



3 billion birds gone

By Cynthia Powers

Were you alive in 1970? That’s 50 years ago. Did you realize that nearly 3 billion fewer wild birds are alive now? Maybe you even helped gather the data that made this study by Cornell University possible. It was published in the journal Science last September.

How might you have helped? Alliance volunteers have contributed to Project FeederWatch (going on right now in the Vera Building). Did you participate in a Christmas Bird Count, or a Breeding Bird Survey? These long-term projects have recently been bolstered by data from weather radar, which picks up migrating flocks, and by the huge computer database called eBird.

How did this happen? You can guess most of the reasons: habitat loss, window strikes, rising temperature, outdoor cats, and weakening of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Basically, not enough people care!

Why should we care? Birds eat a lot of harmful insects, and they do it for free! Plus, they’re beautiful and raise our spirits, which is worth a lot.

There are some success stories: waterfowl are doing well, due to wetlands conservation funded by hunters who purchase the Duck Stamp. Hawks, falcons and eagles have benefited from banning DDT. Bluebirds have rebounded with more nest boxes.

But grassland birds such as meadowlarks are down more than 50%; shorebirds and boreal forest nesters down more than a third. Here in Indiana, in the eastern forest biome, our birds are down 17%.

What can we do? Learn the names of birds, and teach your kids. That’s a beginning. Use native plants to make your own yard bird-friendly. Drink shade-grown coffee, if you can find it. Keep cats indoors, and make windows safer. Avoid using pesticides. Help with a citizen science project like FeederWatch. And vote to preserve habitat, and to strengthen the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty.



By USFWS

National Audubon has just created a fascinating website called “Survival by Degrees” that you can search by location, choose a bird, and see what the effect on its range will be if the global temperature rises by 1.5, 2.0, or 3.0 degrees Celsius. For instance, if the temperature rises 3 degrees, we won’t have any wood thrushes in Fox Island any more. There’s a link to “Survival by Degrees” on our local chapter’s website, stockbridgeaudubon.org; scroll down to explore it.

We really need to act within the next 10 years.

KEEP IN MIND: IF THE WORLD BECOMES SAFER FOR BIRDS, IT WILL BE SAFER FOR PEOPLE, TOO.



Left, an Eastern meadowlark takes a look around.

By [Jimfbleak](#) via Wikimedia

Right, a wood thrush sings.

By [Rhododendrites](#) via Wikimedia



Winter programs

Young Naturalist Home School

1-3 p.m. Jan. 9

Geology and history of the Little River Valley

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs. Cost: \$2

Preregister by: Jan. 2

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Young Explorers

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

2:30-3:30 p.m. Jan. 11

Designed for nature loving kids 5-10 yrs. Cost: \$2

Preregister by: Jan. 3

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Young Naturalist Home School

1-3 p.m. Jan. 23

Eggs — nature's perfect invention

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs. Cost: \$2

Preregister required by: Jan. 16

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston



Courtesy of Maxi Merkel

Naturalist Jeff Ormiston, left, pauses for a snack with visitors Maxi and Ralph Merkel after a presentation on the history of celery growing in the fields around Fox Island in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Whittling with Jeff

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

5-7 p.m. Feb. 4

Whittle a heart for your loved one.

12 yrs. min age if accompanied by an adult. Cost: \$4

Preregister by: Jan. 27

Min.: 1 Max. 6

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184 Jeff Ormiston

Young Naturalist Home School

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

1-3 p.m. Feb. 6

Mammals, our furry friends and relatives

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs. Cost: \$2

Preregister by: Jan. 2

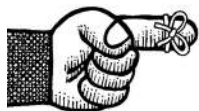
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Don't forget

Memberships expire March 31.

Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids



By Jeff Ormiston

Why?

Why do birds stand on one leg?

By standing on one leg and holding one leg against their body birds can stay warmer when it is cold outside. Because birds don't have feathers on their legs and feet, they lose a lot of warmth through their bare legs. Birds and some animals also have something called "rete mirabile," which is a group of very small arteries that cools warm blood from the heart and sends it to the veins going to the bird's cold legs and feet. By doing that they lose less body warmth through their feet and legs.

Why don't woodpeckers get wood chips in their eyes?

Whenever you do woodworking it is always a good idea to wear glasses to protect your eyes. Woodpeckers don't need to wear protective glasses because they have a thin "see through" membrane called a nictitating membrane that covers their eyes and keeps wood chips from going in their eyes. The membrane covers the eye just as its beak strikes the wood. Many birds, reptiles and some mammals have nictitating membranes to protect their eyes and keep them moist. Polar bears have nictitating membranes that help them from getting "snow blindness" in the harsh arctic snow fields.

Why did the woolly bear caterpillar cross the road?

Every fall we see woolly bear caterpillars on the streets and roads of our communities scurrying to get to the safety of the other side of the road. These caterpillars are the larval (worm) stage of the Isabella tiger moth and they are just searching for a cozy spot to spend the winter. Arctic woolly bear caterpillars are very long-lived and have been known to survive up to 14 years. They also have the ability to survive after being frozen solid. By creating a type of "anti-freeze" in their bodies they can survive temperatures as cold as -60 degrees C. Some people believe the woolly bear caterpillar can predict the weather, but that is not true. The length of the black and orange stripes is more of an indicator of the age of the caterpillar.



By Lisa Esquivel Long

Young Naturalist Home School

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

1-3 p.m. Feb. 20

Animal tracks, identification, make your own

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs.

Cost: \$2

Preregister by: Feb. 13

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184

Jeff Ormiston

Young Naturalist Home School

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

1-3 p.m. March 5

Plants, how they grow.

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs.

Cost: \$2

Preregister by: Feb. 28

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184

Jeff Ormiston

Young Naturalist Home School

Fox Island County Park Nature Center

1-3 p.m. March 19

Turtles, snakes and other reptilia

Designed for kids 6-12 yrs.

Cost: \$2

Preregister by: March 12

Min. 5

Max. 10

To register or for more information:

Email: jormiston@allencountyparks.org

Call: 449-3184

Jeff Ormiston

What's happening on Facebook



Fox Island Park

December 29, 2019 at 8:46 PM · 🌐

This muskrat family group is active in the Nature Center Pond right now. Duck weed, grass and cattails are what they are feeding on. Muskrats use cattails for lodging as well as food and are essential in keeping these ponds from being taken over by the cattails. Every time the muskrat pauses during chewing it is checking out the photographer to make sure he is not a threat to its safety.

Video: J. Ormiston 12-27-19



It must be muskrat love



Fox Island Park

December 29, 2019 at 8:37 PM · 🌐

This muskrat takes advantage of the very thin Bowman Lake ice to enjoy a meal of lake vegetation from the bottom of the lake. The ice provides a safe haven from predators and a chance to dine without a mouthful of water!

The giveaway for this little muncher is its size and tail!





Fox Island on the Indiana Birding Trail

“Whether just getting started as a new birder or enjoying birds as a traveler in the Hoosier state, the new Indiana Birding Trail highlights some of the best state parks, fish and wildlife areas, and other preserves to experience impressive wildlife and scenic beauty.

“More importantly, these sites represent YOU, and your dedication and passion for nature. Without you, these sites would not exist for the birds.

“Visit www.indianabirdingtrail.com to explore the guide, watch for signs at your favorite sites in 2020, and pick up a printed IBT guide to explore this upcoming year.”

—From @IndianaAudubon Facebook page

You can bird Fox Island in 3-4 hours, according to the park page on the birding website.

“Best Times to Bird:

Birding is best during migration, with more than 30 species of wood-warblers possible. Thrushes, vireos and other woodland species can be plentiful. There are many nesting species as well, but summer birding can be challenging because of dense clouds of mosquitos. Winter birding can be rewarding, but is often most successful at the Vera Dulin wildlife Observation Building, where feeders are found. The building is staffed by volunteers, but the staff will open it on request.”



Naturalist Jeff Ormiston spotted this bald eagle in the park’s marsh.



Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
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Roanoke, IN 46783

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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

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

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

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

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

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