

Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society **CARDINAL**

October - November 2016 | USPS 129-810 Vol. 46, No. 5 | ISSN 0162-8186
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Inland Bird Banding Association Meeting
Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary
Connersville, IN
November 11th-13th

IAS Winter Owls U.P. Trip
St. Ignace, MI
February 3-5, 2017



BIRD TOWN INDIANA

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Keep an eye on those feeders!

Red-breasted Nuthatches are being seen in great numbers this year.

Red-breasted Nuthatch • Photo by John Lindsey

BIRD TOWN INDIANA

Carmel, Albion, and Bloomington are the latest cities to earn prestigious designation

contributed by Bird Town Indiana staff



Carmel's Mayor Brainard holding the BTI sign

Bird Town Indiana's "16 in '16" Challenge

To celebrate Indiana's Bicentennial, the Indiana Audubon Society recently announced its "16 in '16" challenge with the goal of naming 16 new Bird Town Indiana communities this year.

This designation is awarded by the Indiana Audubon Society to those Hoosier communities that demonstrate an active and ongoing commitment to the protection and conservation of bird populations and habitat. "We wanted to develop a special challenge to celebrate our natural heritage during our state's Bicentennial," said Dave Fox, Indiana Audubon's Bird Town Indiana chairman. "While this recognition is directly related to birds, we believe that protecting birds and their habitat leads to many other positive outcomes for the community as a whole, so it's a great way to pay tribute to our state's 200th birthday."

Three new Bird Town Indiana communities have received the status of Bird Town in 2016: Albion (Noble County), Bloomington (Monroe County), and Carmel (Hamilton County).

Connersville (home to the Indiana Audubon's Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary) South Bend, Indianapolis, Ligonier, Auburn, Terre Haute and Linton are currently working on certification.

Modeled after the "Tree City USA" program and the highly successful Bird City Wisconsin program, the Indiana Audubon Society began Bird Town Indiana in 2013. Communities complete an application, meeting at least seven criteria in different areas of interest to become certified.

The Bird Town Indiana 16 in '16 is an official Bicentennial Legacy Project of the Indiana Bicentennial Commission.

For more information, visit: www.indianaaudubon.org and click on the Bird Town Indiana tab or contact Dave Fox directly at: dfox@indianamuseum.org.



JAMES H. MASON AWARD

On October 1, IAS member Gary Bowman was presented with the James H. Mason Award for outstanding commitment to the society for his involvement in compiling the annual Christmas Bird Count in Indiana. His work has inspired others and IAS expresses its heartfelt appreciation for the years of service that Gary has provided.

PROGRESS UPDATE

Battle against invasives, maintenance shed upgrade, and Boy Scout Projects at Mary Gray

by Carl Wilms



Amy Wilms addresses a crowd of birders at the Mary Gray Fall Festival

Once again, where did it go? Another season has blown by.

A major thrust of the Sanctuary Committee and the residents' has been work the continued struggle to improve habitat by continuing the war on invasive plants. We are trying to establish battle lines in order to stop further incursions into cleaner parts of MGBS. On your next visit you may notice patches of brown scattered here and there providing evidence of limited, targeted, chemical warfare. In September, Amy and I went

to Mississippi for the Strawberry Plains Hummingbird Migration Festival. Aside from helping band 458 Ruby-Throats in 3 days, we found the nefarious Japanese stilt-grass growing throughout the grounds and forests of the 3000-acre property. Now, we only saw a very small piece of this property, but the impact of seeing sections of forest floor carpeted with stilt-grass, and nothing else, was sobering. We can't let that happen to Mary Gray!

We have built a new mower-deck cleaning area next to the maintenance shed. Its purpose is to allow easier cleaning of the underside of the mower decks between fields/trails so that we don't scatter the invasives when we mow. And, since we notice spotty stilt-grass presence along the foot trails, we are contemplating installing boot scrubbers at trail heads.

In our last Cardinal article we listed items that MGBS could use. Wayne and Marjorie Carmony contacted us and donated several fantastic items. A heavy-duty table grinder, drill press and bits, benches, various hand tools, and a pneumatic metal cutter were among the needed items. Thank you Wayne and Marjorie!

Two additional Boy Scout Eagle projects have also been conducted at MGBS. The first leg of Beech Trail (behind the first residence) had trail improvements and a new bridge installed. Kobe Rudin of BSA Troup 77 in Muncie did this. Jared Isaacs of Connersville BSA Troop 31 installed 3 new bat houses in the campground, in front of Brooks Hall, and near the prairie. These houses can accommodate up to 600 bats.

I have also returned to full-time employment with Indiana University's School of Education in Richmond, IN, working with pre-service teachers. But this has not stopped the warblers from returning...the hummers from leaving (after banding more than last year on our front porch)... and the beauty of your sanctuary being a privilege to steward. Come visit; come often. We believe that protecting birds and their habitat leads to many other positive outcomes for the community as a whole, so it's a great way to pay tribute to our state's 200th birthday.

MEET A MEMBER

Sarah McKillip discusses birding and her involvement with the Robert Cooper Audubon Society

by Brad Bumgardner



Indiana Audubon members are doing great work throughout the state. While Indiana Audubon Society has a statewide reach, our local chapters of the National Audubon Society provide that local level programming and real inspiration. Sarah is no different. As president of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society in east central Indiana, Sarah has been instrumental the education and youth programming in that region of the state. Meet Sarah!

1) Tell us a little about yourself?

I've lived in East Central Indiana (Muncie) for 12 years, and earned my MS in biology at Ball State University studying Cerulean Warblers with Dr. Kamal Islam. I'm serving my third term as president of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society. My husband and I have a five-month-old son, Walter. Besides raising our son, my other full-time job is working as a cataloger at Ball State's Bracken Library.

2) What drew you into birding and birds?

My grandmother always liked to watch birds from the window of her home in Cincinnati, and I liked it too. In college at Northern Kentucky University (near Cincinnati) I took my first ornithology class. I remember seeing an American Goldfinch for the first time during that class and thinking, "Why have I never noticed this bright yellow bird before? They've been here all this time, and I'm just now seeing one!?"

3) Tell us about your work with the Robert Cooper Audubon?

I became active with the Robert Cooper Audubon Society in 2009, as field trip chair. For the past five years, I've served as president. My main goals have included a stronger focus on education and youth outreach. We've visited elementary school kids in low-income areas to pass out books and binoculars; held a Christmas Bird Count for teens at the Youth Opportunity Center; and hosted monthly beginner bird hikes at Mounds State Park for the past two years.

4) What are your favorite Indiana birding destinations?

Loblolly Marsh and Limberlost Swamp properties, Mounds State Park

5) What IAS member benefit do you most enjoy?

The free subscription to Birds of North America. I used it all the time as a student.

6) What's your dream birding destination?

Magee Marsh in Ohio on a gorgeous spring day.

LIMBERLOST'S "BIRD BOX"

Alexandra Forsythe discusses the development of a teaching collection of materials for use by educators and parents.

by Alexandra Forsythe



My brother Scott and I have been given the incredible opportunity to work with the Limberlost State Historic Site to develop a Teaching Collection of materials for use by educators and parents. The Collection includes a resource tab on the Limberlost website, a mobile app, an ebook, a Teacher's Backpack for use during field trips, and the most recent addition: the Bird Box for use in the classroom or at home.

The Bird Box includes everything an educator would need, either before a visit to Limberlost or as a follow-up thematic unit: a teacher's guide and list of activities, books, bio facts, materials, and other visual aids. Students of all ages and experience levels can learn about bird anatomy and behavior, the importance of wetlands and conservation, and contributions made by Gene Stratton-Porter.

The activities and materials provided encourage a hands-on, experiential approach to learning that reinforces any textbook or lecture. For example, while studying the life history of birds, students can hold and peek inside transparent eggs and see how the chicks have developed on a daily basis. Students also learn about the Migratory Bird Treaty, are encouraged to listen to the sounds of nature alongside the Pastoral Symphony, and to conduct research on a variety of subjects, among other topics. Quotations from Gene Stratton-Porter serve as the basis for each activity. The number of topics, and the depth to which each topic is studied, is limited only by the teacher's schedule; the Bird Box provides months' worth of fun, educational activities.

It is our hope that the Bird Box, and the rest of the Teaching Collection, will set students on a course that will allow them to follow the path laid out by Indiana's most widely read female author and one of its most important naturalists. It was important to Gene that people learn about and appreciate the birds and their habitats. The Bird Box is designed to encourage the development of tomorrow's Gene Stratton-Porters.

Teachers want to help bring nature into their students' lives, but they often lack the funding, resources and time to do so properly. The generosity of IAS and the Friends of the Limberlost, and the brilliance of Terri Gorney, Randy Lehman, Curt Burnette, Bill Hubbard and Ben Hess, made it possible to bring this project to life and will give all area students the ability to learn more about birds, conservation, and natural history.

The Bird Box is currently available for teachers to "check out" from Limberlost, and a new Wetlands Box will be available by the end of 2016. On behalf of myself, my brother, the Friends, everyone at Limberlost, and all area students, a sincere thank you to IAS for your continued support.

**Editor's note: Alexandra Forsythe is heavily involved in conservation, in her spare time she is involved in a variety of organizations focusing on conservation, history and education. She has been a leader and active member of the Indiana Young Birders Club for some time. She has also worked with wildlife rehabilitators, charitable organizations, historical societies, Habitat for Humanity, and more.*

IAS WINTER OWLS UP TRIP 2017

This amazing trip is led by past IAS President Brad Bumgardner and will take place February 3-5, 2017

Snowy Owl



Join fellow IAS members for a winter excursion into the eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan for an adventure in search of wintering owl species of the north woods. Target birds include Snowy Owl, Great-Gray Owl, and Northern Hawk Owl. Additionally, the area is good for winter finches, including Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, and Redpoll. Other notables include Northern Shrike, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ruffed Grouse, Bald Eagle, Common Raven, Gray Jay, and Pine Siskin, Bohemian Waxwing, and Rough-legged Hawk.

The trip is a carpool tour led by IAS Past-President Brad Bumgardner, with attendees meeting at Pokagon State Park at 11am on Friday, February 3. Overnight will be in St. Ignace, Michigan with a full day of birding Saturday, and some morning birding Sunday before returning back south. Sites visited will include the famous Rudyard and Pickford Snowy Owl fields, Sault Ste. Marie, Hulbert Bog and Whitefish Point.

Common Redpoll



TRIP COST- \$146.00 per IAS Member. Non-member rate- \$182.00. Single Supplement \$78.00. Tickets go on sale October 15, 2016. For more info, please visit: <https://indianaudubon.org/event/ias-winter-owls-up-trip-2017/>

Participants are responsible for all food/drink costs, as well as transportation to and from the UP. Overnight lodging for two nights is included in the cost. The leader can help with arranging carpool vehicles. Carpool drivers should prepare for snowy driving conditions. SUV or four-wheel drive vehicles are recommended but not necessary. The trip difficulty is easy and most travel is by car caravan. Foot travel on gravel or paved roadways; the biggest challenge would be that the roads may be snow covered or slippery. Duration of foot travel of less than a mile at a time. Participants need to be able to withstand cold temperatures for periods of 30-45 minutes.

Pine Grosbeak

