

Big Walnut Bird Club Newsletter

November 2023



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Club News

This year has flown by once again, and the Christmas Bird Count is only a little over a month away! While I feel fortunate to have had some great birding trips this year, I always seem to long for even more. Seems I've been short on time this year with various responsibilities, projects, trips, etc. I hope you have been able to enjoy the great outdoors in sufficient quantities this year. I wanted to catch up a little with this overdue newsletter to share some of the excitement and beauty of birds witnessed on our club field trips and other personal adventures of a few club members.

While the "Big Walnut Bird Club" is still a small informal group, we have gained some publicity through the Putnam Parks and Pathways and the Putnam Co Visitors Bureau. We hope to attract the interest of additional birdwatchers, amateur and veteran, to join us on field trips and events where we share experiences and knowledge on the local wildlife. Seems like I learn something new on every trip. As always, we invite you to join us on our next outing. And for those who can't make it, you are welcome anytime to send me your birding pictures or stories you'd like to share with the club email group. We have a lot of great bird pictures again, thanks to everyone contributing, hope you enjoy. Happy Birding! Rod

Event Schedule:

Each Friday- BWBC Friday Morning Bird Walks- 8am

Weekly bird walk on Fridays starting from the lower main parking lot of the DePauw Nature Park. **Temporarily postponed until further notice.**

The walk will start at 8 am and some of us may bird until noon but you are free to leave at any time. Beginners are welcome. Bring your binoculars, or we can provide a pair. We'll meet at the lower larger parking lot on the north side of the Park (entrance from Walnut Street). Contact Carl Huffman to verify if he or Amanda Beals will be present to lead the walk; cahuff@depauw.edu 765 721-1628. Carl usually keeps the Putnam Parks and Pathways event calendar updated, so you can check there also.

December 2- BWBC Field Trip- Heritage Lake- 8:30am

Join us Saturday morning at 8:30am at Heritage Lake to explore for incoming waterfowl, gulls, raptors, and other birds attracted to this expanse of open water. This trip will involve driving to 3 or 4 viewing spots where we'll get out and scope the lake for birds. If time, we may also do a short hike on a local trail. We will initially meet at the Marina-Boat Launch gravel parking lot on the west side of the lake (next to Sahm's Haven restaurant). And possibly finish up with lunch at the same place.

December 17- BWBC Christmas Bird Count- 8:00am-Noon

Carl has scheduled this year's CBC on Sunday Dec 17 from 8am-12 (or longer if individuals wish). The count is sponsored by the American Audubon Society. Every year we bird the same circle, which is 15 miles in diameter and is centered close to Brick Chapel. It includes Greencastle, Bainbridge, Fillmore, Heritage Lake, Glenn Flint Lake and the DePauw Nature Park. This circle is divided into 5 areas, and we need at least one car with at least two people in each of the areas. In addition, we send people out on foot to bird the Nature Park (2 groups because it is so big), People's Pathway and the Putnam Nature Trail. All levels of birders are welcome to participate. We need as many eyes and ears as possible! Last year we had a Putnam County CBC record 75 species on count day and 11 additional species in count week (3 days before and after count day).

Please let Carl Huffman know whether you would like to participate no later than Wednesday, December 13 and whether you would like to be in a driving group or a walking group. He will send out further information to those participating about their assigned area and other guidelines. We may hold a compilation meeting/lunch for those interested, to be announced later.

Please let Carl Huffman know by Wednesday December 13 whether you can participate or not.

cahuff@depauw.edu
765 721-1628

BWBC Field Trip Report- Saturday November 4, 2023

Lieber State Park/Cataract Lake

Attendees- Julie Stewart, Craig Schroer, Jeff Gygi, Rod and Melissa Wilson

Summary- We had good weather with a light breeze and mixed sunshine. Arriving shortly after daybreak, we got things off to a quick start by spotting a single Dunlin probing the shallow shoreline on the sand beach. From the vantage point on the beach, we quickly found a few Common Loons diving in deeper waters, along with numerous Bonapart's and Ring-billed Gulls flying and fishing in the area. A flock or two of ducks passed by far overhead, which none of us were able to positively identify (possibly Scaup sp.). We then relocated to the "Peninsula Trail" which is a nice moderately rugged trail that heads south of the Park along the lake, and actually enters Owen County. Hiking to the far end of the trail, we were able to see another large portion of Cataract Lake, where in a distant bay a large flock of ducks were resting. Although distance and back-lighting made ID difficult, it appeared the flock consisted of all Mallards and Gadwalls. There was an even further tiny waterfowl flock on the water that we could not identify, possibly Coots. On the trek back, while admiring all the Persimmon trees and scanning the treeline for various small birds darting about, all of a sudden about a 100 small birds took flight apparently spooked (more than we thought were there), mostly Goldfinches and Yellow-rumped Warblers. We then saw the culprit, a small Sharp-shinned Hawk came flying through, apparently unsuccessful in its hunt. Although difficult to distinguish from the larger Coopers Hawk, we believe this was a Sharp-shinned based on size and flight, and the blurry photo shows heavy streaked chest typical of a juvenile Sharp-shinned, along with characteristic small head and broad wings. Probably a migrant passing through but could also be a resident. A great Blue Heron also missed his meal as we watched him dive/strike almost completely underwater after a fish. Was interesting how the water ran off the bulk of feathers immediately and it looked dry when it stood back up. As we took a break to sit on a bridge in the sun, we had another surprise as a pair of Purple Finches flew into a tree beside us, giving a nice view for the first sighting of this species this fall for all of us. On the way back to the trailhead, we found a few Cedar Waxwings gorging on wild grapes high in the trees. We finished up with another short hike by the campground in some Bush Honeysuckle thickets looking unsuccessfully for an Orange-crowned Warbler or Hermit Thrush, but did find a bold Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Eastern Towhees among others. Everyone then met at Lou's Diner in Cloverdale for a great lunch. Below are two lists of birds observed on the trip (X means present, not counted), followed by some pics for your entertainment:

Lieber State Park (Putnam Co)

X Killdeer

1 Dunlin

25 Bonaparte's Gull -- Estimate

X Ring-billed Gull

5 Common Loon

- 1 Double-crested Cormorant
- 2 Great Blue Heron
- X Turkey Vulture
- 1 Bald Eagle
- 1 Red-tailed Hawk
- 4 Red-headed Woodpecker
- 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker
- 2 Downy Woodpecker
- 1 Northern Flicker
- 6 Blue Jay
- X American Crow
- 2 Carolina Chickadee
- 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 1 Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 1 White-breasted Nuthatch
- 1 Carolina Wren
- X Eastern Bluebird
- 6 Cedar Waxwing
- 2 Purple Finch
- X American Goldfinch
- 2 Dark-eyed Junco
- 6 White-throated Sparrow
- 3 Song Sparrow
- 2 Eastern Towhee
- 6 Yellow-rumped Warbler
- 3 Northern Cardinal

Peninsula Trail (Owen Co.)

- 35 Gadwall -- Estimate
- 75 Mallard -- Estimate
- 3 Pied-billed Grebe
- 1 Killdeer
- X Bonaparte's Gull
- 2 Ring-billed Gull
- 1 Great Blue Heron
- X Turkey Vulture
- 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk
- 2 Bald Eagle
- 1 Belted Kingfisher
- 4 Blue Jay
- 100 American Goldfinch -- Estimate



Sharp-shinned Hawk- Rod W.

2 White-throated Sparrow
2 Song Sparrow
8 Yellow-rumped Warbler



Dunlin, Common Loon- Rod Wilson Pair of Common Loons- Jeff Gygi

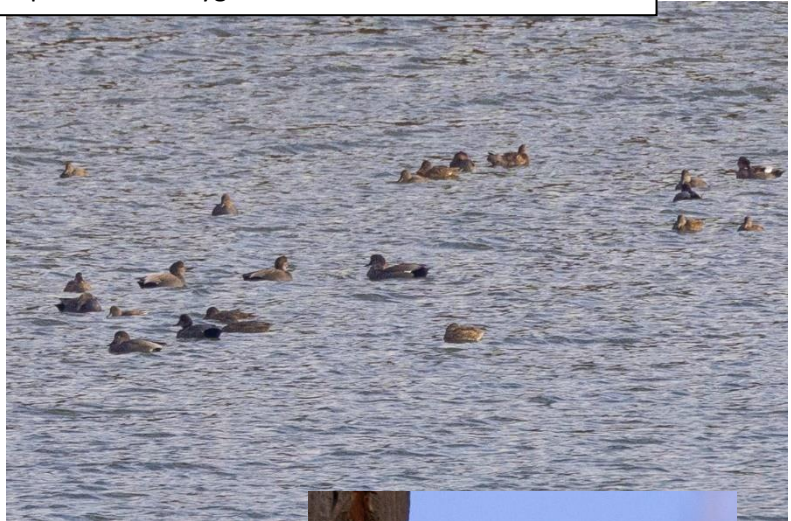




Flock of Bonapart's Gulls, Red-tailed Hawk- Rod W.
Bonapart's Gull- Jeff Gygi



Counter-clockwise from top left: Purple Finch, Gadwalls, Adult Red-headed Woodpecker- Rod Wilson Cedar Waxwing and White-throated Sparrow eating a grape, Juvenile Red-head Woodpecker- Jeff Gygi



Blue Heron feeding, Bald Eagle- Jeff Gygi



BWBC Field Trip Report- Saturday October 14, 2023 (A joint effort w/Putnam Parks and Pathways monthly hike)- Putnam Nature Trail- CR 150W Trailhead

Attendees- 15 attendees

Summary- Per John Garner: The October hike on People Pathways was a success thanks to all the birders that showed up. Birders showed up early where the hikers showed up on time 😊. People Parks & Pathways helps sponsor and advertise hikes each month on the second Saturday at 9am. Bird Club members are always welcome and all the hikers would appreciate your expertise.

Weather was cooperative and we all saw quite a few birds and fall wildflowers. With such a large group, and a talkative one at that (ha), getting everyone to see each bird spotted was impossible. And any shy bird seemed to disappear quickly. But on the other hand, with so many eyes looking, we still spotted some interesting birds. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was probably the highlight for most, as many had never seen before.

Some of the hikers were with *Putnam County Remove Invasive Plants* (PC RIP). They shared a little about their invasive plant species removal work in Putnam County. A link to their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Putnam-County-Remove-Invasive-Plants-PC-RIP/100070407551841/>. I believe they meet monthly and are always looking for volunteers.

We didn't keep an official bird checklist, but below are the species observed during the short hike. A few of the group joined afterwards for a nice lunch at the Fairway. Rod Wilson

Red bellied woodpeckers
Downy woodpeckers
Hairy woodpeckers
Pileated Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Bluejays
American Crows
Turkey Vultures
Black vultures
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Gold-crowned Kinglet
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Cedar Waxwings
White breasted Nuthatch
Carolina chickadee
Northern Cardinal



Catbird
Robin
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Song Sparrows
Indigo Bunting (juvenile)
Northern Flicker
Red-winged Blackbird.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Putnam Co,
Jeff Gygi)



An Interesting Collection

By Jerry Rudd

This summer I was on an ethnic exploratory trip in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. I went to many county historical museums and visited folk artists to hear their stories and photograph their folk art. One of the museums which I visited was in Rosseau County, Minnesota, which borders Canada. It was an above-average county museum with dioramas about emigration and pioneer life as well as a considerable number of wildlife specimens. In the section on wildlife was a bird egg collection which was chronically organized by size and coded to list on the wall. Quite impressive. I guess it was a fad by early naturalists to collect them as a part of their effort to educate themselves about as many living things as they could.



Update from New Mexico

Correspondence from Adair Bock, a former Putnam County resident and club member currently employed at Carlsbad Caverns National Park:

Hello Rod,

I have had a lot of fun working for Carlsbad Caverns National Park. The cave itself may not have many birds, but the area sure does. New Mexico is ranked as the fifth most biodiverse bird state, and the location I'm in (Eddy County) is the best of the 33 New Mexico counties. There are many reasons for the birding being so great, and the diversity of habitat types. The Guadalupe Mountains cross both New Mexico and Texas, with there being the high elevation species like Steller's Jay, Pygmy Nuthatch, Grace's Warbler. In the grasslands and prairies there are birds like Long-billed Curlews, different types of longspurs, and meadowlarks. In the desert scrub/canyons birds like Verdin, Crissal Thrasher, Canyon Wren, and Cactus Wren can be found. The Pecos River runs through the area bringing its own unique variety of birds. And finally, a section of Carlsbad Caverns National Park called "Rattlesnake Springs" is an amazing desert oasis. Rattlesnake Springs is a great spot for rare eastern birds like Philadelphia Vireo, Blue-winged Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

With all the information I just laid out, it's easy to see why the birding is so phenomenal. If you ever decide to visit for birding, you also should visit the Caverns (the largest cave chamber in the US)! Adair (If you'd ever like to contact Adair, such as planning a future trip to southern New Mexico 😊, his email is: dare3star@yahoo.com).

Chihuahuan Raven (Van Horn, Texas)(note white chest feathers)

Upland Sandpiper (Eunice, New Mexico)

Black-tailed Rattlesnake (Guadalupe Mountains National Park)





A Few Pics from Club Members

Carl Huffman

Sedge Wrens and Henslow's Sparrow Big Walnut Nature Preserve on CR 800 N



Jeff Gygi



Yellow-rumped Warbler
feasting, Downy Woodpecker,
Barn Swallow. Jeff Gygi,
Putnam Co., IN





White-eyed
Vireo,
American
Woodcock-

Jeff Gygi,
Putnam
Co., IN



Rod Wilson

Sharing a few favorite pictures from this summer/fall around Putnam County (below). The second page has some non-bird pictures and one out-of-county picture (Flamingo). This “hummingbird moth” or White-lined Sphynx Moth showed up near sunset in our front yard and looked just like a hummingbird feeding on the butterfly bushes. While mostly nocturnal, they apparently do make an appearance in daylight too. This Northern Mockingbird was demonstrating a hunting technique where the bird stalks around on the ground flashing its white wing patches attempting to spook and flush an insect meal. The flamingo was viewed down on the Ohio river near Rising Sun, Indiana, and was actually on the Kentucky side of the river. There were a few flamingos found scattered around the Midwest this summer apparently blown in by Hurricane Idalia far from their range in Florida/Mexico/Caribbean. I haven’t heard if any of them ever made it back south. The bobcat was observed near Glen Flint mid-day (through the windshield) while I was out looking for birds, which he or she may have also been doing. The immature Ruby-throated Hummingbird at our front porch was just starting to get its iridescent green feathers coming in.

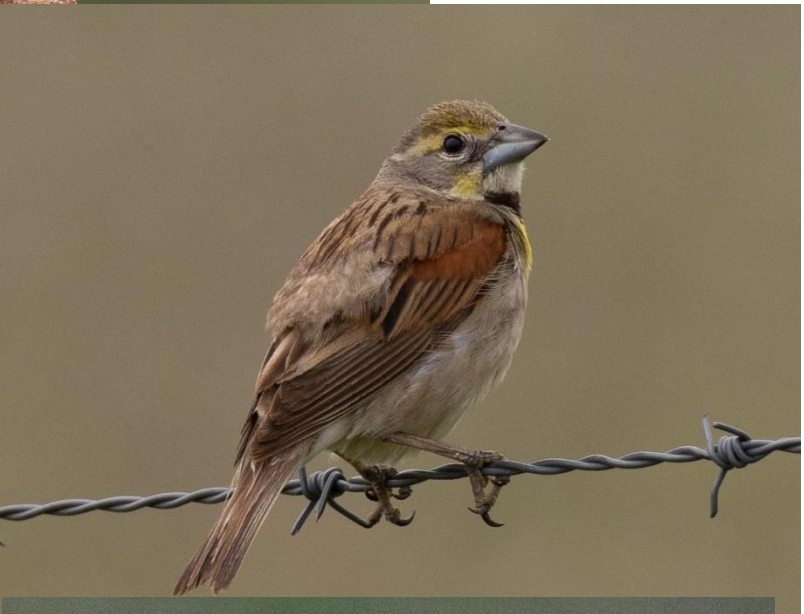


Migrating Ovenbird and Juvenile Swainson’s Thrush (I mistakenly initially ID’d this as a Veery, but was corrected by an E-bird reviewer, ha. I learned that Veery’s should have migrated south by mid-Sept when this pic taken, and that Juv Swainson’s somewhat resemble). -Putnam Co.

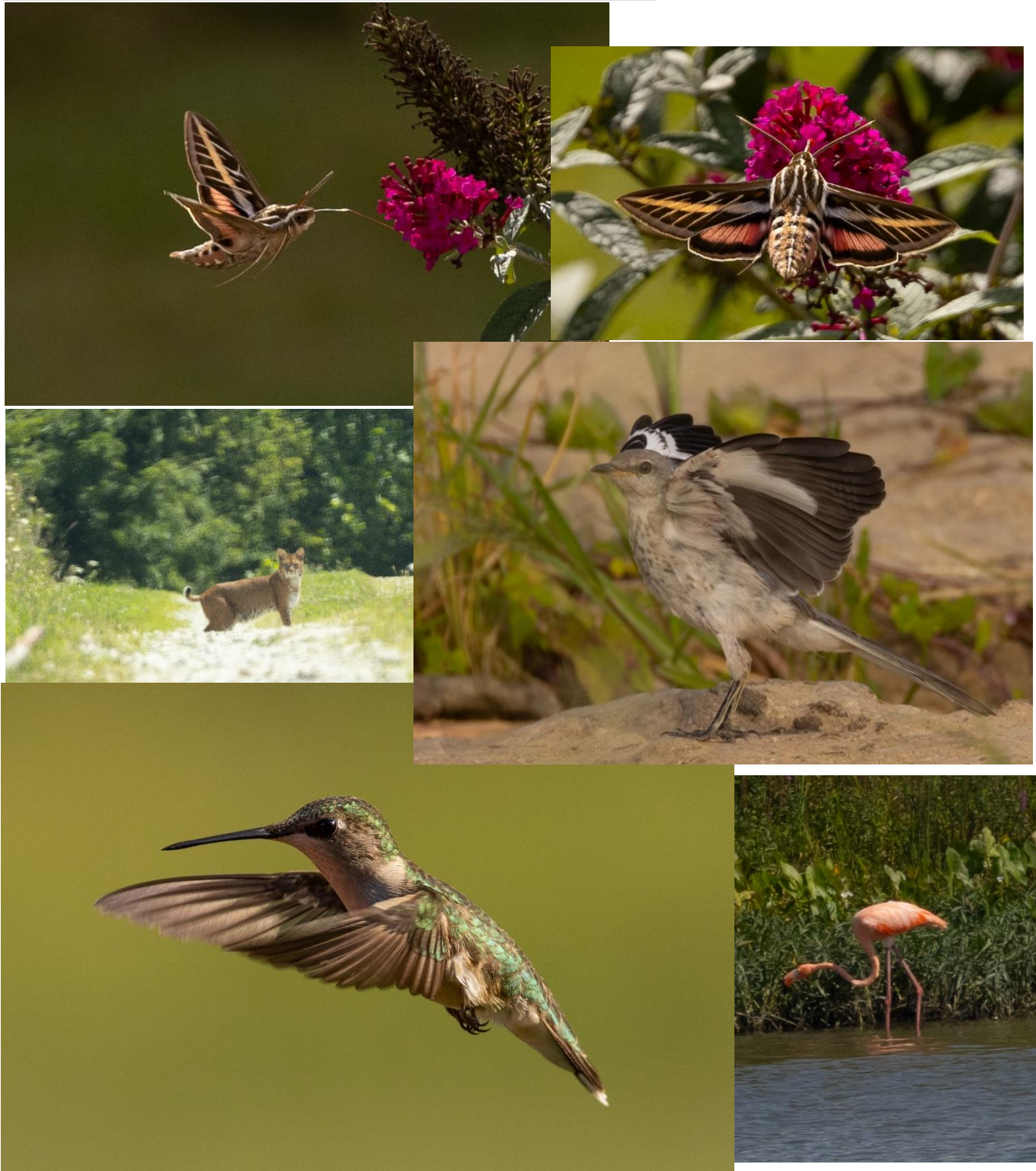




A few grassland birds observed in Northern Putnam County in overgrown fields or hayfields. The Grasshopper Sparrow and Sedge Wren were my first for Putnam County. Clockwise from top: Savannah Sparrow, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Sedge Wren. Rod W.



Clockwise: White-lined Sphynx moth (2), N. Mockingbird, American Flamingo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Juv), Bobcat. Rod W.



Let me know if you ever have anything to share with other club friends in this newsletter, such as a good story, picture, or hotspot. Or anyone to add to the email list. Please feel free to contact me if any suggestions regarding club communication or activities.

Thank you, Rod

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