Indiana Audubon Society ARDINAL

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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:

Wood Duck at Eagle Creek Park, Indianapolis by Ryan Sanderson

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Mailed printed copies of bi-monthly & quarterly newsletters			✓	✓	✓	✓		
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Special Access to Mary Gray Birding Sanctuary	✓	\checkmark	\checkmark	✓	\checkmark		\checkmark	✓
15% discount at the IAS online store				\checkmark	\checkmark			
Register a friend for a trip at the IAS member rate				✓				



Be a part of Indiana Audubon Society! Sign up at: Indianaaudubon.org/membership

UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Join Indiana Audubon for an assortment of field trips and workshops being offered this summer. Visit indianaaudubon.org/events for more information or to register for any of these upcoming late summer and early fall activities. Additional events are listed on our website and many fill early!

APRIL 1: 125th Anniversary Hike at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

APRIL 7-8: Greater-Prairie Chicken Field Trips [Newton, IL]

APRIL 15: Lye Creek Burn Longspur Field Trip [Crawfordsville]

APRIL 15-22: Rio Grande Valley Women's Birding Tour [Harlingen, TX]

APRIL 29: IAS Spring Gathering at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

MAY 6: 125th Anniversary Hike at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

MAY 11-14: Indiana Dunes Birding Festival [Chesterton]

MAY 13: Youth & Family Day at the Indiana Dunes State Park [Chesterton]

JUNE 3: 125th Anniversary Hike at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

JUNE 3: Volunteer Workday at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

JUNE 24: Birds & Bison at Kankakee Sands Field Trip [Morocco]

Visit the Indiana Audubon Events Page at **INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS** to see all the field trips and events now posted for registration. These trips will fill fast!

EVS INDIANA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDIANA AUDUBON RECEIVES FUNDING FOR BLACK RAILS AND 125TH ANNIVERSARY LEGACY PROJECT



Indiana Audubon has received a \$41,000 challenge grant from the Efroymson Family Fund in support of the society's initiatives for combining technology with research into secretive bird movement and nesting and for 125th anniversary upgrades at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary.

The grant award will allow Indiana Audubon to expand upon collaborative marsh bird survey work to search for federally endangered Black Rails through automated recording units at The Nature Conservancy's Kankakee Sands prairies and wetlands. On the heels of a successful pilot year in 2022, research will expand to additional sites, thanks to this grant funding.

Additionally, as part of Indiana Audubon's 125th anniversary, this grant will provide a new interpretive birding blind at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. This accessible birding and photography blind will provide opportunities for bird education and programming. Additional building upgrades will enable Indiana Audubon to host

continued research and outreach events, furthering our mission to engage communities in the enjoyment of birds in their habitat, through conservation, education, and research. At Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, this includes a summer education program for school kids and the Hummingbird Migration Celebration.

In 1998, Dan and Lori Efroymson established the Efroymson Family Fund. The fund continues a long legacy of charitable commitment by the Efroymson family in Indiana. To date, the Efroymson Family Fund has awarded more than \$127 million in grants.



WE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THE EFROYMSON FAMILY FUND SUPPORT.

STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES ON BOTH PROJECTS THIS YEAR!

INDIANA AUDUBON WELCOMES NEW MARSHBIRD COORDINATOR

Indiana Audubon welcomes Bethany Dennis as the new Calumet Secretive Marshbird Coordinator. Bethany joins us from her work with the Indiana Dunes National Park and will be coordinating the volunteer effort for secretive marshbird studies done in Northwest Indiana and Northeast Illinois.

Indiana Audubon will be continuing the acoustic survey for Black Rails at the Kankakee Sands with Black Rail Technician, Lila Fried, in Newton County. Funding for this year's research has been provided by a generous grant from the Efroymson Family Fund.

Give to the secretive marshbird surveys today at **WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/DONATE**



SAVE THE DATE: GLOBAL BIG DAY



Global Big Day is an annual event organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in which birdwatchers from all over the world record the species of birds they see within a 24-hour period. The goal of the event is to document as many bird species as possible and to promote birdwatching as a fun and engaging way to connect with nature.

Mark your calendars for this year's date: Saturday, May 13, 2023. It is timed perfectly with the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival and is the peak of spring migration in the Hoosier state. Participants can submit their sightings using the eBird platform, which is a citizen science project that collects bird sightings from around the world and makes them available to

scientists and conservationists.

The event has grown in popularity over the years, and in 2022, more than 51,000 people from 193 countries recorded over 7,200 species of birds in a single day. The data collected during the event provides valuable insights into bird populations and distribution patterns and is used by researchers and conservationists to guide conservation efforts.

Find more info and watch live results at WWW.EBIRD.ORG/GLOBALBIGDAY



INDIANA AUDUBON GRANTS AVAILABLE

Indiana Audubon is offering several grant and scholarship opportunities as part of our 125th anniversary. The upcoming Indiana Dunes Birding Festival silent auction helps support the Mumford & Keller Grants and Scholarship Program. Over \$10,000 will be awarded in the fall of 2023 from these funds. Applications for the Mumford & Keller Grants begin June 1. Want to support these efforts? Consider donating an item to the silent auction! Contact Development Chair, Mona Clayton, at development@indianaaudubon.org for more information.

Indiana Audubon is also committed to promoting independent and academic research at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. Researchers, both academic and independent, may apply for funding from the 125th Anniversary Research Fund to support research activities at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary. Over \$2,500 will be available for research proposals in 2023.

For more info and applications, please visit WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/MGBS



TEVS INDIANA AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS AND HIKES AT MARY GRAY BIRD SANCTUARY



Join Indiana Audubon staff and volunteers as we celebrate 125 years (1898-2023) as the oldest continually operating environmental organization in Indiana. Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary is the Society's flagship property and contains over 700 acres of wetlands, forests, and prairies.

Throughout 2023, we'll be offering special monthly hikes to explore what makes the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary important for both birds and other wildlife. You just might find what makes this place special to humans, too!

Each hike begins at 9am ET on the first Saturday of the month and requires preregistration as space is limited. Each hike is free for Indiana Audubon members and \$10 for non-members. Please meet at the trailhead kiosk at the main parking lot. Expect a variety of trail conditions and some moderate terrain during each 90-minute hike. On

select dates, the hike will conclude with an opportunity to help Mary Gray through a volunteer work day. Volunteer work days are scheduled for April 1, June 3, and October 7 at 10:30am ET.

Sign up now at WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS

BIRD THE DUNES IN MAY!

While hundreds of birders are making plans for the Indiana Dunes Birding Festival, you don't need to be registered for the festival to make the most of migration in May. Consider these resources as you plan your spring birding adventure in the Indiana Dunes.

Self-Guiding Your Own Adventure - The Indiana Dunes Tourism maintains a self-guided birding guide that highlights some of the best areas to bird in the Indiana Dunes. It's a handy guide for where to go and where to park! View it at indianadunes.com/sp/birding-tour

Birding Backpacks - Many Dunes area nature and visitor centers offer rental binoculars and backpacks. These packs are generally free to use, with a driver's license deposit. Packs can be found at the Indiana Dunes State Park, Visitor Center, Douglas Center, and the Coffee Creek Watershed Preserve.

Youth and Family Birding Day, May 13 - You don't need to be registered to take part in the many free activities taking place at the Indiana Dunes State Park nature center on Saturday, May 13. Activities range from bluebird box building, nature sketching, live birds of prey, hourly bird walks, and more. There are also options for scouts to earn their birdwatching merit badge.

Scout the Longshore - The most amazing wonder of Dunes migration might just be the bird flight that takes place each spring morning when there are south winds. Visit the Indiana Dunes State Park Longshore Tower by the West Lot for one of the best spectacles of spring birding. On some mornings, over 25,000 birds fly over the tower site. A paid DNR bird counter logs the excitement each morning and posts the results at indianadunesbirding.wordpress.com.

Hit the Indiana Birding Trail - An amazing collection of birding trail sites exist within the Indiana Dunes. Nearly 20 sites lie within an hour drive of the Dunes. View them all at indianabirdingtrail.com. You can order the printed guide to take along with you, too!

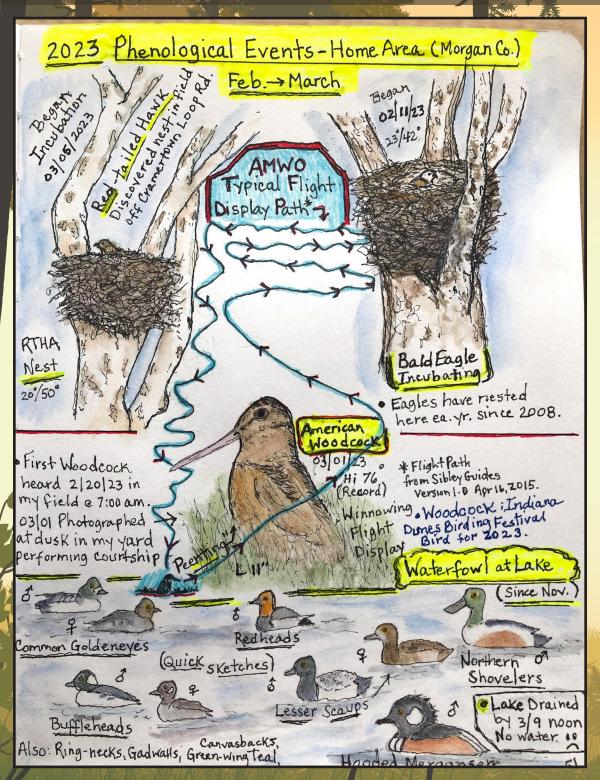


Bring Birder Impact! - Birders travel to see birds and spend money within local economies. Make sure the restaurants and hotels you're visiting know that birders are visiting their business. You can also support the event by checking out the silent auction online or purchasing one of the 2023 commemorative prints.

FIELD NOTES FROM A NATURALIST

Nature journaling involves using words, pictures, and numbers to record your observations, connections, and experiences with nature on paper. It is not about being an artist. Observation, curiosity, and creativity are skills that you can develop.

There is no wrong way to do it – just have fun!



Questions about this series and/or nature journaling? Contact Joni at heronwatch0@gmail.com

INDIANA BIRDING HIGHLIGHT

PINE CREEK GAMEBIRD HABITAT AREA

By: Barny Dunning

Pine Creek is a 807-acre gamebird habitat area in eastern Benton County. Originally purchased by the state for pheasant hunting, it has proven to be an excellent birding area year-round. Its primary feature is about 150 acres of restored wetlands that attract water birds in spring and fall, especially migrant shorebirds if the water levels are appropriate. Large portions of the uplands on the property support breeding populations of grassland birds, and migrant and wintering hawks can be seen from late fall through the winter. Over 250 species of birds have been reported from the site, including rarities such as Hudsonian



and Marbled
Godwits, Red
Knot, White-faced
Ibis, American
Bittern and
several species
of rails. Spring
migrants of many
kinds (warblers,
flycatchers, etc.)
can be present

in large numbers in May, feeding in the



relatively few patches of trees on the property.

Presence of the most desired bird groups (e.g., migrant shorebirds, rare herons) is dependent on water levels. The property has no permanent source of water - all ponds and wetland basins are fed by snow melt and rainfall. So, water levels vary dramatically seasonally and annually. In years of low precipitation, wetland basins may have low water levels in spring (good for shorebirds, bad for ducks) and dry out

completely in the summer (bad for fall shorebirds). In years of high precipitation, water levels may be too high for shorebirds in the spring but excellent in the fall. In such a variable system, you never know what may show up.

TIMING

Typical Time to Bird Site: The wetland basins can be scoped in a few hours but working shorebird flocks can take all day.

Best Time to Bird: Year-round, but most attention is paid to the site during shorebird migration in spring and fall.

Hours: Sunrise to sunset.

GETTING THERE

Address: 2249 N 850 E Fowler, IN 47944

Directions: Most access is from County Road 200 North, which bisects the property and along which most of the parking lots are found. The county road drops into and crosses a wetland basin after about 0.5 miles. That is the start of Pine Creek Gamebird Area. Parking lots are marked with wooden

signs. Most people use Parking Lot #3 from which you can walk across the road to the bluffs overlooking the largest wetland basin, or walk down to the southeasternmost basin, which often retains water the longest into the summer and fall.

Parking: Areas are mowed by the DNR and marked with wooden signs.

SITE LOGISTICS

Admission: Free

Ownership: Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife

Restrictions: Please obey all rules and regulations. Property users should not venture afield September 1-December 31 as the property is hunted. Viewing opportunities are only allowed along

the county roads or from Parking Lots between these dates

Accessibility: No paved trails. Foot traffic limited to mowed trails.

Nearby Amenities: There are no facilities on the property.

CONTACT INFO

Website: wildlife.in.gov

eBird Hotspot Link: ebird.org/hotspot/ L472683



On a recent fall day last year, I was traveling south along the highway that connects Lafayette to the big crane gatherings at Jasper Pulaski. As a birder, I'm always looking out for birds, but on this day, it was a giant vagrant that drew my attention. However, this vagrant was painted on the building as I drove by. A giant Central American motmot clearly in flight. The sighting, and subsequent pullover to photograph it, reminded me of the spark so many receive by the simple beauty and plumage of our feathered friends.

You don't have to drive too far in Indiana to notice the abundance of bird inspired art and murals throughout the state. I had seen murals and artwork from time to time, but it wasn't until the return of driving to meetings and events that came post-Covid that allowed me to take notice of the small, large, and sometimes obscure bird art that can be found. For those up for a road trip, you'll find groups of artists statewide that have, at times, taken it upon themselves to raise awareness about the importance of protecting these feathered friends and their habitats through the creation of outdoor, public bird murals.





INDY BIRD ART SCENE

Of course, there is perhaps no better place to seek out bird art than within our urban landscapes, where brick, concrete, and metal provides a canvas for bird art to spread its wings. Indianapolis is home to multiple murals depicting our native birds. History has it that Indy's first bird mural was an outstretched Bald Eagle painted on the side of a building downtown. Today, one of the most grand scale murals lies in the St. Joseph neighborhood, where a cardinal, Blue Jay, and goldfinch are set within a green backdrop. For a unique take, consider a walk along the canal downtown for hummingbirds under the bridge near Military Park.



DUNES DRAWINGS

One of the most striking murals can be found at the Indiana Dunes National Park Visitor Center, where street artist Ryan "ARCY" Christenson has produced a series of bird and wildlife murals, including an amazing Sandhill Crane. A quick stroll around the grounds will reveal bobcats, monarchs, and custom painted bison. These murals capture the beauty and grace of our local birds and wildlife and serve as a reminder of the importance of protecting the Dunes area ecosystems.



FORT WAYNE DIVERSIFIES CITY ART

Another popular mural can be found in Fort Wayne, Indiana, which features a colorful depiction by Bryan Ballinger, who makes art in several different mediums. He's a regional artist whose work downtown is now recognizable with "Blue Birds", a mural featured on the Visit Fort Wayne building. "I think Fort Wayne is a great example of a city that's embracing art and transforming itself," Ballinger said. A trip to visit Fort Wayne's art should also include the newest mural on the front of the University of Saint Francis Robert Goldstine Performing Arts Center downtown. Constructed last fall, this mural is different as it contains 70 aluminum Dibond panels made by university students. The birds include an Indigo Bunting, Eastern Bluebird, Northern Cardinal, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and American Goldfinch. All the birds are flying eastward except for the hummingbird. They reflect native birds in Indiana but also birds are connected to the saint and the statue of him across the street that show him with animals.



3D LIKE THE BIRDS

While murals and their two-dimensional work can impress, three-dimensional art can be viewed from multiple angles and can create the illusion of depth and dimensionality. The Birds of Paradise in Valparaiso's downtown is a sculpture scavenger hunt, created to promote engagement, culture and activity among local artists. The scavenger hunt is a fun way for community members and visitors to learn more about Valparaiso and its birds. The hunt includes ten bird sculptures representing ten native species hidden in key locations throughout downtown with a coloring book that serves as your guide. Indiana Audubon species profiles also teach participants more about the local birds depicted. You can preview the sculptures and birds featured at indianaaudubon.org/vbop.



BIRDS ON THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

These murals are not only beautiful works of art, but they also serve an important purpose by raising awareness about the importance of conservation efforts for wild birds and their habitats. Just as conservation is not just an urban issue, some of the most amazing bird inspired art can be found among the dirt roads and country landscapes around the state. A visit to Greencastle will not only find one beautifully painted farm silo, but four of them. The silos, which sit on Veterans Memorial Parkway, feature a large Bald Eagle on the westernmost silo, as an additional salute to the veterans the parkway honors. The eagle, with its white head and large yellow bill, is surrounded by dark pink and red peonies, Indiana's state flower and a prolific bloomer in Putnam County. The background of the silo is sky blue.



OTHER HIDDEN CEMS

Ready for tropical birding!? Check out the colorful Turquoise-browed Motmot featured on the brick wall of this building in tiny Monon, about 20 minutes south of Jasper-Pulaski FWA. This is the mural that I referred to earlier in the article, which gave me the art spark!

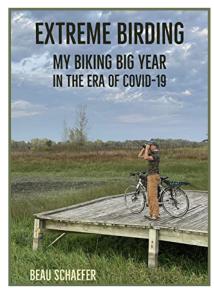
No matter the bird or the location around the state, the various bird art displayed remind us to take a moment to appreciate the beauty in nature that we seek to

emulate and inspire people to take action to protect wild birds and their habitats, whether that be through volunteering, supporting conservation organizations, or simply being mindful of our impact on the environment. In many areas these murals bring a sense of community and pride to the neighborhoods where they are located. The murals have become landmarks and points of interest, drawing visitors from all over the state and beyond.

Written by Brad Bumgardner

EXTREME BIRDING: MY BIKING BIG YEAR IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

AUTHOR: BEAU SCHAEFER



If, like me, you are drawn to "Birding Big Year" books, blogs, and movies, you will likely find Beau Schaefer's "Extreme Birding" very entertaining, in part because of the unusual rules he followed. It's also full of useful birding tips, especially for Midwesterners. I downloaded the book in Kindle, which worked well on a desktop screen.

The "Extreme" aspect is that this was a "green" big year: all birding done on bike or foot, in a 6-county area of Illinois on the north side of Chicago, from Lake Michigan west to McHenry, Kane and Kendall counties. Based in Grayslake, Lake County, 25 road miles from the Lakefront, Schaefer is a very fit 60-year-old, a CrossFit trainer and a just-retired high school biology and chemistry teacher. He has decades of birding experience in NE Illinois and birds hard every year, doing Christmas Counts, Spring Counts, Big Sits, county lists, and patch lists with gusto, and is well connected with area birders.

In deciding to do a green Big Year, Schaefer was motivated a bit by guilt about gas use but primarily by the birding and athletic challenges, as well as by the fact that it

would provide something to focus on during the pandemic. Since chasing a rarity 20 miles away (at least once a week) means a 40-mile round trip on bike, one might reconsider sometimes. He almost always goes, but first lays out the logistical challenges, then the actual experience, giving the reader an intimate, brief look at each major journey. There are many Google maps of routes and a liberal sprinkling of self-acknowledged "bad bird photos", along with good ones, often from friends.

There are 12 chapters, one per month. Midwesterners doing year lists will find the targets and strategy for each month familiar, and the details of how this is done in the Chicago Wilderness fascinating. Destinations include Lake Michigan for waterfowl and many other migrants, farm-field "fluddles" for shorebirds, three hawk-watch sites, the Winthrop Harbor Gull Frolic, Forest Preserves along the Des Plaines River, landfills, sod farms, lakes in glaciated areas, his local patch (Rollins Savanna), and many more.

The book is a testament to the Joy of Intense Birding. What I liked most was his unabashed intensity, the way he communicates the thrill of bird encounters, his honesty about doubts, fatigue, and "whiffs", and his irrepressible good spirits. Though he mainly cycled solo, he was in nearly constant touch with fellow birders who often met him at birding sites, or served as emergency back-ups on longer trips. By documenting his days straightforwardly, including his heavy use of social media and eBird for "intel", we get a picture of how birding is evolving. He does a good job of defining birding terms and jargon, making the book accessible for beginning and even non-birders.

As a cyclist myself, I was very interested in the bike part. I rarely lug binoculars on a bike, settling for hearing song and looking at close birds. Schaefer takes binoculars, a small scope, a camera to document rare species, phone/GPS, charger, bike lock, food, water, always a rain jacket, and occasionally gear for an overnight bivouac. He hates wind and potholes more than snow or darkness. He had two bikes, one for gravel and another for roads. The way to survive 6,119 road miles in a year is "to light yourself up like a Christmas tree", especially when taking off two hours before dawn. He admits he can't change a bike tire (same here), but has a helpful local bike shop, soon gets properly outfitted with tires and a powerful headlight, and finishes the year with only 3 flats and no serious accidents. It inspired me to think about doing a much tamer version of bike-and-hike birding. As he says, make your own rules and enjoy it.

Ultimately, Schaefer got 276 species, ending with a Rufous/Allen's female hummingbird on December 6, requiring a 108-mile round-trip ride. "I left at 0400 and got to the feeder at 0845. Riding at night is the way to go. Got there in good shape, sat on the sidewalk, and saw the hummer in about 5 minutes." Then a brief celebration at Starbucks and a 4-hour trek back home. That winter ride, and his year's total, are amazing. For comparison, my best Indiana big year, driving all over the state, is 275.

CATCH BEAU'S PRESENTATION AT THE INDIANA DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL, SATURDAY, MAY 13 FROM 1-2PM AT THE STATE PARK NATURE CENTER

SELIMOMENTS

Celebrate Indiana Audubon's 125th anniversary by sharing your spark! Everyone has a spark experience that connected them to the birds. Here are some spark moments from Indiana Audubon members.

My journey into birdwatching began like so many new birders: I started birdwatching during the pandemic! I was teaching elementary

school at the time, and since we had to postpone/cancel all of our planned field trips for spring of 2020, we were looking for creative ways to get our students safely outside and away from the endless Zoom lessons. I joined with some formal and informal educators to learn more about the City Nature Challenge. I wanted to try out Seek, iNaturalist and Merlin before sharing the apps with my students and their families to use during the City Nature Challenge. On a masked walk in my local park, I observed a small and fast black and white bird flitting from branch to branch. Using Merlin, I identified it as a Black-capped Chickadee. Later that afternoon, working from my home office I noticed a chickadee in a tree outside my window. Once I saw that second chickadee, I HAD to observe and identify it. I continued to observe chickadees all around my neighborhood, which led to my question: What other birds live here? Now, almost three years later the Black-capped Chickadee still brings a smile to my face, as do all the other birds I joyfully get to observe! - Michelle Morton, IAS Member

The Black-billed Magpie lit an acute spark of fascination in me, more like a stunning flash against the snowy mountains of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Their neatly tucked feathers, black and white at first glance, subtly angled and shifted to a shimmering blue-green, a dazzling flare of colliding light waves filtered and reflected; geometric color. It caught me by surprise as I watched them while sipping my hot chocolate, my unbuckled ski boots propped up. I discovered that nature thrills in more ways than gliding down a black diamond. Now, I pack my Sibley field guide for the slopes. **-Rachel Osborne, IAS Member**

When I was 8 years old my parents gave me the old single photo Audubon field guide. I often stayed at my grandparents house where I spent much time out in the woods and messing around in the creek. I remember walking out behind their house in the old pasture and flushing a flock of sparrows. I caught sight of bright black and white. Being young with no help on ID, I incorrectly identified it as a Lincoln's Sparrow. I now know it was a White-crowned Sparrow. I still remember the moment of "OH! What's that bird? That's neat!". My second spark would be my dad taking me to the flooded bottoms and looking at the ducks. I remember him pulling out a tiny little monocular and proclaiming "I think those are scaup." I still consider watching migrating ducks as the highlight of birding. My third spark was when I had just gotten more seriously into birding and I was wanting to get a few lifers. We were headed to the Smokies for spring break and I had checked eBird and did a bit of research in hopes of

finding a Blue-headed Vireo. I remember so vividly walking away from the crowds and going down this empty path and searching the rhododendron thicket for signs of life. Then, this most melodious, slow paced, clear and wonderful song came piercing through the shadows. I had found the bird by doing research of habitat and locations on my own, that felt good. - Jeremy Ross, IAS Board Member

It was October 8, 2022 and I was on the quest for bird #289 during my 2022 Indiana Big Year. At Yellowwood State Forest, I took a seat in the autumn underbrush and waited for my target. All of a sudden, this Ruffed Grouse squeaks and I hear leaves rustling. Then, it starts to peck my knee! - Mona Clayton, IAS Board Member & Development Committee Chair

SHARE YOUR SPARK!

Submit your stories throughout the year at WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/125YEARS





CELEBRATE SPRING AT THE SANCTUARY!

Not only are we celebrating Indiana Audubon's 125th anniversary, but it's also Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary's 80th anniversary! Over 20 morning and afternoon nature hikes, youth activities, bird feeder cleaning and more will be happening on Saturday, April 29. Bring the family for a day of celebration!

Indiana Audubon members and youth can attend for free and non-members are \$5 per ticket. Register now at WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS

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