

Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society

CARDINAL

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Kankakee Sands Bison & Birds
June 17, 2017

Banding & Bird Walk at Mary Gray
June 24, 2017

Hemlock Cliffs Summer Birding
June 24, 2017

Banding & Bird Walk at Mary Gray
July 1, 2017

Please visit the IAS website for more information

IN THE NEWS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: IAS FALL FESTIVAL
(PAGE 1)

MEET A MEMBER

IAS BOARD MEMBER KIM EHN
(PAGE 2)

FEATURED HOT SPOTS

THE LYE CREEK PRAIRIE BURN
(PAGE 3)

REYNOLDS CREEK GHA
(PAGE 4)

YOUNG BIRDERS

IYBC MOMENTUM GROWING
(PAGE 5-6)

CONSERVATION NOTES

A SIMPLE ACT
(PAGE 6)



CANADA WARBLER PHOTO BY:
JEFF TIMMONS



Indiana Audubon Society's Fall Festival at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary *October 6-8, 2017*

We at the Indiana Audubon Society are pleased and excited to announce this year's Fall Festival. Please be sure to put it on your calendar because you won't want to miss it. The theme will be "Think Globally, Act Locally."

There will be guided bird hikes both mornings and meals served in Markle Barn. In addition, we plan to bring back a crowd favorite hike from decades ago that the late, great Denzil Barricklow used to lead called "Creatures of the Night." This hike will occur after the Friday night talk given by Jim McCormac (talk subject is in the works). Jim is a lifelong Ohioan who has made a study of natural history since the age of eight or so - longer than he can remember! A fascination with birds has grown into an amazement with all of nature, and an insatiable desire to learn more. One of his major ambitions is to get more people interested in nature. He is correct when he says, "The more of us who care, the more likely that our natural world will survive." His blog is always interesting and worth a visit at <http://jimccormac.blogspot.com/>



KEYNOTE SPEAKER – Dr. Bryan Pijanowski, Director of the Center for Global Soundscapes

Our keynote speaker is a global traveler. In fact, when we got in touch with him, he had just returned from western Tanzania studying the soundscapes of the primate-dominated Miombo woodlands, which he described as absolutely fascinating! He and his lab were recently featured on CNN during a piece on Vanishing Species. You can read about it and view it at this link:

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/12/11/world/vanishing-sutter-amphibian-extinction/index.html> (video plays at the top)

This is an excerpt from Dr. Pijanowski's website (<http://centerforglobalsoundscapes.org/>):

"As the Director of Purdue's Center for Global Soundscapes, I oversee all projects

ensuring that they help achieve our overall mission of preserving Earth's natural acoustic heritage. The sounds of our planet are important to its survival, and these sounds are a valuable part of a person's attachment to place and are integrated into society's complex fabric. As the Director, I attempt to translate the energy and enthusiasm I have for nature into everything I do – teaching, research and engagement with the public. Comparing the dawn chorus of different ecosystems, studying how 19th century naturalists and 20th century scholars have used their observation skills so that their work has high impact within science and society; and how new tools can be used to do work that has never before been attempted."

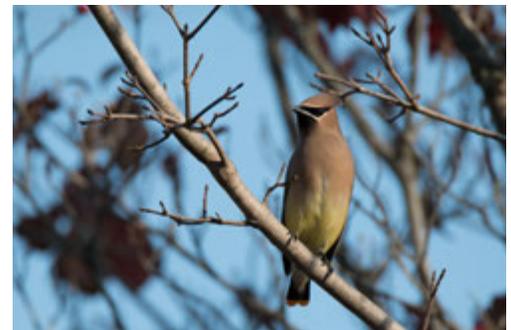
We will be electing a new IAS President, announcing our new Executive Director(!), and handing out a conservation award or two. A few other talks and activities are being planned, including a field trip to Brookville Reservoir on Sunday morning. An agenda will appear on the IAS Facebook page and website soon. Please don't miss this chance to re-engage and learn in a great atmosphere of friendship and fellowship.



Yellow-rumped Warbler
Photo: John Lindsey



Purple Finch
Photo: John Lindsey



Cedar Waxwing
Photo: John Lindsey

Meet a Member: Kimberly Ehn

By Brad Bumgardner



Meet Kim Ehn. Kim lives in Chesterton and is a current board member for the Indiana Audubon Society, and also serves on the IAS committee for the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival.

1) Tell us a little about yourself?

I am married to Eric, my best friend, who loves to cook. I have 3 grown children and 2 grandchildren. My first grandchild, Anders, is my little birding buddy, and I get to take care of him in Illinois for a few days every month. I am retired from full-time employment, which has included Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, local Girl Scout council, and several Montessori schools, one of which I owned and directed for 7 years. I like jigsaw puzzles, scrapbooking, and watching movies. Every year, Eric and I head to the Adirondacks for 2 weeks of tent camping, hiking, and fishing.

2) What drew you into birding and birds?

I've always been nature-oriented. My passion for it as an adult began when I attended an owl presentation at my local garden center. The presenter spoke about volunteering for owl banding and I signed up for the training. After participating for the season, I attended bird hikes at the state park. Then, I was invited to go birding with other volunteers. What continues to draw me into

birding is the excitement and peacefulness I feel when I'm outside seeing the variety of birds in their habitat. I like standing still and discovering their slight movements that are a clue to where they are.

3) How long have you been an IAS member?

I joined in 2010. I became a Board Member in 2016.

4) What is your favorite Indiana birding destinations?

I enjoy destinations that include birding with others. I like sharing the trip, the discussions of identifications, and experiencing the moment of seeing an interesting or rare bird with someone. My favorite local spot is Indiana Dunes State Park.

5) What IAS member benefit do you most enjoy?

There are two that bring me the most pleasure. I have only visited Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary about 4 times (because of the distance), but I have discovered more about this gem each time I've gone. The habitats, the trails, and the people are amazing! The second benefit I enjoy are the publications and website. I like reading about the science and people connected to birding.

6) What's your dream birding destination?

It would be a dream to travel to the extreme locations that would allow me to see Boreal Owl, Elf Owl, Flammulated Owl, Northern Pygmy Owl, and Spotted Owl. I still yearn to see a Barn Owl in Indiana.



The Lye Creek Prairie Burn

By Shari Schultz McCollough



The Lye Creek Prairie Burn, located in northeastern Montgomery County, is an 80 acre oasis made up primarily of wetlands and native grasses. It provides the perfect stopover for weary migrating songbirds, a safe haven so to speak, where the birds can forage for food, preen, take a bath and get some much-needed rest before continuing on their journey.

Crawfordsville resident Clint Murray discovered the area in 2001 while birding the back roads of Montgomery County. To his surprise, he found the fields covered with a vast number of shorebirds. He purchased the land in 2006 and turned it into what we know now as the Lye Creek Prairie Burn. He works tirelessly managing the property. It's a lot of work, from spraying invasive plants all summer, to the annual prairie burn in the early spring.

Clint burns off 15 acres of foxtail in preparation for his annual visitors, which show up in April – Smith's Longspurs. Clint has had visitors from all over the country come to see these coveted birds on his property.

So, where did the Lye Creek Burn get its name? In my research of the property, I found that in April of 1936, a farmer raked his cornstalks in windrows and set fire to them. The soil, which was described as "muck" back then, is actually a peat deposit in a glacial depression. The soil caught fire and burned very slowly for two weeks before the rains came. The fire consumed nearly 30 acres to a depth of three feet, down to the blue shale which underlies the region. Back then, locals called it "the burned off" or "burned over." Clint refers to the area as "the Burn," short for Lye Creek Prairie Burn, so named by Prof. Alton Lindsey in his book, *Natural Areas in Indiana*. The Burn was last farmed in 2003.

Clint has documented 208 species for the Burn, recently adding Lark Sparrow in April 2017. When I asked him what a few of his highlights have been over the years, he immediately stated Hudsonian Godwit, 52 Marbled Godwits, Swainson's Hawk and Black-necked Stilt. Clint has accumulated an incredible list of 29 species of shorebirds for the field. Also worth mentioning are nesting Sedge Wrens. Last year, the Burn saw both early and second nestings, which was a first (most years they only arrive for second nesting). Other species that nest at the Burn include: Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Common Yellowthroat, Baltimore and Orchard Oriole, Wood Duck, Spotted Sandpiper, Ring-necked Pheasant, and a host of sparrows. The field comes alive during early spring migration, when ducks, geese, and Sandhill Cranes are on the move. Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail are also annual visitors.

So, if you're ever in the area, stop by the Lye Creek Prairie Burn, say hi to Clint, and have a walk around. It's a wonderful place.

Directions

From the North: take US 231 south to CR 700 N. Travel east on CR 700 N to CR 150 E, then south to CR 650 N. Go east on CR 650 N for 1 mile to the windmill. The field will be on the south side of road.

From the East: From Thorntown take SR 47 south to CR 500 N in Darlington. Turn right (west) on CR 500 N to the first stop sign, which is CR 700 E (road marker is missing). Turn right (north) on CR 700 E and continue to CR 650 N. Turn left (west) on CR 650 N and continue west for 1 mile past CR 350 E to the windmill. The field will be on the south side of road.

From the South: take US 231 north to CR 550 N (Cherry Grove elevator). Go east on CR 550 N to CR 150 E, then north to CR 650 N. Go east on CR 650 N for 1 mile to the windmill. The field will be on the south side of road.

Reynolds Creek Gamebird Habitat Area

By Kimberly Ehn



Vesper Sparrow

In November of last year, birder and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Park Interpreter Christy Gerlach was in the IDNL Heron Rookery when she identified a Ring-necked Pheasant. "I heard the pheasant. I was in the east parking lot and it was (calling) across the street somewhere in the fields there," she explained. The fields used to be part of the Indiana Department of Corrections "Prison Farm," but in 2011, they were transferred to DNR's Fish & Wildlife Department and become the Reynolds Creek Gamebird Habitat Area (RCGHA).

Reynolds Creek is comprised of three units totaling 1250 acres within Porter County. Supervision falls under the direction of Kingsbury FWA's property manager, Ron Lorman, who I interviewed for this article. The North Farm Unit southwest of I-80

Toll Road and County Line Road, is a fairly wet site that has been used by waterfowl and shorebirds. The 1500N Unit is bordered by that road on the north with Carver Ditch running northerly through it. The South Unit includes land on either side of 600E, continuing east along 1275 N. The east branch of the Little Calumet River runs just north of this unit and through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's Heron Rookery. This unit also includes Reynolds Creek, for which the area is named, and several small ponds. While the main management goal is to improve habitat for Ring-necked Pheasant hunting, the North Farm and the 1500N Unit include an emphasis on encouraging waterfowl and shorebirds.

Approximately 450 acres of RCGHA are being restored back to native prairie by planting Indian grass, Big and Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, and a wildflower mix. These plants will attract insects in the spring and summer to provide a food source for pheasants and other birds. The pheasant hen builds her nest in tall prairie grasses, usually starting in April. Respecting the breeding season, no mowing or other major changes are conducted on the property until August or September. Any prairie grasses or flowering plants to be added are frost-seeded during late fall or early winter, allowing the freeze-thaw action of early spring to plant the seeds into the soil.

Survival of Ring-necked Pheasants through the fall and winter depends on a habitat that can furnish plenty of high protein food and dependable wintering areas. So, the management plan for RCGHA includes approximately 100 acres of tenant farming of corn and soybeans to be rotated across 550 acres. It is expected to have some waste grain in these fields and some food plots of crops left for wildlife. "The farm parcels are typically the drier soils and every four years we have a new contract and try to incorporate a new field to farm and allow the previously farmed field to go fallow," said Lorman.

In the fallow fields, woody species will be removed and early succession habitat will be promoted through limited prescribed burns or a 3-5 year disking rotation. "We have had two contract burns on the property with limited success," Lorman explained, "and we plan on doing more burning and mowing to set back succession." Plant species promoted through this type of management include Foxtail, an important food source for Northern Bobwhite and sparrows. Foxtail creates a large quantity of seed and allows easy movement through the cover by the pheasants.

The wetland portions of RCGHA are being restored with the intent to create areas from ½ acre to 5 acres in size for shorebirds and waterfowl, and will also include sedge meadow habitat.

The North Farm has an access parking lot on County Line Road. There is an access parking lot on 1500 N and two parking areas on 600 E (on the west side of the 1500N Unit). They are graveled, but the soft soils can leave them in rough condition after Spring's heavy rains and flooding. Regarding the west parking area of the South Unit, Lorman explained, "There is a culvert already under the road. We have graveled, but there is nowhere for the water to go. I think that lot will be moved east of the high water."

The Indiana Young Birders' Club

By John Velasquez



The Indiana Young Birders' Club (IYBC) was founded in 2009 by Chad Williams and Rob Ripma, after becoming inspired by Kim Kaufman's leadership and success with the Ohio Young Birders' Club (OYBC). Chad and Rob, both members of the Indiana Audubon Society, recognized the importance of getting our youth interested in birding. It would also be a way to bring together kids in the state who were already birding, in order for them to meet other birders and enhance their skills. Since the beginning, membership in the club has ranged from the very young (Fledglings) to pre-teens and teenagers (Young Birders).

The IYBC promotes not only youth birding, but also family involvement. Every year, the club organizes field trips throughout the state that are led by young birders alongside adult sponsors. The club also publishes a newsletter, the Warbler, which is written almost entirely by young birders. Indiana young birders have a passion for birds, which they use to teach their own communities about nature. Many of the club's past and present members have presented at major birding events, including the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival and the Biggest Week in American Birding. The IYBC also helps foster education among its members and nature lovers across the state by giving away free Kaufman Field Guides via contests, online essay submissions, bird ID quizzes and other means. The club has even donated a number of guides to educators throughout the state. To date, the club has given away more than 200 field guides free of charge!

Some of the original club members included the Williams kids, Sara Sass, Landon Neumann, the Velasquez kids and the Arvin kids. The IYBC logo and The Warbler were both designed and developed by club member Scott Arvin. Today, the IYBC continues to evolve and grow; it is run by an adult committee and a group of youth advisors, and membership averages around 50-60 members. The club recently opened a new chapter in the Dunes area, IYBC North, led by Kim Ehn.

The momentum in youth birding is growing by leaps and bounds, with clubs popping up all over the country. The reason for

continued next page

this growth is all about igniting the passion for nature and birds that all kids have within them, and providing a community to boost their desire to grow and help others.

The IYBC also hosts the annual Indiana Young Birders Conference, which has become the club's crown jewel. Young birders plan, moderate and present the entire event with only limited assistance from the adult committee. Although it is planned and hosted by young birders, birders of ALL ages come away from the conference inspired. To date, the club has hosted four conferences, each one entertaining 80 to 100 attendees. The 5th annual Indiana Young Birders Conference will be held at the Cool Creek Nature Center on August 19, 2017. Details will be posted on the IAS website (www.indianaudubon.org) and the IYBC website (www.indianayoungbirders.org) soon.

If you know a young birder interested in joining, please encourage them to contact the club through its Facebook page, by emailing iybc@indianaudubon.org, or by visiting the IAS website and clicking the IYBC tab for additional information.

Conservation Notes: A Simple Act

by Dawn Slack

A multitude of small things, when combined, can make a difference. Observing one or two warblers in breeding plumage is great, but watching 10-15 different species of warblers hawking insects from the treetops is simply phenomenal. Watching one Monarch butterfly flutter by your doorstep is great, but observing hundreds migrate is breathtaking. Finding a pink lady's slipper orchid while hiking is cool, but let's face it, finding a patch of 10 or 20 makes you feel good all over.

It's not just the beauty of the natural world that intrigues us and provides a sense of euphoria, but there is also a sense of satisfaction, a sense of right, when we observe diverse and plentiful nature. Humans are the caretakers of the land. Humans are responsible for diversity. No ecosystem exists without some influence by humans.

Many of you have heard me talk about invasive species with an emphasis on invasive plants. It is simply because invasive plants lead to a decline in diversity, a decline in food available for many species (most species are specialists, not generalists), and an overall loss of species. Invasive plants lead to monocultures (think about the effects of autumn olive, kudzu, Japanese bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose). Invasive plants are a major threat to rare, threatened and endangered species.

Each one of us can make a difference for these species. Our homescapes may be small, but when we combine many homescapes with sanctuaries such as the Mary Gary Bird Sanctuary, preserves and parks, we suddenly have a healthy, vibrant landscape capable of supporting hundreds of native species. So I'd like to share some native plants that perhaps you would consider adding to your homescape this year.

Blackhaw, *Viburnum prunifolium*. Besides having a cool name, blackhaw adapts to almost any site and any amount of light. It grows well in shaded areas, but the more sunlight it receives, the more flowers and fruit it produces and the more vibrant the leaf color will be in autumn. Blackhaw has a strong angled branching pattern and grows large if given space. It provides nest sites for birds, and fruits for songbirds, turkey, deer and other mammals. It also provides beautiful color all year for your home.

Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*. This is a deciduous holly and is known for its winter fruit display after it loses its leaves. It prefers full sun, but will grow in partial shade. It also grows best in acidic soils. Winterberry's autumn leaf color and red berries are a beautiful display. It grows to 15 feet tall. It provides nesting cover and food in mid- to late winter. Plant both male and female plants to ensure fruit production.

Oaks, *Quercus* species. Oak trees not only provide beauty and shade to our homes, but they also provide food and nesting sites for numerous species of insects, birds and other wildlife. Try planting an acorn this year. You might be surprised at how quickly it grows. Watch it closely and see how much "nature" value a tree adds to your homescape. Share your observations with us.

Lastly, I want to share information about a couple of invasive plants. Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*, is a popular landscape plant. It does not have any wildlife value, and in fact is toxic to birds and animals, including dogs. Heavenly bamboo, *Nandina domestica*, is a newer plant that is creeping north into Indiana. It contains toxic amounts of cyanide. American robins and cedar waxwings gorge on the berries and die of cyanide poisoning. Please consider removing these species if you have them.

For more information about native and invasive plants, please visit the [HYPERLINK "http://www.inpaws.org/"](http://www.inpaws.org/) Indiana Plant and Wildflower Society ([HYPERLINK "http://www.inpaws.org/"](http://www.inpaws.org/)) and the [HYPERLINK "https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/plants.php"](https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/plants.php) Indiana Invasive Species Council (<https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/plants.php>).