

A Tribute to Robert Q. Thompson

by Don Gorney



Bob Thompson birding at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Dan Kaiser.

Longtime Amos Butler Audubon member and birder, Robert Q. Thompson, passed away on January 13, 2012, at the age of 86. Known as "RQ" to his coworkers at Eli Lilly, where he worked for 30 years in biochemistry and antibiotics development, most birders knew him simply as "Bob." Upon retirement, he and his wife, "Lou," traveled extensively, allowing Bob to add to his life list. His children reported that Bob's life list for North America, excluding Mexico, was 704. Besides birding, Bob enjoyed fishing and photography. His beloved wife of 58 years preceded him in death in 2009. He is survived by a son, two daughters, and several grandchildren and great-grand children.

Bob Thompson seemed to be a constant presence at Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, one of his favorite birding spots. Although I don't recall where I met Bob, it was likely at Muscatatuck. Each time I visited Muscatatuck, I was likely to see Bob driving his station wagon on the refuge roads, talking to friends inside the visitor's center, or watching birds at the feeders. Bob was always upbeat and quick with a smile. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Bob's son, Greg Thompson, contacted me in February to inquire as to whether Amos Butler Audubon was interested in acquiring Bob's birding library. Although the organization had no facility in which to house the library itself, it was a solid collection that could be used by others, so I gladly accepted his gracious offer. The bulk of the reference books on birds of North America was donated to the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center, the numerous non-birding field guides and reference books were donated to Cold Spring Environmental School, and several titles were sold at the Birdathon 2012 Silent Auction. Greg also donated a box of field checklists that Bob had meticulously kept for Muscatatuck and for a park in Greenwood. The checklists spanned the period from the 1990s through 2011. The checklists are valuable for the data they contain. Maxine Wolfal, a friend of Bob's from Muscatatuck, kindly agreed to enter the checklist data into eBird. Bob's copious checklists will keep Maxine busy for quite awhile. Amos Butler Audubon is grateful to Bob Thompson's family for the donation of the books and checklists.

Volunteer Days

In 2011, Amos Butler Audubon obtained a \$7,000 grant from TogetherGreen to conduct a series of volunteer day events. Seven events were held between fall 2011 and spring 2012. Six of the events were workdays to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife, while the seventh event was a celebration of International Migratory Bird Day at Eagle Creek Park's Ornithology Center. Funding allowed for purchase of tools, plants, refreshments for volunteers, and our volunteer celebration at Cool Creek Park in August.

Our six workday events took place at four different sites and resulted in eight acres of invasive plants being removed, 990 pounds of garlic mustard pulled, 24,000 pounds of mulch produced, 80 pounds of garbage removed, 113 native trees and shrubs planted, and 624 native grass and wildflower plugs planted. The migratory bird celebration attracted 145 attendees who made bird feeders, dissected owl pellets, saw hawks and owls up close, and learned how concerned citizens like themselves could help the environment. The awesome volunteer day results stemmed from the efforts of the 190 volunteers who turned out for one or more of the events. Volunteers, thanks for making a difference!

Amos Butler Audubon applied for and received another volunteer days grant for 2012-13. By the time you read this, we already will have held three workdays to improve habitat at three different sites. If you are interested in volunteering at future events, please sign up for the volunteer mailing list on our website or contact Don Gorney at don@amosbutleraudubon.org.



Board member John Schaust bands a Carolina Chickadee at the International Migratory Bird Day celebration held in May.

Upcoming Audubon Programs

All programs are held at the Holliday Park Nature Center, 6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis, at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month unless otherwise noted. They are free and open to the public. Information: Email Brittany Davis Swinford at bluemoosey8@yahoo.com or call (812) 340-0824.

November 13: Hacking Northern Harriers

Laura Edmunds
Director of Indiana Raptor Center and Master Falconer

The Northern Harrier (also called the marsh hawk) has an interesting and surprising natural history, especially when it comes to its family life. First presented nationally for the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association, this program includes a species profile and a detailed look at the unusual relationship between mother Northern Harriers and their rambunctious chicks. As Director of Indiana Raptor Center, Laura Edmunds has experienced this activity first-hand and will share some interesting hacking stories with us. Hacking is a training method that helps young raptors reach their full hunting potential, through exercise and experience, to become independent hunters. These wandering terrors of the rodent world are beautiful and are often seen in winter in the company of Short-eared Owls, but few people are aware of their interesting and oddly structured domestic reproductive cycle.



December 11: Climate Change — The Science and the Effect on Plant Communities

Kevin Tunesvick, Restoration Ecologist at
Spence Restoration Nursery and Meteorologist for
the National Weather Service

This presentation will be an update on the science of climate change, how it is changing our weather, and the likely effects it is having and will have on plant communities. Kevin Tunesvick is an extremely knowledgeable botanist with 17 years experience as a Restoration Ecologist at Spence Nursery in Muncie, Indiana. Kevin's degree in Atmospheric Science from Purdue University led him to a career as a meteorologist with the National Weather Service before becoming an ecologist. In this presentation, we will learn about native Indiana plant communities and changes recorded throughout the years. Kevin and his beautiful plant images will give us a better insight into plant phenology and the signs of climate change. The plants can't talk to us...but Kevin can!



January 8: Tracking Down Award-Worthy Wildlife Photos

Kevin Carlsen
Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center Naturalist

February 12: Donna and Barb's Excellent Adventure in the Galapagos

Audubon Birdathon
Chair Donna McCarty
and Birdathon Silent
Auction Coordinator
Barbara Jablonski

Donna and Barb will give a presentation about their 2011 National Geographic/Linblad adventure to the Galapagos. The series of volcanic islands known collectively as the Galapagos is approximately 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador and are so remote that many species found there are unique and endemic. The islands are best known from Charles Darwin's book, "On the Origin of Species," written after his 1835 visit there. The birds and other wildlife, with the exception of the magnificent Giant Tortoises, have for the most part, never been hunted by humans and therefore exhibit no fear of tourists traipsing among them. Nesting birds along the trails go on about their business as though people are invisible. Some even walk between your legs! The beautiful fish, which can be viewed while snorkeling, are an extra bonus. Part of the presentation will be a 30-minute video, shot by a professional videographer aboard the Linblad Endeavor, featuring Donna, Barb, and their spouses in several scenes.



March 12: Wild Nature at Our Urban Doorstep

Tom Swinford, Regional Ecologist, Indiana
Department of Natural Resources

Tom Swinford, longtime Ecologist for IDNR-Nature Preserves, will present on the natural history of Marion County. Highlighted will be the eight state nature preserves of Marion County — the highest quality natural areas remaining within Indianapolis city limits. This includes the sizable preserves of Ft. Harrison and Eagle Creek that form the core of two of Indiana's designated Important Bird Areas. Tom is recognized as an authority on the landscapes, flora, and fauna of central Indiana. Join us as we learn the story of Marion County and what the future prospects are for the fascinating and rare animals that call it home.

Audubon Field Trip

Fall Sandhill Crane Migration Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area Saturday, November 3, 1:00 p.m. until dark

Leader: Marty Williams

Join us for our annual trip to watch the spectacular mass-gathering of Sandhill Cranes at the Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area in northwestern Indiana. Ninety percent of the Sandhill Crane population in the eastern U.S. travels through Jasper-Pulaski each autumn. During the peak, 20,000 or more cranes may be present at one time. The birds are easily viewed in late afternoon as they fly in from a day of foraging in nearby agricultural fields to the 300-acre area known as Goose Pasture. This field trip is scheduled to catch the peak of the migration, which occurs in early to mid-November. We will leave Indianapolis in the early afternoon, allowing us plenty of time to catch the crane show that takes place from late afternoon until dusk. We may do a little birding around Jasper-Pulaski before heading to the observation tower to marvel at the crane spectacle. Plan to meet at the southwest corner of the Dick's Sporting Goods parking lot in the Traders Point Shopping Center, 6030 West 86th Street, Indianapolis, and carpool as needed. Bring snacks and drinks, and dress appropriately for the weather. Please direct any questions to Marty Williams at (317) 366-6126 or email martburger@mac.com.

Hamilton County Bird Hike

Rookery Preserve Park Hike 25440 Scherer Ave., Arcadia Saturday, November 10, 2 p.m.

Join a park naturalist at our newest park for some true exploration. Access to this 30+ acre park is restricted during the majority of the year so that we don't disturb the nesting Great Blue Herons. The birds are not at the nesting site for just a few months out of the year, so this is our chance to explore the areas under their canopy nursery. Access to the property is allowed only with a naturalist, so please join us as we explore and discuss this amazing habitat. For more information call Hamilton County Parks & Recreation Department at (317) 774-2501

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

Marian University EcoLab 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis Every Wednesday, 8 a.m.

Leader: David Benson (dbenson@marion.edu)

No hike November 21, December 19 or 26. Meet at the St. Francis Colonnade.

Cool Creek Park 2000 East 151st Street, Carmel Wednesday and every other Sunday, 9-10 a.m. November 11, 14, 21, 25, 28; December 9, 12, 19, 23, 26

Meet in the north parking lot of Cool Creek Park, past the Nature Center. Information: (317) 774-2500

Strawtown Koteewi Park 12308 Strawtown Avenue, Noblesville November 7 and December 5, 9-10 a.m.

Meet at the Taylor Center of Natural History. Information: (317) 984-5556

Partner Spotlight

Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (KIB) was founded in 1977 as Indianapolis Clean City within City government. It later became an independent not-for-profit 501(c)(3) and was renamed KIB in 1997. KIB's mission is to unite people to build community and transform public spaces through aesthetic and environmental improvement. It is a very active organization. In 2011, more than 46,000 KIB volunteers supported cleanup efforts and revitalized neighborhoods around Indianapolis. These volunteers contributed almost 143,000 hours of service by cleaning up litter, building pocket parks, creating greenspaces, planting trees and flowers, and assisting with special projects.

When Amos Butler Audubon began our Volunteer Days initiative in 2011, thanks to a grant from TogetherGreen, we partnered with KIB on several projects. Both KIB and Audubon provided volunteers and other resources for habitat improvement at Cold Spring Environmental School, Spades Park, and Fort Harrison State Park. The Amos Butler Audubon Birdathon has provided funding for two KIB projects, and we work alongside KIB staff on various school and environmental initiatives. KIB is a valuable partner because of its experience with volunteers, involvement with schools and neighborhoods, and its really well-stocked tool trailer.

Because grant money was available, we decided to purchase four pairs of heavy-duty loppers that are advertised as being very useful for de-horning cattle. Since KIB has many volunteer activities throughout the year, we donated three of the four pairs of loppers to KIB. While KIB staff may not de-horn any cattle, they will have the loppers if the need presents itself. Interestingly, KIB's president, David Forsell, is a former president of Amos Butler Audubon.



Amos Butler Audubon President Don Gorney presents one of three pairs of loppers to Tammy Stevens, Program Manager/Volunteer Coordinator, Keep Indianapolis Beautiful.

Celebrate the Holidays by Participating in the 113th Annual National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 15

Whether you are a first-time birdwatcher or an experienced pro, your help is needed during the 113th annual National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC), scheduled for Saturday, December 15.

Nationwide, over 2,000 Christmas Bird Counts are conducted during the holiday season. They have provided an enormous contribution to conservation for over 100 years. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations — and to help guide conservation action.

The Indianapolis count takes place within a 15-mile-diameter circle covering the northeast side of Indianapolis with the center being in Fort Harrison State Park.

If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher. In addition, if your home is within the boundaries of the Count Circle, then you can stay home and report the birds that visit your feeder once you have arranged to do so with the Count Compiler.

The most exciting news for this year is that CBC is now a free program! Audubon will no longer charge the traditional \$5.00 fee formerly paid by field participants.

To participate in the Christmas Bird Count, you need to register before December 12 so that birding teams can be formed and count plans made in advance of the count. Reserve your spot by calling John Schaust at (317) 208-4021 or emailing schaust@gmail.com

Amos Butler Audubon has again joined with the Crossroads Council of the Boy Scouts of America to host this year's CBC at the Scout Education and Program Center on the northeast corner of Fall Creek Road and North Shadeland Avenue. A Bird Study Merit Badge class will also be held there on the morning of the Christmas Bird Count. Scouts can learn more or reserve their spot by contacting Brian Cunningham at forester3991@yahoo.com, or (317) 753-8154.

A pitch-in lunch for all of the participants will also be held at the Scout Center at noon to go over list of birds seen and to reorganize groups to head back outside in the afternoon to cover additional areas if needed.

General information about the National Audubon Society and the Annual Christmas Bird Count can be found at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc.



Central Indiana CBCs

Indianapolis Northeast: Saturday, December 15

Meet Don Gorney at 8:30 a.m. at Delaware Lake parking lot at Fort Harrison State Park if you do not have a pre-assigned area. Lunch is at the Scout Education and Program Center, 7125 Fall Creek Road North, at noon to go over the list of birds seen. Some groups will head back out in the afternoon. More information can be obtained by calling John Schaust at (317) 208-4021 or email schaust@gmail.com

Eagle Creek Valley: Sunday, December 16

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center. Pitch-in lunch at 12 noon to go over the list of birds seen. Some groups will head back out in the afternoon and early evening. For more info contact Kevin Carlsen at (317) 327-2473 or email kcarlsen@indygov.org.

Hamilton County: Saturday, December 29, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Celebrate the holidays by helping our department and the National Audubon Society conduct its annual Christmas Bird Count. Join us for a day of hiking and birding. Lunch for participants will be provided by the Hamilton County Parks and Recreation Department. Call the Cool Creek Nature Center at (317) 774-2500 or email cool.naturecenter@hamiltoncounty.in.gov to pre-register or to receive more details.



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E-Mail Address, Anyone?

Join the hundreds of other members who have signed up for electronic *LifeLines* newsletters 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 each year in printing and mailing costs.

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. For the expiration date of your National Audubon Society membership, refer to the address label on your *Audubon* magazine.

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

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