March 2015

Dear Friends,

One day in mid-February Richmond had a hint of spring. The morning was calm, partly sunny, and the temperatures climbed from the low 40s to the high 50s. Cardinals, Song Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds and Tufted Titmice were in full song. A pair of Bald Eagles were at their nest just west of Brookville, Indiana. Early Northern Pintail had shown up, along with an early American Pipit. Woodcock had been found displaying farther south in Indiana.

It seemed winter was showing signs of breaking up. Since then, however, snow and sub-zero periods have regularly given pulse to the season. Except for the arrival of Canvasback and lots of Redhead on the small openings at the marinas on Brookville Lake, which is otherwise completely frozen, there has been little sign of spring’s breakout. Bill had two Field Sparrows at his feeder yesterday.

It was a good winter for birding. A Snowy Owl was found just five miles from Bill’s house. About 800 Sandhill Cranes overwintered at Brookville Lake, their winter numbers increase annually. In November we had an unusually early snowfall. Instantly, the next morning Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs were concentrating on newly plowed roads. We’ve long felt that Longspurs are present throughout late December to February, but are only apparent when snow cover forces them to the roadsides. This time we learned they are present in numbers earlier in the season than we had known previously.

With spring possibly opening up before us, now is the time to plan for this year’s Earlham College 34th Annual Birding Big Day! Please join in.

THE 2015 EARLHAM COLLEGE BIRDING BIG DAY will be May 8-10. For those of you unfamiliar with the ECBBD, it is a fundraiser for the College’s Earlham Fund. It provides for scholarships and other underpinnings that make Earlham available to students. Simply put, the ECBBD is a bird-a-thon! Please participate by pledging to and joining in on the BIG DAY.

Participants pledge either (1) a certain amount for the total number of species found or (2) a lump sum gift. When pledging per species, please realize that the total number of species is volatile from year to year and can be large on the global scale (Earlham birders are all over the world!!!). Expect somewhere between 500 and 900 species.

In addition to being asked to pledge, all are encouraged to send in a list of birds you discover and identify on one or more of these dates. You can be anywhere in the World, ECBBD is global. Each year, dozens of birders find great joy and
pleasure in participating – joining friends in being outdoors and joining the challenge of finding birds, as well as doing something important for the College. If you plan to send in a list this year, contact Bill directly at billb@earlham.edu for instructions.

For details of how to pledge and participate see: www.earlham.edu/birdingbigday.

Also, if you would like to join in on Facebook, join the “Earlham birders” group – a year-round group for us where chatter will be going on about ECBBD planning.

How important is ECBBD to the College? Jim Cope and Bill did the first ECBBD in 1982. Bill pledged enough the first year to cover all the postage; he was a bit uncertain how it would work out. Now with 33 years of ECBBD and only 29 years of records (1982-1986 was before computerized data storage!) since its inception,

ECBBD has raised over $750,000 for the Earlham Fund.

Jim would be and Bill certainly is surprised and gratified by that result.

A hearty thanks to Jonathan ’80 and Dotty Holcomb ’79 Doherty for all the work they do for ECBBD – coordinating lists, map points, etc. Also, many thanks to Liza Donnelly ’77 who designed our logo!

Wendy is participating in ECBBD from Peru and/or Ecuador this year. She is on sabbatical conducting research and visiting family.

Please make your gift or send your pledge in today in support of Earlham and its students.

For the birds and for Earlham,

Warm regards,

Bill Buskirk ’66
Professor Emeritus of Biology
billb@earlham.edu

Wendy Tori
Associate Professor of Biology
toriwe@earlham.edu
Yes! I want to pledge my support to Birding Big Day.

☐ I would like to make a lump sum gift of $________
   (Please make checks payable to Earlham College.)

☐ I would like to charge this to my
   ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

Card Number ____________________________
Expiration Date _________________________
Name of Cardholder ______________________
Signature ______________________________

To make your gift or pledge online or find out more about Birding Big Day visit earlham.edu/birdingbigday.

I would like to pledge:
☐ 25¢ ☐ 50¢ ☐ $1 ☐ $5 ☐ $10 ☐ other $__________
for each bird species recorded during the day.
(pledge not to exceed $__________)

Name _________________________________
Address ______________________________
City, State, Zip _________________________
Phone ________________________________
E-mail _______________________________