



A quarterly newsletter published by the Fox Island Alliance, Inc.

What in the world is a big sit?

by Cynthia Powers

If you think that birders can't be silly, read on.

The Big Sit is a birding event in which the birders sit still, and let the birds come to us! Believe it or not, it is a national event. And like the Christmas Bird Count, it has RULES!



The Big Sit 2013.

By the time you read this, the Fox Island Big Sit may have taken place already, because it has to be on October 7 or 8. At Fox Island, we just do it on Sunday afternoon 12-5, on the back deck of the nature center. Natalie has even named our team: the FIBS (Fox Island Bird Sitters.)

I mentioned the RULES. All birds must be sighted from within a 17-foot diameter circle, which we mark out on the deck with chalk. Why? Just because! (read on.)

A bit of explanation here. The Big Sit was invented by the New Haven bird Club in Connecticut, in 1992. I suspect it was a spoof of contests like the Big Year, or a

Big Day where people rush all around hoping to break a record. We picked the Fox Island Nature Center deck, which overlooks the pond, woods edge, and overhead for migrating hawks. Of course, restrooms and shade are right at hand, and we bring treats too!

Usually we see 30-some species, keeping track on a whiteboard. The rule is that if you need to go outside the circle to get a better look, it counts as long as you spot it from within the circle.

You can imagine that it becomes a sort of tailgate party for birders or anyone who wants to talk about birds.

Since the park is closed, we will have to make arrangements for someone to man the gate, so we should plan to get there by, say, 12:30 on Sunday. We thank Natalie Haley for her enthusiasm in promoting "Birding's Most Sedentary Event!"

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Good-bye to a dear friend of Fox Island Alliance

by Pam George

John T. McCory, a long-time supporter of Fox Island Alliance, died Saturday, June 24, 2023.

John, 86, was an active FIA member for numerous years. He was an FIA Board Member from 1984 – 2002, serving as the Vice-President from 1998-2001. He remained Director Emeritus from 2002 – 2023.

He and his wife, Ellamae McCory have continued to attend FIA events and remained actively involved as late as the last annual meeting in April, 2023!

A graduate of Ball State University with a degree in Biology & Physical Geography and a Masters in Earth & Space Sciences, John taught science classes at Fort Wayne Central High School and Northrop High School for 41 years, retiring in June of 1999.

Additionally, his love for all things natural shined through, as he was a past board member for ACRES & Isaac Walton League as well as being an Indiana State Parks Naturalist for 14 years.

He was past president of the Indiana Campground Owners Association, as he and his wife owned their own campground for 34 years.

John has touched the lives of many through the years with his deeply devoted sense of environmental responsibility. He will be missed!

Ellamae requested any memorials be sent to:

Fox Island Alliance
7324 Yohne Rd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46809

Safety in nature

by Dan Preest

Many of us enjoy solitary nature pursuits from hiking, conservation work, fishing, etc. As such, it is a good idea to carry emergency contact information on your person should injury or medical conditions arise. Even if you are with others, having contact information can be beneficial particularly if the others do not know you well or have the necessary information.

A simple method is to carry a laminated card with emergency contact names and phone numbers. Companies such as Road ID (www.roadid.com) sell customized bracelets engraved with emergency contacts and phone numbers.

Mobile phones can be invaluable if an incident occurs where a person is able to communicate and there is a cell signal. As a back-up, carrying a simple whistle is a good idea. A whistle can be used to help people locate a conscious, immobile person. Hollering for help takes a lot of energy and one's voice may not be loud enough or gives out before help arrives.

Park update

by Dan Preest, Conservation committee Chair

Activity continues at the park during the on-going storm recovery. Following are some selected updates for the Fox Island community.

- As of Labor Day, all trails have been cleared except for the Eagle Scout trail which will remain as is. Plans are in place for regrading of the trails but much work remains until they are back in condition.
- Survey of seedlings planted this spring began in June and continued to September 1st. However, during the last few months observations declined due to the explosive growth of other plants that hid the seedlings. Survival varied by location from 74% east of the Nature Center to a low of 30% on the mid to upper dune area. Lack of rain following planting was a contributing factor.
- As you may recall, the FIA sponsored commercial removal of invasive species bordering the lake. A recent survey found a few honeysuckle (the primary target), some autumn olive and more multi-flora rose.
- The gazebo by the Nature Center has had a major rehabilitation. The gazebo was constructed as an Eagle Scout project seven years ago by Ian Brown, and younger brother Cameron clear coated, mulched and built the benches and walkway a little over four years ago. This year, dad Travis repaired the structure and landscaped the area in preparation for Ian's wedding there on September 9th.
- The Anthony Wayne Rotary contributed \$2,800 for rebuilding the trail and bridge behind the Nature Center. This will provide wheelchair accessibility.
- Eagle Scouts are at work on projects. Aiden Robles completed a ramp at the pond end of the Nature Center boardwalk that allows wheelchair access to the pond. Catherine Hill is planning a rehabilitation of the butterfly garden in front of the nature center. Her project will include a new metal arbor to replace the plastic arbor that was damaged during a prior garden burn. Gus Allyn's plan to build full size replica of an eagle's nest has been approved and a site for placement is to be determined. Finally, the BOD approved a funding request of \$1,200 to Korben Hatfield for construction of a new fishing pier.
- The damaged fishing pier (unrelated to the storm) has been removed. Replacement is a possible Eagle Scout project.
- Derrick Roe removed black locust trees as part of his volunteer hours in the Celebrate Recovery program.



Gazebo rehabilitation.



Wheel accessible trail behind Nature Center.



Wheel accessible trail to Nature Center pond.

Calling all volunteers!

by Sarah Maloy, Volunteer coordinator

The newly established FIA Volunteer Group has been busy this fall! Most recently, we began work in the circular pollinator garden near the Vera Dulin Observation building on Aug. 24. And, maintenance continued on Sept. 15. The group will add milkweed seeds this fall and plugs in the spring. As preparation continues for the park reopening in 2024, we need YOU to sign up as a FIA Volunteer!



Volunteer opportunities are expected to continue to return with a variety of options - big and small! As a FIA Volunteer, you would be added to a group that receives notifications of any FIA volunteer opportunity. These notifications are sent out via SignUp Genius and requires no account. You simply review the opportunity, and decide if you want to help! You can give a little or give a lot - every contribution of time and talent is so important! If signing up, 1) select a slot, 2) add your name and email address! It's that easy! This service also sends out a reminder email two days in advance of the activity.

Please visit our newly revealed website, foxislandalliance.org, to locate the Volunteer Application. It can be found under the Volunteer tab.

Please reach out to Sarah, Volunteer Coordinator with any questions! We hope to see you soon - at the Park!



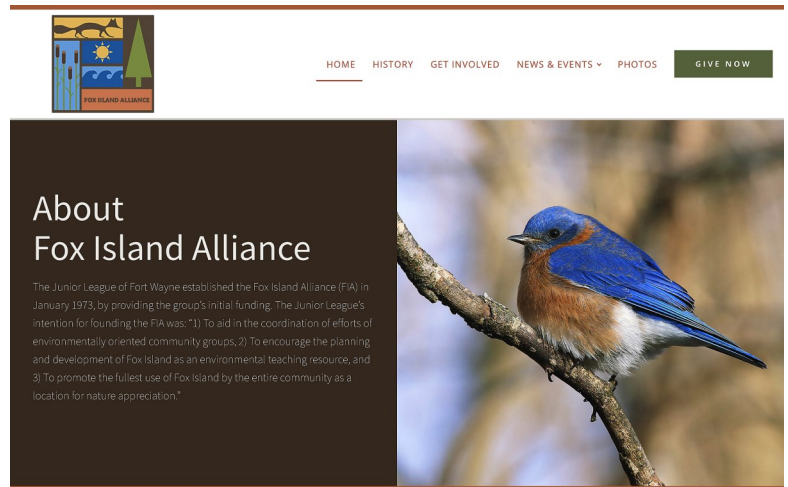
FIA website update

by Sarah Maloy

Have you checked out our brand-new Fox Island Alliance website yet? It can be found at www.foxislandalliance.org and features historical highlights, volunteer resources, membership and renewal options and even a photo gallery!

Now that the new website is up and running, we need your help! Are you tech-savvy or enjoy working with computers? We are seeking volunteers to join the Website Committee and offer support relating to periodic updates to website pages. Commitment would be very minimal and can be completed at your convenient location - no travel required! Training will be provided.

Please reach out to Sarah Maloy at smmindiana@gmail.com with any questions or with your commitment to join the Website Committee!



Special award at the Science Fair

by Tori Mumaw

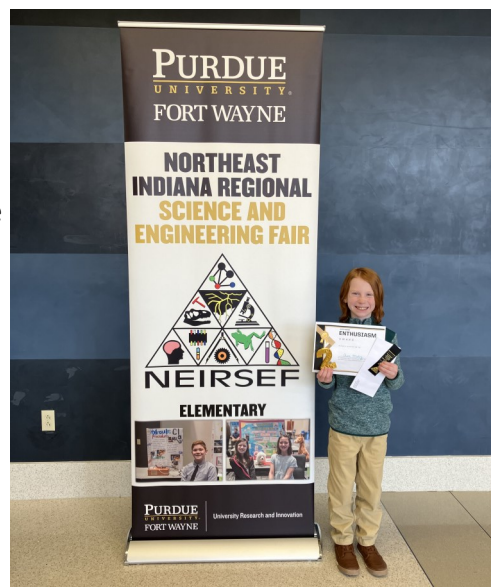
Fox Island Alliance attended the Northeast Indiana Regional Science and Engineering Fair (NEIRSEF) at Purdue University Fort Wayne once again this year. Each year the Alliance tries to focus on projects that are environmental and/or ecologically focused. We look to award the top two projects from each grade category.

Each recipient receives a certificate, a \$50 gift card and a family membership to Fox Island Alliance which allows the student's family to enter Fox Island for free for the year. This year we awarded four awards, the recipients were Fiona Sherman, Aren Maloy, Maleena Felger and Adelina Harding.

Aren Maloy, a second grader, performed an experiment on worm soil preference. Aren chose to study worms because he likes them and wanted to learn more about their role in soil health. His research led him to perform a test that included making observations of live worms and their reaction to different soil types, which included potting soil, sand, gravel and dried leaves. In the end, he found that the worms preferred the soil type that was the most moist. Aren learned about worms and got to practice carrying out the scientific method.

Adelina Harding, a tenth grader, studied the difference in flight between the monarch and black swallowtail butterflies. She grew up admiring monarch butterflies with her family and has always found their migration patterns interesting. Adelina found that the wing shape of the Monarch's are more suitable for flying than that of the Black swallowtail. This project has grown Adelina's interest in butterfly flight and she would like to further invest time in exploring this topic.

Alongside the research and experiment aspect of the science fair these students get to practice their people skills and meet new connections. Next year's regional science fair will be held at Purdue University Fort Wayne on February 24th so come on out and support future scientists and engineers!



Aren Maloy, science fair special award winner.

FIA annual members meeting

by Clara Conroy

The Fox Island Alliance held their 2023 Annual Members Meeting on the afternoon of April 15 at the Fox Island Nature Center. After guests signed in, they were welcomed to take beautiful bookmarks made from photos taken at the park. There was a welcome and introductions by the president, and the meeting was then turned over to guest speaker Helen Frost.

Helen is an internationally acclaimed poet and author of environmentally based books for all ages. She spoke about where she gets her inspiration and the creative process of writing, including collaboration with the illustrator, the writing process, editing and rewriting until just right. She then answered many questions from the audience.

Following the presentation, a variety of refreshments were served. During this time, Helen Frost held a book signing for FIA members who brought copies of her books.

After the break, members reconvened in the classroom for the FIA annual members business meeting. This was followed by the annual meeting of the board of directors, the final portion of an eventful day.



Kit Kapers: Fox Island Park for Kids

By Cynthia Powers, guest author

A Martian visits Indiana

Reprinted from a previous Fox Tale



The elderly Martian leafed idly through the pile of tourist brochures. He had saved credits his whole life for a trip to Planet Earth. Ever since his larval stage his imagination had been captured by the possibility of traveling to the mysterious blue sister planet, where strange life forms thrived despite high levels of poisonous oxygen and temperatures so high that water actually existed as a liquid, hard as that was to imagine!

The tourist business from Mars to Earth had grown by leaps and bounds since the discovery of the warp drive, which made possible the trip within the hibernation phase of the Martian life cycle. The traveler had several hours to observe on Earth before the next cycle began.

Martian tourists liked to go to the western American desert, or to the Sahara, where the sand dunes reminded them of home. They felt more comfortable where the predominant color was red or brown, instead of green. But our Martian was adventurous; he wanted to go someplace different. He decided to go to Indiana.

His space ship landed one morning on a golf course near Fort Wayne. How happy he was to look out the porthole and see the land of his dreams! How bright the sun seemed, so much bigger and more golden than on Mars. Even though the life support system kept him cool enough, he imagined that he felt the sun's warmth through his exoskeleton.

He marveled at the colors. So many more wave-lengths than on Mars! He was near one of the roadways used by human vehicles. Many photosynthetic life forms grew in profusion: pale blue chicory flowers on their spindly stalks, deep orange daylilies whose life span was only one sun cycle, and delicate Queen Anne's lace, suspended like flat pancakes on their tall stems amid lacy foliage.



Along the road waddled an animal. This was, he knew from his study, a warm-blooded form distantly related to humans. It had fur all over its fat body, though, not just on its head. The animal yawned in the hot sunshine, showing its chisel-shaped teeth. It was a woodchuck—so much more wonderful than the dry textbook pictures he was used to.

A twittering call alerted the Martian to turn his eyestalks toward the sky. A flock of martins flew toward their house, skimming insects out of the air. Nothing could have prepared him for the graceful flight of birds. He hoped he could describe it adequately for his grand-larvae. They were so easily bored these days.

The sun sank lower and lower in the strange blue sky. The clouds turned red, causing the old Martian to feel a twinge of homesickness for his red planet. He knew his trip of a lifetime was almost at an end. He hoped he would survive the return journey.

Suddenly, the most miraculous sight! Over the golf course, and over the tall cornstalks across the road, tiny points of light appeared, flashing slowly on and off while they rose and fell in the air. What could they be? As if in answer to his earnest question, a small organism walked over the porthole of his space ship. From his studies he knew it was a beetle. It had a head, thorax, and abdomen, and yes, six legs, just as in his schoolbooks. But what an abdomen it was! The last few segments became illuminated with greenish light, then flashed off. Over and over the spectacle repeated itself. The Martian's breath froze in his spiracles, the sight was so amazing. He felt such awe before the creative power that could invent bioluminescence. He also felt a profound kinship with the wonderful organisms of Planet Earth. As he reluctantly pulled in his eyestalks before the next hibernation cycle, he knew that his trip to Indiana had been worth it.



Board member spotlight, Kate Sanders

What is one of your earliest memories of spending time outside?

Being in the woods with my mom and grandfather. Looking back, I am pretty sure the only time he went inside was to sleep. We were always out with pails or pillowcases hunting or gathering something – mushrooms, watercress, volunteer asparagus, all kinds of nuts and berries, you name it. Along the way they taught me the names of the plants and trees around us.

What led you to join the Fox Island Alliance board?

Within the same week or two, two people who I looked up to and who were both members suggested I attend a meeting to see if I would be interested. I took that as a sign, went to a meeting, and have been on the board ever since.

What is something you have enjoyed about being on the board?

It is truly a great group of people. I have enjoyed getting to know different board members and working with such a diverse, interesting and capable group of people. I think it takes a strong team to get things done, and it has felt great when there is a good team dynamic. I have been vice-president and president of the board and am currently on the newsletter and research committees.

What is your favorite part of Fox Island?

It is hard to narrow it down to just one thing! My favorite activity is looking for salamanders in the spring with Tori and her family. Visually, one of my favorite things was the grove of sassafras trees along the road to the lake – I loved the squiggly pattern of the limbs that was so different from all other tree shapes.

Do you have a favorite native plant or animal?

Ecology was a big part of my biology major, so I tend to think about communities more than individual species – diversity is the key to life! If I was hard pressed to pick one it might be *Lilium michiganense*, or it might be whatever I am fascinated with in the moment.

What would you say to someone who might be interested in joining the Fox Island Alliance Board of Directors?

Come to a meeting! I have talked to people who are interested, but they think we are looking for a particular knowledge base. In fact, we need a well-rounded skill set amongst board members to be successful. It is great when volunteers can find the sweet spot of serving the park with a skill they are confident in.





Fox Island Alliance

Ed Powers
12206 W. Yoder Road
Roanoke, IN 46783

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Terri Habig, President
 Jeff Ormiston, Vice President
 Vacant, Vice President
 Dan Preest, Secretary
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Fox Tale Editor:

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"

www.foxislandalliance.org

Fox Island Alliance Membership 2023 **New** **Renewal**

Since a derecho closed the park in June 2022, and since it will probably remain closed the rest of the year, members have not been able to take advantage of all their benefits. To compensate, the board is offering to discount dues for the 2023-2024 year. If you wish to take advantage of this offer, check the appropriate box below.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

	Full Dues	50% Discount
Individual	\$15	\$7.50
Veteran/Military/spouse	\$5 each	\$2.50 each
Family	\$20	\$10
Senior (55+)	\$5 each	\$2.50 each
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Sustaining	\$30	\$15
Patron	\$50	\$25

Additional gift \$___ General \$___ Exhibits

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:
 Ed Powers, Membership 12206 W. Yoder Rd., Roanoke, IN 46783