

# Stockbridge Audubon

<http://stockbridge.koolhost.com/>

*Representing Northeast Indiana*  
46864

P.O. Box 13131, Fort Wayne, Indiana

## Peterson's Story

A work of fiction (well, sort of!) by our own young birder and home-schooled high school student, **Ryan Smith**

It was midnight, May 19, 1984. The first World Series of Birding, held in Cape May, New Jersey, had just come to a close. Pete Dunne, David Sibley, Pete Bacinski, Bill Boyle, and Roger Tory Peterson, teammates on the Guerrilla Birding team, were the last ones to drag themselves through the door, or finish line, after twenty-four hours of frantic birding. A short while later, The Guerrilla team was announced the winner with an impressive list of 201 species. Peterson, at age seventy-six, a good forty years older than his teammates, went up to receive the sparkling medals. After a short speech by Peterson, the team finally sat down to eat and rest. The room was filled with silence as all the participants ate their chili supper, letting it

warm their cold and tired bodies. After the victorious team had eaten their fill, they made themselves comfortable and began recounting the day's events.

Sibley, the youngest member of the team, began the conversation: "That was one heck of a day we had. I'm beat."

"You're beat," Roger declared, "I'm three times your age; I should be the one who is beat!"

"Today was a day to tire anybody out. We've been birding nonstop ever since midnight yesterday, and this is the first time we've had to relax since," Sibley replied.

Boyle chimed in, "We didn't even stop for food; we scarfed down both breakfast and lunch on the road."

"It was a hard day," Bacinski agreed, "but a satisfactory one. We hit all the needed spots early. We were right on schedule until we got

to the hawk watch. I think we spent too much time there - we should've left there sooner and hit the beach half an hour earlier."

Dunne, who loves the hawk watch, interjected, "Too long at the hawk watch! No, we needed all the time there we could get. If we had left sooner, we would've missed Harrier, Greater Yellowlegs, and Pintail."

"I guess you are right. We failed to find those birds everywhere else. I can't complain," Pete Bacinski remarked. "Everything worked out in the end. If we had stayed as long as I wanted, we would've missed the best bird of the day: the Fork-Tailed Flycatcher that flew across the road just as we were zipping by."

Pete Dunne, the driver of the team, remarked, "When Roger shouted 'Fork-Tailed Flycatcher!' I hit the brakes so hard we skidded twenty feet before jolting to a stop. I'm

surprised it didn't scare the phenomenal bird away. How'd you spot the thing anyway, 'Eagle Eye' or should I say, Flycatcher Eye'?"

"Just happened to glance in the right direction at the right time I guess. It wasn't much." Roger said humbly.

As the group continued to talk, time slipped by with little notice from the team, and the conversation drifted from the excitement they had shared that day, to how each of them reached the point they were at now: What got them hooked on birds. Bill asked, "Peterson, what got you going with birds? If it weren't for you, we might not even have a field guide then we wouldn't be here right now after doing the first ever World Series of Birding, which I believe to be the first of many. What got you started?"

"Well it's an interesting story," the author of the first field guide slowly replied.

Dunne interjected, "Something just occurred to me, in all the years I've known you, I've never heard this story."

"It must have slipped my old mind," Roger explained. After a pause, he remarked, "It's getting pretty late, I don't know if I have time to tell it."

"You've got time," Bacinski quickly intoned. The others were quick to agree.

Roger Peterson got up to get another cup of coffee, black as always. He turned toward the table where his friends were anxiously waiting, but couldn't help himself: he turned away and ambled to the open door listening for the elusive Barred Owl they'd missed on their adventures that day. Nothing. Silence. He pulled himself away, and upon reaching the table, he plopped down heavily, took a sip of his coffee, and launched into his story.

"I grew up in Jamestown, New York. Every spare minute I could find I spent in the woods around my house. I didn't really notice the birds then, my walks were focused on all other nature - but not birds. Every day after school, I'd head out into the forest in search of captivating creatures. I wasn't into anything with feathers at that time. If something big flew in front of me, I'd look, for a brief moment. But sadly, that's about all. Think of how much I could have learned if I had started then."

"What kind of creatures were you hunting for if not birds?" inquired David.

"Oh most anything, I liked insects..."

Kenn Kaufman, who'd been listening from another table interrupted: "Insects are amazing things; I study them in my spare time. I may even follow your lead and compose a field guide, on insects, not

birds."

Dunne declared, "Ha, you doing an insect field guide, that'll be the day!"

"As I was saying," Peterson interjected loudly, "On those walks I'd study insects, mammals, and anything else I encountered along the way, but not birds. I never have figured out why I wasn't drawn to birds right away. One day, just after my eleventh birthday, if I remember correctly, I had a rotten day at school. When I got home, I dumped my books and homework at the house and went immediately into the woods. The woods were kind of a "getaway" for me. After I was in the woods for awhile, I forgot about my abysmal day, because I was seeing many neat things. Before I knew it, an hour had passed. My mother didn't like me to be gone for more than that, so I turned around and started back. I was whistling to myself because I'd found some bugs I couldn't find in my tattered book, and that always excited me. I also caught a glimpse of a red fox. I'd only seen one of them before this. It had been an excellent day. It was then that I saw it - the catalyst of my birding career. A bird hunched on the side of a large oak tree, not four feet up. Looking back now I can tell you it was a Northern Flicker, but then all I knew was that it was a woodpecker." Peterson paused and looked up from his cup

he'd been staring fixedly into, and realized that everyone in the room had stopped talking and was listening intently to him.

"Go on," someone urged from the corner of the room.

"All right," Roger agreed with a yawn. "The woodpecker appeared to be dead. I approached it slowly and cautiously. I advanced to within a couple feet, now sure it was dead. That bird was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen, to this day in fact. I stood admiring the thing, almost hypnotized by it. I inched closer, closer. I began slowly reaching out my slightly shaking hand. Lightly, ever so lightly I stroked its silky back. Upon my touch, the Flicker exploded in flashes of yellow and black. As it flew away its wingtip brushed my face, breaking the spell. I leaped back and sprinted all the way home, partly from fright, partly from excitement. That one moment with the Yellowhammer sparked my passion for birds that has lasted a lifetime."

Bill broke the silence that followed Peterson's story. "So in other words we all have that one Flicker to thank for the modern birding we know today?"

"You could say that. After that day, I never gazed upon the world in the same way. My nature walks through the woods

became bird hikes. And as they say, the rest is history."

Kaufman, who'd been listening to Roger's story along with the twelve other teams that had competed, inquired, "Do you have any more captivating stories, Roger?"

"In my lifetime I've accumulated many stories, but sleep has been postponed long enough. It's nearing two o'clock. I'm headed off to bed. Good night everyone, it's been a wonderful day."

"Night, Roger," the group chorused.

After Roger Tory Peterson, the father of modern birding, left, everyone else said their goodbyes and trickled out the door into the inky stillness of the night, which was broken only by the distant hooting of a Barred Owl. **Thus ended Peterson's tale of his beginning and the first ever World Series of Birding.**

## **Presidential Words for February by Gary Tieben**

When will spring arrive? We've had a severe winter by Midwestern standards. As I write this, the snow in my yard is well over six inches deep. I find it difficult to recall when the ground was not covered with snow.

This winter has had

some benefits for bird people. If you have kept your feeders full, you have probably had flocks of birds. I know that we have had more birds than in a typical winter. In addition to our regular feeder visitors, we have had Redpolls and Pine Siskins. These were firsts at our feeder. White-winged Crossbills are not every winter visitors, but they have recently been seen in many places. Perhaps we will see Evening Grosbeaks as winter continues.

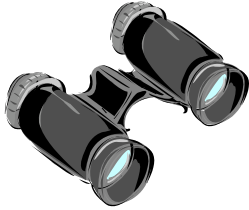
Thankfully, there are some signs of spring. Our first seed catalog recently arrived over two weeks ago. The days are getting perceptibly longer. Some people report seeing a few spring birds such as Robins, Killdeers, and others. These birds are probably holdovers from last year, but they are spring birds and they are here. Most of the reports are from south of Fort Wayne, but it won't be too long until we will be seeing spring birds here in the Fort.

I encourage you to look for winter birds both at your feeder and in nearby birding spots. I also invite you to go along with other Stockbridge Audubon members on the spring field trips. All field trip regulars are ready to welcome you to the fieldtrips, regardless of your birding skills.

Remember to enjoy the present as you are awaiting a well deserved spring.

See you afield,

Gary Tieben  
President, Stockbridge  
Audubon Society



## BIRD NOTES

By Jim Haw

October 20, 2008-January 20,  
2009

The later stages of fall migration produced only a very few of the more unusual waterfowl. Two Snow Geese were at Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Area Oct. 21 (Jim Haw, Marisa Windell), one Greater White-fronted Goose was at the same location Nov. 29 (Haw, Sandy Schacht), and two Cackling Geese were at Salamonie Reservoir Dec. 7 (Jeff McCoy). Two Surf Scoters at Lake Gage, Steuben Co., Dec. 11 (Haw, Schacht) were still there the next day (Terri Gorney, Dave Reichlinger).

Probably an all-time high count of Bald Eagles at Huntington Reservoir was six on Dec. 29 (Jeff Reed, fide Lynnanne

Fager). A Golden Eagle visited Salamonie Res. Dec. 27 (McCoy). Sandhill Cranes migrated in numbers during the first part of December, with a high count of some 960 over Allen Co. Dec. 7 (McCoy). Two late Least Sandpipers were at Fawn River Fish Hatchery, Orland, Oct. 30 (Haw, Doug Rood). Notable among gulls was a Lesser Black-backed Gull at Salamonie Res. Nov. 17 (McCoy). Rusty Blackbirds were few: three at Pigeon River Oct. 21 (Haw, Windell), 8 there Oct. 25 (Haw, Schacht), and 25 at Huntington Res. Nov. 11 (Haw, Schacht, Ryan Smith).

Part of an irruption of Snowy Owls, one Snowy appeared in southeastern Allen Co. Nov. 9 (Cindy Grotrian, Jim Seely). After an absence of some two weeks, it reappeared in the same area around Thanksgiving and remained until Dec. 16, when it was found dead after being hit by a car. Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread in modest numbers, with a notable peak count of 11 in Steuben Co. Dec. 29 (Haw, Schacht, Dan Klopfenstein). Purple Finches were also widespread in small numbers, including a high count of 13 at Chain O' Lakes Jan. 16 (McCoy, John Cassidy). Pine Siskins were widely scattered, but occasionally in greater numbers, peaking at 23 in Ft. Wayne's Lindenwood Cemetery Dec. 7 (McCoy). A Common Redpoll visited the

Pokagon State Park feeders Jan. 16 (Sam Plew), and two were at the Fox Island feeders Jan. 20 (Haw, Schacht, Carole & Ryan Smith).

**The highlight of the winter, though, was an unprecedented invasion of White-winged Crossbills. Six were found at Pine Canyon Lake in Steuben Co. Nov. 29 (Haw, Schacht), and up to 20 were found at that location at least through Dec. 29. One White-winged Crossbill was found in Lindenwood Cemetery, Ft. Wayne, Dec. 10 (McCoy), seven were there Jan. 1 (Haw), and increasing to 100 or more at Lindenwood Jan. 17-18 (Casey Ryan et al). One was at Pigeon River Jan. 16 (Sam Plew), and small numbers began to show up at several other locations by Jan. 18. Jeff McCoy, however, found the mother lode: 230 White-winged Crossbills at Chain O' Lakes State Park Jan. 15, increasing to 280 Jan. 18 (Don and Terri Gorney), the largest flock ever recorded in Indiana. One or more Red Crossbills were found in this flock Jan. 17 (Dave Reichlinger et al).**

## 2008 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Species	FW	PIK	PR	Species	FW	PIK	PR
Canada Goose	987	1551	997	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	2	2
Mute Swan		226	81	Eastern Bluebird	43	35	94
Trumpeter Swan		2		Hermit Thrush		1	
Wood Duck		2		American Robin	5	1	2
American Wigeon	6			Northern Mockingbird	1		
Am Black Duck	2			European Starling	2446	1640	583
Mallard	370	86	27	Cedar Waxwing	6	2	310
Northern Pintail	1	7	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler		3	
Ring-necked Duck		6		Amer. Tree Sparrow	126	123	192
Greater Scaup		3		Song Sparrow	11	18	28
Lesser Scaup		4		Swamp Sparrow	2	8	
Bufflehead		11		White-throated Sparrow	2		
Common Goldeneye		55	43	White-crowned Sparrow	2		
Common Merganser			1	Dark-eyed Junco	151	97	201
Ruddy Duck		1		Lapland Longspur		5	
Ring-necked Pheasant	4	6	2	Snow Bunting		11	
Wild Turkey	82	48	20	Northern Cardinal	106	56	42
Pied-billed Grebe		1		Brown-headed Cowbird	1		
Great Blue Heron	6	3		Purple Finch	2	8	3
Turkey Vulture	23	3	5	House Finch	123	109	45
Bald Eagle	1	2	3	<b>White-winged Crossbill</b>		7	
Northern Harrier	2	2		<b>Pine Siskin</b>	9	30	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	2		American Goldfinch	185	154	55
Cooper's Hawk	9	4	2	House Sparrow	652	391	172
Red-shouldered Hawk	cw*	1		<b>Total species</b>	54	67	46
Red-tailed Hawk	32	40	52	<b>Total individuals</b>	6305	5791	3758
Rough-legged Hawk	1	3	3	*(cw means seen during Count Week)			
American Kestrel	21	9	18	<b>Fort Wayne Participants:</b> Josh Christian, Sr. Mary Joan			
American Coot	cw	6	1	Ginsterblum, Terri Gorney, Jim Haw (compiler), Cynthia Powers,			
Ring-billed Gull	2			Ed Powers, Rodger Rang, Doug Rood, Casey Ryan, Don Ryan,			
Rock Pigeon	61	112	152	Martha Ryan, Sandy Schacht, Carole Smith, Ryan Smith, Sr.			
Mourning Dove	134	146	44	Angeline Walczyk, Ann Walton, Bob Walton, Galen Yordy.			
Eastern Screech-Owl	3	1		<b>Pokagon Participants:</b> Feeder Counters: Terri Gorney at the			
Great Horned Owl	cw*	2		Pokagon Nature Center, and Brad Stevens. Field Counters:			
Barred Owl			1	Graham Rowe-Bultinck, Brad Bumgardner, Josh Christian, Jim			
Belted Kingfisher	4	2	3	Haw, Ted Heemstra, Dan Klopfenstein, Carole Koos, Lance			
Red-headed Woodpecker	2	3	6	Lothamer, Jacob Lothamer, Diana Lutz, Paul McAfee, Jeff			
Red-bellied Woodpecker	41	28	30	McCoy, Holly Meyers, Kip Miller, Cynthia and Ed Powers, Sandy			
Downy Woodpecker	36	38	21	Schacht, John Schaust, Fred Wooley (compiler), and Darci			
Hairy Woodpecker	10	7	7	Zolman.			
Northern Flicker	18	37	22	<b>Pigeon River Participants:</b> Louis Harber, Chad Harber, Jim Haw,			
Pileated Woodpecker	5	2	1	Ted Heemstra, Dick and Peter Hurley, Cynthia and Ed Powers,			
Northern Shrike		1		Sandy Schacht, Lisa Silvey, Ryan Smith, John Winebrenner, Gary			
Blue Jay	117	114	86	Tieben, compiler.			
American Crow	197	169	287				
Horned Lark	10	134	12				
Blk-capped Chickadee	90	62	40				
Tufted Titmouse	40	40	19				
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	15	1				
Wht-breasted Nuthatch	49	77	39				
Brown Creeper	4	10	3				
Carolina Wren	7	6					

FW means Fort Wayne; POK means Pokagon; PR means Pigeon River. This was the 108<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count of the National Audubon Society. Each count area covers a 15-mile diameter circle and attempts to record every bird seen. Results are of interest to scientists in tracking bird populations and establishing ranges, and participation is a great way to interest people in birds.

**The Birding Journals of Maurice McClue**  
**By Terri Gorney**

Did you ever wonder what bird watching was like 50 or 100 years ago? Maurice McClue gives us a glimpse into that world. He kept a detailed nature journal from 1919 to 1957 that it mostly dedicated to observations of birds. This journal has been transcribed and is now in a book.

In many instances he refers to life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c and the early 20<sup>th</sup> c in Steuben County. Most of Maurice's bird watching was at his home in Angola or his farm (the future Charles McClue Nature Reserve) five miles north of Angola. In the 1920s, he speaks of using opera glasses and in the 1940s he has field glasses. It is hard to imagine a world before binoculars and field guides.

In February of 1929, Maurice writes about the first "English Starlings" to reach Angola. He was sorry to see their arrival. He thought it was "a curse to our native birds."

On 26 June 1932 he writes "I saw a scarlet tanager in the woods today where I saw one last year and the year before about the same time." In 2008, scarlet tanagers are still in "McClue's Woods."

In 1950, Maurice did some reflecting about the past. "In my lifetime, or since I have been old enough to observe birds and other wild life a large number of kinds of birds have entirely disappeared, and others are nearly gone. Some of these were of the larger kinds: Swans are no longer seen on our lakes though they were here every spring and fall when I was a boy; likewise the sandhill crane is and has been gone for many years. I saw them every summer up to the year 1900. The last one I ever saw was in 1920. The wild turkeys must have been killed off or left about 1885."

I am happy that he was incorrect on predictions of some bird species disappearing in his lifetime. Mr. McClue would be pleased to know that the bald eagle, osprey and the sandhill cranes are making a comeback in Steuben County.

Maurice left eighty acres of the family farm for a nature preserve. He asked that it be named for his father Charles McClue. The preserve is known as the Charles McClue Nature Reserve. The preserve is dedicated to the education of school children about conservation and the appreciation of the natural world. Maurice not only left the gift of the land but the gift of his written word in the journal. The journal has now been transcribed into a book that is being sold to benefit the preserve. You can contact Terri Gorney at [bandtgorney@aol.com](mailto:bandtgorney@aol.com) or Fred Wooley at [FWooley@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:FWooley@dnr.IN.gov) for more information.

<p>SAVE THE DATE: STOCKBRIDGE ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 19, SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 2 P.M. AT ACHATZ HALL, U of ST. FRANCIS. Terri's brother, Don Gorney, will speak about WARBLERS.</p>
---