

Sycamore Warbler

Volume 46 Issue 4

Winter 2021-2



Thanksgiving is Over which Means Christmas Bird Counts are Coming

We can use you to help on our annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). Participation can be as simple as watching birds in your yard if you live in the Lafayette area count circle, or as extreme as getting up to go owling at 4 a.m. and then canvassing your given territory until it gets dark. Most people opt for something in between, but it's amazing what you can find when you do some serious looking. And of course, you have the satisfaction of knowing you are part of one of the biggest and longest (120+ years) citizen science projects ever undertaken.

When combined with other citizen science projects the Christmas Counts give a clearer picture of the health and stability of the continent's bird populations.



Common Yellowthroat

The Lafayette Count is the standard 15-mile circle as is the Willow-Slough Iroquois CBC. Participants can only count birds seen or heard within the circle. To prevent birds from being counted multiple times, each person or team is given a specific area of the circle. Many participants do the same area each year. Ed Hopkins, is the compiler and oversees the count, handing out the forms, making sure areas don't overlap, verifying any rare birds that may be discovered, and tallying the data.

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Winter plumage
Common Loon
Seen on Laf CBC 2020

Count dates: Lafayette CBC —Saturday, December 18

Willow-Slough CBC — Usually January 1 or 2

TO PARTICIPATE in the Lafayette &/or Willow Slough counts contact Ed Hopkins (463-5927) or email him at birder4in@gmail.com or sign up at the December 9th SAS meeting. Note: ***If you live in the Lafayette circle and have an unusual species at your feeders but can't participate to tally it on count day, be sure to let Ed know so whomever covers that area will know to look for it.***

A Tiny Island Miracle

Vast flocks of Whimbrels were thought to be a thing of the past, the stuff of tattered ornithological journals written 100 years ago. Then a South Carolina wildlife biologist discovered a major migratory stopover site just off the coast—the largest known concentration of this rapidly declining shorebird anywhere on earth.

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The stopover is a small island known as Deveaux Bank near Charleston. The birds (around 20,000, a quarter of the world population) evidently spend their nights for about a month here in spring pausing during their migration to feed on fiddler crabs in tidal marshes off the nearby Virginia coast.

This discovery at Deveaux is a miracle, yes, but the species is in trouble: since 1994 Whimbrel numbers have declined by more than half and the trend shows no signs of reversing.



The fact that so many birds gather on this one small island highlights a previously underappreciated facet of Whimbrel biology—and shorebird biology in general—that could reveal a key to any conservation strategy to save them: simply provide these birds a safe place to spend the night.

CHAPTER NEWS

Hybrid Meetings Continue at Lilly Nature Center

SAS will continue hosting the hybrid membership meetings. You can attend in person at Lilly Nature Center or join via zoom. To date this system has been working well with 20+ people taking part.

Programs start at 7:15 p.m. we do hope people attending in person will wear a mask out of consideration for other attendees. (Lilly may require one in any case for entry to the building).

Weed Wrangler Award

Congratulations to Joan Mohr Samuels for being the West Central Indiana Regional 2021 Weed Wrangler. Joan has been working on invasives since 2000, she helped organize the first workday at Celery Bog Park to remove the Bush Honeysuckle choking the area and later began the **RIP** squad to help local park departments get rid of invasives and improve habitat for birds and wildlife. It has certainly worked and done that at Celery Bog!

Board Actions

Sycamore Audubon's Board of directors has signed on to letters in support of 2372, the Recovering Americas Wildlife Act, To date 33 U.S. Senators have signed on as co-sponsors.

The board also voted \$500 to help support the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival and \$500 to the Hoosier Environmental Council (HEC) to support their work.

The board also sent in Rick Read's grant request for \$250 submitted to the White County Community Foundation's **Women Giving Together Fund**. The grant will support Audubon Nature Club programing in Monticello.

Because of COVID 19, the program has been limited to the Boys and Girls Club this past year but now may expand back into the local grade schools as an after school activity. SAS board voted to supply any additional funds needed for the expansion.

Turkey Legs Again Next Year?



The Rodes have volunteers at SAS' booth for years.

Maybe not. The Board is discussing no longer selling turkey legs at the Feast. It is SAS's biggest fund raiser but finding the volunteers to help at the booth is becoming harder and the people who are the mainstays are getting



older and developing back problems, etc. The past two years SAS has relied on the Purdue Wildlife Club students to fill about 25% of the time slots in exchange for part of the profits. That helps, but we need people who can volunteer to help with **all** the Feast work—the paperwork and booth arrangements that are required in **advance of the feast and during the feast** (ordering the turkey, filling in forms and filing for reimbursement, getting supplies, storing items for the next year, ferrying legs, cider, and other items to the feast, etc.)

Please, let Barny Dunning know if you are interested in exploring the possibilities. If we can find a few more younger regulars it would make a world of difference.

Board Member Speaks Up

On November 3, the West Lafayette Parks and Recreation department held an interactive open house to help the park department collect the public's wishes for the future of West Lafayette parks and their new 5 year plan.

Birding on the *FLY* List...

Don't want to miss an unusual bird sighting nearby or around the state? Barny sends people on the list an email so those interested can pursue the bird by themselves or maybe via a carpool. Contact him to be on the list. See p. 11.

One attendee was SAS board member, Karen Griggs. She shared her thoughts about the parks. WLF-18 included many of her comments in their story about the forum. We hope other members contact the department with their thoughts. If you missed the Nov. 3rd open forum, a similar event is coming in December.

TICT News

TICT is in the process of forming an Eradication Committee,

focused on invasive plant removal projects, and a Reporting Committee, focused on collecting data on the location of invasive species (plant and animal). If you're interested in helping to get these Committees up and running, please let them know.

The Tippecanoe County Soil and Water Conservation District was recently awarded grant funds to hire a part-time Invasive Species Technician. This is a 3-year, part-time position that will include

education on invasive species, providing assistance to landowners in invasive plant management, and coordination of a program that provides financial assistance to landowners for invasive plant control. A job posting should be available soon. Follow the TICT or SWCD Facebook pages for updates.

Questions regarding the job post should be directed to Angie Miller at angella.garciamiller@in.nacdn.net.

Indiana Land Protection Association (ILPA)

This Fall, stewardship professionals from land trusts across Indiana gathered for ILPA's Annual Stewardship Gathering. ILPA is the state organization for land trusts and regularly schedules get-togethers to share information about experiences and land acquisition opportunities available in the state.

This critical learning experience was hosted by Red-tail Land Conservancy, sponsored by Indiana Toll Road and Orbis Environmental Consulting. It featured expert speakers from The Nature Conservancy in Indiana and Ball State University. These opportunities for stewardship teams to learn and train collaboratively are invaluable.

Participants discussed what their favorite tools are, how they use volunteers, handle public access, etc. Below are examples of what some of the projects the various state land trusts are doing.

Shirley Heinze: In the last six years their Stewardship Program has planted more than 68,000 native hardwood trees.

Red-tail Land Conservancy: Staff and volunteers are proud of their recent installation of the Dutro-Ernst short grass prairie on a site that had started out as a field of invasives.

NICHES Land Trust: Retired eight acres of row crops at their Williams Woods preserve and is restoring them to native thicket species American Wild Plum and Hazelnut will be the main species planted. These shrubs provide pollen for pollinators in the lull between the spring ephemerals and summer wildflowers.

Central Indiana Land Trust (CILTI): Is clearing their Nonie Werbe Krauss Nature Preserve on the White River to remove a serious invasion of Callery Pear trees. (note: this is a species now spreading in our local area. Pictured at right, trees, flowers, fruit of Callery Pear)

ACRES Land Trust: is experimenting with mimicking nature's steps to develop native woods as the land trust restores former farm fields. This year, they planted 20 species of native grasses and flowering plants at their Founders Forest. Over the years the land will slowly revert to forest.

Ouabache Land Conservancy is restoring habitat at Atherton Island Natural Area. This year they planted 16,000 trees, 45 species of native wildflowers, and 5 species of native prairie grasses and sedges. In addition, this organization which is all-volunteer, removed old fencing, and invasive plants.



CONSERVATION NEWS

Indiana's Wetland Task Force Appointees

Governor Holcomb has appointed 13 individuals to the new **Wetland Task Force** established to look into aspects of the contentious wetland bill that passed in spite of massive opposition last session. Members will serve until December 31, 2022. Two of the 13 are from West Lafayette.

- o The Honorable Zach Beasley (West Lafayette), Tippecanoe County Surveyor
- o Will Ditzler (Westfield), president of RiverBirch Executive Advisors, who will also serve as chair of the task force
- o Jill Hoffmann (Indianapolis), executive director of the White River Alliance
- o Jared Kakasuleff (Cicero), farmer at Kakasuleff Farms
- o Jeremy Kieffner (Evansville), environmental permit manager at Lochmueller Group
- o Dr. Sara McMillan (West Lafayette), associate professor of Agricultural & Biological Engineering at Purdue University
- o Matt Meersman (South Bend), director of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission
- o Michael Novotney (Valparaiso), Porter County Engineer and director of engineering
- o Commissioner Bruno Pigott, representing the Indiana Department of Environmental Management
- o Kyle Rorah (Dexter, MI), regional director of public policy for Ducks Unlimited
- o Joe Schmees (Fishers), executive director of the Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- o The Honorable Richard Strick, Mayor of Huntington
- o Jeff Thomas (Fort Wayne) co-owner and vice president of Oakmont Development, LLC.

This info came from Indra Frank, *Environmental Health & Water Policy Director* for the Hoosier Environmental Council. She went on to say, "This is good news as there are many smart individuals on this Task Force with a wealth of knowledge about wetlands and their importance. The Chair, Will Ditzler, has many years' experience in wetland restoration and conservation."

Pine Martens Get Some Space But ...

Stealthy, furry carnivores the size of house cats, the Pine Martens of Northern California and Oregon have disappeared from over 90% of their coastal-forest range. The Center for Biological Diversity and allies first petitioned for their Endangered Species Act protection in 2010.

In October, a partial victory: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to protect 1.4 million acres of marten habitat. Unfortunately it doesn't give the animals pathways to travel **between** habitat patches. It also excludes — based on a voluntary agreement that the Center and



partners are challenging in court — some private land owned by a timber company.

"For Oregon's small and isolated populations of Martens to survive, they'll need much more than disconnected fragments of habitat where they've managed to avoid decades of logging," said Center's Quinn Read. "But 1.4 million acres is a good start, and the Center will follow every path to get them all the habitat they need."

Chaco Protective Zone

President Biden and Interior Secretary Haaland have announced plans to prevent new oil and gas development on public lands within a 10-mile radius around Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

For over a century, this region has been treated as an energy sacrifice zone by the government. In addition to being home to families and communities harmed because of endless drilling, Chaco Canyon is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with ancient highways and is a sacred ancestral site for the Hopi and Pueblo people.

The 20-year plan wouldn't have happened except for the the constant pressure from the Indigenous-led Greater Chaco Coalition.

Winter Sycamore Audubon Calendar 2021-2

Audubon Programming continues to be in flux. Field Trips are outdoors so distancing and masks should be sufficient. Normal meeting programs are currently hybrid and are expected to remain that way for some time.

- Dec. 4
Saturday **Practice for the CBC.** Meet at 8:30 am at gravel parking lot Celery Bog. We might go to other areas to practice on sparrows and other Little Brown Jobs. A chance to learn to ID some of the birds you might encounter on the Christmas Bird Counts or on your own rambles.
- Dec 9
Thursday **Program: *Learn about Bird Conservation Program Options.*** Dan Shaver, NRCS State Forester, USDA. Dan will talk about the different options for landowners for various state and federal programs, what they can be used for, and how they can benefit birds. 7:15 p.m. Lilly Nature Center, WL. Please contact Barny Dunning for a zoom invitation if you wish to attend his program remotely. COME and get a territory for the Dec. 18 bird count too! See below.
- Dec. 18
Saturday **Greater Lafayette Area Christmas Bird Count.** Help out to cover our local CBC circle Lafayette's count is the oldest continuous count in Indiana. Ed Hopkins is the count compiler (birder4in@gmail.com). Mark your Calendar now so you don't miss it. See p. 1. And don't forget the Willow-Slough Count. Contact Ed for the date.
- January 1
Saturday **First Day Hike at Prophetstow State Park.** There will be a hike this year, but details of time, etc. are not yet available. Watch the news, or contact the Park or Chuck Tuttle later.
- Jan. 13
Thursday **Program: *Scrub Jays and Native Oak Forest Restoration.*** Bee Redfield, Purdue Wildlife Department. Bee is researching how reintroducing Scrub Jays will affect Oak Forests on the Channel Islands off the California coast. 7:15 p.m. Lilly Nature Center or via zoom (for zoom, request the invite from Barny Dunning, see p. 11)
- January 29
Saturday **Winter Bird Trip.** A look around the area to see our winter visitors. 8:30 a.m. This is a half-day trip.
- February 10
Thursday **Program:** Right now this program's speaker to be determined. Another hybrid meeting so come to Lilly Nature Center at 7:15 p.m. or join via zoom by requesting an invite from Barny.
- February 19
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook** 8:00-10:00 a.m. Meet at the overlook at the end of the road at Prophetstown State Park. Come see what birds are around and visit with park visitors.
- February 26
Saturday **Early Waterfowl Migration.** These species are migrating north earlier. We hope to catch a wide variety of species plus some rarities moving through. Meet at Celery Bog at 8 a.m. We will visit Bicentennial Nature Area and other sites where waterbirds are being found.
- March 10
Thursday **Program: *Merging Analog & Digital Photographic Techniques*** by Alan McConnell. Alan a co-owner of the Opera House Gallery in Delphi, will show how and why he uses the large format film camera while merging digital techniques to create fine art prints. This presentation will also include sample images from his thematic portfolios. Several images were captured in National Parks, Monuments, & Preserves as well as local preserves such as NICHES Land Trust.
- March 19
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook.** 8:30-10:30 a.m. at the overlook at the end of the road at Prophetstown State Park. Come see what we can find around the overlook and visit with park visitors.
- March 24
Thursday **Early Bird Hikes** begin again in earnest. Start your day with an hour or so of birding at Celery Bog. Meet at the gravel parking lot at 8 a.m.
- March 26
Saturday **Field Trip.** Local?? Lakeshore?? Other?? Keep connected for details later when we see what possibility sounds like it will produce the most interesting birds.

Leaves for Wildlife

he following was forwarded by Wes Homoya

A leaf layer several inches deep is natural in any area where trees and shrubs grow. The leaf layer is its own ecosystem. Many wildlife species use the leaf layer as their primary habitat including salamanders, chipmunks, wood frogs, box turtles, toads, shrews, earthworms, millipedes, plus thousands of insect species.

The latter include butterfly & moth species that overwinter, such as Luna Moths, Great-spangled Fritillaries, Woolly Bear caterpillars (Tiger Moths), and Red-banded Hairstreaks. Some species overwinter as eggs, some as pupae, and some as adults. In addition 94



percent of moth species rely on the leaf layer to complete their lifecycles.

It's the Law

President Biden's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan earmarks \$350 million for animal-friendly infrastructure—bridges, underpasses, and roadside fences—designed to prevent roadkill.

Crossings include everything from overpasses for grizzly bears to tunnels for salamanders.

Bees Kill Penguins

A swarm of more than 60 bees killed a group of endangered penguins near Cape Town, the BBC reports. The protected birds had no other physical injuries aside from stings. It was the first known bee attack at Boulders Beach, which attracts more than 60,000 tourists a year.



Who's Your Daddy?

Since 1983 the sex lives of California Condors haven't been private. Biologists have been carefully breeding the birds in captivity, keeping track of who mated with whom; how many offspring they had, and when those offspring were released into the wild. All the info was kept in the official California-condor "studbook."

A few years ago, DNA tests as part of routine research found two condors with unexpected paternity. These two birds—known as numbers SB260 and SB517—were not related to the fathers recorded in the studbook. Actually, they had no fathers at all— all their DNA came from their mothers. "We were confronted with this inexplicable data set," says Oliver Ryder, a geneticist at the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.

The only explanation was that the two female condors must have essentially fertilized themselves without any sperm. The phenomenon is known as parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis has been studied in other birds, like turkeys and chickens. It's also been documented in snakes, lizards, sharks, rays, and bony fish, and all of these 'accidents' have scientists wondering if parthenogenesis is not as rare as once thought.

In the case of the condors, Ryder and his colleagues had used DNA markers to help manage the breeding program for years. It helped them minimize inbreeding and develop a test for chondrodystrophy, an inherited bone disorder common in condors. After captive-bred birds were released into the wild, the team even rappelled down cliff faces to study the parentage of their chicks. The biologists ultimately accumulated samples of blood, eggshell membrane, feathers, and tissue from more than 900 condors over the course of the condor-management program. A few years ago, they decided to analyze the DNA from all of them. That's when the oddity in SB260's and SB517's paternity showed up.

Unfortunately, by the time scientists realized the birds were genetically unique, both of the condors had died, so they weren't able to study how SB260's and SB517's unusual parentage might have affected them. When the birds were alive, they weren't so remarkable that the zookeepers thought to do a special postmortem exam. "To the people taking care of them, they were another condor," Ryder says.

But both of the condors did have some documented health issues. SB260, a male hatched at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in 2001, died two years later after being released into the wild—he was always small and did not integrate well with the wild birds. SB517, a male hatched at Los Angeles Zoo in 2009, had a curved spine and trouble walking. He was never released into the wild and died in captivity at about age eight. (California Condors usually live for decades.) "They certainly weren't, shall we say, shining specimens of the condor," says Demian Chapman, a biologist at the Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium, who has studied parthenogenesis. Health issues are not uncommon for parthenogenetic animals, also known as parthenotes.

New NAS CEO Elizabeth Gray

In mid-October, the National Audubon Society (NAS) announced that Dr. Elizabeth Gray, currently serving as acting CEO, will become the organization's 11th leader and the next CEO. A scientist, ornithologist and global conservation leader, Dr. Gray will be the first woman to hold the CEO title in the National Audubon Society's 116 year history.



"Elizabeth is a trailblazer. She's a trained ornithologist, a global climate change and conservation expert, a strong and proven fundraiser, a seasoned organizational leader and teambuilder who has a long track record incorporating equity, diversity and inclusion in the work she leads," said Susan Bell, Audubon Board Chair and CEO Search Committee Chair.

"Becoming Audubon's CEO feels like a homecoming for me. Birds launched my career into conservation, and they opened my eyes to the importance of tackling climate change." said Dr. Elizabeth Gray, NAS's new CEO. "Birds bring me so much joy and I see that in the team at Audubon as well. Birds are a uniting force, bringing together communities across the hemisphere. Over the past six months as acting CEO, I have been honored and inspired by the opportunity to work with Audubon's outstanding staff and volunteer network, and I am looking forward to partnering together to build a brighter future for birds and the planet. As I've been known to say, bird survival is human survival."

What's in a Cup of Noodles? The truth is more tangled than Nissin's noodles: That's because Conflict Palm Oil makes up 20% of every package of noodles.

5 BILLION servings of instant ramen were sold last year in the U.S. — that's one billion servings of rainforest destruction. It's why Nissin's implementation of bold rain-forest and community protection policies would be such a big deal. And what does Nissin want? Well, they want to become the number one instant ramen brand in the U.S. That's why it's important that Nissin's executives hear directly from YOU. Call (310) 327-8478 and Press 0 to be connected,

The Bird Way

A book review by Karen Griggs

***The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play Parent, and Think* by Jennifer Ackerman Penguin, 2020**

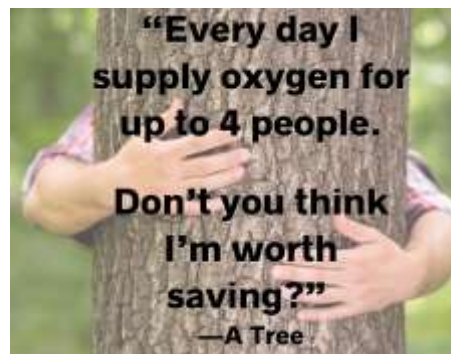
A wildly enthusiastic bird watcher, Jennifer Ackerman sets forth narratives from her own observations at bird field stations, interviews with scientists, and summaries of published research. She made trips to Colorado, Australia, Sweden, and other birding sites.

Written in a conversational (colloquial) style, Ackerman creates some suspense by describing the expectations and the surprising findings of ornithologists and biologists who have recorded sounds of birds.

The Genius of Birds, Ackerman's earlier work, got high praise from reviewers including the *Wall St. Journal*, the *New York Times Book Review*, and *Scientific American*. Because she relies on published work from top-notch research journals, scientific reports, and recent books, her own credibility is high.

Extremely exaggerated reactions to unexpected bird behavior characterizes her writing style, but this is not the type of book one would read from beginning to end. The style is tolerable when the reader enjoys one chapter or section at a time.

Line drawings by John Burgoyne and a comprehensive index make this book above average in the category of popular science.



Snow Crab Population Melting Away

Valuable crab populations off Alaska are in a "very scary" population decline in a warming Bering Sea, the *Seattle Times* reports.

The annual survey of a research vessel in June found dramatic drops in all sizes of snow crabs and, most worryingly, a 99 percent fall in the number of immature female crabs. Rapid climate changes have roiled the sea, harming one of the most productive marine ecosystems on Earth.

Nature Notes & News

● There was an increase in shore-birds seen at the north end of Celery Bog the morning of Sept 1. Ed Hopkins reported a Baird's Sandpiper and Barny Dunning had five Least Sandpipers, two Semipalmated Sandpipers, a single Pectoral, plus some Lesser Yellowlegs (and one Greater), along with Solitary Sandpipers, and other common species. He also had one bird that appeared to be a juvenile Sanderling. Very pale, chunkier than the other peeps, with black legs and bill, and black and white mottling on the back

● At the beginning of Sept. at Celery Bog, people saw Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Black-throated Blue Warbler, & Olive-sided Flycatcher. An Olive-sided Flycatcher was also reported at Bicentennial Nature Area on the 3rd. Bay-breasted Warblers, Blackburnian and Magnolia Warblers and lots of other birds have been seen around in small numbers.

● Over the Sept 6-7 weekend several people saw interesting shorebirds on the east side of Lafayette. Semipalmated Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper and Semipalmated Plovers were reported just east of the Faith East complex along Route 26 (beyond the Meijer's store). A scope was needed. The Baird's and both types of Semis were still there the morning of the 9th

● On the morning of Sept 6, Alex Lowe-Massi discovered two juvenile Little Blue Herons at the Purdue Wildlife Area. Barny Dunning stopped by and saw them perched on two snags out in the middle of the water.

● Also on the 6th at least 8 birders/photographers were at Celery Bog when Barny Dunning arrived. They were rewarded with a very nice fallout—one of the largest number of fall migrants (mostly warblers) seen locally in years. Tons of Tennessee, plus Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided,

Magnolia, Redstart, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green and Cape May. Barny had 12 species (not counting a couple of "baypolls") and several other people had similar numbers. Late evening/dusk had produced similar numbers in the previous days.

● Dan Miller noted the next day, Sept 7, that a pair of Black-throated Blue Warblers were hanging around Celery Bog at the swamp area dominated by the buttonwood in the woodlot immediately west of the Lilly



Black-throated
Blue Warbler

Nature Center at the Bog. Alex Lowe-Massi found the handsome birds early in the morning at the wood edge behind the nature center. Later in the morning they were spotted foraging no more than 3 feet off the ground in the more open area just west of the buttonbush swamp area..

● That same morning, at the intersection of County Roads 50 South and 550 East, a Short-billed Dowitcher was discovered;. It was not there the next morning but Fritz Davis who looked for it did find a Western sandpiper there instead. Last month the site produced a Little Blue Heron..

● The people gathered for the Sept 9th Early Bird Walk found fewer migrants than were there the previous few days. The number of Magnolia and Tennessee Warblers were noticeable lower, but a fall-plumaged male Scarlet Tanager was there to enjoy as were Nashville Warblers, and a female American Redstart

among other birds. Eight warbler species (plus some "baypolls") were found.

● A White Pelican was subsequently seen for a number of days at Celery Bog. The bird was banded. Efforts were made to decode the band via photos. Chuck Tuttle got part of the number which was enough to reveal the bird was banded at the Great Sale Lake in Utah.

● The first week in October Lucas Wilson had a Trumpeter Swan at Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat Area in Benton County.. Lucas was doing the weekly waterfowl survey for the IDNR. Barny Dunning found the same swan at Pine Creek when he did the next survey. It allowed him to get so close he could take photos with his phone.

● Winter migrants starting arriving locally in mid October. On the 19th Chuck Tuttle wrote: "Juncos in the yard today".

● On October 23, Barny noted the first Dark-eyed Junco and White-crowned Sparrows in his yard

● Susan Ulrich had a flock of 1200-1500 blackbirds while driving along 1125 E in Warren Co. on Oct. 2. Most of the flock were grackles but some Red-winged Blackbirds were included. Could have been additional species but the constant flying and landing across two fields and a road made it hard to tell.

Her feeders ave a small group of Purple Finch since mid-October and a single Yellow-bellied Sapsucker showed up for a day.

● A Monticello birder had a similar experience. He was in the woods Saturday morning Oct. 2 and wrote, "It was amazing to see the number of birds that came together above me in the tree tops. They gradually worked their way to the ground and looked like a bunch of ants working the woodland floor.

A Local Solution

One challenge of caring for rescued wildlife is figuring out what to feed them. Pangolins are hard to keep alive in captivity because no one's quite figured out their diet. For other animals, decades of research has helped fine-tune food and formulas that come close to replacing what they'd get in the wild.

At the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in northern Kenya, orphaned elephant calves were fed a concoction of human infant formula. They grow up on it and many are later released back into the wild.

But pandemic travel restrictions caused complications. It was hard to get the baby formula needed because Reteti is in a remote area. Also with the drop in tourism income, they needed to save money so imported baby formula was out.

Most of the people living in the community-owned conservancy of Namunyak, where Reteti is located, are herders. The herds included goats. Looking at the caloric content, protein, fat, vitamins and other nutrients, Reteti staff realized a goat milk-based formula just might work for the elephant calves. And it did. The elephant calves happily drink it, and they're growing up big and strong. Plus, pastoralist families in the conservancy now have another source of income—selling fresh goat milk to Reteti. That's been especially valuable as livestock markets closed during the pandemic leaving families with no one to sell to. In fact, because Reteti's need is so great, the supply needs to be increased so the sanctuary is working with the herders to increase milk yields and protect the land from overgrazing.

They moved around me several times with a "whoosh" sound as they moved in numbers from one tree to another. They were very loud. I was able get binoculars out and saw that they were indeed grackles. That was the first time I experienced being in the middle of a group of birds that size. It was amazing."

- First seen by Alex Lowe-Massi, six White-winged Scoters were found at Celery Bog Oct. 30th and later seen and also photographed by several people.



White-winged Scoters

- Also on the 30th, Barny Dunning had no takers for the Purdue Wildlife area bird walk so he went to Celery Bog and the Bicentennial Nature Area. It turns out all the birders were at the

Bog. Seven people with 4 scopes were at the south observation deck looking at Horned Grebes and large numbers of Ring-necked Ducks and Ruddy Ducks, which had increased there since Thursday. Gadwalls were the most common dabbling duck. There were also the first of fall Lesser Scaup and Bufflehead. Barny saw a juvenile Greater White-fronted Goose which was the first for him this Fall. At the Bicentennial N.A. there were 7 Bonaparte's Gulls.

- Amanda Beheler has been seeing one to two Black Vultures in Fountain County near the bridges over the Wabash connecting with Warren Co. In mid-November she saw a pair in Warren County.

- Newcomers to the area, Greg & Susan Fraley, wrote Nov. 15 that for the last two days they had a small flock of White-throated Sparrows around their home/feeder, mixed in with the

titmice and Dark-eyed Juncos. The day earlier an Eastern Towhee was present.

The past two years since moving in, they had nesting Pileated Woodpeckers and they enjoyed watching them teach their fledglings how to feed at the suet-. Their comment, "the kids really aren't too bright".

- The day before Thanksgiving Rick and Debbie Read had a Purple Finch at their feeders in Monticello. So far it has been a slow finch invasion year locally.

- On Thanksgiving Day, a female Black Scoter was found by Barny Dunning in the main basin of Celery Bog. The bird was associating loosely with a group of Ring-necked Ducks. Present in the same general area were two female Hooded Mergansers and a male Canvasback. Ruby, the reddish Eastern Screech-Owl, was hanging out in the usual hole.

Michael Levine found the scoter about three hours later hanging with the Canvasback and a Redhead, but Ruby was absent from her hole..

Sapsucker Woods Grows

In February 2021, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology added 88 acres to its Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary in Ithaca, N.Y. The new acquisition increases the size of Sapsucker Woods by nearly 40% and adds shrubland habitat to the woods and wetlands found on the rest of the sanctuary.

"We all owe great thanks to Cornell Lab's longtime friend and board member Louisa Duemling, who made an exceptionally generous and timely gift commitment that allowed this purchase to move forward," says John Fitzpatrick, former director of the Cornell Lab, who oversaw the acquisition.

November 30 is Remembrance Day for Lost Species, and we have some heartbreaking extinctions, such as the Ivory-billed Woodpecker to commemorate this year. Let's honor the species we've lost, grieve, and resolve to reduce/end human-caused extinctions.

Monuments Protected Again

President Biden has fully restored protections for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument.

Home to multi-colored cliffs and arches, slot canyons, and fossils that formed much of our scientific knowledge of ancient creatures -- even dinosaurs —two National Monuments have been restored.

The restoration of protections for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument signals a return to a long legacy of conservation. This remote national monument was the last place in the contiguous United States to be mapped. Its creation in 1996 opened a new era of stewardship under the Antiquities Act.

When Bears Ears was dubbed a national monument in 2016 by then President Obama, it was thanks to years of conservation and organizing efforts, proving America's dedication to preserving wondrous places.

In 2017, the Trump administration reduced these monuments by as much as 85%. Since then, environmental groups have fought to regain protection and over 400,000 messages were sent to decision-makers advocating for protecting these special places.

Those messages and support finally paid off, and the fossils, petroglyphs and geographical wonders of these monuments are finally protected once more.

In addition, President Biden expanded protections for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, the first marine national national monument in the



Atlantic Ocean, and home to numerous endangered whales, sea turtles and corals. Picture of a Green Sea Turtle is shown above.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Gets Boost

BirdLife International, perhaps the largest international Partnership for nature conservation in the world, recently announced a \$3-billion wetland conservation project in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership to improve the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

EAAF is one of the world's great flyways. At its northernmost it stretches eastwards from Taimyr Peninsula in Russia to Alaska. Its southern end encompasses Australia and New Zealand. Between these extremes the Flyway covers much of eastern Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, South-East Asia and the western Pacific. The EAAF is home to over 50 million migratory water birds from 250+ different populations, including 32 globally threatened species and 19 near threatened species. It is especially important for the millions of migratory waders that breed in northern Asia and Alaska and spend the non-breeding season in South-East Asia and Australasia. Habitat loss and degradation, along with illegal hunting are the flyway's biggest threats. However the rapid increase of the birding community in Asia, especially in China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Philippines, due to a growing middle class, is a positive factor that may lead to more political actions for flyway protection.

The project will not only benefit the millions of birds that travel along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, but will also support millions of people that depend on the biodiversity and climate resilience that these precious wetlands provide. It serves as an example of the kind of concrete, stepped up, innovative system-wide action needed in the coming decade.



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Nests for Common Terns

Common Terns returning to Buffalo Harbor, NY, this May found a new nesting island made just for them. It, which is a part of a larger suite of bird and fish habitat restoration projects in the harbor and in the nearby Niagara River, to provide vital nesting habitat for the terns.

Nesting habitat has been hard to come by for the state-threatened species, and the birds made do with anything suitable, including breakwaters in the harbor. But time and neglect made those choices unstable. Despite work done to shore up the breakwaters in 2019 one of the main breakwater nesting sites collapsed entirely after an eight-foot seiche (a wind-driven wall of water) and 70-mph winds inundated it. Although other breakwaters still supported nesting, habitat experts with the New York State Department of Environmental Concerns (NYSDEC) recognized the vulnerability of the sites.

Construction of the new tern island started in Spring 2020 after the Buffalo Audubon past and current executive directors Loren Smith and Edward Sirianno secured funding for the project, then worked with NYSDEC to design it. Buffalo Audubon also managed the construction and execution of the project while consulting with the NYSDEC as well as a local contractor, LDC Construction.

The birds will now find their nesting site on a 14,400 square foot island. The island has a rock berm at the base and consists of a sand/pea gravel mixture for the terrain, with vegetation on the island. Large rocks and driftwood have also been placed on the gravel for separation and structure among the nesting terns. There are also 'chick protection structures' on the island which are specially designed wooden "tents," and will be installed each year by the DEC (photo at right).

