

## Libby Frey, Ross Brittain Receive Awards at Spring Banquet

by Bob Dodd

Libby Frey received the Barbara Restle Award for long and distinguished service to the Sassafras Audubon Society and conservation causes at the March 29 annual SAS banquet held at Chapman's Conference Center. Libby was a charter member of SAS in 1970 and has been active in many conservation causes espoused by the organization from the beginning. Among the conservation battles she has fought, Libby worked for the establishment of the Deam Wilderness area and was a major force in stopping the damming of Lost River. She is still active in the ongoing problem of PCB contamination of various sites around Monroe County. Although this issue has been out of the media for some time, it is still with us, and Libby continues to work for

a permanent solution to the problem. Libby joins Barbara Restle and Ruth Reichman as recipients of the award.

Ross Brittain received the Don Whitehead Conservationist of the Year award for major contributions to a current conservation cause. Ross was recognized for his vital

work in studying Northern Saw-whet Owls through the banding and recapture program that he has led for the last seven years at Yellowwood State Forest and Greene County. Ross has documented important advances in our understanding of these owls, which were once considered rare in Indiana. As those who have assisted Ross know, although they are illusive, they are far from rare. Ross joins Don Whitehead and Lee Sterrenburg as recipients of the award.

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ABOVE — Ross Brittain, left, receiving the Don Whitehead Award from SAS President Jeff Riegel. AT RIGHT — Libby Frey, left, receiving the Barbara Restle Award from Bob Dodd. *Photos by Susan Hengeveld*

### CAN YOU NAME THAT BIRD?

This bird is a common visitor to feeders, especially in the spring. Some people consider him a pest, but his iridescent feathers are beautiful in the sunlight. Answer on page 4.

*Photo by Jeff Hammond*



## BioBlitz Scheduled for Brown County State Park June 5-7

by Jim Eagleman and Jeff Riegel

Imagine trying to conduct a plant, animal, bird, insect, and fungal inventory at a 16,000-acre Indiana state park on a relatively busy summer weekend. Now try to gather first-time data from the park's remote backcountry areas from teams who may be experts, but are unaccustomed to hiking up and down rugged ravines and ridge tops. Now add the inquiring public who may not appreciate current demands on the resource, the role of today's biologist and botanist, and the sheer immensity of the project. That's what's in store (and more) at Brown County State Park, just outside of Nashville, Ind., on the weekend of June 5-7.

While some SAS members might be familiar with BioBlitzes and may have even participated in some, many are not, and the uniqueness with this one is the size of the property (Indiana's largest state park), its rugged and remote backcountry with limited access, and the fact that no previous extensive inventory has ever been conducted.

"The sky's the limit," says Brittany Davis, a naturalist at the park. Brittany admits while park records include watch- and checklists on more common species, little investigative

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# Editor's Note:

## Should We Have a Birdwatcher's License?

by Bob Dodd

What a ridiculous question! When I am birdwatching, I am simply admiring the beauty of nature and do no harm to the environment. Unlike hunters and fishers, I do not remove wildlife from their habitat, requiring replacement and management. So I should not have to pay for my nondestructive hobby!

But wait a minute. Birdwatching is not free. When I see a magnificent Bald Eagle soaring overhead, I should remember that except for restoration programs costing millions of dollars, that eagle would not be there. Bald Eagles, Ospreys, and Peregrine Falcons were all but extinct in Indiana until the nongame wildlife program of the Indiana DNR conducted very successful restoration and breeding programs. And the beautiful warblers that I look forward to admiring every spring depend on acres

of forest and wetlands that were purchased and maintained by the state and federal governments. When I see the spectacular bird life at Goose Pond FWA I have benefited from millions of dollars spent to acquire and maintain the property for the public. Indeed, in large part, I have been living off the money provided by hunters and fishers through their license and equipment purchases. Thousands of dollars for Goose Pond acquisition and restoration also came from Ducks Unlimited. The birding community (including SAS) contributed a small amount as well, but most of the funds did not come directly from birdwatchers. Even when I am just birdwatching by looking at my backyard feeders, I am indirectly benefiting from nearby habitat preservation. So maybe a birder's license is not such a bad idea after all.

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### JOIN SAS

Support *Sassafras Audubon Society* local educational programs, outings, and conservation projects by being a *Friend of SAS*. Friends receive membership in SAS, the *Leaflet* bimonthly newsletter, and a 10 percent discount on selected items at the *Bloomington Wild Birds Unlimited* and *Bloomington Hardware* stores. Support national conservation efforts through the *National Audubon Society* and receive *Audubon* magazine along with automatic chapter membership in SAS. But, because *NAS* dues primarily support national projects, we encourage you to also become a *Friend of SAS*. As a *Friend*, you will have the satisfaction of supporting your local chapter and its local projects!

#### Sassafras Audubon Society Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- Friend of the Sassafras Audubon Society \$20/year x \_\_\_ year(s) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Includes chapter membership in SAS
  - National Audubon Society Membership \$20 for first year \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Special introductory offer (regularly \$35/year)  
(Renewals go through National Audubon Society)
  - Additional Contribution to SAS \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your completed application along with your check to: Sassafras Audubon Society, Attention Membership Coordinator, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Thank you for supporting Sassafras Audubon Society!

For more information about membership, e-mail us at SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org.



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The board normally meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. All SAS members are welcome to attend. Contact the president or another board member to learn more details and meeting locations, or e-mail SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org.

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We invite readers to submit material for consideration for publication. Contact the editor at dodd@indiana.edu or (812) 339-2976.

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# SAS Calendar

## May/June 2009

All SAS-sponsored outings and programs are free and open to nonmembers. Watch our website ([www.sassafrasaudubon.org](http://www.sassafrasaudubon.org)) and the Bloomington Birds e-mail list for announcements about other upcoming events. For more information about the outings, contact Jim Mitchell at [jlmitchell33@comcast.net](mailto:jlmitchell33@comcast.net) (812-824-8198).

### **Saturday, May 9: Greene County Big May Day Count**

Volunteers are needed to help count birds in Greene County. See article on page 7 of this issue of the *Leaflet*. To volunteer or for more information, contact the count coordinator, Jess Gwinn, at (812) 876-8623 or [jagmo@bluemarble.net](mailto:jagmo@bluemarble.net).

### **Saturday, May 9: IMBD 'Wings Over Muscatatuck'**

Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, just east of Seymour, Ind., is celebrating International Migratory Bird Day with a full day of events between 6:30 a.m. and 9 p.m. They'll have lots of booths, exhibits, and displays, and the bookstore is open all day. For more information, contact Jackson County Visitor Center (888) 524-1914.

### **Sunday, May 10, 10 a.m.: Spring Butterflies**

Join Sandy and Jeff Belth for a half-day trip to local hot spots for spring butterflies. Wear sturdy walking shoes and sunscreen. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 10 a.m. Contact Jeff Belth at [jeffreylbelth@aol.com](mailto:jeffreylbelth@aol.com) or (812) 825-8353 for further information.

### **Saturday, May 16, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.: Spring Feeder Cleaning**

See article on page 5 of this issue of the *Leaflet*.

### **Wednesday, May 27, 7 p.m.: Program TBA**

Check the SAS website and the media for the program, which will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

### **Sunday, May 31, 7 a.m.: Local Hot Spots**

Join us as Dave Daniels leads us to some local hot spots looking for late migrants. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 7 a.m. We will carpool to the lake areas and return before midday. For more information, contact Jim Mitchell at [jlmitchell33@comcast.net](mailto:jlmitchell33@comcast.net) or (812) 824-8198.

### **Friday–Sunday, June 5–7: Brown County State Park Bioblitz**

See article on page 1 of this issue of the *Leaflet*. For more information, contact Jim Eagleman at the Nature Center at (812) 988-5240 or [NatureCenter@bcbioblitz.com](mailto:NatureCenter@bcbioblitz.com).

### **Saturday, June 13, 6 a.m.: GPFWA Henslow Sparrow Rapid Assessment Program**

We will depart from the northeast corner of the Super Wal-Mart parking lot (near the gas pumps) on West Second Street at 6 a.m. We plan to end by noon and we may have lunch in Linton on the way

back, for those so inclined. The return to Bloomington will be by early afternoon. We will use the same transect methodology we used last year at Hillenbrand FWA. Details on the survey method will appear on the birding listservs. Contact Lee Sterrenburg at [sterren@indiana.edu](mailto:sterren@indiana.edu) for details.

### **Saturday, June 20, 9 a.m.: GPFWA Plant Identification Day**

This event, sponsored by the Friends of Goose Pond, takes place at the Linton Library. Registration is required and there is a fee of \$15, which covers the cost of the workshop and identification book. Contact Barbara Simpson at [barbsimp@comcast.net](mailto:barbsimp@comcast.net) for details or to register.


### **Wednesday, June 24, 7 p.m.: Program TBA**

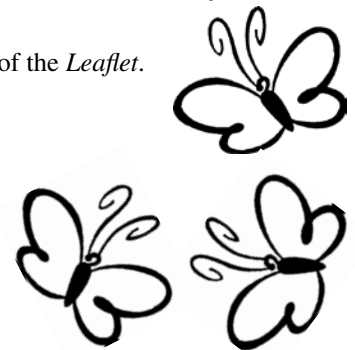
Check the SAS website and the media for the program, which will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

### **Saturday, June 27: Monroe/Brown County Butterfly Count**

See article on page 5 of this issue of the *Leaflet*.

### **Saturday, July 11: GPFWA Butterfly Count**


See the next issue of the *Leaflet* or contact Jess Gwinn at [jagmo@bluemarble.net](mailto:jagmo@bluemarble.net) or (812) 876-8623 for details. 



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## **Editor's Note** *continued from page 2*

Well, I do not think anyone is seriously considering instituting a birdwatcher's license, but there are other ways we can help carry our share of the load. One way is by purchasing heritage trust license plates for our cars. Another is donating a portion of our state tax refund (if you are fortunate enough to get one) to the Nongame Wildlife Fund. The state of Maine has another idea that we might want to consider in Indiana.

Maine has a program they call the Maine Birder Band. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife sells metal bands that you can put on your binocular strap or other field gear. In other words, the birder is banded instead of the bird. The band is inscribed with a unique identifier code and the MDIFW phone number. If you lose your binoculars and they are found by an honest soul, you can recover them. More important, the \$20 fee you pay for the band goes to the nongame bird program of MDIFW. And you can feel the satisfaction of knowing that you have done your part to pay the cost of maintaining our wonderful hobby of birdwatching. This is one of those rare win-win programs that sure sounds great to me. To learn more about this program, visit the MDIFW website at [http://maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/endangered\\_species/birder\\_band.htm](http://maine.gov/ifw/wildlife/species/endangered_species/birder_band.htm). If you think this would be a good idea for Indiana, drop us an e-mail message ([dodd@indiana.edu](mailto:dodd@indiana.edu)) and let us know. Your SAS Board is considering pursuing this idea with the Indiana DNR, and it would help if we knew that our members were with us. 

# A Quest for the Sinaloa Wren in Arizona

by Jim Hengeveld

A first-U.S.-record Sinaloa Wren was found at the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve in Patagonia, Ariz., in early fall and was seen consistently throughout the fall. In December, it was being seen increasingly less but was still being heard in the mornings on a regular basis. After participating in several local CBCs, Susan and I and Lee Sterrenburg decided to DRIVE out to southeast Arizona to look for the wren. We suspected that our chances of actually seeing the bird were not good, but we had a week before we had to be back for obligations at IU, so we rented a car and left town about noon on Friday, Jan. 2.

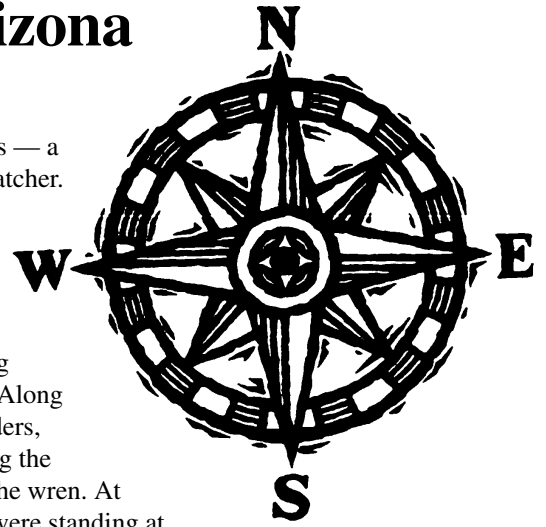
We drove through the night and by 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 3, we were looking at Black-throated, Brewer's, and Lark Sparrows as well as a Sage Thrasher alongside SR 80 in southwestern New Mexico. On the way to the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary, we stopped briefly at the Paton's, where we saw two beautiful Lazuli Buntings. The Sinaloa Wren was not being seen (or heard) in the afternoons, but we wanted to get our bearings at the site as our plan was to arrive there pre-dawn the following day.

We spent the night in Nogales (about two blocks from the Mexican border), and on Jan. 4 arrived at Sonoita Creek at 6:30, about 45 minutes before sunrise, and were serenaded by a Great Horned Owl. Shortly after 7 a.m., we thought we heard the Sinaloa Wren but did not see it, and it was less than a satisfying experience. We spent a good part of the rest of the day at nearby Kino Springs and Patagonia Lake State Park, where we saw a few southwestern specialties, including Rufous-winged Sparrow and Black-capped Gnatcatcher.

While we were birding at Patagonia Lake, we ran into a birder who had SEEN the Sinaloa Wren at Sonoita Creek late in the morning. We also learned about the presence of another potential U.S.-first bird that was being seen at Choke Canyon State Park south of

San Antonio, Texas — a possible Pine Flycatcher.


The following morning, we were at Sonoita Creek by 6:45 but had no luck hearing the Sinaloa Wren. Along with two other birders, we spread out along the creek looking for the wren. At 8:30, Susan and I were standing at a spot where the creek runs right next to the road; Lee and the other two birders were a short distance upstream. At 8:36, Susan and I were trying to get a look at a bird moving furtively through a brush pile, when Susan exclaimed that she had the bird! It took an anxious minute or so before everyone got on it, but eventually we all had good looks. It was in view until 8:42 when Susan went to get her camera and, predictably, the bird disappeared. We were elated and stayed in the area for a short time afterward looking for the wren, but it did not reappear.



We had discussed the possibility of trying for the possible Pine Flycatcher if we had had luck with the Sinaloa Wren, and it didn't take us very long to decide to go after the flycatcher. From Patagonia, we took the "scenic route" east, going through the San Rafael grasslands and via the back side of the Huachuca Mountains over Montezuma Pass at the south end of the range. We drove about 550 miles (half of which seemed to be just getting through El Paso) before spending the night in Fort Stockton, Texas.

We were up pre-dawn the following morning and drove for about six hours to our destination — Choke Canyon S.P. — southeast of San Antonio. Though some folks had seen the flycatcher in the morning, we had to wait approximately one and a half hours before the bird started vocalizing again, at which time it also made an appearance. We had very nice looks at the bird and Susan was also able to get some reasonable, though distant, photos of it. We birded at Choke Canyon for a little while longer, seeing several Audubon's Orioles and a group of five Roseate Spoonbills.

Elated with seeing two (potential) U.S.-first records in two days, we decided to head south rather than back north since we still had portions of two days before we had to head back. We drove down to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where we saw many of the specialties of the area, including a Crimson-collared Grosbeak and a Masked Duck.

On our way back north, we again drove through the night and arrived back in Bloomington at noon on Jan. 8 — six days and approximately 4,400 miles later. It was a long and tiring but thoroughly exhilarating trip, during which we saw/heard 187 species. 

## Save the date!

### Oct. 3–4, 2009

A special weekend of outings and activities to commemorate the 150th birthday of Indiana's greatest naturalist,

**Willis Stanley Blatchley**  
1859–1940

Full details in upcoming issues of the *Leaflet*



Answer to Name That Bird:  
**Common Grackle**

## Bloomington Retains Title as GBBC State Champion

by Bob Dodd

Bloomington birdwatchers successfully defended their title as the Great Backyard Bird Count champions of Indiana in terms of number of lists submitted. Bloomington birdwatchers submitted 215 lists during the Feb. 16–19 event, down 14 lists from the record 229 submitted in 2008. This is the third consecutive year that Bloomington has been the GBBC state champion. Once again, a last-minute push in lists submitted put Bloomington over the top. Bloomington listers counted 83 species, a seven-species increase from the 75 total of last year but still second in Indiana to the 89 total recorded in Evansville. The most frequently reported bird in Bloomington was the Northern Cardinal, followed by Tufted Titmouse and Blue Jay.

Indiana birdwatchers submitted 1,797 lists and reported 131 species, one less than in 2008. Nationally 93,629 lists were submitted, reporting 619 species and 11,550,200 individual birds. Pennsylvania birdwatchers submitted more lists than any other state. Texans reported the most species (341). Mentor, Ohio, had the most lists submitted with 762. Number 10 was Wilmington, N.C., with 250, so Bloomington is within striking distance of making the top 10 list. Just as in Bloomington, the most frequently listed bird was the Northern Cardinal, followed by Mourning Dove and Dark-eyed Junco. Snow Goose was the most numerous bird, followed by Canada Goose and American Robin. Pine Siskins and White-winged Crossbills showed a marked increase this year, indicating a more southerly invasion from Canada than usual.

Thanks to Bloomington participants for keeping Bloomington No. 1 in the state. Most of the lists are not submitted by expert birders but come from backyard birdwatchers who are more concerned with enjoying the beauty of birds than in amassing large totals. But this is one time when you can share in the fun of a bit of competition and help with this citizen science project of tracking changes in bird numbers. If you did not participate in 2009, we hope you will join us in 2010 (Feb. 12-15). It's fun and easy to do. 🐦

## Feeder Cleaning on May 16

The warm days of spring are here, and the Sassafras Audubon Society's Spring Feeder Cleaning on Saturday, May 16, is the perfect opportunity to rid your bird feeders of the dirt, grime, and gunk that accumulated over the winter.

Drop off your feeders at Bloomington Hardware on South College Mall Road between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., and pick them up between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Sorry, but we can't take hummingbird feeders or suet feeders. Proceeds go toward SAS conservation and educational programs. Volunteers are needed. If you would like to help, please contact David Daniels at (812) 333-2121. 🐦

## Join the Monroe/Brown County Fourth of July Butterfly Count

by Jeff and Sandy Belth

On Saturday, June 27, we will conduct the 12th annual Monroe/Brown County "Fourth of July" Butterfly Count. We encourage all who are interested in butterflies to join us, no matter what your level of identification expertise. The Fourth of July butterfly counts are conducted in the same fashion as the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts: a 15-mile-diameter circle is mapped and split into sections, or territories. Our circle is centered at Crooked Creek boat ramp and includes Paynetown, Cutright, Allens Creek, portions of Brown County State Park and Yellowwood State Forest, the Deam Wilderness, and more. The sections are parceled out to field parties, or teams, which cover as much varied habitat as possible and count as many butterfly species and individual butterflies as they can find during the course of the day (usually from about 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). At the end of the day, we meet and tally our results. Our count often has the highest species count in the state and occasionally the highest count in the Midwest.

Although our count has been conducted since 1997, the first Fourth of July counts were started more than 25 years ago by members of the Xerces Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of invertebrates. The name was chosen to mimic the popular Christmas Bird Counts, and like the bird counts, the counts are rarely held on the actual holiday. They are usually conducted two or three weeks before or after July 4; the time is adjusted to correspond with the annual peak of butterfly diversity within the area of the count. For our area, that peak usually occurs around the end of June. In 1993, the administration of the counts was transferred from the Xerces Society to the North American Butterfly Association, an organization formed to educate the public about the joys of nonconsumptive, recreational butterflying, including observation, photography, listing, gardening, rearing, and conservation.

Butterfly counts are a fun way to learn more about butterflies, meet others with similar interests, and help to monitor our local butterfly populations. We hope you can join us! If interested, call Jeff or Sandy at (812) 825-8353 or contact Jeff at jeffreybelth@aol.com. 🐦

## NAME THAT BUTTERFLY

Watch for this butterfly along woodland trails and wetland edges. It spends the winter in hollow logs or behind bark and is often the first butterfly that appears in spring.

Answer on page 7.

Photo by Jeff Belth © 2001



# In My Backyard

by Bob Dodd

I hope that by now you have your Hummingbird feeders up and that they are receiving regular visitors. As I write this we have just put out our feeders (in early April) and are eagerly anticipating the first arrival. But although it is now hummingbird time, I would like to write about bluebirds. Martha Wailes, who sent e-mail after reading this column in the last issue concerning carnivorous cardinals, piqued my interest in this topic. Martha reports that she has cardinals eating mealworms that she put out in hopes of attracting bluebirds. So far she has had no luck in attracting bluebirds, but I guess cardinals are not a bad substitute. The bluebirds have not come to the mealworms but do sometimes come to her heated birdbath in winter.

If you would like to try feeding mealworms to bluebirds or other feathered customers, Martha notes that there is a special feeder, a small cup, that the worms cannot exit. You can purchase mealworms already hatched and ready to go, or if you want to save money and are venturesome, you can raise your own. Here is Martha's report on her mealworm-raising adventures:

"The Web has a lot of information on how to raise mealworms. It's a regular school project — they're dry (not like dirt worms), no smell, no part of the cycle can escape from the small dishpan you can keep them in. Harvested worms live for months in little containers in the fridge (I had plenty



'Bird Party.' Photo by Chuck and Pam Flowers



Eastern Bluebirds. Photo by Jerry Downs

of little containers from having bought them). The basic medium is wheat bran. I bought my first couple of pounds for \$1.49 (or something like that) — organic at Bloomingfoods. Once I realized this worked, I bought 40 pounds (not organic!) from the Farm Bureau Coop for \$8. Forty pounds lasts a long time! Both worms and bugs love banana peels and potato halves. Cheap date. I'm not a particular banana fan, but my office colleagues supply me with empty peels."

A few months ago, we printed a photo from Chuck and Pam Flowers showing two Downy Woodpeckers sharing a meal on either side of a cake of suet. The Flowers have continued to be busy photographing the activity at their feeder. Here is a photo of five different species of birds feeding at the same time. They call the photo "Bird Party." Can you identify the five species (this is a five-for-one Name That Bird)? They are Carolina Chickadee (top), Dark-eyed Junco (below on the pole), House Finch, Northern Cardinal, and American Goldfinch (left to right on the feeder). It looks like these birds believe in diversity! 🐦



## BioBlitz

continued from page 1

work has resulted through community mapping or known species occurrence. "Even the most basic baseline data are lacking in most areas," she says. "It's exciting. We anticipate gathering more information from this endeavor than any other field research project to date."

"Rapid Assessment" is the term used to describe most BioBlitzes. The timed event (usually 24 hours) has been considered competitive between taxa teams at other events. Because of the property size, planners have extended the event to include the entire weekend.

"We are happy to have all come to participate; keeping experts in the field as long as they are comfortable and minimally interrupted is one of our missions," says Jim Eagleman, the park's resource specialist and naturalist. "Getting some sense of where things are and coordinating this knowledge is a step in the right direction."

Purdue University researcher, SAS President, and BirdCountry.US Director Jeff Riegel will coordinate the bird portion of the BioBlitz. "We hope to have as many SAS members and birders as possible from all over attend the event. We will cover all the roads and as many hiking trails as possible. We'll even have a team of backcountry researchers conducting point counts in a portion of the park. Nocturnal birds will be another focus area."

If you are interested in joining in the birding fun, contact Jeff Riegel at [jkriegel@BirdCountry.US](mailto:jkriegel@BirdCountry.US). Let him know the times (morning, afternoon, night) and dates (June 5, 6, 7) you will be available, as well as whether you prefer a driving or walking route.

Several interpretive programs will also be conducted throughout the weekend. For more information, log on to the Brown County State Park BioBlitz website at [www.bcbioblitz.com](http://www.bcbioblitz.com), or call the park's Nature Center at (812) 988-5240. 🐦

# President's Note: *Just Get Outside!*

by Jeff Riegel

First, an update from the March issue. Ann and I took our trip to south Florida and were not disappointed even though several folks around the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge remarked about how few birds there were this year. I guess a few hundred White Ibises is a low number to them. We got our 100 species (actually, 109) and Ann got several lifers, including Painted Bunting, Crested Caracara, and Burrowing Owl. All in all, the weather was terrific and we came back knowing that spring was, indeed, on its way to southern Indiana. But it sure took its sweet time getting here.

But, finally, judging from the bird song outside the bedroom window every morning these days, there is no doubt that the birds are in their spring mood even if the weather isn't. So what should we do? Put on a warmer jacket and GET OUTSIDE! It seems new birds are popping up all over the place now on an almost daily basis. Yellow-throated Vireos, Yellow-throated Warblers, and Louisiana Waterthrushes are just a few of the FOY (first-of-the-year) birds that I've seen in the past few days. But that's only the beginning.

Over the next few weeks, they'll come in spurts, waves, and rising crescendos, and there is no better time to get out and enjoy, not only the birds of spring, but just being a little closer to the nature we all depend on to keep our sanity. And a quick look at our outings calendar will give you plenty of opportunities to join us.

The annual Monroe County Bird-a-thon starts off the month of May, followed the very next weekend with Wings Over Muscatatuck. If you've never had the chance to bird the closed area of our nearest National Wildlife Refuge, you do now. But there's more.

Brown County State Park, Indiana's largest, will be holding their first-ever BioBlitz the first full weekend of June (read more about it in this issue of your *Leaflet*). If you are not familiar with the BioBlitz concept, it is typically a timed event designed to identify every species of life in a given area. Rarely is one of these events held without finding some species not known to exist in the area. What secrets is Brown County harboring? You can help us find out. Just because you may not be a professional in a given area doesn't mean you're not an expert and able to contribute to this massive (not to mention, fun) event. Please join us for as much of the weekend as you can.

Finally, spring is not the only time of year for change. Other changes will be occurring in the coming months, most notably in the SAS Board of Directors. Several members' terms will expire at the end of September; it's not too early to start thinking about new folks to join us. I will be leaving my post as president, and our vice president, Dave Daniels, will be moving on as well. Our very capable *Leaflet* editor, Bob Dodd, and equally capable outing coordinator, Jim Mitchell, will be saying their farewells at the same time. Other openings may occur as well, so think about joining us and if interested, feel free to contact me any time. My e-mail is listed here in the *Leaflet* or you could just GET OUTSIDE and find me. Hint: I'll be where the birds are. 🐦



Answer to Name That Butterfly:  
**Mourning Cloak**



Northern Parula. Photo by Jerry Downs

## Don't Miss the Greene County Big May Day on May 9

by Jess Gwinn

The third annual Greene County Big May Day bird count will be on Saturday, May 9. Big May Day counts record the number of species and individuals of all birds identified within a county from midnight to midnight. Last year's count turned up 174 species. This tied Greene County with Lake and Porter counties for first place in the state. Both Lake and Porter front on Lake Michigan, which provide habitat Greene will never have. However, public lands within the county include Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area, Beehunter Marsh, Hillenbrand FWA, Greene Sullivan State Forest, Combs Unit of Martin SF, Redbird State Riding Area, Shakamak State Park, the Linton Conservation Club, and the West Fork of the White River.

The great tally from last year is due in large part to the number of participants and the variety of habitats covered. If you are interested in participating this year, contact Jess Gwinn, the count coordinator, at (812) 876-8623 or jagmo@bluemarble.net and let him know how much time you can spend so that you can be matched with a team. 🐦

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## Awards *continued from page 1*

Approximately 42 people attended the banquet and took advantage of the opportunity to renew friendships and share experiences with fellow members. The happy hour, meal, and award presentation were followed by a fascinating talk by Keith Clay, who reported his research concerning 17-year cicadas. Keith and his co-workers were ready for the most recent cicada invasion and documented it with photos and videos. In fact, those at the banquet received copies of a DVD prepared from the research.

Because of persistent rain, participants in the planned pre-banquet birding trip used their better judgment and decided to have an extended happy hour in the warm and dry conference center rather than brave the elements for probable minimal results.

Plan to join us next year for this special event. Let's set a goal of at least 75 attendees. We promise you good camaraderie, a tasty meal, an opportunity to meet folks you perhaps have heard about but never met in person, and an interesting program. And if the rain holds off, we can even assure you of an exciting pre-banquet birding trip. 🐦

# Bird Record Committee Helps Hoosiers Preserve Indiana's Avifauna History

by Brad Bumgardner


In October 1991, the Indiana Audubon Society approved the formation of the Indiana Bird Record Committee. In the 18 years since, committee members evaluated nearly 600 bird records. Through the IBRC, we have a better understanding of Indiana's ever-changing bird populations. Mere reports of birds seen often lose integrity years later, when examined long after the original person who saw them passed. Documentation of these birds helps give detail and credibility to the sighting and bridges the gap from casual birdwatching to modern ornithology.

Indiana has a rich past in ornithological history. Going back over 100 years, such names as Amos Butler, Russell Mumford, Charles Keller, and Ken Brock contributed greatly to our knowledge of bird populations in Indiana. A tribute to at least one ornithological great can be found here in Indiana at Spring Mill State Park, where a memorial to Alexander Wilson (think Wilson's Warbler, Wilson's Phalarope, etc.) sits on the edge of a brook deep in a wooded ravine.

Those unfamiliar with the concept of producing written details or documentation of a sighting may feel persecuted when informed that their "say-so" is not enough to make a record legitimate. The

initial enthusiasm of finding and reporting a good bird can quickly turn to discouragement when their undocumented record is treated with skepticism. Don't let this get you down. It is their records, whether accepted or rejected, that future generations will look to.

New features on the IBRC website allow those who find rare birds to simply fill out an easy online documentation form that can be e-mailed instantly. Many of this winter's rare birds have been documented for the IBRC this way already.

As we begin spring birding, the IBRC wants to thank all those who submitted documentations in 2008. They include: David Ayer, Mike Becker, Amy Beringer, Ken Brock, Gary Bowman, John Castrale, John Cassady, James Cole, Dan Collins, Don Gorney, Jim Haw, Roger Hedge, Jim and Susan Hengeveld, James and Laura Hill, Steve Housefield, Pete Janzen, John Kendall, Don Lay, Rebecca Lomax-Sumner, Jeff McCoy, Gary Miller, Chuck Mills, Randy Pals, J.D. Phillips, Michael Retter, Kirk Roth, Lee Sterrenberg, Michael Topp, and Geoffery Williamson. I likely forgot some names, but hats off to these birders for not only finding the rare bird, but taking the time to document them too! 

## Check Out the Indiana Bird Record Committee Online!

Main page: [www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc.htm](http://www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc.htm) • Review list: [www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc/review.htm](http://www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc/review.htm)

2009 decisions: [www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc/results2009.html](http://www.indianaaudubon.org/fibrc/results2009.html)



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