



Sycamore Warbler



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January/February 2005

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Great Backyard Bird Count Returns

For the eighth year running, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society will be conducting the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Held each year during a weekend in February, this event encourages people to count and report the birds they see during this time. As so-called "citizen scientists," the observers then report their findings to the project where they are compiled, along with the reports of thousands of others, to form a composite picture of birds across the nation. These data are then used to track bird populations and trends across winters.

Potential observers are encouraged to take part in this year's count, which runs from Friday, February 18 – Monday, February 21. Participants can count on as many or few days as they'd like, though a count across all days provides the best information. All that is expected is for people to go out into their own "backyards" and count the maximum number of each bird species seen. One's "backyard" can be just that, a backyard, or it can include a school yard, an apartment porch, a local park, or even the land of a state park or national wildlife refuge. This year, there is special emphasis for participants to go out into larger areas of the nation's "backyard" and explore the birds in our state and federal lands, like state parks, wildlife refuges, and nature preserves.

Once all birds seen for the day are tallied, individual results are submitted on-line via the inter-

net and added to incoming national data. (Those who do not have computer or Internet access are encouraged to use computers at their local library.) As the results stream in from across the states, users will be able to see how many people are reporting from various locations and what birds are being seen. The GBBC provides an exciting opportunity to see your contributions to science, along with those of others, going immediately to work.

Last year, 37 people from the Lafayette-West Lafayette area participated and submitted their data. Let's look to increase the number of birds and backyards being counted this year!

For more information about the GBBC, and/or to complete your free registration, visit: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>.

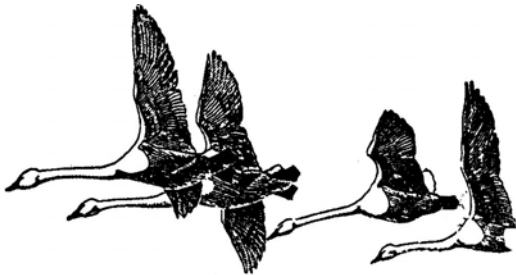


LOCAL & CHAPTER NEWS

Meetings Return to West Lafayette Public Library

With construction of the new West Lafayette Public Library now complete, Audubon's monthly meetings can again be held at the library. All meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month, and we will start our spring season with a program on "Birding Dauphin Island, Alabama." Meetings start at 7:15PM and will be held in the Walnut Room on the second floor.

The new library is situated at its former location at the corner of Chauncey and Columbia streets in downtown West Lafayette. A parking garage is available across from the library on Columbia Street.



A Sad Farewell

Amy Little Mason, age 98, long-time birdwatcher and an active member of the Indiana Audubon Society and the Federation of Indiana Garden Clubs, died the day after Christmas in Terre Haute. She and her husband, Jim, who preceded her in death, were active conservationists. The Indiana Audubon Society instituted the James Mason award, in honor of Jim. It is given to each year to a person for his/her contributions to conservation here in Indiana.

Mrs. Mason was a well-known nature photographer and author of *The Wildflowers of Alabama*. She was one of the founders of the Wabash Valley Audubon Society, had served as its president, and also has served as president of the Indiana Audubon Society. Among many awards during her lifetime, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources named her "Conservationist of the Year" in 1981. She will be missed for both her personality and her great work for conservation.

SAS Field Trips

February 12. Eagle Viewing along the Wabash. Come along with us on this field trip to view some of the Bald Eagles that winter in our area. The group will visit various sites along the Wabash River where the birds are likely to be present. Barny Dunning will lead the trip.

If you plan to go, meet at 9AM in the first gravel parking lot (on the right hand side) at Celery Bog Nature Area in West Lafayette off Lindberg Road. Please note this new meeting location, as we will no longer be meeting at the Levee due to parking concerns. If you have any questions, contact Barny.

Bake Sale Success

SAS held its fall bake and plant sale at the new West Lafayette Public Library on the weekend of October 29. Using profits from the sale, we were able to donate \$500 to the Goose Pond restoration project. Many thanks to those who donated baked goods, plants, or their time to the sale, as you helped to make it a success.

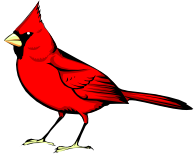
New NICHES Acquisition Result of Generous Donor

A new property was recently purchased in December by NICHES Land Trust. The property is located in the Wabash Bottomlands, a little east of Ross Hills Park and west of the Granville Landing. The 50+ acre bottomland area has been farmed in the past. NICHES will allow it to convert to woods, brush, and wetlands, enlarging protected habitat in that area. The purchase was made possible by a generous donation of cash and appreciated stock from an anonymous NICHES member who wished to see more land acquired in the vicinity of the existing parks.

Eagle Nest Falls Down

A Bald Eagle nest in Tippecanoe county fell down earlier this fall. The nest, which sat in a large Sycamore tree, was located on Collier's Island along the Wabash River and was viewable from Co Rd 950 W. The birds are likely to build a new nest in the vicinity of the old, but it may not be as easily viewed. The nest and its inhabitants had been a favorite eagle viewing spot for many years, because it was a reliable location to find the eagles in late winter and early spring.





An Open Letter to Our Members

Dear Sycamore Audubon members,

Well, it has finally happened; our chapter has to undertake some cost-cutting measures, and we need your input. As you may know, as a chapter of the National Audubon Society, we have received a portion of each member's dues every year. However, National Audubon is undergoing its own financial difficulties, and they have recently been pushing to consolidate local chapters into Audubon Centers. Because of this, they have been reducing the amount of dues share that our chapter receives. This is making it more difficult for us to fund community projects and Audubon Adventures, in addition to distributing six issues of *The Sycamore Warbler* to our membership each year.

Our chapter has more than 500 listed members, but we have no way of knowing how many are primarily subscribers to National Audubon only and the *Audubon* magazine versus those who are also interested in chapter activities. Attendance at monthly meetings ranges between 10 – 40 people and field trips usually have about 10 attendees. Every issue of the *Warbler* costs hundreds of dollars to print and mail to 500+ members, and this seems a logical place to reduce expenditures if many members are not interested in receiving it. As environmentalists, we also want to reduce unnecessary use of paper and ink as well!

We are asking all members who wish to continue receiving the *Warbler* to fill out and return the form below. Please indicate how you would prefer to receive the newsletter: 1) by paper copy; 2) via e-mail; or 3) by having it posted on our website. We are happy to provide members with a newsletter, as long as they want to receive it.

Please do take a moment and let us know that you would like to continue to receive our newsletter. We appreciate your participation in our chapter, and we thank you for your continued interest in birds and the environment.

Board of Directors
Sycamore Audubon Society

YES, I want to continue receiving *The Sycamore Warbler*!

If possible, I would prefer to receive the newsletter by:

- paper copy
 e-mail
 web site

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please detach form and return to:
Sycamore Audubon Society, P. O. Box 2716, West Lafayette, IN 47996.

Early Winter Nature Notes & News

Oct 30: **Jim Peterson** observed an interesting interaction along Deer Creek. He saw a probable **Cooper's Hawk chasing a Belted Kingfisher down the middle of the creek,** about three feet above the water. The kingfisher flew into a large sycamore tree that had fallen into the creek and escaped. The whole episode lasted only five or six seconds. The chattering of the kingfisher caught his attention.



Nov 5: While walking her dogs near the pond along Kalberer Road, **Karen Atchenson** had an **American White Pelican** fly over her head.

Nov 7: On a day spent birding at Prophetstown State Park in Battleground, **Russ Allison** enjoyed lengthy scope views of a **Northern Shrike**. It was the first Shrike he has seen in Indiana.

Nov 25: During a Thanksgiving Day walk, **Chuck Tuttle** observed some good birds along Celery Bog, including: **2 Great Blue Heron; 1 Northern Shoveler; 2 Northern Pintail; 4 Ring-necked Duck; hundreds of American Coot; and 1 Rusty Blackbird.**

Dec 15: On this day, **Noble Kizer** greeted the first sighting of their winter visitors – the **Brown Creeper**. Each year, they see Creepers run up and down a large oak tree in the back

yard that has a suet feeder on it. The birds stay all winter and leave in the spring.

Dec 19: **Del Arvin's** feeders had **4 Fox Sparrows** underneath them on this Sunday, which **increased to 6 birds** on 12/23. This is also the first winter that he has a **Pileated Woodpecker** actually come in and feed at his feeders. The birds have been around his yard but have never fed before.

Dec 28: **Sue and Ted Ulrich** enjoyed a variety of birds at their feeders that were brought in by the snow. **Huge numbers of Mourning Doves (52)** were present, along with **25 White-crowned Sparrows**. They've also seen a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** all winter, along with **Pileated Woodpeckers** coming in for suet. An **immature Cooper's Hawk** also made a visit, likely checking out the feeder birds for a possible snack.

Lakefront Field Trip Report by Barny Dunning

On November 6th, we had our regular fall field trip to the Lake Michigan shore. We almost didn't go because the weather report was too good! For good birding along the lakeshore, you hope for strong winds off the lake, blowing loons, grebes, ducks and gulls close to the beaches where they can be seen easily. So the worse the weather, the better the birding. The weather report for November 6th was for southerly winds and mild temperatures. The weather prospects were so poor that the group of birders, led by Ken Brock, that meets every Saturday to work the lakeshore postponed their activity for a day. Since we usually join this group, this did not bode well for our trip.

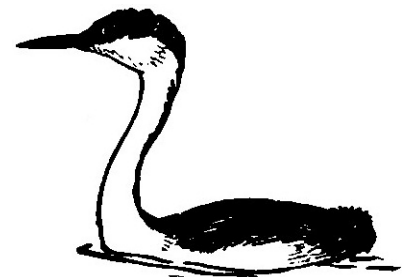
Well, as you might expect, we had a great day with most of the regular fall lake migrants, some unusual birds, and one bird that was a new species for almost everyone in our group. We spent time in Michigan City Harbor, Beverly Shores, West Beach (part of

the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore), and Miller Beach. At West Beach we met Ken Brock – who was lured out of the house by one good bird – in spite of the bad (I mean, "good") weather!

We saw small numbers of most of the expected ducks, gulls and other Lake Michigan water birds, including Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Black Scoter, Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers, and Ruddy Duck. Several flocks of Snow Buntings flew along the beaches. A flying Tundra Swan gave us a great, long view at Michigan City Harbor. We walked the long rock jetty, looking for Purple Sandpiper, but had to settle for a late juvenile Sanderling (at point-blank range). The best bird for most people was a Western Grebe at Miller Beach, which was a state bird at least for almost all of our group.

In the afternoon we drove to Jasper-Pulaski State Wildlife Management Area to watch the Sandhill Cranes gather in the evening. We were joined by several carloads of Purdue students and Sycamore Audubon members who couldn't do the whole-day field trip. With tens of thousands of cranes to watch, it was an extremely satisfying end to the day.

By the way, the regular lakeshore birding crowd was correct in one sense: they did have better and rarer birds on the next Sunday. And two Whooping Cranes showed up at J-P the next day, too. But we still had a great trip on the "bad day."



Wednesdays in the Wild

The weekly Wednesdays in the Wild programs are set to resume in mid-January.

In addition to regularly scheduled programs, they are adding a new twist this year – the “Wandering Wednesdays” program.

The first Wednesday of each month will be a “Wandering Wednesdays” program — a general naturalist walk to a different place each month with no particular focus other than to observe nature in that location. Birders, botanizers, insect lovers, etc., are encouraged to attend and to add their knowledge about what the group is seeing.

Turtles of Indiana

JAN 12th 7 – 9PM; led by Rod Williams & Brian MacGowan, Purdue University Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

Winter Animal Tracks & Trails

JAN 19th 1 – 3PM; led by Mary Cutler. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

Winter Twigs

JAN 26th 1 – 3PM; presenter to be announced. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

Wandering Wednesdays Walk

FEB 2nd 1 – 3PM; led by Mary Cutler. At Brier Environmental Education Center (BEEC), formerly known as the Tippecanoe Battlefield Retreat Center.

The Monticello Mastodon and Other Ice Age Mammals

FEB 9th 1 – 3PM; presented by Ron Richards, curator of paleobiology, Indiana State Museum. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

Colonization & Extinction of Ice Age Megafauna:

Did “Savages” Give or Receive?

FEB 16th 7 – 9PM; presented by Vern Foley, professor of history, Purdue University. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

Wetland Mammals: Muskrats and More

FEB 23rd 1 – 3PM; presented by Dean Zimmerman, Indiana Department of Natural Resources biologist. At Lilly Nature Center/Celery Bog Nature Area.

For more information about these programs, contact:

- Mary Cutler: (765) 567-2993 or
- Joan Mohr Samuels: (765) 567-7023



A Piece of Alaska Comes to Indiana

Looking for a taste of the Arctic? Look no further than the upcoming program on wild Alaska, “The Last Great Wilderness Project.” The Project is a multi-media slideshow presentation depicting the amazing beauty of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This free, hour-long event is presented by nature photographer Lenny Kohm and a native Alaska person of the Gwich'in Nation.

The Last Great Wilderness Project

Tuesday, February 1st at 7PM

Location to be announced

(check *Journal & Courier* for final details)

Sponsored by the Alaska Coalition & the Wildcat Group of the Sierra Club.



Programs of Interest

Indiana's Forests:

A State Forestry Agency Perspective

Monday, January 24th, at 7PM

Presented by Burney Fischer, Indiana State Forester
West Lafayette Public Library – Elm Room

Phytoremediation and the Indiana Harbor Canal

Monday, February 28th, at 7PM

Presented by Katy Euliss, PhD student in Agronomy
West Lafayette Public Library – Elm Room

Euliss will provide an overview of phytoremediation (using plants to remove metals and organics from the environment) and then tell about a specific case study on the Indiana Harbor Canal.

Sponsored by the West Central chapter of INPAWS.

AROUND INDIANA



Former Governor Frank O'Bannon and neighbor and good friend Howard Saylor (left) explore a Devonian Era fossil bed along the Blue River several years ago. (DNR Photo/Bob Sawtelle)

O'Bannon Woods: Indiana's Newest State Park

In recognition of late governor Frank O'Bannon's dedication to conservation and the outdoors, a new state park was dedicated to his name in November 2004. Named O'Bannon Woods, the new park in Harrison County consists of 2,000 acres of the former Wyandotte Woods State Recreation Area. The park contains more than 100 miles of existing recreational trails and will continue to be used for hiking, wildlife watching, camping, and hunting. The park is surrounded by the 24,000 acre Harrison-Crawford State Forest.

Due to its prior development as a state recreation area, the park already hosts a modern campground with 281 sites, a horseman's campground, an interpretative center, and Wyandotte Caves. In addition, the park has historical exhibits, including a pioneer village and a working haypress from the 19th century.

For those who are nature enthusiasts, they can enjoy the Blue River that winds through the park. Hikers can also traverse the state park on the trails and connect to the nearby state forest.

A park master plan calls for development of a new aquatic facility, expansion of the horse campground, and a possible state park lodge and cabins.

--adapted from *WildBulletin*

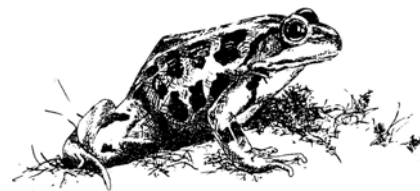
Leap Into Action to Help Indiana Amphibians

Scientists have raised concern about the possibility of a nationwide decline in frog and toad populations. In an effort to help monitor the problem, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources is asking Hoosiers to help.

The Indiana DNR is looking for volunteers who would like to participate in the Indiana Amphibian Monitoring Program (INAMP). Volunteers are needed to listen for frogs and toads from late February through July, during the breeding seasons of Indiana's amphibians.

Interested persons must attend a training workshop to be able to participate in the survey. During the workshop, volunteers will learn about the state's 17 species of frogs and toads, how to identify their calls, and how to complete the surveys. Surveys will be conducted at night, usually after rainy days or on misty nights when frogs and toads give breeding calls. Information collected by volunteers will help DNR biologists better understand the distribution and abundance of amphibians in Indiana. Internet access is required to participate in the program.

Training workshops will be held throughout the state. For local members, the two closest workshops will be held in North Judson and Indianapolis. No registration is necessary, but participants need to bring pen and paper with them.



North Judson
Saturday, Feb. 12
10AM – 1PM

Kankakee Fish & Wildlife Area
4320 W. Toto Rd.
574-896-3522

Indianapolis
Saturday, Jan. 29
10AM – 1PM

Holliday Park Nature Center
6349 Spring Mill Rd.
317-327-7180

For more information about Indiana's Amphibian Monitoring Program, visit: <http://www.IN.gov/dnr/fishwild/endangered/naamp/nindex.htm>.

--adapted from *WildBulletin*

The *Sycamore Warbler* is published six times a year by the Sycamore Audubon Society, a chapter of National Audubon Society serving Audubon members in Benton, Carroll, Clinton, Tippecanoe, Warren, and White counties in central northwest Indiana.

A subscription to the *Warbler* is included with membership in the National Audubon Society. All comments, suggestions, and submissions are welcome.

Send items you think SAS's membership might find interesting to the editor, Angela Hoffman. See address on page 1.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Chapter Application for New Members

I'd like to join! My check for \$20.00 is enclosed. Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local Sycamore Chapter. Send **AUDUBON** magazine & the *Warbler* to:

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

Make your check payable to: **NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY**
 Mail to: The Sycamore Audubon Society, PO Box 2716, West Lafayette, IN 47996-2716

LOCAL CHAPTER H10
 Sycamore Audubon Society
 P. O. Box 2716
 West Lafayette, IN 47996
 7XCH8

Friends of Sycamore Audubon

Yes, I'd like to become a Friend of the Sycamore Audubon Society to help my local chapter maintain the high quality of its programming and environmental leadership. My check for \$15 is enclosed.

Name _____ Email _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Friends do not need to be members of the National Audubon Society. Friends who are not Audubon members will receive the *Sycamore Warbler*.

Eagle Viewing Days

In addition to our own local field trip to view Bald Eagles this season, there are many more opportunities throughout the state this season. Read below about two organized events where you can view the majestic birds. Consider one or both as a way to enliven the cold, dreary days of winter!



**Eagle Viewing Days
 Cinergy's Cayuga Station
 January 29th – 30th**

Cinergy will again be opening its Cayuga location to the public for eagle viewing. Due to its location along the Wabash River, the area near Cayuga Station hosts the state's largest population of mid-winter migratory bald eagles during most years. Admission is free to the event, and the public is welcome between 9AM – 3PM.

Visitors will be able to view Bald Eagles from a distance along the river. In addition, tours of Cinergy's wetland/wildlife area will be available. Always a popular event, the American Eagle Foundation will again present its "Eagle and Birds of Prey Program"

including live eagles and other raptors at 10AM and 2PM each day.

For information, directions, or questions, call 1-800-832-3143. Cayuga Station is located approximately 35 miles north of Terre Haute on State Road 63.

**Eagle Watch Weekend
 Fourwinds Resort & Marina / Fairfax SRA
 February 4th – 6th**

Eagle Watch 2005 returns to Lake Monroe this year via a partnership between the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Fourwinds Resort & Marina. The event draws thousands of visitors each year for a weekend dedicated to the natural inhabitants of Lake Monroe.

Events spanning three days include naturalist-led talks and walks about birdwatching, owls, raptor biology, bird banding, and the future of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. On Friday night, there will even be a folk music presentation. The event costs \$5 per adult for the weekend, \$1 for high school or college students with a valid ID, and it is free to children 12 and under.

For more program information, contact Monroe Reservoir at 812-837-9546. For special rates on overnight accommodations, contact the Fourwinds Resort & Marina at 1-800-824-2628.



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Sycamore Audubon Calendar

Jan 13
Thursday

January Meeting. Rob Rutledge, of the Amos W. Butler Audubon Society, will present on "Birding Dauphin Island, Alabama." Come to learn about this birding hotspot on the Gulf Coast. The meeting starts at 7:15PM in the Walnut Room of the West Lafayette Public Library. Members are also encouraged to meet for dinner before the program. Meet at 6PM at the Parthenon restaurant in Chauncey Hill Mall.

Feb 1
Tuesday

Last Great Wilderness Project. The Project is a multi-media slideshow presentation depicting the amazing beauty of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This free, hour-long event is presented by nature photographer Lenny Kohm and a native Alaska person of the Gwich'in Nation. Sponsored by the Alaska Coalition & the Wildcat Group of the Sierra Club. The program starts at 7PM. Location to be announced. Check *Journal & Courier* for final details.

Feb 10
Thursday

February Meeting. Drs. James and Susan Hengeveld of the Indiana University Biology Department will present on "Hawaii." Expect to learn about the fascinating flora and fauna of the island state. The meeting starts at 7:15PM in the Walnut Room of the West Lafayette Public Library. Those interested in dinner before the meeting should meet at the Parthenon restaurant in Chauncey Hill Mall at 6PM.

Feb 12
Saturday

Eagle Viewing Field Trip. Come along with us on this field trip to view some of the Bald Eagles that winter in our area. Meet at 9AM in the first gravel parking lot at Celery Bog Nature Area (on the right hand side) in West Lafayette off Lindberg Road.