

# THE Warbler

INDIANA YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

FALL 2016

A PUBLICATION OF THE INDIANA AUDUBON SOCIETY







## IYBC CONFERENCE 2016

Conference #4 has come and gone and there hasn't been a single day since that I have not thought about the amazing day we had! All of our conferences have been amazing and each had its own special meaning. But, this one had to be the very best yet!

From our host, Carlynn Berners to each of our speakers, this entire event was run completely by young birders! The event required little to no adult intervention and amazingly, it ran equally as smooth as any adult birding event I had ever attended. The day was extremely organized and the speakers were well-prepared and ready to go. The topics presented varied and were very informative and fun! Evan Williams brought an interesting twist this year with his presentation: The Fascinating Venus Flytrap! He even gave away some free plants! Nick Keihl and Aidan Rominger gave a great presentation on their trip to Tennessee and their birding experiences off the coast of North Carolina. Carlynn presented an awesome look at the Birds

of Hawaii and Matthias Benko gave a very inspirational presentation on his recent trip to Dauphin Island. And, Juan, Catalina, and Louise Velasquez gave a very energetic presentation on their experiences teaching their classmates about birds! One of Indiana's most knowledgeable birders, Landon Neumann gave a great recap of the birds used in our I.D. Quiz. And, finally, our keynote speaker Ethan Rising presented on his experiences attending Hog Island, ABA Camp Colorado and VENT's Camp Chiricahua. It was pleasant to have both Ethan and his mom present at our conference!

Congratulations to the 2016 Indiana Young Birder of the Year, Matthias Benko and to our 2016 Conservation Awareness Award recipient, Carlynn Berners!!

I could write 10 pages on the conference because it was just that good but my space here is limited. I can't forget however, to thank those that make the event possible. A

HUGE THANK YOU to our sponsors! Your support makes our day possible and we appreciate everything you've done! And, to our volunteers that plan all year leading up to the event, work hard on conference day, and clean-up the mess when everyone leaves – THANK YOU! The club appreciates you more than words can express! And to our Youth Advisors and Youth Editors – you are the leaders of the club and your hard work is a true definition of your heart for the well-being of birds! Thank you, thank you, and thank you!

Now it is on to next year, #5. It is going to be a huge young birder party and we can't wait for the day to come! No matter your age, you will not want to miss it! In fact, if you do miss it, you will have missed the best Indiana birding event of the year. So, don't put yourself in that unfortunate position and when you see next year's date, mark your calendar!

Chad Williams

*Chad*



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## AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD AND LILLIAN STOKES

by Carlynn Berners

**When did you begin birding? Do you have any spark bird stories, or early birding stories to share?**

Lillian began birding as a young adult when she fell in love with raptors, took a raptor course from Paul Roberts and went to Mt. Wachusett, MA where she spotted a Bald Eagle (which was rare at the time). That was her spark bird. She had studied psychology and animal behavior and had a masters degree in Psychiatric Social Work but decided she wanted to become an ornithologist. She admired the work of Margaret Morse Nice, a leading ornithologist who studied bird behavior at a time when most of the focus was on collection, description, and listing of birds. Lillian looked to her as a female role model, not easy to find. Lillian continued birding then took a class on bird behavior taught by Don Stokes. They fell in love and decided to devote their lives to teaching others to understand and more deeply appreciate birds and nature which they have been doing for over 35 years. They have a wholistic approach which encourages people to study all aspects of a bird, its behavior as well identification.

Don was taken by his father on birding trips with the Delaware Valley Ornithological Society. As a young adult he became fascinated with bird behavior and the work of Conrad Lorenz who founded ethology, the study of animal behavior under natural conditions. Don was a teacher and he had taught himself much about nature by keeping extensive field journals and notes, finding

that much was not known even about common things. Don had just written the book *A Guide To The Behavior of Common Birds* when he met Lillian. Don's favorite bird is the Raven and his spark bird is Mallard with which he first studied behavior.

**What power binoculars do you prefer to use?**

Lillian uses 10 power binoculars, which work for her because she has steady hands and likes the way this power brings the birds closer than 8 power binoculars, which are the general best choice for most birders. Don uses 8 power binoculars. You did not ask about cameras but just about every birder now carries a camera. Cameras are an essential learning tool and also help document rarities. Lillian is the photographer and has taken many of the photos that appear in the Stokes Guides to Birds. She uses pro Canon gear but also has taught many people how to use the inexpensive point-and-shoot super zoom camera, the Canon SX 50. These small cameras are bringing many people onto birding.

**What was the first field guide that you published?**

Don started his writing career with *A Guide to Nature in Winter* published in 1976 and then *A Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds* in 1979 (later changed to *A Guide to Bird Behavior Vol. 1*). Then he met Lillian and they began producing books together, writing 35 books on all aspects of birds and nature.





# A CONVERSATIONAL RECAP OF THE 2016 INDIANA YOUNG BIRDERS CONFERENCE

by Carlynn Berners and Matthias Benko

Matthias Benko was the 2016 recipient of the Indiana Young Birder of the Year award, and Carlynn Berners was the receipt of the 2016 Conservation Awareness Award. Matthias serves as a youth advisor to the Indiana Young Birders Club. Both Matthias and Carlynn are Youth Editors to the IYBC newsletter, The Warbler. Both presented at this year's conference, and Carlynn served as the host of the event throughout the day. As with all presenters this past August, they did a great job and were both very excited for a chance to talk with each other to summarize the amazing day. Below is a transcript of their conversation! Enjoy!

**Carlynn:** The 4th Indiana Young Birders Conference at Cool Creek was amazing! The day was packed full of great things from start to finish. I was so impressed!

**Matthias:** It was, Carlynn. You know, each year, I tell myself that this was the best year, but then the next year comes and I say the same thing. It really is amazing!

**Carlynn:** I know. The morning birding in riparian habitat in Cook Creek Park was great with the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and all the nuthatches.

**Matthias:** Don't forget the Canada and Blackburnian Warblers! Personally, the latter is my favorite warbler species. What about you?

**Carlynn:** Ooh, I love Blackburnians, too, and also Kirtland's.

**Matthias:** So, what do you think about the presentations? We had a talented line-up this year.

**Carlynn:** Indeed we did! Everyone who presented was so knowledgeable, and there were some really engaging topics! I especially enjoyed hearing our keynote speaker, Ethan Rising. I really want to go to one of those camps now. He talked about camp Chiricahua in Arizona, Audubon Camp on Hog Island, Maine, and ABA Camp Colorado. There were a lot of speakers who talked about great destinations to go visit! I enjoyed your talk

about Dauphin Island, Alabama, Matthias! You took some great photos, and I'm jealous that you saw a Painted Bunting. What other birding destinations do you remember from the conference?

**Matthias:** Well, Carlynn, we enjoyed a great presentation from Aidan Rominger and Nick Kiehl's recent pelagic trip out of Hatteras. It was cool to hear how they and a bunch of other Indiana birders spent those two days off the coast of North Carolina seeing very cool birds like Cory's Shearwater, a White-tailed Tropicbird, Wilson's, Leach's, and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, and Black-capped Petrel. They also birded the Smoky Mountains on the way back and found great birds like Red Crossbill and Swainson's Warbler. And, then, of course, there was your presentation about the Birds of Kauai, Hawaii!! It was so cool to see all the colorful birds of Hawaii from your point of view. You did a great job, and I loved how you talked about the cloud canyons with Tropicbirds. That sounded really cool. And you even got to see the endemic honeycreeper! What species was that?

**Carlynn:** It was the Apapane, one of the most common honeycreepers on Kauai.

**Matthias:** Another great thing about the conference was the diversity of age groups in our speakers.

**Carlynn:** Right! There was a wide age range of speakers, the youngest being Juan, Catalina and Louise Velasquez, who were only nine years old! They did a great job of presenting and talking about the many bird activities that they have done at their school. It's so neat that they love educating their classmates about birds and nature. The oldest presenter this year was Nick Keihl, who is nineteen. Landon Neumann, a past recipient of the prestigious Indiana Young Birder of the Year award, who is now studying at Purdue, as also present, and he recapped this year's I.D. Quiz.

**Matthias:** I also appreciated the diversity of topics at the conference, which wasn't only about birds. Evan Williams did a very cool presentation about carnivorous plants such as the famous Venus Flytrap! I enjoyed the pictures from his recent trip to North

Carolina, where he went to Green Swamp, a bog habitat filled with all sorts of different carnivorous plants. It was great that he invited some of the kids to come up and trigger some Venus Flytrap traps! It was also great that he gave away some free plants! We also had Cool Creek Park's head Naturalist, Amanda Smith, show off her turtles! The star of the show was Chumlee, a Sulcata Tortoise who did laps around the room! She was great, and the turtles were awesome!

**Carlynn:** What did you think of the lunch?

**Matthias:** The food was great! You can never go wrong with tacos, and Moe's Southwest Grill's were good! What did you think of other activities?

**Carlynn:** I really liked the Fledgling Corner table for younger kids with coloring pages and other activities. This always helps with our most energetic participants! There was also a Bird ID Quiz with beautiful photos donated by Ryan Sanderson, a very knowledgeable Indiana birder and great photographer! Also, we had a fun field sketching activity and raffle prizes throughout the day!

**Matthias:** And, Carlynn, I definitely don't want to forget to mention that you were awarded the 2016 Youth Conservation Award! Congratulations! It was well-deserved after all you have done for the IYBC.

**Carlynn:** Thank you so much! And congratulations to you for being awarded the 2016 Indiana Young Birder of the Year! You've been such an active and enthusiastic member and contributor right from the start!

**Matthias:** Thanks, Carlynn! We should also make sure to say thanks to all of our sponsors. We definitely could not have such an awesome conference without them! They include Indiana Audubon Society, Dick's Sporting Goods, Mr. Canary, Robert Cooper Audubon, Stokes Birding Guides, and Kaufman Field Guides. Readers should definitely check out our website to see the entire list and learn more about the Indiana Young Birders Club! Hope to see you all next year!

the town's Natural Resources Inventory.

**What is the rarest bird that has visited your property?**

At our NH property we have had 204 species of birds including a Western Kingbird.

**Do you have a favorite rare bird that you have seen?**

Our most recent favorite (possible) rare bird is the Great White Pelican that showed up on Sanibel Island this past winter, creating much excitement. Potentially it is a first North American and maybe first Western Hemisphere record if it is determined that is was a wild species. This is an exotic looking pelican found in Africa, Europe and Asia, that just showed up at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and hung out for a few days with the American White Pelicans. It is not inconceivable that a bird of that size could fly across from Africa. Even though some Great White Pelicans are kept by U.S. zoos, none were reported missing. The Florida Ornithological Society met in August to decide whether they would accept this as a North American record, but decided to do further investigation. We, and all the birders who saw it, are hoping the record will be accepted.

**What is the coolest place you have visited in the world to go birding? And, why?**

There are so many places around the world to go birding. A few of our many favorites are Trinidad and Tobago (the Scarlet Ibis coming into the Caroni Swamp are a must-see) and even in this country, Alaska, which is one of the great last wildernesses. However, we always try to connect people with birds in their local areas so they will have a sense of stewardship and desire to conserve those birds. That is critical if we are to preserve birds for the future.

**If you could visit any place in the world that you haven't yet visited? Where would it be?**

Panama, it is on our list.

**You were on a TV show about birds. Can you describe the show and the process of making it?**

We were fortunate to be the first people to have a national TV show on birding and it reached over 40 million people, inspiring many of them to get involved with birding. Today it would be hard to reach that many people. It was an enormous amount of work. We were the producers, writers, on air hosts, fundraisers and took all the video of birds for our national PBS show Stokes Birds At Home, which was on TV for several years in the early 2000s. We designed the magazine format show to cover all aspects of birding. There was travel to many birding hotspots and national wildlife refuges all across the

country, from AK to ME to FL to CA. There was also a attracting birds to your backyard segment because that is where the majority of people relate to birds. Additionally there was a bird ID segment in which we gave clues throughout each show as to the "mystery bird" then revealed the answer at the end. A funny thing was when one person heard we were going to be hosts of the first birding show on national TV they said, "but you look so normal." There were stereotypes at the time of a birder being like Miss Jane Hathaway (a geeky character from the Beverly Hillbillies). In bringing birding to national TV and showing all types of people who were into birding we may have helped change the stereotype a bit. We also went on to do a TV show for the DIY network called Bird Watching Workshop with Don and Lillian Stokes, which was on for a number of years. We also have appeared on PBS The Victory Garden doing segments on attracting birds.

**Is there anything you would like to share with young birders about conservation? What are some of the most important conservation issues for birds today?**

Conservation is key, if there is not a large scale commitment to conservation there will be no birds. Young birders are the conservationists of tomorrow and they must embrace that commitment if they care about birds. Climate Change is real and there will more unpredictable and severe weather and drought. The needs of birds may get pushed aside as the population tries to deal with the impact of these issues on humanity. We need strong advocates for birds and sensible solutions to deal with climate change and the elimination of greenhouse gases that take into account what is best for the birds. Alternative energy is a must, but placement of wind turbines should not be in places that will harm birds. Habitat loss due to rising sea levels and changed habitats due to global warming are looming threats to birds. Birders must work together more than ever and much good can be accomplished if we do.

**Any other advice or words of wisdom you can share with the young birding community?**

Keep your passion for birds and make a lifelong commitment to bird conservation. You can make a big difference. Don and I did not know the influence we would have when we first started out but early on we knew we wanted to reach people on a large scale and help them appreciate birds as much as we did. It has taken much hard work and mastery of new skills but we have been very fortunate to have the career we do. We encourage each of you to keep focused, learn from mentors, teach others and you will make a big impact too!

**What is your most recently published field guide/book?**

The most mammoth book project we have ever produced and which took 6 years to do is our recent, The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America. It is the most comprehensive photographic field guide ever produced and covers 854 birds and contains over 3,400 photos showing species from every important angle with the most extensive text and subspecies information available in any field guide. That was then broken down for greater portability into the two new regional guides, The New Stokes Field Guide to Birds: Eastern and Western Regions. Our most recent new publication is for beginning and intermediate birders, The Stokes Essential Pocket Guide to Birds of North America. Amazingly we have always had the same publisher, Little, Brown and Co.

**Has creating and publishing bird guides changed during the time you have been publishing?**

Yes, enormously. In the beginning of our career there were very few bird field guides out there and there was no internet! There were no digital cameras. Publishing has grown and field guides have proliferated. The internet has sometimes taken the place of books and people rely less on books. Too often people don't even use books, they just take a photo and ask someone on the internet. This delays their own learning. They should first study the bird in detail, then use a good field guide to try and ID the bird. Careful looking is the key.

**What area of the Unites States do you live? And, what do you like most about the area?**

We live in two different places and what we like most is that each place has enormous support for conservation. We live in Sanibel Island, FL in winter and southwestern NH the rest of the year. Sanibel is a spectacular place for birds, wildlife and nature photography and 60 percent of it is preserved with tough rules on keeping native vegetation, no high rise buildings, and protecting native animals. And it is the home of J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, one of the crown jewels of the NWR system, visited by hundreds of thousands of birders in winter. We support the refuge by giving fund raising birding and photography tours and doing lectures. We visit the refuge almost every day. In Hancock, NH we own 23 acres, "Bobolink Farm," that border on a big pond (a dammed up section of a river) and a big part of our land is a large field in which Bobolinks, a declining grassland species, nest. We protect the Bobolinks by making sure the hay is cut at the end of August, after the Bobolinks have bred. Our town is a beautiful New England town with much land preserved and we helped write



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### **SPECIAL THANKS**

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*Interested in writing for our newsletter? Do you have a picture or drawing you would like for us to share? Or, would you like to blog about some of your birding adventures with us on our blog site? If so, please email us, we would love to hear from you. [iybc@indianaaudubon.org](mailto:iybc@indianaaudubon.org)*

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*The IYBC is a community for young birders across the State of Indiana to come together and support birding as a sport and to promote conservation initiatives that help sustain bird populations throughout the Americas.  
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