



Family bat event

By Victoria Mumaw

On July 25 the alliance’s Bat Committee hosted a family event focused on bats. Dr. Scott Bergeson and his graduate students were welcomed to share information about their current research happening right here at Fox Island. The Fox Island Alliance helps to financially support these research efforts so we were excited to hear about the bats found at the park along with learning about the importance of this novel research.



Bergeson’s team is conducting a few different studies with the goal of determining what species are present and where their preferred roosting areas are. Galen Burrell, a graduate student at Purdue Fort Wayne, was able to show us how he tags and tracks bats that they catch and release during their night outings at Fox Island. We were also able to hear some recorded bat calls from an acoustic study they are doing. Visitors were able to hear the difference in calls and learn that the research team has heard the calls of some of the state endangered species here at Fox Island.

Guests learned that many bat populations in North America are declining due to the rapid spread of a disease called white-nose syndrome. The once common little brown bat is now state endangered, among other species. The majority of bats found here in northern Indiana overwinter in caves further south. While in hibernation they are exposed to a fungus found in these caves that causes bats to have a white, itchy nose. The fungus forces bats to wake when they would otherwise be hibernating, resulting in a loss of fat storage to survive the full length of winter.

Knowing where these bats spend their summers can help us determine the type of habitat each species prefers. Understanding the habitat used by bats will allow us, at Fox Island and other nature preserves, to know what to focus on in terms of conservation. Guests also learned what it takes to build bat houses and the best location to hang them for optimal bat use!

Along with Bergeson’s presentation, attendees were able to explore pictures of bats found in Indiana as well as see skeletons of some bat species. There was a craft where kids and adults alike could make and color a bat to take home as well as a story time for the younger kids. In all, we had a great time and look forward to a similar event next summer!

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See our new Little Library

By Liz Hincks

Located outside the Nature Center's front door, on one of the posts holding up the roof, is the newest addition to Fox Island. This addition was sponsored by the Education Committee, built and put up by FIA member DJ Mumaw. Countless visitors to the park have enjoyed its contents since it appeared on the last day of April.

The new addition to Fox Island is a Little Library. If you haven't seen one yet, they are "mini libraries" where anyone has the ability to take a book to read and enjoy and leave a book if you are so inclined. These libraries were created, and are sprinkled all over Fort Wayne, in an effort to increase sharing the enjoyment of reading. How much better does it get than to enjoy a book in a setting as beautiful and relaxing as Fox Island?

We started with three large boxes of books, some donated and some purchased. We are thrilled that our Little Library has been used so much! We have had some books put in there as well.

We are almost out of books and need your help. If you have some gently used or new nature-based or animal-themed books, fact or fiction, for children of all ages, that you think others might enjoy sharing, please drop them off at the Fox Island Gatehouse or at the Nature Center. The committee will place a sticker on each book to show it came from Fox Island and identify it as a gift to share the joys of nature and reading.

If you have any questions about the Little Library or donating books, contact Liz at lizhincks11@gmail.com.

The storage shed gets new roof

By Dan Preest

Under the back deck of the Nature Center is a storage shed built by past IMN graduate John Reidenbach, who built the shed a few years ago as part of his IMN volunteer hours requirement.

Over the years, a roof leak developed and in late July the FIA Board approved the expenditure of \$253.54 for repair materials. On Aug. 5, a new metal roof was installed by Carol Gaham, Jeff Ormiston and Dan Preest. Building contents were sorted and useable items moved to temporary storage to allow the shed's interior to dry out.

The next steps will be fitting out the interior for more orderly storage of FIA equipment. A tool and equipment list is being developed for the purchase of items necessary for the alliance to carry out its mission supporting park upkeep. While the list is still being developed and costed, equipment needed includes wheelbarrows, loppers, bow saws, shovels, rakes as well as spading and mulching forks. A chain saw for FIA use will also be proposed.

As a side note, while sorting shed contents prior to reroofing, several heavily rusted hand tools were found. The tools were successfully cleaned using a solution of one-quarter cup of salt dissolved in 1 quart of white vinegar. The tools were submerged for 12 hours.

After the initial soak, the tools were placed in the baking soda bath (water to cover and about one-third of a box of soda) for two hours to neutralize the acidic vinegar. The final step was to dry the tools and coat them in a film of light oil (WD-40 sprayed into tight areas).



Monarchs treated as royalty at festival



By Carol Gaham



This year's Monarch Festival at Eagle Marsh was part of the Fort Wayne "Be a Tourist in Your Hometown" event. Fox Island was well represented at the festival at the tag-and-release table, where the public participated in tagging and releasing over 50 monarch butterflies. The tagging program is part of a community science project initiated in 1992 by MonarchWatch.org that tracks the movements and populations of the butterflies as they migrate to and from Mexico each year.

It is always fun to watch the smile on someone's face when they are asked if they want to help tag a butterfly, and even more fun when a butterfly is placed gently on their arm so they can help it on its journey to Mexico.

The children were encouraged to wish their butterflies well as they fluttered away, so there were lots of "Safe trip to Mexico!" shouts throughout the day.



Two Fox Island County Park volunteers managed the table this year. Joy Maassel did an amazing job interacting with the crowd, teaching amazing facts about the butterflies she cares so much about and works tirelessly with the care and feeding at the park. Carol Gaham also helped with the table. Everyone who came out to the festival enjoyed a warm, sunshiny day.

1,2,3...The 2022 Great Backyard Bird Count

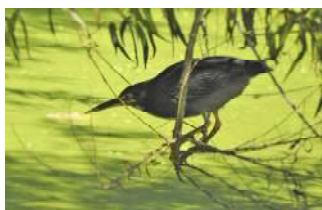
By Cynthia Powers

Do you have at least 15 minutes to spare? If so, you can contribute to the 24th year of this citizen science project, cosponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon and Birds Canada.

Count all the birds you see for at least 15 minutes, at home or traveling such as on a walk at Fox Island. Make your best estimate of the number of each species you see. You can enter a photo as well. If you aren't sure, details are helpful. Count every species you see, even the house sparrows. You can enter a count on each of the four days if you want.



A scarlet tanager seen along the main trail in May.



Record your sightings at www.birdcount.org. You can use your home computer, the Merlin Bird ID app (free!) on your smart phone, or the eBird mobile app. Get your computer-savvy kids to help with that, and turn them on to birding while you're at it. Afterward, you can explore the data from past years. It's more fun than scrolling through Facebook.

A green heron looks for lunch in the pond behind the Nature Center early in September.



Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Pam George



Who's the Yellow Fellow?

What would you call this pesky creature?

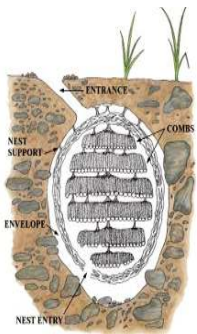


- | | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| A. a bee | C. a hornet |
| B. a wasp | D. a yellow jacket |



If you answered B, C, or D, you'd be right! But the best answer is "D."

As the warm summer gives way to a cool fall, flying insects start to ruin our outdoor activities, especially if we're eating sugary foods. We sometimes call these intruders "bees". However, these uninvited guests at our picnics are probably yellow jackets, also known as "ground wasps" or "meat eater bees."

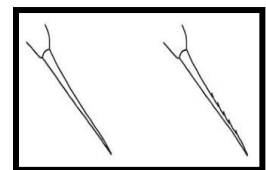


Yellow jackets are also confused with paper wasps because they have much in common. Both have black and yellow stripes, fly, and sting. Both help our environment by feeding on pest insects and larvae that damage crops and shade trees. They also kill house flies that spread diseases! But paper wasps have thinner bodies, have blacker wings, their legs hang down when they fly, and they don't crave sugar.

Yellow jackets build their papery nests in **holes in the ground** left by other animals by chewing on wood chips and mixing the pulp with their saliva.

In the spring when the nests are full of yellow jacket larvae, the adults also chew on protein-rich insects and caterpillars, making an insect paste to feed the babies. By late summer, they have no more babies to feed, so they start to crave those sweet, sugary foods, like your desserts! At this time, they are more aggressive than other stinging insects and are easily riled.

Beware of their sting! Unlike honeybees, yellow jacket stingers are not barbed and therefore remain attached to their abdomens even after repeated stings. Their venom is also much more painful!



**Guess what animal likes to dig up yellow jacket nests and eat their contents without ever getting sick?
The skunk!**

The good news? Yellow jackets never use a nest for more than one season. In the fall, all the males die off, leaving only a pregnant queen to overwinter under tree bark or a fallen log, patiently waiting for spring when she can start building a new nest somewhere else.

Upcoming Programs

Note: All events at Fox Island Nature Center. To register or for more information contact Natalie Haley at nhaley@allencountyparks.org or 260-449-3246, **except for bird count.**

Forest Preschool

1-2:30 p.m. Oct. 20: Fall Trees, Nov. 3: Deer, Dec. 15: Winter Birds

For preschool children and their families or teachers and hosted by a naturalist. Preschool teachers are free.

\$3 per child, \$2 per parent. Preregister by Oct. 15 and 29 and Dec. 10, respectively.

Night Hike by the Light of the Blood Moon

5:30-7:30 p.m. Oct. 21

A total sensory experience. Bring a red filtered light so we don't affect our night vision.

\$2 per person. Preregister by Oct. 16.

Fall Tree Hike

1-2:30 p.m. Oct. 23

Meet a naturalist and take a saunter in the trees.

\$2 per person. Preregister by Oct. 18.

Teacher/Trail Guide Workshop on TREES

1-3 p.m. Oct. 24

For Allen County Park Trail Guides and Teachers.

Scrapbook/Craft Night Out

5-11 p.m. Nov. 5, Dec. 3

For adults to socialize with other adults while crafting or scrapbooking. We provide refreshments, order pizza, and share snacks.

Christmas Craft and Crop

10 a.m.-8 p.m. Dec. 4

\$10 per adult. Preregister Oct. 31 and Nov. 28 respectively; Nov. 29 for Dec. 4 event.



Honeysuckle Daze at Fox Island

10 a.m.-4 p.m. Nov. 9 and 10

Join us in our battle against non-native plants and invasive shrubs such as honeysuckle and autumn olive. Earn your annual park pass by volunteering for a full day. Wear full-length pants and long-sleeve shirt, protective eyewear, hat and leather gloves. If cold, we recommend insulated overalls.

Cost: FREE (we need your help!)

Preregister by Nov. 1 and call or email ahead of time so we have enough equipment available.

Before Yule Night Hike

5-7 p.m. Dec. 18

Take a hike on the wild side under the Cold Moon!

\$2 per person. Preregister by Dec. 13.

Deer Discoveries

1-3 p.m. Dec. 19 at Fox Island Nature Center

The white-tailed deer at Fox Island have lost their headgear! Learn how and why.

\$2 per person. Preregister by Dec. 14.

Winter Solstice Night Hike

5-7 p.m. Dec. 21

Join us in celebrating the shortest day of the year, the longest night and the first day of winter!

\$2 per person. Preregister by Dec. 16.

Christmas Bird Count

8 a.m.-??? Jan. 1 at Fox Island County Park

Join Stockbridge Audubon and Fox Island County Park in the annual Southwest Allen County Christmas Bird Count! Chili will be served for lunch.

Cost: Park entry. Free with annual park pass. Donations of suet/black sunflower gratefully accepted.

Preregister by Dec. 25 by contacting Cynthia Powers of Stockbridge Audubon at zzedpowers@aol.com.

Tracks 'N Trails of Fox Island

1-3 p.m. Jan. 22 at Fox Island Nature Center

Meet a park naturalist and learn how to track animals in the park.

\$2 per person. Preregister by Jan. 18.

Meet Alliance board member Dan Preest

By Lisa Esquivel Long

Dan Preest is among our newest members of the Fox Island Alliance board. He lives in Roanoke and retired in 2018 after 40 years of human resources management with the last 20 years with international responsibilities. He has worked in the auto, forest products, agriculture, aluminum, and welding equipment sectors.

Originally from the Toledo, Ohio, area, Preest moved to Fort Wayne when he joined Central Soya and then to St. Louis when the company was acquired by Bunge. He returned to Fort Wayne for a few years and then relocated to South Carolina for 10 years.

Now that he's back again in Indiana, he's missing some of the plants he had in the Palmetto State. "I miss the trees from our yard," he said. "I had a nice selection, including pin oaks, a live oak, crepe myrtles and magnolias. Also, a very large butterfly bush and lantana (which was perennial) and attracted a wide range of pollinators."

Preest is part of the conservation committee for Fox Island Alliance. "I have regularly cleared invasives from different areas of the park and gardens, expanded the children's' discovery area and built a few survival structures for the kids to use and assist with school groups." He's hoping to add to the Fox Island Alliance board by assisting in "maintaining the great park and helping educate the community about the great resource available to them."

Do you have a favorite wildflower, plant or animal? "Usually whatever is in front of me, but if pressed I would say my favorite are pollinators: hummingbirds/butterflies/bees."

He enjoys hiking, walking with his dog and trying to improve his wood-carving abilities. His newly constructed home is a chance for him to establish flower/herb/shrub beds, plant trees and put in a rain garden this year along with feeding the birds.

He's always been outdoors since a child. "Up to age 14, I camped year-around with my family and Boy Scouts and always enjoyed being in the woods, camped in or visited parks in the Great Lakes area and Ontario. With business travel I was able to visit other parks in the US and other countries."

Welcome, Dan!



Dogs welcome at Fox Island

By Clara Conroy

You can bring your dog with you to the park as you walk the trails. Please remember though, for the safety of your pet, other visitors and wildlife, your dog(s) must be kept on leash at all times.

Your pooch can go swimming at the Doggie Beach on Bowman Lake too. This is the only area where being off leash is allowed. Resident canines are the only exception to this rule.



This coyote was hunting for small animals along the Troubled Waters trail.

Students have environmental-, ecological-themed Science Fair projects

By Liz Hincks

As with so many other things this past year, the 2021 Northeast Indiana Regional Science and Engineering Fair, sponsored by Purdue Fort Wayne, looked a lot different due to COVID-19. To ensure everyone's safety, students shared their experiments individually from different locations via their computers and were observed and questioned by judges by computer in other locations.

In order for students to qualify for the Fox Island Alliance Regional Award, their experiments had to have an environmental and/or ecological theme for their inquiry.

There were three scientists with exceptional experiments selected to receive the Fox Island Alliance Regional Science Award, which included a certificate, a \$50 gift card, and a year's membership to Fox Island Alliance, which allows the scientist and his or her family free admission to Fox Island County Park.

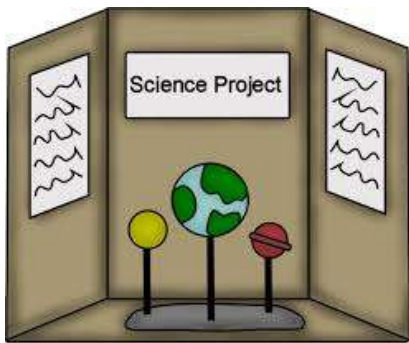
Gabby Colone, a 4th-grade scientist, "likes to grow plants with my mom and my aunt," so she selected "What Type of Planting Mix will the Seed Grow the Fastest In?" for her experiment.

After doing some research on the variety of mixes available, Gabby selected three types of mix for her experiment and gave a thorough description of each type. Gabby created her experiment and observed the growth of each plant. Gabby said she "learned that perlite grew the fastest." Gabby definitely benefited from her experiment because, "I know what planting mix to use in the summer!"

Sydney Inniger, a 7th-grade scientist who loves being part of her school's science fair, selected her topic, "The Importance of Water to Plants," based on her hobby of growing plants and wanting "to experiment on something that challenged me" about how much water plants actually do need in order to survive and thrive. Sydney created a detailed experiment with positive results on how much water is the optimum to use and felt that "moving on to regionals was a phenomenal step to show others my research."

Lucas Till, a 4th-grade scientist, wanted to find an alternative power source. "My project is about discovering how solar power can be used to charge your toys. My hypothesis is I think solar panels can generate enough electricity to power a (radio-controlled) car."

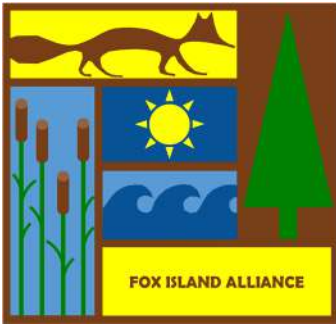
It was obvious that Lucas put a lot of thought, equipment, and work into his experiment. "I selected this because I saw in the news more solar power being used. Renewable energy sources are becoming more popular and needed."



By doing his experiment, Lucas learned that he could power his car with solar energy, but he also "learned how solar power works, including angles and how the amount of sunlight effects output. I also learned about different tools and how to solder electrical circuits together."

All three of these scientists did a wonderful job of creating and explaining their experiments as well as impressing the judges with how they applied the scientific process and knowledge learned.

Congratulations to Gabby, Sydney, and Lucas! We hope to see you again next year at the 2022 Northeast Indiana Regional Science and Engineering Fair.



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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

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