

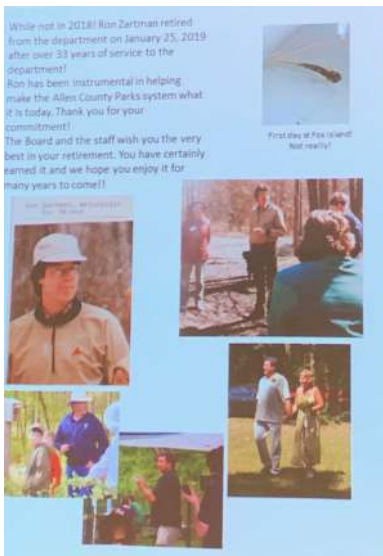


Ron Zartman retires after 33 years

By Lisa Esquivel Long

Some people may enjoy Fox Island so much that it’s a second home for them. For park manager Ron Zartman, it really was home for 30 years.

After 33 years of working as an Allen County Parks naturalist, superintendent and, finally, as manager at Fox Island County Park, Zartman decided it was time to retire earlier this year.



Allen County Parks Superintendent Jeff Baxer showed photos of Zartman during his at Fox Island, including an image of a tadpole.

Fox Island and Metea county parks volunteers celebrated his retirement at the annual volunteer appreciation dinner March 7 at Fox Island, 7324 Yohne Road.

Zartman, 62, who’s from Fort Wayne, said he felt lucky when he got the naturalist job in November 1985.

“Most people have to move to get a naturalist job,” said Zartman, who retired Jan. 25.

At that time, the parks offices and nature center space was where the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building is today.



Photos by Lisa Esquivel Long

Ron Zartman gets a big piece of his retirement cake from volunteer Darrell Will at March 7’s volunteer appreciation dinner.

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Time to renew your membership

Fox Island Alliance memberships expire March 31. Be sure to get your renewal sent in.

Also, let us know if you are interested in volunteering.

See the back pages for details on membership categories.

Birds don't read the bird books

By Cynthia Powers

Every once in a while, a bird turns up where it shouldn't be. Is it brain-damaged? Or just adventurous?

Last December, a homeowner in Noble County noticed something strange: a bird that was bright yellow with a striking black and white head pattern. It turned out to be a great kiskadee, which belongs in South Texas! What was it doing in Indiana? Soon the word got out, and the homeowners were welcoming birders, who were allowed to walk down their lane and look over the horse pasture. When we saw it, it was flying back and forth over Indiana 9, just north of Chain-O-Lakes State Park. It stayed around for a couple of weeks and was seen by many, the first Indiana record for that species, a member of the flycatcher family. One had been seen in Ontario, which isn't that far away, so it might have been the same one. We hope it got straightened out before the polar vortex hit in January.



Indiana is only supposed to have one kind of hummingbird, the ruby-throated. But rarely, a rufous hummingbird turns up.



Several years ago, there was one at a home just off Lima Road. The people kept their feeder going and even set up a heater for it. They were kind enough to invite birders into their kitchen for the best vantage point, and we even saw it for our Christmas Bird Count that year. It was banded by a visiting expert, and managed to stay until April.

Before that, a home near Metea Park had a strange visitor under its feeder, which turned out to be a varied thrush, which belongs out in the Pacific Northwest. Again, the homeowners kindly let several groups of birders come into their home and look out over their back yard.

Who knows what will turn up next? Stockbridge Audubon will lead a hike April 20 at Fox Island, coinciding with the Master Naturalist bird class. We'll start at 8 a.m. and be done by noon. Beginners are always welcome, and spare binoculars will be available. More field trips are listed on our website, www.stockbridgeaudubon.org.

A comatose hummingbird gets human help

By Ed Powers

Hummingbirds' motors run hot. Their metabolism is so high that they can only go for a few minutes without refueling.

So how do they make it through the night? They go into a state of torpor, where their metabolism slows so much, they are practically in a coma. I observed this phenomenon myself several years ago.

A raccoon had been knocking down our hummingbird feeder every night, looking for something sweet. So, we had gotten in the habit of bringing the feeder into the house in the evening. One evening I went out to retrieve it, and found a hummingbird sitting on the perch of the feeder, motionless – I touched it without waking it up. This presented a dilemma: if I brought it in, the bird would wake up in the morning, fly off into some corner, and possibly starve before we could catch it and put it out; but if I left it there, the raccoon would come along and find a tasty protein snack.

My solution was to put it in the cab of my pickup. When it woke up, it would find sustenance at its feet, and when I opened the truck door to go to work, the tiny bird flew out and went about its daily business, as did I.



Courtesy of USGS National Wildlife Health Center

Fat bats win over white nose syndrome

By Natalie Haley, environmental educator for Allen County Parks

Bat Conservation International (BCI) scientists Tina Cheng and Winifred Frick and others published results of their intensive study, “Higher Fat Stores Contribute to the Persistence of Little Brown Bat Populations with White-nose Syndrome,” in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*. White-nose Syndrome has caused several bat species to decline to threatened and endangered population levels since its invasion in 2009.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) disrupts hibernation behavior, leading to an over-depletion of their body fat and causes winter starvation as it wakes them up when there are no food sources. Our Indiana bats are insectivores, and they hibernate during periods of low winter insect activity. The bats migrate to our southern Indiana cave sites and wait out the winter in various cave colonies. WNS is caused by the fungal pathogen, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd) that infects the epidermis or skin of bats and forms white lesions.

Some colonies of little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) infected with WNS were persisting through the winter, and these BCI scientists wanted to know how. They theorized that high body fat prior to winter may contribute to their ability to survive. They measured body fat early and late in winter in six study sites when WNS initially invaded in 2008 and 2009. They also measured body fat in early and late winter populations, eight years later (2016), where bats are now surviving WNS.

Body fat measurements were higher in four of the six populations in early winter than during WNS invasion. These fatter bats managed to survive WNS invasions at considerably higher rates than other leaner body fat populations. Mortality rates of fat bats were 58%-70% less than the populations of leaner bats. This discovery is huge in that we may now intervene and manage bat populations by fattening them up prior to winter.

Fox Island County Park is known for its high levels of mosquito populations. As bats are known to eat hundreds of mosquitoes per night, we are hopeful that we are doing our part to help fatten our little brown bats before they migrate to southern Indiana at the end of summer. Our Allen County bats are just a couple of months away from arriving. Usually by June we will find a healthy population of bats in Fox Island. The most common bat seen in the park is the big brown bat. The big brown bat is the only bat species of the 13 known bats found in Indiana that is not a species of special concern nor endangered. According to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (<https://secure.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/8450.htm>), four of the 13 species are only found in Indiana during spring and fall migration. Three of the 13 species are especially rare in Indiana. If you find a bat in your attic or another unwanted location, please contact Going Bats, bat rehabilitators. They will remove the bats for free, with no harm to the bats and no charge: www.goingbats.org.

Reduce – Reuse – Recycle

The waste hierarchy, and what we have forgotten about it

By Kate Sanders

Recycling has changed considerably over the past decade, hasn't it? When recycling first started becoming available, there were precious few things that could be stored and taken to the drop-off spots.

Do you remember collecting until you had enough to make the trip worthwhile, and then loading up the trunk and walking each separate thing into separate trailers?

Now, in the city especially, we are completely spoiled. All we have to do is throw our recyclables, unsorted, into a bin, and they get hauled away. How much do people pay attention to the list of what can and can't actually be put into that bin and recycled? I hope everyone...

With recycling getting better, more available, all the time, we have forgotten all about the waste hierarchy, and we too often skip straight to recycle. When I was much younger, we learned to, "reduce, reuse, recycle" in that order.

First, you are supposed to consciously reduce the amount of waste you create. Use refillable water bottles, take real plates and silverware and cloth napkins to barbecues and carry ins, look at the number on the plastic containers, and do not purchase things in containers that cannot be recycled, don't purchase things you don't need so that you don't encourage continued production.

Which brings us to reuse. Whether something is recyclable or not, if you can find a reuse for it, reuse it.

In our home we like to think of these searches for reuse as creative adventures for repurposing, and there is so much inspiration out there now for reuse if you look or get creative on your own. The sky is the limit!

Finally, the last step is recycle. When you are finished with the reuse, recycle it, or when you have reduced, and you still have extra, recycling is still there to help. Recycling is still a good choice, especially when the alternative is trash, but if you can reduce, and reuse, please consider those first.

Why am I talking about this in the Fox Tale, which is usually all about cool and amazing things we find outside? The most common trash item to wash up on beaches is single-use plastic cutlery. That is not a cool thing to find outside.

There is more and more news every day on where our trash is being found in different parts of the natural world where it does not belong. Significant amounts of plastic in the oceans, trash washing up on miles and miles of beaches – when was the last time you went anywhere at all and did not see trash out of place?

So please, let us all help remind each other to make a cleaner world, for the sake of the animals and cool and amazing things we all love -- by using the waste hierarchy and reduce, reuse, then recycle.



Mark your calendar for the annual meeting

This year's annual meeting will be held 6-8 p.m. May 10 at the nature center. Dinner will start at 6:30 p.m. Live music will be provided. Members will receive a notice soon.

May 2019						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Friday, May 10th 2019

Sol Fest: Fun in the sun!

By Jeff Ormiston

The 2019 edition of Sol Fest will be held Saturday, May 4, and Sunday, May 5, at Fox Island County Park's Bowman Lake.

This annual event is the fundraiser for the Allen County Parks Youth Scholarship Program, which provides funds for local school groups that may not otherwise have the financial resources available to visit our county parks.

Live bands will play noon-7 p.m. both days, and the Beer Garden will be open during that time. The Kids Area will be open noon-5 p.m. with food vendors and many kids activities.

The entry fee for this event is \$5, and children 11 and under get in FREE.

Because this event is a fundraiser, annual passes are not honored.

The Fox Island Alliance will again staff the pond dipping station and the Vera Dulin Wildlife Observation Building.



On Thoreau and trees

By Laura Colpitts

As the last vestiges of winter are disappearing we can see the signs of a new season approaching. We've set all the clocks back an hour (except the one in the car) and have moved the heavy coats to the back of the closet. The sap is rising, and buds are forming within our arboreal friends.

Two years ago as I was reading "The Hidden Life of Trees" by Peter Wohlleben, I saw there was to be a local discussion for people to share what readers thought of the best-seller. By attending the event, I learned a lot of folks loved trees and the relationship that a walk in the woods provided. People seemed to experience a renewal, a grand, serene, almost immortal and encouraging companion in trees. Many had a favorite tree or a woods they returned to view and contemplate in different seasons. Some were leaning against, or reading under, or yes, even hugging their special tree!

This week, delivered to my in-box was a post from "Brain Pickings" by Maria Popova titled "Thoreau on Nature as Prayer." She states that to Henry David Thoreau trees were "creative and spiritual companions, sane making and essential." His love of them is said to come alive in verse and photos in a new book "Thoreau and the Language of Trees" by author and photographer Richard Higgins. As Walt Whitman, a contemporary of Thoreau, writes, "After you have exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, life and so on — have found that none of these finally satisfy, or permanently wear — what remains? Nature remains to bring out from their torpid recesses, the affinities of a man or woman with the open air, the trees, fields, the changes of the seasons — the sun by day and the stars of heaven by night."

So, now I'm off to the library (or possibly Amazon.com) to revisit Thoreau in this new format before I head back into the woods. Maybe I'll see you out there.



Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Pam George



Are we springing forward?

Winter seemed to last forever, but no doubt nature is gearing up for a glorious spring!

While fall may seem like the season of “lasts” – falling leaves, falling temperatures and fading colors – spring is thankfully the season of “firsts.”

First sights: Days are growing noticeably longer as nights are getting shorter. The quality of daylight has changed and seems so vibrant, it almost hurts your eyes.

First sounds: At the break of dawn, the air is filled with the melodious music of the numerous songbirds who are returning to the area as the temperatures start to rise, and food sources become available.

First colors: Buds burst open on the bare branches of trees and bushes adding flashes of bright greens, soft pinks, pale blues and buttery yellows to the landscape.

First smells: Nothing compares to the earthy, pleasant smell that soil produces in early spring. What’s responsible for that special fragrance? Soil-dwelling bacteria thrive in the soil when conditions are wet and warm. After a warm spring rain, tiny spores produced by the bacteria float up into the air – and directly into your nose.

First creatures: Tiny amphibians - wood frogs, spring peepers, gray tree frogs and chorus frogs – emerge from their frozen states of being under logs, stones and dead leaves and hop off to the nearest pond, where they croak loudly to attract a mate.

You’ll have to wait until later to hear the sustained trill of the American toad or the deep “jug-a-rum” of the giant bullfrog. They are burrowing below the frost line for now and awaiting a warmer reception from Mother Nature.

First trees to bloom: The white flowers of the serviceberry, dogwood and black cherry trees brighten the forest floor at Fox Island, followed by the purple flowers of the redbud tree and the tulip-shaped flower of the tulip poplar, our Indiana state tree.

The fluffy catkins on willow trees are flowers too and start releasing their pollen into the spring breezes.

First birds to appear – Neither the American robin nor the bluebird are the first summer birds to arrive. They’ve been hiding in plain sight all winter long. It’s the red-winged blackbird with its familiar “Okalee” that is the spring forecaster, followed soon by the tufted titmouse singing “Peter, Peter, Peter.”



First insects: The adult mourning cloak sleeps in dark and sheltered places like under tree bark for most of the winter but emerges to sip on flowing sap as trees awake from their winter naps.

Adult ladybugs also hibernate over the winter, sometimes inside your house, so the adult emerges quite early and ready to lay clusters of eggs and feed on the first batch of sweet-tasting aphids.

So, start hiking the trails at Fox Island Park and make a checklist of the spring-time “firsts” you spot! Date and keep your list so you can schedule a similar hike next year to compare your results. Each year can become a new adventure!

Classes, camp and club meetings

Yoga in Spring

**April 3, 10, 17, & May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29;
Wednesdays**

The benefits of regular yoga include muscle toning, maintaining flexibility, managing stress and insomnia. Our yoga instructor provides a low-stress yoga experience. Release the toxins in your joints while increasing flexibility and destressing. This class will get you through the rest of your busy week! A drop-in fee of \$10 per session is accepted.

5:30-7 p.m.

Cost: \$55 for all eight classes or \$10 per class
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 5
Max. 40

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nha-ley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3180
Natalie Haley

Scrapbooking

April 12, May 17, Fridays

We are scrapbooking memories to last a lifetime! We provide refreshments. Pizza may be ordered for \$5 (optional). Most bring a snack to share. Crafters/sewing welcome all the same. Class fees are \$10 per session. Creative Memories Consultant Sandye Parks may be contacted if you need to place any orders.

6 p.m.-midnight

Cost: \$10 per class
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 5
Max. 22

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nha-ley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3180
Natalie Haley

Fox Kit Club

April 9, May 14, Tuesdays

April 9 – “Cottontails”
May 14 – “Sketching with Nature”
Developed for preschool students and their accompanying parent or teachers. Teachers are free.

10-11 a.m.

Cost: \$3/child, \$2/adult
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 5
Max. 25

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nha-ley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3180
Natalie Haley

Hike 4 Lunch

April 17, May 15, Wednesdays

Join a naturalist on an edible nature hike. You never know where you might be able to find food and water in a survival situation.

10-11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$2
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 5
Max. 20

Metea County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nha-ley@allencountyparks.org
Call: 449-3777
Natalie Haley

Morel Mushroom March

April 30, Tuesday

Join a naturalist on an edible morel mushroom walk. Learn how to find and correctly harvest morels. Includes a simple mushroom collecting bag.

1-3 p.m.

Cost: \$3
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 5
Max. 20

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3777
Natalie Haley

Outdoor Adventure Camp

June 17-21, Monday-Friday

We would love to teach your camper how to have a proper outdoor adventure. Camp experiences include back-packing, hiking, trail-marking, birding and helping the local animals that live within Fox Island County Park. Visits with local wild animal experts are included in this camp as well.

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$120 per camper
Preregister by 5 days before program
Min. 10
Max. 20

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3180
Natalie Haley

Survival Camp

June 24-28, Monday-Friday

As many are out of touch with nature we feel the need to show your camper how to immerse themselves in the outdoors while having fun. We will build shelters and collect solar-powered water. They will learn fire safety and fire starting skills. This is an amazing camp that will help your camper feel confident while having fun outdoors.

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$120 per camper
Preregister by 5 days before program
Min. 10
Max. 20

Fox Island County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3180
Natalie Haley

Canoe Camp I

July 8-12, Monday-Friday

Canoe camps have become ever-increasingly popular amongst our northeast Allen County campers. Your camper will survive the July summer heat while floating in the clean cool water of Cedar Creek. Camp experiences include creek hikes, canoeing in Cedarville Reservoir, and tube floats down Cedar Creek. Campers will learn how the water quality of Cedar Creek has drastically improved through human initiatives. Your camper will become a citizen scientist by helping us catch water invertebrates indicative of the high quality of water that is found in Metea County Park.

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$120 per camper
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 10
Max. 20

Metea County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3777
Natalie Haley

Canoe Camp II

July 15-19, Monday-Friday

Due to the popularity of our Canoe Camps we have felt the need to meet public demand by offering a second amazing week of floating in the protected and cooling waters of Cedar Creek. Your camper will measure the quality of the water and will understand how we can live safely and responsibly along our many river systems. Creek hikes, tube floats and canoeing allow for a fully immersive experience.

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$120 per camper
Preregister by: (5 days before program)
Min. 10
Max. 20

Metea County Park

Nature Center

To register or for more information:
Email: nhaley@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3777
Natalie Haley

Zartman retires, continued from Page 1

“The nature center was all pine trees,” he said.

The current nature center was opened in 1997.

Zartman started living at the 605-acre park in 1986. The Fox Island Alliance ran the cross-country skiing rentals, which were very popular, before the county parks department took over the responsibility.

“There was less paid help and lots of volunteer hands,” Zartman said.

“Ron had a long career here at Allen County Parks, most of it before my time, said Jeff Baxter, superintendent of Allen County Parks. “I knew him back when I worked at (Fort Wayne) Parks but more as a business associate.”

With so many years at the park, Zartman has seen numerous visitors.

“There are many many school kids he led hikes for,” Baxter said, “and just like a teacher who has taught for many years he probably has led hikes for kids of kids he led hikes for when they were little. He was wonderful at leading kids on hikes and they all loved him from what I could see. They'd color him thank you notes and pictures, and he'd keep them up for years. Ron didn't throw away a lot, never those.”

They didn't always see eye to eye, but each worked to do what was best for the park.

Zartman had a couple of interesting run-ins with deer over the years at the park.

“I had a close encounter with triplets, three fawns,” he said.

The three wobbly babies were playing in a water puddle.

“Finally, one stood by me and nuzzled me,” he said. “I couldn't help but reach down and pet it.”

The other encounter was a little less pleasant, and more reminiscent of “Alien.” Zartman said he had seen the body of a deer that had been hit on Yohne Road.

“I went back one day and all of a sudden out popped this bloody possum.”

He and his wife, Rita, got married at the park 10 years ago this year and are now living in a home that she had before their marriage. It's been an adjustment for him to have neighbors again.

“We've looked at retiring for awhile and figured we could,” he said.

Looking back, he credits the help he go over the years.

“I've been helped and assisted by the alliance and volunteers,” he said.



By Lisa Esquivel Long

Ron Zartman talks with a volunteer.



Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
12206 W. Yoder Road
Roanoke, IN 46783

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Lisa Esquivel Long

The **Fox Island Alliance** is a volunteer not-for-profit organization. Its purposes are to help preserve the natural features of Fox Island County Park, to assist its orderly development as a nature preserve, to raise funds to facilitate its development, to promote Fox Island's use as an educational center, and to coordinate volunteer efforts.

MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE ON MARCH 31. CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL TO BE SURE.

Use the application to the right and check "Renewal"

Fox Island Alliance Membership Application __New __Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

__ Check if you would like to receive your Fox Tale by email

__ Check if you do not want your name published

Please Circle One:

Students \$5 - Senior \$5 - 2 Seniors \$10 - Indiv. \$15 - Family \$20

Sustaining \$30 - Patron \$50

Additional gift \$__ Education \$__ Exhibits \$__ Scholarship

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Total Dues and Gifts \$__

If this membership is a gift, enter donor's name:

Check if you are interested in volunteering. You will be contacted.

Will your employer match your gift to FIA?

Check with your Human Resources/Personnel Department.

FIA is a 501 (c) (3) organization; extra gifts are tax deductible.

Make your check payable to FIA, Inc. and mail with this form to:

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