



Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society **CARDINAL**



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photo by Dr. Delano Arvin, M.D.



Upcoming Events

Christmas Bird Count
Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary
12/31/2011 7:00 AM

Gull Workshop
1/21/2012 2:00 PM

Gull Trip to Lake Michigan
1/28/2012 8:00 AM

Eagle Trip
2/4/2012 7:00 AM

Prairie Chicken Trip
4/6/2012

Spring Birding Festival
5/4-6/2012 1:30 AM

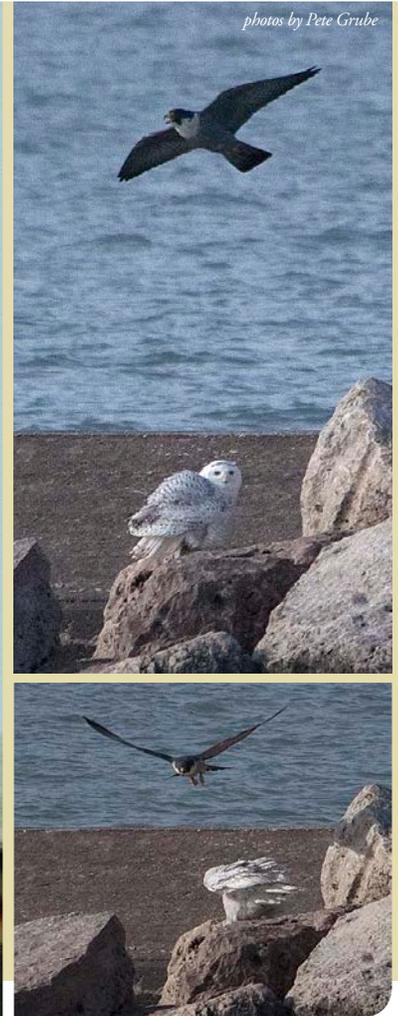
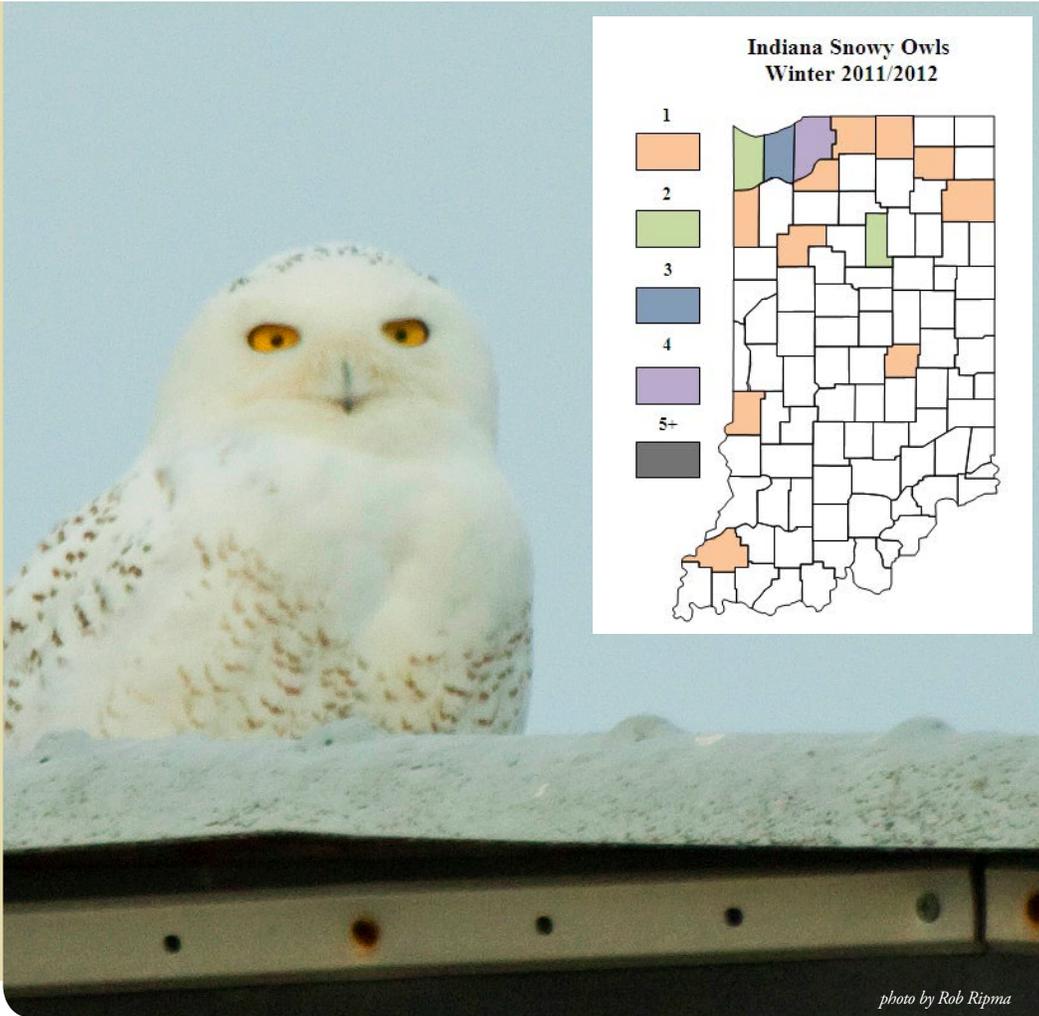
North Dakota Trip
6/9/2012 7:00 AM

**Fall Birding Festival in
Brown County State Park**
10/5-7/2012

For information about
Christmas counts and more,
go to IndianaAudubon.org

photo by Jim Sullivan





The Snowy Owl Irruption of 2011 by Rob Ripma

On December 1, a birder found a Snowy Owl on the east side of Indianapolis at the Mount Comfort Airport. This owl is part of a major irruption of Snowy Owls this winter. The owls are not escaping the cold weather of the far north nor are they fleeing a snowstorm; rather, they are here in search of food. Normally during irruptions, the owls come south when the population of lemmings crashes, but this is an unusual year. Due to an abundance of lemmings during the breeding season, Snowy Owls were very successful in fledging their young, creating an excess of young owls. This abundance of owls has created a shortage of food, and the young birds must come south in order to survive the winter.



Even though Snowy Owls venture south on a fairly regular basis, the irruption this year is very exciting. There are reports that over 100 are present in Wisconsin alone! Check out this map from eBird. <http://ebird.org/ebird/map/snoowl1?neg=true&env.minX=&env.minY=&env.maxX=&env.maxY=&zh=false&gp=false&mr=on&bmo=10&emo=12&yr=2011-2011&byr=2011&eyr=2011>

Pretty impressive so far!

Unfortunately for the owls, coming this far south means that they are in a dire situation. They are mostly starving when they arrive and need to find food quickly. They are also not used to vehicles and often end up dying from collisions. If you find a Snowy Owl (or any other bird) that is in need of help, please contact a licensed wildlife rehabber. If you do not know a rehabber, a local park or a Wild Birds Unlimited store should be able to point you in the right direction. Do not

try to help the bird yourself, as you could end up hurting both yourself and the bird.

As for the Snowy Owl at Mount Comfort Airport, it seems to be doing pretty well (at the time of printing). It has been observed hunting, although no one has seen it catch anything that I know of. I expect that rodent populations are high in the area because Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls regularly winter near the airport, and rodents tend to make up a large portion of their food source, too. Hopefully it will survive the winter and head back to the Arctic for a successful breeding season next summer.

Be sure to check out Rob's blog at nuttybirder.com

Indiana Audubon Society Upcoming Field Trips, 2012

Eagles, February 4

In 2012 the Indiana Audubon Society will return to west-central Indiana for its annual Eagle Field Trip. The last time this trip was conducted in 2010 forty-three Bald Eagles (an "average" number) were counted from the West Union bridge in west-central Parke Co. in the first half-hour of daylight as they flew from their night-time roost to the Wabash River. This year our Eagle Field Trip will take place 4 February 2012 and again will start at sunrise at the West Union covered bridge in western Parke Co. When the flow of eagles subsides we will work our way up and down the Wabash River bottoms in Parke and Vermillion Counties to observe eagles going about their daily activities. We will also see how many species of geese can be found among the thousands of geese wintering near the Cayuga Power Plant. Four of the six local Bald Eagle nests should be seen as well. Though not guaranteed, Golden Eagle and Trumpeter Swan have usually been present. The Golden Eagle may require an end-of-the-day run to its roost site.

Directions: West Union Bridge

Start - From the intersection of U.S. 41 and St. Rd. 236 three miles w. of Marshall in Parke Co.

1. Go south approximately one mile and turn west (right) on Co. Rd. 500 N (the first blacktop road)
2. Drive approx. five miles to an angled 4-way stop at Co. Rd. 210 W. (10 O'Clock Road)
3. Turn right on Co. Rd. 210 W. (10 O'Clock Rd)
4. After approx. 1 mile veer right on 550W (Tow Path Rd) for another mile when you should reach a concrete bridge with a covered bridge to your right.
5. Drive across concrete bridge and pull into parking area on north side of covered bridge or (should there be heavy snow cover) pull over as far as possible on the east side of the bridge and park along the road.

You may also find a map online by searching for the "town" of West Union

which consists of only a few homes. The bridge is just north of the indicated spot.

You should be at the bridge **NO LATER THAN 7:15 A.M.** The first eagle may cross the bridge at 7:15 a.m. or as late as 7:35 a.m. and stop crossing the bridge in numbers as early as 8:00 a.m.

The bulk of our eagle watching will be done by 1:00 p.m. but the trip will continue as long as there is interest and daylight. We will eat lunch at the Greenacres Restaurant on St. Rd. 63 south of Cayuga.

Be prepared for mud, snow, and/or very cold weather.

Participation is free to Indiana Audubon Society members and students under the age of 18 while a charge of \$15 is required of non-members.

Hope to see you 4 February 2012!

Join Us!

Alan W. Bruner, Chair – Field Trip Committee | abbird@att.net, (765) 597-2459 | cell phone (765) 562-2741

North Dakota, June 9-15

IAS is sponsoring a field trip to the Jamestown, North Dakota area from Saturday 9 June through Friday 15 June 2012. This flat to gently rolling area is located in the southeast quarter of the state and is characterized by vast treeless grasslands dotted with wetlands and ponds (prairie potholes). It is one of the most productive nesting areas in the country for waterfowl, marsh birds, and grassland birds, including many specialties. Indeed this is the place to see Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Gray Partridge, and Sharp-tailed Grouse. Western species rarely encountered in Indiana are also sure to be seen, such as Swainson's Hawk, California Gull, Western Grebe, Western Kingbird, Brewer's Blackbird, and Western Meadowlark. Birds we see only as migrants and/or in very small numbers in Indiana are relatively easy to find as breeding species, including Willet, Marbled Godwit, Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Franklin's Gull, Forster's and Black Terns, Clay-colored Sparrow (very common), LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Ducks that rarely nest in Indiana are



so numerous that rarely does five minutes go by when a Lesser Scaup, a Gadwall, or a Northern Shoveler cannot be seen flying by or even standing in the road. The area hosts the largest breeding colony of American White Pelicans in the United States and you may see a pothole pond full of "spinning" Wilson's Phalaropes or courting Ruddy Ducks. And there is much more!

Travel time of a day and a half both to and from North Dakota will be interrupted with three full days and two partial days of birding in the

prairie pothole region. Three 7-passenger vans have been reserved for the trip which will be led by Alan Bruner and Jay Bolden. The trip is designed for up to twenty participants and we plan to leave early Saturday morning 9 June and return home on Friday evening 15 June.

The estimated cost of the trip based on a minimum of 16 participants is \$500/person. This includes all transportation costs (van rental and fuel), lodging (six nights), guide expenses, and some miscellaneous. Not included are personal items and meals.

Those interested should contact Alan Bruner as soon as possible to voice their interest in the trip. This can be done via e-mail abbird@att.net, home phone (765)597-2459 or cell phone (765)562-2741. Indiana Audubon Society members will be given priority over non-members.

THE TRIP IS FILLING UP FAST SO DON'T DELAY - ONLY FOUR SPOTS LEFT!!



The Indiana Young Birders Club is planning a big year of field trips and activities. Check out the list below and then go to indianaaudubon.org to get your young person involved.



2012 FIELD TRIPS

2/18/2012 8:00 AM-12:00 PM
 5/19/2012 8:00 AM-12:00 PM
 5/4-6/2012
 5/26/2012 10:00 AM-4:00 PM
 6/30/2012 9:00 AM-3:00 PM
 9/2/2012 10:00 AM-3:00 PM
 9/8/2012 7:30 AM-12:00 PM
 10/5-7/2012

Great Backyard Bird Count with the IYBC
 Birding for Migrants with Landon Newman!
 Indiana Audubon Society Spring Festival
 It's All About the Birds!
 Turkey Vultures and Bio Blitz with Scarlett Arvin!
 It's All About the Birds!
 Lakefront Birding with Landon Neumann!
 Indiana Audubon Society Fall Festival

Eagle Creek Ornithology Center, Indianapolis, IN
 Eagle Creek Park, Indianapolis, IN
 Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, Connersville, IN
 Salamonie Reservoir, Andrews, IN
 Dr. Delano Arvin, M.D., Property, Lafayette IN
 Interpretive Center, Dunes State Park, Chesterton, IN
 Lake Michigan Lakefront, Details TBA
 Brown County State Park, Nashville, IN



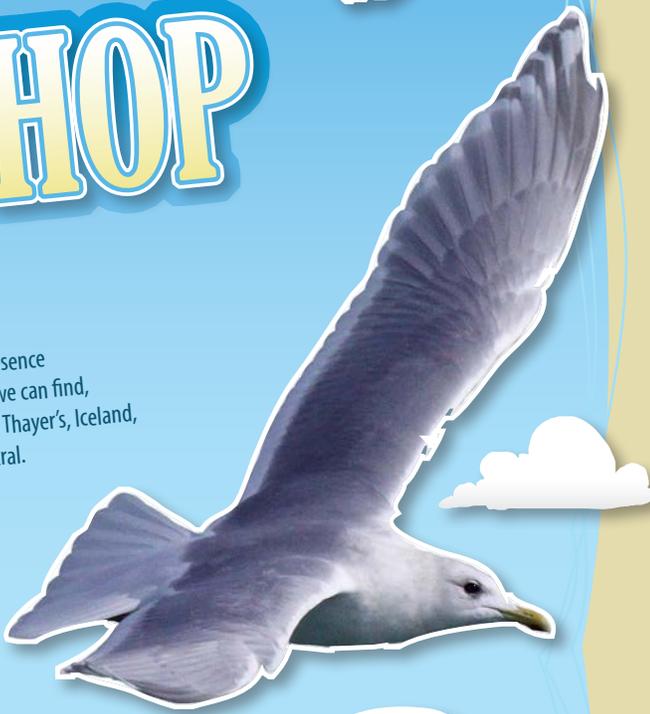
Join the Amos Butler Audubon Society and Indiana Audubon Society as we come together to present a gull identification workshop with gull identification expert John Kendall. The workshop will offer a classroom session on January 21 from 2pm to 5pm at the Cool Creek Park Nature Center (2000 East 151st Street, Carmel, Indiana 46033). John will teach us about all aspects of gull identification including proper gull terminology, molt cycles, and how to identify the gulls we find in Indiana.

GULL WORKSHOP

Then, on January 28, we will head north for a day on the lakefront to put our new gull identification skills to work with the field portion of our workshop. John Kendall will be joined by Chicago gull expert Amar Ayyash for this portion of the workshop. We will meet at 8am Eastern / 7am Central at a location yet to be determined that will be dictated by the presence of gulls this winter. We will spend the morning closely studying as many species of gulls as we can find, hopefully including a rarity or two. Expected species include: Ring-billed, Herring, Glaucous, Thayer's, Iceland, and Great Black-backed Gulls. The workshop will conclude around 1pm Eastern / 12pm Central.

There will be a \$10 registration fee for this workshop and all proceeds will be donated to the Northwest Indiana Migratory Bird Association. The workshop will be limited to 40 participants, and the registration deadline is January 7.

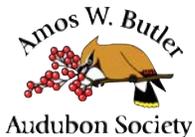
Please contact **Rob Ripma** at robert.ripma@nuttybirder.com or **317-748-4140** for more information. Go here for a registration form, tinyurl.com/gullworkshop



LEADERS

AMAR AYYASH
Amar resides in the Chicago suburbs where he teaches math for a living. Most of his free time is devoted to watching and photographing gulls. His keen interest in this family of birds has resulted in him travelling around the country to learn about their plumages, ranges and behaviors. He maintains one of the only gull websites in North America, anythinglarus.com.

JOHN KENDALL
Born & raised in Kokomo, John has birded the Dunes area for 25 years. He has been the IAQ Winter Field Notes Editor, 2007-2010 and IAQ Managing Editor and Board Member, 2010-2011. He regularly logs 285-300 state species annually, including 300 in 2006. 350 life species in Indiana. He is quite familiar with species' rarity levels and both short and long term trends. He is active and familiar with the aspects and nuances of bird photography, flickr.com etc., as they relates to representation of field marks and sightings. John is a founder, acting Secretary and Board member of NIMBA, (Northwest Indiana Migratory Bird Association).





This Northern Saw Whet has been one of at least 4 that have been found in my father's woods. It was very cooperative. They're still being seen at this location and as of this writing have been found every day since December 2. They were originally found on November 12.

photos by Scott Arvin



Thank You Kenn and Kim Kaufman

A big thank you to Kenn and Kim Kaufman for their participation in our fall program and an even bigger thank you for Kenn's mention of Indiana Audubon and the Indiana Young Birders Club in the January/February 2012 issue of Bird Watcher's Digest. Check it out. <http://www.birdwatchersdigest-digital.com/birdwatchersdigest/20120102?pg=4#pg19>

Return Service Requested

www.indianaudubon.org

The Cardinal
3499 S. Bird Sanctuary Rd.
Connersville, IN 47331

