

2014

Amos Butler Audubon BIRDATHON REPORT



Two Teams of Fledgling Birders do a Big Day



Wren's Warblers

by Melissa Upchurch

Wren's Warblers hiked the windy woods of Eagle Creek Park in search of the best list of birds they could find. They met at 10:30 a.m. on May 3, along with Maggie Jaicamo, Indy Parks Naturalist, and their parents. With binoculars in hand they set off to Warbler Alley. Around Lilly Lake and the Ornithology Center they spotted their species. After a long hike and a few tantrums from the girls (and their parents), they ended up at the Ecology Pond for their much deserved picnic. While walking up to the pond one of the girls spotted a goose egg and, despite all the parents yelling to not pick it up, she did, and to our surprise the Mother Goose didn't charge. I wonder if the seven screaming girls had anything to do with the peaceful release. After the total count was done, we determined that the girls had noted 54 species and collected over \$1,300. Most importantly, our park and wildlife were seen for the first time by new nature lovers in the best city park in the world. Wren and her Warblers would like to thank all the people who donated to their team and to their parents for helping them collect those donations. They will be back next year! 🐦



Benson's Junior Rangers

by Stonegate Elementary School First-grade Students

May 27: Our class went on a Birdathon with Dr. Benson, Mrs. Benson, Mrs. Gierlach, Mrs. Botkin, and Mrs. Zavala. We walked from our school to Boone Meadow Elementary School and back. We walked 2.5 miles! We saw or heard 47 species including: a Killdeer, a Mockingbird, a Goldfinch, a Cardinal, a Robin, a Flicker, a Red-winged Blackbird, and a Great Blue Heron. Mrs. Benner brought us pizza for lunch. On our walk we found cool things like caterpillars, a pile of sticks that looked like a beaver lodge, and annoying goats. They bleated at us and we bleated right back! We had a magnificent, fun day! 🐦

2014 Amos Butler Audubon Birdathon Species List:

(geese, swans, ducks) Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck; (game birds) Northern Bobwhite, Ring-necked Pheasant, Wild Turkey; (loons) Common Loon; (grebes) Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe; (cormorants) Double-crested Cormorant; (pelicans) American White Pelican; (herons) American Bittern, Least Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron; (ibis) White-faced Ibis; (vultures) Turkey Vulture; (hawks, kites, eagles) Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk; (falcons) American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon; (rails, gallinules) Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Moorhen, American Coot; (cranes) Sandhill Crane; (plovers) American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer; (stilts) Black-necked Stilt; (sandpipers) Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Upland Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, American Woodcock; (gulls) Ring-billed Gull; Herring Gull; (terns) Caspian Tern, Black Tern, Common Tern, Forster's Tern; (pigeons, doves) Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Monk Parakeet; (cuckoos) Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo; (owls) Barn Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Barred Owl; (nightjars) Common Nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Whip-poor-will; (swifts) Chimney Swift; (hummingbirds) Ruby-throated Hummingbird; (kingfishers) Belted Kingfisher; (woodpeckers) Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker; (flycatchers) Olive-sided Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; (vireos) White-eyed Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo; (crows, jays) Blue Jay, American Crow; (larks) Horned Lark; (swallows) Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow; (chickadees, titmice) Carolina Chickadee, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse; (nuthatches) White-breasted Nuthatch; (wrens) Carolina Wren, House Wren, Sedge Wren; (gnateaters) Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; (thrushes) Eastern Bluebird, Mountain Bluebird, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, American Robin; (mimics) Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher; (starlings) European Starling; (waxwings) Cedar Waxwing; (warblers) Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Palm Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat; (sparrows) Eastern Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow; (Cardinals and allies) Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel; (blackbirds, orioles) Bobolink, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole; (finches) House Finch, American Goldfinch; (old world sparrows) House Sparrow.

Official combined count total (all teams): 215 species

- 182 **Wild Birds Unlimited:** Brian Cunningham, Landon Neuman, Rob Ripma, Eric Ripma, John Schaust
- 175 **UIndy:** Ryan Sanderson, Ryan Hamilton, Kim Higdon, Aiden Rominger
- 173 **DNR Team:** Michael Brattain, Lee Casebere, John Cassaday, Roger and Cloyce Hedge
- 140 **Bud & Carl's Legacy Team:** Amanda Smith, Keith Starling, Janet Tuten, Jerry and Marty Williams
- 136 **Noddy Little Gulls:** Lou Ann Barriger, Martha Davis, Polly Nicely, Laurie Voss
- 135 **Team Bishop:** Mike and Linda Bishop
- 123 **Community Hospital Team:** John Munshower, Doug Sherow, Greg Steffen
- 106 **Carbon Neutral Team:** Dave Benson and Chuck Benson
- 99 **Team Cool Ponds:** Kevin Carlsen, Maggie Jaicamo, Maricela Aviles
- 84 **EcoLab Team:** Dave Benson, Paul Evans
- 75 **The KGB:** Karen LaMere, Tim Johnson, Betsy and George Wilson
- 54 **Wren's Warblers:** Maddie Barry, Charlie Barry, Mali Guffy, Presley Hill, Madi and Lilly Medley, Caroline and June Rickleff, Wren Upchurch
- 47 **Benson's Junior Rangers:** Dave Benson, Kara Benson, first-grade Junior Rangers
- 22 **Team Walmart:** Chad Williams, Walmart employees and their families

Thanks to You, 28 Years and Still Going Strong!

Generous donors like you—dedicated volunteers and exuberant team members—made a winning combination for the 2014 the Amos Butler Audubon Birdathon. It wasn't a record-breaking year for fundraising, but it was darn close. This year's total was a most impressive \$35,298—just shy of last year's all time record high of \$35,774. However, it was a record-breaking year for Big Day species counts.

Three Teams Break Birdathon Species Count Record!

It's been a phenomenal year for Birdathon team Big Day events. The previous Big Day species count record of 172, set by the IBA team in 2007, was beaten by not one, not two, but by three teams. The multiple year high-count champ DNR team tallied 173 species on May 18. Last year's high-count champ, UIndy, ventured forth a week earlier in the month, on May 10, and turned in an impressive 175 species. But it was the Wild Birds Unlimited team on May 18 that really raised the bar with a whopping 182 species!

This year we were pleased to add another very youthful team, Wren's Warblers, to our roster. All members were between the ages of three and six. Stonegate Elementary's Benson's Junior Rangers joined us for a second year. These students were all first graders. Our hope is to see some of these budding birdwatchers competing on future teams and continuing our efforts to save wild birds.

Your Dollars Benefit the Birds

Of course, our ultimate goal has always been to support projects that benefit the birds of Central Indiana, both migrant and nesting species. This year some of our grantees have been long-time beneficiaries of your generosity such as the American Bird Conservancy and their Cerulean Warbler Corridor Project. Also included in this group is the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center, which impacts thousands of visitors with their world-class bird exhibit. Marian University's Nina Mason Pulliam EcoLab's bird-friendly habitat restoration projects fall into this category as well. Keep Indianapolis Beautiful received a grant for its native plant showcase project, creating bird habitat at the St. Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center. Hamilton County Parks & Recreation has created an exhibit at its Cool Creek Park facility to educate the public about the history and importance of bird protection laws. The Jameson Camp, which serves hundreds of children each year, was able to create a bird-viewing area. All of these initiatives have been made possible thanks to you.

A sincere thank you to all of our Birdathon sponsors from Donna McCarty, Birdathon Chair; members of the Birdathon committee; and the board of directors of Amos Butler Audubon

Individual Contributors of \$100 or more:

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Volunteers who raised Birdathon donations of:

\$1,000 or more:	\$500 to \$999:	\$100 to \$499:	
Lee Casebere	David Benson	Kevin Carlsen	Ryan Sanderson
Mary Ellen Gadski	Mike & Linda Bishop	Lou Ann Barriger	Keith Starling
Cloyce Hedge	Gordon Chastain	Brian Cunningham	Jerry Williams
Roger Hedge	Polly Nicely	Ryan Hamilton	Betsy Wilson
Donna McCarty	John Schaust	Barbara Jablonski	
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Special Contributors:

Pete Drum: Birdathon Database Curator
 Mary Ellen Gadski: International Projects Coordinator
 Barbara Jablonski: Silent Auction Coordinator
 Don McCarty: Birdathon Treasurer
 Bill Murphy and Chris Carlson: Report Editors

Fundraising Champs: Bud & Carl's Legacy Team



Team members (l-r): Marty Williams, Janet Tuten, Keith Starling, Amanda Smith, and Jerry Williams

by Marty Williams

Bud & Carl's Legacy Team, with new member, Janet Tuten, left Indianapolis in the very early hours of May 12, and our Big Day for 2014 was underway! As we began our journey to Southern Indiana, a light rain began to fall. Thankfully, by the time we made our way to Green-Sullivan State Forest, the rain had stopped and the dawn chorus was in full swing as the morning sun just started to peek above the horizon.

This was the second year we began our Big Day at Green-Sullivan. We were able to start off with a good number of interior forest species that included both species of tanagers and orioles as well as vireos, flycatchers, and many warblers, including a Pine Warbler spotted by an eagle-eyed Amanda.

From there it was over to Goose Pond and BeeHunter Marsh, where we encountered the ubiquitous swarms of gnats that kept us all vainly swatting the buzzing around our eyes and ears. We persevered their persistent harassment to add a variety of species to our count.

Our next stop was Stillwater Marsh just east of Bloomington, where we were able to add more forest birds, including a Cerulean Warbler.

With looming rain clouds forming at Stillwater, we decided to head north to Eagle Creek Park. Special highlights were a surprise Common Loon in the Waterfowl Sanctuary and an American Bittern and a Golden-winged Warbler at the Skating Ponds— all quite a shot in the arm for the team. Hats off to Janet, who was able to hear a Barred Owl call over the noise of our moving car. From there we added Louisiana Waterthrush and Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers at the Starling Sanctuary.

It was starting to get late so we headed north to Geist Park to pick up the Brown Creeper that had been spotted a couple of days earlier at an active nest. We were finally able to count a Red-tailed Hawk, a species that had eluded us all day long. Our last bird was a calling immature Great Horned Owl.

We'd gone the whole day without spotting any gulls or terns, so we headed over to Morse Reservoir, but it was already too dark. Hopefully we will have better luck next year. That is where we finished our Big Day, with our official tally of 140 birds.

Bud & Carl's Legacy Team would like to thank everyone who made our Big Day possible through your generous donations. We can't wait to do it again next May! 🦅



DNR Team The Team's Best Big Day Count

by Lee Casebere

The DNR Team picked May 18th as count day with traditional team members Roger Hedge, Cloyce Hedge, and Lee Casebere being joined by John Cassady and Michael Brattain. After a lackluster year in 2013 in central Indiana, we went back to north-west Indiana, where we've had our best success through the years. Our day was spent mostly at Willow Slough, Kankakee Sands, and the Lake Michigan area from Michigan City to Whiting. To get right to the point, we had an excellent day with our best count ever, 173 species (our old record was 171).

There were few extraordinary highlights, just great overall success in getting many species of birds. We did well with waterfowl at 13 species (including White-winged Scoter) and with shorebirds at 12 species. Warblers were our best group as a whole, where we managed to get 31 species. The most unexpected bird of the day was a Snowy Owl seen at Kankakee Sands!

To further emphasize our excellent birding prowess, our team managed to find all of the expected hummingbirds, swifts, kingfishers, and waxwings (are you laughing yet?). All kidding aside, we had success and fun and thought we had a shot at reclaiming the top honor for the number of species seen. Imagine our surprise to learn that two other teams did even better! Surprised, but not disappointed. We are so proud of what this Birdathon has become! From its humble beginnings with one team many years ago, it has grown immensely to having many teams that compete for species seen and money raised for the benefit of many worthy conservation projects. The DNR Team is extremely thankful for everyone who supports our team and this great Amos Butler Audubon birding tradition! 🐦

Noddy Little Gulls A Serendipitous Day

by Laurie Voss

What could be more enchanting than to begin your Birdathon adventure in the middle of Yellowwood State Forest just before dawn, listening to the Whip-poor-will giving its repetitive call? Then as the sky gives up the stars and the dawn begins to break, the morning chorus erupts so loudly that it is difficult to pick out the individual species. For the Noddy Little Gulls (Polly Nicely, Martha Davis, Lou Ann Barriger, and Laurie Voss), nothing could be better than that.



Team members (l-r): Martha Davis, Polly Nicely, Lou Anne Barriger, and Laurie Voss

On May 10th, under beautiful skies and with perfect temperatures, we

began our day just that way. Weather wise, this was the best day we have ever had for a Birdathon. While on the T. C. Steele grounds we encountered about a 45-minute heavy rain, but that just made the birds even more hungry and vocal when it stopped. By the end of the morning we had 28 species of warblers.

What made this Birdathon most memorable were the surprises and the little serendipities along the way. We found our Mockingbird in the Burger King parking lot during a stop. We got our elusive Red-tailed Hawk when the driver (moi) got us slightly off course. Then with our "last hour before dark" desperate push, we found six species that had eluded us earlier in the day. We ended our adventure with 136 species—a group record. We can't wait to try to break our record next year.

We want to thank all of our sponsors for their generous support of the "gulls." A big thanks also goes to Donna McCarty and Pete Drum for their hard work and dedication to the Birdathon. 🐦

Record-breaking High Count Champs: Wild Birds Unlimited From the Lakeshore to Goose Pond

by John Schaust



Team members (l-r): Landon Neumann, Eric Ripma, Brian Cunningham, Rob Ripma, and John Schaust

That decision was made by Team Wild Birds Unlimited during the 2013 Birdathon. After three years of eagerly learning the peaks and pitfalls of trying to be competitive Birdathon participants we decided that it was time to go all out and plan a true "Big Day" attempt for 2014.

For almost a year, potential routes, dates, and scouting plans were discussed. Calendars and schedules were compared and the final team roster was compiled: Landon Neumann, Eric and Rob Ripma, Brian Cunningham and John Schaust. Our target date was May 18th.

Ultimately, an incredibly detailed Big Day route was developed, Indiana birding reports were monitored, and every potential birding site was scouted by members of the team during the 36 hours prior to the start of count day.

We started after midnight at Kingsbury FWA near LaPorte, shivering (38°) under starlit skies as we tallied our first bird, an American Woodcock. We ended at 11:30 p.m. in the warmth of Greene County, where we tallied a pair of Barn Owls as our 182nd species of the day!

Everything had come together: the preparation, timing, weather, traveling, abundant birds, and lots of luck to create an unforgettable Big Day Birdathon experience. Our diverse team, with its 40+ year age span, had joined together for one of the top birding days that we are likely to ever have — and we truly had a blast doing it!

The odds of us pulling off this type of extreme effort as a team in the future are probably slim to none. But we will always cherish the day that Team WBU found our way from the Lakeshore to Goose Pond!

We would like to thank our families, friends, and especially Wild Birds Unlimited for making our Big Day possible through their generous support and donations. 🐦



Team members (l-r): George Wilson, Betsy Wilson, Karen LaMere, and Tim Johnson

TKGB Avian Agent Mission

by Betsy Wilson

TKGB rendezvoused for its spying mission to discover the whereabouts of as many species of avians as possible at

8:40 a.m. on May 12th. The plan was to stay in our cover vehicle as much as possible. It had been agreed that agents Tim, Karen, George, and Betsy would check their feeders for any birds lurking nearby after 7:30 p.m. on May 11th. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, White-crowned Sparrows, and a Brown Creeper were spotted. TKGB headed for Eagle Creek Park for woodland species and were rewarded by close-up views of a Northern Parula, two Black-billed Cuckoos, and a Swainson's Thrush.

Late morning saw the agents heading north to Pine Creek for shore and field birds. Lesser Yellowlegs and Solitary, Pectoral, and Lesser Sandpipers were spotted as well as a Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks and an Osprey. A Common Merganser, Northern Shovelers, Mallards, and Blue-winged Teal were feeding nearby. The highlight of the trip north was getting a life bird for agent Tim, when two Dickcissels sat on fenceposts by our car and sang for us.

Heading back to Eagle Creek, the mission ended just before 7:30 p.m. with an eye-level view of two Magnolia Warblers within 10 feet of us. The agents were pleased to have spotted and heard 75 species of birds. We wish to thank our families and friends for supporting us in this endeavor. 🐦



Linda and Mike Bishop

Team Bishop Big Day Includes a Stop for Duct Tape

by Mike Bishop

Linda and I chose May 12th for our 2014 Birdathon effort, and as it turned out, we couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day. After nipping into a coffee shop, we traveled to Eagle Creek Park and drove straight to the ice skating ponds, where we spotted a Philadelphia Vireo and our first few warblers. Next stop was the marina, where we encountered an active group of warblers and other migrants. At the nature center, a Red-breasted Merganser was seen in flight over the reservoir. A long trek into the north end of the park was rewarded with Broad-winged Hawk, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Gray-cheeked Thrush. At Scott Starling Sanctuary, we added Cerulean Warbler, Ovenbird, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. After stopping for duct tape to repair a blown-out hiking boot, we made a beeline for Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area, where we managed to add several species of shorebirds, including many Black-necked Stilts with fuzzy youngsters. Other Goose Pond highlights were Little Blue Heron, Blue Grosbeaks, Forster's Terns, and Bald Eagles. Several Common Nighthawks were calling in Linton as we stopped for a bite to eat before the long drive home. Back home in Indy, a Barred Owl called repeatedly as we unloaded the car — a perfect way to cap off a great day. Despite missing several expected birds, we tallied 135 species. Many thanks to our generous sponsors for their continued support, and thanks to Amos Butler Audubon for all their bird conservation efforts! 🐦



Team members: Paul Evans and Dave Benson

EcoLab Team Where's a Crow When You Need One?

by Dave Benson

This year, Team EcoLab, consisting of David Benson and Paul Evans, Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Marian University, decided to bird just Marian University properties. We ended up finding 82 of our total 84 species in the Nina Mason Pulliam EcoLab. We started at 4 a.m. in a vain attempt to find owls and rails. The only night birds we ended up with were Common Nighthawk and American Woodcock. At dawn, the birding got off to a great start with a singing Connecticut Warbler and Swamp, Lincoln's, and White-throated Sparrows, along with several other migrants. For some reason, the EcoLab tends to be a great spot for Connecticut during migration. Breeding birds that are regular in the EcoLab include Kentucky Warbler, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Green Heron, and lots of Baltimore Orioles. By afternoon we were feeling good because we still had several "easy" birds to get, like House Finch and American Crow. We found House Finch up by the new medical school building, but no crows ever flew into sight. The problem with birding at only one site is that you miss lots of birds that would be easy if you could move to another location — like crows. In fact, as soon as I left Marian's campus, around 4 p.m., I saw multiple crows along the highway. It was a very challenging experience, and we were very excited to find 84 species in one small property near downtown Indianapolis — of course, thanks to the generous support of the ABA Birdathon, we've been able to steadily improve bird habitat within the EcoLab over the years. Our 84 species will be a hard benchmark number to beat. Thanks to our donors for their support! 🐦

Carbon Neutral With a Bird and Thong

by Dave Benson

This past year I was awarded with my very Town BirdaThong by the Birdathon committee. Unfortunately, my biking and birding partner on the Carbon Neutral team, Greg Osland, had heard that I might wear it and decided that it was best to leave the country during Birdathon season. The birds apparently got the memo as well and headed north prior to our Big Day. So, it was up to my brother, Chuck, and me to carry on our winning tradition of accomplishing the highest count without contributing to global warming. Due to timing issues, we didn't try for night birds this year and instead got to Eagle Creek Park at a leisurely 8 a.m. Usually one of the benefits of birding on bikes is that you can hear lots of species while riding from location to location. But, this year, it was quiet! And to make matters worse, I immediately blew a tire and spent the rest of the morning riding on the rim. Things didn't pick up until we ran into Larry Peavler, honorary member of team Carbon Neutral, who made several migrants such as Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-and-white, and Mourning Warblers appear on command. I managed to run into another wave of migrants near Circle Drive that included a late Blue-headed Vireo and a Northern Waterthrush. Then it was on to the Scott



Dave Benson modeling his BirdaThong

Starling Sanctuary after 1 p.m., where the Royal "we" became the actual we—my brother Chuck finally showed up. He claimed to have been birding for hours from the deck overlooking the reservoir, from which he had identified several "Common Flappy Birds." We birded the Scott Starling Sanctuary, picking up some regulars, and continued into the grasslands with the Brownsburg wetland as our ultimate destination. Here several shorebirds were identified. Then home to Zionsville for beer and Chorizoqueso at El Rodeo. The day ended up with a great total of 124 species. Thanks for sponsoring our Carbon Neutral efforts! 🐦

Team Cool Ponds Newbie Birder Adds 27 Lifers

by Maggie Jaicomo

May 10th was a warm and beautiful spring day at Eagle Creek Park. Our team was a bit limited in the area travelled due to the staffing needs of the Ornithology Center where we all work, but we had a successful day nonetheless. It was Maricela's first official day of work as a naturalist at Eagle Creek Park, and she was still a newbie birder. What a great way to start a new job, spending the day out birding! Several of the species we saw throughout the day were life birds for her; we added 27 new species to her list! We started our morning at the skating pond, which is always a hotspot for warblers during migration, and it did not disappoint. Starting off our morning were Mourning Warbler, American Redstart, Sora, and Northern Waterthrush, to name a few. We located Henslow's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark in the grasslands on the west side of Eagle Creek Park. Midday found us birding along the Coffey Dam trail, which even in the heat of the day delivered some good species: Orchard Oriole, Belted Kingfisher, Osprey, and Eastern Kingbird. Some unfortunate misses included Scarlet Tanager, Green Heron, and Pied-billed Grebe. We tallied 99 species for the day; we just couldn't seem to break through to three digits. We would like to thank our main sponsor, Cool Ponds, as well as all of our donors for their continued support of our Amos Butler Audubon Birdathon team. 🐦



Team members (l-r): Kevin Carlsen, Maggie Jaicomo, and Maricela Aviles

Ulndy Team Stop! What is That Thing?

by Ryan Sanderson

The 2014 University of Indianapolis Birdathon team was made up of Ryan Sanderson, Ryan Hamilton, Kim Higdon, and Aidan Rominger. We had a long route, starting at Goose Pond around 8:45 p.m. and ending, as it has the past two years, at Grant Street Wetland in Gary at 8:45 p.m. the next day.



Representing Ulndy Team members Ryan Sanderson, Ryan Hamilton, Kim Higdon, and Aidan Rominger is this Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Many birds were seen—175 species, in fact, the second highest total for this competition ever! The clear highlight was our team's finding what was likely the rarest bird found by any of the teams — a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Kankakee Sands! There is a very funny story to go along with this.

Our team was driving along a gravel road when Sanderson got out of the car to look at a bird approximately 300 yards away. He didn't want to say what he thought the bird may have been because, indeed, he thought it might have been a Scissor-tailed. That would have been exceedingly rare and, quite frankly, wishful thinking. Through the shimmering heat distortion, it couldn't be seen well by the naked eye, so a scope was used. It revealed a rather pedestrian Northern Mockingbird, not even a new bird for the count. Not to be discouraged, our team went on.

Within 30 seconds of driving farther down the gravel road, Hamilton and Rominger said, "Stop! What is that thing!?" We stopped immediately, looked, and sure enough, a female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was sitting in the opposite field less than 50 yards away! This was the third very rare bird seen by our team in two years, and the second that we found independently.

We would like to thank all of our sponsors for their generous support. Much fun was had by all, and we can't wait to participate again next year! 🐦

Team Walmart New Birds for New Birders

by Chad Williams

On June 14, an almost entirely new Team Walmart descended upon McCormick's Creek State Park excited for an altogether new experience — birding! With the exception of their leader, Chad Williams, none of the six other participants were birders. Our Big Day would be slightly different than most other Birdathon teams mixing hiking, picnicking and birding into one amazing event!

Together we hiked a moderately difficult trail complete with rocks, hills, and waterfalls. The day was gorgeous and the scenery along the trail amazing. But, the best part was birds that showed up along the way making birding seem like it took no effort at all. Highlights for the group included Scarlet Tanager, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and American Goldfinch. While common to most of us, these species offered an entirely different glimpse into the world of birds to these participants. In all, we saw 22 species of birds continuing our tradition of turning in the lowest count. However, what we lacked in species we gained in avian awareness which is ultimately what the Birdathon is all about and making our day a smashing success! Many thanks to each associate who gave their time for birds! 🐦



Chad Williams, Walmart employees and their families

Community Hospital Team

John Munshower, Doug Sherow, and Greg Steffen

Our Big Day was May 11 setting a team best record of 123.

We thank all of our Community Hospital team sponsors. 🐦