



Photo, Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area

Let's be honest. 2020 was one of the most difficult and trying years we have ever had to endure. We, like many others, had to learn how to give workshops over Zoom (something which will likely continue into 2021). Meeting new people and working with fellow conservationists to improve habitats and trails in person simply wasn't possible. Good news was hard to come by, but thanks to the generosity and compassion of so many of our members, 2021 is off to a promising start.

Our annual conference was a huge success! With just our silent auction, you helped us raise over \$5,000 that will go toward educational programming, development of new trails, and continued political advocacy for our wildlife. We thoroughly enjoyed the presentations by our speakers and all the great questions, so a big thank you to all who participated.

We're also excited to be announcing a new trails project with Goose Pond, made possible by grants from the Duke Energy Foundation and the Indiana Greenways Foundation. You can read more about that on page 6. As with much good news, some troubling news accompanies it. A new bill, SB 389, threatens to strip all protections from Indiana's isolated wetlands and we need your help to stop it.

While we know 2021 will not be a quick return to normal, we have high hopes. We look forward to continuing working with all of you to protect Indiana's amazing outdoors.

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Speaker Breakdown

Our conference began with keynote speaker Collin O'Mara, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). IWF has worked closely with NWF to protect the critical habitat and incredible wildlife of Indiana. It's easy for Hoosiers to forget that Indiana is a wetland state, playing host to migrating birds like whooping cranes, sandhills, and pelicans. We also border a Great Lake, a crucial habitat to protect, with unique features like the Dunes. Collin reminded us our efforts to promote conservation in Indiana are not going unnoticed and are having impacts greater than we often realize. He encouraged us to keep up the fight for wildlife and set an example for the rest of the nation.

Amanda Wuestefeld, Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), spoke about the importance of protecting Indiana's often forgotten grassland habitats. Crucial for so many species, birds especially have seen dramatic population declines paralleling the loss of grassland habitat. DFW is partnering with 32 organizations, including IWF, to protect and restore vital grassland habitat. These partnerships also aim to reconnect people to thousands of acres of grasslands to foster conservation for generations to come.

Thank you to our amazing presenters for taking the time to share their knowledge and passion for conservation.

We also want to say thank you to our studio staff for safely and responsibly helping us deliver a conference during trying times. We could not do this without you.



▲ Photo, top; Collin O'Mara, NWF, middle; Amanda Wuestefeld, DFW, bottom; Tina Mahern, Eric Filson, and Derek Tow in studio.

Thank you to our Conference sponsors!



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear IWF members and friends,

We are off to a great 2021. I am excited to share that we were able to hit the \$15,000 matching grant challenge at the end of 2020! Thanks to members and friends, we were able to rise to the challenge set by our friends at Common Grounds Lab. With this support we are so excited to be bringing you a sleek, new website in the coming weeks.

A few important organizational notices:

- Our office at 708 E. Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202 is now fully closed, and vacated. This address will however still serve as our mailing address until further notice.
- Our staff and board continue to work remotely as we fulfill our conservation mission.
- IWF will continue to offer virtual programs and conduct our regular business remotely until it is safe to gather in person.
- Our office phone number 317-875-9453, is no longer operational.
- Right now, the best way to reach us:
 - o Emily Wood, Executive Director: wood@indianawildlife.org
Media inquiries, major gifts, sponsorships, membership
 - o Aaron Stump, Habitat Programs Manager: stump@indianawildlife.org
Book a program, native plant orders, Certified Wildlife-friendly Habitats, Sustainable Campus Certifications
 - o Jenny Blake, Sustainable Trails Coordinator: blake@indianawildlife.org
Trail partnerships, volunteer opportunities, general wildlife inquiries

We look forward to sharing other updates and important notices in this issue. Thanks for your support and commitment to conservation in Indiana! We couldn't do it without you!

Yours in conservation,

Emily Wood, Executive Director



Apply for the 2021 Holt Scholarship!

The IWF Endowment awards a \$1,000 scholarship in memory of Charles Holt, a lifelong member and champion of fish and wildlife resources. Applicants must be at or above a sophomore level and studying a field related to resource conservation or environmental education. Applications are accepted until June 15.

Visit www.indianawildlife.org/Holt-Scholarship to apply.

Conservation Champions Award



▲ Photo; Indiana State Senator Michael Crider



▲ Photo; Indiana State Representative Carey Hamilton

The Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) is pleased to recognize two prominent members of the Indiana General Assembly for their long-standing commitment to conservation and natural resources.

State Representative Carey Hamilton (D-Indianapolis) and State Senator Michael Crider (R-Greenfield) are the recipients of the IWF's annual Conservation Champion award.

This unique honor was established to recognize Indiana lawmakers for their efforts to preserve the state's outdoor heritage for future generations of Hoosiers.

Rep. Hamilton recently spearheaded the launch of a bipartisan Indiana Legislative Trails Caucus tasked with growing and maintaining Indiana's many trails and greenways. She has also been a leader in Indiana's recycling and clean energy efforts.

Sen. Crider, a former conservation officer for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, has championed efforts at the statehouse to keep our parks and outdoor recreation areas accessible for all Hoosiers.

Both lawmakers have demonstrated a clear commitment to conservation as well as the economic and community benefits that accompany it.

Think Spring: Native Plant Sale 2021!

We know it doesn't feel like it, with 10 inches of snow in some of our yards, but spring is just around the corner and it's never too early to order your plants for our spring sale!

Thanks to our partnership with Cardno Native Plant Nursery to provide a selection of native plant kits, bare root shrubs and trees, and seed packets. Each plant kit contains 50 native plants that will be delivered to your door. Every purchase supports IWF and Indiana's wildlife.



▲ Photo: Bird and Butterfly Kit

For more information visit indianawildlife.org/wildlife/native-plants/native-plant-sale

SB 389 Call to Action

What is SB 389? Indiana Senate Bill 389 repeals the law requiring a permit from the Department of Environmental Management for wetland activity in a state regulated wetland, removing protections for isolated wetlands in Indiana.

Where is the bill now? On 1/28/21, SB 389 had a proposed amendment to send the issue to an interim study committee to properly consider the consequences of the legislation. This amendment was defeated. On 2/1/21, the bill easily passed in the Senate. The bill will now move on to the House.



Why should I care about wetlands? Wetlands are critically important. They are among the world's most productive ecosystems, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs. In the USA as a whole, nearly 35 percent of all rare and endangered animal species depend on wetlands for survival, although wetlands cover only around 5 percent of the land. In Indiana, more than 60 wetland-dependent animal species are of special conservation concern, while more than 120 species of wetland plants in Indiana are considered to be endangered, threatened, or rare. The Indiana Native Plant Society estimates that over one third of Indiana's flora, an estimated 888 species, grow in wetlands, showing the critical importance of this habitat. Photo by Steven Mueller

Wetlands also play key roles in the hydrologic and biogeochemical cycles, providing incredibly valuable ecosystem services which directly impact human health and economics. They play a major role in maintaining water quality, removing or retaining excess organic and inorganic nutrients (for example from septic system runoff and fertilizers), trapping pollutants (including some heavy metals), and filtering sediments - wetlands with emergent plants can remove up to 95% of the sediments from floodwaters.

Wetlands also play a vital role in floodwater storage, protecting human health and safety and reducing costs associated with flood damage and stormwater management, a sentiment excellently summed up by Indra Frank of HEC, "All in all, wetlands are the most cost effective stormwater management infrastructure there is".

Indiana has lost over 85% or 4.7 million acres of the approximately 5.6 million acres of wetlands that existed in the state c.1780. Among the 50 states, Indiana ranks 4th (tied with Missouri) in proportion of wetland acreage lost. The isolated wetlands that this bill threatens are critically important habitats that should remain protected.

How do I contact my legislator? You can find your legislator at iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators.

What should I say? It is as simple as demanding that they oppose this piece of legislation, which does not have the best interests of their constituents in mind. You may be wondering why we do not have a sign on letter. We have found individual outreach is significantly more effective at swaying legislators than a generic letter. We know this requires a little more work on your part, but we strongly believe this issue is worth the added effort. Please call or write your legislators immediately and often.

You can view this full article at indianawildlife.org/oppose-sb398.

Goose Pond Trail

IWF welcomes our new sustainable trail partner [Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area](#)! With the help of a \$10,000 grant from the Duke Energy Foundation and a \$10,000 grant from the Indiana Greenways Foundation, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and IWF will be building a new half-mile+ ADA-accessible trail.

While keeping the best interest of the wildlife in mind, the trail will include the four critical components needed for them to survive; food, water, shelter, and a place to raise young. It will also focus on improving inclusivity while broadening recreational opportunities within the property. Expect to see up to five educational stops along the way that will coincide with the newly installed interpretive exhibit inside of the Visitor Center.



▲ Photo; Goose Pond FWA Visitor Center and parking lot. Interpretive trail is visible in yellow with points of interest marked by red dots.

Follow Us



▲ Photo; Wilson's Snipe, Goose Pond - Emily Wood



▲ Photo; Blue Winged Teal, Goose Pond - Emily Wood



▲ Photo; Black Necked Stilt, Goose Pond - Emily Wood

ADVERTISE HERE!

Does your business share the IWF vision of sustainable wildlife and wildlife habitats for Indiana? If your business would like to show its commitment to conservation and be highlighted for doing so through our communications and website, please contact us by e-mail at info@indianawildlife.org.