



2024 BIRDATHON REPORT

Eastern Towhees are not considered threatened, yet their population has declined more than 50% since 1966



A Record Number of Grants in 2024

The 2024 Birdathon was faced with a big goal after receiving a record number of grant requests. After careful deliberation by the Birdathon Grants Committee a goal of \$38,832 was set to be able to fund 13 different grants. Thanks to the amazing work of our donors, volunteers and Birdathon teams we were able to fully fund all of the grants and preserve a healthy carryover for next year's grant requests. This year, we continue to partner with American Bird Conservancy and their wonderful work in the Central Andes Birdscape in Colombia. Keep Indianapolis Beautiful is creating a new green space on the near East Side of Indianapolis. Our long-time partner, Marian University EcoLab, is continuing habitat restoration work. Research studies at Indiana University, Purdue University and IU Indianapolis are covering female bird song, migration of Eastern Towhees and Northern Saw-Whet Owls, invasive plants in the lower Wabash River corridor and bird window strikes in Indianapolis. Camp Utopia is continuing its successful program this year with 30 students. New nest boxes are being installed at Richland Bean Blossom Community School Corporation and Holliday Park is repairing their Bluebird nest box trail. Carmel Clay Parks are purchasing new binoculars for birding programs. Last, but not least, Conner Prairie hosted the first Black Birders Week event in Indiana in June and ABAS was very excited to be able to help fund this event.

This year a total of twelve teams participated, including a new team: Second-Cycle Birders. The Noddy Little Gulls were both the species champ and the fundraising champ this year with 149 species and over \$7,755 raised! Bud & Carl's Legacy Team came in second place for both species with 140 species found and fundraising with \$6,505 raised. Carbon Neutral was third for fundraising with \$2,547 raised and the Second-Cyle Birders finished in third for species count at 139 species. Be sure to read the tales of their Big Day events as well as those of our other teams.

A sincere thank you to all of our generous Birdathon donors and our dedicated volunteers

from Chandler Roberts, Birdathon Chair, members of the Birdathon Committee, and the Board of Directors of the Amos Butler Audubon Society. The funding of these wonderful projects would not be possible without your efforts and generosity.

Contributors of \$100 or more:

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Cara & Greg Hasselbeck	Roxanne Pannell	Sara Zeckel
Rebecca Heck		Jason Madden & Julie Zent
		Miles Zevin
		Robina Zink

Volunteers who raised Birdathon donations

\$1,000 or more	\$500 to \$999	\$100 to \$499
Mary Ellen Gadski	Lou Anne Barriger	Mike Bishop
Wendy Kindig	Dave Benson	Jonathan Bontrager
Donna McCarty	Linda Bishop	Kristina Lakins
Chandler Roberts	Jeanette Frazier	Logan Lakins
Janet Tuten	Becky Heck	John Schaub
Laurie Voss	Wes Homoya	Doug Sherow
		Greg Silver
		Patty Steffen
		Marty Williams

Corporate Sponsors:

\$2,000 Wild Birds Unlimited. 4040 East 82nd Street, Indianapolis

\$1,500 CRG RESIDENTIAL 805 City Center Drive, Suite 160, Carmel, IN

Special Contributors:

Janet Tuten, Birdathon Database Coordinator
Mary Ellen Gadski, International Projects Coordinator

1st-Place Fundraising Champs and Species Count Champs: Noddy Little Gulls



Team members (l-r):
Laurie Voss, Jeremiah
Oden, Wendy Kindig,
and Lou Anne Barriger

A Blessed Day Species Total: 149

By Laurie Voss

The air was still, the skies were dark but clear as the Noddy Little Gulls crept into Eagle Creek Park to begin their Birdathon adventure. Shortly after entering, our first bird of the day was a Barred Owl. Since Owls have been difficult for us in the past, we knew this was going to be a great day and it didn't disappoint. The team, consisting of Wendy Kindig, Lou Anne Barriger, Jeremiah Oden, and Laurie Voss, were excited to see what the day would bring.

As the sun rose, the morning chorus began while we drove around the park. We were able to pick up some good birds by car including a Mourning Warbler. After visiting the Ornithology Center for the Merlin, we covered much of the park, Scott Starling Sanctuary, and the Crest on foot. We tallied 26 species of Warblers, our best total yet.

Our next stop was a wet area along busy Northfield Drive in Brownsburg. That was productive for most of our shorebirds who didn't seem bothered by all of the traffic right next to them. From there we headed to Goose Pond but picked up a Wild Turkey on the way.

The afternoon was slow, tallying only one or two birds at each stop, and we were disappointed at not seeing the nine Glossy Ibis where they had been seen the day before. Towards sunset, we stopped at "Double Ditches" where we picked up quite a few birds including Least Bittern, Coot, and Willow Flycatcher. As we were ready to leave, we checked the skies and were excited to see six Glossy Ibis fly right over us. Shortly afterwards, we had four Black-Crowned night Herons do the same. The evening was magical with Chuck-will's Widow, Barn Owl, and Common Nighthawk. We tallied 149 species for the day.

A big thanks goes out to our sponsors for your support and generosity to the Birdathon. Your support encourages and challenges us each year. 🐦

2nd-Place Fundraising Champs: Bud & Carl's Legacy Team



Team members: (l-r): Matthew Krohn, Janet Tuten, Keith Starling, and Fred Wooley. Not pictured Patty Steffen.

A Long Tradition Species Total: 140

by Keith Starling

I lost count of how many years the Bud and Carl's Legacy Team has participated in the Amos Butler Audubon Society Birdathon, but I have never lost the reasons. Our commitment remains strong, driven by our mission to raise funds for the many worthy grants supported by the ABAS, to honor Bud Starling and Carl Weber, who formed the first ABAS team, and to spend a complete day with good friends enjoying the beauty and magic of the birds in Indiana. This year was no different.

This year, we began our journey in the south, experiencing the dawn chorus in Green-Sullivan, and birded our way north through Goose Pond, Stillwater Marsh and Morgan Monroe State Forest, finishing in the Eagle Creek area. The weather was favorable, the birding was good, and the company was exceptional. Our team saw 146 species of birds, but our official count was 140, as we timed out on six species to stay within the 24-hour time limit. It was a wonderful day!

I would like to extend my gratitude to all the team members for their hours of preparation and participation, to all the other ABAS teams, our many donors and all those who give to ensure the success of the Amos Butler Birdathon. 🐦

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the Bud & Carl's Legacy Team has
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3rd-Place Fundraising Champs: Team Carbon Neutral



Team members (l-r): Dave Benson, and Wes Homoya

A Green Birding Extravaganza Species Total: 125

by David Benson

"Day one is dead to me. Forget day one." Using the harshest language, he could muster at just after midnight with already 10 painful miles in the saddle, Wes Homoya realized the folly of our typical plan. As usual we began looking for spring migrants at Starkey Park at 5pm on day one, then we headed to Browning marsh by bike before going after owls at dark. This plan netted us exactly one species that we didn't eventually find day two in Eagle Creek Park on a particularly slow birding day. Migrants were few and far-between, but Wesley and Dave Benson picked them off one at a time, ending with 23 warbler species. A long bike trip to St. Malachy and then a hellish car-scape death-ride through Brownsburg to a floodle yielded seven shorebirds including a flock of 19 Short-billed Dowitchers ending our 24-hour 45-mile green-birding extravaganza with 123 species. Thanks to our donors and to the few polite Brownsburg drivers who weren't trying to kill us! 🐦

*"A long bike trip to St. Malachy and
then a hellish car-scape death-ride
through Brownsburg to a floodle
yielded seven shorebirds..."*



Team members:
(l-r): Randy Patrick,
Alex Tamerius,
Debbie Patrick,
Chandler Roberts,
and David Benson

Team EcoLab Eye-level Warblers Species Total: 77

By David Benson

It's finals week at Marian University and Team EcoLab, consisting of Chandler Roberts, Alex Tamerius, Debbie and Randy Patrick, and David Benson, aced it! After a slow evening before, the early morning birding was fun with Great-horned Owl and Common Nighthawk gracing the pre-dawn skies. Our first warbler song of the day was a happy "bee buzz" of the Blue-winged with Nashville, Tennessee, and Chestnut-sided soon to come. The surprises came at the Tea Garden on upper campus with perfect, eye-level views of Cape May and Yellow-throated Warblers. And, to cap it all off, at the last moment in our 24-hour birding final exam, Debbie Patrick scored some significant bonus points by finding a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, finishing the big day with 77 species! Thanks to our generous donors for supporting the Birdathon and team EcoLab! 🐦

"After a slow evening before, the early morning birding was fun..."



Team members
(l-r): Wes Homoya,
Sheila Lawrence
Barb Homoya, and
Mike, Homoya

Brownsburg Railsitters A New Team Member Species Total: 69

By Wes Homoya

The Homoya family welcomed newcomer and new friend Sheila this year, and her enthusiasm was much appreciated! We also are grateful to our "hype gal" Becky Heck and all the local friends and birders who popped in throughout the

"The migration gods did not smile upon us this day as we ended with only five warblers..."

morning to join us. Our day's highlights included Eastern Screech and Barred Owl (pair), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (a lifer for a couple friends), 6 diurnal raptor species, Philadelphia Vireo, and a beautiful "raspberry lemon sherbet" first-year male Summer Tanager. The migration gods did not smile upon us this day, as we ended with only five warblers, one empid, and one catharus thrush species. Nevertheless, we had a blast as always, for some great causes! Many thanks to all those who donated to or solicited donations for the Birdathon via our team this year. 🐦



Team members (l-r): Elcira Villarreal and Jeanette Frazier

Las Aguilas Arpias Species Total: 52 Grateful for the Opportunity to Support Conservation

Team Las Aguilas Arpias observed 52 species at Eagle Creek Park on a casual afternoon walk and drive on May 3. We are grateful for our continued donors and appreciate that with their support we are able to continue funding fantastic conservation, education, and research opportunities locally and abroad. 🐦



Team members: Mike and Linda Bishop

Team Bishop A Vocal Raptor Species Total: 118

By Michael & Linda Bishop

On May 8, 2024 we began our birding adventure at Eagle Creek Park, where the highlight was a very vocal Merlin in front of the Ornithology Center. We located several warblers, including Connecticut Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler and Kentucky Warbler, but somehow managed to not see a Palm Warbler the entire day. We then travelled toward Goose Pond FWA, picking up several species along the way, including American Kestrel, Wild Turkey and Horned Lark. Goose Pond seemed to have fewer shorebirds and marsh birds than previous years, although we did locate a Virginia Rail. Songbirds were a bit more cooperative as we added Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Henslow's Sparrow and Blue Grosbeak. Northern Bobwhites were calling at the

visitor center as usual. We finished the day with a total of 118 species despite missing quite a few expected species. As a bonus, we were treated to a free car wash in the form of a torrential downpour on the long drive home. Many thanks to our generous sponsors and Amos Butler Audubon Society for their efforts toward bird conservation. 🐦



Team members: Doug Sherow, Paul Brandenburg and Greg Steffen. Brown Booby photo by Paul Brandenburg.

Community Hospital Team An Unexpected Sighting Species Total: 99

By Paul Brandenburg

This year we split our eight hours of birding over two days to allow for the possible availability of one team member following surgery. On May 19th approximately 150 miles were covered by car with two miles on foot. We covered Greg's Yard, Eagle Creek Park, Ravinia Woods in Morgan county, Morgan Monroe State Forest and along the White River in White County. On our second day we concluded our birding in Eagle Creek Park at a variety of locations and wrapping up the day at Rick's Boatyard Cafe. The highlight of our Big Day, however, was adding the Brown Booby at Springmill State Park. We thank all of the donors who supported our team. 🐦



Team members: Logan and Kristina Lakins

BirdQuesters A Good "Mourning" Species Total: 132

By Logan Lakins

For this Birdathon, The BirdQuesters chose to bird for half of our time on our new homestead and the rest of the time at Goose Pond. Goose Pond led to some Glossy Ibises that had been around for a bit, a Black-bellied Plover hiding in the grass and a very late Greater-white Fronted Goose. Oddly enough, we could not find a single Great Egret or Red-tailed Hawk throughout the day. Our home birding led to some birding firsts in our yard. We were treated to good looks at a Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush and a Black-throated Blue Warbler. But the highlight was a very vocal male Mourning Warbler that flew over my head and landed just for Kristina to see. Listening to it sing was more than enough for me. Once again, thank you to all our family and friends who donated towards our Birdathon. 🐦



Team members (l-r): Ben and Maggie Miller, Holly Miller and Wes Homoya

Mud Creek Creepers Carolina Wren Rescue

Species Total: 63

By Wes Homoya

“The hot tub is calling, and I must go...” that’s how the expression goes, right? Hmmm, perhaps not, but that’s what we did again! And yes, the hot tub (and deck, and yard) ARE in the forest, so close enough I reckon!

This year we again gathered for an afternoon, evening, and morning to document all the birds we could see and hear around this special Mud Creek-side haven. One big highlight was when we heard some peeping coming from a drainage pipe that sounded suspiciously like baby birds... Ben grabbed his drill and moments later two little fluffball Carolina Wrens were freed and reunited with their frantic mama. A dozen warblers and a Barred Owl family made the occasion memorable as well. Many thanks to all those who donated to or solicited donations for the Birdathon via our team this year. 🐛

“One big highlight was when we heard some peeping coming from a drainage pipe that sounded suspiciously like baby birds...”



Team members (l-r): Brian Cunningham, John Schaust, Courtney Meyer and Dwayne Wolf

Wild Birds Unlimited Team

Species Total: 61

This year Team WBU consisted of John Schaust, Dwayne Wolf, Courtney Meyer and me (Brian Cunningham). We had 61 species on June 6, 2024. 🐛



Team members (l-r): Nathaniel Wise, Rhiannon Thunnel and Jonathan Bontrager

Second-Cycle Birders A State-wide Big Day:

Species Total: 139

By Jonathan Bontrager

As soon as we heard the dry, insect-like trill of a Worm-eating Warbler deep in the woods of Lincoln State

Park, our countdown began. Setting out from Indy on the afternoon of May 24th, we aimed to traverse the state to maximize our species total in 24 hours.

After securing several southern breeders near Evansville, including Cattle Egret and Mississippi Kite, we then raced against sunset to reach Goose Pond, just in time to find Eurasian Collared-Dove, Bell’s Vireo, Black-necked Stilt, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, and Least Tern, followed by Barn Owl and Chuck-will’s-widow after dark. Driving through the night, we found Eastern Screech-Owls at Celery Bog, then Sora, Whip-poor-will, and Least Bittern at Willow Slough and Kankakee Sands.

We planned to arrive at the Dunes at dawn, but it was a bust for migratory songbirds, with little more than American Redstarts and a single Cerulean Warbler. After a quick stop at Grant Street for shorebirds, including Black-bellied Plover, Dunlin, and Semipalmated Sandpiper, we made a last-minute adjustment and headed back to K-Sands for our final hour, picking up Vesper, Lark, Henslow’s, and Grasshopper, Sparrows, Bobolink, and a surprise Black Tern and Ruddy Duck.

Despite missing peak migration, we managed 139 species in 24 hours. We were thrilled to contribute to bird conservation and had a blast doing it! 🐛

“Setting out from Indy on the afternoon of May 24th, we aimed to traverse the state to maximize our species total in 24 hours.”

Congratulations to all of our 2024 Birdathon teams and a heartfelt thank you to all who sponsored them and the Amos Butler Audubon Society Birdathon

Official 2024 Birdathon Team Species Counts

- 149 **Noddy Little Gulls:** Lou Anne Barriger, Wendy Kindig, Jeremiah Oden, Laurie Voss
- 140 **Bud’s & Carl’s Legacy Team:** Matthew K., Keith Starling, Patty Steffen, Janet Tuten, Marty Williams, Fred Wooley
- 139 **Second Cycle Birders:** Jonathan Bontrager, Nathaniel Wise, Rhiannon Thunnel
- 132 **BirdQuesters:** Logan Lakins, Kristina Lakins
- 125 **Carbon Neutral:** Dave Benson, Wes Homoya
- 118 **Team Bishop:** Mike and Linda Bishop
- 99 **Community Hospital Team:** Paul Brandenburg, Doug Sherow, Greg Steffen
- 77 **EcoLab Team:** David Benson, Deb and Randy Patrick, Chandler Roberts, Alex Tamerius
- 69 **Brownsburg Railsitters:** Barb, Mike, and Wes Homoya, Sheila Lawrence
- 63 **Mud Creek Creepers:** Wes Homoya, Ben and Maggie Miller, Holly Miller
- 61 **Wild Birds Unlimited:** Brian Cunningham, Courtney Meyer, John Schaust, Dwayne Wolf
- 52 **Las Águilas Arpias:** Jeanette Frazier, Elcira Villarreal