



## SOME WARBLERS ARE STILL HERE!

By Cynthia Powers

May is a magical time for birders, as many kinds of warblers migrate through our area on the way to their nesting grounds in the far north. But take heart: not all of them leave! Several kinds stay for the summer.

The family Parulidae, or wood warblers, live only in the Western Hemisphere, as do hummingbirds. In fact, birders from other countries such as the UK come here just to see them. Another reason to be glad we're in Indiana!

Perhaps the most common of the Fox Island nesting warblers are the Yellow Warbler and the Common Yellowthroat. The Yellow Warbler's song sounds to me like "Sweet, sweet, supersupersweet." If you get a close enough look, the male has fine red streaks underneath. Yellow Warblers can be found almost anywhere but leave by the end of July.



If you go out to the restored prairie toward the east end of the park, you are almost certain to hear the "witchety-witchety" song of the Common Yellowthroat, and you may even see his masked bandit face.

Blue-winged Warblers sound like "bee-buzz." They like second growth woods or weedy clearings. Their bluish gray wings have two white wing bars.



Orange is a rare color in nature, but the male American Redstart displays a striking orange and black plumage. He even calls attention to it by fanning and raising his tail. The female just substitutes yellow for orange.

Everyone loves the Ovenbird, with its loud "Teacher! Teacher!" song, or more like "CherTee! CherTee!" Seen more often on the ground, its spotted and streaked breast might make you think of a thrush, but it really is a warbler.



Other warblers nesting in Indiana are uncommon: Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Cerulean, Prairie, Yellow-throated, Black-and-white, Prothonotary, Kentucky, Hooded, and Louisiana Waterthrush, which is really a warbler despite the name. (Not everything makes sense.) Best to master the five more common ones; then you won't be sad when May is over, migrants are gone, and Fox Island is best left to the mosquitoes.

# ***“Wind in the Woods”* The Story of John Muir by John Stewart**

## **An Introductory Report**

**by Natalie Haley, Park and Education Manager for Fox Island County Park**

With a day of time on my hands due to rain and no need to water our newly planted pollinator habitats, I decided to read one of my late Grandmother Joyce Adams’ books on John Muir. John Muir, known as the Father of our National Parks was born in Dunbar, Scotland on April 21, 1838 to Daniel and Ann Muir. Their auburn-haired, blue-eyed boy learned to read and spell at the knee of his Grandfather Gilrye by looking at the shop signs along Dunbar’s cobbled and wayward streets. Before age three he went to school with a little green bag that held his first book in it and was tied around his neck so he wouldn’t lose it. John recalled “it blowing back in the sea-wind like a flag.”

Doctors were feared by children in those days and John was no different. The children were told stories of “dandy doctors” who caught children out after dark and sold them to the medical school in Edinburgh. Research crimes of Dr. Burke and Dr. Hare for more information. When John’s baby brother, David, was a few days old, he was vaccinated. John watch in horror as the doctor scratched at David’s arm until it bled. The little boy John ran to the doctor and promptly jumped high enough to bite his arm! John’s ability to overcome his fears in order to protect what he loved would become legendary.

Afterschool foot races were a favorite sport. John, who usually won, lost one day to a girl and was shamed before his friends. Every moment he could slip away from home he spent running up the brae. Before long he was the undefeated winner of every footrace! John did not take defeat lightly in his life then nor later.

Dunbar Castle was his favorite playground. Though highly energetic, John calmed down when out exploring nature; looking at plants and for bird nests.

While the boys were studying lessons with Grandfather Gilrye, their Father came in and announced they were going to America. Grandfather Gilrye sadly predicted that all they would find was work. On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1849, John, his father Daniel, his brother David and older sister Sarah, set sail for New York City. His mother Ann and other siblings would follow a month later. While his father spent time with seasickness below deck, and his older sister stayed in her bunk, John and his brother David slid about the decks with Irish, German, French and Scandinavian boys. “We were flying to our fortunes on the wings of the winds, carefree as thistle seeds,” John later wrote. It took them six weeks and three days to reach New York Harbor.

Daniel homesteaded in Kingston, Wisconsin on 160 initial acres, surrounded by woods, meadows and Fountain Lake (now known as Muir Lake). His first discovery was a blue jay nest. Rough and tumble learning continued when his father gave him and his brother an Indian pony named Jack. Daniel told them to “Take him to the meadow and learn to ride.” They also taught themselves to swim in Fountain Lake. When the rest of the family joined them, work began and time for exploring became limited and Grandfather’s Gilrye’s prediction became truth.

John’s father Daniel had a habit of thrashing the boys for misdeeds, and sometimes for when they didn’t do anything. Work and whippings pushed John out of the family nest to escape to the freedom nature could bring. He no longer went to school so he borrowed books from neighbors to read. His father was only pleased when John read and learned from the Bible. John and his father would have bible lessons each evening. John would stay up later reading and learning from his borrowed books until his father would tell him to go to bed. It got so bad that Daniel tired of always telling him to go to bed. His father finally relented, in a way, by telling him that if he wanted to read he could get up as early in the morning as he wanted to. So, an undefeated, unafraid, determined young John woke up at 1:00AM to read!

(A short report on the childhood of one who walked in the winds, raced up the braes; and calmly, yet enthusiastically explored the woods and waters of Dunbar, Scotland and Kingston, Wisconsin. Read future Fox Tales to hear how John Muir became the man who fought for our National Parks).



## *Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids*

### *Going Batty at Fox Island*

*By Pam George*

If you have ever taken a night hike at Fox Island, you may have encountered one of several species of bats that have been spotted in the park including Big Brown Bat, Indiana Bat, Little Brown Bat, Red Bat, Silver-haired Bat, and the Evening Bat.



Bats live in a variety of habitats, including wetlands, fields, and forests. They usually feed where insects swarm, such as over water and fields, in forest clearings, along forest edges, and around parking lot lights, all of which can be found at our park.

The abundant trees at Fox Island provide ideal shelters and attract a wide range of insects for bats to feed on. Since bats are not able to bore holes or make their own nests, they use whatever gaps are available – including hollows made by other animals or by the natural decay of the wood. Trees with woodpecker holes, or even deep crevices from lightning strikes are particularly attractive. The loose bark of the shagbark hickory tree is also quite suitable for bat roosts. They usually select naturally warm sites, such as sheltered trees receiving some sunshine during the day.

#### **Intriguing Bat Facts:**

- Bats are mammals, but they are the only mammals that actually fly.
- The scientific name for bats is Chiroptera, which means ‘hand wing’ because their wing structure is almost the same as our hands.
- Being nocturnal, they fly at night and use echolocation to find food and travel safely. Bats send out sounds that bounce off objects and travel back to them so they can tell the size of the object and how far away it’s located.
- A baby bat is called a pup, and the mother bat usually only has one baby at a time. The pups are born and cared for in colonies where the female bats gather together. The male bats do not participate in caring for the pups.

Because bats feed on insects, the increased use of pesticides has undoubtedly resulted in the poisoning of some of these beneficial critters. Also, the clearing of forests has caused a decline in the summer habitat of the many Indiana bats. Preserved areas like Fox Island Park become one of the few havens that provide a secure location for these unique creatures of the wild.



Therefore, Dr. Scott Bergeson, a wildlife biologist who teaches at Purdue Fort Wayne, has chosen our park as a location for some valuable scientific research. To collect data about what species of bats are currently still present in the park, he will again this summer be setting up “invisible” nets at various locations right before sunset to safely capture any bats flying through. Once a bat has been caught, Dr. Bergeson will first identify the species, then measure its body dimensions and collect a blood sample to help determine its health. He also will be monitoring a newly installed bat roosting box in the wetland area behind the nature center.



## Fox Island Alliance

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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.

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