feeder for perches. Over the years he

has recorded 214 bird species on the property of which 85 to 90 have nested. The list includes many rarities such as a Swallow-tailed Kite.

On the very first day the Arvins moved in, he saw both grey and red foxes. He has seen badgers twice, a mink, a long-tailed weasel, and many owls. The nesting Great-horned Owl has sat on his television antenna very early in the morning. Other owls include resident Barred and Screech Owls, and the tiny migrating Saw-whet Owl (one year 4 were present simultaneously which he happily showed to delighted birdwatchers).

Another draw for birds is his unique raptor & vulture feeding station. Because of it he sees lots of eagles, vultures, and other carrion-eaters drawn to the 'offering' he makes along a remove driveway. It is about 600 feet, the length of two football fields, quite a way from his home. He spaces out the carrion he collects so the birds won't have to compete with each other. He has seen as many as three American Bald Eagles at one time and a Golden Eagle at another.



As for vultures, this year he has had as many as 15-20 sitting around at once. The largest group of vultures he ever observed was a "top count of 79".

Their behavior is predictable. "They usually begin eating around mid-morning and may be out until well after dark." he commented. Dr. Arvin and one of his sons collect the roadkill for the feeding station. "We drove 30 miles this morning, but all we got was a squirrel." he said ruefully. He can't use dead deer because it would require a truck and strong people to transport it.

(When I once found a deer along the River Road, I called the county highway department. They asked me to notify Wolf Park near Battle Ground. They evidently pick them up to provide food for their wolves.)

"State and local police have stopped by once in a while," he commented, just checking on what he was picking up. Dr. Arvin "had difficulty loading up a dead 40-pound beaver near Delphi once." When a police officer stopped and Dr. Arvin explained what he was doing, the officer asked, "Do you need help?" Dr. Arvin replied. "No. but if you had been here a half hour ago...."



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You can support **Sycamore Audubon Society's** local educational and conservation work by becoming or renewing as a Friend of SAS. Friends become chapter members of the Sycamore Audubon Society and receive our quarterly newsletter, *The Sycamore Warbler*.

You can support **National Audubon Society's (NAS)** national conservation efforts by becoming an official member of NAS (\$20). Contact SAS's membership chair for information. When you join NAS, you receive *Audubon* magazine **along with automatic chapter membership in SAS**. Since NAS dues primarily support national projects, we encourage national members to ALSO become Friends of SAS. As a Friend, you give directly to our local chapter and its projects.

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SAS's treasurer would appreciate payments in August-September to make it easier to keep track, however Friends memberships are credited to whatever month a Friend first joined.

New Friend member Renewing Friend

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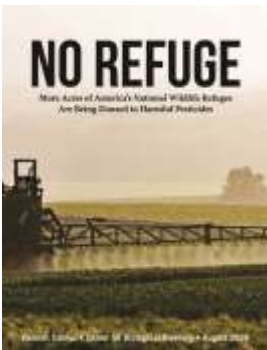
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Pesticide Use Increases on Wildlife Refuges



A report, *No Refuge*, from the Center for Biological Diversity shows that over the span of just two years, the area sprayed with toxic pesticides on crops in our national wildlife refuges swelled. Between 2016 and 2018, the damaging chemicals were sprayed over 34% more acreage — and there was a more than a **70% increase** in particularly dangerous pesticides, including dicamba, 2,4-D and paraquat, banned throughout most of the world.

Bird Trade a Concern of Bird Life International

Bird Life International (BLI), a British not for profit, is working all over the world to end the illegal and unsustainable bird trade—both in living caged birds and parts of birds such as the bills of hornbills. Currently BLI's focus is on Asia where this issue is especially urgent



On the island of Java, so many birds have been captured and caged that **there are more songbirds in cages on the island than there are in the wild**. The size of the problem is leading to a loss of diversity as well as pushing a number of species of birds to extinction.

Tidbits

- ◆ The largest source of carbon pollution is no longer power generation—transportation is now the new title holder.
- ◆ For those of you who missed the news, the American Bison was named the National Mammal of the United States back in 2016.
- ◆ Charging stations for electric cars in Japan outnumber gas stations.
- ◆ As of 2025 no automobiles using fossil fuel will be allowed to operate in Norway.
- ◆ 515 vertebrate species are down to less than 1,000 members.
- ◆ A handful of topsoil contains as many separate living organisms as the total of plants, animals, and birds that exist on the surface of the earth.
- ◆ The Vatican is urging all Catholics to divest themselves from armament makers and fossil fuel companies.
- ◆ The prairie-living Burrowing Owl shreds dried cattle or horse manure and lines its underground nest chamber with it. Speculation is that the odor protects the owls from predators by masking the owls' presence.



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A subscription is included with membership in National Audubon or Sycamore Audubon Society.

Fall Sycamore Audubon Calendar 2020

Held each
Wednesday

Wednesdays in the Wild. See the schedule for Sept. to Nov. inside on p. 6. You need to register for the programs you wish to attend by Monday before the meeting. All programs are outdoors.

Held each
Thursday

Early-Bird Hikes. Meet at Celery Bog's gravel parking lot for a short bird walk and see what birds are around. Great way to start your day. Official walk is one to 2 hours but some people leave earlier or stay, especially when there are lots of birds around.

October 8
Thursday

Program: Dinner and a Show. An SAS experiment, this is an OUTDOOR program at Celery Bog Park's amphitheater. It will parallel our usual September members' program with whoever wishes bringing a 5-10 minute presentation. Given that this is outdoors and the weather may not be perfect, please try to stay fairly close time-wise. No Carry-in Dinner this year but anyone wishing to can bring their own picnic supper. Program starts at 7:15 p.m. Dinner when-ever you wish beforehand. We will not have refreshments, but the parking is still free!

October 11
Sunday

Audubon at the Overlook: 5-7 p.m. As usual this will be at the Overlook at the end of the park road. Join others to see what birds are around, and interact with the park visitors.

November 12
Thursday

Program: To Be Determined. In flux at this time. Invision an on line type arrangement such as Zoom or ?? Get on the SAS MailChimp list to be informed as plans develop more fully.

November 15
Sunday

Audubon at the Overlook: 1-3 p.m. As usual this will be at the Overlook at the end of the park road. Join others to see what birds are around, and interact with the park visitors.

December 5
Saturday

Audubon at the Overlook: 8-10 a.m. As usual this will be at the Overlook at the end of the park road. Join others to see what birds are around, practice for the CBC and interact with the park visitors.

December 10
Thursday

Program: To Be Determined: Perhaps on **Our local Christmas Bird Counts.** A bit of preparation for the CBC on Saturday. Again this is envisioned as an on line type arrangement such as Zoom or ?? Get on the SAS MailChimp list to be informed as plans develop more fully.

December 19
Saturday

Lafayette Area CBC: Yes! There will be a CBC. NO problem with social distancing as everyone has a territory. Get yours for Tippecanoe County. Ed Hopkins compiler. More info in December Warbler.

January 1
Friday

Willow-slough Iroquois Preserve CBC. Again Ed Hopkins is the compiler. More info in the December Warbler. All info will be by email or phone. His email hopkinse@purue.edu; phone 765 714-9913.

CHANGES AND ADDITIONS LIKELY. PLEASE SIGN UP WITH MAIL CHIMP SO YOU DON'T MISS OUT.