

Indiana Audubon Society
CARDINAL

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In this issue...

FIELD TRIP UPDATES • MOVING FORWARD • MEET A MEMBER • SOCIETY NEWS & MORE!

Production Team

Executive Director
Brad Bumgardner

Editor & Graphic Designer
John Lindsey

Copy Editor
Mark Welter

Contributors

Brad Bumgardner
Carl Wilms
Jeremy Ross
John Lindsey
Annie Aguirre
Mark Welter
Sam Warren
Fred Wooley
Matt Igleski
Shari McCollough
Kimberly Ehn

Layout Designers

Annie Aguirre
John Lindsey

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.



Cover Photo:
WILLETS
(Shari McCollough)

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UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

The Indiana Audubon Field Trip Committee is happy to announce the slow return of field trips for the fall 2020 birding season. To comply with CDC guidelines, all field trips will follow the following restrictions:

- All IAS trip participants must register in advance for upcoming field trips.
- All IAS 2020 field trips are limited to 10 participants.
- All participants must utilize facial coverings and/or social distancing during the trip.
- All non-related participants should plan on traveling separately rather than carpooling during multiple location trips.

August 2: Shorebird ID Workshop Webinar: Zoom Link

August 8: Lakefront Shorebirds Field Trip: Miller Beach, Gary

August 22: Birds and Butterflies Photography Trip: Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, Connersville

August 23: Fall Warbler ID Workshop Webinar: Zoom Link

September 12: Eagle Creek Fall Warblers: Eagle Creek Park, Indianapolis

October 10: Lye Creek Sparrows Field Trip: Lye Creek Burn, Crawfordsville

Visit the Indiana Audubon Events Page at www.indianaaudubon.org/events to see the first fall field trips and events now posted for registration. These trips will fill fast!



Global Big Day - A Big Day for Indiana!

We did it! Global Big Day results have been piling in, and we are happy to share that we broke the top 20 states leaderboard... for the first time EVER! #BigIN20 Here are some AWESOME facts from Indiana's BIG Day:

- 236 species recorded in the state
- 9 NEW species recorded in Indiana for Global Big Day
- 1,700+ individual checklists submitted - that's more than DOUBLE our previous years!

Top counties by species: Gibson - 152; Vigo - 150; Tippecanoe - 148

We are EXTREMELY proud of this increased effort and Indiana's results! Despite the difficult times we currently live in, people were able to watch and count birds at a variety of locations, and we are already excited for next year!

Global Big Day is hosted by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and 2020 was its 6th year. More than 700 species have been recorded in the US on this day! This event gives a snapshot of all

the birds seen in the world on one day, and it is all through the individual checklists submitted by birders.

A more detailed summary will be available in the Indiana Audubon Quarterly once data is finalized and analyzed.

Thanks to everyone that participated. To learn more about the Global Big Day, visit

indianaudubon.org/globalbigdaycount.



Nominate an IAS Member Today!

Indiana Audubon Society members are encouraged to submit their nominations for one of two annual awards the Society bestows each year. The Earl Brooks Award is given to an individual "for advancement of conservation of natural resources in Indiana." The award recipient does not have to be an Indiana Audubon Society member. The James H. Mason Service Award is presented to a member of the Indiana Audubon Society who has dedicated themselves through service to the society. It serves as an inspiration and focus for others to work with such individuals. More information on each award can be found at indianaudubon.org/about-ias

Grants/Scholarships Awarded this Year

The Indiana Audubon Society is pleased to announce several awards in the Mumford and Keller Grants/Scholarship Program for 2020. This program is for individuals and organizations that are seeking funding for activities related to Indiana's natural resources, particularly those related to Indiana's avifauna. This year's funding has been set aside for applicants in many categories, including, but not limited to: research, bird preservation, workshop attendance, and youth birding activities. \$5,000 in funds will be awarded this fall.

For more information about the Mumford and Keller Grants/Scholarship Program, visit the Indiana Audubon Society website. For questions about possible funding projects, email IAS Awards Chair, Kim Ehn at kmehn@comcast.net.



Photo Quiz Answer

How'd you do with last issue's photo quiz? Did you guess Heath Harlan's Bell's Vireo, taken June 9, 2019 in Pike County? If so, congrats! We'll have a new photo for you in the October-November issue.



Bird Banding and Research

The Spring banding and Monitoring Avian Populations and Sustainability (MAPS) program is in full swing. Starting in May and running through October, the program is designed to monitor migration and breeding bird activity at MGBS. With the tremendous support of volunteers (if interested, contact Amy Wilms at wilmsab@indianaudubon.org), twenty-four mist nets have established to catch birds for the banding station. Some of the species processed this year include: warblers (Canadian, Mourning, Kentucky, Magnolia, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow, Palm, Connecticut, Ovenbird, Black-and-white), Yellow-breasted Chat, Red & White-eyed Vireos, flycatchers (Great Crested, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian, Yellow-bellied), woodpeckers (Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy), and others, totaling 47 different species. It has been an unusual year for netting the American Robin; eight have been banded so far this year, when previous years may have totaled a single bird for the entire season.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (RTHU) arrived noticeably late this season. During the first week in June 2019, more than 70 birds were processed in one night. MGBS had several RTHUs arrive in late May and early June, but then they seemed to disappear. The week of June 14th saw a return of many birds. It is curious how migration patterns can vary.

The Indiana State Department of Health is using MGBS as a monitoring site for ticks on bird populations. It is no surprise that the property has a healthy tick population. As with any outdoor activity, take precautions to prevent falling victim to tick-borne diseases.

MGBS is working with Dave Russell (Miami University) to monitor moth populations in forest habitats. Similar to the MAPS project, the moths at MGBS are being compared to the moths at other locations that have larger invasive plant populations. The question being researched is to what extent do plant populations impact moth diversity and populations. Many of you may have met Dr. Russell previously, as he is an active birder and bird researcher, and is a mentor to Amy Wilms, the MGBS banding coordinator.



Education

The COVID-19 outbreak has impacted everyone this year. MGBS is not an exception. School groups that usually frequent the property did not arrive. We really missed their traditional assistance with pulling garlic mustard plants! A few visitors helped the residents by lending their backs to this seemingly endless task. Pictures show John Kreiger (banding and invasive plant volunteer) standing next to one of the piles of garlic mustard that were burned after picking, and a massive oriental bittersweet vine discovered and terminated in the heart of the Woodpecker Trail woods.

Connected to educational efforts was the participation of Alex Sharp and Kristin Attinger with MAPS banding. Alex completed his MS degree at Ball State (studying Cerulean Warblers with Dr. Kabal) and is moving, with Kristin, to Florida to pursue his PhD, while Kristin continues to do fieldwork with multiple banding operations around the nation. It is wonderful to see MGBS serving as a training platform for scientific bird studies.

Kristen Sweinhart recently came to MGBS to collect her winning silent auction bid from the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival silent auction - a banding session with Amy Wilms at MGBS. She really enjoyed herself as she participated in the banding process and took a tour of MGBS, seeing portions of the property she hadn't previously visited.

Maintenance

Another new footbridge has been installed on the Tulip Poplar Trail. On the southeastern portion of the trail, in the heart of the big woods, John Godwin, Abbie Kirk, and Amy & Carl Wilms prepared the materials, hauled them to the site, and hauled out the old bridge. Come and check it out.

John Godwin, Resident Caretaker, put finishing touches on a new culvert along the service road leading to the 4th Pond. We mixed more than 60 bags of concrete to build this culvert! (My arms reminded me of this tidbit for many weeks!) It was needed to help prevent the road's erosion. Additionally, a number of erosion diversion dams have been placed to control water along the service road.

The outhouse in the campground has also had some needed landscaping applied. Several IAS members have come to the campground during our IAS members-only opening.

Progress is being made on negotiations for the MGBS Solar project. Work started in earnest during the summer of 2019 with the installation of additional trusses in the Maintenance Shed and removal of sun-blocking trees. Several donations have been received to support this project, which is anticipated to reduce CO2 emissions from coal-derived electricity by a whopping 1,344,388 pounds over its projected lifespan. Such a large number is hard to conceive; it's the equivalent of 22.4 fully loaded triple-axle dump trucks (using gravel as a payload). We are hoping to have construction of the 19 Kwh installation completed during 2020.

Easement work on the transmission lines that traverse MGBS was completed this spring. The crew was aggressive in its marking and felling of trees they felt jeopardized the power line's right-of-way. Negotiations for future cuttings are underway, with the goal of conducting the trimming in a manner that is more beneficial to IAS and the MGBS.

The most recent Eagle Scout project was complete this past fall. Hutton Cochran (Granger, IN) worked with his troop and with Carl Wilms to install new gates for the service road and the entrance to the Mary Gray Nature Preserve. He also built 12 Leopold benches for the campground fire rings (a separate Eagle Scout project) and other areas around the Sanctuary. They turned out very nicely and we thank him for his interest and motivation. Congratulations, Hutton!

Hopefully you are reassured that the mission of IAS is being manifested at MGBS through the passion, activity, and work being exercised on the property during a difficult time in our history.



Expect the UNEXPECTED by FRED WOOLEY



I don't know why I'm surprised when unexpected things happen in nature, but I am. Animals show up where they rarely or should not occur, a new plant is discovered where never observed, and it's a "wow!" moment in which birders, botanists, and naturalists find great delight. Even casual nature observers are intrigued with the unexpected. Over the years, I have gotten many calls, emails, photos of something unexpected or unknown, with the follow-up question, "Fred, what's this?"

I take all reports and questions seriously; as conditions change, animals move, plants adapt, someone explores where few go, and seemingly something new and different appears. If the newly reported is not a problematic or invasive species, or a danger to itself or people, there is no harm and all charm.

Birds provide the best example of the new and unexpected. Gradual climate change over time or a sudden and forceful weather event pushes an individual bird to an unexpected location. Some are simply hard to explain. I've often fallen back on a quote by famed birder, author, artist and field guide producer, Roger Tory Peterson - "Hey, birds have wings and fly places."

Today, colleague, former coworker, friend, and fellow naturalist, Xandri Clifton stopped by our property on the Indiana-Michigan state line. Our plan was to visit nearby natural areas, particularly the Blue Heron Ministries Badger Barrens near Clear Lake, and enjoy the stunning display of wild lupine in full and glorious bloom.

It was a beautiful spring day, but dark and damp, with occasional sprinkles. Every time we thought of venturing out, the rains returned. We ended up walking our property, enjoying the first-of-the-season blooming plants, and resident birds tending to their nests.

From the driveway near the house, through the mist, we enjoyed a pair of bluebirds in a dead elm snag at the edge of the yard. Xandri stepped further from a tree blocking our view and immediately noticed a larger bird at the very top, perched on a small dead branch.

"Oh my, what is that, Fred?"

I stepped over and looked at this hunkered, damp, dark silhouette and immediately thought crow. It was not big enough though, and the posture and shape were not quite right. With binoculars, we saw this grayish head, dark over the eye, and a smallish hook-like, hawk-like beak. I called it out, "Northern Shrike!" It is rare visitor here in the winter, but by June they should be at their breeding grounds far north at the edge of Canadian tundra. I'm thinking of R.T. Peterson's quote.

The rain was picking up and we retreated to the protection of the overhang on the garage roof. Viewing through rain and against the dull and dark milky sky was not the best and we quickly went from bird guides to binos and Xandri said, "Fred, I think that's a Mississippi Kite."

She was absolutely right! This bird is seen even less frequently in Indiana, but the time of year made more sense. Kites are several inches bigger than shrikes and once an oriole landed within a couple feet of it, the kite stretched out and its size, colors (not really colorful) and markings became obvious.

We got to enjoy it for about 45 minutes, giving us a chance to consult several field guides to check ranges and comments on movements this time of year for likely observations. We only had phones for cameras and the photo I got, though not enough to clearly identify the bird, gives indication of the shape and size, surrounding habitat, and distance of observation.

The Mississippi Kite's normal summer range sweeps through southern states, just touching the tip of southern Illinois. There have been spotty reports of possible nests in a couple of southern Indiana locations over the decades. They are graceful fliers and feed mainly on large insects, flying insects, and occasionally small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. They winter in South America.

It pays to give every bird, mammal, anything, a second look. You just never know. It pays to consult various sources. The great resources on-line provide information unavailable just a decade or two ago. We learned from the eBird website that a Mississippi kite was observed in the Indianapolis area a week ago. We learned from Kenn Kaufman in his *Birds of North America* that the Mississippi kite "Strays north of mapped range, mainly in late spring."

There you go... Now, was it the same bird that other birders noted in Indianapolis last week? Hey, birds have wings and they fly places...



The article originally appeared in the KPC News Outdoor Page.

Fred Wooley is a naturalist, Indiana Audubon member, writer, and land preservation/restoration enthusiast. He lives on part of an old farm overlooking an extensive fen in northern Steuben County.



meet a
MEMBER
Matt Igleski



Q Tell us a little about yourself. Family? Where do you live and work?

My wife, Vickie, and I live in Hammond, IN, but are originally from Grand Rapids, MI. We commute into Chicago together since we both work at Lincoln Park Zoo. Vickie takes care of birds and I develop curriculum for school programs. I have held a variety of jobs focused on animals and conservation: environmental science teacher, research technician, and zookeeper.

Q What got you interested in birds and birding?

While I was in graduate school at Central Michigan University, I took an ornithology class. That didn't instantly turn me into a birder, but it really fast-tracked my identification skills and got me out looking for birds on occasion. Right after graduate school, I worked for the University of Notre Dame Environmental Research Center. In this position, I lived and worked summers at the research station in northern Wisconsin. During the summer of 2011, I ended up being roommates with an avid ornithologist and birder, Luke DeGroote, who is now the avian research coordinator at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania. Luke was a great mentor, and showed me how to go out and "find" birds. The first time I tagged along with Luke, he was going to a bog to find Black-backed Woodpeckers. As we pushed through dense conifers to get to an old, rickety boardwalk, we first heard and then saw a pair of Black-backed Woodpeckers! My first time seeing this species, we got great views as they landed on a dead tamarack about 50 feet away. By the end of that summer I had really "fledged" and was well on my way to becoming a full-blown birder.

Q Any current bird issues or threats you are passionate about?

As a new homeowner, I've become pretty passionate about getting rid of turf lawns. They offer very little ecologically, and most people don't even really use their lawns. There is so much to gain for wildlife, including birds - and for people - if we shifted toward tearing up our lawns and planting native plants. We've been in our house for couple years and have already reduced our lawn by nearly 25%. With a small yard, we don't even use a gas-powered mower, opting instead for a reel lawnmower which reduces our carbon footprint.

In the short time since we've planted a variety of native plants and shrubs in our relatively small urban yard, we have already observed many new wildlife visitors. We noticed right away that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds much preferred visiting our Cardinal Flowers (*Lobelia cardinalis*) rather than our hummingbird feeder. We've also had large groups of butterflies visiting our asters, and caterpillars munching down on our milkweed.

Planting native plants is a great way to help birds by providing food and shelter for migrants. It's also great for people by adding low maintenance beauty to your yard.

Q What's your favorite birding destination, both in Indiana and outside the state?

The Indiana Dunes is my favorite birding destination in the state. It has a great variety of habitat and its location along the lake is just a great setting for getting outside to enjoy nature! Outside of the state, we really enjoy getting to southeast Arizona. We've been to the region a few times and are never disappointed. That part of the country offers really great resident birds and the potential for exceptional vagrants. Our last trip there we saw a White-throated Thrush (an Arizona first record) and got to see our lifer Elegant Trogon!

Q Advice to new birders getting into the hobby?

Go out a lot... and use a field guide (a real book, not a phone app)! Learn the most common birds in your patch really well and practice using your field guide (yes you have to learn how to use your field guide). Learn everything about your common birds: look at their beaks, note their shape and size, read the full description about them in the field guide, and note the other species around them in the guide. All of that will help when you are trying to ID a new-to-you species by giving you a good set of characteristics for comparison.

Find someone better than you to go birding with. Ask questions about how they are determining species - it's not always something that is as cut and dry as you might expect. Experienced birders are often operating on instinct, probability, and general impression. Experience gets you thinking more and more about time of year, type of habitat, what birds to expect, what birds are rare but possible, etc., all before you even see your first bird that day. Much of that is relatively automatic and comes with just getting out a lot and talking to other birders.

ADJUSTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Sam Warren • IAS Education & Outreach Coordinator

Since mid-March, we've all had a bit of adjusting to our sense of normal. Due to COVID-19, social distancing has become customary and our porches have been our new vacation spots.

For IAS, this adjustment has meant no in-person birding trips, education programs, or outreach events. For me as the new Education & Outreach Coordinator, this meant a refiguring of what my position would look like.

So, the IAS team does what it does best: innovates! We wanted to continue engaging with members and provide some sort of educational programming without people having to leave their homes. Thus, our virtual Zoom meetings were born!



Coffee & COrVIDs began in April and will continue every other Wednesday through July on Zoom. We provide the birding community with a place to connect and discuss migration, rare bird sightings, and birding hot spots. We've had anywhere from 10 to 40 participants at a meeting, both IAS members and non-members alike. There's always some trivia, bird ID games, prizes, and many laughs as we admit the successes and struggles of birding.

As Indiana allowed people to go back to work, we decided to create a similar evening event. Pints & Passerines is our birding "happy hour" that features less coffee and more brews, but still the same amount of birds! At both the morning and evening sessions, we've featured exciting guest speakers to spark new discussions. Some speakers include Hannah & Erik from Hannah & Erik Go Birding, Juan Diego from Tropical Birding Tours, David Lindo aka The Urban Birder, Sharon Stiteler aka Birdchick, and many more!

Personally, I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know members of the birding community even though I haven't been able to physically see them. I've learned so much about Indiana's birds and natural areas without leaving the safety of my local spot. Having just moved to the state when COVID began, Coffee & COrVIDs helped me feel welcomed and gave me tons of birding locations to visit!

Not only have our discussions proven to be educational and fun, but they have also provided a social outlet in a time we need it most. It's brought our birding community closer and allowed us to meet others from places we don't often visit. We've shared how to bird safely while social distancing and other ways to cope when safety guidelines prevent us from doing things we love. In a way, COVID may have brought us all closer as it kept us apart.

Pints & Passerines will continue on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, at 7pm ET/ 6pm CT on Zoom starting August 5th. Don't miss some birding recommendations, tips, and great fun while social distancing. We hope you join us!

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5819272830>



ADJUSTING TO THE NEW NORMAL

IAS Fall Gathering 2020: Back to Basics! KIM EHN - IAS VICE PRESIDENT

We are going Back to the Basics of birding this fall as we meet outside and offer members a few different ways to bird together, including proper protection, social distancing, and participant limits. As CDC and state guidelines may change, please consult the IAS events page for more up-to-date details about the schedule and field trips, as well as registering prior to September 12.

Here is what we know. This year's reduced festival (i.e. gathering) is taking place Saturday, September 26 from 7am-5pm at Fort Harrison State Park, Cherry Tree Shelter. Fort Harrison is a beautiful state park located within Indianapolis, and is part of the Indiana Birding Trail. More than 1,700 acres boast in excess of 200 species and include miles of easy to moderate trails and a variety of habitat types. Nearby Eagle Creek Park - with nearly 4000 acres and diverse year-round bird sightings - and its Ornithology Center will also be featured.



This year's event schedule is posted online and will focus on outdoor-based activities. The tentative schedule includes special field trips with top state guides, box lunches outdoors, a virtual IAS Board and membership meeting, outdoor afternoon workshops, and a virtual silent auction to support our local and state birding projects and grant programs.

This year's fall event has adjusted to COVID conditions and the final schedule has been changing daily prior to publication. Visit the gathering event page at indianaudubon.org/events to see the full schedule, and register today to join us for a fun fall day in central Indiana!



INDIANA BIRDING TRAIL HIGHLIGHT

PATOKA RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BY JEREMY ROSS

Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge is a 10,000-acre Import Bird Area IBA in the counties of Pike and Gibson. Though labeled as a bottomland forest habitat, it is the diversity of habitats that make it special to birders. Within the refuge, one can find seasonally flooded agricultural fields, grasslands (850 ac.), swamps and marshes (950 ac.), forested sloughs and oxbows, and reforestation planting at different levels of succession. Due its diversity, the refuge holds something for year-round birding.

The bottomland forests offer valuable habitat to nesting birds such as Prothonotary Warblers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, and Hooded Mergansers. The grasslands are home to nesting Henslow's Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks, Dickcissels, Bobwhite and Bell's Vireos. The flooded fields host numerous shorebird and waterfowl species, depending on season and water level. During the winter and into April waterfowl numbers can be quite significant at hotspots like Oatsville and Monty's Station if floodwaters are present. If the previously mentioned hotspots remain flooded and shallow through the first week of June then a birder can expect nearly any species of shorebird. If water is present into summer, then large congregations of waders like Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons can be seen feeding along with reliable yearly sightings of Snowy Egrets and Little Blue herons and more uncommon sightings of Yellow Crowned Night Herons. By fall, the seasonally flooded areas are usually dry, but a birder can still find waders on permanent wetlands such as Dillin Bottoms, Snakey Point and Bucks Marsh but often this requires walking into areas without trails and looking over the marsh as the water levels are usually too shallow to boat. If one considers all the public properties that surround the wildlife refuge, a birder has over 25,000 acres of opportunity.



TIMING

Typical Time to Bird

Site: 2-6 Hours

Best Time to Bird:

Four seasons of birding exists within the refuge. Spring migration is the best time to bird the refuge. Aside from the season, one of the most important aspects to consider when birding the refuge is the water level of the Patoka River. The river is **Hours:** Year-round. Sunrise to sunset.

GETTING THERE

Address:

510 ½ West Morton St.
Oakland City, IN 47660

Directions:

Between Wheeling and Pikeville, along the Patoka River, with Oakland City as the center. Hours: open year-round, sunrise to sunset. However, nocturnal birding can be had from the road.

Parking:

Many large and/or popular parcels have small parking areas. Roadside viewing can be on busy roads, so caution is necessary.

SITE LOGISTICS

Admission: FREE

Ownership:

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Accessibility:

The preserve features a 0.4-mile ADA-accessible gravel trail that runs through upland woods to the southern prairie.

Restrictions:

Open to hunting. Hunters and other users may be present.

PARK & STAY

Nearby Amenities:

At the Boyd Trail parking lot is a new pit toilet, there are no other public restrooms. Gas stations are available at Arthur, Winslow, Francisco and Oakland City. Oakland City and Petersburg are the nearest towns with restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores and campgrounds only one nearby hotel at Oakland City.

CONTACT INFO

Website:

fws.gov/refuge/Patoka_River

Phone Number:

(812) 749-3199

eBird Hotspot Link:

ebird.org/hotspot/L387713





Adopt a Shrike!

Help save the shrike! Indiana Audubon, in partnership with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Loggerhead Shrike Working Group, have teamed up to help provide shrubs for shrikes in the Adopt a Shrike program.

The Loggerhead Shrike is a state-endangered species that has experienced precipitous declines in recent years. In the late 1980s, Indiana's Loggerhead Shrike population consisted of nearly 100 breeding pairs. Ongoing monitoring efforts now identify fewer than ten breeding pairs annually in the entire state. Habitat loss due to changes in land use is likely a contributing factor, as much of the grassland habitat in their historical range has been developed or converted to large-scale agriculture.

Remaining shrike breeding pairs now tend to occupy small farms with overgrazed pasture, barbed wire fences, and bushes suitable for nesting. Overgrazed pastures produce bare ground, which provides ideal hunting conditions for shrikes - which need to spot and capture prey on the ground - but little in the way of nesting trees and shrubs. The DNR's current efforts are working to provide shrike nesting habitat by focusing on nest bushes and shrubs along fencerows. In helping with this initiative, IAS and the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife Non-game program are teaming up for the Adopt a Shrike program. Donors will receive a special adoption certificate highlighting the shrike research and conservation being done, an annual report detailing all the year's shrike banding efforts, and a commemorative "Never met a shrike I didn't like" T-shirt. Each adoption is \$50 and can be purchased through the IAS Online Store. Visit indianaudubon.org/adopt-a-shrike to learn more.



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