

Indiana Audubon Society

# CARDINAL



NEWSLETTER • APR–MAY 2018 • VOL.49 No. 2



COVER STORY

## Bring on **SPRING!**

Don't miss a single moment. See the IAS event lineup.

[ pg.3 ]

---

## Production Team

Executive Director  
Brad Bumgardner

Editor  
Mark Welter

Graphic Designer  
Annie Aguirre

Contributors  
Annie Aguirre  
Brad Bumgardner  
Clint Murray  
Mark Welter  
Ryan Slack

The *Cardinal* Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Audubon Society. Its purpose is to share stories and conversations so that members and the birding community beyond can stay meaningfully connected both to birds and to the people dedicated to their protection.



# NEWS

## INDIANA AUDUBON AWARDS

Nominate a fellow IAS member for the 2018 Brooks and Mason Awards. The IAS Awards committee recognizes individuals each year that exemplify the dedication and commitment to Indiana's resources. Consider nominating someone for either of these two awards.

The Mason Award goes to those who have dedicated themselves through service to the society. It is rare when the commitment exhibited by James H. Mason is seen in individuals. It serves as an inspiration and focus for others, to work with such individuals. This award recognizes and expresses heartfelt appreciation for those IAS members who evoke the memory and dedication of James H. Mason.

The Brooks Award is given to those that work "for the advancement of conservation of natural resources in Indiana". Recipients do not have to be a member of the Indiana Audubon Society to receive the award.

► For more information, contact the Awards Chair, Kim Ehn, at: [kmehn@comcast.net](mailto:kmehn@comcast.net)

## The Indiana Audubon Society would like to welcome the following members who joined recently. Welcome aboard!

Rachael Ackley  
Kelly Ammon  
Elsie Anderson  
Maureen & David Baird  
Jane Baldwin  
Krysten Bauer  
Kimberly Beck  
Beth Beck  
Roger Beckman  
Andrew Belt  
Mary Bender  
John & Alice Bentley  
Stephanie Bode  
Stephana Boles  
Karen Boleyn  
Jennifer Bowman  
Aaron Bullman  
Thomas Cates  
Lori Christiansen  
Deborah Cooney  
Sara Costello  
Nancy de Caprariis  
Linda Degnan  
Diana Dibkey  
Maggie Driscoll  
Fred Edwards  
M. Erdmann  
Kristine Fallon  
Loyce Fandrei  
Glen Flory  
Patricia Frank  
Kathie Fritz  
Allee Forsberg  
Laura Fuderer

Joy Fulk  
Richard Garrett  
Kathleen Gillespie  
Richard Goebel  
Karen Griggs  
Wendy Haas  
Cassie Hall  
David Hamilton  
Susan Hengeveld  
Kenneth Hill  
Thomas Hohman  
Clyde Holler  
Guy Joassin  
Lisa Judge  
Sherry Kieper  
Kathy Kristelli  
Steve Kuntz  
Bill Lambert  
Cindy Little  
Mary MacDowell  
John McDonnell  
Alex McQuade  
Don McQuade  
Diane Meiborg  
Ronald Meldody  
Mary Meyer  
Nancy Moldenhauer  
Stephany Mollo  
Sharee Morse  
Brian O'Neil  
Patricia Perry  
Sam Plew  
Wayne Pope  
Karen Powell

Carol Preflatish  
Carolyn Quinn  
Michael Raymond  
Henry Raymond  
John Reichardt  
Michelle Rethmeyer  
Susan Rhodes  
Janice Richey  
Martha & Eric Robinson  
Colleen Rock  
Kathleen Ruesink  
Haley Samuelson  
Kevin Shick  
Kathy Shreiner  
Anne Snow  
Susan Starr  
Dave Starr  
Janet Starr  
Samantha Steele  
Sharon Stewart  
Vesna Tanaskoski  
Nancy Tatum  
Pamila Tincher  
Susan Truitt  
Eleanor Wages  
Melissa Washburn  
Charlotte Watson  
Archie Wills  
Bonnie Willy  
Mary Beth Witcher  
Tyler Yeager  
Whitney Yoerger

# MEET A MEMBER

## Ryan Slack

### Tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from? Family?

I grew up in New Castle and currently live in Brown County with my lovely wife of 5 years, Dawn. My grandparents lived on a family farm located south of Cambridge City in northern Fayette County that dates back to 1824, when my family settled a section of land. My parents, Rick and Patsy, currently reside on that farm, and my brother Craig lives near them. I grew up birding mainly at Summit Lake (before and after it was a State Park), Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, and my grandparents “back 640,” with Spring pilgrimages to Point Pelee sprinkled in as often as I could. After graduating from Purdue with a degree in Wildlife Science, I moved to the Cincinnati area in the 90’s. I was part of the world-famous Cincinnati Zoo Bird Show for a couple years, then I became an environmental consultant specializing in helping clients deal with Endangered Species Act issues, mostly focused on endangered bat species. This career took me to the Lexington area in the

early 2000’s, then back av-to Indiana where I have remained. We now have a couple grandchildren in the Omaha area that we enjoy visiting. Right now, I’m excited about getting my ABA (mainland) list to 500 (currently at 497, in the 400’s for a couple decades now). Just need one pelagic trip!

### As President of IAS, what goals are you currently working to achieve?

My main goal as IAS President is making the wave we are currently riding bigger. I was given a solid foundation with the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival surging and a newly hired Executive Director, Brad Bumgardner. He’s doing great things, including the aforementioned festival and putting our name on the map throughout the state with new grants and strong field trips. Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary is hosting a one-day Spring Gathering on May 5 and also the inaugural Hummingbird Migration Celebration on August 11, where folks can witness

the height of the feeding frenzy of their 600+ hummingbirds prior to migration. I have a strong Vice President in John Velasquez, who I really enjoy working with. We decided to take the Fall Festival on the road again, so it’s going to be at Pokagon State Park the weekend of October 20 with a great keynote speaker to be announced soon. With Brad and John and the whole IAS Board working on things the President normally has heavy involvement in, I’m able to focus on achieving better communication and understanding among our committees and the Board, which is already helping strengthen the bylaws and get the most out of our budget streams to provide maximum benefits to our members, and ultimately to the birds.

### What’s your favorite membership feature?

My favorite feature is likely nostalgic, because as a kid, I couldn’t wait for the *Cardinal* newsletter and

Indiana Audubon Quarterly to hit the mailbox by the side of the road.

I memorized those issues while dreaming of finding rarities of my own one day. Oddly, I don’t use others that are equally my favorite features (showing my age here). These include our social media presence for sharing rare birds in Indiana, exclusive membership benefits for field trips at the Dunes Festival, and the Birds of North America access. There was no Indiana Young Birders Club back when, or I’m betting that would now be my favorite feature. A shout out to that group!

### Any current bird issues or threats you are most passionate about?

I’m very passionate about the negative impacts human society has on birds and their habitats. I can make a short list, in no particular order: our huge thirst for energy (all sources being equal when it comes to bird impacts); large-scale agriculture, including commercial fishing, forest clearing, and any other natural habitat conversion; invasive plant and animal proliferation;

domesticated cats outdoors; coffee and palm oil plantations; perfectly manicured lawns, etc. Every issue and threat to birds covered in the 2015 documentary “The Messenger” covers my passion. Check it out.

### Favorite bird?

I’ve been birding for so long, this is a very hard question to answer. So I default to “the next one.” Outside of seeing a Starling or House Sparrow in the US, the next one I see always brightens the moment I’m in, so by default it becomes my favorite bird.

### What are your favorite birding destinations, statewide or worldwide and why?

Our favorite destination in the Indiana is quickly becoming the Lakefront during migration. I still love birding Mary Gray of course, and our favorite local birding patch is Zimmerman Wetlands (named in memorial to the Indiana bird artist, William Zimmerman). Dawn and I started going to Cape May in the Fall several years ago – it’s definitely our favorite birding destination outside of Indiana. Dawn’s mother lives on the Gulf coast of Texas outside the town of Seadrift, within the Whooping Crane winter range. That’s quickly becoming a favorite, too.





# Spring



**MAY 5**  
**SPRING**  
**GATHERING**



**LOOKING**  
**AHEAD**

Enjoy a weekend of birding, learning, and fellowship with friends at the peak of migration at Mary Gray Birding Sanctuary!

With over 700 acres of property, birders can wander the trails, welcome back migrating birds, and celebrate spring in full bloom.

### PRICE

Our all-inclusive price is reasonable!  
**\$15/Adult** (Free for children under 16)

**INCLUDES:** All meals (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner) and all programs/hikes/talks!

### WHERE TO STAY

Camping is available for IAS members free of charge at the Mary Gray Birding Sanctuary campground. All formal events will be held on Saturday.

**CAMPGROUND:** The Sanctuary has a primitive campground for use during your stay (at no additional cost). Pit toilets are located in the campground. Water and modern restrooms are nearby and will be available for your stay.

**WOODRIDGE INN:** The Inn is located about 20 minutes from Mary Gray. Depending upon room choice, rates are between \$80-95/night. Contact the hotel directly by calling 765-825-4800.

### MAY 5

Spring Gathering at Mary Gray (Connersville)

### MAY 12

IAS Big May Day Bird Count

### MAY 17-20

Indiana Dunes Birding Festival (Chesterton)

### JUNE 8

Birds and Bison at Kankakee Sands Field Trip (Morocco)

### JUNE 8-10

Kirtland's Warbler Field Trip (Grayling, MI)

## MAY 12

### BIG MAY DAY BIRD COUNT

This spring on **May 12**, IAS invites you take part in the **Big May Day Bird Count!**

Each year on the second Saturday in May, Hoosier birders work together to tally all the birds seen and heard in their county, and help provide a one-day snapshot of bird populations throughout the state.

In addition to helping to highlight migratory health for the state, the survey results contribute significantly to Indiana Audubon Society's scientific records, and are compiled, analyzed, and published in the *Indiana Audubon Quarterly*.

► To participate in your county, contact Matt Kalwasinski at: [maykalwasinski@yahoo.com](mailto:maykalwasinski@yahoo.com)





## BIRDING PASSIONS & PERILS COLLIDE

BY BRAD BUMGARDNER

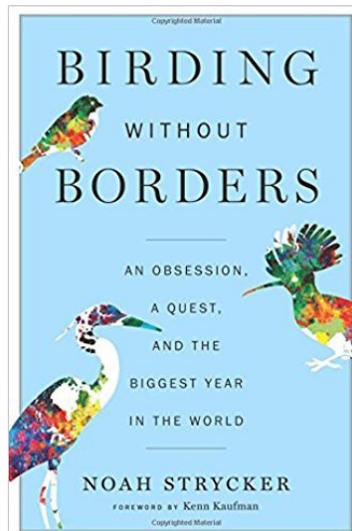
This past fall, Noah Strycker published his latest book, *Birding Without Borders*, detailing his 2015 journey around the world in search of the ultimate birding big year. Birders without knowledge of this adventure would have had to have been on another planet, as his big year was well catalogued in birding circles, online, and through social media channels. National Audubon hosted his blog, in which he posted updates and bird sightings on a near-daily basis, which was quite an accomplishment, considering that his daily birding often went on with little or no sleep and in remote sites with limited online access.

Noah set out to be the first person to see half the bird species on the planet. The world record when he began his carefully prepared solo expedition was 4,341 (in 2008). Noah, who was 28 when he began in Antarctica at the start of 2015, far exceeded his goal of 5000 species, ending at 6,042. Noah presents his story in a very down-to-earth style. He never saw himself above and beyond the locations, cultures, and people that he visited. We unfortunately don't get to read enough about the people and places, but do get hints here and there, as he is dependent on the kindness of locals in places such as Peru. The kindness and enthusiasm of locals wanting to show off their specialty species was also inspiring to read. The future of birding seems hopeful after reading some of the stories. Noah also shows off a sense of humor – about himself, his obsessive check-listing, and his extreme endeavor.

Reading about Noah's adventure plays with your imagination and

## BIRDING WITHOUT BORDERS

*An Obsession, a Quest and the Biggest Year in the World*  
By Noah Strycker • Illustrated. 326 pp. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt



causes you to consider whether you could attempt such a project. The answer, according to Noah, is an absolute “yes”. His big year was done on a budget of just \$60,000. Very doable for those serious enough to attempt it. It makes you realize that today's world is small, and we should never let money get in the way of wanderlust.

While the book has earned its place in the pantheon of big year chronicles such as Peterson's Wild America and

Kaufman's Kingbird Highway, it sometimes misses the mark when it comes to reflecting on the places that are visited and overall conservation stories that are left untold. Of course, with the entire world as its playground, a single book could not begin to fully explore all the possible stories. It becomes more of a retelling of the daily blog and species seen. Birders will no doubt enjoy the species list at the end and the places that each bird was found (he waited months to find his first Red-winged Blackbird – in Costa Rica of all places!).

## BIRD BANDINGS AT MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY

See the birds up-close at during a bird banding session at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. Bird banding provides a wealth of information – on habitat, on migration, and breeding habits for species found throughout the preserve.

### TO PARTICIPATE:

Banding begins at 6 am and spans several hours, depending on songbird activity. For those wishing to learn more and participate hands-on in the process (including net use, practice in bird removal & data collection), please arrive at 6 am sharp.

### TO OBSERVE:

Observers may arrive as early as 7 am to walk the nets and enjoy watching the banding of birds. The group will also complete point counts (listing birds seen and heard) along the way every hour.



**UPCOMING DATES: MAY 26, JUNE 2, JUNE 16, JUNE 23, JULY 7, JULY 14, JULY 21, JULY 28**

► To RSVP for a banding session, contact Amy Wilms at: [wilmsab@indianaudubon.org](mailto:wilmsab@indianaudubon.org)

APR-MAY 2018



## Feel the **BURN**

BY CLINT MURRAY

**T**he Lye Creek Burn, aka “The Burn” is an 88-acre wetland in north central Montgomery County that is a part of the larger Lye Creek Prairie. I first discovered this site in April 2001 as I was on my way to check some corn fields I had marked for Smith’s Longspurs. I had only been down this road once before, and at that time it was under a heavy blanket of snow. I remember thinking that the road looked as if it were created on a dike. On this day, however, my attention was soon diverted by a flock of about 200 American Golden-Plovers that circled in the air. I saw where they landed and pulled off the road. As I looked through my binoculars, I was astounded at what I saw: there were shorebirds out there! In addition to the plovers, there were over 200 Pectoral Sandpipers. I can’t describe the excitement I felt, but I knew immediately that this was a place to watch.

The natural history of this site is perhaps best told by citing A. A. Lindsey et al.’s 1969 publication, *Natural Areas in Indiana and Their Preservation*:

“About 4 mi. SE of Linden, this tract lies in a shallow post-glacial lake basin, shown as Lye Creek Swamp’ in the 1875 geological map. Following the recession of the Early Wisconsin glacier, a shallow deposit of peat formed in the depression. Plant succession brought about a wet prairie, which A. R. Bechtel visited in 1920, writing that it ‘...had been pastured but never been touched by farm machinery. The grass was very thick on the ground. As we walked over it we frequently came to grassy ponds of water which were over shoe top and sometimes knee deep on us. Several flocks of wild ducks flew up ahead of us. I have heard sportsmen relate about the great hauls of wild ducks which were made decades ago from the Lye Creek and Potato Creek Prairies in the northeast part of Montgomery County.

In the spring of 1928 the black earth had been plowed and planted in corn, after deepening of the drainage ditch. Bechtel wrote, ‘However, the cultivation of much of this prairie has not proved profitable. Heavy rains always turn it into lakes of water.

“In April 1936 (the second of two very dry ‘Dust Bowl’ years) a farmer raked the cornstalks into windrows and set fire to them; the soil caught fire and burned on 60 acres throughout the thickness of the peat: ‘...for several weeks at the rate that a cigar burns. Before a rain came the fire had consumed the soil on half of the 60 acres to the depth of three feet. Neighboring farm land was saved by digging trench 3 feet deep around the burning land.”

The trees which Professor Lindsey spoke of are no longer there. They were cut down and buried in a trench that was dug across the center of the field (no more fires here). This depression holds a lot of water and forms the major area of mud flats that is attractive to shorebirds and ducks. It is truly an incongruous sight to see diving ducks in a farm field, but there are indeed fish in the connecting drainage ditch. In three years’ time 23 species of shorebirds have been recorded at the site.

In addition to the shorebirds, I learned from the locals that the area is also a stopping point in the spring for thousands of Sandhill Cranes.

The nature of the field changed, however in 2003. Only half the field was planted, and the low ground was left to grow up in grasses and forbs.

The water was not pumped out after planting and so rainfall made it much wetter than in previous years. This attracted a few shorebirds, but not enough to make it worth a visit. It should prove a good site for sparrows in the fall, however. For the first time LeConte’s and Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrows were found here. As for now there are no plans to plant any of the field.

Birding can be varied and exciting depending on the season. Shorebirds and ducks can be found here during spring migration. Sparrows occur in the fall. In winter, hawks and Short-eared Owls are regular, as are longspurs. Several sparrow species and likely Sedge Wrens nest in the fields.





## SITE INFORMATION

**OWNERSHIP:** Private property

**HOURS:** None

**FEES:** None

**ACCESS RESTRICTIONS:** The site is entirely on private property

**RESTROOMS:** None on the site. The nearest public restrooms are in Linden and Crawfordsville

**LODGING:** The nearest lodging available is in Crawfordsville

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

**PARKING:** Park at the windmill on the north side of the road. Be sure to leave room for farm equipment to get into the field during times when farming operations may occur. Even though a field is planted, a sprayer may need to get into the field. In the fall consider that it may be time to harvest. All public roads have a sign at the intersection and are wide enough for two vehicles. Anything else its a farm road and should not be driven on, although no one would object to your parking there if field access is not blocked.

### 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.



Steiner HX Series

**MORE  
THAN  
GAME-FINDING.  
GAME CHANGING.**

[steiner-optics.com/outdoors](http://steiner-optics.com/outdoors)

**STEINER**   
Nothing Escapes You

**Birds&Beans** 

**5 reasons to always  
buy Birds&Beans<sup>®</sup>  
Organic Fairly Traded  
Smithsonian  
Bird Friendly<sup>®</sup> Coffee**

[BIRDSANDBEANS.COM](http://BIRDSANDBEANS.COM)



- 1** Save Neotropical migrant and local bird species.
- 2** Conserve forest and habitat.
- 3** Keep toxic chemicals out of the eco-system.
- 4** Support farm families and local communities.
- 5** Preserve healthy microclimates.

**BONUS: Our coffee tastes great!**

