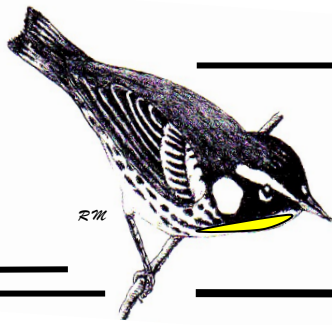




Sycamore Warbler

Volume 50 issue 4 Oct-Nov 2025

Special Great Lakes Audubon Sponsored Field Trip Draws a Crowd

On September 6 throng of at least 26 people gathered for different parts of SAS's Celery Bog Wetland's field event. The event was sponsored by National Audubon Society's Great Lakes Chapter to focus on wetlands and their value to birds.

After splitting the group into two groups due to the number of participants, the two groups embarked on a 2-hour bird walk. There were several active flocks of warblers that played hide and seek in the trees, along with a variety of other species. Finally both groups ended up at the far pond to enjoy a wide variety of shorebirds and waterbirds, including a nice Sora Rail (right).

Totaling the species for the day the group as a whole saw or heard at least 65 species, including at least 16 species of warblers, i.e. Wilson's, Golden-winged, Cape May, Chestnut-sided and a LOT of American Redstarts. One participant (at least) found a Mourning Warbler by the north pond. Another person who birded an additional two hours ended up with 76



species. All in all, one of many very good warbler and other migrant birding days lately.

Returning to the Nature Center the group found two picnic tables with drinks and nibbles arranged by George Kopcha. He provided the drinks and Great Lakes Audubon provided funds for the treats from **Mama Ines Mexican Bakery** and a **variety of raffle prizes**.



The latter included **three digiscoping adapters to be made by Alex Kittleson**, and **gift coupons for Silver Dipper ice cream or coffee from Java Joe's**. Some SAS board members also donated books and T-shirts as prizes. The adapters and ice cream went fast. Everyone who put their name in won something.

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Global Big Day Oct 11

Everyone should get out and do some fall birding, regardless of whether you join us or not.

Our plans are to coordinate a trip with the Indiana Audubon Society and NICHES, land trust, to see some of their properties.

We will go to Mulvey Pond and the adjacent Howell Woods. Meet at the Celery Bog gravel parking lot at 8:30 am for carpooling. Questions? Call Rachel (see above)

CHAPTER NEWS

Board Actions

Larry Theller requested a \$675 donation from the board for a wall-mounted smart TV (\$400) and Haiku Box (\$275) with paid annual membership for the Lilly Nature Center. The TV, along with a Terra Listens device, previously donated (by Larry Theller) will provide a visual display of birds singing at Celery Bog and will stream the live audio into the observation room.

The Haiku Box will record and identify bird songs near the feeders and post them to a live public website. Both of the aspects of this project will improve the educational opportunities that local and migrating birds afford with minimal effort for staff and volunteers at Lily Nature Center.

His motion was moved and seconded, and passed unanimously.

The board also considered whether or not to continue to

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.

Upcoming Programs

October: Radar Ornithology: Tracking migration under the cover of darkness Dr. Kyle Horton is an associate professor at Purdue University in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. Dr. Horton's Aeroecology Lab uses radar to uncover where and when millions of birds migrate after dark, how city lights alter flight paths, and how these discoveries power forecasts that protect birds in real time.

November: Make Way for Ducks (and Vultures, and Geese): Mitigating Avian-Vehicle Collisions. Purdue graduate student Shane Guenin will talk about his research on avian vision and behavior being used to reduce hazardous bird strikes with aircraft.

schedule meetings for both the months of January and February because of the possibility of bad weather. The board decided to continue holding them but with the offer of zoom options.

Fall Intro Nature

Join us for this year's **Fall into Nature**, an engaging outdoor event at Horticulture Park featuring guided nature hikes and a variety of other fun nature-related activities. Food will be provided via a TACO truck. If you would like to help out at table for SAS contact George Kopcha.

The event will be held Thursday, **October 23** from 4 to 7 p.m. SAS will be one of a number of groups that will be there with information booths to interact with the students.



The event is primarily aimed at introducing Purdue Students to various groups they might find of interest. A sister event (**Spring into Nature**) is held each spring.

Horticulture Park is at 300 McCormick Road. The event has usually been held at the south west end of the park. Stop by and say "Hi" .

Field Trips

Early bird walks (8 am, Celery Bog starting at gravel parking lot) will continue on Thursdays at least through Thanksgiving Weekend.

Sat. Oct 11. Global Big Day! See front page for details. SAS is coordinating a trip with **Indiana Audubon** and **NICHES, Land Trust**, to visit and bird some of their properties. We will go to Mulvey Pond and the nearby Howell Woods. Meet at Celery Bog's gravel parking lot at 8:30 am to carpool.

Sun. Oct 12. Fall waterfowl trip. Traditionally SAS has a field trip focusing on water birds the last weekend before duck hunting season (I starts Oct. 13th!). Meet at 8:30 am to carpool at Celery Bog. We will go where waterfowl, shorebirds, terns or other water birds are being reported. ½ day trip.

Sat. Oct 18. Possible day-long trip to the Lake Michigan Shore to look for fall migrants that don't regularly show up in the West Lafayette area. Possibilities include gulls, terns, ducks and some songbirds. Remember: traditionally the worse the weather on this field trip, the better the birds! **Contact Barny if interested in going. details will be organized if there is enough interest.**

Wed. Oct 22. Get to the Point event at Celery Bog from 5-7 pm. Meet at "the point" between the two main wetland basins to look for passing birds.

Sat. Nov 1. Audubon at the Overlook. 5-7 pm. Meet at the observation deck at the end of the paved road in Prophetstown State Park to look for and talk about whatever birds are around. The Purdue game is away that weekend, so no conflict. We could do either morning or evening.

Sat. Nov 15. Late fall migrants! Meet at gravel parking lot at 8 am to look for the migrants that tend to straggle through after the early pulse of warblers and flycatchers. We will start at Celery Bog, but may go to Bicentennial if interesting water birds are being reported there. ½ day trip.

**Birds can be found anywhere
at anytime, so keep looking!**

Tid Bits

- A recent study found that tree bark plays a vital role in removing methane from the +atmosphere.
- The Eurasian swift can stay in the air for weeks or months. They drink water by flying close to the surface of lakes and sleep flying high up in circles with one eye open. They only have to land when sexually mature to raise their young.
- Hummers have heart rates from 400-1200 bpm, but during their resting cycle (called Torpor), their heart rates can Dip as low as 40 bpm.
- Hummingbirds are the only known birds with forked tongues.
- Hummingbirds flap their wings in a figure 8 pattern and can beat their wings 70 times per second or up to 12,000 bpm!
- Some indigenous cultures see hummingbirds as deceased ancestors returning to visit the living.
- Turkey vultures are thought to have the strongest sense of smell of any vulture (which incidentally means of any bird, since old world vultures are thought to be the only birds with a sense of smell). In fact, their sense of smell is so strong that they are used as an indicator by gas companies to find gas leaks, as the additive used to give gas it's bad smell is the same as one of the byproducts of putrefaction. So turkey vultures will swarm around gas leaks .
- Birds were the first animal found to be capable of keeping a musical beat, even when the tempo changes. The second animal found to have this capability was the Sea Lion.
- A bird's eye takes up about 50 percent of its head; our eyes take up about 5 percent of our head. To be comparable to a bird's eyes, our eyes would have to be the size of baseballs.

Conservation & Environmental News

Support Public Lands

Public lands are our country's single biggest clean water provider. According to the US Forest Service, National Forests are the largest source of municipal water supply in the nation — 60 million people in 3,400 communities across 33 states.

Some of our major cities, like Los Angeles, Portland, Denver, and Atlanta receive a large portion of their water supply from national forests.

Birds have an unusual tolerance for cold

According to Alexander Badyaev, evolutionary biologist



and photographer, birds tolerate cold well. As much as 70% of a bird's body weight consists of muscle — **at least two times more than any other vertebrate.** And that muscle becomes one of their primary sources of heat.

Instead of warmth, it's a need for new or more abundant food sources that stirs most birds on their seasonal quests, not the temperature.

BIRDBASE–DATASET Tracks Ecological Traits

info forwarded by Chuck Tuttle

BIRDBASE dataset tracks ecological traits for 11,589 species of birds. 26 years ago Çağan Şekercioğlu was an ambitious, but perhaps naive graduate student when he embarked on a simple data-compilation project that would soon evolve into a massive career-defining achievement.

With the help of countless students and volunteers, the University of Utah conservation biologist has finally released BIRDBASE, an encyclopedic dataset of traits covering all the bird species recognized by the world's four major avian taxonomies.

Described in a study published in the journal *Scientific Data*, the dataset covers 78 ecological traits, including conservation status, for 11,589 species of birds in 254 families. The main trait categories tracked are body mass; habitat; diet; nest type; clutch size; life history; elevational range; and movement strategy, that is whether and how they migrate.

While some little-known species still have incomplete data, the dataset provides a foundation for ornithologists around the world to conduct new global analyses in ornithology, conservation biology and macroecology, including the links between bird species' ecological traits and their risk of extinction, according to Şekercioğlu, a professor in the university's School of Biological Sciences. He also hopes **BIRDBASE** will help other biologists win support for studying avian conservation.

"To get funding you have to have a big question, but without data, how are you going to answer those big questions?" Şekercioğlu posed. "It also shows we still have ways to go. Birds are the best-known class of organism, but even though they are the best known, we still have big data gaps."

BIRDBASE has proven a boon to many avian researchers who have tapped it to support dozens of papers, most of them listing Şekercioğlu as co-author. The tally of Şekercioğlu's papers that have used BIRDBASE currently stands at 98, accounting for 14,000 of Şekercioğlu's 24,000-plus citations.

Among the conclusions the dataset has enabled is that a majority of the world's bird species, or 54%, are insectivores (see picture to right) and many species in this group are under pressure.

"Most of them are tropical forest species. It is a very important group and they're declining," he said. "They're sensitive even though



they're not hunted. They are small, so they don't need a big area. You wouldn't expect them to be the most sensitive group to habitat fragmentation but they are highly specialized."

The dataset also showed that fish-eating seabirds are at elevated risk of extinction as well, and fruit-eating birds are vital to the survival of tropical rain forests.



"The most important seed dispersers in the tropics are frugivorous birds," Şekercioğlu said. "In some tropical forests, over 90% of all woody plants' seeds are dispersed by fruit-eating birds who eat them and then defecate the seeds somewhere else and they germinate."

DID YOU KNOW?

The oxygen produced by the life in the oceans provides 50% of all the oxygen we breath.

Culture Affects Birds' Nestbuilding

Neighboring groups of birds within the same species can create very different-looking nests — showing that their nest-building choices aren't solely controlled by instinct and the environment. Instead, these birds seem to learn rules for nest-making that get passed down within a family group from generation to generation.

That's the conclusion of researchers who studied the grassy structures built over two years by white-browed sparrow weavers living in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa. The small, brown-and-white birds live communally. It turns out that groups that lived quite near to each other nonetheless built distinctive architectural forms.



The finding suggests that nests might not be the product of innate behavior alone. "It might be that we're seeing a tradition", says Maria Cristina Tello-Ramos, a researcher of the study associated with the University of St. Andrews. Scientists already knew that groups of animals, including birds, can form their own cultures, in the sense that important information is passed through social learning rather than just genetics.

Birdsongs can have regional "accents," and birds also look to their elders to learn about foraging and migration, says Tello-Ramos. Lab studies suggested that the same can be true for nest-building.

Experiments show that inexperienced male zebra finches watch familiar males choosing nest-building materials and then use that information to modify their own choices. If before they preferred a pink ribbon, rather than an orange one, then they will prefer the orange one if they see others using the orange," says Tello-Ramos.

She wanted to see how social learning might affect the nest building of white-browed sparrow weavers. highly social birds live in extended families of two to 14 individuals.

Humans transmit a lot of information to each other through asocial learning, notes Sheard, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, who studies diversity in bird nests but wasn't part of the research team. "but there's sort of this old-fashioned belief that animals don't do that at all and it's purely genetic, or you build things out of whatever's laying around."

As this study shows, that's just not true, she says. And in addition to learning from other birds, birds can learn from their own experiences.

Nature & Trip Report Notes

- Three people participated in the Aug. 30 trip to the Overlook. 45 species were seen or heard including Bobolink, two Sandhill Cranes, Blackburnian Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, plus late singing Sedge Wrens. Chuck got nice photos and also found a singing Blue Grosbeak. A "somewhat early" Red-breasted Nuthatch was there as well.

- Tuesday, Sept 2, was a good day at the Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat Area in Benton County. Best bird was an immature dark ibis. These birds can be either White-faced Ibis or Glossy Ibis, both are rare for our area and difficult to tell apart at this time of year. The ibis was still being seen the next day at the southern most wetland basin. Also present Tuesday was a basic plumaged Red-necked Phalarope, several Common Gallinules and an American Bittern late in the day and Northern Pintails joined the Blue-winged Teal and Great Egrets.

- The Sept 4 early bird walk drew 9 people who had 65 species in two hours of birding. Vivek Govind Kumar started before the group and ended up with at least 72 species. Lucas Wilson who birded the Purdue Wildlife Area that same morning, reported lots of migrants there, too.

- Some of the highlights for Celery Bog included more duck species than usual. 14 warbler species, 4 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, 4 Solitary Sandpipers, plus Philadelphia Vireo, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and Veery. Warblers included Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, Cape May, Magnolia, several Golden-winged and Ovenbird. Perhaps the most unique sighting at the Bog that morning was a roosting Common Nighthawk in a bare tree below the nature center. A wonderful photo of it taking off is

seen below.



- Barny recently saw a listing of 19 different seasons for Indiana - [the recent cool spell was "fake fall".] Thus he wasn't expecting a whole lot for the Sept 11 Early Bird Walk, but hit a couple of small flocks of warblers and vireos and by the end the total was about 65 species. Vivek Govind Kumar had a total of 68 species since he started before the "official" walk began. Right at the very end, Vivek had the best bird of the morning: a female-type Hooded Warbler which was one of 13 warbler species for the day. Other interesting migrants included Philadelphia Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, most of the expected thrushes, and four species of shorebirds.

- Temperatures on the next Early bird Walk on the suggest it was a "second summer" but fall migration continued. Birdcast reported 1.7 million birds passed overhead the night before (given the winds out of the north). Early morning (around 7:45-8 am) the field trip produced 40 species

including Northern Water-thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, lots of Bay-breasted Warblers, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Philadelphia Vireo and an Indigo Bunting. Red-breasted Nuthatch continue to be heard there and in town. A Stilt Sandpiper continued at the mud flats at the north end of Celery Bog - it had been there for about 2 days. Barny reports that the past Tuesday was a good day at Pine Creek Gamebird Habitat Area in Benton County. Best bird was an immature dark ibis. These birds can be either White-faced Ibis or Glossy Ibis. Both are rare for our area and difficult to tell apart at this time of year. Also present that Tuesday was a basic plumaged Red-necked Phalarope, several Common Gallinules and an American Bittern late in the day.

- Saturday Sept 20 was a nice outing learning about the "**Forestry For the Birds**" program with 7 folks. Larry Theller reports there were coffee and donuts waiting for them in the Sugar Shack while learning details about the program. Following the presentation they walked down to the Tippecanoe River and back— around 1.5 miles. The highlights were a purple finch, a kingfisher hanging out at the pond, a white-eye vireo singing, and close looks at a blackpoll warbler. Plus 15 minutes trying to spot a yellow-billed cuckoo who was a master at hiding in plain sight..

- Larry Theller enjoyed a late 90 minute lunch on Sept 25, watching his small pond where he saw a Black-throated green warbler, 2 American Redstarts, 2 Bay-breasted Warblers, a Blackpoll, and a Tennessee Warbler, along with a show-stopping Golden-winged male in bright plumage, coming down to splash and bathe in the water.