Indiana Department of Environmental Management

Riffles & Pools

Office of Water Quality

idem.IN.gov

HOOSIER RIVERWATCH VOLUNTEER NETWORK

Greetings Riverwatchers!

As spring settles back into Indiana and waterways awaken with the seasonal rains, it feels like the perfect moment to celebrate. As we continue to laud the 30th anniversary of Hoosier Riverwatch, we begin the workshop season with over a dozen training opportunities. In fact, this may be the most workshops I've seen scheduled this early in the year. It is a perfect time to join a basic training or learn more at our new advanced macroinvertebrate workshops.

With today's technology and volunteers' enthusiasm, community science has never been stronger. The City Nature Challenge in April saw over 300 individuals record observations (see the CNC Recap below for more details). Communities in other states are also engaged in similar science projects. The Lake Erie Volunteer Science Network, for example, recently achieved standardizing their data so that the Ohio EPA can utilize it as Level 2 Credible Data. Another program, Illinois Riverwatch, has 1,500 volunteers involved in monitoring waterways. Unfortunately, their parent organization, The National Great Rivers Research & Education Center, discontinued the program due to a change in federal funding. This serves as a reminder that the most valuable aspect of programs like this is **YOU**. More engagement equates to more data collection which makes the program more valuable to the mission of watershed protection.

This reinforces what Hoosier Riverwatch volunteers already know: every data point matters. From Lawrence Creek to the Ohio River, your sampling helps paint a clearer picture of watershed health, just as it did throughout 2025 when volunteers contributed thousands of data points and expanded our contributions to national tools like the Water Quality Portal and How's My Waterway. With spring workshops on the horizon and another season of hands-on science ahead, I'm excited to see what stories our streams will tell this year.

As always, thank you for your dedication, curiosity, and willingness to get your feet wet for Indiana's waterways. Here's to a spring full of clear creeks, curious minds, and continued stewardship.

Dylan Allison
Hoosier Riverwatch Coordinator

Spring 2026

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June 16 – North Webster

June 24 – Farmland

July 16 – North Webster
Advanced Macroinvertebrate Workshop

July 31 – Muncie
Advanced Macroinvertebrate Workshop

Sept. 18 – Bristol

Sept. 19 – South Bend

More workshops soon!

Hoosier Riverwatch is sponsored by IDEM

2026 Instructor Gathering

On April 10, Hoosier Riverwatch instructors met at the Indianapolis Zoo for a day of networking and continuing education. Because these volunteer instructors come from all over the state, this annual event is a unique opportunity to bring the entire group together. Nearly 30 individuals came together to celebrate the successes of the 2025 workshop season and look forward to the 2026 season. Several instructors were recognized for their long-time involvement in the program. Hoosier Riverwatch instructors Seth Harden, Carrie Parmenter, and Karan Barnhill were presented a Lifetime Appreciation Award for serving as an instructor for over a decade.

Speakers from Earlham College, Shannon Hayes and Andy Moore, presented a student study of the effects of a dam removal in Richmond. Hoosier Riverwatch Coordinator, Dylan Allison, shared some information on the state endangered Eastern Hellbender before zoo staff gave a behind-the-scenes tour of their hellbender recovery program. The Indianapolis Zoo partners with Purdue University and other organizations to raise hellbender juveniles in captivity before releasing them back into the wild in an attempt to boost population numbers.

Instructors were given the chance to win prizes to supplement their workshops, including microscopes, field guides, and 3D printed macroinvertebrate models. Participants finished the day by exploring the zoo. A big thank you to all those who attended and the Indianapolis Zoo staff who helped the event become a success!

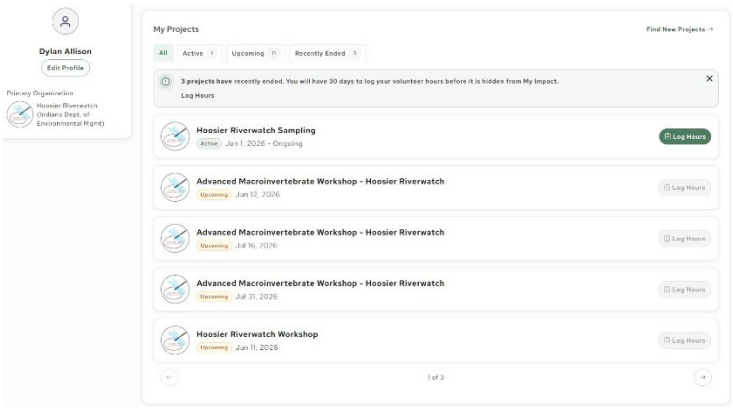
If you are interested in joining the group and leading Hoosier Riverwatch workshops as an official instructor, reach out to Riverwatch@idem.IN.gov for more information.

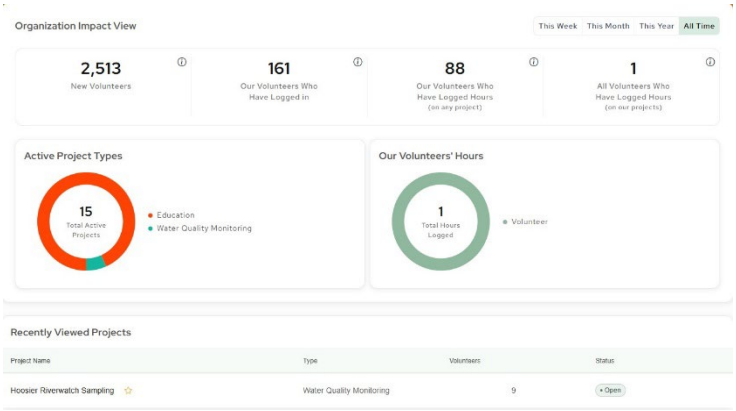
Photos Courtesy of IDEM

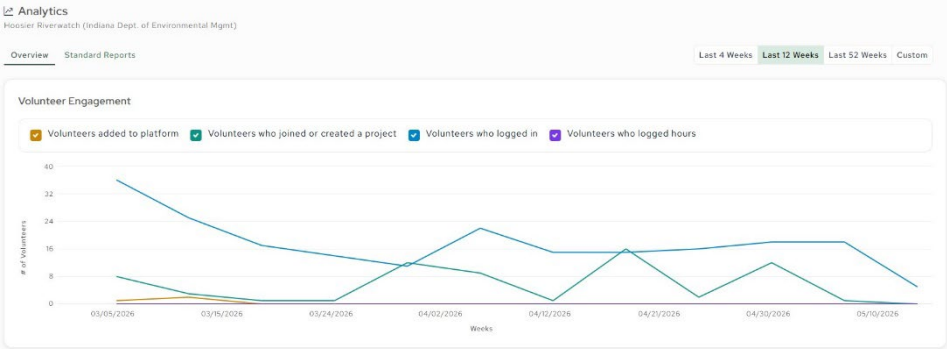
NatureConnect: A Volunteer's Platform

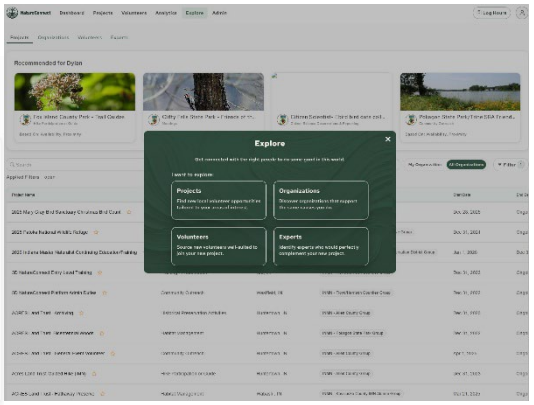
If you've gone through a Riverwatch workshop in the past, you may have received an email from NatureConnect earlier this year. Hoosier Riverwatch has joined this platform to promote volunteer opportunities and record volunteer hours. NatureConnect is an online platform and engagement tool that can bring together both nature organizations and volunteers. Hoosier Riverwatch is not the first Indiana organization to join NatureConnect. Indiana Master Naturalist students have been utilizing the platform for more than a year to track their required volunteer hours. Through the NatureConnect platform, users can record volunteer hours, find new volunteer opportunities, and connect with other volunteers. As an organization, Hoosier Riverwatch is able to track total volunteer hours by our water monitors, communicate program updates to all users, and collaborate with other local nature organizations.

All Hoosier Riverwatch volunteers are invited to join NatureConnect. There is a project called 'Hoosier Riverwatch Sampling' currently open to record stream-side hours. Volunteer hours are a major metric that supports the continuation of Hoosier Riverwatch, so every hour recorded helps! For more information about the platform visit getnatureconnect.org. If you require a new invite to join the organization, reach out to help@3dnatureconnect.org.









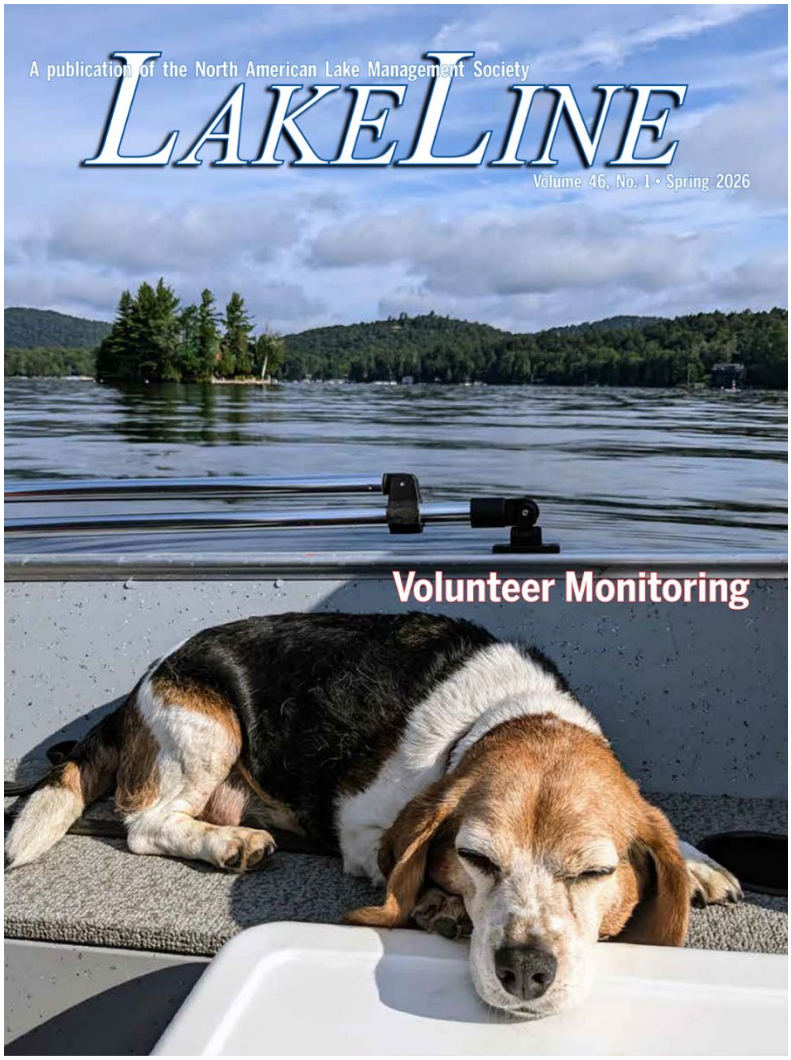
LakeLine: Volunteer Monitoring

The North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) publishes a quarterly publication called *LakeLine*. While most editions are only available to NALMS members, there are select issues that are open access. This spring, an open access issue was published highlighting volunteer water monitoring:

This issue of LakeLine focuses on the efforts of the many volunteers who dedicate their time as stewards to our natural resources. The articles in this issue cover volunteer monitoring efforts on lakes and ponds and streams and rivers. Efforts range from local to international, and across a range of parameters, from water monitoring to biomonitoring, and ice in/out to shoreline habitat assessments. Volunteers do it all and do it well.

Whatever term you prefer to use, volunteer monitor, water steward, citizen scientist, or something else, these dedicated volunteers contribute hugely to the science of our water resources. Because many of them live next to or near a waterbody, they literally are the eyes on the water, seeing the day to day changes in and around these waterbodies, which is something that a biologist in academia, or government (state, federal, or provincial) or the private sector can't possibly do, given their need to focus on tens or hundreds or even thousands of waterbodies under their purview.

Volunteers who engage in monitoring waterbodies have a vested interest in the resource, and a passion for maintaining it and understanding it. Their efforts at monitoring are solid, following often detailed quality assurance and quality control methods and quality assurance project plans so that the data they collect are rigorous and sound, and can stand up equally with the data collected by trained scientists, and contribute to larger data sets in meaningful ways. Volunteers also work locally to share their knowledge and raise public awareness about water quality and protection efforts, often presenting their data at local association meetings, municipal events, and sometimes even professional scientific conferences. Their contributions are greatly appreciated, as evidenced by the articles contained within this issue.



To access the issue, visit nalms.org/product/lakeline-46-1-volunteer-monitoring. For mor information on the North American Lake Management Society, visit nalms.org.

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Spring Outreach

Hoosier Riverwatch participated in a handful of outreach events this spring. Coordinator Dylan Allison led Indiana Master Naturalist classes in three consecutive weeks. Classes took place at Southeastway Indy Park, Pokagon State Park, and Pioneer Park in Mooresville. A second event at Southeastway Indy Park, Environment Adventure Day, saw over 400 local elementary school students engage in Hoosier Riverwatch Junior activities and other organizations' activities. Additionally, Conner Prairie's Homeschool Day was an opportunity for families and students of all ages to try out some Hoosier Riverwatch testing on the White River. Lastly, Riverside Intermediate School in Fishers hosted an Outdoor Learning Day which saw over 150 sixth-grade students engage in Hoosier Riverwatch Junior activities as well as stations like fly tying, wildlife rehab, and water testing.

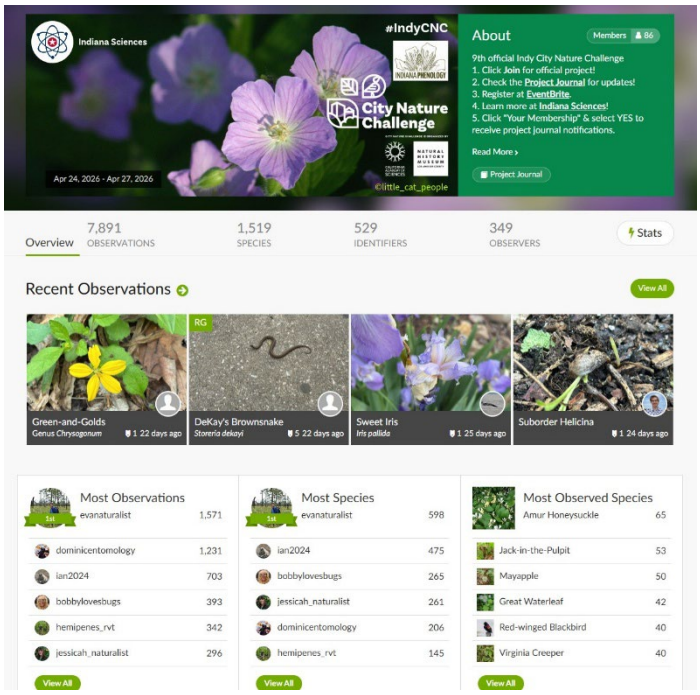
Photos Courtesy of IDEM

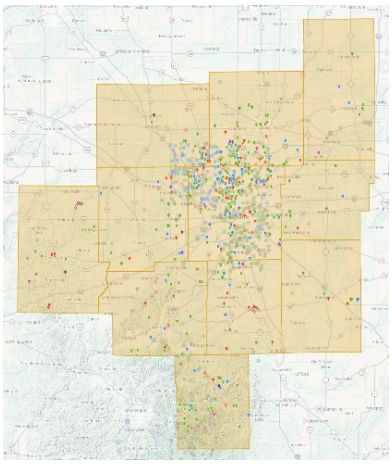
2026 City Nature Challenge

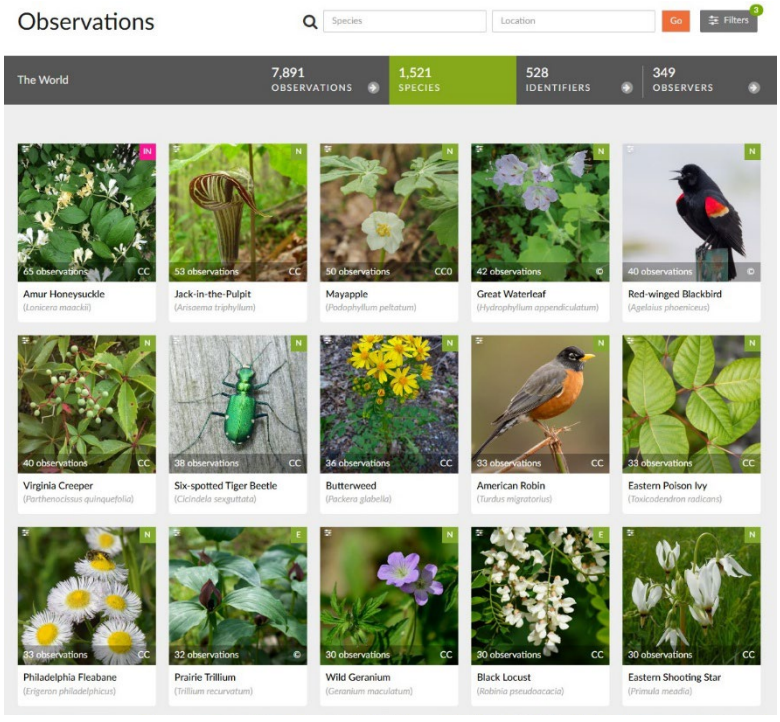
In our Winter 2025 issue, we highlighted an annual event called the City Nature Challenge (CNC). The City Nature Challenge encourages residents to become citizen scientists in over 600 cities around the world. Participants are asked to explore their green spaces and document their findings via the iNaturalist app. The results ultimately measure a city's biodiversity and monitor change.

The 2026 Indianapolis City Nature Challenge, held April 24–27, saw an impressive turnout by community scientists. Over 300 participants documented observations. A total of 7,891 photos of 1,521 different species were uploaded on the iNaturalist project. About 3,864 of those observations, approximately 48%, are considered "research grade". Research grade is a benchmark of the project's data quality assessment only achieved when two-thirds of the online community agrees on a species level taxon. Although this was fewer than the 9,600 observations from 2025, the recordings still hold value in the scientific community. Some of the top recorded species included the invasive Amur Honeysuckle, Jack-in-the-Pulpit flower, Red-winged Blackbird, and Tiger Beetle.

For more information and results of the 2026 City Nature Challenge, visit inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2026-indianapolis.







Mark Your Calendars

2026 Workshops

Thursday, June 11	**Plainfield** – Richard Carlucci Recreation Center (10 a.m.–4 p.m.) Instructor: Sarah Wolf Register here.
Tuesday, June 16	**North Webster** – North Webster Community Center (9 a.m.– 4 p.m.) Instructor: Lyn Crighton Register here.
Wednesday, June 24	**Farmland** – Davis Purdue Ag Center (9 a.m.–4 p.m.) Instructor: Sam Gradle. Register here.
Thursday, July 16	**Advanced Macroinvertebrate Workshop** (basic training prerequisite) **North Webster** – North Webster Community Center (10 a.m.–2 p.m.) Instructors: Lyn Crighton & Brandon Olson Register here.
Thursday, July 31	**Advanced Macroinvertebrate Workshop** (basic training prerequisite) **Muncie** – White River Education & Research Center (10 a.m.–2 p.m.) Instructors: Dylan Allison & Sam Gradle Register here.
Friday, Sept. 18	**Bristol** – Bonneyville Mill County Park (9 a.m.–4 p.m.) Instructor: Krista Daniels & Ally Pudlo Register here.
Saturday, Sept. 19	**South Bend** – St. Patrick's County Park (Time TBD) Instructors: Jan McGowan & Dr. Kate Barrett Registration coming soon!

Check the Hoosier Riverwatch Calendar

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Call Out for Instructors!

Do you have an interest in outreach and engaging with the public? Do you enjoy getting your feet wet and sampling in our streams and rivers? If so, you may be interested in becoming a Hoosier Riverwatch Instructor! Benefits include receiving monitoring equipment from IDEM and an invitation to annual Instructor Gatherings. For more information, reach out to Riverwatch@idem.IN.gov.

IDEM Office of Water Quality Mission

The Office of Water Quality's mission is to monitor, protect and improve Indiana's water quality to ensure its continued use as a drinking water source, habitat for wildlife, recreational resource and economic asset.

The office achieves this by developing rules, guidance, policies, and procedures; assessing surface and groundwater quality; regulating and monitoring drinking water supplies and wastewater facilities; protecting watersheds and wetlands; and providing outreach and assistance to the regulated community and the public while supporting environmentally responsible economic development.

Hoosier Riverwatch Mission

The mission of Hoosier Riverwatch is to involve the citizens of Indiana in becoming active stewards of Indiana's water resources through watershed education, water monitoring, and clean-up activities. Hoosier Riverwatch is a water quality monitoring initiative sponsored by the **Indiana Department of Environmental Management's** *Office of Water Quality*.

For more information, go to **idem.IN.gov/riverwatch**.