



# Audubon Leaves

*A Publication of the South Bend - Elkhart Audubon Society*

February 2024

Volume 76, Number 1

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***Serving North-Central Indiana Since 1944***

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## **A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE SOUTH BEND-ELKHART AUDUBON SOCIETY**

*Tai Gunter, President*

At our Board meeting on Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, the Board voted 15-1 in favor of recommending that the South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society change its name. We are excited to welcome this change, which will allow us to better reflect our mission and values.

In past issues of the *Audubon Leaves*, we've talked about how the controversial past of John James Audubon is difficult to reckon with and puts us in a challenging position as a chapter. We must denounce his slavery and racism, while recognizing his contributions to ornithology and what the "Audubon" name means as a beacon of conservation in the United States. But this name change represents so much more than that – we want to take this opportunity to better reflect who we are and what we do. We ask our membership to reflect upon how we can best represent our passion for birds, commitment to conservation, and our mission to educate our community.

We recognize the contributions of John James Audubon to ornithology and the significance of the "Audubon" name in conservation. However, our chapter's identity is distinct and rooted in the passion and dedication of our members. Audubon's contributions and paintings, along with the long history of our organization, will live on. No matter what, we'll remain a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission and goals remain the same.

Put simply, we believe a new name can better reflect our unique mission and values.

**What about the birds?** One challenge with our current name is that it doesn't mention the focal point of our organization: birds. Although our membership relates the "Audubon" name to the national conservation organization, that isn't a universal truth. Many people aren't familiar with the national organization, and only know Autobahn to be a road without a speed limit in Germany. By changing our name, it allows us to better represent what we do, especially to the younger generation of birders that we hope to attract. The Board agrees that we want the new name to include "bird" so that it's clear what our organization stands for.

**Who are we?** Recently, we've also expanded our service area to include part of Marshall County. This currently isn't represented by our "South Bend-Elkhart" name. For that matter, there are several communities that are left out of our current name. We want to be inclusive of everyone that lives in our service area. We have considered several names that geographically represent our area, such as "Northern Indiana," "North-Central Indiana," or "Michiana." A new name will help us connect with people of all ages and backgrounds, inviting them to join our flock and share in the joy of bird conservation.

**How can we work together?** A criticism of changing our organization's name is that we will lose the continuity that connects us to the National Audubon Society, as well as the many other local chapters that surround us. Across the country, many local chapters that have chosen to rename their organizations have used the word "alliance" to represent their mission to serve as an ally to birds, and work with other conservation organizations to best fulfill their mission.

At the moment, most of our discussions have come back to the "Bird Alliance" suffix. This meets the goal of our new name reflecting our primary focus of birds, while maintaining the continuity of naming alongside other local chapters in the Midwest.

**What are the next steps?** Your voice is crucial in shaping our new identity! Share your thoughts on the name change at [www.sbeaudubon.org/namechange](http://www.sbeaudubon.org/namechange). Stay tuned for an upcoming mail ballot in a future issue of the *Audubon Leaves*, where you'll have the opportunity to vote on the final name. The final decision must be ratified by the membership before taking effect.

### FEBRUARY CALENDAR



- 10 Science Alive! at St. Joseph County Public Library, 10 AM
- 10 Field Trip at Notre Dame Lakes, 9 AM
- 11 Board Meeting at Rum Village Nature Center, 1 PM
- 11 Membership Meeting and Program at Rum Village Nature Center, 2 PM
- 14 March *Audubon Leaves* Articles Due
- 16-19 Great Backyard Bird Count
- 17 Field Trip at Lydick Bog, 9 AM

Check [www.sbeaudubon.org](http://www.sbeaudubon.org) and our Facebook page for field trip announcements, updates, and cancellations.

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## GOSHEN DAM POND ISLAND, AKA BLOSSER'S ISLAND

*Heidi Gray, Past President*

In October of 2022 I received a phone call from Bill McDonald of Goshen. He and his wife, Karen, owned a 3.5-acre island in the Elkhart River and were hoping to donate the island to an organization or institution that would properly take care of the island as a bird sanctuary. Bill and his sister were bequeathed the island from their mother, Betty McDonald, in late 1997. Bill's sister lived out of the area, so Bill and Karen became the owners and caretakers of the island. Betty McDonald had always hoped that the island would be a bird sanctuary and this is what led Bill to contact me as the SBEAS president at the time. Goshen College and the Elkhart County Parks had also been approached as possible caretakers. Ronda DeCaire knew that my husband, Doug, and I were looking into purchasing islands across the St. Joseph River from us and thought SBEAS would be the perfect organization to consider as the new owners.



© Heidi Gray

Bill and Karen met with the SBEAS Board in early December of 2022 and spoke to them about the island, relaying that they would like to see the island given to the organization so that it could be kept as a bird sanctuary. An ad hoc committee was formed with Scott Namestnik, Doug Gray, and myself. The three of us boated over to the island on July 15, 2023 after the eagle nesting season was safely over. Yes, a pair of Bald Eagles have been nesting on the island. We, unfortunately, entered on a wet area of the island and I spent a bit of time checking out mudholes. Doug used bark shed from an ash tree to cover some of the mud for better foot holds. Scott was able to find drier sections and list plants and birds he came across. We did find the drier island entrance and Scott made a quick search through that area to see if there were other plants to list. The Maypole and the foundation of the roller rink are still visible. Scott wrote up his findings and sent the list to the SBEAS Board with our recommendations for accepting the gift of the island.

Blosser's Island Park has had a lot of history over the years. From 1866-1868 a dam had been built on the river creating an oxbow along with the island. In 1906 Amos Blosser had the idea to create a recreational gathering place on the island. The island was cleared of underbrush and a pavilion for a roller rink was built. The island was opened for the public in 1909. A large boat, the Sadie A, was used to transport people to the island. The Interurban Trolley made a stop nearby so that people could visit. Other activities on the island were a Maypole and a bowling alley, and the roller rink turned into a dance hall. In addition, food was available for picnicking. Blosser's Island Park became the 'Social Gathering Place of Goshen.' Karen McDonald's mom remembered going to the park and its activities. By World War II the park had lost its attraction. Cars, movie theaters, and other 'modern' recreational attractions became more popular. The island was left to nature to take back over.

A few years ago a couple of Goshen College students created a video of the history of the island. It can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/641974638>.

As mentioned above, there have been a pair of eagles nesting on the island. A neighbor reports on the nesting to an IDNR volunteer who compiles eagle nesting results from around the state. The island, obviously, is only accessible by boat. The McDonalds have 'No Trespassing' signs posted so that the eagles and the island in general are not disturbed. This hasn't always been the case. Karen McDonald remembers that she and Bill hauled out about nine bags of trash not too long ago. Scott did not find much trash when we were there. Karen has been kept informed of the wildlife the neighbors observe on or around the island. Deer, swans, and otters have been seen. One neighbor told her of watching a squirrel that misjudged the distance swimming to the island and flopping on the shore when it arrived.

In December of 2023 the island officially became the property of SBEAS. The SBEAS Board of Directors will decide how to best protect the island and its flora and fauna. Thank you, Bill and Karen McDonald, for the donation of the island in memory of your mother, Betty McDonald.

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### GO PAPERLESS!

E-subscribe to the *Audubon Leaves* at  
[Leaves@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:Leaves@sbeaudubon.org).

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

We'll do the rest!

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/>.

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

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

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## FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

*Bruce Cates, Program Chair*

Our February membership meeting will be held on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at the Rum Village Park Nature Center in South Bend. Our speaker will be Wayne Richard Pope. Mr. Pope is an adjunct associate professor of photography at Lansing Community College. A self-described "avid bird photographer," he teaches a variety of classes, one of the most popular being "Nature Photography with a Smartphone." He lives with his wife, Donna, in Okemos, Michigan, near Michigan State University.

Mr. Pope recently published a book entitled *Birds of Michigan*. He will be sharing photos from his book, as well as bird pictures he has taken in Indiana's St. Joseph and Marshall counties, for the program he is calling "Birds of Michiana." Copies of his book will be available for purchase at our meeting. The price will be \$60.00, cash or credit card only, for an autographed copy.

Please join us to see some beautiful, colorful photos of birds from our area by this author, teacher, and professional photographer. Maybe he'll even give us some tips on how to better use our own smartphone cameras!

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## 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Tai Gunter, President*

At our April membership meeting, we will hold our annual election for the four SBEAS Board executive positions (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer), as well as two Director positions. The executive positions are a one-year term; the Director positions are a three-year term, with two Director positions opening each year. This year, our Treasurer, Martha Kummerer, has announced that she will not be seeking re-election and will be stepping down from her role. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Martha for her many years of service as our Treasurer and her dedication to helping our organization succeed. If you or anyone you know has experience with bookkeeping or accounting and would be interested in the Treasurer position, we would welcome you to join us. Our Board is a dedicated, active, and diverse group of people who are committed and passionate about birds and the mission of SBEAS. We welcome the contributions of anyone willing to volunteer their time on our Board - it's a rewarding and fulfilling experience that connects you with a great group of people. If you are interested in the Treasurer or one of the Director positions, please reach out to me at [tai.gunter@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:tai.gunter@sbeaudubon.org).

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## GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT WITH SHIRLEY HEINZE LAND TRUST AT LYDICK BOG

*Carol Goodall, Field Trip Chair*

Join us on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. (Eastern Time) at Lydick Bog Nature Preserve, where we will collaborate with Shirley Heinze Land Trust to count the birds at this property for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Lydick Bog is located at 25898 US-20 in South Bend, Indiana. You need not be an expert birder to participate in this event. Everyone is welcome. Dress for the weather. Wear sturdy shoes.

Google map link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/gC6gZvAiWj524S4d8>

Questions: [fieldtrips@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@sbeaudubon.org).

For more information about the Great Backyard Bird Count, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

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## FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

*Carol Goodall, Field Trip Chair*

Join us on February 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. when we walk around the lakes at Notre Dame in search of waterfowl. Dress for the weather. Some trails may be slippery or muddy.

We will meet in the northeast corner of Lot D6. This lot is the north lot off Dorr Rd.

Google map link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/PzyqayhQd3yagf296>

Questions: [fieldtrips@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@sbeaudubon.org).

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## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

*Jude Keltner, Membership Chair*

We welcome the following new and returning members:

Ronald Barker, Norman Chadwick, Crystal Clear, Janice Collins, David Court, Renee Crabtree, Becky Eickhoff, Arlen Epp, Judith Ferrell, Ralph Fitch, Mark Gasper, Krystal Gerber, Bridgette Glass, Lisa Harris, William J. Harris, David J. Justice, Oliver Kauffman, Dean R. Kelly, Marcia K Kern, Jonathan E. Kinter, Christopher Kolda, Rita M. Kopczynski, Elishia Lantz, J. Martin, Elaine Mick, Linda Monroe, Kathie Newman, Myriah Nisley, Phyllis Nofziger, Karen Nye, Marcellinus Pizarek, Amanda Qualls, Ann Patrice Resnik, Kath-leen Rojek, Roseanne Savol, James Schmidt, Carol Stuart, Susan Wautelet, Marion Williams, Teryl Yoder, and Nadine Zerger.

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

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

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**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.**

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## A NATURAL HEALER OF WILD THINGS

### Heather Downey

On December 3, 2023, long-time raptor rehabilitator Carole Riewe passed away at the age of 83. She leaves behind a legacy of conservation work, involving the rescue and release of numerous hawks, owls, and falcons. Carole was fearless when it came to handling the birds with sharp beaks and piercing talons. This journey of healing wildlife began in 1993 after she obtained the state and federal permits to do so. Many an injured raptor has Carole, a native of Massachusetts, to thank for successfully healing and returning them back into the wild.

Carole was a naturalist by trade and served as the Director of Rum Village Nature Center for 20+ years. Her passion for the natural world served her well educating the public and mentoring other local raptor rehabbers. Nicole Harmon, Director of Indiana Humane Wildlife (Valparaiso, IN), recently recounted, “Carole cared about wildlife fiercely and was an enormous advocate for Peregrine Falcons in South Bend. She was a mentor and a friend.”



© South Bend Tribune

For nearly 20 years Carole volunteered her skills to assist in the banding of 28 female and 20 male Peregrine Falcon chicks. The nightly news and Tribune cameras captured the annual event as screaming chicks and nervous parents quickly came into focus. You could also see Carole donning her PPE, a hard hat and leather gloves. I often imagined Carole speaking softly to the tiny creatures, eyes staring at her fearfully. She always had a special fondness for the nestlings and monitored them tirelessly upon release.

Rachel Carson once wrote, “Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we will say our work is finished.” Carole Riewe spent many years preserving the lives of local raptors with a keen mind and steady hand. In the years to come, when I observe soaring hawks or hear hooting owls, I will think of Carole with admiration. I will feel a deep debt of gratitude for a woman who devoted her life to healing raptors for future generations, both avian and human alike.

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## NEW TRACKCHAIR PROVIDES ACCESS TO TRAILS AT POTATO CREEK STATE PARK

*Reprinted from Indiana DNR Division of State Parks News*

Wheelchair users and guests with mobility disabilities can explore more-challenging trails at Potato Creek State Park, thanks to a new trackchair, which they can borrow from the park’s nature center.

The addition brings the number of trackchairs available for outdoor use at Indiana state park properties to 15. Chain O’Lakes, Charlestown, Fort Harrison, Mounds, O’Bannon Woods, Pokagon, and Spring Mill state parks and Salamonie Lake have one each. Indiana Dunes has four, and McCormick’s Creek has two. Potato Creek’s chair, manufactured by Action Trackchair, is joystick-operated and equipped with a seatbelt and arm and leg rests.

The chairs available across the state park system vary in design and appropriate trail use. Potential users should consider discussing those conditions with property personnel before visiting. Guests can also reserve a chair ahead of their visit. For contact information at the individual locations, visit [stateparks.IN.gov](https://stateparks.IN.gov) or check the Indiana Recreation Guide at [on.IN.gov/recguide](https://on.IN.gov/recguide).

The new chair at Potato Creek was made possible by a grant from Ford’s Bronco Wild Fund, an organization that focuses on accessibility, preservation, stewardship, and connecting people to the outdoors. The funds for these chairs and other projects come from a portion of the profits from every Bronco® model sold.

The grants were coordinated through the America’s State Parks Foundation, a national nonprofit arm of America’s State Parks, which supports and promotes state park systems and their leadership across the country. Indiana was one of 18 states awarded funds for these chairs.

Potato Creek State Park is at 25601 State Road 4, North Liberty, IN 46554. Learn more at [on.IN.gov/potatocreeksp](https://on.IN.gov/potatocreeksp).

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## SOUTH BEND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

[Lindsay Grossmann](#), *South Bend CBC Compiler*

"A nice day for birding" is what many of those who participated in this year's South Bend Christmas Bird Count, held on December 16, 2023, claimed. Mild temperatures (in the 40s), no snow or ice, and overcast skies for the majority of the day yielded fairly good observation conditions. It did sprinkle a bit in the afternoon, but that didn't slow us down! With a total of 71 species, we rocked this year with an above average count for our 80<sup>th</sup> Year!

In total, we observed 13,321 individual birds, which was above average as well. We had a count first Wood Thrush this year! The top three species of the count (by individuals) were: European Starling (3998), American Crow (2204), and Canada Goose (1718). Notably absent this year were Wild Turkey, Pine Siskin, and Purple Finch, all three of which have been seen in the area this winter, but were absent on count day.

The full list of species includes: (note: **bold** indicates a count significantly higher than average)

Canada Goose 1718, Mute Swan 26, Trumpeter Swan 1, Wood Duck 1, Gadwall 6, Mallard 415, Bufflehead 27, Common Goldeneye 1, Hooded Merganser 43, Ring-necked Pheasant 1, Pied-billed Grebe 5, Great Blue Heron 6, Cooper's Hawk 5, Bald Eagle 8, Red-shouldered Hawk 5, Red-tailed Hawk 30, American Coot 2, **Sandhill Crane 51**, Killdeer 4, **Ring-billed Gull 243**, Herring Gull 39, Rock Pigeon 354, Mourning Dove 167, Eastern Screech-owl 1, Great Horned Owl 4, Barred Owl 3, Belted Kingfisher 9, Red-headed Woodpecker 6, **Red-bellied Woodpecker 121**, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 8, Downy Woodpecker 83, Hairy Woodpecker 24, **Northern Flicker 56**, Pileated Woodpecker 10, American Kestrel 4, Merlin 1, Peregrine Falcon 1, Blue Jay 332, American Crow 2204, Horned Lark 2, Black-capped Chickadee 198, Tufted Titmouse 83, Red-breasted Nuthatch 6, White-breasted Nuthatch 122, Brown Creeper 19, Winter Wren 2, Carolina Wren 25, Golden-crowned Kinglet 5, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1, Eastern Bluebird 45, Hermit Thrush 3, Wood Thrush 1, **American Robin 858**, Northern Mockingbird 1, **European Starling 3998**, Cedar Waxwing 14, **Yellow-rumped Warbler 11**, American Tree Sparrow 80, Field Sparrow 3, Dark-eyed Junco 501, **White-throated Sparrow 52**, White-crowned Sparrow 2, Song Sparrow 23, Swamp Sparrow 1, Northern Cardinal 195, Red-winged Blackbird 3, Eastern Meadowlark 1, Common Grackle 4, House Finch 212, American Goldfinch 240, and House Sparrow 574.

This was my first year compiling the count and I fumbled through it with the help of many people who have been doing this for a lot longer than I have, so a special thank you goes out to: Kristen Sweinhart (former compiler), Scott Namestnik, John Bentley, Tai and Melissa Gunter, Laura Fuderer, and Carol Goodall. Also thank you very much to all of our counters, both in the field and via feeder counts, who in addition to those listed above include: Sherry Barker, Kim Bell, Steve Bell, Carol Bell, Mark Blassage, Janet Egyhazi, Miriam Eck, Charles Kiefer, Evie Kirkwood, Craig Kirkwood, June Kohler, Tim Liddell, Kathy Maloney, Mary Jo Mankowski, Jan McGowan, Brett McNeil, Keshava Mysore, Lindsay Namestnik, Tara O'Leary, Joel Ralston, Vicky Ryzdzynski, Margo Shearman-Howard, and Jim Spier. In total, we counted for right around 400 miles (including 39 miles on foot and 13 miles via bike) and 85 hours!



Leo shows us that you're never too young or old to participate in a Christmas Bird Count! © Tai Gunter

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## RED BARN RUMMAGE SALE, APRIL 20<sup>TH</sup> - IT'S ON THE CALENDAR!

[Martha Kummerer](#), *Red Barn Rummage Sale Chair*

In a search of our archives, I found that we started this immensely important fundraiser back in 1993 when Peggy Eminger held a garage sale at her home with members' donations. It must have been overwhelming because the very next year we moved it to the Big Red Barn in St. Patrick's County Park and we've been there ever since, filling the barn in late April with our unending supply of treasures.

Please help us again with our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Sale. There are many ways to help: by donating items, volunteering to unpack and price items, supplying home-baked items for the Bake Sale, helping customers during the sale, cashiering, or packing up and tidying the barn after the sale. No experience needed.

The sale will be held on Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, but we will be setting up from Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> to Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. Any amount of time you can help on those days will be appreciated. More details will be coming, especially what we can sell, and, unfortunately, what cannot be sold. If you have questions before then, email [treasurer@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:treasurer@sbeaudubon.org).

We are also seeking a co-chair. It's always easier to share responsibilities, so if thrift sales are in your veins, consider learning how it's carried off and I'll be glad to have you on board.

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## 28<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ELKHART COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

*Ronda DeCaire, Elkhart County CBC Compiler*

The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Elkhart County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, December 30<sup>th</sup>, with more than 60 volunteers documenting 23,515 birds from 82 different species.

Highlights included a first time White-winged Scoter and second time Double-crested Cormorant. Historical high counts for the Elkhart County CBC (compared to the past 27 years) were for the Wood Duck, Red-headed Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, European Starling, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Results:

Cackling Goose 2, Canada Goose 2861, Mute Swan 174, Wood Duck 10, American Black Duck 8, Mallard 968, Green-winged Teal 5, Canvasback 25, Redhead 215, Ring-necked Duck 20, Greater Scaup 4, Lesser Scaup 30, White-winged Scoter 1, Bufflehead 9, Common Goldeneye 82, Hooded Merganser 23, Ruddy Duck 70, Wild Turkey 72, Pied-billed Grebe 1, Horned Grebe 1, Double-breasted Cormorant 1, Great Blue Heron 14, Bald Eagle 16, Northern Harrier 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 15, Red-tailed Hawk 44, American Coot 126, Sandhill Crane 72, Ring-billed Gull 704, Herring Gull 38, Rock Pigeon 505, Eurasian Collared-dove 2, Mourning Dove 155, Eastern Screech Owl 10, Great Horned Owl 7, Barred Owl 4, Belted Kingfisher 24, Red-headed Woodpecker 23, Red-bellied Woodpecker 177, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 8, Downy Woodpecker 175, Hairy Woodpecker 42, Northern Flicker 88, Pileated Woodpecker 20, American Kestrel 21, Blue Jay 398, American Crow 772, Horned Lark 15, Black-capped Chickadee 245, Tufted Titmouse 129, Red-breasted Nuthatch 8, White-breasted Nuthatch 251, Brown Creeper 48, Winter Wren 8, Carolina Wren 141, Golden-crowned Kinglet 13, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1, Eastern Bluebird 196, Hermit Thrush 6, American Robin 938, Gray Catbird 1, Northern Mockingbird 1, European Starling 8816, Cedar Waxwing 250, Yellow-rumped Warbler 14, Eastern Towhee 1, American Tree Sparrow 455, Fox Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 62, Swamp Sparrow 2, White-throated Sparrow 82, White-crowned Sparrow 42, Dark-eyed Junco 1100, Northern Cardinal 456, Red-winged Blackbird 11, Brown-headed Cowbird 7, Purple Finch 3, House Finch 374, Pine Siskin 30, American Goldfinch 357, and House Sparrow 1405.

Six additional species were found within the count circle during count week (three days before and after count day): Slaty-backed Gull, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough legged Hawk, Eared Grebe, American Wigeon, and Northern Pintail.

Special thank you to the dedicated volunteers who make this annual count a huge success:

Burne & Jody Miller, Scott Namestnik, Larry Ford, John Cassaday, Craig and Evie Kirkwood, Trice Berkley, Clay Berkley, Ronda and David DeCaire, Jessica DeCaire, Perry Yoder, Jared Lehman, Debra Vincent, Conrad Harstine, Harley Yoder, Maggie Nowicki, Kathryn Nowicki, Leland Shaum, Neal Miller, Gary Chupp, Ray Helmuth, Annie Aguirre, Justin Rippey, Katy-Ann Yoder, Jessica Kreider, Bob and Christine Guth, Jim Fuehrmeyer, Matt McGlaughlin, Don Presser, Steve McCloskey, Jack Watson, Wayne Cook, Jon and Mary Kauffman-Kennel, Ruth Kauffman, Margaret McGlaughlin, Alissa McCarty, Kent Schmidt, Robyn Buenger, Ann Turnock, Carole Mitchell, Pat Frank, Heidi Gray, John Deuschle, Marilyn Horvath, Wilma Harder, Sherry Hug, Aaron Kingsley Family, Mike Kossler, Jan Montecalvo, Lois Oyer, Mike and Sylvia Steed, James Stuckey Weber, Sue Bumgardner, Glenn Dyksen, Merlin Lehman, and Gayle Gerber-Koontz.

Mark your calendars: The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Elkhart County Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, January 4, 2025.

### SANCTUARY REPORT

*Bradley Waelbroeck, Sanctuary Chair*

Happy New Year! Hopefully everyone is staying warm! I have seen several small birds all puffed up in this blistering winter wind. Dress how they dress! If you go out, make sure you have layers on. With sub-arctic winds like we are experiencing it is not safe to be out in the weather for very long unless you are well dressed and insulated from the cold! The Ford 1700 is up and running again with a fresh battery, coolant flush, and a belt tensioning. Half of the South Field has now been mowed. Look forward to hearing about more future projects soon!

## Great Backyard Bird Count

27th Annual • Feb 16–19, 2024

Count birds in your backyard, local park, or wherever you spot a bird, and submit your observations online.

[birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org)

Great Blue Heron/Ardea herodias  
Photo: Danielle Cooper/Macaulay Library



## PHOTO QUIZ!

There were eight correct responses to the December-January photo quiz. The winner was June Kohler, who correctly identified the bird in the December-January *Audubon Leaves* as a Canvasback. June was awarded a \$20 gift card to the South Bend Farmer's Market. Congratulations, June! Read about the Canvasback in the article to the right.



© Patrick Randall

The February *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](mailto: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!

## CANVASBACK (*AYTHYA VALISINERIA*)

[Lindsay Grossmann](#)

Deemed the “aristocrat of ducks,” the Canvasback holds its rust-colored head high as it swims. It can be found in open lakes in the winter around our area. The species it is most often confused with is the Redhead and they are often seen flocking together. Differences between the two include the forehead shape and overall color. Canvasbacks have a long black sloping forehead and bill, whereas Redheads sport a bluish bill and steeper forehead. Although both have the typical diving duck body coloring of black on the ends and light in the middle, a Canvasback’s body color is much whiter than the gray of a Redhead. Overall, Canvasbacks are also larger, but that is only noticeable if you happen see them side by side.

As mentioned, they are diving ducks, preferring to feed on plant tubers in the bottom of lakes and wetlands in the winter. They will dive down to the bottom to pull these plants up. Their Latin species name, *valisineria*, comes from their favorite food source, the plant *Vallisneria americana*, commonly referred to as wild or water celery, or eel grass. They are a favorite of waterfowl hunters, so don’t be surprised if they are skittish and dive away quickly when you try to observe them. Remember, they are only here in the winter, preferring to nest in the deep marshes, ponds, and lakes of the central plains and Northern Rockies all the way up into western Canada and Alaska.

Source:

Cornell University, All About Birds, accessed online 16 January 2024. <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Canvasback>.

**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](http://www.sbeaudubon.org/namechange) to provide your feedback.**

**For more information, see the article on this topic on page 1 of this issue.**

### 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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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 March issue is

**February 14<sup>th</sup>**. Send comments or articles to:

Lindsay and Scott Namestnik  
26568 State Road 4  
North Liberty, Indiana 46554;

or email to: [Leaves@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:Leaves@sbeaudubon.org).

**IT'S YOUR TIME TO SHINE!**

*Tai Gunter, President*

Did you know that South Bend - Elkhart Audubon Society is one of the most active Audubon chapters in the state? We thrive because of dedicated volunteers at all levels of the organization. We become a better Society through continuous growth and flourish as a result of diverse opinions. Right now, we are in immediate need of an Executive Board Director and a Treasurer. For more information, contact me at [tai.gunter@sbeaudubon.org](mailto:tai.gunter@sbeaudubon.org) to inquire how we might best put your skills and talents to use to better our Society.

The South Bend-Elkhart Audubon Society is on the web at [www.sbeaudubon.org](http://www.sbeaudubon.org)



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