



Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society

CARDINAL

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Upcoming Events

- **Lake Michigan**
November 23
- **Eagle Field Trip**
January 18
- **Another Puerto Rico Trip**
February 2014
- **Dominican Republic**
February 2014



American Redstart photo by Kyle Arvin



Northern Saw-Whet Owl Research at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

The Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary (MGBS) is excited to announce the opening of its first Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) banding station. This research will add to the knowledge that is needed to understand the NSWO migration patterns and biology. The project has teamed up with Project OwlNet, a community of ornithologists who provide standardized methodologies, information on capture techniques, ageing and sexing resources, analytical tools, data archiving, and other services. (http://www.projectowl.net.org/?page_id=54, n.d.).



Why We Band NSWO

NSWOs are very difficult to find. They are highly nocturnal, rarely vocalize outside of the breeding season and are extremely hard to detect in daytime. (http://www.projectowl.net.org/?page_id=54, n.d.).

The elusive owl has proven to be around in large numbers once the audio lure (NSWO vocalization) began being used. Stations started opening up in the early 1990s and have increased in numbers since that time.

About the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary Banding Station

The nets are located north of House #2, in the forested area. A short walk from the house provides easy access to the nets. Volunteers walk the nets every hour to look for birds caught in the nets. Six nets are being used in this first year.

We Caught One!

On the 24 October 2013 the MGBS caught our first NSWO! The bird had been previously banded and we are waiting on more details to come that will be shared with all! Many thanks go to the wonderful volunteers who stayed up late to help! Bob and Jan Holmes, Ryan and Dawn Slack, and Carl & Amy Wilms stayed up late on a Thursday night to capture this awesome bird!

Future

While this has been a "light" year for NSWOs, the station at the MGBS will continue to open the nets every Saturday until December. Hopefully next year we'll catch more!

Interested in Volunteering?

Contact Amy Wilms (wilmsab@indianaudubon.org) to find out more. We welcome all skill levels!

Students Invade Mary Gray *by Carl Wilms*

Elementary students from Fayette County School Corporation's after school program are enjoying their first meal at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary after a brisk, sun-filled, fall hike on the Wildflower Trail. Funding provided by the IAS Mumford / Keller Grants program is providing transportation, training, and material support for this portion of the five day a week program.

After I shared an introductory presentation to students at their schools in September, students are being transported to MGBS once a month for nature encounters. During this visit, leaves were collected, binoculars were used, snakes were viewed and discussed, and photographs were taken by students to use with writing activities when they return to their schools.

While the coldest months of January and February will most likely be avoided, this first visit was a wonderful experience. The enthusiasm of the children and the other volunteers is high. My thanks to IAS and the Mumford / Keller Grant program for assisting in this important educational adventure.

Lake Michigan Field Trip November 23

The Indiana Audubon Society will sponsor a field trip to the shores of Lake Michigan November 23, 2013. It will be led by Dunes State Park Interpretive Naturalist and IAS President Brad Bumgardner. We will work the lakefront in search of rare gulls, scoters, winter finches, or other rarities often found this time of year. Perhaps the season's first Snowy Owl or Purple Sandpiper will be found!

We will meet at the Indiana Dunes Tourism Visitor Center (1215 N St. Rd 49, Porter, IN) at 8am central (9am Indianapolis time). The Visitor Center is located on St. Rd 49, north of I-94, and south of US 20. From there we will car pool to selected sites, determined by recent sightings and weather conditions. Locations may include Michigan City Harbor, Beverly Shores, Indiana Dunes State Park, Port of Indiana (photo ID required), and Miller Beach.

The group will stop for lunch in a nearby town and will finish up mid-afternoon. All participants should be prepared for cold winter conditions on the lakeshore (winds, possible snow or rain, below freezing temperatures). The best birding can occur when the lake is at its unruliest!

Interested participants should pre-register by emailing Brad Bumgardner at bbbumgardner@dnr.in.gov. We hope to see you there!



■ Eagle Field Trip 2014

The Indiana Audubon Society will sponsor an eagle field trip in West-Central Indiana on 18 January 2014. Alan Bruner will lead this trip along the Wabash River in western Parke and eastern Vermillion counties. The day will begin at daybreak at the West Union covered bridge (directions below) where we will count the eagles flying overhead to the Wabash River from their winter roost along Sugar Creek. The number of eagles passing by at this spot has averaged more than thirty birds with a peak of 87 in 2013. When the passage has slowed, we will work the river between Cayuga and Montezuma to observe more eagles in their daily activities as well as any waterfowl and raptors that might be wintering in the area. Tundra and Trumpeter Swans overwinter in the area, sometimes by the hundreds, if the river bottoms are flooded. And there is always a chance to see one of the local Golden Eagles!

Those wishing to count the eagles coming off the roost must be at the West Union bridge by 7:15 a.m. local time. The eagles often begin to pass over by 7:30 a.m. If you cannot be there at that time, you may join us

later at the bridge at 8:30 a.m. The West Union bridge can be reached by turning west off of U.S. 41 on CR 500 N., which is the first blacktop south of the intersection of U.S. 41 and St. Rd. 236. Five miles brings you to an angled four-way stop at 10 O'Clock Road. Turn right on 10 O'Clock Rd. and continue about a mile and veer right onto Tow Path Rd. for another mile until you reach a concrete bridge over Sugar Creek with a covered bridge to your right. We will meet there. If conditions are suitable, we will park in a pull-off just north of the bridge. If there is appreciable snow or ice, do not park in the pull-off area, park on the bridge keeping to the far right facing north.

The majority of the trip will conclude around noon, but we will continue to explore many additional birding opportunities in the area for those who wish to make a day of it.

If you have any questions you may call Alan Bruner at 765-562-2741 , e-mail abbird@att.net . Please preregister with Alan Bruner via email.

IAS President Wins Award

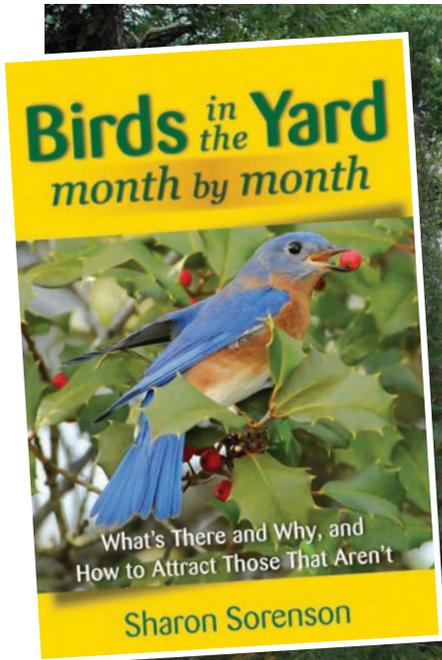
Congratulations to IAS president, Brad Bumgardner, for being named as one of the 20 under 40 on nwi.com! Read about it here: http://www.nwitimes.com/business/under-brad-bumgardner/article_b9d5601e-60f5-50cc-b7fd-df41b9e95417.html



Camping at Mary Gray by Scott Arvin

In mid October many members of my family decided to camp at Mary Gray for the weekend. We had a wonderful time on the trails, enjoyed the fall color, and managed to see many birds moving through. I found many types of fungus, sometimes covering large areas, that dotted the forest floor. We even found a yellow jacket nest in the middle of the campground (*Vespula maculifrons*) that we watched from a safe distance. Bats moved into the shelter at our campsite after discovering the insects that our lamps brought in at night. The weather was perfect and we'll be sure to do it again.

Mary Gray is open to all IAS members and you should take advantage of this amazing place whenever possible.



All photos copyright © Sharon Sorenson



■ **Birds in the Yard, Month by Month** review by Amy Wilms

As an avid birdwatcher, past president of the Indiana Audubon Society, and wildlife property manager, I've read books and magazines about how to identify birds and diversify habitat. I have now come across a unifying book that speaks to both - enjoying birds and increasing backyard bird habitat. Sharon Sorenson has accomplished a significant task! The author speaks to diverse groups of people (novice to expert) who enjoy our feathered friends. I plan on marking my calendar to read the coming month's (and therefore year's) descriptions to anticipate bird arrivals (and departures).

Simply put - if you enjoy birds, you'll fall in love with this book! The text is easy to read and extremely informative. Its content helps novice and experienced bird lovers problem solve, expand knowledge, and determine what plantings will promote diversity in their gardens. The monthly configurations help break down the potentially overwhelming information into "bite size chunks".

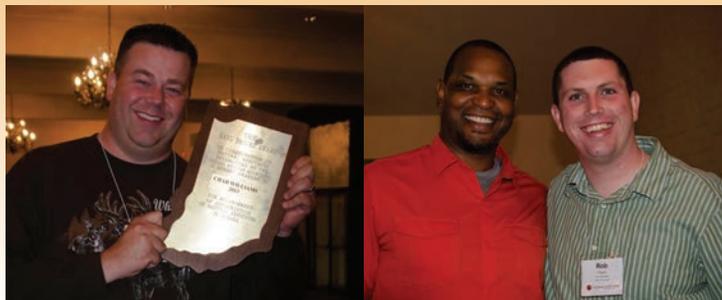
This will make a wonderful addition to a libraries for novice and experienced lovers of nature who desire to lure wildlife in order to develop their abilities to appreciate the beauty around us.



■ The Fall Festival at Indiana Dunes by Rob Ripma

I spent this past weekend in northwest Indiana running the Indiana Audubon Society's Fall Festival at Indiana Dunes State Park. We had a great line up of speakers and were hopeful that the weather would cooperate and the birding would be excellent.

The event kicked off on Friday night with a presentation about the long shore flight at



the new Bird Observation Tower at the state park. The volume of birds passing by the tower each year is absolutely staggering and I would encourage all birders to bird from the tower if they have the opportunity.

The forecast did not look good for the field trips on Saturday morning but I was pleasantly surprised to wake up to overcast skies with no rain and very little wind. My group made our way to Michigan City Harbor and the sun came out just as we arrived. Our most interesting find of the day occurred shortly after we arrived when a very dark backed gull flew in and landed on the beach. This bird had been reported from the area for the last several days and there is still a lot of debate about what species the gull actually is. Some birders feel that it is a pure Kelp Gull while others think that

it is a hybrid Kelp/Herring Gull that is known as Chaneleur Gull. We spent the rest of the morning birding around Washington Park and Indiana Dunes State Park looking for passerines.

Our afternoon programs got off to a great start with Tiffany Conrad from the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site talking about the history of Gene and the historic site. It was

extremely interesting to hear about one of Indiana's most famous writers and conservationist.

Next up was Sharon Sorenson to talk about her new book, *Birds in the Yard: Month*

by Month. This book tells you everything you need to know about attracting birds to your backyard and her presentation was fantastic! As an added bonus, Sharon donated all of the money from the sale of her book over the weekend to Indiana Audubon Society's Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary.

John Kendall was our final presenter for the afternoon and he spoke about his 15 day Costa Rican birding adventure. I think he made everyone in the room want to go birding in Costa Rica with his wonderful photos and stories.

Our keynote dinner and presentation took us just down the road to Woodland Park in Portage. After a tasty meal, IAS President Brad

Bumgardner presented Chad Williams with the Earl Brooks Conservation Award for his work starting the Indiana Young Birders Club! I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award.

The evening concluded with keynote speaker Drew Lanham talking about "Connecting the Conservation Dots". His message challenged everyone in the audience to take a different perspective on conserving birds and their habitats and was very thought provoking. If Drew is ever presenting near you, be sure to check out his talk!

Sunday was a day for birding but the predicted rain finally caught up with us. It was pouring outside when we all met up at 7 am and continued to rain as we made our way to McCool Basin to look for some special sparrows. Luckily, the rain let up shortly after we arrived and we all decided to get soaked looking for birds! I've always had great luck with Nelson's Sparrow on this property and this outing was no different. We had at least five individuals although the real number was likely more! Most participants also got great looks at Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, and many other more common species.

While we were all at McCool, some of the other participants were at Dunes State Park where Brad was banding songbirds. We were fortunate that the rain stopped there as well! The highlight of the morning was a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Be sure to join Indiana Audubon Society for next year's festival in Evansville!

MGBS Eagle... Scout Project



Sam Cragg is a senior at Connersville High School and just wrapped up his Eagle Scout project at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. While hiking and running (Sam is a cross country runner) the trails at Mary Gray he thought it would make a great Eagle Scout Project to improve two of the bridges on the trails at Mary Gray. After discussing the proposal with Carl Wilms (MGBS resident manager), Sam got the green light to move ahead with the project.

Sam secured funding (in excess of \$400) from local businesses and organized the removal of the old bridges and installation of the new ones. On Oct. 24th removal of existing bridges began. The laborious task of dragging two 16 and two 23 foot telephone poles (thanks again to Duke Energy) into place was also accomplished. In preparation of installing the new bridges, wood was cut using the upstairs of Markle Barn as a woodshop.

The crew wrapped things up after a good 8 hours.

On Friday, Oct. 25th, the crews reassembled and hauled materials to the construction sites. As the pictures indicate, the construction was a success. The existing bridge on the Woodland Trail was cut in half with each half being relocated to sections of the Woodland Trail that were in need of short spans. The Sanctuary ATV was used to drag these into place, "dusting" the trail of newly fallen leaves on the way.

At the end of the day (another 8 hours) Sam was congratulated on completing an excellent project. He smiled as he handed Carl an envelope that included excess funds collected for the project. Everyone is invited to come and hike the lovely trails and enjoy the fine workmanship exhibited with these new additions to our wonderful property.

The Indiana Young Birders Club took a trip to the Lake shore on 9/7/13 which was led by Rob Ripma.



Get your young birder involved in IYBC activities for their chance to win a free Field Guide. indianayoungbirders.org

▪ Short-eared Owl Trip Coming on December 7

Join IAS for a fantastic new field trip on 7 December to view the Short-eared Owls at Somerville Mine/Bluegrass Wildlife Area led by Dan Collins. This location is known to have one of the largest Short-eared owl populations in the state and you won't want to miss this trip! The field trip will allow participants to search for Merlins in the early afternoon followed by waterfowl sites with the possibility of seeing Rough-legged Hawks. About an hour before sunset, Dan will lead participants to a high vantage point within a grassland plain in anticipation of spotting over a dozen Short-eared Owls near dusk.

Participants should prepare to dress warm for this field trip. Dressing in layers is suggested. Weather is unpredictable during this time of year – please plan accordingly.

Where to Meet

Meet at 2pm local time (CST). NOTE: Evansville is in a different time zone than most parts of Indiana. Be sure to adjust your arrival accordingly. (For instance, if you live in the Indianapolis area, you'll need to arrive by 3pm EST).

Driving Directions:

Participants will meet at a gravel boat ramp parking lot on the north side of New Harmony Road approximately ½ mile east of Exit 15 off I-164/I-69. Look for a sign that says "Bluegrass WMA".

Register in Advance

Participants should register in advance by contacting danc@collinspestmgt.com no later than 5 December.