



Audubon Leaves

A Publication of the South Bend - Elkhart Audubon Society

December 2023
January 2024

Volume 75, Number 9

Serving North-Central Indiana Since 1944

HOLIDAY POTLUCK

[Tai Gunter](#), *President*

Our annual holiday potluck dinner will be Sunday, December 10th at 1:00 p.m. at the Elkhart Conservation Club. Please bring a dish to share prior to 1:30 p.m. Roasted turkey will be provided; the cost of this is shared. Beverages will also be provided. After food and conversation, we will have a slide show of our members' nature photographs from the past year. Please bring your photos on a flash drive. Next year's budget will also be presented to the membership for a vote. The Elkhart Conservation Club is located at 55515 Riviera Drive in Elkhart. If anyone is interested in helping to set up tables and chairs and decorate the tables, please join us at 12:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!



You are invited and encouraged to comment on the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society name change discussion.

Everyone's opinion is valued and will be taken into consideration.

Please visit

www.sbeaudubon.org/namechange

to provide your feedback.

For more information, see the article on this topic in the November *Audubon Leaves* and on page 3 of this issue.

**We need your help for our
Christmas Bird Counts**

in South Bend and in Elkhart County!

See the articles on page 4 of this issue and contact the count coordinators to join in the fun.



Volunteers from the Queens County Bird Club participate in the 121st Christmas Bird Count, December 19, 2020 at Highland Park in New York City.
© Luke Franke/Audubon

DECEMBER CALENDAR



- 2 Field Trip to Kankakee Fish & Wildlife Area and Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area
- 2 Budget and Board Meeting at the Gunters', 2 PM
- 10 Potluck, Meeting, and Slide Shows at Elkhart Conservation Club, 1 PM
- 16 South Bend Christmas Bird Count
- 30 Elkhart County Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY CALENDAR



- 13 Big Sit at the Sanctuary, 9 AM
- 14 Board Meeting at Rum Village Nature Center, 1 PM
- 14 Membership Meeting and Program at Rum Village Nature Center, 2 PM
- 17 February *Audubon Leaves* Articles Due

Check www.sbeaudubon.org and our Facebook page for field trip announcements, updates, and cancelations.

FROM THE MINUTES

John Bentley, Secretary

President Tai Gunter called the November 12, 2023 SBEAS membership meeting at the Elkhart Conservation Club to order at 2:02 p.m. Twenty-eight (28) members and guests were in attendance.

- Tai welcomed everyone and called for bird sightings. Among those mentioned were Double-crested Cormorants, a very far astray Rufous Hummingbird, and Cattle Egrets. One member had taken a video of an Osprey diving and catching a fish.
- Tai reported that he and Melissa Gunter had attended the Audubon National Leadership Conference in Colorado.
- Tai reported that the Society is in the process of setting up an annual scholarship named for Vic and Marge Riemenschneider, to honor their long-time commitment to our Society and to benefit young people who want to go into environmental fields.
- Tai announced that the Board would like feedback from the membership on whether or not we should remove John J. Audubon's name from the Society's name. A link to a website where anonymous comments can be posted appears in the *Audubon Leaves*.

Committee Reports

Field Trips. Carol Goodall will lead a Sandhill Crane trip to Jasper-Pulaski State Fish and Wildlife Area on December 2nd.

Hospitality. Alice Bentley asked for a volunteer to cook a turkey breast for our holiday potluck on December 10th, as well as assistance with decorating the tables for that event. She thanked refreshment providers for the November meeting, Marie Smith and Ruth Middleton, and asked for volunteers for future meetings.

Programs. Bruce Cates reported that in March we will have a speaker from Indiana Audubon Society. He is still pursuing a February speaker.

Sanctuary. Bradley Waelbroeck reported that the November work day at the Sanctuary had eight volunteers. They winterized the pump and summer quarters and cleaned up downed trees and trails.

Other Business. Tai announced that Wild Ones, with SBEAS support, are trying to arrange a lecture by noted author Doug Tallamy.

Treasurer's Report

Martha Kummerer reported that the operating checking account (KeyBank) had a balance of \$28,482.92 as of October 31st, and the endowment checking account (Everwise) held \$11,943.63. She mentioned that \$6,495.24 of the operating funds are an additional component of the Dickey bequest and will be moved to the Dickey CD when it renews.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Bruce Cates, Program Chair

Our January membership meeting will be held on Sunday, January 14th at 2:00 p.m. at the Rum Village Park Nature Center in South Bend. Our speaker will be local naturalist Janet McGowan, appearing on behalf of the local non-profit organization, Wild Ones. Her program is titled "How Native Plants Bring Your Garden (and the Birds) to LIFE!". She will explain the many benefits of using native plants in our yards and gardens. She will discuss the ways native plants support healthy soils, climate, pollinators, and humans, while giving special attention to how critical they are for our precious birds. She will also share how and why native plants save gardeners time, money, and effort as they join a grassroots effort to support native ecosystems. Jan will also provide some tips on finding native plants for your landscape, and resources for garden planning and design.

Ms. McGowan is excited to share her knowledge with our members. I have personally seen her doing programs at the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Granger and can attest that she is an excellent speaker. Please join us!

Want to recycle your Styrofoam?

**If you have excess polystyrene
(the kind used in packaging, not for food),
bring it to our meetings so our members can
transport it to a company that will
recycle it.**

**For those of you not on Facebook,
to view pictures of our recent events,
you may visit our Facebook page
via the internet at**

**[https://www.facebook.com/
SouthBendElkhartAudubon/](https://www.facebook.com/SouthBendElkhartAudubon/).**

**For those of you on Facebook
please like our page:
South Bend Elkhart Audubon.**

Follow us on Instagram [@sbeaudubon](https://www.instagram.com/sbeaudubon).

THE SOUTH BEND-ELKHART AUDUBON SOCIETY NAME

[Tai Gunter](#), *President*

Last month, we reached out to you asking for feedback on the ongoing discussions about a potential name change for the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society. For a full summary of the issue at hand, please refer to the November 2023 issue of *Audubon Leaves*. As local Audubon chapters all over the country grapple with the challenges of a controversial past, our Society must do the same. Your input is crucial in shaping the decisions we make as a community. The thoughtful feedback received so far has been valuable and is sincerely appreciated.

The comment period remains open, and we want to hear from as many members as possible. If you haven't shared your thoughts yet, we encourage you to do so. To submit your anonymous comments, please visit www.sbeaudubon.org/namechange. We are actively considering all perspectives as we navigate this important decision. We appreciate your continued engagement and look forward to hearing from you. Over the coming months, the Board will review the feedback received and decide on next steps; we will continue to update the membership as this process moves forward.



© Mary Keim

**Don't forget the field trip
to Kankakee Fish & Wildlife Area and
Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area
with our Field Trip Chair,
Carol Goodall,
on December 2, 2023!**

**The highlight will be seeing
thousands of Sandhill Cranes,
a natural wonder that we can see here
in northwest Indiana.**

**For information on this trip,
see the article in the
November *Audubon Leaves*, or visit our
Facebook page.**

BIG SIT AT OUR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

[Carol Goodall](#), *Field Trip Chair*

Join us for a nice break from the winter doldrums! On January 13, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. we will have a Big Sit at our wildlife sanctuary. We will have a fire in the woodstove and watch the feeder birds.



© Phil Myers, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

There are already Red-breasted Nuthatch & Pine Siskin at the sanctuary. The finch network has predicted a good winter for winter finches in our area. There will be hot chocolate and snacks available. Please dress for the weather and bring a chair.

Our wildlife sanctuary is located at 59395 Clover Rd., Mishawaka, IN. Questions, please contact: fieldtrips@sbeaudubon.org.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

[Jude Keltner](#), *Membership Chair*

We welcome the following new and returning members:

John Ferguson, Elizabeth Henningfeld, Eileen Hunt, Deborah Johnston, Linda R. Levine, Melissa Martin, Julie A. Rice, Barbara Rowe, Constance Runnels, Barbara Shelby, Shoshana Sloman, Ya'akov Sloman, Kristen Van Dyke, Laura Weismann, and Nancy Whiteman.

We look forward to seeing you at an activity soon. See the calendar in this newsletter and check our Facebook page for updates.

*** REMINDER ***

For your convenience, your membership expiration date is printed above the mailing address on your mailed *Audubon Leaves*. If you receive your newsletter by email, the notification email includes the following: "Your membership will expire on mm/dd/yy". To save SBEAS the expense and effort of sending renewal notices, please be mindful of this date and renew promptly.

Should you have any questions about your membership, please email us at membership@sbeaudubon.org. If you would like to renew your South Bend-Elkhart Audubon membership online, you can do so at www.sbeaudubon.org.

28TH ANNUAL ELKHART COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Ronda DeCaire, Elkhart County CBC Compiler

The South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society and the Elkhart County Parks are calling upon volunteers for the annual Elkhart County Christmas Bird Count, which will be held on Saturday, December 30, 2023.

Volunteer bird counters can participate two ways:

Field Observers will be assigned an area and given maps to count birds within a designated part of Elkhart County. Teams will bird by car and foot from dawn to dusk. Participants should dress for the weather and bring binoculars and field guides. Field observers will meet at Ox Bow House Shelter in Ox Bow County Park on Saturday, December 30th at 7:30 a.m. Ox Bow County Park is located at 23033 County Road 45 in Dunlap. Field sections can also be assigned prior to the date.

Feeder Counters can count birds in their yards. Participants must count the highest number of each species seen at once in their yard on that day. Feeder counts can take place during any amount of time and counters are welcome to count all birds seen from their yard, especially along waterways.

The Elkhart County count circle extends from the state line on the north end to Waterford Mills on the south end, and includes the towns of Bristol, Middlebury, Goshen, and the eastern portion of Elkhart. The center of the 7.5-mile radius for the count circle is the intersection of County Roads 18 and 23.

Bird watchers are encouraged to contact Ronda DeCaire with the Elkhart County Parks at (574) 535-6458 or rdecaire@elkhartcounty.com to register their name, address, phone number, and email to receive further directions for the bird count.



Volunteers survey birds for the Boulder Christmas Bird Count at Teller Farm in Boulder, Colorado, on December 18, 2022. The Christmas Bird Count is a long-running, annual community science project. © Evan Barrientos/Audubon

SOUTH BEND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - DECEMBER 16, 2023

Lindsay Grossmann, South Bend CBC Compiler

Help wanted! We need both feeder counters and field observers for the South Bend Christmas Bird Count, to be held on Saturday, December 16th. This circle is centered on downtown South Bend and extends out 7.5 miles in each direction covering a variety of habitat. Please contact Lindsay Grossmann at lindsay.grossmann@sbeaudubon.org or (574) 807-4443 to sign up! Volunteers of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to take part in this traditional event.

You can also go to the following page for more information and to sign up:

www.sbeaudubon.org/christmas-bird-count.

SANCTUARY REPORT

Bradley Waelbroeck, Sanctuary Chair

We had a Sanctuary work day on November 11th, the day before our membership meeting. There are no more work days scheduled going into winter; the next scheduled work day is March 9, 2024.

All feeders were filled at 8:00 a.m. sharp by Laurie Wood. The Summer Quarters were winterized with the help of our team of eight volunteers. Benches were stacked along the shelves by Jillian Waelbroeck and Jude Keltner with tables then stacked against them. We left one table and a pair of benches out for use so there is a place to rest. The speed bumps have been removed for the winter and placed in the Seed Shed. Please use caution entering and exiting the Sanctuary as all of the beautiful leaves continue to fall, making it difficult to see the pathway. The upstream (west) entrances to all culverts were cleared of accumulated brush to prevent flooding when the thaw comes. The well and pump have been winterized with the help of Dale Keltner, Bruce Cates, Tai Gunter, and Merrilee Britt, so please remember to stay hydrated and bring water with you when you visit the Sanctuary! A friendly newt announced his presence then scurried away when we lifted the lid to the well pit. The grass meadow by the pond was mowed one final time and mowing has commenced on the south prairie field. Two nesting boxes were retrieved from different places in the Sanctuary and taken to the Winter Quarters for repair or replacement. Remember to stay warm as temperatures drop. Wear mittens or gloves, scarves, hats, and a warm coat. A good thing to carry when visiting the Sanctuary during this time of the year is hand warmers. There are even rechargeable electric ones on the market these days!

I would also like to say thank you all for the opportunity to take care of our Sanctuary. We don't just do the things we do for the avians we all adore, we also do them for all of us. Taking care of nature helps us take care of ourselves. I am open to all comments and requests for anything you may notice our Sanctuary needs.

PHOTO QUIZ!

There were six correct responses to the November photo quiz. The winner was Nancy Reiter, who correctly identified the bird in the November *Audubon Leaves* as a Black-capped Chickadee. Nancy was awarded a \$20 gift card to the South Bend Farmer's Market. Congratulations, Nancy! Read about the Black-capped Chickadee in the article to the right.



© Greg Lasley

The December-January *Audubon Leaves* Photo Quiz is shown above. All correct answers will be entered in a drawing, and the winner will receive a \$20 gift card. Send responses along with your mailing address to Leaves@sbeaudubon.org with PHOTO QUIZ in the subject line. You can also send a response in the mail to:

Lindsay and Scott Namestnik
26568 SR 4
North Liberty, Indiana 46554

Good luck!

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*POECILE ATRICAPILLUS*)

[Lindsay Grossmann](#)

Aerobatic and curious, the Black-capped Chickadee is the epitome of the term “adorbs.” A small and compact songbird with a short bill, these birds can look like little fluffballs, especially when it’s cold. They are one of our smallest birds to overwinter in this area, where they take up residence in forests of all types all year long. Their black cap and chin contrast dramatically with their white cheeks, gray back and wings, and buffy belly.

Black-capped Chickadees can be easily confused with their more southern cousin, the Carolina Chickadee, but fortunately for us they tend to stick to their range maps. We are firmly in the “black-capped” region, but if you go not too far away, like Fort Wayne or Lafayette, they both occur and you will have to be able to tell them apart. By sound is the easiest way, as Carolinas have a four-note song, whereas Black-capped have a two- or three-note “Hey Sweetie” or “Cheeseburger” song.

We think of these birds as “feeder birds,” and they are, especially in winter. But their diets consist of about 50% animals (insects and spiders) in winter and a whopping 80% animals from spring through fall! They nest in tree cavities and bird houses.

Their name-sake “chick-a-dee-dee” warning call helps identify them in the field, but did you know the number of “dee”s on the end indicates the severity of the threat? If you hear one calling with 4 “dee”s, for instance, be on the lookout for a nearby hawk or owl!

Source:

Cornell University, All About Birds, accessed online 9 November 2023.
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-capped_Chickadee.

NEW OR RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP FORM: NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY OR CHAPTER ONLY

(For a renewal, only include your address if it has changed)

NAME: _____
FULL ADDRESS: _____

____ I want to join or renew my membership in National Audubon Society. I will receive the AUDUBON magazine plus membership in the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society. Make check payable to National Audubon Society for \$20.00.

____ I want to join or renew my membership in the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society only. Make check payable to South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society for \$20.00 (all the money goes to our local Society). I will not receive the AUDUBON magazine.

All memberships will receive the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society newsletter, *Audubon Leaves*. Please send the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society newsletter by:

____ mail ____ email email address _____

Can we contact you via email when necessary (such as to notify you of meeting cancellations)? ____ yes ____ no

MAIL THIS FORM AND CHECK TO: SBEAS MEMBERSHIP CHAIR, PO BOX 581, MISHAWAKA, IN 46546.

Audubon Leaves

South Bend - Elkhart Audubon Society
Membership Chair - Jude Keltner
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(574) 656-3511

Membership: Jude Keltner

(574) 276-6348

The South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society publishes the *Audubon Leaves*

nine times a year: February, March, April, May, Summer, September, October, November, and December-January.

Comments and members' articles are welcome; deadline for the February issue is **January 17th**. Send comments or articles to:

Lindsay and Scott Namestnik
26568 State Road 4

North Liberty, Indiana 46554;

or email to: Leaves@sbeaudubon.org.

GO PAPERLESS!

**E-subscribe to the *Audubon Leaves* at
Leaves@sbeaudubon.org.**

**Include your present mailing address,
and put "Leaves" in the subject line.**

We'll do the rest!

The South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society is on the web at www.sbeaudubon.org



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1%
FOR THE
PLANET