

# *Nature News and Notes*

## *December 2011 / January 2012*

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### ***Photo Night and Silent Auction is Wednesday.***

***December 21, 2011***

The annual Wabash Valley Audubon Society photo night will be held in the lower level of the Vigo County Public Library beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 21, 2011.

Attendee's can also bid in the silent auction being held on the same night. Several nature and bird related items will go to the highest bidders.

All members are welcome to share their photo's, video's and stories.

Presentations must be kept between 10-15 minutes to allow everyone time to share their images. A laptop computer and screen is provided by the library. The public is invited to attend.

### ***Jenny Bodwell to present "Pictorial Tour of Wabashiki". Wednesday.***

***January 18, 2012***

In January our monthly member meeting will feature Jenny Bodwell's Pictorial Tour of Wabashiki FWA. Jenny is a graduate student at Indiana State University, studying birds and their habitats for her Master's degree in the new Wabashiki Fish and Wildlife

Area. Jenny is originally from Canaan, New Hampshire, and attended the University of New Hampshire where she received a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Conservation Science. She moved to Terre Haute with her husband to attend ISU. They live in Terre Haute with two dogs, one foster dog (let Jenny know if you are interested in a sweet three year old white german shepherd), three indoor cats, five ducks and two goldfish. The public is invited to attend. Please join Jenny and all of us from WVAS January 18th at 7:00 p.m. in the lower level of the Vigo County Public Library to learn new interesting things about the new FWA here in Terre Haute.

### ***Learn Birds With WVAS at Dobbs Nature Center***

A great place to learn our local bird species is at the Dobbs Memorial Grove Park. The Wabash Valley Audubon Society visits the nature center at least once each month to help those interested find and learn the birds being found in the park and at the nature center viewing window. To find out when the next schedule event is planned, see the events schedule in this newsletter or on our website at [www.wabashvalleyaudubon.org](http://www.wabashvalleyaudubon.org). Usually, we visit the center on a Saturday

between 10 am and noon. Stay for as little or as long as you like. The nature center is always great fun for adults, kids and the whole family.

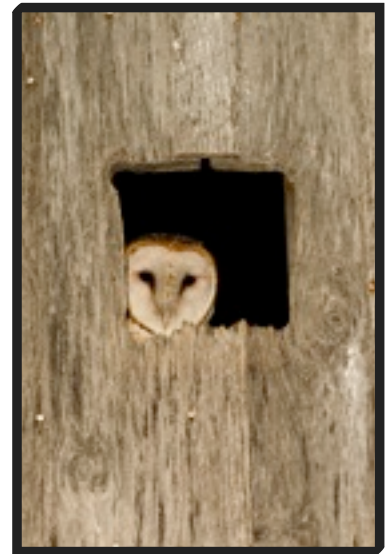
### ***Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans. January 28, 2012***

Our next WVAS guided field trip on Saturday January 28th will take us to Parke and Vermillion County. We will begin by meeting at the parking lot of the Vigo County Public Library. We will depart the library at 6:30 a.m. Our first stop will be at the West Union Covered Bridge to see Bald Eagles leaving their roost along Sugar Creek. From there we will make various stops throughout Parke County eventually finishing at Universal Mine in Vermillion County. Besides Bald Eagles we should see several Trumpeter Swans and many other bird species. "Reservations" made by January 27th are necessary to attend this field trip. Contact Marty Jones, [indth33@yahoo.com](mailto:indth33@yahoo.com) or 317-696-6246 to reserve a spot or if questions. This event will be cancelled in event of hazardous winter road conditions.

## *Indiana DNR Barn Owl Project - Barns and Volunteers Needed*

According to Amy Kearns of the Indiana DNR-Division of Fish and Wildlife, there are around 200 nest boxes for Barn Owls in the state, most in the southern half. The DNR checks these boxes every 4-5 years to get an idea of how many owls are nesting in the state. Checking the boxes more often than that causes unnecessary disturbance to both the owls and the landowners. The last time boxes were checked was 2009, when DNR found 17 nests in the state, which is typical.

So far in 2011, DNR, with the help of volunteers, have installed 8 nest boxes. In addition to those listed above, 1 box was installed in Daviess County at an active roost, 3 boxes were installed in Scott County in areas of good foraging habitat, 1 box was installed at an active roost in Randolph County, and 1 box was installed at a historic roost in Monroe County. The volunteer in Monroe County has installed a 2nd box on his own and plans to build and install more in the future.



Barn Owls benefit from nest boxes placed in barns or metal outbuildings, as the box gives them a safe place to roost and nest. If you are interested in building and installing nest boxes for the owls, Ms. Kearns can send you blueprints and info to help you get started. Ms. Kearns is also looking for volunteers that can help install boxes. Email Ms. Kearns ([greenpertplus@hotmail.com](mailto:greenpertplus@hotmail.com)) with your availability (weekdays or only weekends?) and what counties you could help in.

Ms. Kearns also keeps a file of Barn Owl sightings. As of December 13, 2011 here is what she has recorded - if you know of any additional sightings not listed below, please email Ms. Kearns at the address listed previously.

January 25 - Switzerland County, 1 owl sighted.

May 7 - Harrison County, 1 owl roosting in barn, did not nest in box.

May 14 - Lawrence County, 1 owl sighted at known nesting location, 3 owls (2 adult and 1 young) on June 14.

May 19 - Perry County, 1 owl sighted at known nesting location.

June 18 - Daviess County, 2 owls sighted at known nesting location.

June 28 - Greene County, 1 owl sighted in flight.

July 2 - Greene County, 1 owl sighted at roost, nest box installed on October 14.

July 21 - Washington County, juvenile owl taken to rehab.

August 8 - Tippecanoe, 2 owls at roost heard only by birder.

August 30 - Greene County, 2 juveniles taken to rehab, nest box installed.

September 24 - Hendricks County, 1 owl sighted, landowner will build and install box himself.

October 1, Jennings County, 1 owl adult owl taken to rehab, later died.

October 20 - Owen County, 1 owl sighted at roost, barn owners do not want nest box.

November 12 - Porter County, 1 owl sighted.

November 13 - Gibson County, 3 owls sighted at two roosts, landowner will build and install boxes in both barns himself.

November 24 - Newton County, 1 adult owl taken to rehab.

December 8 - Noble County, 1 owl sighted.

December 10 - Warrick County, 1 owl sighted at known nesting location.

## *Bluebird Nest Box Results*

Thanks to all Wabash Valley Audubon members who helped monitor our bluebird boxes during the 2011 nesting season. In just the past two years the Wabash Valley Audubon has established a successful bluebird box trail throughout Clay, Sullivan and Vigo counties. Currently, we have 27 bluebird boxes located in such places as cemeteries, church yards, school yards and rural roadsides. The boxes are made of recycled 4-inch diameter recycled pvc drainage pipe topped with a cedar roof. An important part of the design is the clear vinyl floor (made from discarded carpet mats) which allows sunlight into the box. Most species that compete with bluebirds for nesting sites prefer a dark nest cavity and therefore will not nest in these pvc boxes.

During the 2011 nesting season our bluebird trail fledged a total of 64 bluebirds! As expected, some boxes were more successful than others. Our most successful nest box was monitored by Nicholas Brown in which three broods were raised from April 15 through August 3. This single nestbox located in Calvary Cemetery on East Wabash Avenue produced a total of 12 bluebirds out of these three broods. Joe Dickson also had very successful nestboxes at both Roselawn Cemetery and a pair of church yards on the north end of Terre Haute. If you want to see bluebirds in the summer the westside of Roselawn cemetery is the place! The Roselawn staff has graciously allowed several bluebird boxes along its western border of the property.

We have already begun preparing for the 2012 bluebird nesting season. Boxes that did not produce fledglings for the past two years have been relocated to more favorable habitat areas. Building and monitoring nest boxes not only helps the birds, but is also fun and educational for both children and adults. Contact a board member if you are interested in monitoring a bluebird box in 2012.



*Several volunteers helped clean our newly adopted planter. The planter is located on Wabash Avenue just west of 14th Street. Photographed are Stephanie Taylor and Denise Weltzin. Other volunteers included Mike Hannum, Barbara Weber, Joe Dickson, Ellen Lunsford, Brenda Milliren and Margaret Tamar. We look forward to next spring when we return to plant native Indiana plants at this location.*



### ***Wampler Presentation***

The Wabash Valley Audubon Society welcomed Maryrose and Fred Wampler, the author and illustrator of "Trees of Indiana" and "Wildflowers of Indiana", for a presentation about their nature artistry at the November monthly meeting. Photographed are Michael Sacopulos and his son Alexander as they receive an autographed book from Mrs. Wampler.

### ***Mertin Story by Jane Chestnut***

My feeding area is just outside the door, where I have a black silhouette of a bird. Recently, I heard a big thump and on the patio was a merlin, trying to get to its feet. It rested quietly for a few minutes, then flew up into a big dogwood tree, nearby, where it was standing on one foot, and a tuft of feathers sticking out, near its leg. It moved over a few feet and I went outside to try for a better picture and it flew away. I think it mistook the silhouette for a real bird and it was going after dinner.

### ***Upcoming Christmas Bird Counts***

The Turkey Run CBC will be held December 26th. Contact Alan Bruner, [abbird@att.net](mailto:abbird@att.net)  
The Newport CBC will be held December 28th. Contact Alan Bruner, [abbird@att.net](mailto:abbird@att.net)  
Sullivan CBC, December 31. Contact Michael Brown, [mikepytlak@aol.com](mailto:mikepytlak@aol.com).

### ***Website, Facebook, and Twitter***

The WVAS *website* address is: [www.wabashvalleyaudubon.org](http://www.wabashvalleyaudubon.org) You will find information, past and current, photo's, dates of upcoming activities and more.

The WVAS *Facebook* page may be found by going to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and searching "Wabash Valley Audubon". Our facebook page is updated almost daily.

All Facebook post are also available through *Twitter*.

## *Elanco/Lilly Wabash River Project: In Partnership with the Indiana DNR Healthy Rivers Initiative*

### **Background**



In June 2010, Governor Mitch Daniels and the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources announced the Healthy Rivers Initiative (HRI), the largest conservation initiative to be undertaken in Indiana. The initiative includes a partnership of resource agencies and organizations who will work with willing landowners to permanently protect 43,000 acres located in the floodplain of the Wabash River and Sugar Creek in west-central Indiana.

This project involves the protection, restoration and enhancement of riparian and aquatic habitats and the species that use them, particularly threatened, endangered, migratory birds and waterfowl. This initiative will also be beneficial to the public and surrounding communities by providing flood protection to riparian landowners, increasing public access to recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, boating, and bird watching, and leaving a legacy for future generations by providing a major conservation destination for tourists.

In early 2011, the Governor solicited the involvement of Elanco/Clinton Labs, an Eli Lilly facility just north of Clinton, Indiana. Their site contains about 300 acres of Wabash River bottom within the HRI target area. Elanco has agreed to a conservation plan for that acreage, and to place a conservation easement on the area. Further, they have agreed to make the site available for selected public recreation opportunities and for plant, animal and ecological research.

The Elanco plan will include planting about 18 acres of trees, mostly to widen the wooded corridor along the Wabash River. Approximately 30 acres of wetlands will be restored or created in the bottom. About 40 acres of native warm and cool season grasses and forbs will be planted to provide woodland and wetland buffers. Areas will be set aside for natural bottomland regeneration study, plant restoration research, and about 14,000 feet of walking trail which will be open to the public. On adjacent upland sites, a "pollinator patch" will be established for insect pollinators, and a 50 Trees Trail will be planted for area students to find leaves for projects.

### **Project Benefits**

One strong aspect of this project is providing a model for bottomland management, from both the conservation and agriculture perspective. Therefore, the area will be used for education through field days and small group education efforts. Research areas, mentioned above, should provide learning and interesting discussion.

Widening the wooded corridor will over time will help armor the river bank and help hold soil in place. The trees will help catch soil and debris, keeping them out of the river and thereby reducing the nutrient load of the river and reducing nutrients that reach the Gulf of Mexico "hypoxic zone."

Additional woodland in the bottom will provide added nest and roost sites to a wide variety of wildlife, provide a variety of wildlife food, and improve the migration corridor used by birds and other wildlife. The native grasses, forbs, and wetlands will provide new similar benefits to wildlife, trap debris and hold soil in place.

There will either be new wetland areas or the existing ones will be enhanced so that they catch and hold more water, reducing flooding downstream, provide added benefits to wildlife, and help recharge area ground water. The wetland enhancements will help hold water longer on site, benefitting waterfowl and amphibians particularly.

The pollinator patch and 50 trees trail will be valuable educational tools for youth and adults of the community. The hiking trail will provide as much exercise as individuals want to put into it. The trails will pass through or by woodlands, native grass areas, wetlands, and the Wabash River providing unlimited hours of opportunity for nature study, bird watching, hiking and family time. Such facilities and opportunities are limited in Vermillion County. Reprinted with permission of Dean Zimmerman, District Wildlife Biologist.

### **Land Conservancy Annual Meeting, January 27th**

The Ouabache Land Conservancy (a 501(c)3 non-profit land trust) will be hosting its annual meeting and banquet on Friday January 27 at Gerhardt's Bierstube Restaurant, 1724 Lafayette Avenue, Terre Haute. The featured speakers for the evening: Mike McCormick (Vigo County historian, master story teller and author of Terre Haute: Queen City of the Wabash) and Marty Jones (Wabash Valley Audubon Society president and expert wildlife photographer); will present the History and Nature of the magnificent Forest Park, located along the banks of the Otter Creek in North Terre Haute. There will be a social hour and silent auction (donations accepted) beginning at 6:00 with dinner at 7:00. Make reservations by contacting Phil Cox at (765)548-4007 or [philwcox@gmail.com](mailto:philwcox@gmail.com) by January 19. Checks (made payable to Ouabache Land Conservancy for \$25 per person for members, \$50 for non-members (includes a membership), and \$20 per guest with member) can be mailed to Phil Cox, P.O. Box 237, Clinton, IN 47842 or payment can be made at the door (with a reservation). Please come and help celebrate Ouabache Land Conservancy's 2011 accomplishments and 2012 vision. Silent auction items may be donated at the banquet. Non-members and especially persons living or owning property in the Otter Creek Valley are welcome! For more information about the Ouabache Land Conservancy, go to [ouabachelandconservancy.weebly.com](http://ouabachelandconservancy.weebly.com).

### **Indiana Harvested 5.7 Million Acres of Corn in 2009**

Man discovered the rich soils that exist in the prairies about 150 years ago. Finding the prairie soils outstanding for crop production, they plowed the prairie everywhere they could for the production of wheat, corn, and other domestic crops. Today, the most fertile and well-watered region, the tallgrass prairie, has been reduced to but 1% of its original area. This makes it one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in the world.

### **Newport Prairie Update**

On December 14, the new owner of the former U.S. Army Newport Chemical Depot property voted to convert the largest black soil tallgrass prairie in the State to row crops. The owner, the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority, has renamed the property the Vermillion Rise Mega Park. Unfortunately, this public Board was convinced that the prairie wildlife would simply find some other place to survive. Of course, this kind of thinking is what causes wildlife to become extinct. There are many species of endangered wildlife that inhabit this prairie and there is no immediate mitigation planned. In other words there is no place for the displaced wildlife to survive. The conversion will be done as part of the Board approved contract with Farmers National Company to manage the agriculture portion of the property. It is not known (at this time) if this includes all 336 tallgrass prairie acres or not; as some of the existing prairie area was planned to be adjacent to a proposed recreational trail. Bids to lease the agricultural tracts (including the tallgrass prairie area) are to be accepted in the near future; as soon as Farmers National Company can get everything that is required ready (maybe by sometime in January).

## Events

All events are open to the public. If you have a topic you would like to present please contact WVAS. If additional information is needed call one of the officers listed below:

### WVAS OFFICERS 2011-2012

**President:**

Marty Jones,  
[indth33@yahoo.com](mailto:indth33@yahoo.com)

**Vice-President:**

Phil Cox,  
[philwcox@gmail.com](mailto:philwcox@gmail.com)

**Secretary:**

Stephanie Taylor  
[franniesimone@yahoo.com](mailto:franniesimone@yahoo.com)

**Treasurer:**

Phil Milliren  
[philiren@msn.com](mailto:philiren@msn.com)

**Conservation & Education:**

Phil Cox

**Board member:**

Ellen Lunsford,  
Helen Vermillion,  
Joe Dickson,  
Shelley Arvin,  
Nicholas Brown

**Social Chair:**

Margaret Tamar,

**Membership Chair**

Brenda Milliren,  
[breniren@msn.com](mailto:breniren@msn.com)

**Memorial Fund:**

Open

**Bird Count Compiler:**

Peter Scott,  
[psscott@indstate.edu](mailto:psscott@indstate.edu)

## December

17  
Bird Identification Assistance. Join a Joe Dickson of the Wabash Valley Audubon Society for help finding and identifying birds at the Dobbs Nature Center viewing window. 10 AM to Noon.

17  
The 52nd Annual Terre Haute Christmas Bird County. To participate contact Peter Scott, [psscott@indstate.edu](mailto:psscott@indstate.edu) or Marty Jones, 317-696-6246

21  
Annual WVAS Photo/Video night. Vigo County Public Library, 7:00 p.m. Bring your photo's/video's to share. Everyone is welcome whether presenting or not.

31  
Sullivan County CBC. To participate contact Michael Brown, [mikepytlak@aol.com](mailto:mikepytlak@aol.com)

## January

18  
ISU grad student, Jenny Bodwell will present "Birds of Wabashiki FWA". Jenny has spent many hours monitoring birds at this location and will share her findings and stories with us.

21  
Bird identification. Join a Wabash Valley Audubon Society member for help finding and identifying birds at the Dobbs Nature Center viewing window, 10 a.m. to noon.

28  
WVAS Field Trip. Bald Eagles and Trumpeter Swans. Meet at the Vigo County Public Library. We will leave the parking lot at 6:45 a.m. Must make "reservations" by contacting Marty Jones, [indth33@yahoo.com](mailto:indth33@yahoo.com) or 317-696-6246

## February

15  
Bob Eddleman will be our guest speaker. Mr. Eddleman is with the Central Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area (CMWA). Meeting will be held at the Vigo County Public Library, lower level beginning at 7:00 p.m.

18  
Bird identification. Join a Wabash Valley Audubon Society member for help finding and identifying birds at the Dobbs Nature Center viewing window, 10 a.m. to noon.

## *Michael Gerringer Discovers Rare Bird in Vigo County*



*Say's Phoebe photo by Michael Brown. December 11, 2011*

Birders from all over Indiana and Illinois recently flocked to Vigo County to see a Say's Phoebe. The bird was very cooperative, staying several days and allowing wonderful views and photographs.

The Vigo County Say's Phoebe becomes only the seventh (and second winter) Indiana record. Say's Phoebe, named after the naturalist Thomas Say, is a passerine bird in the tyrant flycatcher family. Their normal breeding habitat is dry open or semi-open areas across western North American from Alaska to Mexico. Normally, Say's Phoebe's migrate to southern Mexico.

ISU grad student, Michael Gerringer found the rarity around noon on Saturday December 10th, along Swalls Road, east of Tabortown Road. The area is on reclaimed land on what was formally Chinook Mine.

At the time of Gerringer's rare find he was working on his school project which involves the FAA's overall investigation into the effectiveness of commercially available avian radar systems. Initially he thought the bird was a bluebird, but when he got closer he realized it was not a bluebird due to behavior characteristics such as the bobbing of the tail. Upon getting closer Gerringer noticed the orange-brown on the under-parts and belly, and realized that it was something he had never seen before. Using his bird field guide he determined the bird was a Say's.

### **Indiana Say's Phoebe Records**

- |                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. 04 Apr1937  | Dunes State Park (Porter County) |
| 2. 27 Dec1997  | Dearborn County                  |
| 3. 29 Sep2003  | Miller Beach (Lake County)       |
| 4. 30 Apr2004  | Migrant Trap (Lake County)       |
| 5. 27 Aug2005  | Hawthorn Mine (Sullivan)         |
| 6. 22 Apr 2008 | Dunes State Park (Porter County) |
| 7. 10 Dec2011  | Chinook Mine (Vigo County)       |

Records Source: Ken Brock



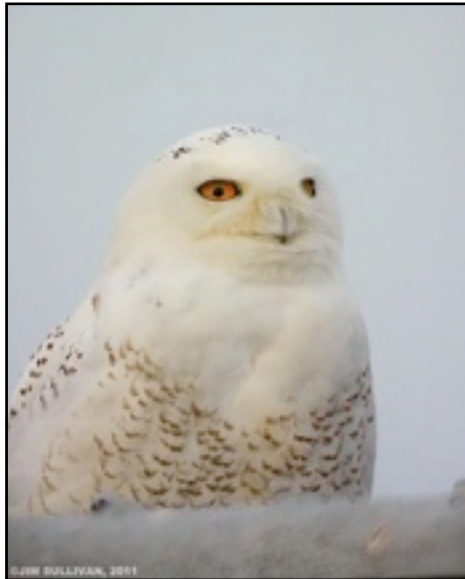
# WYAS MEMBER PHOTOS



Whooping Crane by Jim Sullivan.  
Photographed December 9th at the  
former Chinook Mine, Clay County.



Cattle Egrets found on November 7th by Stephanie  
Taylor on state road 157 on the Owen/Clay County line.



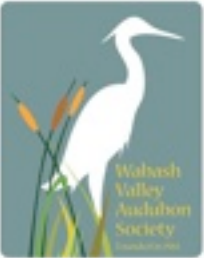
Snowy Owl by Jim Sullivan.  
Photographed in Marion County,  
Indiana on December 3rd.



Trumpeter Swans by Joe Dickson. Photographed  
at Universal Mine west of Clinton, Indiana.



Red Foxes by David Hamenstafer.  
Photographed in November in Southern Vigo  
County.



Wabash Valley Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 2338  
Terre Haute IN 47802-2338

**Audubon Help Needed**

*NOTICE*

Wabash Valley Audubon currently has openings for the following positions: board member, newsletter editor, memorial fund. Some of the most valuable gifts that an organization can receive have no price tag on them. Only an hour or two of volunteer work each month can really make a difference. To learn more contact Marty **Chapter Members** if you are a chapter only member, your membership renewal is due!

Newsletter photo sources: Google Images & Flickr

**JOIN AUDUBON Wabash Valley Audubon Society Code No. C1ZH050Z**

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

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