

Attention Citizen Scientists

Migration is well underway and Sassafras Audubon is eager to lead the way in an urban conservation, citizen science experiment. We want to begin treating our beautiful IU campus as an ecological unit of study – to make sense of it from the point of view of the bird diversity it hosts. We also want your help!

The general plan: To look at bird presence and abundance for three different survey periods: migration (April 15 – May 15), summer breeding (June 1 – 30) and winter residency (January 1 – 31). We also have agreed upon six areas that we think are most worth surveying – these are indicated on the campus map. Four of these areas (Beer Gardens, Jordan Wetlands, Hilltop and the Cross-country course) are particularly important because the Office of Sustainability has targeted these areas for future management. For example there are plans to substantially increase the canopy cover in the Beer Gardens unit – creating an Arboretum of sorts. The data we collect may help give campus administration a sense of the difference ecological management can make to species diversity on campus.

Now all we need are some citizen-scientists. Really we're just asking you to spend some time in these campus units and tell us what you find. Our hope is to have volunteer groups survey each of the six campus units twice for each of the survey periods. If your group is planning to survey the same unit twice over the survey month, we recommend that you spread your visits out by two weeks or so. (Of course you can survey these units more than twice if you'd like.)

I went out on my own in late March to get a sense for the time needed to adequately survey a unit. I walked around the Dunn unit (Unit 2) until I felt comfortable I had identified most of the species present there. It took exactly an hour, and since it was still early in the year there wasn't a great deal of diversity to see. With small groups, it will probably take less time – though there will likely be more so see in late April, which may add to the time needed. Also, some units are smaller and more open than others. Just bird until you're comfortable that you've identified most of what's there.

Unless you're a student, faculty or staff member at IU weekends may be the best time to survey birds – for two reasons. First there is less noise on campus. (Things get fairly loud, fairly early during the week.) Second, **parking** is less problematic. On the weekends (Friday 5pm – Sunday 11pm) there are several FREE places to park on campus. Parking zones D and E are free during this window. Also you can park for free in the parking garages on Saturdays and Sundays (for more information link to http://www.parking.indiana.edu/parking_operations/free_park.aspx). In addition Bloomington residential parking is not enforced after 5pm or on weekends if you would like to park near, but not on campus.

The data sheet: We've designed the data sheet to be very user-friendly but also informative. Tell us who you are, where your group is spending their time on campus (which unit), how much time you're spending, a bit about the weather conditions and of

course the birds you encounter. For the weather conditions, use the tables below and estimate the temperature. When indicating the species use the full common name. Then tell us how many individuals you detected visually. If you can count your detections according to sex, the data-sheet allows you to do so (**M** or **F**). If you cannot, simply count the number of individuals as unknown sex (**U**). The data-sheet also allows you to indicate how many individuals you detected by their vocalizations – again, for those surveyors who are able. We would like to know how many individuals you heard singing on campus, and in the case of the flycatchers and other non-passerines, how many individuals you heard calling. Double-counting individuals that are both visually and aurally detected is fine – we’ll take that into account when we begin interpreting all of your data. So it’s okay if you record, for example, a male Northern Cardinal detected visually and record that same individual under ‘Song.’ There is also some space for you to make additional notes if you notice something of behavioral, ecological, or management interest. For example, I found the nest of a Cooper’s Hawk in one of the campus units and noted its location in the notes and observations column.

You may notice birds that do not “use” the campus ecology per se, but these are also worth recording. Sandhill Cranes flying over the campus would be a good example of species you can record on the Flyovers section of data sheet. Finally you may come across birds with injuries or even casualties as a consequence of building strikes. If so, indicate the species, the building code (these codes are on your campus map) and make any notes you think may be helpful. If we find some regularities, or common problem-buildings, perhaps there’s something we can do about it. If you come across an injured bird, contact Wild Care (contact information below).

After you’ve completed the data sheet, you can send it to me by email or by regular mail (contact information below). Thanks in advance for all of your help!

Stephen Friesen
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Mail data sheets to:

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<http://www.wildcareinc.org/>

Wind Codes:

Beaufort Number

0	Smoke rises vertically
1	Wind direction shown by smoke drift
2	Wind felt on face; leaves rustle
3	Leaves, small twigs in constant motion; light flag extended
4	Raises dust and loose paper; small branches are moved
5	Small trees in leaf sway

Indicators of Wind Speed

Sky Codes:

Code

0	< 10% clouds
1	10-50% clouds
2	60-90% clouds
3	> 90% clouds
4	Fog
5	Light mist or drizzle
8	Showers

Sky Condition