

Sycamore Warbler

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Spring 2023



Osprey Chuck Tuttle

Global Migratory Bird Day May 13

The second Saturday in May is usually the best Saturday to find a wide variety of birds in Indiana. It combines year round species, summer nesting visitors, migrants passing through, and some lingering winter odds and ends. It's an exciting time to look for birds. Each year all over the world, people get out and compile their sighting via ebird. This usually results in a list covering a large % of the world's total species.

Locally, SAS has traditionally sponsored two or three specific county counts: one for Tippecanoe County compiled by Barny Dunning; one in Warren County compiled by Susan Ulrich (people needed. If you do any birding in one of those two counties May 13 please contact the compiler and send them, and ebird (if you do ebird tell the compiler and they will do it for you), your bird information. See p. 11 for compiler's contact info.

IPL interviews DNR Director Dan Bortner

On February 13th, the Indiana Parks Alliance (IPL) held a zoom meeting with Dan Bortner, head of the IDNR. It was a wide ranging discussion that covered increased state funding for state properties to help catch up with repairs, plus plans for new inns at Potato Creek and, eventually, our local Prophetstown State Park.

Thanks to the big boost in the usage of natural areas since the pandemic, the DNR and the state are very interested in increasing the protection of natural lands and protecting it for future generations. The DNR has also received more funding for hiring and increased salaries. Low salaries have been a problem for years. Someone is hired, stays for awhile, get trained, and then leaves and goes into the private sector. This is especially true for the regulatory staff.



December Program Draws a Crowd

SAS's December meeting with Kim Hoover of *Hoots 2 Howls* brought out a big crowd of people. Kim didn't disappoint them. Her live owls and raptors were fun to watch as she shared her knowledge of each species and the personal



quirks about each of the birds she brought and their history.

Afterwards Kim sent a letter thanking SAS for inviting her and thanking the audience for their incredible generosity in support for her rehabilitation center. The funds donated will be used to buy food and medical supplies for the birds of prey she maintains and cares for at the center.

Above Kim holds a Barn Owl & below a Barred Owl. Photos by Rick Read.

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CHAPTER NEWS

Programs Remain Hybrid

Join us in person or zoom. Contact Barny Dunning if you would like a Zoom invitation.

Potential Board Members

After several years of no new board members, we now have two new board members plus several people interested in joining. Contact Barny Dunning (see p 11) if you are interested.

Invasive Work Resumes

The **RIP Squad (Remove Invasive Plants)** took out several thousand honeysuckle, burning bush, and other woody invasive plants at Ross Hills and Prophets Rock Park this past fall, improving habitat for birds and wildlife as well as native plants.

Now is the season for Garlic Mustard. RIP will be working at Celery Bog, Cumberland Woods, Happy Hollow Park, Ross Hills and Prophets Rock Park Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-5 pm starting April 11. Contact Patty Jones at 765-463-3050 for exactly where the group will be working when.. You can also go our on your own if you can identify the plant.



More people are needed. Garlic Mustard is easy to pull and requires no herbicide but there are a multiple of acres to cover and more eyes and hands are warmly welcomed.

Crowd for GBBC

Chuck reports that 130 people came to Celery Bog Feb 18th during the Great Backyard Bird count.

Garden Expo A Big "YES"

SAS and the local Indiana Native Plant Society will again be at Garden Expo, selling donated plants and other items. The sale is in the Hog Barn at the Tippecanoe Co. Fairgrounds off Teal Road between 9th and 18th streets on Sat. April 22. (Earth Day!).

As usual, we are asking our members for help, both for donations and to volunteer to help at the booth. People are needed Friday from 3-5 for set up, and on Saturday from 9-3 to help at the booth plus from 3-4 for clean up. Donations can be left Friday from 3-5 pm or Saturday, between 8-9 am. They can also be left earlier at Karen Griggs' house at 100 Thornbush Drive in W. L (off Happy Hollow Road. Those plants need to be moved to the booth on Friday. To volunteer, or more info, call or email Susan Ulrich. See p. 11.

2022 was a huge success, people mobbed the booths and plants disappeared even before we managed sorting them all.

Outdoor Explore: June 10

A volunteer or two is needed to help at Outdoor Explore's birdwatching tent June 10. This event people in the community the ability to explore different outdoor activities

they might enjoy. Various groups are divided between Bicentennial Park (where SAS will be) and the Tippecanoe Amphitheatre. SAS is a sponsor for this event.

Great Lakes Audubon Holds First Statehouse Advocacy

This year, for the first time, the Audubon Regional Office covering Indiana and the Great Lakes states held a Advocacy Day at the Indiana Statehouse. Representatives from the various state chapters along with the independent Indiana Audubon Society attended, They heard from several legislators and each met with their own Senators and Representatives to share some of Audubon's six Policy Priorities.

Staff from the Great Lakes and National offices were present to help guide the process and attend the meetings with reps and senators.

Sycamore Audubon Society was represented by Susan Ulrich.

Happenings In Monticello

Sat. April 22 Earth Day

8-10 a.m. Join a bird walk with Rick Read in City Park for about an hour, then Altheer Nature Park for about an hour. Meet at Shady Rest pavilion, City Park.

9-930 p.m. Owling with Rick Read. Meet at Shady Rest pavilion, City Park

Fri & Sat April 28-9 Arbor Day

5-7 p.m. Friday: Ribbon cutting for the Bluestem Nature Center, located next to Altherr Nature Park. Tour both outside and inside. Snakes available.

8-9 am, Saturday: A bird walk with Rick Read. Meet at Altheer Nature Park parking lot.

10-12 Grand Opening activities at the Bluestem Nature Center. Tours, speakers, plantings.

Birding on the *FLY List*...

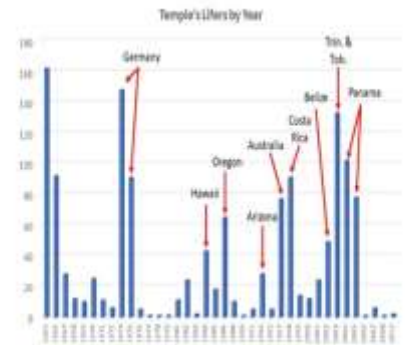
Don't want to miss an unusual bird sighting nearby or around the state? Barny sends people on the list an email so anyone that is interested can pursue the bird . Contact him to be on the list. See p. 11.

Losses: Temple Pearson, long time SAS member & Russ Allison



Dan Miller with Temple & Joe Pearson

Temple Pearson, one of SAS’s founding members died in December. An enthusiastic birder and active in numerous local activities, Temple was a member of the Purdue Women’s Club bird study group which morphed into the Sycamore Audubon Society some 48 years ago. Temple always brightened any room she was in. Her son, Tate, made the graph at the right showing her life birds by year from 1965 to 2012. Spikes are from trips. The last two from trips to Panama.



Russell E. Allison, 84, died January 14. Russ had a passion for photography & birds. He was regularly seen at Celery Bog and Prophetstown Park and reported numerous sightings. His wife, Barbara, who predeceased him, often brought treats to SAS’s meetings.

Fifth Grade Camp

Volunteers are needed to help with the WL School 5th Grade Camp on Tuesday and Thursday at Camp Tecumseh in early May. It is easy—an SAS member and teacher goes with each group to find, identify and talk about the birds seen and heard. Check with Chuck Tuttle for date, time details & carpooling info from West Lafayette.

What Some of our Common Hawks Ate in 1979

Red-shouldered Hawk

- 32% insects
- 28% rats & mice
- 25% Frogs & Snakes
- 5.3% aquatic animals
- 6.5% small birds
- 1.4% poultry
- 0.9% gamebirds
- 0.9% rabbits

Red-tailed Hawk

- 55.0% rats & mice
- 10.5% insects
- 9.3% rabbits & squirrels
- 9.2% small birds
- 6.3% poultry
- 6.1% snakes & frogs
- 2.1% game birds
- 1.5% aquatic animals

Cooper’s Hawk

- 55% small Birds
- 17% rats & mice
- 12% game birds
- 10% poultry
- 3.3% insects
- 1.7% rabbits
- 1.0% frogs, etc.

Info from *The Beginning Naturalist* by Gale Lawrence 1979

Indiana Dunes Birding Festival Registration Open

Registration opened March 1 for this years May 11 to 14 festival. Field trips and talks fill up quickly so don't wait to register & sign up.

Birding in the Indiana Dunes is the best the state has to offer.

Registration and Information on the 2023 Indiana Dunes Birding Festival is at

www.indunesbirdingfestival.com

“ If you plant a single acorn, it will support tens of thousands of individuals of thousands of species in the tree’s lifetime” — Doug Tallamy

Greater Lafayette Interested in Climate Change

Greater Lafayette residents searched for “climate change” online more than any other region in the country in 2022, according to Google. The result was as a surprise for local officials & activists.

According to a Google spokesperson, the Greater Lafayette area had the highest percentage of searches for **climate change** compared with anywhere else in the U.S. That doesn’t mean the region had the highest volume of searches for the term — but the highest number of searches **for** climate change relative to overall searches in the area.

West Lafayette high school student Rahul Durai works with the group Confront the Climate Crisis, which advocates at the statehouse for climate legislation. He said the search results should be a point of pride for the community.

Fish & Wildlife Study Group

The 2022 legislature directed the DNR Fish and Wildlife Division to meet with Hook & Bullet and Conservation groups and report back on recommendations for funding. The resulting study group endorsed dedicating Indiana state sales tax on outdoor equipment to the DNR land holding divisions. This was an idea most lately proposed by INCA in 2019, and introduced in that legislative session as the **Indiana Outdoor Stewardship Act**.

It has been estimated that dedicating these revenues for conservation would generate about \$60 million per year, in addition to the funds normally budgeted from the general fund. INCA is contacting legislators to find sponsors to reintroduce this proposal in the upcoming session. **Ask your legislators to be sponsors.**

CONSERVATION NEWS

Indiana Environmental Legislative Priorities

Renewable energy, climate, efforts to improve statewide water quality, are top issues for Indiana environmental advocates in the 2023 legislative session.

From *Indiana Capital Chronicle*

A Win for the Tongass

The Biden administration has finalized the reinstatement of Roadless Rule protections across the Tongass National Forest. This is a major victory that safeguards nine million acres of pristine old-growth forests from destructive logging and roads. These forests are critical carbon sinks and form the backbone of Southeast Alaska's economy—while supporting an incredible array of biodiversity.

The Tongass is the ancestral homeland of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples. Thank you, to the many leaders of the Southeast Alaska's Tribes and communities who spoke up, engaged and led the way in defending this place that they have long protected.

Conflict Palm Oil Continues

The Rainforest Action League reports that despite decades of promises to tackle their part in driving deforestation, Procter & Gamble continues its sourcing of conflict Palm Oil in some of the world's last remaining, and intact rainforests, such as Indonesia's Leuser ecosystem.

P&G sources their oil from producers involved in Indigenous land theft, labor violations, and who endanger 1,000's of species in Indonesia. One of the worst of the producers is Royal Golden Eagle, a company responsible for land grabbing in Indigenous territory,

First Ever Climate Disinformation Suit

The city and county of Honolulu filed a lawsuit against the major oil and gas companies in 2020, seeking damages for the disinformation campaign they waged for decades misrepresenting the scale and severity of climate change impacts from their products.

There have been dozens of similar cases across the country and the fossil fuel industry has fought hard to prevent them from ever going to trial. But this February, a judge in Hawai'i ruled the Honolulu lawsuit will move forward in state court. This will be the first climate disinformation case that will move into the legal discovery phase in which the companies charged can be forced to disclose internal company documents and correspondence. What's revealed in discovery could uncover important truths. -From the *Union of Concerned Scientists*.

destruction of critically endangered Orangutan habitat, violence and child labor abuse in Indonesia.

Carbon Capture a Scam ?

It should be a red flag that the oil and gas industry is pushing for the expansion of carbon capture and storage. In reality, this greenwashing scam keeps us reliant on fossil fuels, poses serious health risks for communities, and increases pollution – all subsidized by taxpayer dollars that should be invested in proven renewable energy solutions, like wind and solar power.

Better Air for New Mexico

Each year in New Mexico -the 2nd largest oil producing state-the oil and gas industries emit over 1.1 million tons of methane, plus 300,000 tons of volatile organic compounds.

Now, new rules under Governor Michelle Grisham's administration will slash this pollution and require frequent inspections of compressor stations and wells, especially those near homes and

The EPA has returned to the 2015 Water protection standards that were cut by President Trump



No Mining In Boundary Waters for 20 years

Jan. 26th the U.S. Department of the Interior set protections for the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park from sulfide-ore copper mining. The decision bans toxic mining on federal land in the headwaters of the Wilderness and Voyageurs for 20 years.

This is the most significant Boundary Waters protection action since 1978. You can take action by sending a thank you card to U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland.

Today's science-based decision is a massive help to protect the Boundary Waters: you don't allow America's most toxic industry next to the United States's most popular wilderness.

The U.S. Forest Service's comprehensive scientific review found that sulfide-ore copper mining would pollute the Boundary Waters and Voyageurs in ways that could not be fixed or mitigated.

Fall Sycamore Audubon Calendar 2022

Meeting programs are currently hybrid: in person or by zoom. Field Trips are outdoors and obviously in person. Bring a mask if you desire, and of course binoculars if you have them. Extra pairs available if not.

Programs Remain Hybrid: To join us by zoom. Contact Barny Dunning in order to get the Zoom invitation

- March 9
Thursday **Hybrid Program: Celery Bog Nature Area History & Educational Nature Exhibits**, Dan Dunten, Director, Celery Bog Nature Park, WL Park Dept. Dan will discuss how the area has changed over the past 16,000 years, how the Nature Area received its name, new additions to the property & possible future additions. He will also showcase other new additions to the WL Park system, including Cason Family Park. 7:15 PM Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Park. Dinner with Dan at 6 p.m. at McAllister's in WL (old site of MCL Cafeteria).
- March 18
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook.** Prophetstown State Park 8-10 AM at the end of the park road to see what birds may be around and share them with park visitors passing through.
- March 23
Thursday **"Official" start of the Earlybird Walks at Celery Bog** each morning through May at 8 a.m. Meet at the gravel parking lot for a one hour walk to see what birds are new or still around.
- April 13
Thurs **Hybrid Program To be announced** 7:15 PM Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Park. Dinner with speaker at 6 p.m. at McAllister's in WL (old site of MCL Cafeteria).
- April 15
Saturday **Spring Migrants Bird walk.** Celery Bog Nature Center at 7:30 a.m. Spring-like weather means birds are coming back quickly. Join us to see what new and old arrivals are around.
- April 22
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook.** Prophetstown State Park 6:30-8:30 PM at the end of the park road to see what birds may be around and talk to park visitors passing through.
- April 29
Saturday **Warm up for Global Big Day.** Meet at Martell Forest by the Wright Center at 7 am. This is a chance to bone up on, or learn, visual and song identification of forest birds in the field.
- May 6
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook.** Prophetstown State Park 7 to 9 AM at the end of the park road to see what birds may be around and talk to park visitors passing through. Another chance to test your skills at bird identification prior to the global Bird Day.
- May 11
Thursday **Hybrid Program To be announced.** 7:15 PM Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Park. Dinner with speaker at 6 p.m. at McAllister's in WL (old site of MCL Cafeteria).
- May 13
Saturday **Global Migratory Big Day.** See p. 1. Bird in your favorite locations anywhere within Tippecanoe and Warren Counties (or other local county) Enter your data into eBird and Barny will compile a full list for the county. If you don't do eBird, send your data to Barny for directly. Send Warren County lists to Susan Ulrich & ebird if you do ebird. Tippecanoe may restart holding compilation parties if health conditions permit. Check with Barny closer to the date. Possible territories/counties to cover, etc., can be discussed at the May 11th meeting.
- June 3
Saturday **Prophetstown State Park Trip.** Focus is on breeding grassland birds & other park specials such as Blue Grosbeak, Henslow's Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, and Bell's Vireo. Meet at the last parking lot at the end of the paved road in the park at 7 am.
- June 24
Saturday **Audubon at the Overlook.** Prophetstown State Park 7 to 9 PM at the end of the park road to see what birds may be around and talk to park visitors passing through. Another chance to test your skills at bird identification prior to the global Bird Day.

Thank you, Connie Brown for the wonderful treats at the February meeting, and Marilyn Anderson for the ones in January

Surprising Info About Bat Songs

Scientists recently revealed that bats are one of three rare groups of living beings who make sounds to each other with the throat's ventricular folds instead of vocal cords.

The other two groups of beings? Tuvan throat singers and death-metal vocalists.

Using ultra-high-speed video, a Danish biologist discovered that bats use their ventricular folds to create calls in lower frequencies — just as death metal singers do when grunting out their most guttural lyrics, observes National Public Radio.

Since bats can also make extremely high-pitched calls, they have a tremendous vocal range unparalleled in mammalian sound production. So actually, bats are more like grindcore vocalists, who use very-low *and* very high-pitched frequencies.



Audubon Action For You To Take

National Audubon is asking its members to urge the Dept. of the Interior to reject a misguided and harmful Willow oil development project at an irreplaceable, fragile area.

Teshekpuk Lake wetlands complex—one of the most important wildlife and birding areas in the Arctic—is threatened by a Conoco Phillips oil development—the Willow Master Development Plan.

Significant portions of the Willow project would be located within the irreplaceable Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, which has been protected for decades due to its significance for nesting Yellow-billed Loons, molting geese, polar bears, and caribou.

More Plastic: coming to an Ocean Near You

“There are plenty of fish in the sea ” Everyone’s heard this phrase thrown out around Valentine’s Day, but Greenpeace is afraid the day could come when this is no longer the case.

The health of our oceans is tied inextricably to the health of all life on Earth — but thanks to corporate profiteers—our oceans dying. Driven by unlimited earnings and enabled by apathetic governments around the world, the corporations bearing responsibility — such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé — continue to put profits over people and the planet.

By 2040, yearly plastic production and consumption is predicted to triple — with devastating impacts on our oceans, warns Greenpeace warns.



Historic nesting range of Marbled Murrelets

Luring Marbled Murrelets to Nest

Many people have heard of Stephen Kress and his successful use of audio playback and puffin decoys to lure Atlantic Puffins to return to nesting at Easter Egg Rock,

This technique, known as ***Social Attraction***, has since been used 800 times for colonial seabirds. It has been estimated that 1/3 of all seabird species have benefited. Social Attraction is now being tried to lure endangered Marbled Murrelets into remaining areas of old growth forests along the Pacific coast where they once nested.



Marbled Murrelets normally lay only 1 egg a year. One of the parents incubates it for 24 hours before it is relieved by the other parent for the next 24 hours. Nest success is low with 70% of nests failing. Nine out of 10 failures are the result of predation—often in spite of the incubating bird putting up a spirited defense. The increase of new birds isn’t enough to offset the loss of the older birds. It is hoped expanding into nesting areas not currently being used, will help increase nesting success. From ***LivingBird***

Ozone Layer Improving

In a report released in early 2023, scientists keeping track of the ozone layer noted that the Earth's atmosphere is recovering. The ozone layer will be restored to its 1980 condition—before the ozone hole emerged—by 2040. More persistent ozone holes over the Arctic and Antarctica should recover by 2045 and 2066, respectively.

This progress is thanks to the ***Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer***, a landmark agreement signed by 197 UN member countries in 1987 to phase out ozone-depleting substances. Without the pact, the EPA estimates the U.S. would have seen an additional 280 million cases of skin cancer, 1.5 million skin cancer deaths, and 45 million cataracts—and the world would be at least 25 percent hotter.

Oldest Known Living Bird

The planet's oldest known wild bird has returned to her tiny home island in the Pacific Ocean: Midway Atoll. Her name is Wisdom, and she's a Laysan albatross — or mōlī in Hawaiian — and she **is believed to have turned 71 this year**, though she may be even older. Biologists identified Wisdom in 1956 after she'd laid an egg, and they've been tracking her since.



They think she's at least 71 years of age because large seabirds aren't known to have chicks before the age of 5. While she has had several mates, she spent the past 18 years with one appropriately named Akeakamai (Hawaiian for "lover of wisdom"). The pair produced a chick together in 2021.

Because mōlī like Wisdom use their massive six foot wingspan to fly thousands of miles every year, scientists estimate this bird has flown a distance equivalent to seven trips to the moon and back.

Great Lakes Day 2023

Save the Dunes has once again been selected to serve as the Indiana State Lead for Great Lakes Day.

Great Lakes Day involves more than 100 advocates from the eight Great Lakes states, all lobbying Congressional Leadership on policy priorities established by the ***Healing Our Waters Coalition***.

This March, the group will travel to Washington D.C. to meet with Indiana Legislators on key budget requests and legislative priorities that impact the health of the Great Lakes such as full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program, and full funding and equitable implementation for key water infrastructure programs.

Predation Affects Vegetation

Ecologists Jack Goheen at the University of Wyoming and Adam Ford at the University of British Columbia plus 7 colleagues, examined the relationship between plants, herbivores and carnivores in a Kenyan savanna food web. Global positioning devices placed on 20 impalas, 4 leopards and 5 African wild dogs allowed them to map habitat preferences against the locations of the animals, and more specifically impala kills.

Satellite imaging was used to survey overall tree cover and when impalas frequently grassy glades with fewer trees, versus heavily wooded thickets.

To measure plant preferences and defenses, they looked at two species of Acacia, one long-thorned and tannin poor, and the other short-thorned and tannin-rich. In controlled settings they offered free ranging impalas both species with and without thorns. The impalas preferred the less thorny branches regardless of species and tannin content.

The researches then looked at the abundance of acacia species in relation to the areas preferred by the gazelles. It turns out that in the thicker-wooded areas preferred by the predators since they were better for ambushing, the shorter thorned species thrived, while the more open savanna areas were dominated by the long-thorned species. The result: predators indirectly created a safe haven for the shorter thorned species in the savanna landscape. That protection could change should the large carnivores be eliminated from the system.

Nature Notes & News

● Dec 2, Gary Overdorf wrote Rick Read about Short-eared Owls he saw the night before near the Tippecanoe-White County line. He mentioned they had been there for many years and seemed to prefer the pasture on the north side of 1300, often hunting along the ditches by the side of the road. The best time to see them was just at sunset.

● “Surprise feeder bird for the morning - a Wild Turkey! We used to have them hanging around the house years ago, but those were domesticated birds (at least semi)”— Barny Dunning, Dec 20.

● Dec 22 Amanda Beheler and her son, Liam got to see a snowy owl about 1 mile North of Pence (1000 W & approx 3850 N). Ron Halston called them after seeing the owl at 8:30 am. It took them awhile to find it but after an hour they saw the bird perched on a pole about one mile north of Pence. The bird flew east into a corn stubble field for at least another hour. The land owner mentioned to them this was the third Snowy Owl seen on their property since they moved there.

● January 20 NICHES had a special members' trip to a property on which they hold a conservation easement and do invasive work. The group was overwhelmed by a congregation of 600-700 Greater White-fronted Geese which took off in mass, circled and eventually landed again. There were 50-75



Canada Geese, 40-50 Mallards, and a dozen or so Pintails.

On her way home from the property Susan Ulrich saw a kettle

of 20 Black Vultures along River Road in Warren County, a short distance east of Cicott Park. Up to 5 adult Red-headed Woodpeckers and one immature are coming to her feeders.

● The Dec. 2 Short-eared Owls mentioned earlier remained along the White County -Tippecanoe County line, in the fields between C.R.100 East and 300 East. On Jan 21 Barny Dunning had four owls perched on the fence right next to the county road or wheeling around in the fields, hunting, from about 5 pm to 5:30 pm. Some perched on the fence allowed him to get quite close via the car. There were also at least two Northern Harriers flying over the same fields.

● “Timing is everything” according to Barny Dunning. On his Jan 23 trip to Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat Area in Benton County to do his weekly waterfowl survey for the DNR, he didn't have much to report except a couple of Canada Geese and a few sparrow flocks. But as he returned to his car, multiple V's of Greater White-fronted Geese passed overhead, calling. Total of 314 birds.

● On the 24th he wrote: “This morning long lines of geese were all headed south – probably in anticipation of the weather that is supposedly on our doorstep, The V's were visible from County Road 750 North down to Kalberer Road. and seemed to be Canadas.”

● Roxie Easter visited NICHES Mulvey Pond on Jan. 24th and had over 1,000 White-fronted Geese sitting on the water.

● Jan 30, six American White Pelicans were spotted at Portland Arch NP by Jarod Hitchings.

● The Jan 28 “Risk a Major Snowstorm” field trip went off without a hitch after years of living up to its name. An enthusiastic group got to

see a number of nice birds.

● Feb.18 Six people participated in the Audubon At the Overlook event despite temperatures in the 20s and a cold wind blowing across the observation deck. An “improvement” in the deck area was the removal of most of the vegetation on the slope opposite the deck. Most was non-native, thus the removal, but now the wind really cuts through. Around 25 species of birds were noted which including a close fly-over by a pair of Sandhill Cranes, a Northern Harrier, two different Bald Eagles, and either 14 Mallards or the same 2-4 going around and around.

Eastern Bluebirds were calling and the first Common Grackles of the year for most of the participants flew past. But the very best observation didn't have feathers: it



was a Bobcat in the middle of the main drive, seen by two of the participants as they headed to join the group. Yep, “Timing is everything”. Bobcat photo from National Wildlife Fed.

● Feb 27 Ed Hopkins had a storm of gulls along Stair Road, mostly Ring-bills but with a few Lesser Black-Backed and Herring Gulls mixed in.

Celery Bog Sightings —

The Bog produced a number of interesting sightings this winter. They included a Pine Siskin Jan 15 by Rachel Munds; a Ross's Goose by Barny Dunning on Jan 28; a Peregrine Falcon by Brandon Nelson plus a Common Goldeneye by Peter Dy-Liacco on Feb. 6. Other sightings were a Snow Goose Feb 9 seen by Vivak Govind Kumar, and Curtis Black's sighting of an American Pipit on Feb 12. Two Cackling Geese were noted by Judith Birkle on the

Hanging on by a Thread

How does it feel to look a bird in the eye and know that the entire species would have gone extinct without your help? Thomas Ghestemme knows as he puts some mealworms onto a feeding station, where a young Fatu Hiva Monarch tilts its head inquisitively, looks at him and takes the food. Watching the bird flutter off, Ghestemme's eyes show a mix of emotions: relief, fascination and hope. However, his frown also betrays deep concern.

For Ghestemme and his Polynesian colleagues, contemplating a species' existence when out in the field is a regular occurrence rather than an emotional experience. Not once – but twice – this Critically Endangered flycatcher would have disappeared from the face of the planet were it not for a handful of people working for, and with, SOP Manu (**BirdLife** group in French Polynesia). In 2008, when SOP Manu started work on Fatu Hiva – a very, very, remote French Polynesian island of the Marquesas archipelago in the South Pacific – there were only two fertile pairs left of the entire species. After some successes with their initial work, the population later dropped again in 2015, this time to just three fertile pairs.

Today, the Fatu Hiva Monarch is still one of the rarest of the rare, numbering a mere 18 birds (of which only four are females). The species is on the brink of oblivion again. One of the 18 is the first of the species ever to take supplementary food – a fledgling, born in 2022, it took only 10 days to learn to use the station. Reflecting on that moment, Ghestemme says he cannot be sentimental: "We don't think about the past. You have to be strong. We just give everything we have, all the energy possible. We won't stop until the very last female."

13th A variety of ducks turned up during the next week and a Horned Grebe was seen Feb 22 by Vivak Govind Kumar. 3 Rusty Blackbirds were spotted by Ed Hopkins the next day.

Fritz Davis had a Common Merganser on the 24 followed by sightings of a second influx of ducks and geese over the next few days. Mixed in on the 25th were reports of a single Ring-billed Gull, a dozen Sandhill Cranes, and an American Woodcock.

The first Red-winged Blackbird arrival was noted by Michael Mayer on the 26. He also reported a Great-horned Owl that day. Chuck Tuttle has since reported that the pair of Great-horned Owls is indeed back on their nest near the Buttonbush pond west of Lilly Nature Center.

At Prophetstown State Park -

— many birds were also noted. On Jan 1 Katie Powell had both a Pine Siskin plus a Bobwhite. On the 14 Brandon Nelson had an Eastern Towhee. Jan 29 Jack Chaillet saw a Gray Catbird, (uncommon for the season). On Feb 14 its close cousin, a Northern Mockingbird, was spotted by Kala Simpson. The 25th John Skene had 8 Tundra

Swans and Vivak Gomar Kumar had 12 Red-winged Blackbirds, an Eastern Meadowlark, 5 Bald Eagles, 2 Killdeers and a variety of ducks, while Sam Hartzler had 50 Ringbilled Gulls, 3 Sandhill Cranes, and a Northern Harrier.

Bicentennial Park—

—attracted the birdwatchers and the birds, too. Doug Wade had a pair of Cackling Geese Jan 3, Sam Hartzler had a Herring Gull on the 9th, and four days later, saw a Surf Scoter. On Feb 16 Fritz Davis spotted a Merlin. On the 19th Karl Wood found a Black Duck and Doug Wade a Trumpeter Swan.

Feb 24th produced a Red-breasted Merganser for Mark Arvin, and the 25th a Common Merganser for John Skene. The spring's first Red-winged Blackbirds and Killdeer were both reported in the area by Michael Mayer on Feb 26th.



California Spotted Owls Finally Given Protection

More than two decades after a petition for protection was filed, and three subsequent legal suits, the US Fish & Wildlife Service finally has said that it will protect the California Spotted Owl.

This was the very last subspecies of the Spotted Owl that lacked protection.

These white-spotted owls make their home in old-growth forests. Their classic four-note call was once common in the big trees of Southern California and the Sierra Nevada ranges. But then logging, climate change and other threats such as the spread of the Barred Owl from the east, have sent their numbers plummeting.

"It took way too long for these endearing birds to be proposed for Endangered Species Act protection," said Center of Biology's attorney Justin Augustine. "I urge the Service to move quickly to bring them back from the brink."



Local Whip-poor-wills

The Whip-poor-is one of many birds known as *aerial insectivores*—birds that catch their food on the wing.



Experts fear that the insects this group rely on for food are declining in big part due to ongoing pesticide use. Other threats include habitat loss and degradation and increasingly frequent and severe hurricanes along migration routes.

Whip-poor-wills used to be common in most of the SAS's counties but are now nearly gone. If you still have them in your area please email Susan Ulrich.



Honeybees Lifespan Halved

A Study shows the lifespan of honeybees has dropped by half over the last few decades.

Honeybees kept in laboratories now live a median of 17.7 days. In the 1970s, honeybees in similar settings lived a median of 34.3 days. This study is just the latest sign that bees are in trouble. For years, these important pollinators have been in decline.

This data is disturbing, not just for honeybees, but for the many ecosystems that depend on them. We all know that

Honeybees are critical pollinators. They disperse seeds and help plants reproduce and maintain genetic diversity.

Three of the main reasons behind honeybee deaths are the use and proliferation of toxic pesticides, habitat loss and climate change. To save the bees, we need to take on all of these issues, especially for corporations to stop the production and sale of the worst pesticides, and advocating for legislation expanding critical habitat for pollinators and to help fight climate change.

Playing Bumblebees?

Bumblebees live busy lives. They are important pollinators of flowering plants and vegetables. They help care for their hives' young. And now we know that they also seem to want to have some fun.

New research is the first evidence that bees enjoy playing with toys. In an experiment, bumblebees were offered small wooden balls. Rather than ignoring them, the bees chose to roll them around --not to get a job done, but instead, just for fun.¹

Because bees seem to like to play, it may mean that they experience joy and other emotions. But bumblebees are under threat. Pesticides, development, and climate change are causing massive die-offs.

¹ Erik Stokstad, "[Are these bumblebees playing with toys?](#)" *Science*, October 27, 2022.



The Anhinga

The Anhinga (AKA the American darter) is the only New World member of its family, *Anhingidae*. Three other species exists: the Oriental darter, the African darter and the Australian darter. A legend of a South American winged dragon is believed to be based on the Anhinga. The name itself comes from the Tupi people of Brazil and translates to "small head", "snake bird" or "devil bird".

The oil gland secretion of an Anhinga does not waterproof the feathers as it does for many birds living in and around water. Anhingas also lack an impermeable layer of down insulation next to the skin. As a result the birds lose heat rapidly which is why the species range is limited to warm areas and it is often seen drying its feathers on a sunny perch, as shown above. This not only dries out the feathers but the dark feathers aid with heat absorption. The nostrils of adults are shut off externally meaning the species, like cormorants, have to breathe through their mouths.

(Anhinga and Whip-poor-will pictures courtesy of google)



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Saving Snags: Rethinking Post-Fire Woodland Management

"While some people think a wildfire is a disaster for a forest", says Dominick DellaSala, chief scientist at **Wild Heritage**, a nonprofit that focuses on forest protection and restoration. "the real disaster is what can happen if the area is heavily logged **after** such an event. The process can impede the forest's recovery by compacting soils and killing the associated microbial communities that are important for a healthy, biodiverse ecosystem."

"A tree really has a second life after it's been killed, particularly with fire-killed trees, which decay far slower than if a tree succumbs to disease or insects," says Timothy Ingalsbee, wildfire ecologist and executive director of the nonprofit **Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology**. "I've called them 'living dead trees'. These dead snags are particularly important for birds. One fourth of western forest birds rely on dead trees at some point in their lives. A burned forest is very sensitive to disturbances. Bare exposed soil is very erosive and when you're slamming large logs and dragging them on steep slopes, then you lose forest soil and that is more or less a permanent loss in a human lifetime. It takes a long time to develop a fertile soil bed."

Logging trucks and equipment can also kill or disturb native seed banks that would naturally regenerate after fire and lead to new growth. The associated roadbuilding can cause water-quality problems and degrade habitat. And it's not just the initial clearcutting that's problematic. It's also what follows, which is usually intensive management with tree planting and herbicides.

"Instead of having this natural diverse mosaic of vegetation patterning that comes in after a fire with patches of hardwoods and patches of conifers and open areas where flowering species can thrive," says Luke Ruediger, conservation director of the **Klamath Forest Alliance**. "The agencies tend to come in and plant these even-aged, evenly spaced and relatively densely packed plantation stands that then can increase fire risks and are more biologically sterile than the naturally regenerating habitats that surround them."

