

Indiana Audubon Society

# CARDINAL

NEWSLETTER • DEC 2020 - JAN 2021 • Vol.51 No.6



**WELCOMING IN 2021**

WITH NEW EVENTS, PROGRAMS, UPDATES, AND MORE!

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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:

Evening Grosbeak

by Shari McCollough

# JOIN —OR— RENEW TODAY

**INDIVIDUAL \$30**  
BASIC BENEFITS FOR 1 ADULT

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A PARTNERSHIP WITH PERKS

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AGES UP TO 11

**STUDENT \$20**  
AGES 12-18

MEMBERSHIP PERKS	Individual	Family	Contributing	Cardinal Club	Life	Library	Fledgling	Student
Access to bi-monthly & quarterly newsletters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mailed printed copies of bi-monthly & quarterly newsletters			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Complete access to Birds of North America Database	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Discounted Field Trips & Programs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Special Access to Mary Gray Birding Sanctuary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
15% discount on all IAS online store merchandise				✓	✓			
Register a friend to any IAS field trip at member rate				✓				

➤ Be a part of Indiana Audubon Society! Sign up at: [Indianaaudubon.org/membership](http://Indianaaudubon.org/membership)



## UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

The Indiana Audubon Field Trips Committee is continuing field trips, while adhering to the most up to date health and safety recommendations. To comply with CDC guidelines all field trips will follow the following restrictions:

- All IAS trip participants must pre-register in advance for upcoming field trips
- All IAS 2020 Field Trips are limited to 10 participants
- All participants must utilize facial covering and/or social distancing during any field trip
- All non-related participants should plan on traveling separately rather than carpool during multiple location trips

**DECEMBER 14-JANUARY 5:** Audubon Christmas Bird Counts [Multiple Locations]

**JANUARY 9-10:** IAS Board of Directors Retreat [Location TBA]

**JANUARY 23:** Winter Eagle Field Trip I, #21in21 series [Salamonie Lake]

**JANUARY 29- FEBRUARY 3:** Winter UP Snowy Owl Tour [St. Ignace, MI]

**JANUARY 30:** Winter Eagle Field Trip II [Salamonie Lake]

**FEBRUARY 12-15:** IAS Winter Sax-Zim Bog Tour [Duluth, MN]

**MARCH 13:** Summit Lake Waterfowl Trip, #21in21 series [Summit Lake State Park]

Visit the Indiana Audubon Events Page at [WWW.INDIANAUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS](http://WWW.INDIANAUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS) to see the winter field trips and events now posted for registration. These trips will fill fast!

### #21IN21 CHALLENGE

Celebrate birding in Indiana in 2021 with the "21 in 2021" Challenge. This is your chance to explore great birding locations around the state and win prizes just for doing what you love! What is it? Simply put, it's an opportunity to visit many of the diverse locations along the Indiana Birding Trail. All ages, all abilities, all welcome!

From deep-water lakes to shallow wetlands and forests to prairies, Indiana's 60+ Birding Trail destinations offer a diversity of habitats, birds, and birding opportunities. Download the #21in21 spreadsheet and begin tracking your visits. You can visit 21 unique Indiana Birding Trail sites, or visit the same one 21 times over the course of the year.

Complete and submit your spreadsheet by the deadline date for your chance at great prizes, including Indiana State Park annual passes, Indiana Audubon gear, and more. You'll also get a commemorative #21in21 patch just for completing the challenge.

Want more birding opportunities!? Take part in our [#21in21 Field Trip Series](#), visiting 21 Indiana Birding Trail sites in one calendar year with our special guest leaders. Visit [indianaaudubon.org/events](http://indianaaudubon.org/events) to begin registering for trips on December 20.

*To learn more about the Indiana Birding Trail and the 21 in 2021 Challenge, visit [indianabirdingtrail.com](http://indianabirdingtrail.com) to download your spreadsheet and start hitting the trail!*



### COMING SOON! BROCK'S SHOREBIRDS OF INDIANA

Imagine that spring has arrived, and you are taking a late April birding trip to your favorite wetland. Upon arriving, a quick binocular scan reveals something unusual on the far side of the marsh. You are astonished when your telescope reveals that the mystery birds are a flock of 43 Marbled Godwits. After savoring the moment and regaining your composure, you might ask yourself the following question: is this a record high count for Indiana? Currently, there is no easy to answer that question, but with Indiana Audubon's assistance, a solution will soon be at hand.

In the late 1950s, Charles E. Keller wrote a splendid series of scientific articles dealing with Indiana's shorebirds. His papers, which were published in the Indiana Audubon Quarterly, included an exhaustive literature search as well as field data collected in the state. An update to Keller's work will be made available to IAS members in 2021 and interpreted in the upcoming "Brock's Shorebirds of Indiana". The updated format, which includes various maps and tables, will be formatted in easy-to-access (and downloadable!) files. This synopsis is exceptionally data rich, and should provide an excellent reference resource for anyone interested in Indiana's shorebirds. Indiana Audubon plans to soon place this new 50-page compendium on the IAS website, where it can be easily accessed by the next generation of Hoosier birders.



Marbled Godwit by Shari McCollough

**LOOK FOR THE DEBUT OF THE NEW BROCK'S SHOREBIRDS OF INDIANA AS OUR 2020 HOLIDAY GIFT TO THE INDIANA AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP!**

DEC 20 - JAN 21

### IAS SERVICE AWARDS 2020



At the recent Annual Membership Meeting at Fort Harrison State Park, Indiana Audubon Society (IAS) presented the James H. Mason Service Award and Earl Brooks Conservation Award. These awards are given annually to individuals who have advanced the conservation of natural resources in Indiana through many endeavors.

Brad Bumgardner, current Executive Director of the Society, was awarded the James H. Mason Service Award for his years of volunteer service to the organization. For more than a decade, Bumgardner has exhibited dedication to the Society by connecting people to birds. He was a former Lead Interpretive Naturalist with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and is currently the chair of the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival, which was created during his tenure with the DNR and occurs each year in mid-May. Bumgardner was also the recipient of the Times of Northwest Indiana's "20 Under 40" Award in 2013.

Richard Maxey, of Chesterton, was the recipient of the Earl Brooks Conservation Award. Maxey was recognized for his 5+ years of work in what is now the Westchester Migratory Bird Sanctuary. The former town dump site has been converted to a bird sanctuary, which included removing invasive plant species, finding funding for trails and site infrastructure, and leading volunteer work groups to help establish a non-profit land trust for the property. Maxey's work was the driving force in the effort to transform the landscape into a welcoming habitat for bird life.



### MUMFORD & KELLER GRANTS ANNOUNCED

Each year, Indiana Audubon awards grants through the Mumford & Keller Grants and Scholarship program. Named in honor of two Indiana ornithology legends, Russell Mumford and Charles Keller, these grants expand the knowledge of the birding world by funding projects in Indiana and around the globe. In 2020, \$6,000 was raised through annual contributions from Indiana Audubon, as well as both the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival and IAS Fall Festival silent auctions. The following projects were awarded funding:

- Equipment and materials to establish avian pollinator field study at Wabash Middle School: \$1000
- Assist Sassafras Audubon Society with funding to establish a MOTUS tower at Goose Pond FWA: \$1500
- Equipment for in-house lead testing of injured birds including Bald Eagles at Humane Indiana Wildlife: \$2000
- Update MOTUS tower frequency at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary: \$800
- Research funding to test the use of Autonomous recording units and environmental DNA to monitor Marsh Birds \$700

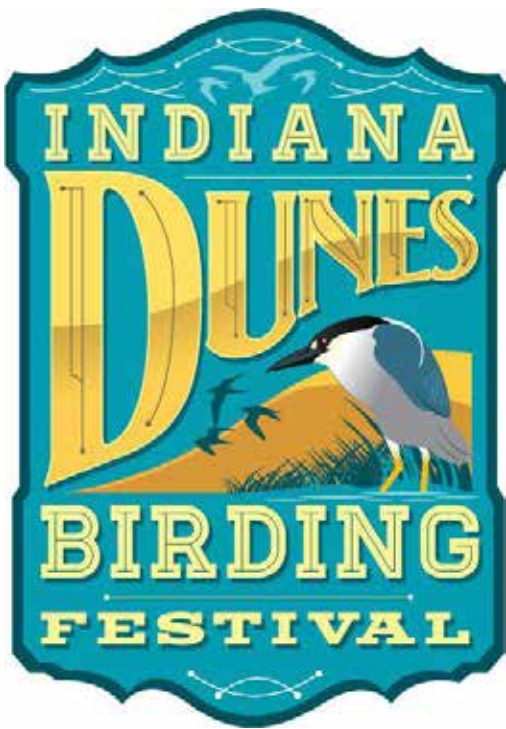
### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



Tufted Titmouse by Shari McCollough

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 24th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2021. Visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and resources!



# 2021 INDIANA DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL

Don't let the pandemic get you down! The Indiana Dunes Birding Festival is back and re-imagined for 2021. Begin making plans to join us in the Indiana Dunes May 13-16, for the Indiana Dunes Hybrid Birding Festival. The festival committee is hard at work creating an interactive and safe festival, for both in-person and virtual participants. Carpool field trips and virtual live streaming trips in the field will be available, with the return of popular events like Birds and Brews, the annual bird calling competition, and more. We will be featuring a livestream keynote address from Scott Weidensaul, whose new book, "A World of Wings," will be provided to EVERY participant!

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## HEADLINERS

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### Hannah & Erik Go Birding!

*The Birds Don't Know  
They're Special!*

FRI 11:30 AM-12:30 PM  
INDIANA DUNES VISITOR CENTER

### Juan Diego Vargas

*Paraiso de Aves: The  
Birds of Costa Rica!*

SUN 11:30 AM-12:30 PM  
INDIANA DUNES VISITOR CENTER

### Marc Kramer & Eliana Ardila Ardila

*Birding by Bus: Where  
Van Life Meets Birding*

SAT 11:30 AM-12:30 PM  
INDIANA DUNES VISITOR CENTER



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## KEYNOTE

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### Scott Weidensaul

*A World of Wings: Migratory Birds on a Changing Planet*

SAT 5:30-9:30 PM | SAND CREEK COUNTRY CLUB [ CHESTERTON, IN ]

Even as scientists make astounding discoveries about the navigational and physiological feats that enable migratory birds to cross immense oceans or fly above the highest mountains, go weeks without sleep or remain in unbroken flight for months at a stretch, humans have brought many migrants to the brink. Based on his forthcoming book "A World of Wings," author and researcher Scott Weidensaul takes you around the globe -- with researchers in the lab probing the limits of what migrating birds can do, to the shores of the Yellow Sea in China, the remote mountains of northeastern India where tribal villages saved the greatest gathering of falcons on the planet, and the Mediterranean, where activists and police are battle bird poachers -- to learn how people are fighting to understand and save the world's great bird migrations.

# INDIANA BIRDING HIGHLIGHT

## MUSCATATUCK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BY: DONNA STANLEY



Muscatatuck is Indiana's oldest National Wildlife Refuge (est. 1966), and encompasses 7,724 acres of land in Jackson and Jennings Counties. The Refuge contains a wide variety of habitat on gently rolling terrain. Approximately 60% of the Refuge is covered with forest, most of that being bottomland forest. The remainder of the area consists of shrub/scrublands, seasonal or permanent wetlands cover, and grassland. There are two large lakes (Richart and Stanfield), two creeks (Mutton and Storm), many marshes and ponds, and a vegetated swamp known as Moss Lake.

Muscatatuck is a natural pocket of wetland which floods frequently, but most roads are passable throughout the year. A 4-mile Auto Tour Loop starts and ends near the Refuge Visitor Center.



There are five hiking trails, with most being about 1 mile in length. The Chestnut Ridge Interpretive Trail near the Visitor Center is ¼ mile in length, paved, and wheelchair accessible. Other trails include Turkey, Bird, Wood Duck, and Hunt-Richart. The Visitor Center contains a Bird Viewing Room where visitors may watch birds visiting outside feeders. Recent bird observations are noted on a list at the Visitor Center.

Muscatatuck is designated as a continentally important bird area. It is managed to provide habitat for migratory birds and is an important stopover site during spring and fall migration. In the warm months, the mature forest and shrublands of the Refuge provide opportunities to find species such as Kentucky Warbler, Wood Thrush, Summer and Scarlet Tanager, American Redstart, Orchard Oriole, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Prairie Warbler. Cerulean Warblers also nest in the Refuge's mature upland forests. Old fields provide habitat for other warblers, Blue Grosbeaks, and many sparrow species. Wet fields and shrublands provide nesting sites for a large population of American Woodcock. Indigo Buntings are widespread along the Auto Tour Loop.

The Endicott grassland provides habitat for nesting Dickcissels, Sedge Wrens, Field and Grasshopper Sparrows, Yellow-breasted Chats, and sometimes Henslow's Sparrows. Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and sometimes Northern Parula warblers can be found along wooded wetland edges. Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, and Wood Ducks are common in the marshes. During spring migration, Sora and Virginia Rails appear regularly in the wetlands.

In winter, wetlands host a variety of ducks, geese and grebes, as well as Tundra Swans. Open fields attract Northern Harriers and other raptors. Bald Eagles are present year-round, as are Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Barred Owls. Songbirds like White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Winter Wren, and sometimes Red-breasted Nuthatch may also be found during the season. A growing population of Sandhill Cranes winters in the Refuge area, with peak numbers usually occurring in December and January. Whooping Cranes often travel with Sandhills, and sometimes stop in at the Refuge.

### TIMING

#### Typical Time to Bird

**Site:** 3-4 hours

**Best Time to Bird:** The Refuge is a good place to bird at all times of the year with peak migrant songbird and water bird numbers occurring in April and May. Waterfowl usually appear in November and many birds spend the winter if the refuge wetlands don't freeze.

**Hours:** 1 hour before

sunrise - 1 hour after sunset

### GETTING THERE

**Address:** 12985 E. U.S. Hwy. 50 Seymour, IN 47274.

**Directions:** There is only one vehicle entrance (from U.S. Hwy. 50) which is located approximately three miles east of the junction of U.S. Hwy. 31 and Hwy. 50. DO NOT use Google Maps to locate the entrance as the apps usually take people

to a now closed West entrance.

**Parking:** Park in parking lots or along road edges.

### SITE LOGISTICS

**Admission:** Free.

**Ownership:** Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks

**Accessibility:** Chestnut Ridge Trail (by Visitor Center) is paved, ¼ mile long, and accessible to wheelchairs.

### Nearby Amenities:

Modern restrooms are located at Refuge Visitor Center. A pit toilet is located at the Persimmon Pond Fishing Area. The staffed Visitor Center (open Tuesday through Saturday) has water fountains, a large exhibit area, and an exceptional Nature Bookstore operated by the Muscatatuck Wildlife Society. Seymour is approximately four miles west of the Refuge on Hwy. 31 and has

numerous motels and restaurants. Public campgrounds are located nearby in Brownstown and Vernon.

### CONTACT INFO

**Website:** [fws.gov/refuge/muscatatuck](http://fws.gov/refuge/muscatatuck)

**Phone Number:** (812) 522-4352

**eBird Hotspot Link:** [ebird.org/hotspot/L163702](http://ebird.org/hotspot/L163702), though 13 smaller hotspots exist on the property.

# meet a **MEMBER** COOKIE FERGUSON



## **Q TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF. WHERE ARE YOU FROM? FAMILY?**

I grew up in New Buffalo, Michigan. I am a graduate of Michigan State and Western Michigan Universities. My husband, Steve, and I live in La Porte. We have one daughter, Kris, who is married and lives about 2 miles away and one granddaughter, Allison, who is looking at colleges these days. I taught Middle School for 30 years (which gives me a unique outlook on life). I ran my own business for 22 years (coming home from school daily to take care of and train 16 American Saddlebred horses). I've worked retail in a Christmas store and as a bookkeeper for a trucking company. In 2011 I landed at the IN Dunes State Park as a volunteer and an Interpretive Naturalist. I am on the Indiana Master Naturalist board, and am vice president of the Northern Chapter of the Indiana Native Plant Society. I am Secretary of the Dunes-Calumet Audubon Society and on the board of the Indiana Audubon Society. In my spare time I'm on the board of the IDBF as volunteer coordinator and lead some of the tours at the festival.

## **Q WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN BIRDS AND BIRDING?**

I have always been interested in nature. As a kid I watched nature and birds from the back of a horse on many a trail ride. Birding became front and center when I became involved in the Indiana State Park pin program where the goal became to visit and earn a pin from each state park. Then the Indiana Master Naturalist program grabbed me and required 30 hours of volunteer time. That landed me at the IN Dunes State Park where I met Brad Bumgardner. Brad literally "took me under his wing" and opened up the vast world of birds. I now help with all kinds of bird research and this month I am helping the netting and banding of migrating Saw-whet owls.

## **Q WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BIRDING DESTINATION, BOTH IN INDIANA AND OUTSIDE THE STATE?**

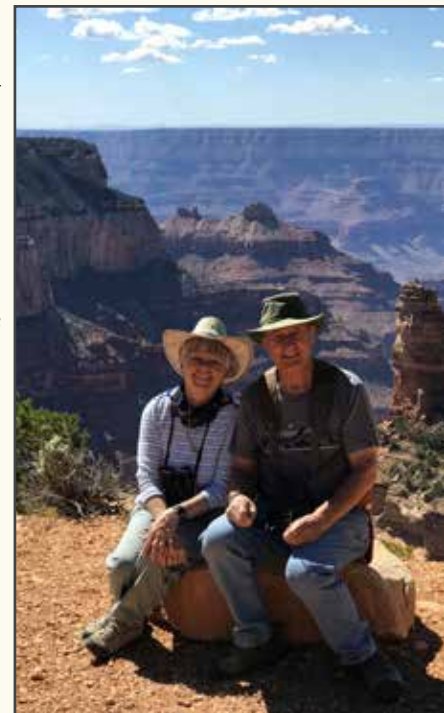
There are so many sites in Indiana. The top of my list has to be the Indiana Dunes area which with the help of Lake Michigan provides the perfect resting and staging spot for many migrants. There are some 370+ species that visit this area every spring and fall. Outside of Indiana there are many places, but a favorite would be south Texas in particular Padre Island where there are a great number of unique species and lots of "open land and starry skies above".

## **Q IF YOU COULD RAISE ONE BIRD RELATED ISSUE OR AWARENESS TO MORE PEOPLE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

Loss of habitat effecting bird populations...that's why I participate in Marsh Bird Monitoring, Climate Watch and Heron Rookery Monitoring along with owl banding. It worries me that natural areas are getting smaller as human interference seems to spread onward. One of my passions is to "get kids outside" so they will discover what secrets nature. Fun, discovery, and understanding are so important. Hopefully they will learn to appreciate and protect natural places in the future.

## **Q FAVORITE BIRD OF ALL TIME?**

This will sound cliché but my favorite bird is truly the one I'm looking at "at the moment". I have been lucky enough to travel to many states as well as Africa and Central America. From the painted bunting, spotted towhee, and green jay in the states, the Harpy eagle and Quetzal in Central America, the Tody and pygmy owl of Cuba, or the lilac breasted roller and secretary bird in Africa, I can't wait to see what fascinating bird will show up in my binoculars next.



# SO YOU THINK YOU FOUND A RARE BIRD?!

By: Nick Kiehl

The local birding community saw an influx of new members this spring as COVID-19 forced people to remain close to home, prompting many to discover a newfound interest in backyard and neighborhood wildlife. Add to them the dozens of Indiana birders who have gotten their start in the last few years, and it's safe to say that we have more eyes focused on birds than ever before. With more observers comes a greater chance of detecting something rare or unusual, but documenting a rare bird can seem like a daunting process to someone unfamiliar with the expectations of such a report. Fortunately, we no longer have to rely on rare bird hotlines or "snail mail" to get information on sightings, but with better technology comes greater complexity. Whether you've found something truly rare or just need some ID help, there are dozens of websites that could be used to report your sightings. This article will help explain how to approach the identification of a rare bird and where to report that sighting (and others) to inform the community.

Rare birds are rare, so finding one is a real treat, but how do you know what's considered "rare" in a given area? Maybe the single most important piece of information for new birders to learn is the status and distribution of local avifauna, and field guide range maps are a great place to start. As an innocent(?) young birder, I remember being convinced that Hermit Thrushes were breeding across the street from my house in Marion County. If I had taken a moment to check range maps, I would have learned that the Hermit Thrush is only found in Indiana as a migrant and during the winter months. What I had seen was almost certainly a Wood Thrush, a common Indiana breeder with an incredible song (seriously, look it up!).



Wood Thrush (left) and Hermit Thrush (right) by Ryan Sanderson

Another piece of advice is to learn the common birds first. Knowing the expected species well is the key to recognizing when something looks unusual or different. Finally, it's a good idea to tune in to what other birders are seeing, whether through Facebook groups, eBird's explore tools (<https://ebird.org/explore>), or the statewide mailing list IN-BIRD-L (<http://birdnews.aba.org/maillistdigest/IN01>). Bird distributions are dynamic, and range maps from just ten or twenty years ago may need an update, so real-time communication with others can be key.

Keeping those resources in mind, let's say you're out birding and think you've found something rare. What now? While the bird is still in view, take the following steps before doing anything else: get photos/audio if possible and jot down notes (mental or otherwise) detailing anything and everything you observe about the bird. Too often, the intrigued birder will immediately begin flipping through a field guide or phone app, and in the meantime the bird drops out of view or flies away. Pay attention to the





American Avocet by Ryan Sanderson

bird's behavior, any vocalizations, surrounding habitat, and size comparisons if possible. If birding in a group, make this a team effort! Photos are especially useful since they capture details that might normally go unnoticed and also facilitate ID confirmation. Photos or not, it's important to consider common species before getting set on something less expected. Even a familiar species in bad light, heavy molt, or when seen at a distance can look strange, and as a result, it's easy to assume that it must be something unusual. From experience, I can tell you that taking those extra few moments to watch the bird closely and consider the options leads to less frustration when trying to recall field marks. The whole exercise is a great learning experience that, rarity or not, will improve your ID skills.

After finding an unusual bird, it's always fun to inform the birding community about what you've seen. Birding is more enjoyable when sightings are shared with others, but with the dizzying array of platforms available to report sightings, it's sometimes difficult to decide where to post. For general reporting, social media (particularly Facebook groups), are the most popular. While many relevant groups exist, "Birding in Indiana," "Birding Indiana: Advanced Birding" and "Indiana Rare Bird Alert" are good places to start. As experienced birders know, claiming to have found a rare bird and posting the pictures on Facebook is the fastest way to get comments about the ID! Although mailing lists receive less traffic nowadays, the statewide IN-BIRD-L (<http://birding.aba.org/maillist/IN01>) still sees regular reports. If a truly rare bird has been spotted, submit documentation (eBird list or online form) to the Indiana Bird Records Committee. This expert-led committee maintains the official list of all birds recorded in the state of Indiana, and evaluates rare bird reports with the hope of monitoring vagrancy patterns over time. To find out which species require documentation, see the review list (<https://indianaaudubon.org/records-committee/review-list/>). Finally, eBird is great for reporting both rare birds and everyday sightings. Use the links for "Explore Species" and "Explore

Regions" to check recent sightings, and subscribe to alerts to be notified when something rare is spotted in your area (<https://ebird.org/alerts>). When sending information about a rare bird to eBird or the Indiana Bird Records Committee, remember to include as much detail about the bird's appearance, behaviors, and vocalizations as possible. Frequently, such reports describe the circumstances surrounding the sighting in great detail but fail to include more than a sentence or two about the actual bird! It's a good idea to reflect on the thought process that led to the ID in the first place, and of course, including a photo helps immensely!

Finding unusual birds is one of the more exciting aspects of birding, and reporting those sightings should not feel intimidating. Become familiar with just a handful of resources such as eBird, birding groups on social media, and the bird records committee to feel a boost of confidence the next time it's your turn to share an exciting find. Remember to start with the basics, including a study of range maps and seasonality, and you'll be prepared to recognize the next rare bird that hops, swims, or flies into view.



Varied Thrush by Shari McCollough

**FOR MORE INFO ON RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS, VISIT THE INDIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE (IBRC) SITE AT [WWW.INDIANAUDUBON.ORG/RECORDS-COMMITTEE](http://WWW.INDIANAUDUBON.ORG/RECORDS-COMMITTEE)**

# MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY

# UPDATES

Activity for the residents at your Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary (MGBS) has not been significantly altered by the Covid-19 pandemic. At least not in terms of continuing our pursuit of research and developing a healthy habitat. However, most scheduled events were cancelled. This will negatively impact our year-end budget balances.

*-Carl Wilms, MGBS Resident Caretaker*



## BIRD RESEARCH & ACTIVITY

Amy continues to coordinate the summer MAPS banding program with the help of dedicated volunteers who practiced Covid protocols. Fall banding was also conducted with similar practices and reduced visitors. Hummingbirds made their annual trek to MGBS with over 500 bands being attached. Northern Saw-whet owls are beginning to arrive; as of Oct. 29th, 4 owls have been banded with one having a new transmitter attached.

Amy and I installed a larger water pump in our backyard water feature this year. During this exceptionally dry end to summer, the birds lured in to the bubbler have been exceptional. We have had warblers (Tennessee, Black-throated Blue & Green, Louisiana waterthrush, Yellow-rumped, Nashville, American Redstart, Ovenbird), thrushes (Wood, Swainson's, Gray-cheeked and Hermit), Golden and Ruby-crowned kinglets, and all of the regulars. It has been a real treat. On September 24th, we did a count from our backyard to the maintenance shed (about 120 feet away), and identified 71 species!



## ASH TREE DANGERS

As you are all probably aware, the Emerald Ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) has devastated the ash trees in Indiana. MGBS is no exception. Upon taking a closer look at dead ash trees around the campground at MGBS, we were shocked to notice close to 20 that needed to be removed for camper safety. This initial inspection led to the posting of warning signs placed at the entrance to MGBS; and the closing of specific areas where exceptional potential tree/branch falls exist. On the weekend of Oct. 24, a large ash tree fell over the service road and on top of the Lonicera trailhead. Another tree fell on a bridge on Beech Trail. These events precipitated a discussion of the potential dangers to visitors. Even with warning signs posted, many visitors demonstrate a lack of understanding of the potential dangers of falling trees; we were rather dismayed at the visitors that would take off on a hike during windy conditions despite the warning signs. With this in mind, the Sanctuary Committee decided to close the property to visitors until the circumstances can be improved. On Oct. 27th, John Godwin and I walked the Wildflower Trail looking for trees with the potential to fall on the trail (~100 feet). After walking a fourth of the trail, we had marked 45 trees. Some of these trees were truly magnificent; thirty-inch diameters. Scouting, marking, and contracting tree cutters to remove these dangers is going to be a lengthy and expensive process. Please be patient. When John and I prepared for the work weekend to clear trees around the campground, we spent around one hour for each tree (17 trees were felled). Calculating where the tree “wants” to fall, and where we want it to fall, evaluate for safety, and reducing collateral damage, does not, and should not, involve quick decisions. We appreciate your patience during our closure as we make the sanctuary safe for everyone!



## INVASIVE PLANT PROGRESS

Maintenance issues were met in typical fashion; head on! John Godwin and I attacked Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) for the second consecutive season. The transmission lines that traverse the property (approximately 30 acres) had significant infestations of this invasive grass. The area was mowed, and sprayed with grass specific herbicide, three times in 2019, starting in July and through August. This season, a reduction in the stiltgrass population was observed. The right-of-way was mowed once, and sprayed twice, during July and August. In mid-September, when stiltgrass was going to seed, there were NO stiltgrass plants observed in the 30-acre plot. We are excited with the prospect of 2021 finding the right of way clear of this nasty plant (but not so foolish to bet money on it). However, stiltgrass has been found along trails, and in scattered plots, throughout the property. Once an invasive plant arrives, it will likely never be eradicated. We will be vigilant in monitoring its presence. There are several open fields that will be aggressively addressed in 2021 as stiltgrass has been located in them. We also built, and installed, 9 boot scrubber stations around the trail system to help reduce the spread of invasive plants.

We acknowledge the grim reality that dealing with invasive plants with aggressive means, impacts our breeding birds. However, when faced with the alternative of losing quality habitat, we see no alternative course of action. If you have suggestions, we will welcome your input.

## SOLAR UPDATE



The solar array has been installed and connected to the buildings! This effort was first discussed in 2011. With the invaluable assistance of a donor from Illinois and several Indiana Audubon Members, this system is anticipated to produce around 70% of MGBS's electrical needs, provide an electric car charging station, and reduce IAS's carbon footprint by about 12 tons/year. The picture shows the last panel being laid on the maintenance shed.

INDIANA AUDUBON SOCIETY  
**CARDINAL**

## OCTOBER BIRD ID QUIZ

Congrats to everyone that submitted a guess in our previous bird ID quiz. The provided documentation was of a SPOTTED TOWHEE seen in October 2006 in Fishers, IN. Cynthia Powers was successful in identifying it and was our October issue winner. Thanks to everyone that took a guess!

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