

Stockbridge Audubon



Representing Northeast Indiana

P.O. Box 13131, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46864

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Fall Meeting at Pokagon: Freshwater Mussels of Allen County Rivers (do you know the Giant Floater?)

Date: November 6, 2005

Time: 2:00 PM SUNDAY

Location: Nature Center
Pokagon State Park

Speaker: Warren Pryor

Warren is Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Saint Francis, and formerly Animal Curator at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo. He has studied the native freshwater mussels in the rivers of Allen County.

Native freshwater mussels are important components of the stream ecosystems in the Midwest. They provide food for muskrats, they filter algae from the water, and humans enjoy their beautiful

shells. Mussels are so vital to our streams that they are now protected by state and federal laws.

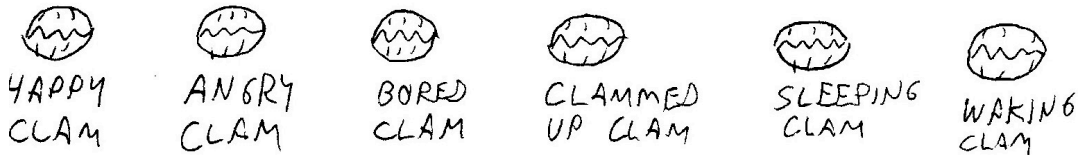
In Allen County, the St. Joseph River had 29 species at the time of Warren's study. Next was the Maumee River, with 17 species, Cedar Creek with 15, the St. Mary's with 5 and the Eel River with only 3.

The most widespread species was the giant floater. If a river has lots of mussels, it indicates good water quality. After all, a mussel can't leave when water quality goes down!

Mussels have really intriguing names, like the giant floater, the deertoe, the heelsplitter, and the purple wartyback. (The zebra mussel, of course, is an alien invasive.)

You might want to come early for Sunday dinner at Pokagon Inn, or stay late to enjoy the birds at the feeders outside the Nature Center, and the golden color of the tamaracks in the wetlands.

Remember there is a \$4.00 fee per car for park admission, or you can use your state park pass.



President's Remarks

By Julie Henricks

As happens every so often, the board has been discussing what we can do to bring Stockbridge events more in step with the wishes of the membership. For example, the field trip schedule is the highlight of the spring and fall seasons; a lot of time and planning go into these excursions, but many members never have experienced one. It may be that folks don't have an entire day to devote to such an outing, or perhaps the price of gas is discouraging people from venturing as far from home as they once did. Do you have thoughts on this topic? If you don't participate in the current field trips, would you be more likely to do so if they were shorter and/or closer to home? Or is there some other consideration we should be aware of?

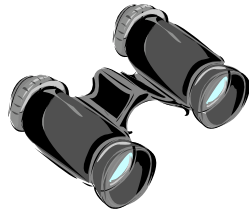
If you don't think field trips are your thing, Project FeederWatch may interest you. This activity is sponsored by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and is designed to track trends in bird populations. The upcoming "season" begins November 12; check <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw> for more information. (Or contact Cynthia Powers to learn more about what's being done locally with Project FeederWatch.)

Here's another idea: help is always needed at the bird observation building (the old Nature Center) at Fox Island County Park, where visitors drop in and appreciate learning about the feeder birds. You could be just the person to spark a new birder's curiosity! At any rate, you'll enjoy the relaxing atmosphere of the cozy building. To volunteer, call the park at (260) 449-3180.

Something else you might consider is **running for the Stockbridge board**. We're always on the prowl for new members. It's fun, and it doesn't take much time – usually an hour or two once a month, 7-8 times a year.

Just one more thing: how important is it to you to receive a paper copy of the newsletter? Did you know that if you have Internet access, you can view the current and past newsletters on the Stockbridge website? The board has been kicking around the idea of discontinuing the mailing of the newsletter to every member. We would like to hear from you if you definitely want to continue receiving the paper version.

We welcome all of your comments and suggestions; feel free to e-mail me at Julie.Henricks@ge.com. If you would rather phone, the numbers of all of the board members are included elsewhere in this newsletter. Let us know what you think! :0)



Bird Notes by Jim Haw

July 26-October 1

Numbers of most fall migrants seemed rather small, with no peak days detected. A Northern Pintail at Pigeon River Sept. 15 was northeast Indiana's earliest in fall by 5 days (Jim Haw, Frannie Headings, Sandy Schacht). Great Egrets as usual moved into our area after the nesting season, the high count being 36 in northern Allen Co. Aug. 20 (Jamie Toole et al). Two Black-crowned Night Herons returned to the Fort Wayne zoo grounds by Sept. 29 (Ed & Cynthia Powers). An adult Bald Eagle graced the Engle Rd. wetland, Ft. Wayne, Sept. 25 (Rodger Rang). Peregrine Falcons on the move were an immature at Pigeon River Sept. 15 (Headings et al) and an adult at Fox Island Sept. 24 (Stockbridge field trip). Highlights among shorebirds were single Baird's Sandpipers at the Engle Rd. wetland Aug. 23 and Sept. 18 (Haw), and 2 Am. Avocets at Salamonie Reservoir Aug. 14 (Jeff McCoy). Always notable locally, terns were represented by 2 Caspians at Fawn River Fish Hatchery Aug. 18 (Schacht et al), a Forster's at Cedarville Reservoir, Allen Co. Aug. 21 (Haw) and 2 Black Terns at the Woodburn sewage ponds Sept. 11 (Haw), tying the latest fall date for that species in northeast Indiana.

A Black-billed Cuckoo was at Metea Park, Allen Co. Sept. 4 (Haw). Olive-sided Flycatchers were at Pigeon

River Aug. 18 (Headings et al) and Salamonie River State Forest Aug. 27 (Schacht, Haw). Purple Martins staging at Salamonie dam peaked at 80 Aug. 27, and six late birds were at Topeka, Lagrange Co., Sept. 22 (Dave Yoder). An apparent incursion of Red-breasted Nuthatches in modest numbers began with a bird at Fox Island Sept. 3 (Stockbridge field trip).

“Lawrence’s” Warbler, the rare genetically recessive hybrid between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers, was found at Metea Park Sept. 4 (Haw) and at Franke Park, Ft. Wayne, Sept. 5 (Haw), the third and fourth modern records for northeast Indiana. Other notable warbler records were Golden-winged at Mengerson Reserve, Ft. Wayne, Aug. 26 (Haw) and at Fox Island Sept. 18 (Haw); a late Cerulean at Chain O’ Lakes State Park Sept. 10 (Stockbridge field trip); an early Yellow-rumped at Fox Island Sept. 3 (Stockbridge); a record early Black-throated Green at Pigeon River Aug. 18 (Schacht et al); and Mourning on Sept. 3 (Stockbridge), Sept. 17 (Rang), Sept. 18 (Haw), and Sept. 24 (Ed Powers), all at Fox Island. A Henslow’s Sparrow was singing in Salamonie dam spillway July 30 (Haw, Schacht). A Lincoln’s Sparrow at Metea Park Sept. 11 (Haw) tied the early fall arrival date for the region. Two Bobolinks remained in northern Allen Co. through Sept. 10, the first September record for northeast Indiana (Haw et al). A Purple Finch flew over Pigeon River Sept. 15 (Haw).



FORT WAYNE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 17, 2005

The Fort Wayne count is held in a 15-mile diameter circle in northern Allen and southern DeKalb Counties. Participants divide into field parties of two to four, each with at least one experienced leader, to count all birds identified by sight or call in a designated section of the circle. Groups drive county roads slowly and walk where public lands or permission from landowners permits.

It is possible to participate in a field party for the day, or for half a day, morning or afternoon. All-day and morning participants meet inside Hall’s Restaurant, corner of Coliseum Blvd. and Lima Rd., by 6:45 a.m. Some of us arrive in time to have breakfast at Hall’s before 6:45. Parties depart by 7 a.m. to find owls at daybreak. Afternoon-only participants will join their parties at lunch (11-12) at locations designated by each party leader. Be sure to dress for the weather, including waterproof, warm boots for wet or snowy conditions. Pack a thermos and snacks, and bring a sack lunch. There is a participation fee (\$5 per person as of 2004) which goes to National Audubon Society to help defray the cost of compiling and publishing the count data, which goes into a database along with the results of the other counts across the continent. Stockbridge Audubon will pay half of the fee for the Fort Wayne count.

Persons who live in the count circle can also participate by counting birds at their feeders and in the yard. There is no fee for feeder watchers. Call Jim Haw to see if your home is within the count circle.

A chili supper follows the count at 6:15 p.m. at Franke Park Day Camp (Psi Ote Lodge). All participants are invited to eat, share the day's experiences, and join in compiling the day's list.

If you plan to join in the count, please contact the compiler, Jim Haw, by phone at 485-7802, or e-mail jhawillet@aol.com, by December 14.



**PIGEON RIVER CBC:
Sunday, December 18, 2005**

Participants will meet inside Hall's Restaurant, corner of Coliseum Blvd. and Lima Road, by 6:45 a.m. Come early to enjoy a warm breakfast with good company. If you plan on attending, please **contact Gary Tieben at 493-7058, by Dec. 16.** There is a \$5.00 participation fee which goes to National Audubon Society to help defray the cost of publishing the data. 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.**

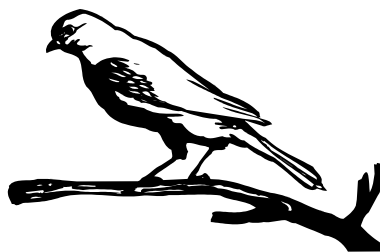


POKAGON STATE PARK CBC:

Wednesday, December 28, 2005.

Contact Fred Wooley at the Park Nature center during business hours, 260-833-2012. Please register by 4 p.m. on Dec. 16. Meet at the Nature Center by 7:45 a.m.

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. (If we're lucky, there will be chili from the Pokagon Inn!) Again, there is a \$5.00 participation fee to National Audubon to help defray the cost of publishing the data from all over the continent.



Bird of the Month: Evening Grosbeak

By: Warren Mead

The first time I saw an evening grosbeak, I was only 7 or 8 years old. It was a memorable event for two reasons. First, I didn't see just one grosbeak, I saw dozens of them, as if they had suddenly dropped out of the sky on to the bird feeders. Second, when I ran to tell my Granddad that there were a bunch of "goldfinches" on his feeders, he came to the window and told me they were evening grosbeaks. He then offered all the information he could about these birds and I was so impressed with his knowledge. I was also impressed by the fact that these birds apparently knew what time of day to show up, as it was just getting dark when they arrived for their dinner!

The evening grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*) is a chunky, starling-sized bird that does indeed resemble a goldfinch in coloration. Primarily yellow to yellow-brown, the evening grosbeak has black wings and prominent white wing bars. The male has a yellow "eyebrow". As common to the grosbeak family, the evening grosbeak has a very heavy bill. In the spring, the coating of the bill peels away leaving the newly exposed bill somewhat greenish in color.

The appearance of evening grosbeaks in our area is very inconsistent, as they will arrive here in irruptive fashion during winter, when they flee their northern habitats due to severe weather and/or dwindling food supplies. Even when they do arrive in our area, they may go unnoticed as they travel as "nomads" in large, gregarious flocks from one food source to the next. They will stick around at feeders that are faithfully refilled, but will vacate areas that offer natural food sources after devouring every last tidbit.

Evening grosbeaks form monogamous pairs in spring and nest very closely to other pairs in large flocks. Incubation lasts 11-14 days during which the male feeds the female while she remains on the nest. Altricial young are cared for by both parents for about two weeks while they are in the nest. A mating pair of evening grosbeaks will have 1-2 broods a year.

The call of the evening grosbeak is a "chip" or "chirp" somewhat similar to that of a house sparrow. However, the grosbeaks' vocalization is said to be more musical than the sparrow's.

Evening grosbeaks will quickly deplete any feeder that offers sunflower seeds and they prefer platform feeders. Their range has been expanding eastward since the late 19th century, due to the presence of bird feeders and new tree plantings.

So as the cold days of winter arrive, watch your feeders at dusk for the presence of this colorful and hungry visitor. Keep your feeders filled with sunflower seeds and your yard may become a favorite feeding station for our featured bird-of-the-month: the evening grosbeak.

Katrina News:

National Audubon reports that several donors, including Wild Birds Unlimited, have donated 200 hummingbird feeders to the areas devastated by the hurricanes. Let's hope the ruby-throats that have just left Indiana can make it safely across the Gulf to their winter homes.



Great News from Little River Wetlands

Paul McAfee reports that on August 15, 2005, the Little River Wetlands Project purchased 680 acres of floodplain farmland, with the intention of restoring it back to its natural state as a wetland.

The Stockbridge Audubon Society was one of our largest supporting organizations. **Over 40 of our members gave nearly \$2500!** It's obvious that we're aware of the great birds that have been seen at the Engle Road wetlands, and that we can see the tremendous potential to have over a square mile of wetland habitat right next to the city of Fort Wayne.

Paul says that they will not have possession of the property until after Dec. 31. That will give the farmer time to harvest his crops and remove his irrigation equipment, etc. After that, plans will be made. The first step is to restore the hydrology, by removing pumps, breaking tiles, modifying drainage ditches, and doing other earthwork. This will be a big engineering project and will take some time. Paul will keep us informed and let us know when we can have public access. He would also like us to keep records of the birds we see on the property as it develops.

Yea! For the Eagle Marsh Restoration! And thanks to the Audubon members who helped!



“BIG SIT” Was Bigger than Ever!

On October 9, several members and visitors counted birds from a 17-foot circle on the back deck of the Fox Island Nature Center. Last year, we counted 32 species, but this year **we ended the day with an even 40!**

We had 22 by about 10:00 when Channel 21 came to take pictures. Later, Channel 15 also came. The high point of the day was a **Bald Eagle** which circled over the little pond, putting on a real show! An orange-crowned warbler was also seen from the count circle.

At 2 p.m. we took a break by hearing a brief talk by Sarah Hendricks, Fox Island environmental educator, on the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, including the now famous video clip of the woodpecker in flight. Sarah had also organized a panel discussion of several local conservation organizations: the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo, Little River Wetlands, ACRES, Allen County Parks, and of course, Stockbridge Audubon, represented by our own Julie Henricks.

We ended the day by hearing both Barred and Great Horned Owls, and enjoyed a wiener roast as the sun set. As expected, our team, the “Fox Sparrows” didn’t come close to our arch-rivals, the “Sitting Duck Deck Sitters” from Lake Lemon, north of Bloomington, who had 76 species. But we had a great time!

Check out bigsit@birdwatchersdigest.com for results from Big Sits all across the country.

Many thanks to all who participated!

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_____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Address_____

Individual/\$20 Family/\$20

City/State_____

Student/\$15 Sr. Citizen/\$15

Zip_____ Phone_____

Lifelong/\$1500

**HO-9
7XCH**

Mail to National Audubon Society, Chapter Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80322-1001.

NEARSIGHTED CLAM
IN LOVE WITH A
BIG MAC



(Is this a Giant Floater?)

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