



Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society

CARDINAL



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Upcoming Events

- **Reduce Invasive Species**
Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary
May 1-3
- **IAS Spring Festival**
Friday, May 1-Sunday, May 3
- **Indiana Dunes Birding Festival**
May 7-10

Get more info at indianaaudubon.org
or look for us on [facebook](#)



Long-eared Owl photo by Scott Arvin



SPRING FESTIVAL PROGRAM PREVIEW

MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY, MAY 1-3, 2015

SAVE THE DATE!

The Indiana Audubon Society is excited to announce the line-up for our Spring Festival! Please join us this weekend as we learn about pollination and native pollinators, learn about the coolest little raptors in Indiana, American Kestrels, get up-close and personal with hummingbirds, and enjoy a virtual birding trip to Africa. As always there will be lots of birding, early morning hikes, and food and fellowship. Lastly, we also have a special comedic skit for you about being a manager of a bird sanctuary. So please join us for a bird inspired weekend at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary.

FRIDAY EVENING

How Indiana Wildflowers Get Pollinated

Peter Scott

This talk focuses on the ways that flowering plants attract effective animal pollinators, and secondarily on the insects that visit flowers, their lifestyles and foraging behavior. Forest wildflowers of the sanctuary illustrate various strategies for pollination. Most are hermaphrodite (bisexual), and need help with pollination, while a few have unisexual flowers. Most flowers provide a food reward for insect visitors -- at least pollen and often nectar -- but some are deceptive and do not reward a pollinator's assistance. A flower's shape and several other features determine whether it receives visits by only a few types of insects or many; both the specialized and generalized strategy have advantages and disadvantages. Our main pollinators are bees, flies, wasps, butterflies and moths. Probably 100 species of bees occur at Mary Gray. Many are solitary, each female building her own nest, while others are social (with queens and sterile workers) or parasitic (laying eggs in other bees' nests). Length of flight season for insect pollinators varies (from 3 weeks to 5 months), as does the degree of specialization on flower types. Plant-pollinator interactions are fascinating because they often yield mutually beneficial outcomes (good seed production and well-fed, fertile insects), but are evolutionarily driven by competition and conflicts of interest.

SATURDAY MORNING

Greet the Morning with a Bird Walk – Warblers are here!

Alan Bruner

A Spring Festival is simply not a festival without getting up early for the Saturday morning Bird Walk! Last year we tallied over 100 species of birds during the weekend. Help us top that number. Your trip leader is top notch at locating those special birds.

9 AM The BIG Sit & Bird Banding

Bird watching at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary is such an enjoyable event, but sometimes it's nice to catch

up with long lost friends that we haven't seen recently. Hence, the Big Sit – Fellowship and birding. It doesn't get any better than that. The goal will be to list what birds are seen from the front porch, bird blind, around Brooks Hall, and at the Sanctuary while friends catch up with friends. This year we'll add a net and band a few of our feathered friends. All banded birds are, of course, added to the MAPS scientific database.

Take the Challenge

How well do you know your birds? Participate in the bird contest presented in Brook's Hall and name as many birds as you can based on photographs taken by our new Resident Caretaker, Mr. Michael Hall. Michael has been assisting with bird banding for several years and has photographed his own learning curve. So check out the cool photographs and name that bird!

11 AM American Kestrels!

Michael Hall

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

1:30 PM Great Lakes HummerNet

Allen Chartier

The Great Lakes HummerNet is a research project, initiated autumn 2001 by Project Director Allen Chartier. It is designed to learn more about hummingbirds in Michigan, Ohio, and northern Indiana by enlisting the help of volunteer observers throughout the region. Data is gathered through observation as well as banding studies.

This presentation will describe the research objectives of the project, tell you how you can participate, provide helpful hints on how to attract and feed hummingbirds, provide hummingbird gardening tips, and review what has been learned so far.

2:45 PM Oh, the Questions: Answering the phone for the Indiana Audubon Society

Amy & Carl Wilms

The residents at Indian Audubon's Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary receive hundreds of phone calls each

year. When the phone rings, Carl and Amy take turns answering the vast array of questions that folks ask. Sometimes the questions are simple and others are just downright tough to answer; but they are always interesting! This fun and enlightening interactive program will make you laugh and learn about the questions people ask.

3:30PM Wildflower and Pollinator Hike

Peter Scott

Along sanctuary trails, we will examine a dozen wildflower species, and their structures and adaptations for pollination, including placement of anthers and stigma, nectar secretion, and flower-opening patterns. We will look for corpses of mushroom flies in the female spathes of Jack-in-the-Pulpit, a species that traps and kills its pollinator. Other common flowers will be Geranium, Stellaria, Phlox, Mitella, Trillium, and Viola. With patience, we should see some bees and flies, and learn how to study them in the morning when reward levels are high.

SATURDAY EVENING

7:00 PM Birding Kenya (with Mammals Too)

Alan Bruner & Peter Scott

Alan Bruner and Peter Scott describe a two-week birding trip that introduced them to five of Kenya's national parks and game reserves: Tsavo, Amboseli, Masai Mara, Lakes Nakuru and Naivasha. Traveling in a Land Cruiser with a Kenyan guide, they identified 350 bird species (a third of Kenya's total) and numerous big mammals. Kenya is a very pleasant and exciting place for a birder to get to know African birds and other wildlife.

8 PM Fellowship in Brooks Hall or around the campfire

SUNDAY

7:30 AM Sunrise Bird Walk

Ryan Slack

Come join us for the Sunday morning bird hike with Ryan. Ryan has been birding the Sanctuary for many years and has a special knack for finding target birds. There's nothing quite like a morning walk through the Sanctuary, so join us and help us increase the bird list for the weekend.

The BIG Sit – Day 2



INDIANA DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL

Experience birding like never before...

on Lake Michigan's South Shore

MAY 7-10, 2015

Inaugural Indiana Dunes Birding Festival Registration Live!

The Indiana Audubon Society is helping to host the very first Indiana Dunes Birding Festival, May 7-10, 2015. The festival is being held a week after the popular spring festival and meeting at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary.

This four day festival features over 60 programs, workshops, field tours, and hikes. The highlight is special keynote presentation by National Geographic Birding Adventure's James Currie. The Indiana Dunes Birding Festival is an event designed to celebrate the dunes area's rich biodiversity and bird watching opportunities to create a positive impact on the economic, conservation, and environmental education for visitors and residents to the Indiana Dunes region.

IAS members will want to hurry and register, as the event will no doubt fill up. Registration is now live and can be accessed at www.indunesbirdingfestival.com. Here's sneak peek of some of the programming being offered.

Highlight Activities!

- Peregrine Falcons: Cheetahs of the Sky!
- Birding the Indiana Dunes
- Gull ID of the Great Lakes
- Nature Photography: Getting it Right!
- Which Warbler was That!?
- Birds and Brew
- Lakefront Birding Tours
- Indiana Young Birders Day at the Parks!
- Wild Whippoorwills
- The Raptor Experience: Birds of Prey Live
- Birdscaping your Lawn

JAMES CURRIE, KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL

by Alex Forsythe

The first annual Indiana Dunes Birding Festival is fast approaching, and there is much excitement surrounding the event. With world-class birding, outstanding field trips and interesting speakers, it is easy to see why birders will be flocking to the festival. Of special interest is the keynote speaker: James Currie. His top-rated “Birding Adventures” television show is very popular, and his book, “When Eagles Roar”, tells us much about him. I have had the pleasure of working with him in the Race 4 Birds Foundation. However, I still wanted to know more about this fascinating man so I asked him a series of questions. This is what I have learned from his book, from working with him and from our conversations.

At a young age James Currie developed a deep connection with nature, and his interest was inspired and encouraged by his aunt Jan. She took him birding, taught him how to observe nature, and she nurtured his curiosity and enthusiasm for the flora and fauna around him in Africa. At age ten, he witnessed a Black Eagle catch its prey right in front of him, and from that point on, he was a birder. He and his parents thought birding was a safe activity. “How much trouble could you get into with a pair of binoculars?” However, he soon learned that birding could be exhilarating and even dangerous. Watching that first eagle was harmless and thrilling; watching an eagle three decades later almost cost him his life. In between those two eagles were adventures most of us only dream about. “Many people think of birding as a passive pastime. No! That’s bird watching. Birding is an active pursuit, full of unknowns and excitement. To me, there’s nothing better than a healthy dose of birding on the edge.”

At age twenty-five he underwent grueling training to fulfill his life-long dream of becoming a game ranger. He worked at the Phinda Game Reserve, a model of restoration and conservation. The area was restored from agricultural fields, ranch lands and wastelands. Native plants and animals were carefully reintroduced with an emphasis on encouraging the local community’s support. Jobs were created through eco-tourism, and since local residents were benefitting from the conservation efforts, the wildlife was better

protected and the program was more successful than others.

As a game ranger, Mr. Currie had many close encounters with wildlife: charging elephants, lethal snakes, enraged Cape buffalo and large angry cats. Nonetheless, he tends to remain calm. “I seldom panic. Panic is the worst enemy for someone in a crisis. I need a clear mind, keen senses and the ability to problem-solve. I become captivated by the situation and detach myself from fear and irrational thought. I place myself outside, looking in as if I’m watching from a distance.” To his clients, he recites this mantra: “If anything unexpected should happen, whatever you do, do not run! Look at me and I’ll tell you exactly what to do.”

In addition to dealing with danger, he learned to track animals, read their behavior and recognize warning signs. He also became a talented story teller, able to captivate his clients and pull them in to the minds of the animals they witnessed, and create a sense of awe and wonder. For example, rather than just recite facts from a field guide, this is how he describes a cheetah: “As the cheetah takes off after its intended prey, a finely tuned body kicks into gear like a high performance racing car. A flexible spine alternately concaves and convexes as the back legs are pulled between the front legs, briefly touching the ground every twenty feet. The illusion is that of an airborne missile. The cheetah opens its mouth as it runs, inhaling air into the enlarged lungs, much like a V-8 engine sucks in gas for propulsion.” He goes on from there, forming a picture in your mind so vivid, you’d think you had watched a cheetah hunt its prey in your front yard. His description of a Bateleur Eagle is likewise poetic: “Watch how the eagle uses its wings, how the bird dips and raises those wings to compensate and catch its balance, much like the outstretched arms of a bateleur, which is French for “tightrope walker”.

Being a ranger was not always filled with dangers. There were touching, awe-inspiring moments as well. His favorite non-bird animal is the African elephant, and he was able to witness the interactions among elephants on many occasions. He deeply respects their

complex social relationships, intelligence, emotional range, and mentoring structure. “My experiences with elephants can only be described as instructive, enlightening, and even mystical. They have taught me a lot about myself, and I will always be grateful for the time I spent with these magnificent beasts. To witness the death of a single elephant is to experience the sadness of the loss of decades of wisdom, magnified a thousandfold when reflected through the eyes, ears and voices of the herd.”

Recognized for his skills and conservation efforts, he was asked to become managing director of the Africa Foundation in Johannesburg. The foundation served as a link between the communities, tourism, wildlife and conservation. They provided education and health care with the income generated by eco-tourism.

He also began a birding tourism company in southern Africa: HoneyGuides. The tour company was designed for “birders hell bent on increasing their birding life lists at all costs”. He helped clients locate birds like Wattled Cranes, Violet Wood-Hoopoes, Dune Larks, Herero Chats, Damara Rockjumper, Hartlaub’s Francolin and many more African specialties. While birding, he points out some of the other interesting flora and fauna, and he seems to attract fascinating animals into his path. He says the most surprising animal he has seen while birding was an African Serval that came within three feet of the car while he was searching for an African Pitta.

The idea of the “Birding Adventures” television show came to him in the middle of the night. He wanted to bring the world of birding to more people. What better way than through television? To decide what bird species, or “Golden Bird”, to feature on the show, it has to meet certain criteria. “It is always a bird that is unique to the area and something which traveling birders would love to see. It needs to be enigmatic in some way - either super rare, beautiful or extraordinary or a combination of these. It would be tough to make a Golden Bird out of a cisticola for example!” One example of a Golden Bird is the Sun Parakeet (aka, “Sun Conure”), which can only be found in pockets along the river in Guyana.

The rarest bird he has traveled to see was the



James Currie, *continued*

Ridgway's Hawk, of which there were only 200 left in the wild at the time. The most interesting birds that he has seen are Club-Winged Manakins, Western Bowerbirds or Torrent Ducks because they have "developed unique strategies to cope with life".

To find the birds for the program, he and his two videographers are usually accompanied by a local guide familiar with the area and the specific target bird. Mr. Currie focuses on birds in interesting places, but he also presents the surrounding flora and fauna while conveying facts about them in an entertaining way. In each episode he explores the local culture, features local experts, and emphasizes conservation. His favorite place in the world to go birding is the Western Cape of South Africa because of its natural diversity. He says that what makes a good birding location is "diversity, tendency to attract rarities and proximity/access to the birds."

His recently released book, "When Eagles Roar", covers the first chapter of his life. "It is about experiences with birds and wildlife. There is also

a strong interpersonal relationship element to the storyline and this makes the book somewhat unique when it comes to typical nature books." He is planning a second book that will contain all of the birding adventures he has had, especially while filming the "Birding Adventures" show. "Birding has a way of grabbing you, holding you in the passion of the moment, all attention on the trees, the sky, the birds. No thought of heat or cold or pain or wind or thirst or hunger or even trespassing through someone's property." No matter where he travels, he finds that birders are the same at heart. "The passion and love for birding is the same whenever you meet a birder from another country."

His favorite bird is the Harpy Eagle "mainly due to its symbolism and the fact that it is both strong (arguably the most powerful raptor on earth) and fragile (its vulnerability to habitat loss) at the same time - like most of us!" Eagles hold a special place in his life. "In my life eagles roar. They roar deeper than any lion."

He loves the excitement of birding. "I want to chase this thrill the rest of my life. To the ends of the earth". However, he is equally passionate about fostering a new generation of young birders. Most recently, he has helped create the Race 4 Birds Foundation to encourage more young people to join the birding world. "Race 4 Birds is the single best way for us to enhance the popularity of birding amongst the youth. After all, who doesn't like a bit of friendly competition?!" Working with him in the R4B Foundation, I have watched him put his words into action; he always goes the extra mile to encourage and support young people. He is truly passionate about the R4B mission, and he would like to see more young people become interested in the natural world.

His advice to young people: "Open your eyes and ears, get outside and unplug the electronics."



MUMFORD AND KELLER GRANTS/ SCHOLARSHIPS FUNDS AVAILABLE IN 2015

The Indiana Audubon Society is pleased to offer the Mumford and Keller Grants/Scholarship Program in 2015. This program is for individuals and organizations that are seeking funding for activities related to Indiana's natural resources, particularly those related to Indiana's avifauna. In 2015, \$2,000 has been set aside for applicants in many categories, including, but not limited to: research, bird preservation, workshop attendance, and youth birding activities.

Applications for funding are due by March 1 and August 1, 2015. Applications and more information are on the Indiana Audubon Society website (www.indianaaudubon.org). 