

Indiana Audubon Society

CARDINAL

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MOTUS TOWERS FOR MIGRATION

Learn how the groundbreaking
global project is helping
conservation take flight.

[pg 2]

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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.



On the cover:

Motus Tower at
Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

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UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Join Indiana Audubon for an assortment of field trips and workshops being offered this spring. **Visit indianaaudubon.org/events** for more information or to register for any of these upcoming activities. Additional events are listed on the website. Many fill early, so sign up now!

JUL 13: BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES FIELD TRIP

SCOTT STARLING SANCTUARY [INDIANAPOLIS, IN]

JUL 27: BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES PHOTOGRAPHY 101 FIELD TRIP

MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY [CONNERSVILLE, IN]

AUG 3: LAKEFRONT SHOREBIRDS FIELD TRIP

MILLER BEACH [GARY, IN]

AUG 10: HUMMINGBIRD MIGRATION CELEBRATION

MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY [CONNERSVILLE, IN]



NEWS



BIRD BANDING HANDS-ON WORKSHOP

SEPT 6-8 Indiana Audubon is offering a unique banding workshop for individuals wanting to learn more about bird banding for research, experience, or to advance your field ornithology knowledge. These workshops will introduce participants to the use of bird banding, bird banding ethics, understanding bird molt for ageing and sexing birds in-hand, and how bird banding is being used in Indiana.

The Indiana Audubon Bird Banding Workshop takes place at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, in Connorsville, IN. Participants will receive in-the-field training in extraction and handling of birds, and understanding bird molt. The 2019 workshop will be held September 6-8 and costs \$249 for the weekend. Discounts are available for Indiana Audubon members. Included in registration is breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Saturday, and breakfast on Sunday. Additionally, camping is available on-site.

Participants will begin by observing instructors during the banding process, then rapidly progressing to hands-on experience. Beginners will be taught safe handling practices the first day before being given one-on-one instruction on extraction at the nets. Later in the course, as time and advancement allow, participants will have the opportunity to band birds and discuss criteria used to age and sex birds. Advanced participants will initially be showing molt limits in the hand but will progress to ageing birds on their own and will be "quizzed" by the end of the workshop. Participants may ask to join in on net rounds or banding, and are encouraged to observe and participate, as time allows, in the parts of the banding operation that interest them.

Workshop registrations are limited in order to maximize one-on-one training with bird in-hand experience, so participants are encouraged to register early.

► **REGISTER TODAY:** indianaudubon.org/events

EFROYMSON GRANT AWARDS INDIANA AUDUBON MOTUS GRANT

On the heels of Indiana's first full-time Motus research station at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, the Efroymsen Family Fund has awarded Indiana Audubon an additional \$11,000 grant to expand upon the initial research into bird migration movement.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is a collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry arrays to study movements of small animals.

The Motus tower expansion will allow for further tagging of both Northern Saw-whet Owls, as well as the study of summer movements of breeding birds within the sanctuary, particularly Wood Thrush. Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary offers a unique opportunity to study movement of breeding



birds in a natural resource management ecosystem, in comparison with nearby parks and preserves that face larger invasive species issues. Mobile trackers will allow for precise tracking of summer birds. Indiana Audubon looks forward to sharing more as the transmitters are put on our migrating birds. Visitors to the sanctuary can take part in summer bird banding to see the research in action and to learn more about this exciting grant.



Requiem for a Siskin

Philip Clay English

In the supposed cruelty said to be April
A Pine Siskin – his feathers edged
In that special color that tries to be
The month of May all on its own – was
Hard wired for exuberance.

Filled with free lunch – he jumped
Like a lightning borne note of his own species'
Love song to the spring – so intent to live that he
Made a blind bee-line straight through
The northerly opened back door
Into and through his luncheon hosts' home
Only to crash – headlong –
Into a barrier of crystal clarity: that invisible
Melted sand contraption set into the south wall.

A strictly human nesting contrivance.

Merely misunderstood through
The tiny eyes of his innocent instinct
That formerly small soul in life's flight
Became at once aware of how blind sight can be
And he was made immense in some greater sky.

On that same May-green day
A mature bird with subtly purple plumage
Was taken in by that transparency too
As he met the secret plane set there as well.

He was stunned

To find his eyes again opening – awake
Once more – moving toward the flight into life.

Few things by nature crave the coffin.

We makers of transparent deaths and deals
Are in unique possession of
The great gift curse: to choose from
Which colors speaking out to us in their
Desire to become our feathered badges
And which flocks pulling at our sleeves for attention
Shall be honored by our calling them our own.

Mine is the flock of the Purple Finch.



The Little OVENBIRD That Could



BY PENNY STARIN

Every year, my husband and I spend the first three weeks of January in sunny San Diego, visiting our daughter and escaping what we hope is the worst of northern Indiana's winter weather. During our absence we leave our 18-year-old cat, the house plants, the tropical fish tank and the resident and wintering birds in the capable care of a family friend (even though she has a fair-to-middling bird phobia). During our previous time away from home, we were having an issue with a pair of Carolina wrens repeatedly finding their way into the house. I may be anthropomorphizing, but it actually seemed that they would seek us out wherever we happened to be, apparently telling us to let them out! Our poor house-sitter had to help them escape on a number of occasions and was extremely pleased when we finally located and blocked the small opening around a pipe that was allowing them access.

Throughout December of 2018, our winter had been relatively mild, but that all changed when the calendar

turned to the new year. Almost as soon as we left for California, the temperatures turned much colder and there were several heavy snowfalls. We had left extensive instructions and a large and varied supply of food for our sitter to put out for the birds on a daily basis. There is nothing worse than feeding wildlife to the point of dependence on a food source, and then cutting it off because you're out of town. We were particularly concerned about our resident family of Eastern Bluebirds (six in number), and had emphasized that freeze-dried mealworms should be scattered on the floor of the covered back porch, where they would hopefully remain free of snow. All went well, and we returned home late in the evening of January 22nd, in spite of threatening bad weather and a government shutdown that affected many travel plans.

The morning of January 23rd arrived frigid and windy. My husband and I are both very early risers (even before the birds and long before

dawn). I anxiously awaited the coming of daylight so I could see what species we were hosting at our feeders, which hang from the eaves of our porch off the dining area. As I bundled up and was about to go outside to replenish the food supply, I saw a tiny bird hopping around in the snow on the porch, just beyond the sliding glass doors. It was smaller than a sparrow and not behaving or moving like a chickadee, so I grabbed the nearby binoculars to take a look. Imagine my shock and amazement when the lenses revealed an Ovenbird (an insect-eating warbler), happily gobbling mealworms and apparently unperturbed by the weather conditions. I quickly checked my Sibley app to find that an Ovenbird's normal winter range is in Florida, the Caribbean islands and Mexico!

I immediately alerted our local bird experts and record-keepers and managed to get some really awful (but identifiable) photos of the bird in the snow as proof of his presence. Now I was on a mission – I vowed to

do everything in my power to keep this bird alive, and spent much of every day just watching to make sure he (or she) was still with us.

I researched Ovenbird food preferences and found that they will eat small seeds and vegetation in the winter.

I also ransacked the shelves at our local pet store, garnering canned insects intended for reptiles, and even insect pellets for tropical fish. Tiny suet pellets and peanut bits were also added to the menu.

Each morning as the sky lightened, I could not begin my day until I'd seen "Owen" (of course, we had to give him a name!). I found that he sheltered at night on the porch behind a ceramic birdbath dish that was tipped up against the back wall.

He would apparently

huddle there in some dried-up leaves, from which he also gleaned dead insects. My husband is a gadget freak and has three weather stations on our property. I refused to look at the screens and begged him NOT to tell me what the temperature was each day, since knowing would only add to my worry. Then I got the news that a polar vortex was on the way, with air temperatures expected to dip to around 25 degrees below zero and wind chills far below that – for several days in a row! I hardly slept those two or three nights, agonizing over this poor little Ovenbird who missed his flight south. The first morning of the vortex, I glued myself to a kitchen chair and watched for Owen. He had been emerging each morning from behind his birdbath around 7:20, and my nerves could hardly stand it as the minutes slowly ticked by. At 7:25, he came hopping out from his shelter as if it were a balmy spring day, and commenced dining on his favorite mealworms. I literally burst into tears and ran to tell my husband that Owen had made it through the night. The funniest aspect was that all the resident birds who should be used to weather like this were all huddled with their feathers puffed up trying to retain some warmth – and looking utterly miserable. Owen, on the other hand, seemed completely unaffected and unconcerned by temperatures that had to be far outside any previous experience. He merrily went about the business of



“It was a miserable, bitter, cheerless winter, but the little Ovenbird continued to visit his dependable pantry”

breakfast and retreated to his refuge. I'm an avid birder who doesn't know (or care) how to tweet, but I'd been sending out group texts to my birding friends to let them know Owen's daily status. That morning of Wednesday, January 30th, the text message was "OMG, he's OK!!!!!!!!!!!" Meanwhile, Brad

Bumgardner, Executive Director of Indiana Audubon Society, was doing some research. He looked up previous records of overwintering Ovenbirds and found that they had at times been seen as far north as Ottawa, Ontario – but not in January, and never in temperatures lower than zero degrees.

Owen survived the vortex, but that doesn't mean the weather got much better. It was a miserable, bitter, cheerless

winter, but the little Ovenbird continued to visit his dependable

pantry, though sometimes we wouldn't see him for several days running. It seems that when the ground was not covered with snow, he was able to forage in the nearby woods – I'd sometimes catch sight of him hunting in the dead leaves. When snow made finding food more difficult for a ground-dweller, he would return to the porch. I'd never had an opportunity to study an ovenbird at such close range, and for such extended periods of time. Usually, you catch a quick glimpse in the forest as they fly away at your approach, or just hear their increasingly loud "Teacher! TEACHER!" call. Through our glass doors, I could observe his actions from only a few feet away and sometimes for 30 minutes at a time (if I didn't make any sudden moves!). I had never realized how much an Ovenbird hunts and moves like a Sora or other rail, with a chicken-like strut and the little upward jerks of the tail. I now think of them as little "rails of the forest."

My husband was able to take some much better photos over the course of Owen's visit, and we continued to see him until the last recorded sighting on Saturday, March 2. His survival at that point seemed virtually guaranteed by the occasional hints of an approaching spring, but I sincerely hope he doesn't make a habit of wintering at our house – my nerves can't handle it! 🍂

meet a **MEMBER** AMY KEARNS

Q TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF. FAMILY? WHERE DO YOU LIVE? WORK?

I live with my husband, two children, and two rescue dogs in Mitchell (Lawrence County). My husband Noah teaches high school and I am the assistant nongame bird biologist for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Q WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN BIRDING?

I've always been interested in nature and the outdoors. As a child I often paged through my Grandma's Peterson guide, but what really got me into birding was ducks. In college at UW Madison, a power plant's warm water discharge into Lake Monona near my house attracted a diversity of ducks in winter. They were reliable and cooperative. I borrowed my Dad's binoculars and after teaching myself the basics, I took an ornithology course and got hooked.

Q YOU'VE BEEN FORTUNATE TO PARTICIPATE IN BIRD RESEARCH AROUND THE STATE. TELL US ABOUT SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PROJECTS.

We have some really great projects that help endangered species. Those are my favorite. Recently I've helped replace radio transmitters on Whooping Cranes, created and managed safe nesting habitat for Least Terns and Barn Owls, and gathered data for innovative projects studying Loggerhead Shrikes and secretive marsh birds. Those are my top five.



Q DO YOU HAVE FAVORITE BIRDING AREAS IN & OUTSIDE OF INDIANA?

Indiana has so many wonderful birding destinations that it's hard to choose just one! Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area is probably my favorite due to the incredible diversity of species found there, the home it provides to nesting endangered species, and the spectacular scenes regularly witnessed during migration. Outside of Indiana, south Texas during spring migration is pretty awesome.

Q WHAT'S YOUR DREAM BIRDING DESTINATION?

After our children fledge and I retire, I want to volunteer where I can contribute toward bird conservation while being totally immersed in unique habitats. For example, I'd like to help monitor nesting albatross in Hawaii and band birds in Costa Rica. I'm looking forward to that.

A + Q

WINGSPAN



AN INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH HARGRAVE

BY LINDSAY GROSSMANN

Lindsay Grossmann loves board games almost as much as she loves birds - so imagine her delight when a board game recently came out that was all about the birds (and accurately designed to boot)! She got to be one of the first to play in the game in its early test phase, and couldn't be more proud of her connection to this hit game that is causing her hobbies to intersect so directly!

Q Tell us about yourself. Where are you from? What do you do for a living?

I live just outside Washington, DC. I moved here over 20 years ago to work for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Now I work part time as a freelance consultant on health policy research projects and part time as a game designer.

Q What is your favorite bird?

I went to high school in Florida and perhaps because of growing up around a lot of wetlands, I'm partial to all of the big wading birds, especially the Roseate Spoonbill.

Q Can you explain the game play and mechanisms of your game, Wingspan?

Wingspan is a card-based engine-building game about bringing birds into a nature preserve. There are 170 unique bird cards, and each one requires food and maybe eggs for you to play it. You have your own player mat with a painting of three habitats on it, and each habitat is associated with a key action in the game: you use your forest to get more food, your grassland to get more eggs, and your wetland to get more

cards. Each bird that you play into a habitat makes you better at that action on your future turns. And many have special powers that get activated when you use their habitat. For example, a raptor might gain you more points by going hunting for mice (rolling the food dice) or birds (by looking at the top card of the deck).

Q How would you compare Wingspan to other games?

Within hobby games, Wingspan would be called an "engine builder," because you're making your turns more and more powerful as you go along. People compare it to games like Race for the Galaxy, Gizmos, and Terraforming Mars because of that. There are significant differences between all of those games, but they all have that strong feeling of building something up to make your turns better and better.

That sense of progression is harder to find in a lot of more mainstream games. Monopoly is one of the few mainstream games I can think of that has that sense that you're much more powerful at the end of the game than when you started. Compare that to Sorry, for example, where you are only ever taking the same simple action each turn.





Q Explain your motivations for creating Wingspan. What inspired you?

There are a lot of great board games out there that give you really interesting, meaty decisions to make, but in a lot of them you're doing something that is totally uninteresting or even actively distasteful to me. For example, in Settlers of Catan you're populating this pristine landscape and turning wood and ore into settlements. I decided to try to make a game that was about building up something I love.

Q What are your favorite birds in the game?

Art-wise it's so hard to pick, but the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that made it onto the cover is there for a reason. The birds in flight are really dynamic and fun, but I know they were also a lot more time-consuming for the artists. You see a lot more feathers when a bird is in flight!

For their powers, I love the cowbird and the cuckoo because they

both have an action that's meant to mimic their nest parasitism: when another player lays eggs, their power is that you get to lay an egg in one of your other birds' nests. Some version of that was one of the first powers that I came up with.

Q How challenging was it to work theme and mechanics into your game? How long has the game been in development?

I worked on Wingspan off and on, part time, for about 5 years. I think a lot of people don't realize how much time goes into designing and play-testing games before they hit the market, and the more complex the game, the more testing it needs. Wingspan was play-tested hundreds of times as it evolved.

The real world characteristics of birds gave a lot of inspiration for ways that the game could work, but it was definitely a challenge to come up with 170 cards and test them all. I started with a much smaller deck to work out most of the game, and

then the publisher really encouraged me to make it bigger so that people could have a sense of discovery as they play. You'll never see all the cards in a single game.

Q Which excites you more – the idea that your game might inspire more gamers to become birders or more birders to become gamers?

That's a great question. Both make me so happy, and I've definitely heard from both! It's definitely been fun on the Wingspan Facebook page to see gamers posting bird pictures and saying "I never would have noticed this bird if it weren't for this game." But I really wanted to hit that sweet spot where it would appeal to gamers who want a game with a lot of interesting decisions, but still be accessible to birders who aren't gamers. It may feel a little daunting to some folks who have never played a modern board game, but your first several turns are actually quite simple. The game kind of eases you in.

Q What has the initial reception of the game been? Where do you see it going from here?

It's been far beyond my wildest expectations. There have been articles in the New York Times, the Times of London, and Science magazine. On the most popular board game ranking site, Board Game Geek, out of tens of thousands of games it shot up to #80 within 4 months of people getting the first copies. (Pandemic and Dominion, two all-time-best-selling games in the hobby market, are at #74 and #75.)

We've said we're going to try to do an expansion for each continent. I just wrapped up my work on the first one, but it will take many months for it to be available. There's a lot of work that happens after my part is done! So many games come out every year and sort of fall off of people's radar. I'm hoping Wingspan might manage to stick around for a while. 🍂



WHERE BIRDING MATTERS

Marion's Matter Park

BY APRIL RAVER

sparrows, and wrens are seen regularly. Many species of waterfowl are often seen along the river and in the shallow waters at the base of the dam just outside of the park entrance. Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted Mergansers are all seen regularly in the winter months on the river's open waters. Three years ago, a long-tailed duck spent

a day swimming in the park and drew many birding enthusiasts from all over the state. Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers and other shorebirds have been seen on the banks of the river, while Bank, Tree, Barn, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows are often spotted hunting for bugs over the water and along the shoreline. While walking in the park, one will often see birds soaring high overhead, including Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Red-shouldered Hawks. Quite regularly, Bald Eagles and Osprey are seen fishing in the river or soaring above.

The park is made up of many different habitats, all of which are great for birding. The footprint of the park itself follows along the Mississinewa River, which draws many kinds of waterfowl and shorebirds. There is a paved path - The Riverwalk - which runs along the river and allows a safe, easy walk for birding. In the middle of the park is an old-growth forest which includes a nature path one can meander down to view woodland species. On the west side of the park along the river there is another small forest with an old Indian trail running through it. Bald Eagles, Wood Ducks, herons and Belted Kingfishers can often be seen

while hiking this trail. A fishing pond attracts grebes and ducks in early spring. Located in the heart of the park are 6.3 acres of luxurious landscaping known as the Gardens and the Meadow. With more than 7,000 annual plants, several ponds and water features, and a national award-winning butterfly garden, this area of the park is a must-see. Hummingbirds, finches, and butterflies galore can be found in this area in the summer months. During late summer and early fall, Monarch butterflies are tagged and released each evening in The Gardens.

Ready to explore this little-known birding mecca? The park is located at the corner of North River Road and Quarry Road in Marion, just off Highway 9. The park is open sunrise to sunset 365 days a year. Explore the area on your own, or join the Mississinewa Audubon Club for a guided birding hike on the second Saturday of every month at 9 a.m. (meet at the entrance to the Gardens). Alone or on a guided hike, make sure you come out and explore this birding hotspot and let us know what great birds you see along the way! 🍁

Located in the heart of central Indiana, in the town of Marion in Grant County, exists a birding mecca that few have explored – a 101-acre nature paradise known as Matter Park. The park, which sits on the bank of the Mississinewa River, was established back in 1892. Since then, it has expanded and evolved into the birding hot spot that it is today. While birding in the park is great year-round, it is exceptional in the Spring. Beginning in early May, the trees along the river are dripping with warblers, thrushes, vireos and tanagers. As you drive River Road through the park, the sweet songs of spring drift in through your windows and serenade you along the way.

According to eBird records, 112 different species of birds have been reported in the park. All seven species of woodpecker regularly occurring in Indiana have been documented in the park, including Red-headed Woodpeckers, which nested there last year. Nineteen different species of warbler have been recorded, almost exclusively during the month of May. Blackburnian, Prothonotary and Northern Parula are some of the highlight species seen. Swallows, thrushes, cuckoos,



FIRST SEASON OF MOTUS AT MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY PRODUCES EXCITING RESULTS



CARL WILMS HELPS BAND A
NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL

In 2018, the Efromyson Grant allocated to the Indiana Audubon Society provided for the erection of Indiana's only permanent Motus tower at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary (MGBS). It was an exciting year as Amy Wilms traveled to Maine to gain certification for attaching transmitters to Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) for the approaching winter banding season. After certification, six transmitters were attached to NSWOs with harnesses over the banding period. After each band was attached, the feedback from the Motus wildlife detection system was carefully monitored for evidence of overwintering or departure.

Five of the birds indicated fairly rapid departure. We are unsure where they went due to the lack of additional Motus systems. However, one bird provided exciting insight. A hatch-year female was banded and had transmitter #331 applied on November 17, 2018. She had a weight of 92g and a wingspan of 138 mm.

After a rapid disappearance from Motus detection, she returned within reception range on December 10, 2018. She then escaped transmitter detection until January 21, 2019. On that evening, Amy was attempting to lure in NSWOs for banding purposes and was using a loud speaker as a lure. While #331 was not captured that evening, she did come within transmitter reception

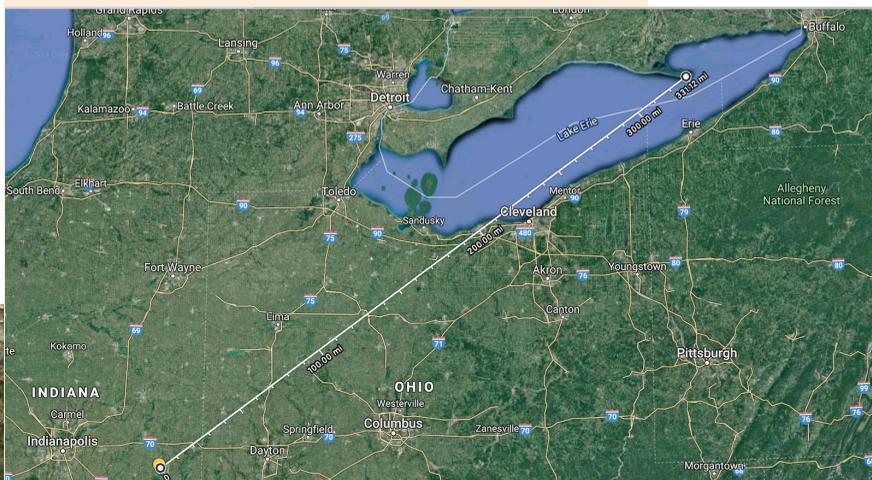
range. This NSWO was detected by the MGBS Motus system 13 times

between January 21 and February 10th. We can report with confidence that the NSWO wearing transmitter #331 remained in the MGBS area for the winter. This is a very exciting confirmation of overwintering NSWOs in the area. During the 2017-2018 season, one bird was banded in the fall and then recaptured in the early spring. This caused speculation that the bird may have overwintered at MGBS, but it also may have just revisited on its return migration to Canada.

Additional results have been returned using the Motus system in Canada. The NSWO wearing #331, last detected at MGBS on February 10, was registered by a Motus system at the Long Point Bird Observatory on the north shore of Lake Erie in Canada on March 21. These dates demonstrate that the bird took 29 days to travel 331 miles (see

attached map). At this point we are unsure whether the bird traveled around or over Lake Erie. Further detections by other Motus systems should provide clarification as to its route of travel.

The Indiana Audubon Society is grateful to the Efromyson Family Fund for its generous support of this monitoring program. 🍁



NSWO #331 MOTUS DETECTIONS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2019 INDIANA DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL

A pair of Prothonotary Warblers gather materials for a nest box located at the Indiana Dunes State Park. With luck, they may just call it home "sweet, sweet, sweet" home.

[Photos by Shari McCollough]



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

