

Stockbridge Audubon



Representing Northeast Indiana
46864

P.O. Box 13131, Fort Wayne, Indiana,

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Plan to join us at the “Big Sit” Birding’s Most Sedentary Event

Date: October 9, 2005

Time: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: Nature Center

**Fox Island County Park,
7324 Yohne Rd., Fort Wayne**

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you stayed in one spot and let the birds come to you? If so, then the “Big Sit” is for you!

The “Big Sit” was dreamed up by the New Haven Bird Club in Connecticut as a sort of spoof on the “Big Day” contests where people rush all over a state trying for the most species. For a “Big Sit” the observers sit in a 17-foot diameter circle and record all the birds they see. Of course, it helps if the circle overlooks great habitat, and has lots of creature comforts for the birders, such as restrooms, comfortable seating, etc.

We chose the deck behind the beautiful new Nature Center at Fox Island County Park.

We can sit under the roof overhang, looking across the pond to the edge of the woods. We will have spotting scopes set up, and plenty of field guides and binoculars to share. And it wouldn't be October without cider and donuts.

The “Big Sit” is always the second Sunday in October, and has now gotten to be a national event. Prizes are given, but the best reason to do one is to reach out to beginners. In 2004 we saw 32 species, had many visitors, and got a nice article in the Journal-Gazette.

This year at 2 p.m. Sarah Hendricks, one of the Fox Island environmental educators, will give a presentation on Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers. She also plans to invite members of local environmental organizations to set up displays, and perhaps participate in a panel discussion.

Do plan to join us! Just drop in whenever you can, during park hours of 9 to 5. Bring your family and enjoy the fall colors!

Park admission is \$2 each.



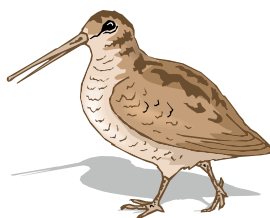
Birding Milestone: Dave Reichlinger’s 500th ABA area bird was a Roseate Tern, seen on the Dry Tortugas, Florida. A Black-Whiskered Vireo was his 500th for the United States.
CONGRATULATIONS, DAVE!



President’s Remarks from Julie Henricks

It’s been many weeks now since the stunning revelation of ivory-billed woodpecker sightings in Arkansas’ Big Woods. Whenever I think of this story, the same word comes to mind: redemption – for the woodpecker, for the die-hard believers in its continued existence, and for the rest of us humans as well. In this case, it appears, we’ve been given a second chance to save a rare creature. This doesn’t happen often enough in nature, but the fact that it *can* happen should inspire all of us. If anyone needed proof that habitat preservation makes a difference, this is it!

We hope that you’ll help us celebrate the ivory-bill, along with the slightly less-electrifying birds of Fox Island County Park, at this year’s combination fall meeting / Big Sit. You can read more about it elsewhere in this newsletter. In the meantime, have an enjoyable end of summer and beginning of fall.



Bird Notes
By Jim Haw
Feb. 2-July 25, 2005

Among winter birds, Huntington County's cooperative Snowy Owl near Markle continued to be seen at least through Feb. 22. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, casual in winter, were recorded at Salamonie River State Forest Feb. 3 (Jim Haw, Marisa Windell) and Lost Bridge West, Salamonie, Feb. 15 (Haw, Frannie Headings). Two Common Redpolls patronized the Fox Island feeders Feb. 5 (Rodger Rang) through 19. Two Field Sparrows at Huntington Reservoir Feb. 24 (Ed & Cynthia Powers et al) were unusual if wintering, very early if spring migrants.

Spring migration began late, and was generally late until May. Numbers of most species were relatively low. The rarities of the spring were a Glossy Ibis found by manager Dave Clary and his staff at Fawn River Fish Hatchery that obligingly delighted many birders Apr. 5-10 and 28-29 and May 2, and a less obliging Black-necked Stilt in Whitley County May 17 (Steve Hossler). Both were modern firsts in northeast Indiana.

A Snow Goose was at Pigeon River Feb. 10 (Haw, Headings) and 19 (Haw, Casey Ryan). Single White-fronted Geese were at Salamonie Feb. 15 (Haw, Headings) and Hogback Lake, Steuben Co. Mar. 15 (Josh Christian, Haw, Sandy Schacht), while 7 White-fronts were at Salamonie Mar. 20 (Paul McAfee). Three Tundra Swans visited Pigeon River Mar. 26 (Haw, Headings), and three Surf Scoters graced Hurshtown Reservoir Apr. 17 (Haw). A Ruddy Turnstone was at the Woodburn sewage ponds May 23 (Jeff McCoy). A White-rumped Sandpiper in Allen Co. May 14-15 (Haw, Rang) was the other shorebird standout of the spring. Woodburn produced the only Black Terns, 2 on May 11 and 3 on May 15 (Haw). Connecticut Warblers were at Mengerson Reserve May 22 (Haw) and Chain O' Lakes State Park May 23 (Rang).

Record early migrants were single Bank and Cliff Swallows at Pigeon River Apr. 12 (Schacht et al), Blue-winged Warbler at Franke Park Apr. 18 (Rang), and Yellow-throated Warbler at Salamonie Apr. 5 (Windell et al). Record late were a Northern Shoveler at Woodburn May 22-29 (Haw, McCoy) and a White-crowned Sparrow at Metea Park May 22 (Haw).

The nesting season brought several outstanding nesting records. A pair of Bald Eagles near Lagro hatched two young, the first eagle nesting in northeast Indiana in many years. Also a modern first, two Osprey nests at Pigeon River hatched two and three young respectively. Hooded Mergansers, rare but increasing as nesting birds, were found with broods at Fox Island, in northern Allen County, at Pokagon (Brad Bumgardner), and at Cedar Swamp, Steuben Co (Haw). Two Loggerhead Shrike nests fledged young in western Lagrange County, good news for a species that is almost extirpated in Indiana. An injured Barn Owl found in Noble County May 4 and taken to a rehabilitator (fide

John Winebrenner), added to sporadic reports of that species in Noble Co. Black-throated Green Warblers, rare but increasing in summer, were in Mengerson Reserve June 12 (Haw), Salamonie River State Forest June 21 and July 14 (Haw, Schacht), and two at Chain O' Lakes June 18 and July 2 (Josh Christian, Haw, Schacht). More unexpected was a Black and White Warbler at Pigeon River July 12 (Haw, Schacht). Fox Island's Summer Tanager returned for a third year May 11 into July but may have been unmated (Haw), while another Summer Tanager was at Chain O' Lakes May 23 (Rang) and a third was in Salamonie River State Forest July 14 (Haw, Schacht). Unexpected in midsummer, a Bonaparte's Gull at Salamonie July 9 (Haw) was the second July record for northeast Indiana. A Black-throated Blue Warbler at McClue Reserve, Steuben Co. June 14 (Bumgardner) was also out of season. A Western Meadowlark in Allen Co. from June 25 through July (Ed & Cynthia Powers) was more expected but still very notable.



Bird of the Century? Ivory-billed Woodpecker

By Cynthia Powers

The recent amazing discovery that at least one ivory-billed woodpecker survives in the dense, old-growth forest in eastern Arkansas made me wonder: could this bird ever have been seen in Indiana? It's possible (barely.)

John James Audubon explored the area in the early 1800's. From his home in Henderson, Kentucky, just across from Evansville, he traveled along the Ohio River. His technique for painting birds involved shooting them, posing them in lifelike poses, sketching them, and then eating them. His account of the ivory-bill even includes detailed drawings of its internal organs!

What, exactly, is an ivory-billed woodpecker? If you have seen the crow-sized pileated woodpecker, you have the general idea. "Pileated" means "with a crest" and the Woody Woodpecker appearance of the pileated applies to ivory-bills as well. But the main difference between them is the extensive white on the lower wings of the ivory-bill, similar to the wing pattern of the much smaller and more common red-headed woodpecker. Ivory-bills are slightly bigger than pileateds, and as you might imagine, their bills are white, not black. Female ivory-bills have all-black crests: the male has the striking red crest. Audubon described their call as "Pait-pait-pait." Others say it sounds like a New Year's party horn, or the sound of blowing through a detached clarinet mouthpiece, or "just imagine the yank-yank of a great big white-breasted nuthatch." They also make a characteristic double knock when drumming.

According to Audubon, the historical range of the ivory-bill extended across the Deep South, up the Mississippi and Ohio as far as the extreme southwest tip of Indiana. They were never common, because they eat large beetle grubs found only in recently-dead trees in old-growth forest. (Their scientific name, *Campephilus*, means "lover of caterpillars.") They feed by stripping the bark off, not by gouging huge deep holes. James Tanner, who studied the last known ivory-bills in 1937-9, estimated that each pair of ivory-bills needs about 6 square miles of deep forest to survive. At that time, he estimated the total population at 22 to 24 birds.

Ivory-bills were last seen, by Tanner, in an old-growth forest in Louisiana known as the "Singer Tract." That's because it was owned by the Singer Sewing Machine Company, which had used the lumber to make sewing

machine cabinets. During World War I much southern timber was used to make ships. Later, during World War II, the Audubon Society tried to save the remaining virgin forest. There was hope of success, because of the shortage of labor during the war. But at the last minute, German POW's were brought in and set to cutting the huge trees of the Singer Tract. Some of the timber was used for the decks of PT boats, other for pallets for shipping ammunition. And now, the famous Singer Tract is only a soybean field!

So, as usual, habitat destruction was the main reason ivory-bills declined. But ornithologists were guilty too. Many birds were shot for collections, just because they were so rare. And the Victorian craze for egg collecting played a role too. Native Americans traded for the spectacular beaks, which they used as decorations. Audubon reported that two or three ivory-bill heads would be sold by river boatmen for 25 cents.

What will happen next to the ivory-bill? Thank goodness the area is already protected as the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge. I think a good way to safely observe them might be to establish a floating blind out on the river, where one might hope to see one fly across the river. After all, we have riverboat casinos, why not riverboat bird blinds? It's important that despite their zeal to add an ivory-bill to their life lists, birders must keep the safety of the birds absolutely paramount. Meanwhile, we can enjoy their smaller cousins, the pileated woodpeckers.



Late news from National Audubon:

After 25 years of fighting, your help is needed AGAIN to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A crucial vote will be taken in Congress IN SEPTEMBER. Now is the time to call/write to Senators Bayh and Lugar, and Congressman Souder.



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