



Stockbridge Audubon

www.stockbridgeaudubon.org

Representing Northeast Indiana

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

Just a reminder: On Sunday, November 20, at 2 p.m. in the Nature Center at Pokagon State Park, our own Mark Weldon will speak about last spring's Sandhill Crane Census. Several of our members helped with this project. Details were in the last newsletter. The program is FREE, but

STOCKBRIDGE OPPOSES KENTUCKY CRANE HUNT PROPOSAL

By Jim Haw

Authorized by the Board of Directors, President Gary Tieben wrote a letter to the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources expressing Stockbridge Audubon's opposition to a state plan for a limited hunting season for Sandhill Cranes in Kentucky during

the public comment period last summer.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service classifies Sandhill Crane as a game bird, and western states have long been authorized to have hunting seasons for Sandhills. Several western states have done so. The eastern population has not been hunted. However, in 2010 the USFWS's Mississippi and Atlantic Flyway Council finished a management plan for the eastern population of Sandhill Cranes which concluded that the bird's increased population justified limited hunting if states so desired. To our knowledge, Kentucky is the only Midwestern or eastern state to submit a hunting plan to the USFWS for approval. **The Indiana DNR does not plan to propose crane hunting at this time.**

"BIG SIT" HELD AT FOX ISLAND

By Cynthia Powers

Well, a mini-sit, anyway! Natalie Haley, environmental educator at Fox Island, promoted a Big Sit on the official date of October 9, but only from 1:30 to 4:30. It was held on the back deck of the nature center. What is a Big Sit, you might ask! It's described as "Birding's Most Sedentary Event." In contrast to "Big Day" events, at a Big Sit you let the birds come to you. In fact you have to see a bird from within a 17-foot diameter circle, set up in a (preferably) comfortable location, with a view of several different habitats. Fox Island's nature center deck is quite good for that purpose, as it's under a roof, restrooms are nearby, and has views of shrubbery, a pond, and the open sky. We even brought snacks. How many species did we see? Only 15, including a Cooper's Hawk. But we enjoyed the perfect weather and chatting with several visitors, whom we invited to our November meeting.

AND FURTHERMORE.....
Have you seen the movie "**The Big Year**" yet? It was released in mid-October, starring Steve Martin and others. It's based (loosely) on a book of the same title, by Mark Obmascik.

And the book is “based on” reality.....describing a hobby that got way out of hand. Three obsessive birders compete to see as many North American species as possible in one year: over 700! Recently one of the original three, Greg Miller, spoke at the Midwest Birding Symposium at Lakeside, Ohio. (He’s played by Jack Black in the movie.) He immensely enjoyed being a consultant for the film, and says it portrays birders in a positive light. No little old ladies in tennis shoes this time! See the movie and see if you agree: **birders are really cool!**

WHAT????? GARDENING FOR CATERPILLARS????????



Recently Douglas Tallamy gave a talk at IPFW geared toward those interested in native plants, gardening for wildlife, and birds. (That’s all of us, right?) His book, Bringing Nature Home, promotes using our suburban lots to increase habitat. Most of us think of berries and seeds for bird food, but Tallamy pointed out that nesting birds need lots of juicy caterpillars to feed their babies. And caterpillars, of course, if they survive the birds, hatch into butterflies. When selecting trees to plant, consider oaks, willow, and wild cherry in particular. Why? Because these native species support the highest number of insects. He used Lepidoptera as symbolic of all insects, because more data is available, and he showed slides of many interesting caterpillars we could be enjoying, if only we planted natives instead of non-natives. If we consider gardening for caterpillars, we’ll have more birds in our yards. And that’s a good thing!



BIRD NOTES
By Jim Haw
July 21-October 20, 2011

Eagle Marsh was the place to be for much of the period as new species were added to the property list, beginning with a King Rail July 31 (Jim Haw, Rodger Rang, Dave Reichlinger). Next was a Red-necked Phalarope Aug. 12 (Dave Slager, Aaron Boone), a Stilt Sandpiper Aug. 20 (Haw) with numbers growing to 5 Sept. 4, a Baird’s Sandpiper Sept. 4 (Haw) and two on Sept. 9 (Haw), a Buff-breasted Sandpiper Sept. 5 (Haw, Sandy Schacht), a rare Black-necked Stilt Sept. 9-15 (Haw et al), and northeastern Indiana’s first Hudsonian Godwit since 1988 on Sept. 21 (Haw, Reichlinger). Also of note at Eagle Marsh were a high count of 52 Great Egrets Sept. 5 (Haw); Least Bittern July 25 and Aug. 8 (Haw); Peregrine Falcon Sept. 5 (Haw, Schacht), Sept. 25, and Oct. 11; two families of Common Gallinules with a total of 9 young July 25 (Haw); 3 Caspian Terns Aug. 9 (Rodger Rang); a Forster’s Tern Aug. 12 (Sam Plew); a Black Tern Aug. 14 (Haw) and two Sept. 4-9 (many observers); and 4 Bobolinks Sept. 16, NE Indiana’s latest fall record by 6

days (Haw). Elsewhere, a Cackling Goose in Steuben County Sept. 13 (Haw, Schacht) was the earliest fall record for the state. An early Snow Goose was at Pigeon River Sept. 24 (Plew). A Black-crowned Night Heron returned to the Ft. Wayne zoo grounds Sept. 1 (Ed & Cynthia Powers). A King Rail found at Pigeon River Aug. 11 (Haw) stayed through Sept. 5 (Leland Shaum et al). A Common Gallinule remained at Pigeon River through Oct. 18 (Haw, Schacht), becoming NE IN’s latest by two days. Notable shorebirds were a Black-bellied Plover in Lagrange Co. Aug. 28 (Plew); an American Avocet at Salamonie Res. Aug. 20 (Dennis White, Dan Sills); and White-rumped Sandpipers in Lagrange Co. Aug. 3 (Plew) and Fawn River Fish Hatchery Sept. 24 (Plew). Salamonie hosted 10 Franklin’s Gulls Sept. 27 (Haw, Schacht) and 3 Caspian Terns Aug. 4 (Haw, Schacht). The songbird migration was generally poor. Exceptions included Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, which was found three times: Chain O’ Lakes State Park Aug. 23 (Haw, Schacht), Fox Island Aug. 29 (Haw), and Mengerson Preserve Aug. 31 (Haw). Olive-sided Flycatcher also was well represented, with one at Fox Island Aug. 15 (Haw), 2 at Pigeon River Aug. 20 (Haw, Schacht), and one at Pigeon R. Aug. 30 (Haw). A “Brewster’s” Warbler hybrid was at Pigeon

River Sept. 13 (Haw), while Golden-winged Warblers were noted at Franke Park Sept. 17 (Jerry Brown) and Sept. 23 (Haw), and in Salamonie River State Forest Sept. 27 (Haw). A Summer Tanager in Franke Park Sept. 15 (Haw, Doug Rood) furnished a rare September record. Winter finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches are apparently not coming south in numbers this winter because of a bumper wild food crop in Ontario. Single Red-breasted Nuthatches were at Mengerson Preserve Oct. 6 (Powers) and Pine Knob Park, Lagrange Co., Oct. 18 (Haw, Schacht). The only Pine Siskin reported was at Pigeon River Oct. 1 (Haw et al), and the only Purple Finch at Pigeon River Oct. 18 (Haw).
October 2011

PRESIDENTIAL WORDS

By Gary Tieben

Early winter in the Midwest is a time when deciduous trees have lost their leaves and when these leaves have covered the ground in wet layers. People with lawns typically remove these leaves in the fall. However, not every leaf drops from every tree. Some trees, oaks, in particular, hold their leaves through much of

the winter. Some dead fall leaves hold to the twigs so well that they are pushed away from the twigs by the enlarging buds in the spring. These leaves and the leaves "missed" in the fall cleanup comprise the leaves that are blown around by the winter winds. In a neighborhood, these 'winter blown' leaves spread irregularly over everyone's yards and flower beds.

These "winter blown" leaves form wet masses that inhibit the growth of grass and most cultivated plants. If not removed, in addition to killing the underlying plants, these wet masses eventually dry and blow away. The bare ground beneath them is an excellent seedbed for the pioneering plants we consider weeds. All in all, it appears that leaves seem to cause problems for smaller plants. This is not the case in a woods, where there is no fall cleanup of the leaves. All of the leaves either blow away or collect, depending upon the topography and the prevailing winds. Downwind depressions fill with a few inches to several feet of leaves depending upon their depth, while higher, steeper ground is typically blown clear. Most of the ground in a deciduous forest is

covered with leaves. How do the native plants cope in a "world of decaying leaves?" Take a look at an early spring woods or even a native flower garden. You will see the sturdy native plants pushing through thick wet masses of leaves. You may recall seeing mayapple shoots that have pierced oak leaves and have lifted these leaves inches above the ground. Our native plants are at home with leaves. It is true that even native plants can't grow through the depth of leaves that may gather in a deep depression. Over time, however, the leaves that collect in depressions break down, eventually filling the low spot with fertile soil. Native plants will then slowly cover this area from the edges until the one time depression is covered with plants.

I encourage you to take a walk in a wooded park or preserve during the early spring. Take time to see how plants thrive in a world of decaying leaves. You may not learn everything in a single trip, but slow down enough to see how native plants deal with their environment. You will be surprised at how much you learn.

NOMINATIONS ARE DUE SOON: If you would like to nominate someone to the Stockbridge Board of Directors (maybe yourself?) e-mail to Julie Henricks, VP, at julie.henricks@ge.com. Requirements: attend board meetings, respond promptly to e-mails, and contribute ideas.



Fort Wayne Christmas Bird Count When: Saturday, December 17, 2011

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. Some parties will need to bring a sack lunch. There is a participation fee (**\$5 per person** age nineteen and over as of 2010) 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.

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 to see if you're in the count circle.

A chili supper follows the count at 6 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 jhawillett@aol.com, by December 12. Jim will also take reservations for the chili supper, and he can answer questions or provide further information.

(Hint: when you come in the door, don't reveal your rare sightings until the very last minute!)



Pigeon River Christmas Bird Count When: Sunday, December 18, 2011

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 13. 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: Wednesday, December 28, 2011

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.

Did you know.....the Christmas Bird Count started in 1900, so this year's will be the 112th!

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; another is Wild Birds Unlimited.

15th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count



Count for the Birds in America's Great Backyard: February 17-20, 2012

- 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 thousands 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. Imagine scientists 250 years from now comparing 2012's data with their own!

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



Indiana Audubon Winter Bird Feeder Count

Here's an easy way to count from your own window. The count periods are Nov. 20-25, Dec. 20-25, Jan. 20-25, and Feb. 20-25. You record the highest number of each species seen at one time. The record form is available from DNR biologist John Castrale at jcastrale@dnr.IN.gov.

Last year there were only 3 counts recorded from Allen County.....we can do better than that!

And don't forget **Project FeederWatch**, sponsored by Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It starts Nov. 12 and goes into April. Cost is \$15 (\$12 for Lab members.) Check out feederwatch@cornell.edu. It's fun! Involve your kids!