

Nature News & Notes

### Volunteers Needed

### No events Scheduled.

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## Save the Date!

### Northern Saw-whet Owls: Indiana's Role in Current Research Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 6:30pm via Zoom Meeting Link: bit.ly/WVAS-Saw-Whets

Once considered non-migratory, the Northern Sawwhet Owl is now colloquially referred to as Indiana's smallest owl as banding efforts began to reveal the migratory behavior of the species and its use of habitat across Indiana in the fall and winter. Join us on Zoom as Helen Nesius and Tabitha Olsen of Purdue University discuss the current understanding of saw-whet owl natural history and the on-going research and banding effort taking place here in Indiana!



Spring/Summer 2021

### Global Big Day Bird Count Saturday, May 8th, 2021 All day!

Join us in an all day bird count that includes birders from all over the world. Contact Peter Scott at peter.scott@indstate.edu to participate.



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### **Upcoming Events**

**April Member Meeting** 

Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6:30pm Northern Saw-Whet Owl presentation. See page 1 for more details.

The Cornell Lab 🍸 🗹

GLOBAL **BIG** DAY

Northern Saw-Whet Owl at Yellowwood State Forest by Marty Jones

**Bird Count** 

### Global Big Day Bird Count Saturday, May 8th, 2021 All Day

Join us in an all day bird count that includes birders from all over the world. Contact Peter Scott at peter.scott@indstate.edu to participate.

May Member Meeting

### Annual Spring Picnic at Dobbs Park Wednesday, May 19th, 2021 at 6:30pm

Join us in the Amphitheater for our Annual Spring Picnic. This will not be a carry-in to share food. We ask that you bring your own food, drink and table service. Social distancing will be observed and masks are recommended.

For more information or to let us know you are coming call 812-877-1095.



**Annual Meeting/Banquet** 

### Annual Meeting and Banquet at Mogger's Wednesday, August 18th, 2021 at 6pm



Join us at Mogger's Restaurant and Pub on the patio at 6pm for social hour with dinner starting at 7pm. Dan Bradley of riverSCAPE will tell us about their projects and the collaboration between riverSCAPE and WVAS in producing a local birding guide. Look for more information in future emails.

### **Completed Events**

Date	Title	Presenter
September 16, 2020	Annual Fall Picnic at Dobbs Park	
September 19, 2020	14th Annual Indiana Bat Festival Cancelled	
October 10, 2020	2nd Annual Terre Haute Bird Festival Cancelled	
October 21, 2020	Avian Conservation, Diet, and Genomics	Nick Gabry
November 18, 2020	Hoosiers for Whoopers: How YOU can help Whooping Cranes in Indiana via Zoom	Sophie Wolbert
November 21, 2020	Birding with WVAS—Cancelled	
December 5, 2020	Birding with WVAS—Cancelled	
December 16, 2020	Member Photo Night via Zoom	
December 20, 2020	Christmas Bird Count	
January 20, 2021	The Rise and Fall of the Ruffed Grouse in Indiana via Zoom	Perry Seitzinger
February 17, 2021	Finches and Owls and Nuthatches (Oh My!): Winter Irruptives in Indiana via Zoom	Barny Dunning
March17, 2021	Birding the Indiana Dunes Longshore Fight via Zoom	Brad Bumgardner



Left—Eastern Phoebe at Dobbs Park by Carissa Lovett

Right—White-Throated Sparrow by Mike Lunsford



### Terre Haute's **6** st Christmas Bird Count, Dec 20, 2020

By: **Peter Scott** (peter.scott@indstate.edu)

This year's count was held during the Covid-19 "novel coronavirus" world pandemic, ongoing since March. Let's hope this becomes a historical curiosity for future readers, not a recurring event. It did not affect us much on count day, except by limiting field party-sizes to family members and cutting out social gatherings at lunch and dinner. We had a countdown using the Zoom video conference app.

**Count total**: We had **81** species on the count – the same as last year, and right at our recent average of **81.6** species for the last 10 years. I hasten to add that our average is high for our location and birder numbers, and reaching it takes hard work each year. So, good job!

No new species were added to the all-time count-day list of 145, BUT an **Orange-crowned Warbler** busy at Dobbs Park feeders on Dec. 17-18 was a new count-week bird. Sadly for our count's glory, this procrastinator evidently moved south to winter warbler-land, leaving Carissa Lovett's mealworm treats behind. All species seen on count day were ones that have been recorded in the last 10 years (**Table 1**), during which time 114 species have been found. The rarest were **Black Vulture, Common Merganser, Eastern Phoebe,** and **Brown Thrasher**, each with either 2 records (the vulture) or 3 in the past 10 years.

# years seen	# species in category	Species names
	• •	
10	57	(too many to list)
9	6	Greater White-fronted Goose, Wild Turkey, Pied-billed Grebe,
		Eurasian Collared-Dove, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing
8	3	Northern Shoveler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch
7	4	Snow Goose, Rough-legged Hawk, Winter Wren, Eastern
		Meadowlark
6	4	Common Goldeneye, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskin,
		Savannah Sparrow
5	3	Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Short-eared Owl
3	3	Common Merganser, Eastern Phoebe, Brown Thrasher
2	1	Black Vulture
Total	81	

Table I. Species seen in 2020 and their frequency in last 10 years (including 2020).

Although we saw most of the "regular species" (Table I), we missed four that we have found more often than not (Table 2): Eastern Screech-Owl, Peregrine Falcon, Common Grackle, and Killdeer.

# years seen	# species in category	Species	
9	1	Eastern Screech-Owl	
8	2	Peregrine Falcon, Common Grackle	
6	1	Killdeer	
4	3	Lapland Longspur, Chipping Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird	
			(Continued on page 5)

Table 2. Species seen in at least 4 of the last 10 years that were missed in 2020 (7species).

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**High counts:** We established all-time high counts for six species, perhaps aided by a higher than usual number of party-hours (112): Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and Rubycrowned Kinglet.

**Participants:** Thirty-three birders participated, operating in 17 field parties that were active for at least 1 hour (the average being 6.5 hours of daytime birding). Two observers watched a yard feeder. New participants included Brian Payne and family, John Sheldon, Mona and Rob Sternfeld. Eighteen participants are veterans of at least 5 Terre Haute counts; ten have done 17 or more, led by Mary Beth Eberwein (36 counts).



Greater White-fronted Geese at fenced lake on Carlisle x Dallas Roads (Michael Brown)

Weather: Temperatures ranged from 35 to 43 F. It was cloudy early and clear from midday on. Winds were light in the morning, reaching 14 mph in the afternoon. There was no snow cover or precipitation, and rivers and lakes were unfrozen. In short, conditions were pleasant for winter.

**Waterfowl:** The usual three goose species – Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Canada – were present in unremarkable numbers. No swans were found within the circle, though the lakes of nearby Universal mine are full of Trumpeters and Tundras.

We had 9 duck species: in descending order of abundance, they were Mallard (263), Gadwall (87), Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked, Hooded Merganser (12), American Black, Ruddy (2), Common Goldeneye (1), and Common Merganser (1). The best sites were Hulman Street reservoir (with Black Duck and divers) and J.I. Case Wetland by Hawthorn Park (Gadwall, Shoveler). The juvenile Common Merganser in female plumage was the best duck rarity, found by Marty Common Merganser (Marty Jones)



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find.

(Continued from page 5) Jones on Otter Creek at Forest Park, just above Mill Dam.

Gallinaceous birds: Our count of Wild Turkeys (133) was an all-time high, though we have broken 100 several times. There were 3 big flocks of 35-47 birds.

Grebe, Heron: Eight Pied-billed Grebes lingered, half of them at Hulman Lake. Great Blue Herons (25) were fairly common.

Vulture, Hawks and Eagle: The count of Turkey Vultures (123) was the second highest ever, following last year's record of 159. The biggest group was 45 west of St. Mary's, by Nicole Castaneda and Meredith Hoggatt. Two Black **Vultures** were our second CBC record for the species, still irregular in the county. The **Bald Eagle** count of 16 was an all-time high, with 1 to 3 birds seen by 7 parties.

Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks were equally common (42 each). Two **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen in the northern part of the circle, a species often missed. Northern Harrier (7), Cooper's Hawk (9), and Sharpshinned Hawk (I) rounded out the list, the last of these being a late afternoon 2 Black and 1 Turkey Vulture

(Steve Lima)

Coot, Shorebirds, Gull: Three American Coots hung on at I Case wetland. We found no Killdeer or Snipe. **Ring-billed Gulls** made appearances along the Wabash River (flocks of 30 and 40), but did not repeat their remarkable abundance of last year at Hulman Street Reservoir.

Pigeons and Doves: 40 Eurasian Collared-Doves were counted on the railroad tracks at Graham Grain, enjoying spilled corn. Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves were common.



**Owls:** Steve Lima and Ben Cvengros each had a **Great Horned Owl**. Steve had a **Short-eared Owl** in one of the grassy units of Wabashiki FWA along Darwin Road, a species seen in only 5 of the last 10 years. We had nine **Barred Owls**, including one that flew into the open at 9:30 am to pose for Peter along Springhill Avenue. A major disappointment was missing **Eastern Screech-Owl**, despite 3 hours' effort at previously dependable sites. For some mysterious reason, Screech has become hard to get, though we've had it on 24 of 26 counts since 1996 and counted 10 as recently as 2014. More field work is needed. The behavior of smaller land birds indicates that they still consider it a threat. On the Wabashiki levee trail, Tufted Titmice hearing the recording in late morning flew to suspicious tree cavities to inspect.

Woodpeckers: We found the usual 7 species, including 10 Yellowbellied Sapsuckers. We had 47 Red-headed Woodpeckers, the most since 2003; Marty had II in Forest Park on Otter Creek, and the Bakkens had the same total. 33 Pileated Woodpeckers tied the record.

A Barred Owl hunted in mid-morning along Falcons: 22 American Kestrels were seen, but Peregrine Falcon Springhill Road (Peter Scott) was missed. Usually (since 2002) I or 2 are present downtown or on

the ISU campus. But even Steve Lima, who knows their every perch, could not find one. A pair nested successfully again this year on the Sycamore Building, so the absence (if indeed all left town) will likely be



(Continued from page 6) temporary.

Flycatcher: An Eastern Phoebe spent count week sallying for insects at a small pond, protected from wind, at Bill Mitchell and Denise Sobieski's property. This is one of the hoped-for, potential late-lingering insectivores, but we've only had it on 5 previous counts over 60 years - so a great find.

Jay to Kinglet: The count of 486 Blue Jays was an all-time high; the acorn crop has been good in some areas. No special effort was made to count American Crows at downtown roosts at dawn or dusk. During the day, several parties reported 300-750 birds each. The total of 4,532 was certainly Ruby-crowned Kinglet at ISU (Marty Jones)

an under-count for the circle's nocturnal population, but still it was our most numerous species.

Forty-six Horned Larks were found (40 by Dick Bonness and Dan Weber), a typical count for a non-snowy day. Numbers for Carolina Chickadee (217) and Tufted Titmouse (197) were normal, while White-breasted Nuthatches set a record with 112. Six Red-breasted Nuthatches were tallied, the remnants of a good fall incursion. We had I Winter Wren and 137 Carolina Wrens, the latter an all-time high. Five individuals were seen of each kinglet species, Golden-crowned and Ruby**crowned**, an all-time high for Ruby-crowned. One visited the productive water leak in the Root Hall (ISU) meditation garden and was photographed by Marty Jones.

Thrushes to Warblers: Eastern Bluebirds (155) were seen by almost every party, and American Robins (354) were even more common. The largest robin flock was at the Root Hall watering hole, admired by Mary Beth Eberwein and Paul Wassel. Nick Gabry heard a Hermit Thrush sing (a

rare winter occurrence) at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods: 6 others were detected.

Sixteen Northern Mockingbirds were scattered across the circle. Steve Lima found a pair of Brown Thrashers. European Starlings (2157) were half as common as American Crows. It was a single-digit year for both **Cedar Waxwing** (3) and Yellow-rumped Warbler (3). As noted in the introduction, an Orange-crowned Warbler spent 2 days at Dobbs Park feeders before vanishing on count day. It is still a great count-week bird. Carissa Lovett quickly recognized it, since another Orange-crowned spent time there late last winter (Jan 21-March 7,





Brown Thrasher (Steve Lima)



**Orange-crowned Warbler, Dobbs Park** (Peter Scott, Dec. 17)

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(Continued from page 7) 2020).

Sparrows, Cardinal, Blackbirds, Finches, House Sparrow: We had 10 sparrow species, counting Eastern Towhee, including 9 Savannah Sparrows (all at the former Key West Mine, a grassy unit of Wabashiki FWA) and 3 Fox Sparrows. The three most common species – Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow – were seen by almost all parties. The others, in descending order, were American Tree (57), White-crowned (39), Field (15), and Swamp Sparrow (8).



A dapper young White-crowned Sparrow (Michael Brown)

**Northern Cardinals** were widespread **(402)**. One in the Bakkens' yard was most unusual-looking: *an adult female with a pinkish white head and wing coverts*, qualifying as partially leucistic.

The only large "blackbird" flock was one of 500 Brown-headed Cowbirds (Bakkens). One hundred fifty-one Red-winged Blackbirds were counted, but Common Grackle and Rusty Blackbird were missed. Most of the 15 Eastern Meadowlarks were in grassy units of Wabashiki FWA.

House Finches and American Goldfinches were seen by most

Unusual plumage of a female Cardinal (David Bakken) parties, and 2 Purple Finches by Steve. It's been a good fall and

winter for **Pine Siskins** across Indiana and we had 19, including 15 at the magnetic feeders of Mitchell/Sobieski, which in November had 3 *White-winged Crossbills*. Alas, no *Evening Grosbeaks* were located, though this is the best winter for them in the lower Midwest in over 20 years, with records in more than 15 Indiana counties.

House Sparrows (599) are not yet a declining "species of concern" in Indiana, as they are in Europe.

On the following page, count totals are given for this year's count. See also a separate Excel spreadsheet that I will circulate, which has party-by-party totals for 2020 and the 1960-2020 history. Results will also be posted on the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count web page.

**Thanks:** to Dan Weber for compiler assistance, Steve Lima for weather data, and David Bakken, Mike Brown, Ben Cvengros, Marty Jones, and Steve Lima for sharing photos from count day.



American Kestrel (Ben Cvengros)



House Finch with "Christmas" berries (Marty Jones) (Continued on page 9)

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**Complete list of species and individuals**, with notable species in **bold** (seen in 2 or 3 of last 10 years), and new high counts of individuals in **red**. Terre Haute, Ind. CBC, 2020.

Gr. White-fronted Goose	1116	Blue Jay	486	Count week only:
Snow Goose	183	American Crow	4532	American Wigeon
Canada Goose	1214	Horned Lark	46	Orange-crowned Warbler
Gadwall	87	Carolina Chickadee	217	
American Black Duck	8	Tufted Titmouse	197	
Mallard	263	Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	
Northern Shoveler	39	White-breasted Nuthatch	112	Participants, 2020
Ring-necked Duck	25	Brown Creeper	7	N = 33
Common Goldeneye	1	Winter Wren	1	David Bakken
Hooded Merganser	12	Carolina Wren	137	George Bakken
Common Merganser	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	5	Laura Bakken
Ruddy Duck	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5	Dick Bonness
Wild Turkey	133	Eastern Bluebird	115	Michael Brown
Pied-billed Grebe	8	Hermit Thrush	7	Nickolas Brown
Great Blue Heron		American Robin	354	Nicole Castaneda
Turkey Vulture		Northern Mockingbird	16	Ben Cvengros
Black Vulture	2	Brown Thrasher	2	Zoe Delefortrie
Bald Eagle	16	European Starling	2157	Joe Dickson
Northern Harrier	7	Cedar Waxwing	3	Mary Beth Eberwein
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3	Rob Eberwein
Cooper's Hawk	9	Eastern Towhee	26	Nick Gabry
Red-shouldered Hawk	42	American Tree Sparrow	79	Meredith Hoggatt
Red-tailed Hawk	42	Field Sparrow	15	Marty Jones
Rough-legged Hawk	2	Savannah Sparrow	9	Steve Lima
American Coot	3	Fox Sparrow	3	Carissa Lovett
Ring-billed Gull	79	Song Sparrow	120	Ellen Lunsford
Rock Pigeon	562	Swamp Sparrow	8	Bill Mitchell
Eurasian Collared-Dove	40	White-throated Sparrow	125	Margaret Moga
Mourning Dove	241	White-crowned Sparrow	39	Brian Payne family (6)
Great Horned Owl	2	Dark-eyed Junco	384	Peter Scott
Barred Owl	9	Northern Cardinal	402	John Sheldon
Short-eared Owl	1	Red-winged Blackbird	151	Denise Sobieski
Belted Kingfisher	10	Eastern Meadowlark	15	Mona Sternfeld
Red-headed Woodpecker	47	Brown-headed Cowbird	558	Rob Sternfeld
Red-bellied Woodpecker	105	Purple Finch	2	Paul Wassel
Yellow-belled Sapsucker	10	House Finch	176	Dan Weber
Downy Woodpecker	82	Pine Siskin	19	Compilers:
Hairy Woodpecker	13	American Goldfinch	103	Peter Scott
Northern Flicker	56	House Sparrow	599	Dan Weber
Pileated Woodpecker	33			
American Kestrel	22	Total species	81	
Eastern Phoebe	1	Total individuals	15,918	

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### **Bird Town Indiana**

WAVS has played a vital role in conservation projects around the Wabash Valley for more than half a century. In 2021, WVAS received recognition for their efforts by earning the 'Bird Town Indiana' designation for the city of Terre Haute.

This designation is a source of pride showing that our community is actively committed to protecting and conserving our natural world and local bird populations.

Bird Town and Tree City signs at Dobbs Park Photo courtesy of Carissa Lovett

Free Event!

Annua Saturday, October 2nd, 2021 1pm - 5pm

> At Dobbs Park 5170 E. Poplar St. Terre Haute, IN 47803 812-877-1095



# Terre Haute Bird Festival

Live Birds Presentations, Guided Bird Hikes, Bird Talks, Bird Netting Demos, Kids' Crafts, Merchandise, Bake Sale.





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### Get Involved!

### Wabash Valley Audubon Society Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is fun and not just for the members of the board! There are many easy ways you can help the organization. Here are a few:

### Hospitality

Sign up to bring a snack to one of the monthly meetings. This does not have to be homemade, you can just pick something up from the store.

### Dates for 2021: To prevent the spread of Covid-19, there will be no food or drink sharing.

### Birding with Wabash Valley Audubon at Dobbs Park Nature Center

WVAS is providing public educational programs. Volunteer to help out at one of these programs as many have a craft component. Or volunteer to lead one of the hikes or presentations. For a list of the future program topics go to our Facebook page or email us.

### Outreach

WVAS attends many educational events. We man a table and pass out information about WVAS and wildlife. Look for opportunities to help throughout this and upcoming newsletters.

### **Board Meetings**

You are welcome to sit in on board meetings, which is a great way to find out more about the organization and ways to help out.

Dates for 2021:	Apr. 21st	May 19th	Sep. 22nd
	Oct. 20th	Nov. 17th	Dec 15th

To help out with any of the above or if you have questions, please feel free to contact Carissa Lovett at 812-877-1095 or carissa.lovett@terrehaute.in.gov.

We hope to hear from you soon.

### Membership Reminder

### September started the new fiscal year for WVAS, so please remember to renew your membership.

We would like to see photos from our members. Here are some ideas, but you are not limited to this list.

- ◊ Take pictures while birding, hiking, or at our meetings
- O you have an interesting bird visiting your feeders?
- ♦ Have you seen an animal you cannot identify?
- O you have a nice picture of a weather event?
- Have you seen a cool reptile or amphibian?
- Take pictures of butterflies, trees, flowers, the sky is not the limit.
- We would like to include photos of our members enjoying the outdoors.



Luna Moth by Carissa Lovett



The Wabash Valley Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

The Wabash Valley Audubon Society (WVAS) serves Clay, Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion and Vigo counties. The public is welcome to attend our activities, including monthly meetings, field trips and conservation projects.

### WVAS Mission

WVAS is involved in appropriate projects to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, interact with other local organizations and groups with similar concerns, and provide educational opportunities to the local community to increase their awareness, appreciation, and involvement in the natural world that surrounds them.

### Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Wabash Valley Audubon Society believes our education and conservation work is enriched and strengthened by the contributions of diverse individuals and communities. We believe the WVAS must reflect and embrace the diversity of human experience in our communities, workforce, and membership in order to achieve our conservation goals in a way that represents all.

We are committed to creating a culture of acceptance and inclusion that values and supports the diverse voices of our members, including those influenced by sex, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity and expression, disability, national or ethnic origin, politics, and personal experience. It is our aim to foster an environment free of discrimination that is dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through proactive efforts to advance equality in nature centers, green spaces, and our wider community.

### WVAS Officers for 2020-2021

### President & Programs:

Nick Gabry n.t.gabry@gmail.com

Vice-President & Field Trips: Open

Secretary: Courtney Wiesepape cwiesepape@gmail.com

Treasurer: Phil Cox philwcox@gmail.com

Membership: Lucinda Berry laberry@eiu.edu

Bird Festival Chair: Carissa Lovett carissa.lovett@terrehaute.in.gov

### Directors at Large:

Lucinda Berry Carissa Lovett Ellen Lunsford mabel819@aol.com Ray Peck rpeck1@sycamores.indstate.edu

Bird Count Compilers: Peter Scott peter.scott@indstate.edu Dan Weber danleeweber@yahoo.com

Webmaster: Nick Gabry

Newsletter Editors: Carissa Lovett Ellen Lunsford



Like us on Facebook



Contact us at Wabashvalleyaudubon @gmail.com

If you have a topic or photo you would like to share, please contact Carissa or Ellen. All Wabash Valley Audubon Society events are open to the public.

A reminder to our members who receive the NNN by mail:

The Nature News and Notes newsletter can be read and enjoyed in full color on our website, www.wabashvalleyaudubonsociety.org. Just click on the word "Publications" in the top row of links on the homepage to visit our archives.



Wabash Valley Audubon Society P.O. Box 2338 Terre Haute IN 47802-2338 Spring/Summer 2021