

# Newsletter for the Indiana Audubon Society

# CARDINAL

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Lakefront Sparrow Search  
October 14, 2017

IYBC Birding at Salamonie  
October 21, 2017

Birding Crash Course! @ the Dunes  
October 21, 2017

Dunes Owl Banding  
October 28, 2017

Please visit the IAS website for more information

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GOLDEN-WINGED WARBER:  
JOHN LINDSEY



# Introducing IAS Share & Connect

*By Brad Bumgardner*



The Indiana Audubon Society Share & Connect program is a new initiative to promote, inspire, and facilitate the next generation of bird enthusiasts and conservationists in Indiana. Share & Connect collects donated new and gently used birding equipment (binoculars, scopes, field guides) and helps connect the donor to Hoosiers looking for assistance with building their birding passion.

Share & Connect is designed for young birders, under-served birding community members, and others that can demonstrate a need for birding equipment to further their interest in birding and conservation in Indiana and beyond. The program is run by generous support of donations and seeks working binoculars, spotting scopes, birding field guides relevant to Indiana birding, and other accessories that help someone advance their skills and interest.



Donations by birders like you are the backbone of this program. Please consider sending us your new and gently used equipment and field guides. Donations can be sent to the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, by mail or in person.

## Field Trip Spotlight: Join us with the Cranes in November!



Join IAS this fall for a special motor coach tour to enjoy Indiana's largest wildlife spectacle, the mass migration of Sandhill Cranes at Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area on Saturday, November 18. This special coach trip will leave from Indianapolis's north-side, at Cool Creek County Park and will be led by Indiana Audubon Executive Director, Brad Bumgardner.

The trip will begin inside the Cool Creek Nature Center at 1:00 P.M. Eastern time. Registered participants will get a short introductory program about the cranes of Indiana, their history and status in Indiana, before boarding a motor coach bus for Jasper-Pulaski to view up to 20,000 cranes as they head to their evening roost. The trip will return to Cool Creek Park around 8:00 P.M.

At Jasper Pulaski, participants will be able to witness the evening gathering of cranes from atop special viewing platforms. We will also provide binoculars and spotting scopes to assist with the observations. Beginning about one hour before sunset, flocks of cranes will glide in from all directions. They gab and socialize again before returning to roosting marshes at dusk. Outdoor Indiana magazine rated the fall spectacle among the top 20 things every Hoosier should witness before they die. This trip is well suited for beginning and experienced birders, general nature enthusiasts, and photographers.

# IAS Fall Membership Drive

By Brad Bumgardner



Take part in Indiana Audubon Society's fall membership drive. Now through December 10, anyone that joins, renews, gifts, or refers a new member will be entered to win one of two great birding baskets courtesy our partners, valued at \$500 each. Two lucky members will be drawn on December 15, just in time for Christmas! Any membership level will enter you into the drawing. Additionally, any eligible member will also receive a commemorative Northern Cardinal print from Indiana Audubon Society during our membership drive. Membership info can be found at [www.indianaaudubon.org](http://www.indianaaudubon.org). Thanks to Wild Birds Unlimited and Premier Optics for the basket sponsorship!

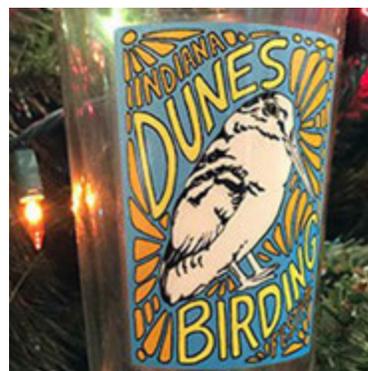
Each \$500 basket contains:

- Alpen Wings 8x42 Birding Binoculars with Alpen Lifetime Warranty
- One ticket to the 2018 Indiana Dunes Birding Festival (including keynote presentation), May 17-20, 2018.
- Foundational feeder set up from Wild Birds Unlimited
- Complimentary Deluxe Bird Seed Mix from Wild Birds Unlimited
- Royal Wing Tube Bird Feeder with squirrel baffle
- Indiana Audubon Society T-shirt and baseball cap
- Birds in the Yard: Month by Month by Sharon Sorenson
- The Joy of Bird Feeding by Jim Carpenter
- Birds of Indiana Field Guide by Stan Tekiela
- Ken Brock's Birds of Indiana CD



## IAS Merchandise Now Available Online

Wear your love on your sleeve with Indiana Audubon-branded apparel and accessories! From shirts, caps, and Indiana Dunes Birding Festival gear, each purchase supports Indiana's oldest conservation organization as we work towards conserving and preserving Indiana's natural heritage, its unique flora and fauna. Visit the IAS page to check out the full selection.



# Meet a Member

By Brad Bumgardner



Meet a Member: Tyler Stewart

## **Tell us a little about yourself? Where are you from, family?**

I'm just your typical graduate student that has a strong interest in birds and nature as a whole. I go to school at Purdue and try to spend as much time outdoors as I can. I grew up in Loogootee, a small town in southern Indiana. I'm an only child, so I spent a lot of time outside by myself.

## **What drew you into birding and birds?**

I have always been curious about the natural world. I was a big insect collector in high school and college. I hunted and just enjoyed being outside. I remember seeing birds while I was

outside and was always curious, but never knew where to start. In college, I took a birds class and began casually birding. I got bored watching the same birds over and over again and began exploring, checking out listserves and social media to find new birds and hotspots. It grew from there!

## **You're currently at Purdue? What's your field of study and interests?**

Yes, I am currently a graduate student here at Purdue. I am in the FNR department working on my MS in Forestry. I currently have a BS in entomology, also from Purdue. My work focuses on the health of black walnut trees in the eastern US, primarily focusing on a disease called Thousand Cankers Disease that is spread by a tiny insect. Most of my research is based in Yellowwood State Forest, which is also coincidentally one of my favorite birding hotspots. I love going down to my site during the summer, as Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Hooded, Cerulean, and Worm-eating Warblers all breed where I work.

## **What is your favorite Indiana birding destinations?**

Oh man, I have several favorite locations. I am conveniently located in the middle of Goose Pond and Lake Michigan, about two hours away from each. Both are incredible locations to bird. On one hand, I really like Lake Michigan because of the unique diversity that that you can expect to see when birds are moving. It's definitely a go-to during spring and fall migration and into winter. Goose Pond is a wetland oasis in a cornfield desert and is special in its own right. It took me forever to "figure that place out" so to speak, but I have a fondness for it as well. It is only a half-hour or so from my hometown so it's nice to visit family from time to time when I'm down that way.

Locally however I must go with Celery Bog here in West Lafayette. It is quick, easy, and usually very birdy during migration. I have gotten some really good birds there including Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Connecticut Warbler, Canada Warbler, Black Tern, and others.

## **You're currently doing a lot of birding in 2017. Is it officially a big year? Any thoughts for folks that may be considering one?**

Haha this is a tough one for me to explain. It's hard to say I'm not doing a Big Year when I've made multiple trips to the same place in the same day for a bird that I missed earlier. And sadly, I've done that multiple times this year! I guess yes, I'm working on as big of a Big Year that I can do while working/going to school. Originally my goal was to add as many new Indiana lifers as I could this year and focus on looking for a handful of birds that I really wanted to see. It kind of bloomed from there,

As for advice for those that are considering a Big Year? First you have to have the right mindset. You will miss birds you need or really want. Chasing rare birds doesn't always pan out. If you stay positive and have fun and enjoy the experience, you will enjoy your year. Seek out others that are doing a Big Year or have in the past. I have met a ton of birders this year and it is always great to bird with them or talk strategy. We have group chats and talk birds all the time. Some of those birders have become great friends and it is awesome to run into them all over the state. Make sure you are aware of the time commitment and sheer willpower it takes to get up before sunrise or take off and drive three hours for a bird that may leave right before you get there (those friends you make can help you in those cases). Also do your research – know when and where birds will show up and prioritize what birds you go after based on your odds of seeing the species again later. I'd rather be trying to find a Black-throated Blue Warbler right now trying to find a Glossy Ibis.

# Finding Nelson's Sparrow

by Kim Ehn



"Devilishly hard to find!" commented Dr. Ken Brock when I asked about this secretive sparrow with an orange-yellow face. Following a suggestion by the new Executive Director of IAS, Brad Bumgardner, I was on a personal quest to research the documentation and then find one for myself.

A small, 4 – 5 inch long bird, with a wingspan of 7 ½ inches, the Nelson's Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsonii*) is about the size of an American Goldfinch. It's distinguished by its bright orange face and chest, which some birders have described as a stunningly goldenrod

yellow. The dark gray crown is bordered by dark brown lateral stripes and the gray ear patch and cheek contrasts with the ochre/orange lores and eye stripe. The streaks on the breast and flanks are smudgy in contrast with the white belly. This sparrow also has a short, rounded tail with pointed tail feathers.

Field guides that I consulted described food habits as being insects, spiders, snails and seed found on the ground in dense grasses or the edges of shallow pools of water. Peter Scott gave a good accounting of habitat in his 2013 report from Lebanon Business Park in Boone County. "Sighted on the north end of a second pond, in a densely vegetated hip-high area of pink knotweed, small willows, foxtail, just a few yards from water." Then he adds that Mumford & Keller described a similar site as "a dense stand of polygonum, Bidens, and other moist soil plants around the weedy borders of a pond." Gary Langell specifically looked for Nelson's Sparrow at Goose Pond-GP12 in October 2016, and found the bird, "next to cattails and large patch of Daisy fleabane."

Using 123 records, Dr. Ken Brock has noted the Fall arrival of Nelson's Sparrow to be September 21st, a peak date of October 2nd, and a migration departure date of October 18th. He rates it as a Rare (Finding Code:7) migrant (1-3 birds seen in a year) that passes through Indiana annually.

Consulting the eBird reports for Indiana and considering the 2015-16 data, I narrowed the locations to six areas.

1. Hammond Migrant Trap in Lake County (Lakefront Park & Sanctuary Migrant Park) was a stopover for Nelson's Sparrows in 2016, starting with a sighting by Karl Overman on September 27, and then not seen again until September 29 by Michael Topp. On October 2, Jeff Timmons relocated the bird on the east end of the main trail, just past the turn style and other birders also saw it that morning. Despite efforts by birders, the sparrow was hidden until October 5 when Kristin Stratton reported seeing it for three seconds in the west end grasses by a cottonwood tree.
2. West Beach Unit of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in Porter County showcases dune grasses in the field NW and NE of the Long Lake parking lot where a Nelson's Sparrow was reported by Aidan Rominger on October 1 and by Bob Decker on October 5 & 6. Curiously, there were no September 2016 visits to this area.
3. Whiting Park in Lake County is a mostly groomed area with some mixed plant groupings. In September 2016, birders visited specifically looking for this bird in patches of weeds, flowers, and vegetation. With strong north winds, it flushed to a path where it was identified by John Cassady.
4. The Limberlost Swamp Wetland Preserve spans both Jay and Adams Counties. Finding it is as simple as crossing the road that lies between. In Adams County, Jim Haw found three birds on October 8, 2015, moving around in patches of vegetation in shallow water and mud. On October 11, 2015, Jeff & Mike Timmons saw 4 Nelson's Sparrows, later, Ed Hopkins found two of them, and the next day, Kirk Roth flushed one from the roadside plants. "Perched on a rush to check me out," Roth reported. In Jay County, on October 11, 2015, John Velasquez found two Nelson's Sparrows bouncing around in thickets, foraging low, and rarely coming out in the open. Nelson's Sparrows were not reported in 2016. John Velasquez visited too early in September and too late in December.
5. In Newton County, the Kankakee Sands Nature Preserve stretches for miles and has 9 hotspots on eBird. On October 25, 2016, Scott Enochs observed a Nelson's Sparrow in the area now known as KSNP Bison Viewing Area. The following year, Ed Hopkins, listed his two birds for the area known as KSNP Unit K/CR 225 Marsh. Hopkins described his encounter. "Had heard a 'seet' call in cattails on south side of willows with some deep water to the north. I couldn't pull the bird out into the open with whistled screech owl calls & pishing though I saw a sparrow fly once. It was starting to rain, and I turned to leave. A sparrow flew out of a small patch of cattails to another just south of the thicker marsh. I thought that it might be yet another Swamp Sparrow, but it had an orange face to my glee. It teed up on the tip of a cattail leaf & gave me a nice look."
6. The units of Goose Pond FWA that have had sightings reported in 2015 and/or 2016 include GP12 and Beehunter Marsh BH5S. Amy Kearns and Don Gorney had a very cooperative individual in October 2016 that spent time in the wool grass near cattails.

# Finding Nelson's Sparrow

by Kim Ehn

Other single sightings in 2016 in Indiana include Whiting Park (Lake C.), Chauncey Marsh Preserve (Lawrence Co.), and Universal Strip Mines (Vermillion Co.). In 2015, sighting locations reported were Boot Lake Nature Preserve (Elkhart Co.), Willow Slough FWA (Newton Co.), Pine Creek GHA (Benton Co.), and Noblesville (Hamilton Co.).

The range map constructed by Cornell Lab shows the summer breeding as a swath from the northwest corner of Minnesota and the eastern two-thirds of North Dakota, northward through the interior of Canada to the provinces of the southern corner of Manitoba, and into the northwestern reaches of Alberta and Saskatchewan. A smaller area occurs at the southwestern shore of Hudson Bay in Manitoba and Ontario. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Nelson's Sparrows are relatively common and numbers increased between 1966 and 2014. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 1.1 million with 100% spending part of the year in the U.S., and 87% in Canada.

I wondered if the breeding areas could point to indications of their migration pattern through the interior of Illinois and Indiana on their way to the wintering grounds on the Gulf and Atlantic Coast. The larger numbers of up to 5 in a sighting as reported on eBird seem to be in Alberta during the months of May through August. A check on the eBird reports along the Gulf Coast show the same numbers at many locations along Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida during the months of October through April. How will the recent hurricane impacts on the wintering areas affect the Nelson's Sparrows?

Dr. Ken Brock told me, "These magnificent birds are certainly worth the effort required to find them." And that is my birding goal for October.

## My Life with Cranes by George Archibald

Book Review by Kim Ehn

Jim Harris, Senior Vice President at International Crane Foundation (ICF) writes in the Forward that "George is a great storyteller, true stories that he himself made happen through faith and perseverance." Indeed, as I read this autobiographical journey of Archibald and the ICF, I was captivated by amazing events of his life. His reflections include sad moments of loss and triumphant moments of success.

Archibald grew up in Canada and spent two summers taking care of captive cranes in Nova Scotia. He was going to study medicine until he was convinced to attend Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. To conduct a comparative study of the behavioral displays of cranes, Archibald reconstructed a suitable environment, obtained funds, and secured 56 cranes of 9 species.

Together with Ron Sauey, a fellow graduate student at Cornell, Archibald was determined to create a world center for the conservation of cranes. Using the Sauey family farm in Baraboo, Wisconsin, aviaries were constructed and Red-crowned cranes from Honolulu and Massachusetts were the first residents.

The current ICF property is 180 acres just north of the original farm and Archibald includes the background story about the event as well as the events of producing the first captive Whooping Crane chick. Collecting cranes at ICF allowed Archibald to develop and test plans to help cranes with breeding and conservation of each species.

Archibald's work with cranes has taken him all over the world: to China for Red-crowned Cranes, the Korean peninsula for White-naped and Hooded Cranes, Iran for Eurasian Cranes, India and Russia for Siberian Cranes, China for Black-necked and Red-crowned Cranes, and Australia for Brolgus and Sarus Cranes. He has met the top leaders and environmental directors of these countries as well as important ornithologists of his time.

My Life with Cranes focuses on the human drama of Archibald's own stories and does not follow a chronological order. Many of the described experiences list only the years or seasons. His research projects involve many encounters with cranes and gives credit to why the ICF in Wisconsin is an incredible conservation program and resource for the world birding community.

Photos and maps are included in every chapter but are not specifically identified with names, dates and locations. I am thankful to be given the opportunity to review this book as it has made me a supporter of the conservation work of the ICF, a future visitor with a new awareness, and a renewed member with credit card and membership application in hand. See this companion piece: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkNrLmAuq44>

# Mary Gray News

by Carl Wilms



Mary Gray continues to improve its "Island in a Sea of Agriculture" status. As invasive plants continue to be challenged, we are rewarded with diversity in bird life. This fall we have already welcomed: Black and White, Magnolia, Blackburnian, American Redstart, and Tennessee Warblers (to name a few) as well as a large population of Swainson's thrushes. Six donations have been made this season in exchange for facility use (weddings, family gatherings) subsidizing the Sanctuary's budget. Repairs have been made to the 1st, 3rd, and 4th ponds. A portion of the west end of MGBS are being considered for designation "Nature Preserve" by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Plans are officially underway for the Hummingbird Celebration in 2017! The event will be held on August 11, 2018, at your Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary (MGBS). We will host

the event in conjunction with Connersville Tourism bureau with hopes of generating community and statewide interest in hummingbirds and other bird life. More details will be coming to IAS membership shortly. We will need many volunteers to help pull this fundraising event off smoothly. Mark your calendar and let us know if you'd like to be contacted for lending a hand ([carl.wilms@indianaaudubon.org](mailto:carl.wilms@indianaaudubon.org)). Amy has banded over 500 of these gems so far this year at Mary Gray. The August date is selected as the adult and hatch year birds abound at that time.

It has been two years since the last solicitation letter was sent to the IAS membership requesting funds to support operations at Mary Gray. As you probably know, no IAS membership funds are delivered to Mary Gray. Financially, the IAS and MGBS finances are kept separate. MGBS has been very fortunate to have loyal donors who have supported Mary Gray in the past. Additionally, several estate gifts in the past decade have been essential to funding Mary Gray's operations. In order to continue the enhancement of the property's habitats, continued support from IAS members is essential. Please consider making your tax deductible donation today. You can donate (or add MGBS to your estate plans) in several ways.

- Mary Gray Bird Sanctaury Endowment Fund

Sally Routh, IAS Treasurer

12284 Daugherty Drive

Zionsville, IN 46077-9308

o Funds in this account have interest distributed to MGBS on a quarterly basis.

- Lambert Family Charitable Trust

Fayette County Foundation

521 Central Avenue, Suite A

PO Box 844

Connersville, IN 47331

o Funds in this account have interest distributed to MGBS on a quarterly basis.

- Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary Operating Budget

c/o Carl & Amy Wilms, Resident Managers

Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

3499 S. Bird Sanctuary Road

Connersville, IN 47331

o Funds will be deposited into the MGBS checking/savings account and used on an as needed basis.

Insurance and electricity costs garnish one third of the Mary Gray budget. Purchasing equipment, maintenance supplies, and building materials follow in allocations. We do our best to conserve the generosity of donors.

Every Yard Needs a Little Character



**FREE** pin feeder with the purchase of a seed character

\* Valid only at the Schererville and Valparaiso stores. One discount per purchase. Offer not valid on previous purchases or sale items. Offer valid thru 12/31/2017



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