

Sycamore Warbler

Volume 49 Issue 1

Spring 2024



R.M.

Forget Shakespeare: Brush up on your Bird ID: the Spring Global Bird Count is May 11

Warblers are heading north and so are hundreds of other species as winter morphs into spring. Last years SAS's two counts recorded 164 different species and 7,967 individual birds which was up from the 5,014 individuals of 151 species located in 2022. Weather, especially winds and its direction, along with rain. make a big difference in the species and numbers found.



Blue-winged Warbler
Matt Williams



Spotted Sandpiper
Chuck Tuttle

SAS's holds counts in both Tippecanoe and Warren Counties. However you are free to count anywhere you wish and report what you find on ebird. Any bird seen that day is countable. People birding Tippecanoe County can send their lists to Barny Dunning, the Count compiler, who will forward the results to ebird or tell you how to do it, or they can sent it to him as well as directly to ebird.

People who would like to help with bird sightings in Warren County should call or email Susan Ulrich. The county has only a few participants and so lots of area that gets no coverage. She will be happy to suggest areas and locations. If you are helping **NICHES** Land Trust by reporting birds on their properties, there are many that get no coverage. Barny and Susan's contact info is on the back page.

This is a **GLOBAL** count. Birds are reported from all around the globe. Well over half of all the known world species were tallied last year.

Indiana's Birding Community Suffers Two Losses

The community lost Delano Zeus Arvin December 16, 2-23. He was an amazing naturalist, maybe the best all-round non-professional in Indiana, with an encyclopedic knowledge of birds, plants, mammals, herps and reptiles, etc. He was a founding member of Sycamore Audubon and served in a number of board positions in the group's earlier years and also served on the Indiana Audubon Society board, including a vice-president. He was always happy to share his knowledge and expand other people's birding skills and enjoyment of nature.

For many years he and his wife, Marge, hosted a May event at their beautiful property near Buck Creek starting with an early bird hike followed by a wildflower hike. This was one of the most popular events of the year. He also regularly bought photos to Bring Your Own September meetings, as well as gave many programs to SAS based on trips he and his family took around the state, the US, and the 6 continents visited around the world. Many of us recall his habit of including an appropriate poetry selection he'd memorized for each program.



He once mentioned to Susan & Ted Ulrich how when he was a boy he would climb the family's cherry tree to see the birds that came in, then go inside and identify them using the paintings in J. J Audubon's **Birds of America**.

Many people who knew him believed he became a Radiologist as it gave him the freedom to look for birds while providing for his wife and 6 children. The latter were encouraged to check the Arvin property for (continued on pl. 3)

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Chapter News

Recent Board Actions

The Board recently voted on a number of projects and grant requests lately. Here are some of their actions:

- Voted to give \$500 to the West Lafayette Park Department for bird seed for the Lilly Nature Center Feeders.
- Donated \$500 to the Indiana Audubon Society to sponsor their annual **Indiana Dunes Birding Festival** held in May in NW Indiana. For info go to:
www.indunesbirdingfestival.com.
- Donated \$250 to Tippecanoe Co. Parks Department to sponsor their **Outdoor Explore** event.
- Gave \$1,000 for a graduate student's research studying the migration pathways of Eastern Towhees (20 biotags @ \$50 each)
- Finally the board voted \$200 to the Purdue University Student Wildlife Society to help them with expenses for the Midwest Forestry Symposium they host this year.

In other business, the board decided to use donations received in memory of Del (Delano) Arvin, a founding member and founding board member of SAS, to fund several projects the board has been discussing. One is building a Chimney Swift tower for migrating swifts to use in the fall as the older chimneys they use are declining in number. After discussing this with the WL Parks Department, it was agreed to build the tower at Celery

Bog Nature Area. The second project will also be installed at the Celery Bog. It is a Kiosk that will be devoted to birding information such as what species are currently around and upcoming birding events. Both projects will include a plaque noting they are in memory of Del.

Other Board news:

Bea Redfield has resigned from the SAS board for personal reasons. We wish her the best.

Spring Peeking Around the Corner

Spring brings a lot of new birds and plants, along with a lot of Audubon Activities and festivals in addition to the programs and field events. Read about the latter on p 5. The following are some of the Audubon activities that could use your help and ideas.

RIP Needs People

Spring is the time to pull Garlic Mustard before the seeds ripen and fall. The RIP squad (Remove Invasive Plants) works Tues and Thurs afternoons at 3-5 at various parks. GM is easy to identify and remove—no herbicide or equipment needed.

Work on Tuesdays is at Celery Bog, or Cumberland Park, or Happy Hollow Park; Thursdays at Ross Hills Co. Park, or Prophets Rock Co. Park. Email Patty Jones at: removeinvasiveplants.

wcinps@gmail.com for the work schedule. You can also go on your own any time and email Patty Jones where and how long you worked. She sends a report on the amount of donated hours to WL Parks & Tippecanoe Co Parks Departments.

RIP also joined forces with **TICT**, the Tippecanoe Invasive Cooperative Taskforce. January 8 there was a major Honeysuckle work day at McAllister Park in Lafayette. Check to see when and where the next one will be.

Spring is not a time to treat medium to big honeysuckle. But it is a great time to pull small ones up by their roots. If you notice one on your rambles, give it a steady pull and hang it up to dry.



Garlic Mustard Rosette w/ flower stalk starting.

Garden Expo April 27th

NEEDED Both DONATIONS & VOLUNTEERS

Garden Expo is held in the Tippecanoe County Fairground's Swine Barn on Teal Road between 9th & 18th street. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Swine Barn is the building closest to 9th st.

SAS partners with our local Indiana Native Plant Society. This sale and the later **Pop Up Plant Sale**, raise money to help with funding SAS projects such as those listed earlier on this page.

Birding on the *FLY List*...

Don't want to miss an unusual state or local bird sighting? Barny Dunning sends people on the *FLY List* an email so anyone that is interested can pursue the bird. Contact him to get on the list. See Board Listing on back page.

Losses from p 1: bird nests. He paid them various amounts for their discoveries via a scale based on rarity. Highest was \$50 (or so) for a Worm-eating Warbler. Common nests might be a quarter. The family requested that donations made in Del's memory go to the Sycamore Audubon Society &/or NICHES Land Trust.

Clint (Bud) Murray, whose love of birds inspired him to work to protect and improve an 88 acre area known as **The Lye Creek Burn**, died Feb 13. The area is valuable for a wide variety of birds. 243 species have been recorded there, including 23 species of shorebirds. One species the site is well known for is Smith's Longspur. Clint spent years to ensure the Burn would be protected and helped with its upkeep. His stewardship included removing invasive plants and burning as needed. Donations can be sent to the Indiana Audubon Society.

DONATIONS

We take all kinds of plants: indoor or outdoor, from ferns to shrubs or small trees, plus items connected to gardening or birds. If you have a question, contact Susan Ulrich (see back cover).

Donations can be brought Fri 5-7 p.m. the night before or from 8-9 the morning of the sale. If these don't work contact Susan.

VOLUNTEERS

We need several people from 5-7 pm Fri to set up and organize the booth and move any plants stored elsewhere to the booth

On Saturday people are needed from 8-3 as cashiers, to assist buyers, and keep tables organized. Also help taking down the tables at 3 to 3:30 would be appreciated.

Mind BOGgling Event

This family friendly event is May 18 at Celery Bog. A few volunteers are needed at the booth. Could also use ideas for a new child friendly activity SAS could do. Contact Susan Ulrich.

Fifth Grade Camp

Birders are needed to help with the WL School 5th Grade Camp at Camp Tecumseh on Tuesday, May 7 and Thursday,

May 9. It's easy—a group of students, a teacher (or 2) plus an SAS member go on a 30 minute walk to find, and talk about the birds. Breakfast after if wanted. Check with Susan Ulrich if interested and to carpool. Note: Chuck Tuttle gives a bird program for campers before they go. One bird many wanted to see at camp last year was this one, the Red-winged Blackbird.



Thank You's

A late thank you to Ruth Foster who was left off the list of people who helped at last year's Garden Expo.

Also many thanks to all of you who sent SAS extra support. There have been a large number of donations these past months, many made in memory of Del Arvin, and others in general support for the chapter. This list will appear in the next newsletter.

Forestry For the Birds

Rick Hines who presented the December SAS program, is one of only two Forestry land owners working with **Forestry for the Birds** certification, a new program began in Vermont under the auspices of the Nature Conservancy.

He wants to in get info about this program out to other non-commercial forestry land owners and increase the number of people and acres involved. The program requires a state wide birding organization to handle certification. National Audubon does not have an Indiana office, Indiana has the Great Lakes Audubon Regional Office which covers all the Great Lake states. Indiana Audubon, which does cover all of Indiana, is not affiliated with NAS, and was actually formed before National Audubon Society. Rachel Kittleson, SAS's VP has worked with Indiana Audubon Society and will see if they will take up the leadership of the Forestry for the Birds program.

Rick offered to show our chapter around his sugarbush operation and SAS plans on setting up a field trip there sometime in 2024. He also gave a donation to SAS in honor of Becky and Larry Teller who did the official bird study work needed for certification on his property and refused payment.



CONSERVATION NEWS

COP28 Methane Deal helps Tackle Warming

From EDF Solutions Vol 55 # 1

Methane is 80 times more potent than CO₂ in the first 20 years after it is emitted and is responsible for roughly 30% of global warming. Progress is finally being made to reduced its release.

1. Over 50 oil and gas companies agreed to cut their methane emissions by 90% by 2030. This group is responsible for about half the world's oil and gas production.
2. Compliance will be monitored. **MethaneSAT**, mentioned in the last *Warbler*, is being launched this year. It will be able to locate even small methane leaks to see that companies are delivering on their promises.
3. If implemented by 2030, the commitments could lead to more progress in reducing more methane in the next few years than has been achieved in the last decade.

Two other major methane announcements also came at CO28. In one, the US Environmental Protection Agency finalized its first comprehensive rules governing methane pollution. The rules will cost-effectively cut methane and air pollution from one million oil and gas sites across the country.

The second involves the dairy industry which accounts for nearly 10% of global methane emissions. A new coalition, the **Dairy Methane Action Alliance**, will promote a global shift to climate-smart dairy production.

'Carbon Mega Bomb' Gas Export Hub Paused

The Biden administration recently announced that it will pause any new approvals for climate-killing LNG exports. The pause, expected to last through at least November, comes from concern from climate experts that approval would create a "carbon mega bomb" with emissions 20 times greater than the controversial Willow oil project in Alaska.

The project, Calcasieu Pass 2, or CP2, would be positioned near the rapidly eroding Louisiana shoreline and be the biggest such export terminal in the US as well as part of a huge expansion of new gas infrastructure along the Gulf of Mexico. The move, sources said, could spell trouble for the project and 16 other proposed terminals, as the energy department has been asked to expand its evaluation of CP2 to assess its impact on climate change, as well as on the economy and national security. "The scale of the project is almost unfathomable and it locks us into a fossil fuel dependency for the next 30 years. If all we do is shift from coal to gas, we are cooked." commented a retired EPA official. CP2 would ship up to 24 million tons of liquified natural gas each year if built.

Climate Change's impact on Louisiana is Gigantic

Louisiana has lost an area about the size of Delaware, 2,000 square miles or 720,000 acres, since 1930 as the result of higher sea level, increased violent storms and flooding caused by climate change. With no action, Alabama would lose 3,000 more square miles in the next 50 years, doubling the costs from flooding to around \$24 billion a year.

The levee system aggravated the problem by choking off the mud carried by the river which maintained the wetlands that helped protect the area. Now Louanna is trying something new—the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion—to use the mighty Mississippi River to create new land. Instead of levees holding it back, the plan frees the river via a 2 mile channel letting up to 75,000 cubic meters of fresh water (and mud) to flow into the bay. This is roughly the amount of water going over Niagara Falls in a day. It is anticipated that 20 to 40 square miles of new wetlands will form over the next 50 years. The river itself did something similar 2019 creating a new flowing channel that has already starting to form new islands which are quickly being vegetated, bringing back birds and fish.

Toxic Chemical Finally Going, Going...Gone

In Oct 2023 trichloroethylene (TCE)—a known carcinogen was finally banned by the EPA although the proposal won't be finalized until 2024, and most uses then banned within a year.

One area suffering from TCE pollution is Franklin, Indiana, where the chemical contaminated the groundwater. Most of the contamination came from a nearby electrical parts plant which had used it as a degreaser. It is also used as a spot cleaner and dry-cleaning solvent. As a result Franklin suffers higher rates of pediatric cancer. It turns out TCE also is toxic to nervous systems, kidneys, liver, immune systems and to developing fetuses.

The process to ban TCE took 10 years and was spearheaded by the non-profit Environmental Defense Fund.

Spring Sycamore Audubon Calendar 2024

Meeting programs are currently hybrid: i.e. in person or by zoom. Field Trips are outdoors and obviously in person. Bring binoculars if you have them. Extra pairs available if not.

- March 14 Thursday** **Program: West Lafayette Parks & My Plans for Lilly Nature Center.** Kyle Gephart, the new WL Parks Naturalist and Lilly Nature Center Director. 7:15 p.m. at Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Area, WL. Dinner at 6 p.m. at Mcallister's in W. Lafayette.
- March 23 Saturday** **Get to the Point** at Celery Bog, from 7-9 am, followed by general birding for returning spring migrants from 9-11 am. The Point is the narrow area between the two main basins at Celery Bog.
- March 24 Sunday** **Audubon at the Overlook.** Prophetstown State Park. Meet at the end of the park road for an hour or two to see what's around and talk to interested park visitors passing by between 6-8 p.
- March 30 Saturday** **Early Spring Migrants.** Meet at 8 am to look for early migrant warblers, sparrows, water birds and whatever else is moving through at the gravel parking lot of Celery Bog. 1/2 day trip, with possibility of checking other locations depending on bird reports.
- April 11 Thursday** **Program: Jeop-birdy!** Wes Homoya, a passionate conservationist, guide for Natural Selections Tours, and former Sycamore Audubon board member. Join Wes Homoya and other fun-loving birders for an exciting night of bird trivia! Test and add to your avian knowledge playing a twist on *Jeopardy* the world's most beloved game show. And "Yes" there are a few prizes... (but none are a cruise). 7:15 p.m. at Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Area. Dinner at 6 p.m. at Mcallister's in W. Lafayette.
- April 20 Saturday** **Get to the Point** at Celery Bog, from 7-9 am, followed by general birding for spring migrants from 9-11 am. Meet at the Point, the narrow area between the two basins (Barny suggests bringing coffee).
- April 28 Sunday** **Audubon at the Overlook** Prophetstown State Park. Meet at the end of the park road for an hour or two to see what's around and talk to interested visitors. 6:30-8:30 pm. A look at bird migrants in the evening.
- May 4 Saturday** **Warm up for the Global Big Day.** Need to refresh your song and identification memory? Meet at 7:15 am at Martell Forest for a 1/2 day walk, remembering bird songs and appearances before the Big Day next week. [I think both Chuck and I forgot this field trip last year - this year I will try to show up]
- May 9 Thursday** **Program: Who is What?: Changing Bird Names,** Barny Dunning, SAS President and Purdue Professor of Forestry & Wildlife. The American Ornithology Union is reviewing and changing the common names of a number of birds. Learn more about it. 7:15 p.m. at Lilly Nature Center, Celery Bog Nature Area. Dinner at 6 p.m. at Mcallister's in W. L.
- May 11 Saturday** **Global Big Day** - You can bird anywhere you want in Tippecanoe County or get an area to cover in Warren Counties and post your list on eBird. Barny and Sue will compile the results into a total for each county. Don't have an eBird account? It is easy and free to set one up. But you should also send your results to Barny and Susan for the results to be posted in the next *Warbler*. Multiple people birding in a popular area like Celery Bog is not a problem but may mean other areas may get missed. In Warren County you can report birds outside your area but note where and found them. See below for a late joint venture to end the day.
- May 11 Saturday** **Audubon at the Overlook.** End Global Big Day at the Overlook at Prophetstown State Park from 7:30-9:30 p.m. May find a few species to add to the count that are more active at dusk.
- June 1 Saturday** **Prophetstown State Park Grasslands.** Met at 7 am at the last parking lot of the paved road. Emphasis is on grassland breeders (Henslow's Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, etc. but many other species are likely to be seen or heard as well) There will be a park entrance fee unless you have a State Park pass.

Indiana Legislature Continues its Attack on Indiana's Wetlands

- In the 1990's, the DNR estimated that Indiana had already lost 85% of its original wetlands. In the past few years lobbying by developers has resulted in a massive loss of more wetlands within the state along with mitigation.
- SB 389, passed in 2021, added so many exemptions to Indiana's wetlands law that now 75% of the wetland acres impacted by construction are lost with no mitigation for their lost functions.
- In 2023, the US Supreme Court significantly reduced federal protection of wetlands, essentially leaving the fate of wetlands up to the states. What Indiana does in state law matters more than ever.
- In 2023, HB 1383 continued to erode protection of wetlands by changing the class definitions to shift some class III wetlands (high protection) to class II wetlands which have much less protection.

In spite of a massive outpouring of opposition which included two of our local residents, Raoul Durai and Liz Solberg, along with many other environmentalists, appearing before a committee to testify against the bill, legislators passed it into law.

Indiana's Historic Swamps did More than Support Wildlife & Water Quality

Two former wetlands (AKA swamps or bogs) had significant parts in Indianapolis history as key stops on the Underground Railroad.

Information from the ***Untold Indiana history blog***, notes many Hoosier opponents of slavery —primarily Quakers—guided African American freedom seekers toward Indianapolis's Westfield area, a major Quaker center before the Civil War.

Why? Marion County's wetlands were nearly impenetrable. This gave many enslaved people a place to hide and bloodhounds could not follow their scent through the wet areas. One such area was Bacon's Swamp, a peat bog located where part of Broad Ripple is now. The Presbyterian owners were acquainted with Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. The peat bog across from the Bacon dairy farm served as a nighttime hiding place for the arriving freedom seekers who were then led on their way northward.

Another wetland, the 200 acre Fletcher's Swamp, was just east of Indy's old North Side. Colin Fletcher, Sr., an abolitionist, owned a 1,600-acre farm in the area. He and his family helped freedom seekers travel north to safety.

After Emancipation, Fletcher hired many ex-enslaved men. Their work included clearing the swamp, a task completed by Calvin Fletcher, Jr. in the 1870's. The History Blog notes: "Thus it shared the fate of thousands of acres of Hoosier wetlands sacrificed to agriculture and turned into conventional cropland".



Covercrop Acres Up

In 2023 Indiana set a new record for acres in cover crops, an estimated 1.6 million acres. That is more than 13% of the state's row crop acres.

The practice provides multiple benefits including reduced sediment and nutrient loss into waterways and improved soil health.

It takes 100 years to produce one inch of topsoil.

Fish Creek Trees & More

Over the past 30 years, The Indiana Nature Conservancy (TNC), has worked with local landowners, to plant **one million trees** in the Fish Creek watershed. The trees help filter water entering the creek and keep the stream cleaner for mussels and other species.

Work at Fish Creek is overseen by Nathan Herbert of The Nature Conservancy. He stewards the 1,300 acres of the Conservancy's Douglas Woods Nature Preserve and the restoration of 679 acres of cornfield, native forest, and wetlands.

The creek itself feeds into the St. Joseph River which provides drinking water to many people downstream. The work at Fish Creek by the TNC will continue for many decades into the future.

Crossroads of America

Long before the state of Indiana put this slogan on its license plate, the area served as a crossroads for at least 14 Indian nations whose members came and went, camping and hunting the state's rich hunting grounds— more tribes than any other state. US Route 40 was originally a heavily traveled Indian trail.

Wallows on the Prairie

Wallows are compacted areas in prairies formed by Buffalo who use them for dust baths when dry and mud baths when filled with water. Wallowing most likely helps the animals get rid of flies, shed winter coats, and scratch areas they can't reach. The structures are a tiny ecosystem within the prairie as a whole. The compacted soil and fertility caused by the animals urinating and defecating favor different kinds of plants and insects. When filled with water, they are used as sites for birds and reproduction of insects and amphibians.

There used to be thousands of wallows scattered across America's grasslands. Producing more is one reason The Nature Conservancy has been active in adding bison to the prairie landscape. Today 6,600 bison are active on a dozen preserves in the United States, including Kankakee Sands here in Indiana.



Restoration

Late last year NICHES was kept busy planting trees and shrubs in order to improve and restore habitat on recent acquisitions.

Many of the 5,440 shrubs, were planted in a small ex-agricultural field at Williams Woods. The shrubs included were both for pollinators and wildlife, including birds. The species included were American plum (choice food of Bobwhite, Bluejay, Robin, & Red-headed Woodpecker); American hazelnut (choice food of Blue Jay & Hairy Woodpecker); common ninebark (Goldfinch & Yellow Warbler nest site); chokecherry (choice food for Eastern Bluebird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Kingbird, American Robin, Wood Thrush & Pileated & Red Bellied Woodpeckers); black chokeberry; and gray dogwood (choice food for Eastern Bluebird, Robin, Swainson's Thrush). **Note:** bird info from *Attracting Birds: from the Prairies to the Atlantic* by Verne Davidson.

The trees, planted on four acres along Kickapoo Creek, included pecan trees and three oak species (white, burr, Shumard). All 400 were local genotypes donated by WLF weatherman, Chad Evans. Another 600 local genotype oaks he donated were planted at the Laura Hare Bend of the Wabash east property. They included white and burr oak along with the addition of swamp-white and chinkapin oaks.

Acorns and nuts are high in energy and are one of the most important food sources for Wild Turkey, Blue Jay, many ducks and woodpeckers, as well as squirrels, white tailed deer, racoons, and other wildlife.

Habitat Is Where It's At

Saving critical habitat for dozens of vulnerable species is always a cause for celebration. This is cause for a BIG one: The Indiana Nature Conservancy announced that in late 2023 they completed their biggest land protection project in Indiana they have done in in the last 25 years. Their new acquisition is a 1,700 acre forested property adjacent to the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge

More than 80 plant and animal species considered to be endangered or of special concern in Indiana live within the area — including Indiana bats and nesting bald eagles. This acquisition adds to land already protected by the Refuge, creating more than 20,000 acres of connected wildlife habitat. Bigger is always better when it comes to protection.



Blue Jay with acorn & Red-eyed Vireo with Gray Dogwood berry

Other Indiana News

On October 10th Indiana's Division of Nature Preserves dedicated its 300th State Nature Preserve: **Toothwort Woods** in Jennings County. It is 101 acre site within the Crosley Fish and Wildlife Area. The name comes from the site being unique in Indiana for hosting all four species of toothwort that occur here.. The property consists of a wide variety of habitat types and supports many species of interest.

Nature & Trip Report Notes

● SS's Lake Shore Trip report was omitted from last newsletter: Once again the fall trip to Lake Michigan's lakeshore produced a rare bird: a **Limpkin**. Normally found in Florida and southern states, the bird was a lifer for some and a state bird for others. The Limpkin had been around awhile and was considerate enough to wait for our field trip before moving on. Good looks were had by all. Birds along the lakefront were mostly far out requiring scopes for ID. Later the participants visited Dunes National Park hoping to see the Townsend Solitaire which had been reported, but no luck.



● Nov 31 at Celery Bog, a single Cackling Goose was spotted amid a group of 300 Canadas—the first salvo of the Fall goose migration. At Prophetstown, Sam Hartzler & Vivek Govind Kumar got good views of a Northern Shrike while Lucas Wilson & Lydia Pultorak saw a flock of flying 'white' geese which turned out to be mostly Snow Geese with one Ross's.

● **TWO** Whooping Cranes flew over Rte 18 in White County Dec. 9. No reports of them stopping at any nearby area.

● Chuck Tuttle got great pictures of two Harriers who seem to be courting. The male was flying around the perched female.

● Dec 22 Both Barny Dunning & Mark Arvin got early presents:

Northern Shrikes. Barny's was at the Pine Creek Area which he monitors, while Mark relocated the one at Prophetstown SP. He also had 3 Black Vultures near Soller-Baker on Twyckenham.

● A number of people were out New Year's day using the holiday to start building their 2024 bird list. Quite a few interesting birds were reported such as a Ross's Goose & Greater White-fronted Geese at Ivy Tech's ponds and other areas in SE Lafayette. Rachel and Alex Kittleson had Tundra Swans as flyovers on the 2nd at Celery Bog while Ed Hopkins found a female Red-breasted Merganser at Bicentennial Nature Area. Two reports of Peregrine Falcons came in, one at Bicentennial Park. Becky Theller enjoyed a Great Horned Owl at Battle Ground and Ruby, the Eastern Screech-Owl, was seen in her usual tree at Celery Bog. Rachel and Alex visited the Short-eared wintering and saw flying in the morning/ Lastly, Greg Fraley lucked into a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers near Martell Forest.

● Bicentennial was active in mid-January with a group of American Pipets showing up. Barny Dunning got there later and no pipets but over 800 waterfowl, mostly Cana-



da and White-fronted Geese


● Birds moved through rapidly. On the 15th Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Geese Cackling

Geese, Snow Geese, Canvasback, Redhead, Common Goldeneye, Greater Scaup, Ruddy Duck and Common Mergansers all passed through. Several people also had small numbers of Ring-billed Gulls and one Herring Gull.

● Lapland Longspurs were also moving through in NW Tippecanoe County around the Purdue Dairy Barn and Beef Cattle Barns as well as the fields north of the Beck Ag Center where Barny Dunning had a flock estimated at 1,000.



● The ice storm and frigid weather in January didn't just affect the waterbird migration. It brought birds to feeders in big numbers. Susan Ulrich kept a tally and had nearly 300 birds of 30 different species show up. Highlights were 14 Fox Sparrows at one time, 2 Rusty Blackbirds, a Red-winged Blackbird, and at least 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers. The latter are still coming (not as frequently) to suet, but mostly to small piles of whole corn kernels in her driveway. The Fox Sparrows weren't just a fluke, as at least 15 came after the 5" wet snowfall occurring later.

● 10 people showed up for the Jan 27 field trip in spite of the forecast of heavy fog. Some hoped for birds failed to show but that was offset by a spectacular view of two Long-eared Owls at Prophetstown State Park. Photo by Jill Evans on  next page. The birds are expertly camouflaged by the vegetation as the picture shows. Other highlights were 25 species found at Celery Bog, including a brown creeper and

Birding in an Eclipse

Susan Ulrich

Back in 1991 my husband, Ted, and I went to Guatemala with a group of birders then flew to Costa Rica on our own and rented a car. The country was safe and easy to get around in and we saw dozens and dozens of new bird species. One day while birding a area of grassland with small scattered groves of trees and shrubs it started to get dark. We looked to see if a storm was coming and realized it was the start of a solar eclipse. We hadn't been listening to news so were taken by surprise. What was interesting was the reaction of the birds. As it got darker, birds started to sing their night songs. Then as the sun began to shine again, they sang their morning songs and began moving around and feeding as if it were morning. It would have been a great time to have had a cell phone and Merlin. The photo to the right is of a Fiery-billed Aracari, one of the species we saw in Costa Rica. The picture is from Temple Pearson who saw one in Panama on a tour. Not sure who in her group took it. The bird is a denizen of the Pacific slopes in those two counties.



a distant Northern Harrier seen at Pine Creek.

- Chuck Tuttle and Kyle Gephart had a group of Tundra Swans Feb. 6 at Celery Bog.
- Feb 11 Mark Arvin again re-located the Prophetstown *Northern Shrike* in "its usual spot".
- The next day, Jacki Vance-Kuss found the Peregrine Falcon back in the NE corner of the Holiday Inn in downtown Lafayette.
- The unusual warm weather in Mid-Feb brought some species back early, including woodcock. There were reports at Celery Bog and Lise Schools heard them give their "peent" call **on the 14** from her house.

- 2/21 Vivek had another good evening flight at Bicentennial yesterday. The highlight was 35 American White Pelicans that flew over and then landed on the main lake. I went over at sunrise this morning and at least 5 of the pelicans were still there as of 7:30 am. They were on the back side of the large island and only visible when they poked their heads up or stretched. It could be that

all of the pelican flock was still there, just hidden on the back side of the island. Hopefully they will hang around and make themselves more visible. Also present this morning were two Tundra Swans and 19 or so Common Mergansers. Yesterday evening Vivek also had Hooded Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, American Wigeon, and Bufflehead, among

- Jacki Vance-Kuss reports that the Peregrine Falcon was seen again in NE corner of the Holiday Inn in downtown

Lafayette Feb 24. The increased number of reports for this species locally may reflect an increase chance of a nest within the next few years., There are certainly a lot of taller buildings in the area than there were a decade ago.

- Temperatures were around 28 degrees (and wind chills significantly lower), but 5 people gathered for our field trip for early waterfowl migration on Feb. 24. There had been lots of movement of mergansers, diving ducks and American Wigeon coming in and leaving over the last week, making participants hopeful of a successful day. The group visited Bicentennial NA and Celery Bog. But our biggest sighting occurred in transit, when one of our two carloads had a Merlin land on a power pole at a West Lafayette intersection.

At Bicentennial, three Tundra/Trumpeter Swans were departing as we arrived. We also saw Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon and Redheads. At Celery Bog there wasn't a wide variety of waterfowl, but did locate the early Hermit Thrush that had been reported for about a week.

- The stretch off much warmer than usual weather has brought a lot of migrants rushing back into the area, especially common breeders such as Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer and Grackles which seem to be everywhere There have also been a number of Horned Larks seen in farm fields. In the past few years their numbers locally have been dropping, maybe this year will be a turnaround.

If you see something interesting please send an email to Susan Ulrich, the editor. My apologies for any omissions. Had a major computer glitch wipe out some of my saved data, not all of which was recovered.



Area Christmas Bird Counts 2023 Season

Lafayette CBC Participants:

Fritz Davis, Barny Dunning, Peter Duy-Liacco, flora & Roxie Easter, John & Denise Ervin, Vivak Govind-Kumar, Ed Hopkins (compiler), Amy Krzton-Presson, Steven Roach, John Skene, Larry & Becky Theller, Susan Ulrich, Chris Wiles.

Twenty-one species of waterfowl were tallied on the two counts but nine of them were CW, so only seen in the week around the count and not on the count day themselves.

Waterfowl at Willow Slough - Iroquois count were down with the exception of swans, as the lake had only refilled about 10% since it was drained and the levees worked on last year. The later date, Jan. 2, is another likely factor. Notable species were two species of Swan and a Golden Eagle, along with a Northern Shrike, and 70 American Pipit



Cedar Waxwing

Lafayette's count on Dec. 16 had Snow Geese, Wilson's Snipe and 25 Bald Eagle, 2 Peregrine Falcon and 2 Winter Wrens. A Catbird, Hermit Thrush and 41 Cedar Waxwing still around probably reflect the warmer than usual weather which was also likely responsible for just a single Lapland Longspur found.

The sighting of a dozen Northern Bobwhite on the Lafayette Count is encouraging, maybe a sign they are on the increase and will spread out from Prophetstown Park. On the other hand, the most common bird, the European Starling, made up 47% of the total birds seen on the two counts.

Species Name:	Laf	WS-I	Species Name:	Laf	WS-I
Snow Goose	11	1	Northern Flicker	24	8
Ross's Goose	cw	0	American Kestrel	8	8
Greater White-fronted Goose	62	204	Merlin	cw	0
Cackling Goose	cw	1	Peregrine Falcon	2	0
Canada Goose	1703	303	Northern Shrike	0	1
Mute Swan	cw	cw	Blue Jay	80	171
Trumpeter Swan	0	8	American Crow	306	138
Tundra Swan	0	14	Carolina Chickadee	73	0
Trumpeter/Tundra	0	9	Black-capped Chickadee	0	11
Wood Duck	12	0	Tufted Titmouse	63	5
Northern Shoveler	27	0	Horned Lark	1	21
Gadwall	65	0	Golden-crowned Kinglet	8	0
Mallard	878	29	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4	0
American Black Duck	5	0	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	0
Northern Pintail	cw	0	White-breasted Nuthatch	77	11
Canvasback	cw	0	Brown Creeper	8	1
Redhead	cw	0	Winter Wren	2	0
Bufflehead	cw	0	Carolina Wren	28	0
Common Goldeneye	cw	0	European Starling	5726	2381
Hooded Merganser	1	0	Gray Catbird	1	0
Common Merganser	cw	0	Eastern Bluebird	42	5
Northern Bobwhite	12	0	Hermit Thrush	1	0
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	5	American Robin	978	28
Wild Turkey	21	0	Cedar Waxwing	41	0
Rock Pigeon	360	33	House Sparrow	162	293
Eurasian Collared Dove	0	16	American Pipit	0	70
Mourning Dove	156	20	House Finch	104	137
American Coot	1	1	Purple Finch	2	3
Sandhill Crane	10	0	Pine Siskin	8	0
Killdeer	7	0	American Goldfinch	88	212
Wilson's Snipe	2	0	Lapland Longspur	1	0
Ring-billed Gull	20	0	Chipping Sparrow	cw	0
Great Blue Heron	22	0	Field Sparrow	3	0
Black Vulture	cw	0	American Tree Sparrow	163	207
Turkey Vulture	cw	0	Fox Sparrow	7	6
Golden Eagle	0	1	Dark-eyed Junco	210	182
Northern Harrier	3	15	White-crowned Sparrow	8	21
Sharp-shinned Hawk	cw	1	White-throated Sparrow	113	11
Cooper's Hawk	5	2	Savanna Sparrow	1	2
Bald Eagle	25	1	Song Sparrow	33	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	17	5	Swamp Sparrow	5	1
Red-tailed Hawk	28	22	Eastern Towhee	2	1
Rough-legged Hawk	1	29	Eastern Meadowlark	2	0
Eastern Screech-Owl	4	3	Red-winged Blackbird	8	3
Great Horned Owl	3	7	Brown-headed Cowbird	30	42
Short-eared Owl	4	1	Rusty Blackbird	cw	0
Belted Kingfisher	9	0	Yellow-rumped Warbler	6	0
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	0	Northern Cardinal	67	37
Red-headed Woodpecker	7	37	Total Individuals	12129	4,824
Red-bellied Woodpecker	57	18	Total Species	78	85
Downy Woodpecker	58	16	Field Parties	11	6
Hairy Woodpecker	15	2	Field Observers	16	9
Pileated Woodpecker	16	5	Feeder Watchers	2	0

WS/I CBC Participants: John Cassady, Richard Garret, Christine & Robert Guth, Jed Hertz, Edward Hopkins (compiler), Barb Lucas, Susan Ulrich, Lynn Vernon.

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Sycamore Audubon Society

a local Indiana chapter of the National Audubon Society serving members in Tippecanoe, Warren, Benton, Clinton, White, and Carroll counties



Case Dismissed

Southwestern Willow Flycatchers depend on depend on dwindled, dewatered and degraded streamside habitat of the U.S. Southwest, where they face a threat of extinction due to livestock grazing. That's why the Center for Biological Diversity and allies won Endangered Species Act protection for these little birds in 1995.



Recently Pacific Legal Foundation, a property-rights law firm, filed suit to strip them of their protection on behalf of New Mexican cattle growers — and last week a court dismissed that suit.

"What a relief the court didn't buy the baseless arguments that were made to deprive these beautiful birds of the help they need to survive." said the Center's Meg Townsend.

A Bit of NAS History

The principal founder of the Audubon idea and its name was George Bird Grinnell (1849-1918). He was a friend and confidant of Theodore Roosevelt (who later served as Audubon's first vice-president) and a neighbor of Lucy Audubon, John J. Audubon's widow. He also was the editor of *Forest and Stream*, using that position to promote the idea of a conservation group to protect wild birds and wildlife—not just hunt them, which led to the Christmas Bird Counts of today.

Grinnell also loved the American West and spearheaded laws to protect buffalo, birds, and fish from commercial interests. He spent time with the Pawnee, Cheyenne and other tribes and worked to protect some of America's most treasured National Parks. If you visit Glacier National Park there is a glacier named for him.

In the early years, there were individual Audubon Chapters but no national organization. Albert Willcox, a NY insurance executive, gave a planned gift to launch Audubon as a national organization. A large final bequest funded National Audubon's early conservation projects plus the initial salaries of NAS's staff, including Gilbert Pearson, who later led the crusade against plume hunters and eventually served as National Audubon Society's president.

Tidbits

- Most owls fly nearly silently thanks in part to comb like structures on the edges of their wing feathers and a velvety coating on the flight feathers.
- Great Gray Owls have the longest comb structure and thickest coating on their wing feathers, making them particularly silent when flying.
- Great Gray Owls may plunge as deep as 18 inches into snow to reach their prey.
- Since deep snow bends sound waves, Great Gray Owls often hover briefly over snow to better pinpoint the prey's position.
- Water also bends sound waves which may be why fish-eating birds such as the Osprey, Kingfishers and Gannets prefer to strike straight down rather than at an angle.
- The American Turkey was so important a food source for the Aztecs they dedicated two annual religious festivals to the birds.
- Turkeys look ungainly but can run up to 18 mph and reach flight speeds of 50 mph.
- In the early 1900's only an estimated 30,000 turkeys remained in the world.
- Altricial birds (ones that are born blind, naked, and helpless have very large mouths and most have mouth linings that contrast sharply with their naked bodies or are brightly colored..
- Young Cedar Waxwings mouth linings are bright red & violet blue; young nighthawks are smokey blue; meadowlark young have red, orange, and yellow as well as blue.
- Some altricial young also have small knobs in the mouth which reflect light. They help attract and guide the parents to where to place the food



Sycamore Audubon Society
P. O. Box 2716
West Lafayette, IN 47996

<http://www.sycamoreAudubon.org>
Email: sycamoreaudubon@gmail.com

Address Service Requested

2023-2024 Board of Directors

Barry Dunning, President, **Field Trips**
(C) 765-412-8760 (W) 765-494-3565
jdunning@purdue.edu

Rachel Kittleston, Vice President, Programs
Rachel.Kittleston@outlook.com

Brian Shilling, Treasurer
267-495-7158

Anne Piechota, Secretary
apiechota224@gmail.com

Paul Brooks, Webmaster
219-221-0254
paulbrooks@gmail.com

George Kopcha, At Large
gkopcha@gmail.com
(c)765-714-5126

Bea Redfield, Media/Publications
civet@live.com

Larry Theller, Membership
Gideonbyrd@icloud.com

Chuck Tuttle, at large
586-4806 chuckt1708@gmail.com

Susan Ulrich, Publications
765-583-2275 sueandtedulrich@msn.com

Kaitlyn Young, Conservation
Young411@purdue.edu

Another Type of Forest

As they grow, kelp forests, like those on land, absorb lots of pollution including fertilizer runoff from farmland and carbon compounds much of which enters the ocean from the atmosphere. **For centuries they have helped offset much of our planet-warming emissions, for free.** But now, like many land ecosystems they are in decline. Warmer ocean water is a major factor.

At a salmon farm in Storm Bay, Tasmania, researchers hope their research can save an entire ecosystem from warming oceans. Beneath the waves, scientists are growing several types of giant kelp—which in the wild can grow up to 175 feet tall—on ropes—in order to track which ones can thrive in hotter conditions.

Rising water temperatures, more frequent marine heat waves and invasive sea urchins have already destroyed 95% of the giant kelp forests in Tasmania. This island, south of Australia's mainland, is a global hot spot for ocean warming, with sea temperatures in the island's east rising faster than the global average.

Some kelp species, like the giant kelp common off the coast of San Diego, reach the surface to form a canopy. Others top off many feet down, creating an understory. These Kelp forests are quite widespread, covering an area of ocean up to five times greater than that of all coral reefs, according to a new report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

They also support a stunning diversity of life. Kelp blades and anchors (known as holdfasts, the closest thing they have to roots) provide shelter for young fish, a place for adult fish to spawn, and food for invertebrates like urchins and other creatures. One study found that a single stalk of kelp in Norway supported roughly 80,000 organisms across 70 distinct species. Over 1000 species of plants and animals are found in some kelp forests off the California coast. .



The more learned about Kelp forests the more important they are shown to be and the more research needed. According to the **Kelp Forest Alliance** there are now over 50 restoration projects underway affecting 14,500+ acres of seabed.