

# Stockbridge Audubon

<http://members.aol.com/StockbridgeAS>

*Representing Northeast Indiana*  
46864

P.O. Box 13131, Fort Wayne, Indiana

## It's Christmas Bird Count Time Again!

Birding activity continues into December with a series of Christmas counts in northeast Indiana. Joining in one or more of these counts is a **perfect break from the hectic holiday** schedule. As always, inexperienced birders are encouraged to participate, as you will be teamed up with "seasoned veterans" to count each and every bird that is seen or heard. Extra observers are always helpful no matter what their level of experience.

**See page 4 to find out how to participate!**

**Board members needed:** our bylaws allow for 11 board members ("directors") and right now we have 10. Some of us have served faithfully for many years and we need some new folks with new ideas. We meet about once a month at the U. of St. Francis in Achatz Hall, the science building. The new term would start in May, but you could start your campaign right away (!) If you're interested call Gary Tieben at 493-7058 or any other board member (see back page.) **Help!**

### President's Remarks

By Julie Henricks

In my Sunday School class, we often report recent "God sightings". These are incidents that less-religious folks might consider mere "coincidences". The other members of the class usually tell about events involving people; it seems that I'm

forever relating things that have a nature theme.

An example occurred a week ago, on a sunny October afternoon when I was at home on vacation. I was working on a window in an outbuilding and was pulling out a bunch of nails.

I put each one in my pocket, except for the very last one, which flipped over my head. I couldn't find it for the life of me, so I continued my task. Later, I searched for it again: still no luck. I really wanted to locate it before I mowed the

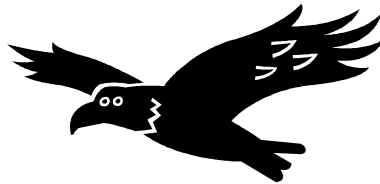
next time, so that I wouldn't risk flattening a tire on the mower. I finished that chore and began another one, but the nail still bugged me. I went back and tried looking for it from a different angle. Just like before, it was impossible to find against the grass and weeds, many of which had stems that were of the same diameter and color as the nail. I figured I would forget about it for today. But then as the sun was setting and I was ready to go in the house, I decided to try one more time. I passed the building, and my breath was taken away by a **northern harrier** flying low over the bean field, only yards away.

It was easily the closest view I've ever had of a harrier in the wild.

I watched the bird until it disappeared from sight, then walked about 15 feet, looked down, and saw the wayward nail. It was hanging with its white-painted head sticking straight up, in a clump of weeds. How could I have missed it before? Well, maybe I wasn't meant to find it until now, because something really cool needed to be seen first.

I love the way birds'

lives intersect with ours; I trust that you do, too. Have a wonderful fall, seeing those cool things in your own yard, down the street, or further afield; and Happy Holidays!



**BIRD NOTES**  
**By Jim Haw**  
**August 1-October 22**

Among late-season nesting birds, an American Bittern flying over South Milford and a Least Bittern at Pigeon River, both on Aug. 5 (Jim Haw, Fran Headings) were notable. Fall migrants, though, dominated the period. There were three very unusual species: A Laughing Gull at the Northwood shopping center, Ft. Wayne, Sept. 5 (Haw, Dave Reichlinger), a Sabine's Gull spotted by Ed Powers and enjoyed by all on the Stockbridge field trip to Salamonie Reservoir Sept. 23, and a "Lawrence's" Warbler at Chain O' Lakes State Park Aug.

29 (Haw).

A Snow Goose at Pigeon River Oct. 3 (Haw) was quite early, but much less so than a Common Loon in Allen Co. Sept. 1 (Powers), northeast Indiana's earliest in fall by 29 days. An immature Little Blue Heron frequented a pond on Griffin Rd., Allen Co. Aug. 2- 17 (Haw et al). The only Bald Eagle report was from Eagle Marsh Oct. 16 (Jim Seely). Eagle Marsh also hosted a Peregrine Falcon Aug. 4 (Haw). Fifteen Broad-winged Hawks over Fox Is. Sept. 14 (Doug Rood, Marisa Windell et al) highlighted the best hawk flight day of the fall. Notable among shorebirds were a Baird's Sandpiper and a White-rumped Sandpiper at Eagle Marsh Sept. 17 (Haw), a Stilt Sandpiper at Eagle Marsh Sept. 14 (Haw, Sandy Schacht, Windell), and two Long-billed Dowitchers Oct. 17 (Haw, Headings, Schacht), growing to 9 on Oct. 20 (John Kendall), at Fawn River Fish Hatchery. Three Caspian Terns were at Salamonie Aug. 24 (Haw, Schacht) and a Forster's Tern stopped at Cedarville Reservoir Aug. 27 (Haw).

There was a good early

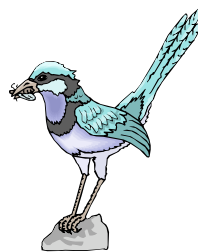
movement of Olive-sided Flycatchers, the earliest one at Chain O' Lakes Aug. 8 (Haw, Headings) setting a new early fall arrival date. Others were at Salamonie Aug. 9 (Haw, Ed Woodruff), two at Pigeon River Aug. 17 (Haw, Headings, Schacht), and one at Pokagon Sept. 3 (Fred Wooley). Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was found at Pigeon River Sept. 2 (Stockbridge field trip) and at Franke Park Sept. 4 (Rood, Windell et al). There were only three reports of Red-breasted Nuthatch, the earliest at Ft. Wayne Sept. 16 (Reichlinger). Two Golden-winged Warblers at Franke Park Aug. 24 (Jerry Brown) began a very good fall for records of this species, with all but one found at Franke. An Orange-crowned Warbler at Franke Park Sept. 15 (Brown) was the earliest fall record by 9 days; peak count of a good fall flight was 3 at Fox Is. Sept. 30 (Stockbridge field trip). Fox Island furnished the only Mourning Warbler reports, one on Aug. 20 and two on Sept. 3 (Haw). A Dickcissel at Salamonie Aug. 9 (Haw, Woodruff) was record late by 4 days.

## **WE'RE INVITED TO POKAGON STATE PARK:**

**By Fred Wooley**

On Friday December 29th, we will have a "Bird Banding Demonstration" from 1pm to 4pm. Chief Naturalist, John Schaut, from Wild Birds Unlimited, will be banding birds throughout the afternoon, as they are caught in nets at the Nature Center. Participants can come at anytime to observe. The demonstration is free, but there will be the normal park entry fee of \$5.00 for in-state vehicles and \$7.00 for out-of-state vehicles. Or, people may use their annual pass.

## **Bird of the Month: Blue Jay** **By Warren Mead**



I think it is safe to say that no other backyard bird has been called more names than the Blue Jay. How about: bully, mean, bossy, obnoxious, nest-robber, corn thief, pushy, cannibalistic, noisy, nasty and rascal: or handsome, alert, protective, beautiful and striking.

The striking blue coloring of this bird is not a result of feather pigment. Rather, the structural elements of the feathers cause

them to reflect the blue wavelengths of the light spectrum, making the feathers appear blue. The feathers themselves are actually brown to almost black in "true" color.

Another notable feature of the Blue Jay is its crested head. In fact, the scientific name of the Blue Jay, *Cyanocitta cristata*, means "blue jay, crested."

With a length of about 11 inches and a wingspan of 16 inches, the Blue Jay is easily one of the largest birds to regularly visit our yards and feeders. Males and females look alike throughout the entire year. Sometimes when molting, they will lose the feathers on their heads and take on a very weird, almost sickly appearance. This doesn't last long, however.

Originally a forest dweller, Blue Jays have adapted to nearly all habitats in our area, including city parks and suburban yards. About 70-75% of their diet is seeds, so it is easy to attract them to feeders. But their absolute favorite food is peanuts in the shell, with peanut pieces, sunflower seeds and suet all in second place.

Blue Jays form monogamous pairs in spring and are solitary nesters, liking to nest

in conifers. In our area they usually raise one brood a year of 4-6 young. The female does most of the incubation, but both parents feed the young.



**Fort Wayne Christmas Bird Count**  
**When: Saturday, December 16, 2006**

The Fort Wayne count is held in a 15 mile diameter circle in northern Allen and southern DeKalb counties. Participants divide into groups of two or four, each with an experienced birder, to count all birds identified by sight or call in a designated section of the circle. Groups drive county roads slowly and walk on public lands or where landowners permit.

**All-day and morning participants meet inside Hall's Restaurant, corner of Coliseum and Lima Road, by 6:45 AM.** Come early to have breakfast with the birders and plan out the day's strategy. The groups typically depart for their routes by 7:00 AM hoping to find owls at daybreak. **Afternoon-only participants will meet their party at lunch (11-12) at a place decided by the party leader.**

**If you plan on attending, please call the compiler, Jim Haw, at 485-7802, or [jhawillet@aol.com](mailto:jhawillet@aol.com), by December 13, to make your reservation.**

Be sure to dress for the weather, including waterproof (and warm) boots for either wet or snowy conditions. It's a good idea to pack a sack lunch, thermos, and snacks for the day; and don't forget your birding gear. There is a \$5.00 participation fee which goes to the National Audubon Society to help defray the cost of publishing the data from the nationwide counts. Stockbridge Audubon will pay half of the fee of each member participating in the Fort Wayne count.

Feeder watchers who live within the count circle may add their counts to the total. There is no fee for feeder watchers. Just call Jim Haw to make sure if your yard is within the count circle.

A chili supper follows the count at 6:15 PM at Franke Park Day Camp (Psi Ote Lodge). All participants are invited to eat, share the day's experiences, and join in the time-honored ritual of compiling the day's list. **(Hint: when you come in the door, don't reveal your rare sightings until the very last minute!)**

Blue Jays will raucously mob hawks, owls, and cats, helping protect other birds in the area (see, they're not so bad!) They also are credited with planting oak forests, by burying acorns. I

had a peanut bush in my yard once, which I attributed to the agricultural antics of a Blue Jay!



**Pigeon River Christmas Bird Count**  
**When: Sunday, December 17, 2006**

Participants in the Pigeon River count will meet inside Hall's Restaurant, corner of Coliseum Blvd. and Lima Rd., by 6:45 AM. Come early to enjoy a warm breakfast with good company. **If you plan on attending, please notify Gary Tieben at 493-7058, by December 15.** There is a \$5.00 participation fee which goes to the National Audubon Society to help defray the cost of publishing the data from the nationwide counts. Wear warm clothing and boots for wet or snowy conditions. Bring a sack lunch, thermos, and snacks, along with your birding gear. Because the hunting season will be in progress, you need to wear an article of clothing of hunter orange.



**Pokagon Christmas Bird Count**  
**When: Thursday December 28, 2006**

Participants for the Pokagon count will meet at the Pokagon State Park Nature Center by 7:45 AM. **If you plan on attending, please notify the Park Nature Center during business hours at 260-833-2012.** Please register by Dec. 25th. Remember to bring warm clothes and boots for wet, snowy conditions, and of course, your lunch, drinks and snacks. Usually we meet back at the Nature Center at noon to eat and warm up. There is a \$5.00 participation fee, as in the other counts, and you will need to pay the park entrance fee or use your annual pass.

This from IN-bird: whooping cranes have been spotted in the sandhill flocks this fall at both Jasper-Pulaski and at Muscatatuck! And sure enough, some *Selasphorus* hummingbirds have shown up in Indiana (see last issue.)

This would be a fun project for a snowy weekend, especially if you have internet-savvy children who can enter the data online. All you have to do is count for at least 15 minutes a day.

You can count on your own property, or go to a park or Grandma's house. Audubon is one of the sponsors.

## 10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count



### Count for the Birds in America's Great Backyard: February 16-19, 2007

- No Fee or registration required
- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Track results in real time online
- Count in your backyard, balcony, schoolyard, park, wildlife refuge
- Be a part of the network

Join with thousand of others to find out how many birds are being seen in your area and across the continent this winter. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, you help document where birds are, and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds this winter.

For more information, and to view results, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

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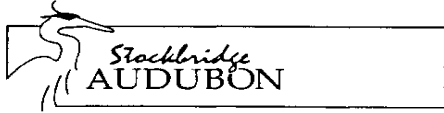
### Mark your calendar for our Spring Meeting:

**April 22, 2007 at Fox Island, 2 p.m.**

### **"From the Black Oystercatcher to Black Gold: Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska"**

**By Taldi Walter, Alaska Field Coordinator for National Audubon**

**She will discuss issues facing the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Tongass National Forest, Chugach National Forest, and the National Petroleum Reserve.**



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**Inside this issue:**  
Christmas Bird Count Instructions  
Jim Haw's Bird Notes  
Bird of the Month: Blue Jay  
**And lots of other neat stuff**

We welcome **new** members using the form below. To speed your service and save us postage, mail **renewals** directly to National Audubon, using the form that they provide. Any questions relating to membership? Ed Powers, Membership Chair, will be glad to help!

HO-9 National Audubon Society/Stockbridge Audubon Chapter Membership Application HO-9  
I want to join Audubon! Enclosed is my check payable to the National Audubon Society.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES  
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