

Indiana Audubon Society

CARDINAL

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LEARN ALL ABOUT
SHOREBIRDS

with Brock's Shorebirds of
Indiana supplement online

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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:

American Golden-Plover by Ryan Shean

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Special Access to Mary Gray Birding Sanctuary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
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Register a friend to any IAS field trip at 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 and early fall. Visit indianaaudubon.org/events for more information or to register for any of these upcoming activities. Additional events are listed on our website, and many fill early! Register online today.

AUG. 5: Hummingbird Migration Celebration at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

AUG. 8: Building Birder Skills 2.0: The Migration Explorer [Virtual, Zoom]

AUG. 12: Lakefront Shorebirds Field Trip [Michigan City]

SEPT. 2: 125th Anniversary Hike at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]

SEPT. 9: Fall Birding at Humane Indiana Wildlife [Valparaiso]

SEPT. 12: Building Birder Skills 2.0: Birding with Your Phone [Virtual, Zoom]

SEPT. 23: 125th Anniversary Celebration at Eagle Creek Park [Indianapolis]

OCT. 7: Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary Open House [Connersville]

OCT. 7: 125th Anniversary Hike at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary [Connersville]



INTRODUCING THE CHASING MELODY PROJECT



Graphic: Design by Scott Arvin.

In a groundbreaking initiative, Indiana Audubon and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources have joined forces with international partners to launch the Chasing Melody Project. This project marks the first large-scale, life-cycle tracking endeavor for Wood Thrushes across their entire range, including their summering and wintering grounds.

Help protect the Wood Thrush by supporting the Chasing Melody Project with a donation. Your gift will contribute to deploying Motus tags on these charismatic birds, allowing us to unravel their migratory mysteries and target habitat management for their survival.

Learn more about this project and how to donate at indianaaudubon.org/chasingmelody.

NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR AN AWARD

Each year, we encourage Indiana Audubon members to nominate someone you know for one of two annual awards the society bestows. 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 member.

The **James H. Mason Service Award** is presented to an IAS member who has dedicated themselves to the society through outstanding service. It serves as an inspiration and focus for others to work with such individuals.

More information about each award can be found under Indiana Audubon Society Awards and Grants at indianaaudubon.org/about-us.



JOIN INDIANA AUDUBON'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Indiana Audubon is looking for new board members! If you're passionate about bird conservation, consider joining our board of directors to help us advance our mission. Don't worry if you're new to board membership — we welcome everyone who shares our passion for feathered friends. Our board meets at least three times per year, giving an excellent opportunity for collaboration and networking with like-minded individuals.

Submit your application at bit.ly/IAS-board-app.

IAS MONITORING OF WATERBIRDS WITH DRONES



Earlier this spring, in partnership with the Indiana DNR, Indiana Audubon assisted with colonial waterbird surveys in northwest Indiana. Avian Flu had a significant impact on many Caspian Tern populations across the Great Lakes. Fortunately, Indiana's population was not only healthy, but had increased from last year.

 *How many nesting Caspian Terns can you find in this image?*

Photo: Rooftop Caspian Tern colony by Brad Bumgardner.

BROCK'S SHOREBIRDS OF INDIANA

Shorebirds are a diverse group of birds that often migrate long distances and whose identification can be as challenging as finding them. Indiana isn't always thought of as a destination to watch shorebirds, however, the state's many mudflats, shallow waters, sandy beaches, and rocky shorelines provide a host of habitats for both breeding and migrating shorebird species.

Charles Keller revolutionized our understanding of shorebird migration in Indiana through his marvelous 1957/58 shorebird articles. He integrated a thorough literature search with sparse local records. Today, more than 60 years later, Dr. Kenneth Brock has compiled the most comprehensive update on Indiana's nearly 50 shorebird species. Each species account offers detailed information on migration timing, abundance, and distribution across the state.

The Brock's Shorebirds of Indiana supplement is a great addition to his previously published *Birds of Indiana* and *Birds of Indiana Dunes*. Each shorebird species account is made available online by Dr. Brock for all Indiana Audubon members.

Get ready for fall shorebird migration by exploring the species accounts available at indianaaudubon.org/shorebirdsofin.

Photos: Sanderling (top right) by Logan Lakins and American Golden-Plover (bottom left) by Ryan Shean.



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.



THE HISTORY OF **MARY GRAY** **BIRD SANCTUARY**

By Joanne Guttman

The Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary is a property of the Indiana Audubon Society (IAS), and is in Fayette County, Indiana, near Connersville. This year marks the 125th anniversary of the IAS and the 80th anniversary of the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, so it seemed fitting to share some of the sanctuary's history.

Originally, the property was a hunting ground for the Delaware and other Native tribes prior to European settlement of the area. The Treaty of Fort Wayne bought land from the Native Americans in 1809, establishing a boundary, until around 1818, when central Indiana became opened for settlement. The Delaware and related tribes moved to Kansas in the early 1800s, then to Oklahoma, where they are presently located.

Robert P. Gray, born in Ireland, came to America in 1764. He fought in the American Revolution and moved to Fayette County in 1843 after purchasing land there. He and his wife, Agnes, died soon thereafter and were buried in the Gray Cemetery, which is located on the far west side of the

sanctuary, among many other tombstones. Their son, John Gibson Gray, was born in 1789, and had a log cabin at the present site of the Delawana Camp on the west side of the property. His son, John Gibson Gray, Jr., built a home just east of the Delawana Camp. A tornado destroyed the structure in 1963, but the foundation is still there. John Gibson Gray's son was Finly H. Gray, born in 1864.

Finly Gray married Alice Green in 1901, and their daughter was Mary Gray, born in 1902. (The files also noted that the last wild passenger pigeon was shot near Laurel, Indiana, which is close by, in the same year.) They only had one child, Mary, who contracted typhus at age 12, leading to a brain infection. She never recovered, and she spent her remaining years institutionalized in Richmond. She died in 1940.

Finly served in Washington, D.C., as a congressional representative from Indiana from 1911 to 1917, and again from 1933 to 1939. Prior to that, he was also a mayor of Connersville for two terms. After Mary fell ill, Alice turned to art and the study of nature to fill her time, seeking solace. Alice had many bird feeders and birdhouses and was a published author in Indiana and Washington, writing about birds and insects.

An article written in 1933 for an Indiana newspaper stated she would miss her birds and flowers when she moved to Washington for Finley's term. Earl Brooks, who later became Indiana Audubon's first executive director, read this and wrote to Alice, inviting her to join the society for \$5.00 at that time.

She became a sustaining member and kept up a correspondence and friendship with Mr. Brooks and other IAS members. This led to her leaving 251 acres of land in her will to the Audubon Society, to be kept in perpetual remembrance of Mary. In 1941, IAS accepted this gift, and received the land at her death in 1943. Upon Finley's death in 1949, he bequeathed the remaining property in his will to IAS, but it took until 1951 to settle the estate. This led to 640 acres, including three homes and two barns. In addition, the Grays' home, Canal House in Connersville, was also donated to IAS, but it was later sold to other groups to become part of Historic Connersville.

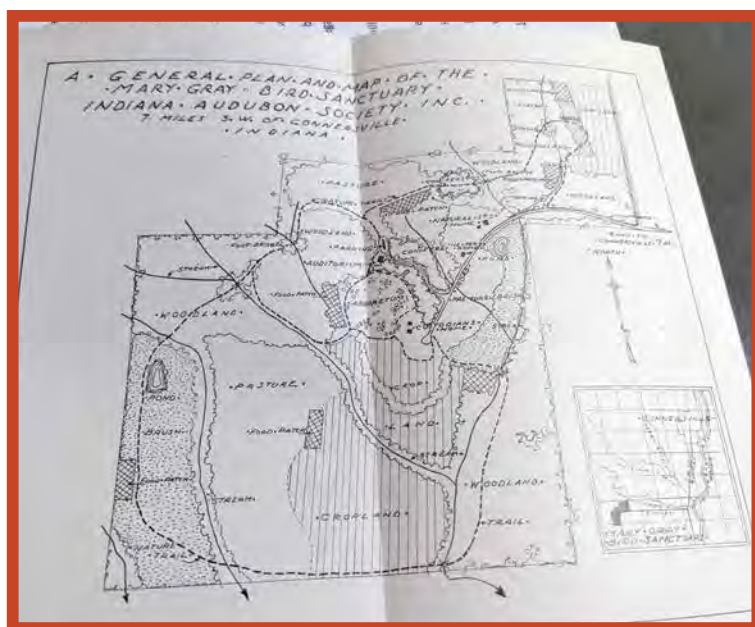
Presently, Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary has two homes for its caretakers and multiple outbuildings. Markle Barn offers meal facilities and an open area for meetings and receptions. Brooks Hall, named after Earl Brooks, has meeting facilities, displays, restrooms and storage. There is a primitive camping area with an outhouse and multiple campsites. A gift from Phyllis Yuhas added another 30 acres to the sanctuary in 1972. Also, the Delawana Camp is still there with a few buildings that the local Boy Scout troop has used.

The sanctuary is still owned and managed by Indiana Audubon. Recently, an interpretive trail system was set up with informational signs along the way, and plans are underway for an accessible bird blind. Throughout the year, the sanctuary is used for outdoor education for children and youth, as well as schools and other groups. Hummingbird and northern saw-whet owl banding also happens on the property.



Indiana Audubon's spring meeting is held at the sanctuary, and they host a Hummingbird Migration Celebration in August and an Owl Night in the fall. There is a MOTUS tower for tracking birds in migration, and multiple workshops and conferences are held there during the year. Over eight miles of marked hiking trails are open to the public, and members can fish in the ponds.

The sanctuary's present Operations Manager is Libby Keyes, with Land Steward Alex Warchol helping her. You can contact them with any questions by calling (708) 567-5510 or visit IndianaAudubon.org for further information. 🍁



Dr. Joanne Guttman, M.D., is a retired family physician and IAS board member who also serves on the sanctuary committee. She has lived in Connersville for 32 years and was married at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary.

Photos: Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary image (opposite page) by Shari McCullough; all others (this page) by Joanne Guttman.

meet a
MEMBER
KRISTINA LAKINS



WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN BIRDS OR BIRDING?

My husband, Logan, started birding a few months before I did. I started tagging along on his outings. Once the weather turned warmer and spring migration picked up, I was hooked. I'm also very competitive and love to spot a bird first.



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

We recently moved to a 15-acre property in Morgantown and are very excited to see what birds it holds and brings in. I am a CPA and Tax Manager at Blue & Co., LLC, in Bloomington. We have three rescue dogs—Otis, Harper, and Roo.



WHAT'S YOUR DREAM BIRDING DESTINATION AND WHY?

I haven't birded anywhere outside of the U.S. yet, so my current dream birding destination is Costa Rica. I think it's the perfect first international birding destination to not get too overwhelmed by the number of new birds, enjoy some eco-lodges and good food, and stop by some bird-friendly coffee farms.



WHAT ARE YOU MOST HAPPY TO SEE IN THE FIELD OF BIRDING?

I am most happy to see a push toward diversity in the field of birding. We still have a long way to go, especially in Indiana, but I am happy to see forward movement.

INDIANA BIRDING HIGHLIGHT

EAGLE MARSH NATURE PRESERVE

TEXT & PHOTO BY ED POWERS

Eagle Marsh is a 756-acre wetland nature preserve located on the southwest border of Fort Wayne.

Ten+ miles of trails allow hikers to access the preserve's varied habitats of shallow-water wetland, sedge meadow, prairie, mature forest and young trees. With adjacent Fox Island County Park and other privately-owned natural land, Eagle Marsh creates almost two square miles of habitat for birds and other wildlife.

A berm, built in 2015 by the U.S. Corps of Engineers in an effort to prevent

Asian carp from crossing into the Great Lakes watershed, is topped by the Continental Divide Trail. This trail, accessed from a parking lot off Engle Road, combined with a part of Trail 1 and the Towpath Trail (a remnant of canal days, now part of Fort Wayne Trails) is three-mile hike that provides a good overview of the preserve.

Other trails in the east end are accessible from the parking lot. The parking lot of the Boy Scouts of America office provide access to trails at the west end of the property. 🍁



TIMING

Typical Birding Time:
1–4 Hours

Best Times to Bird:
Migrant ducks are found February through April, peaking in March; smaller numbers come October through December. Shorebirds are found mostly April through June, and July into October. Marsh birds, such as rails, bitterns and herons occur beginning in April and May, some continuing into the summer.

GETTING THERE

Hours: Open daily from sunrise to sunset

Address: 6801 Engle Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46804

Directions: At the east end, the gate across the lane to the Barn is often closed, but the public may walk in anyway. If the gate is open and you drive in, be sure you don't get locked in.

SITE LOGISTICS

Admission: N/A

Ownership: Little River Wetlands Project

Restrictions: No dogs or other pets, hunting, fishing, biking, motorized vehicles (except to the Barn during special events), horseback riding, alcohol, drugs, weapons, camping, campfires, and all collecting.

Accessibility: There are no paved trails.

Nearby Amenities:

The only restrooms are portable toilets behind the Barn. The preserve is on the edge of Fort Wayne, so there are many hotels and restaurants nearby. Especially close ones are clustered around the intersection of I 69 and West Jefferson Boulevard.

CONTACT INFO

Website:
lrwp.org

Phone Number:
(260) 478-2515

eBird Hotspot Link:
ebird.org/hotspot/L917081

Photos: Campsite (this page) by Steve Betchkal; Merlin Bird ID screenshot, smartphone and background images (opposite page) by Brad Bumgardner.

THE MERLIN EXPERIMENT

BY STEVE BETCHKAL

For today's birder, the Merlin Bird ID app is the hottest thing since the invention of the printed field guide. It's all the rage. Everywhere I go, people are using it, talking about it, and singing its song-identification praises.

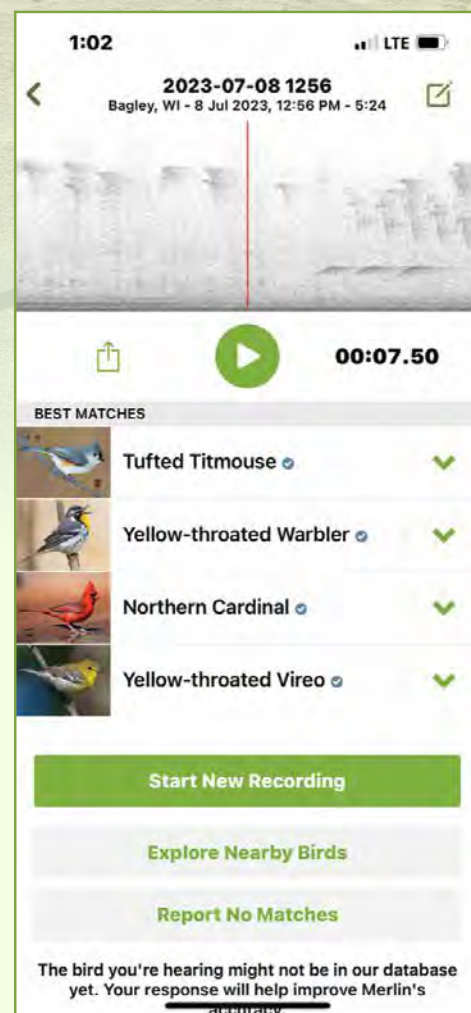
The technology seems brand new, but it's not. In 2004, the Boston-based corporation Wildlife Acoustics was "perfecting" Song Sleuth, a rather clunky hand-held device designed to identify wild bird sounds. It was a rather crude point-and-shoot computer, bigger than binoculars but smaller than a breadbox, with a microphone in front and a read-out screen. For it to work, you had to insert the right bird card for your region. But that didn't mean it succeeded.

I field-tested the Song Sleuth for Wildlife Acoustics in the Eau Claire area of Wisconsin. For the first trial, I walked it into my backyard and pointed it at a singing American Robin, and *voila!* The

Song Sleuth correctly matched the song to the bird. Heady with success, I then pointed it at a Gray Catbird. The machine told me I was listening to a Canada Goose.

Song Sleuth was a marvelously fun toy. For its next field test, I brought it to a high school science class in Colfax, Wisconsin, where the students had a gas pointing it at any bird that opened its mouth. We discovered that the device's success was limited by the species included on the inserted card. Also, ambient noise confounded it. Wind and traffic noise often garbled the results. But when it correctly matched the song to the bird, it was magical. What a delightful and wondrous trick!

I feel somewhat the same about Merlin today. I have now been field-testing the Merlin app for months across the U.S. While the app is generally accurate, it regularly makes both positive and negative errors. That is, it identifies birds that aren't there, and it misses birds that *are* there. Here's a classic example. This spring, I camped at the Green River Campground in Dinosaur National Monument in extreme northeastern Utah



two days after Earth Day and played a favorite game I call "Birds in the Bag." I try to identify as many birds as I can by sight or sound each camping morning before I shed my sleeping bag. My record is 43 species, set at Straight Lake State Park. My REI two-person tent has a built-in birder-friendly feature: the top is made of screen,

so in arid landscapes I can camp without the fly and watch the birds moving about above me.

As I lolled in the bag, taking inventory of the bird sounds and sights, I opened my cell phone and switched on the Merlin Bird ID's Sound ID feature, just to see how we "matched up." Since the app not only records in real time, but then preserves the track record, it's easy to go back in and review the results. The app and I both agreed upon Spotted Towhee, American Robin, Canada Goose, European Starling, House Wren, and Black-billed Magpie. However, the app also identified Lesser Goldfinch and Red-tailed Hawk (I neither heard nor later confirmed these species in the campground), House Sparrow (which I could not detect from the tent but later found singing about 100 yards from my campsite), and House Finch (present 75 yards from my tent, but a brash and easily detectable song). The app failed to register a nearby Eurasian Collared-dove clearly and persistently calling "Blue-MOON-poop" and a flyover Wood Duck calling "oooh-WHEAT!" If you're scoring along at home, that's 50% accurate, which is downright embarrassing.

I had better luck at a high mountain pass in central Wyoming. There, the app did well, successfully logging Dark-eyed Junco, Red Crossbill, American Robin, Pine Siskin, Canada Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Red-naped Sapsucker, and Cassin's Finch. The only error was a Clark's Nutcracker, so the app scored a 91% match with reality.

Since then, I've had the AI tell me I had White-eyed Vireos, where I wished there were, and ignore goldfinches, warblers, sparrows, and catbirds. It missed a Mourning Warbler 10 feet away from me at Lion's Den. At Bong Recreation Area in Wisconsin, it completely whiffed on American Crow, Tree Swallow, and Bobolink. Strike three, you're out!

But then, there are the times when there truly is Merlin Magic. Over Memorial Day weekend, I was birding Wyalusing State Park. I hadn't seen or heard a Yellow-throated Warbler at the top of Long Valley Road for many years, so I stopped to listen. It was still early, not even 5:30 a.m., I had the place to myself, and the woods were noisy with birds. A number of birds were present: American Redstart, Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Wood Thrush, gnatcatchers, woodpeckers, pewees, titmice, grosbeaks, cardinals, and vireos. Alas, there was no Yellow-throated Warbler. I thought to myself, "Hmmm." This would be a good time to see what Merlin says, so I switched it on. The species list immediately started to populate on screen. Imagine my surprise when a



Brad Bumgardner visited Wyalusing State Park in early July and found Steve's Yellow-throated Warbler singing. "[It] sang distantly and at first wasn't being picked up by Merlin. But on the return trip, it was calling more frequently and closer," he noted.

Yellow-throated Warbler appeared. I stopped what I was doing and listened harder, and there it was. High-pitched, faint, and way up in the White Pines. I'd missed it in the cacophony. It's my informed opinion that the human ear and brain combined are still better than Merlin, but the app had done one thing it does best; it registered everything it thought it heard, and in this case, it had caught the bird I had glossed over.

Bird song identification is always challenging. In fact, it scares most people who find it overwhelming. While Merlin is not 100% accurate, what it does with 100% efficacy is boost confidence. Beginning birders find the tool liberating and revelatory. It reveals an unknown world, full of educational possibilities. As a backup, it can assist as a safety net in detecting possible species present, and for birders with hearing loss, it can augment visual assessment. Merlin Bird ID will only get better with time.

My advice? For now, don't believe everything it says it hears. 🍁

Steve Betchkal is an ornithologist, author, master birder, and Emmy-winning journalist from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, who speaks fluent bird.



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The Mumford and Keller Grant/Scholarship Program is used to award funds to individuals and organizations for activities related to Indiana's natural resources. This program receives annual funding from the Indiana Audubon Society annual budget, IAS fall festival, and Indiana Dunes Birding Festival Stewardship Fund.

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