

Sycamore Warbler

Volume 49 issue 4 Winter 2024

2024 Lafayette Christmas Bird Count Report

Welcome to the new Sycamore Warbler

The Lafayette Christmas Bird Count was held Saturday, Dec 14. The following 20 people took part this year: Kevin & Mark Arvin; Fritz Davis; Barny Dunning; Flora & Roxie Easter; Shane Guenin; Edward Hopkins (compiler); Lars Hovde; Amy Krezton-Presson; Stephen Roach; John Skene; Eric, Larry & Becky Theller; Ellen Tobias; Gale Turco; Charles Tuttle; Susan Ulrich; and Chris Wiles.

Our newsletter is changing from four issues three months apart to six issues 2 months apart. This gives SAS more flexibility with unexpected changes to the calendar of events and more timely news updates. If you have any comments, either pro or con, or any possible info for the next issue, please let us know. You can write us at:

Seventy-four species were found the day of the count. An additional 12 species (half waterfowl including all 3 Merganser species) were seen count week (cw). Check out all the results on page 3. One species, the Clay-colored Sparrow, is under review. A dozen species only had a single individual found. These include American Coot,



Killdeer, Long-eared Owl (picture to left), Short-eared Owl, Red-Headed Woodpecker, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Clay-colored Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, (picture above) and Purple Finch.

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or contact a board member

Results from the January 1st Willow-Slough CBC are being tallied. They will appear in the next

Issue of the newsletter.

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Indiana State Wildlife Plan Update Due in 2025

The Hoosier Environmental Committee (HEC) has been taken part in the revision of the Indiana State Wildlife Action Plan, which began work in January 2023 which will be completed Oct. 1, 2025. This collaborative revision process helps people who care about and work for Indiana's natural resources to create a plan together.

Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife is leading the revision process by developing regional workshops that convene partners to develop the foundation of each regional plan. HEC is creating common goals for ecosystem and species health for the regional plans.

1. Conservation of habitat: keeps wild spaces wild and provides cleaner water and air for us all.
2. Places where fish and wildlife live : serve as wonderful places for recreation. These places are oases for people to go outside, find peace and quiet, see something new, and share time with others.



CHAPTER NEWS

Thank You's

SAS appreciates, and would like to thank, the following individuals who have made donations to the chapter.

Janice Wood

Gale Turco

Jerry & Connie Brown

Board Actions

The board discussed when and how meeting should be cancelled after the late decision to cancel January's Program. It was decided meetings should be cancelled iff snow or ice make road conditions unsafe or in the event of tornado warnings. It should be based on input from board members and communicated via texts and emails no later than 5:00 pm. the day of the meeting—earlier if the speaker is from out-of-town. If the cancellation notice is late, SAS should have someone at Celery Bog (if it's safe to travel) to inform anyone who missed the notice.

In other action the board voted to donate \$250 for herbicide for Tippecanoe Invasive Cooperative Task Force (TICT) effort to help



Above: Kaitlyn Young by a Motus tower. Kaitlyn, an SAS board member and master/pHD student uses Motus Towers to track Eastern Towhees she netted and banded last Fall.

A story on Purdue and Motus towers is on p. 5.

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Upcoming Programs

Held the second Thursday of the month at the Celery Bog Nature Center in West Lafayette at 7:15 p.m. Dinner for anyone interested at McAlister's in West Lafayette at 6 pm.

February 13 **An Introduction to taking photos with your phone and field optics**. Alex Kittleson is a design engineer and birder who built his own digiscoping adapter as a side project. He will discuss the basics of digiscoping and the pros and cons of various digiscoping adapters available

March 13 **Birding in SE Africa with Road Scholar**, Larry & Becky Theller. Join us for an interesting program featuring the birds and wildlife of SE Africa.

April 10 **Planning your Own Exotic Birding Trip**. Jackie and Travis Vans-Kuss give some hints and advice on how to improve the trip's chances of success and pitfalls to avoid. The pair have visited a number of countries over the past few years, and have shared some of their travels at SAS's September **Bring Your own Program**.

control invasive seeding Callery Pear along the Wabash by the Ouiatenon Reserve. The land is owned by the Tippecanoe Parks Department who will help with the effort alongside volunteers.

A increased donation to help Indiana Audubon Society cover the expenses for the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival in May will be voted on at the next Board meeting. IAS expenses will be higher this year as the Park Department can no longer donate buses and other items for the event.

There is still no signage for the new birding Kiosk and Chimney Swift Tower at Celery Bog. Barny Dunning will be working with Kyle to get wording from the Arvin family for the brass plaques to put up in Del Arvin's memory.

Barny is thinking of putting up some temporary lists and event announcements until the official signage is ready

Not too Early to think about April Garden Expo

If you have garden or bird items or plant pots to donate for the April 27 Garden Expo, or plan on bringing some plants but need pots for them, contact Susan Ulrich (page 1).



Spring will be here soon and we'll need items connected to gardening and birds to sell at the Tippecanoe Master Gardener's Garden Expo. We host a popular joint booth with the local Native

Plant Society which is both groups biggest fundraiser of the year.

Birding on the *FLY List*...

If there is an unusual bird sighting nearby or around the state Barny sends people on the list an email so anyone interested can pursue the bird by themselves or often via a carpool. Contact him to be added to the list. See page 1.

2024 Lafayette Christmas Count



The American Bald Eagle is now OFFICIALY the national bird of the United States. This years CBC total of 61 birds is a count record showing how the species has rebounded since the banning of DDT.

Feb-March Field Trips

Meet at Celery Bog gravel parking lot at Celery Bog unless other location noted .

Sat Feb 15 **Looking for Winter Birds** that might be around (Snowy Owl, Snow Bunting, etc) 8:15 AM for walk and drive 1/2 day trip.

Sat March 1 **Early Waterfowl Migration** Their migration gets earlier each year. We will visit places where birds are still being reported 7:30 am. 1/2 day.

Sat March 15 **Audubon at the Overlook**, Prophetstown State Park Meet at end of the road at 7:30-9:30 am.

Thur March 22 8 am **Early Bird Hikes** begin at Celery Bog at 8 am. Estimate one hour. Continue thru May.

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>
Greater White-fronted Goose	4	American Kestrel	10
Canada Goose	842	Merlin	1
Wood Duck	9	Peregrine Falcon	1
Gadwall	17	Blue Jay	123
American Widgeon	cw	American Crow	375
American Black Duck	cw	Horned Lark	7
Mallard	589	Carolina Chickadee	105
Northern Shoveler	5	Tufted Titmouse	91
Green-winged Teal	cw	Red-breasted Nuthatch	3
Lesser Scaup	589	White-breasted Nuthatch	97
Common Goldeneye	4	Brown Creeper	11
Hooded Merganser	cw	Winter Wren	1
Common Merganser	cw	Carolina Wren	36
Red-breasted Merganser	cw	Golden-crowned Kinglet	11
Ruddy Duck	3	Eastern Bluebird	33
Northern Bobwhite	cw	Hermit Thrush	1
RingNecked Pheasant	cw	American Robin	1351
Great Blue Heron	11	European Starling	4249
Northern Harrier	5	Cedar Waxwing	13
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Lapland Longspur	55
Cooper's Hawk	8	Yellow-rumped Warbler	4
Bald Eagle	61	American Tree Sparrow	111
Red-shouldered Hawk	21	Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Red-tailed Hawk	17	Field Sparrow	cw
Rough-legged Hawk	2	Fox Sparrow	4
American Coot	1	Dark-eyed Junco	553
Sandhill Crane	64	White-crowned Sparrow	17
Killdeer	1	White-throated Sparrow	50
Wilson's Snipe	7	Savanna Sparrow	cw
Ring-billed Gull	12	Song Sparrow	48
Rock Pigeon	646	Swamp Sparrow	6
Mourning Dove	205	Eastern Towhee	1
Eastern Screech-Owl	cw	Northern Cardinal	187
Great Horned Owl	2	Red-winged Blackbird	17
Barred Owl	2	Eastern Meadowlark	1
Long-eared Owl	1	Rusty Blackbird	cw
Short-eared Owl	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	88
Belted Kingfisher	12	House Finch	170
Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Purple Finch	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	83	American Goldfinch	109
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	House Sparrow	4322
Downy Woodpecker	82		
Hairy Woodpecker	18	Total Species seen:	74
Northern Flicker	38	Count Week:	14
Pileated Woodpecker	29	Total Birds	1,183

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS FOR ELEPHANTS — from WWF

1. The International Union for Conservation of Nature determined that savanna elephants and forest elephants are separate species. This means that forest elephants will get their own funding and attention.
2. WWF's education efforts and targeted buyer campaigns helped drive down demand for elephant ivory by 49% in China.
3. Using thermal camera-based anti-poaching systems in Zambia's Kafae National Park & other sites has been remarkably successful at reducing and even eliminating poaching.

Historic Decision by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The court accused the Peruvian government with violating its peoples right to a healthy environment by letting a century old metal smelter to poison the community of La Oroya. The court determined the

MT. RAINIER WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN GAIN PROTECTION

This bird—the smallest of the ptarmigan species and the only one which lives above tree line all year—is now protected under the endangered species act. The main problem is habitat loss. As the tree line moves north as the climate warms, it eliminates the meadows the birds use in summer and reduces the layer of winter snow they can burrow under for warmth. Next step? Safeguarding the birds' habitat. Birds with protected habitat are twice as likely to recover as those without.

Research done by the Union of Concerned Scientists concluded that 37% of forest land burned in western north America since 1986 can be traced to emissions from the top 88 carbon producers.

The bird was first proposed for protection 14 years ago which means the decision is 12 years behind the two years decisions are supposed to take.



White-tailed Ptarmigan in winter plumage

Tyson Water Dump

Between 2018 and 2022 it is estimated that Tyson Foods, the world's largest meat and poultry processor, dumped more than 371 million pounds of pollutants directly into US waterways.

PFAS limit set by EPA

Last spring the EA set the first enforceable federal limits on PFAS in tap water. Along with the rule limiting these 'forever chemicals', they also announced \$1-billion in funds for local communities to test and treat their drinking water.

Congo Basin Initiative

The Jane Goodall Institute known for the protection and research on gorillas and related species, recently outlined a plan to secure nearly 2 million acres of protected areas in the Congo Basin. Not only is the Basin one of the most biodiverse of ecosystems left on earth, it absorbs more carbon than the Amazon—nearly 1.5 billion tons of CO2 a year.

It is also home to 75 million people, 10,000 plant and 400 animal species and threatened by political instability and climate impacts.

The institute will be working with local communities to get them the legal ownership of community managed protected areas and also expand the corridors used by wildlife. They Goodall institute have already helped three communities protect 280,000 acres of intact forest on the southern border of Maiko National park.

Special Birthday You're Invited

Homer Erickson, retired Professor of Botany at Purdue and a founding member of SAS turns 100 this year.

A birthday party in his honor will be held on campus in the Purdue Botany Building at 1 pm March 8 at 1 p.m. Please stop by and say hello.

Years ago, Homer was part of a Purdue exchange program with the nation of Brazil, as was Russ Mumford and other Purdue faculty. Homer worked with and near a small school in one of the provinces.

While there, he also helped Russ work on identifying and cataloging the birds of the area. The school is now a university and is using the book Russ and Homer put together as a text for their Ornithology classes.

Lost Bird Project leads to New Reserve

The search for the Sinu Parakeet, a lost bird* which has not been seen since 1949, led in part to the establishment of the 656 A La Crisalina reserve in NW Colombia. Two field searches seeking the parakeet along with posters and a reward resulted in finding the first Crested Eagle nest for Colombia, which helped establish La Cristalina. The ABC (American Birding Conservancy), along with its Columbian partner Sociedad Ornitologica de Cordoba and other groups led to the reserve's creation. The Eagle is listed as Near Threatened. It has a large range but very sparse distribution.

The new reserve is home to over 300 species of birds including the Critically Endangered Blue-billed Curassow and the Endangered Great Green Macaw.

An active Crested Eagle nest was found in Peru last year. A nest cam was set up in a location that would not disturb the nest and went live 24/7 on YouTube and the organizations websites.

*Lost birds are species not seen for 10 or more years. Currently the list has 125 species on it

36%
The proportion of US methane pollution that comes from livestock.

Purdue A Part of Nationwide Research Network

By putting up Motus Towers at Cuingham Woods (CW), the Purdue Wildlife Area (PWA) and Lugar Farms (LF), Purdue has helped expand the state and nations research network which pick up radio transmitters on a variety of wildlife species moving through the area. More sites mean more and better information for researchers. The 3 towers, pick up the signature of radio transmitters on a variety of tagged wildlife species passing within a 9 mile radius. Here are just some of the species detected by the towers:

Red-eyed Vireo (C W) from Ontario, Canada
Yellow Warbler (PWA, LF) from Montreal, Canada
Eastern Whip-poor-will (PWA, LF) from Ontario, Canada
Common Nighthawk (LF) from MPG Ranch in Montana
Swainson's Thrush (CW, PWA, LF) British Columbia & Saskatchewan Canada

The three towers raise the number of Indiana's tower locations to 21, including one at the Purdue South-eastern Agricultural Center. Funding came from a grant program from the **Purdue Office of Experiential Education**, the **Purdue Ag Alumni Trust Fund** and the **Mary Rice Grant program**. The addition of the towers would not have possible without Brian Beheler of FNR and Joel Wahlman of SEPAC who set up the towers at each location.

Dr. Barny Dunning explained being a part of the Motus tower network could have a local impact on Purdue students in addition to assisting researchers across the world with animal tracking. "With the establishment of Motus towers at Purdue, existing class projects using radio transmitters will be enhanced. We also envision that students will be inspired to start new research initiatives, a core piece of the transformative experience we want to provide in FNR."

Kaitlyn Young, a master's student in Dunning's lab, is utilizing the information from the towers for her research on eastern towhee migration in central Indiana. "The Motus network made my master's project possible," Young said. "My original research question was to determine when Eastern Towhees depart for fall migration. After attaching Cellular Tracking Technologies PowerTags on my sample of towhees, however, all the birds left their territory earlier than expected. Thanks to the Motus towers we installed I have some puzzling yet interesting results to report. Working with Motus has inspired so many more migration-related questions that I hope to explore as I continue my research career."

Nature & Trip Report Notes

- Oct 5th Field trip went to the Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat Area looking for late fall migrants. They found 39 species overall, including 7 species of sparrows (including 6 individual Lincoln's Sparrows); plus a few lingering water birds —Wilson's Snipe, a Northern Shoveler, both species of teal, and a pair of Trumpeter Swans. The unexpected highlight



was the Blue Jay migration. For two hours a flock of jays passed overhead flying southwest every 10 minutes or so. The two largest groups consisted of 157 and 137

birds. Over all, at least 450 jays flew by.

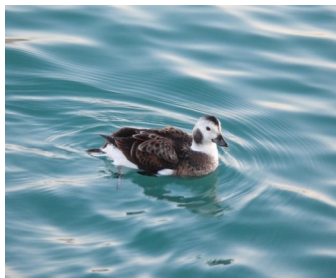
- Ed Hopkins saw an immature Franklin's Gull on Oct 13. It spent most of the afternoon hanging around with a Ring-billed Gull.
- SAS's first tries at Birdability events had a slow start. Weather was a partial factor as was the Purdue Half-Marathon race at Celery Bog, but the main factor was most likely publicity. We will try again next year. Your suggestions for how to improve getting the info out would be appreciated.
- The Nov 10th Overlook event only drew a few people thanks to the windy weather. Those who came struggled to see/hear 27 species— 5 of them sparrows—in an hour before calling it quits.
- Four SAS members led by George Kopcha went on the Jasper-Pulaski Field Trip. A 5th member came down from Michigan City but failed to find them. All did get to see and hear an estimated 3,000 Sandhill Cranes.

- Mark Arvin reported a friend of his saw a Snowy Owl Dec. 2nd flying over her car northbound on 52 just south of Veterans Memorial Parkway. The bird landed on a white tank in the industrial park. The next morning Mark looked for it. He searched for an hour without spotting it.

- A Northern Shrike showed up at Susan Ulrich's yard in eastern Warren Count on Dec 4. The bird caught one bird coming to her feeders and flew off with it. It was not seen again although subsequent bird behavior indicated some predator was around.

- Dec 28 Barny visited Bicentennial Park where 10 Common Mergansers and 4 Common Goldeneyes showed up as a late Holiday present..

- A second Snowy Owl report for the area was from Johnathan Lindell. He saw the owl in Carroll County in early January between Delphi and Flora.



- The most exciting bird for January was a female Long-tailed Duck (picture above). It was in the company of a large number of Goldeneyes at Bicentennial Park. Barny's report noted that sightings were late in the day (5:20-30 p.m.).

The size of the Goldeneye flock was also of interest. Initially at 125 birds, the flock grew to 165-57 on subsequent days, complete with male and female courtship displays. Barny noted he usually feels lucky seeing 10 or more at a time. He believes the reason for the late arrival time was that the birds spent

their days on the Wabash and then moved inland for the night.

- Looking for an alternative Short-eared Owl location since the Granville site was converted to row-crops, Barny checked a field on the county road between Tippecanoe and White Counties in early Jan. The road is marked as White County Road 1300 South, but in eBird it is marked as "E County Line Road N". He arrived about 5:10 p.m. and had one owl flying around hunting during his 10 minute stay. As a bonus, He also had a flock of about 35 Lapland Longspurs and 5 Horned Larks at the C.R. 1300 South and C.R. 100 East intersection.

- Ed Hopkins visited the area a few days later on Jan 8 and saw two Short-eared owls in the western most hayfield on N County Line Road E of Tippecanoe CR 300 East. One got to within 30 yards of Tippecanoe County on two occasions but they both stayed in the hayfield in White County. He got there at 5:20 and stayed until 6 p.m

- 1/17 Larry & Becky Theller stood where trail 3 meets the Wabash in Prophetstown SP and saw 200 ducks out of bino range. There were a couple of wigeon and a Redhead nearby and a Common Merganser flew overhead. Two possible loons were near the ducks. Not having a scope or camera, they left and returned with a scope. The ducks were still there but at 3:30 were so backlit by glare that the scope didn't help.

