

Barbara Jablonski Receives 2014 Volunteer of the Year Award

The 2014 Donna McCarty Volunteer Service Award was presented to Barbara Jablonski at the February 10 Amos Butler Audubon program meeting. Since 2005 Barb has been the Silent Auction Coordinator for the ABA Birdathon. Her virtually single-handed efforts have brought in thousands of dollars for this fundraising event. The money raised from the silent auction pays for all of the Birdathon Celebration expenses. This means that none of the donations from our sponsors for the Birdathon grants are used to pay for this party. The excess funds raised by the auction, which are considerable, give each year's Birdathon a big head start on fundraising to fulfill the new grant requests. Last year alone the silent auction brought in more than \$4,450 from the sale of 220 items.

Barb also took on the task of preparing gift bags for the Birdathon volunteers. These bags contain numerous useful items and treats for those who solicit \$100 or more in donations for the Birdathon. Most years this means preparing 25-30 of these bags. The majority of the items she put in the gift bags were those she solicited as donations, but she also came up with creative ideas for gifts for the volunteers such as caps, T-shirts and individual coolers.

As if this wasn't enough, she also looks for opportunities to raise additional funds. For example, in 2013 she was responsible for procuring an opportunity from Whole Foods Market to donate to ABA 5% of their profits on a designated day. This proved to be the largest donation ever made for their program (more than \$5,000) thanks to her promotional efforts. Last year she organized a fundraiser with Granite City restaurants to



Donna McCarty (left) with ABA Volunteer of the Year 2014 Barbara Jablonski (right). In appreciation of her service to the chapter she was given an original Rudy Duck decoy by John Bundy of Bundy Decoys.

donate 20% of the tab of those who turned in an ABA flyer and dined on September 18.

To thank her for her considerable contribution to the chapter, ABA gave Barb a Ruddy Duck decoy by John Bundy of Bundy Decoys. John is one of the vendors solicited by Barb for the Silent Auction. He picked out one of his artistic creations especially for her.

The next time you see Barb, be sure to congratulate her!

The 2014 Indianapolis Christmas Bird Count

by John Schaust

Last month was the 115th anniversary of the first National Audubon Society (NAS) Christmas Bird Count (CBC). It was also the 104th anniversary of the official Indianapolis CBC, which was first conducted in December 1910. This year we conducted the Indianapolis CBC on December 20.

The Indianapolis CBC area encompasses a 15-mile-diameter circle, with the center in Fort Harrison State Park near the intersection of Shafter and Boy

Scout roads. The circle includes the northeastern portion of Marion County and small portions of Hamilton and Hancock counties. Conditions during this year's count were typical for late December in Central Indiana: temperatures 25-32°F, northwest winds 1-7 mph, skies overcast all day, lakes and ponds about 30% frozen, and streams and rivers open. Forty five people participated—41 observers in 14 field parties that spent a combined total of 60 hours in the field while traveling almost 185 miles on foot and by car. In addition,

there were eight feeder watchers — four exclusively at feeders and four who had also participated earlier in the day as field observers. They combined for a total of 10 hours of feeder watching.

Despite a midday tally of only 52 species at the lunch gathering, the observers persevered and finished the day with 68 species, which was eight fewer than last year's record-setting 76. The average for the past 20 Indianapolis CBCs is 63 species. A respectable 9,543 birds were recorded for this year's count, down about 16% from last year's

Upcoming Audubon Programs

All Programs are held at the Holliday Park Nature Center, 6363 Springmill Road, Indianapolis, at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. They are free and open to the public. Information: Email Maggie Jaicomo at Margaret.jaicomo@gmail.com or call (260) 403-3172.



March 10: Birding Adventures in Argentina

Speakers: Randy and Deb Patrick

Randy and Deb Patrick participated in a three-week tour of Argentina's Ibérica Marsh and the Peninsula Valdés area, conducted by Trogon Photography Tours. The Ibérica Marsh, three million acres of mostly unspoiled wildlife habitat, is the second-largest wetland in the world (after the Pantanal in Brazil) and is known for its great birding. The Peninsula Valdés is known for its sea lions, elephant and fur seals, and breaching southern right whales, along with other interesting mammals as well as awesome birds. One must remember that birding photography is not a sport to find all of the avian species in an area but to obtain great photos of as many species as time permits. Join the Patricks as they share the grand fun and great photography they experienced.



April 14: KathyQ, Indianapolis's own Celebrity

By Laura James-Reim

Although not called such at the time, the monitoring of the Peregrine Falcons in downtown Indianapolis was what today is called citizen science. Laura and her team recorded every detail of what happened from copulation through egg laying and hatching and every hop, skip, and jump of the fledglings. The researchers don't go into that much detail now, since the species has recovered without the need for continuing such intense monitoring, but you will be fascinated at how the peregrines in downtown Indianapolis have fared over the years and the people who watched them and who cared. KathyQ is one of the old-guard falcons, still going strong.



International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 16; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center

6515 DeLong Road, Indianapolis

This free mini-festival will be fun for the whole family, even those who may not be bird nuts. Activities will include exhibitions of live birds of prey, naturalist-led bird walks, bird banding, owl pellet dissection, coloring contests, and raffling of prizes. Complete a passport and receive a free International Migratory Bird Day T-shirt (while supplies last)! This is a rain-or-shine event. No pets, please.

ABA Field Trips

Waterfowl Field Trip — Bloomington

Sunday, March 15, 7:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Meeting place: Marsh parking lot at
6965 West 38th Street, Indianapolis

Join Scott Enochs as he leads a trip to Bloomington in search of migrating waterfowl. Bloomington has many waterfowl hotspots including Lake Monroe, Lake Lemon, and Stillwater Marsh. We will meet at the Marsh parking lot as noted above and carpool to Bloomington, where we will visit many productive locations in search of migrating waterfowl. Participants can expect to head home around 1 p.m. Questions: Contact Scott at (317) 850-4801 or email msenochs@comcast.net. Registration is not required, and the event is open to everyone.

Shorebird Field Trip — Goose Pond

Saturday, April 18, 7 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Meeting place: Kroger parking lot at
1930 East Main Street, Plainfield

Join Scott Enochs as he leads a field trip to Goose Pond in search of migrating shorebirds. We will meet at the Kroger parking lot as noted above and carpool for the 90-minute drive to Goose Pond. Goose Pond has become a premier stopover point for many species of shorebirds. It is one of the few sites in Indiana to view nesting Black-necked Stilt. Shorebirds will be our primary target for the day, but we will also seek out migrating waterfowl and early migrant warblers. Participants can expect to be back in the Indianapolis area around 3 p.m. Questions: Contact Scott at (317) 850-4801 or email msenochs@comcast.net. Registration is not required for this event, and it is open to everyone.

Regularly Scheduled Bird Hikes

Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center

6515 Delong Road, Indianapolis
Every Sunday year-round, 9 a.m.
Meet at the Ornithology Center.

Information: (317) 327-2473

Cool Creek Park

2000 East 151st Street, Carmel
Every Saturday, 8 a.m.

Meet in the north parking lot of Cool Creek Park,
past the Nature Center.

Information: (317) 774-2500

Marian University EcoLab

3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis
Every Wednesday beginning March 18, 8 a.m.

Leader: David Benson (dbenson@marion.edu)

Meet at the St. Francis Colonnade.



Eastern Bluebird photo by Barbara Jablonski

The 2014 Indianapolis Christmas Bird Count

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11,061. One of the most significant factors affecting this year's species count was loss of some great habitat around the Indianapolis Regional (formerly Mt. Comfort) Airport, where the grassy runway margins had been planted with soybeans. The result was a total lack of Horned Larks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Short-eared Owls, Northern Harriers, and other grassland species. The total number of birds observed was about 1,500 less than last year mainly because we found 2,800 fewer American Coots; last year's coot count was an all-time high.

We recorded no new species this year; thus the total number of species observed during all Indianapolis CBCs ever conducted remains 141. We did set record high numbers for 10 species: Redhead (27), Greater Scaup (12), Hooded Merganser (108), Horned Grebe (4), Bald Eagle (5), Red-bellied Woodpecker (92), Downy Woodpecker (179), Pileated Woodpecker (24), White-breasted Nuthatch (233), and Carolina Wren (86). Despite indications last autumn of a potential winter finch invasion, totally absent this year were Purple Finch, both species of redpolls, and both species of crossbills, while only 10 Pine Siskins and two Red-breasted Nuthatches were recorded.

My sincere thanks to all participants, whose time, effort, and expertise are always greatly appreciated; to the Crossroads of America Council of the Boy Scouts of America for hosting this year's Indianapolis CBC at the Golden-Burke Scout Center (and special thanks to Brian Cunningham and Rob Ripma for teaching the Bird Study Merit Badge on count day!); and to Amos Butler Audubon for sponsoring the Indianapolis CBC and for helping to provide food for

the participants' lunch and under-writing snacks for the Bird Study Merit Badge class. I look forward to seeing everyone again next year!



*Golden-crowned
Kinglet photo by
Barbara Jablonski*

Hamilton County Parks Activities

Beginning Bird Hikes

Cool Creek Park

2000 East 151st Street, Carmel

Sundays (March 1 and 15) and Wednesdays (March 11 and 18)

8:30 - 10 a.m.

Meet in the north parking lot, past the Nature Center

Birds are fascinating, and watching them can be an awe-inspiring experience. Catching a glimpse of these gorgeous creatures, however, can be frustrating, and learning how to identify all of them can be overwhelming! Join our Naturalist staff and other guest leaders (when available) Sunday and Wednesday mornings, and we will learn together. This will be a great opportunity for birdwatchers of all levels. You may begin anytime during the season and come as often as you like. Pre-registration is not required. Don't forget your binoculars! For more information, contact Amanda Smith at amanda.smith@hamiltoncounty.in.gov or call (317) 774-2500.

Saturday Morning Spring Migration Bird Hikes

Cool Creek Park

2000 E. 151st St., Carmel

Saturdays, April 18 and 25, 8 a.m.

Catch a peek at some beautiful birds as they make their return this spring. The hikes are led by well-known birder Keith Starling. Hurry, some birds will not stay around long! After the hike, stop by the Nature Center's Wildlife Viewing Area for coffee and doughnuts. Don't forget your binoculars! Spring migration bird hikes meet in the north parking lot of Cool Creek Park. Free. Older children and adults welcome, no pre-registration required. Questions? Call (317) 774-2500 or email www.myhamiltoncountyparks.com

Strawtown Koteewi Park Beginning Bird Hikes

Taylor Center of Natural History, Strawtown Koteewi Park

12308 Strawtown Ave., Noblesville

Wednesdays —March 4, April 1, May 6, and June 3, 8:30 a.m.

Free. Adults welcome, no pre-registration required. Questions? Call (317) 774-2574 or email www.myhamiltoncountyparks.com

American Woodcock Walk

Taylor Center of Natural History, Strawtown Koteewi Park

12308 Strawtown Ave., Noblesville

Saturday, March 21

Indoor program 6 p.m., outdoor program 6:30 p.m.

Unusual, weird, romantic, and unique are all words used to describe the American Woodcock. Come experience this rite of spring for yourself as male woodcocks perform their aerial courtship displays for the females in the prairie at dusk! An indoor presentation will take place inside the Taylor Center for those interested in knowing more about the life history of this bird. Those interested in seeing the aerial display should meet the group inside the Taylor Center and will be led by a Naturalist outside. Free. All ages welcome, no pre-registration required. Questions? Call (317) 774-2574 or email www.myhamiltoncountyparks.com



Rookery Preserve

25440 Scherer Ave., Arcadia

Wednesday, March 11, 1 p.m.; Friday, March 20 (first day of spring), 2:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 21, 3 p.m.; Thursday, April 2, 1 p.m.; Friday, April 10, 11 a.m.; Saturday, April 11, 3:30 p.m.; Saturday, April 18, 2 p.m.; Wednesday, April 22 (Earth Day), 4 p.m.

Join a Naturalist at the Great Blue Heron rookery in Hamilton County. We will meet and stay at the Stoops Observation Deck and discuss details about the park. We will spend the majority of the time watching and talking about the Great Blue Herons, which should be busily courting and tending their nests. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, and photography equipment; some equipment will be available. We meet at the observation deck. Free; pre-registration suggested at (317) 774-2500 or email amanda.smith@hamiltoncounty.in.gov Questions? Call (317) 774-2574 or email www.myhamiltoncountyparks.com

Great Horned Owls and Small Dogs—Whoop Knew?

By Amanda Smith



As a Naturalist, I'm privileged to work in a profession that enables me to learn something new about nature every single day. Naturalists serve as a resource for people who know very little about the natural world. We encounter many people who have serious fears regarding nature; the majority of their fears are steeped in myth or misunderstanding and prevent them from truly enjoying the outdoors. With that said, there are some dangers that nature can present. In these cases, education is the most powerful ally.

Recently a patron with a concern visited the nature center where I work. She was worried about her small, five-pound dog becoming prey to a natural predator. A great deal of attention has been given to the dangers that coyotes pose to our pets, so I was ready to begin the common dialog on that topic. However, I was surprised when her concerns focused on the Great Horned Owl she had heard calling in her yard. Her specific question was, "How much can a Great Horned Owl carry?" The answer surprised me and increased my appreciation of these amazing apex predators.

Great Horned Owls are large birds, standing 18-25 inches tall, with a wing span of close to four feet. Yet this massive bird weighs only about three pounds. It was surprising to learn that a Great Horned Owl would have no problem killing and carrying off our patron's five-pound dog. Even more surprising was learning that an owl can lift prey even heavier than that. Great Horned Owls can dead lift about nine pounds off the ground, close to three times their own body weight. These owls are powerful predators with a host of adaptations. When outstretched, an owl's feet, tipped with four razor-sharp talons, are about eight inches long and four inches wide. They hit their prey with about 30 pounds of force, typically crushing the prey's spinal cord upon impact.

Great Horned Owls regularly prey on animals larger than themselves. They are known predators of Great Blue Herons, which weigh about the same as our patron's dog.

Even more amazing, Great Horned Owls are one of the few predators of skunks in our area. An adult skunk typically weighs 7-9 pounds but can reach 14 pounds. Owls lack a highly developed sense of smell, so the skunk's defense is ineffective with an owl. Young deer, Osprey, and even bobcats are on the menu of these stealthy predators; however, 80-90% of an owl's diet consists of small prey like rabbits, mice, shrews, voles, and squirrels. Smaller prey is swallowed whole, whereas larger prey is consumed in pieces, sometimes over the course of several days. It's amazing to think that this bird is capable of taking a bird as small as a Golden-crowned Kinglet or an animal as large as a fawn.

Great Horned Owls are one of the fiercest predators in our area. They should be regarded with an appropriate amount of awe and respect. Understanding their role in our ecosystem and their capabilities enables us to protect our pets while also appreciating their presence in our neighborhoods. Pet owners have a responsibility to protect their animals, especially the smaller, more vulnerable ones, by accompanying them outdoors and by keeping cats indoors. Limiting negative exchanges with wildlife will protect our pets while at the same time protecting the animals with which we share habitat.

Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz

Don Gorney, Amy Kearns, and Landon Neumann,
Indiana Coordinators

Over the past half-century, the historically abundant, swamp-loving Rusty Blackbird has experienced one of the steepest population declines among North American landbirds. During the last 15 years, scientists have learned a great deal about this bird's breeding and wintering ecology, knowledge that allows us to target conservation initiatives during these phases of this bird's annual cycle. However, as with many migratory species, we know very little about Rusty Blackbird ecology, distribution, and habitat use during migration. Are there hot spots where

many individuals congregate? Are there stopover areas that are used predictably each year, and are these locations protected? The Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz will address these and other questions to help focus future research and conservation of one of North America's most vulnerable blackbirds. We need your help in this effort to conserve this fascinating songbird.

Spring 2015 kicks off the second year of this three-year Spring Migration Blitz. The Blitz time window for Indiana will span March 1 through mid-April. If you would like to contribute data to the Spring Migration Blitz effort, just bird as you normally do, but also focus on potential Rusty Blackbird habitat. You can seek the best known places for Rusty Blackbird sightings or explore uncharted territory. Make sure to report ALL of your

observations to eBird – we want to know both where you saw these birds and where you did not. Between March 1 and April 30, 2014, dozens of Hoosier observers submitted to eBird 364 Rusty Blackbird observations, totaling 11,666 birds, a 38% increase in submissions over 2013, the year before the Blitz. Help us increase submissions another 25% in 2015 by birding potential Rusty Blackbird habitat in March and April and reporting your results to eBird. It's that simple.

Check out the newly revamped website of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>) for information about identification, vocalizations, habitat preferences, and types of data to collect to support this initiative.

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I do do not want Amos Butler Audubon to share my name with the National Audubon Society. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent provided by law. C3ZH000Z

E-Mail Address, Anyone?

Join with hundreds of other members who have who have gone green by signing up for the electronic *LifeLines* newsletter and meeting reminders. Send your request, including your name, to Martyn Roberts at info@amosbutleraudubon.org. This shift towards electronic communication continues to save Amos Butler Audubon hundreds of dollars in printing and mailing costs annually.

Are You a Chapter Supporter?

The expiration date of your Chapter Supporter membership is printed on the mailing label on the paper copy of your *Lifelines*, to the right of your name; "N/A" denotes that you have not paid Chapter Supporter dues. To determine the expiration date of your National Audubon Society membership, refer to the address label on your *Audubon* magazine.

If you receive *LifeLines* electronically or if you have any other membership questions, please contact Martyn Roberts at info@amosbutleraudubon.org or call (317) 251-2908.



*Our mission:
To promote the enjoyment and stewardship
of the birds of central Indiana*

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