



NATURE NEWS & NOTES

February/March 2013

Diana Hews, Behavior
of a Oaxacan Lizard:
Biologist in a Tropical
Deciduous Forest,
February 20, 2013

The Wabash Valley Audubon Society welcomes everyone to the February member meeting to be held at the **Vigo County Public Library** beginning at 7:00 p.m. Our February presenter will be Dr. Diana Hews. During June of 2012, Diana and five biologists were in Oaxaca, Mexico to study social behavior and physiology of a specific lizard species. Working along the Pacific coast in tropical deciduous forest, team members encountered reptiles and amphibians, heard Citreoline Trogons calling at courts and weathered the effects of heat, humidity and Hurricane Carlotta. Forays from their hotel on the Huatulco town square included sampling Oaxacan cuisine, roasted crickets and cerveza.



Photo courtesy of Diana Hews

Diana is a Professor of Biology at Indiana State University. She studies hormones, behavior and sexual selection in lizards, and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in

physiology. She has a US ABA bird life list of 565 species, and attributes the last 250 of those to getting to bird with her husband, Peter Scott.

Matt Williams, TNC
Wabash River
Initiative, March 20,
2013

The Wabash Valley Audubon Society welcomes everyone to the March member meeting to be held at **Dobbs Park Nature Center** beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Matt Williams, Ecoregion Director for The Nature Conservancy (TNC), will be speaking on TNC's Wabash River Initiative - a bi-state project that seeks to improve water quality in the river in order to preserve the tremendous biodiversity that can be found in the Wabash. Mr. Williams will discuss some of the threats to the Wabash, as well as touching on several of the rare and unique species that depend on the river for survival. His talk will also address the importance of the river corridor to a number of species of birds, and recent evidence that highlights the importance of the Wabash as a migratory pathway.

Mr. Williams graduated from Alma College in Michigan in May of 1997 with a B.S. degree

in Biology. He has nearly 15 years of experience with The Nature Conservancy, which includes experience with endangered species work, land protection, and large scale restoration management. As Director of the Central Tillplain Ecoregion, Mr. Williams supervises two project offices that work to preserve biodiversity in aquatic systems where the predominant land use is agricultural. He also is involved in promoting new practices that have benefits for both agriculture and the environment, including the two-stage ditch design which reduces the amount of nutrients and sediment being transported through agricultural drainage ditches.

Consider Being a
Volunteer

Some of the most valuable gifts that an organization can receive have no price tag on them. We are currently seeking volunteers to serve as: board member, newsletter editor, webmaster, memorial fund. To learn more contact any board member or call 317-696-6246. indth33@yahoo.com.

Member Spotlight: Herb Krauch



Herb became a member of the Wabash Valley Audubon Society last year after moving to Terre Haute from Venice, Florida. While living in Florida, Herb was very active in the 1,000 member Venice Audubon Society. Herb resides in Terre Haute with his wife Ruth. They have been married 56 wonderful years. His daughter is Susan Hayhurst.

Herb was born in Indianapolis. He graduated from Purdue University, BS 1949, MS 1967, and is a retired forestry and natural resources professor. During his undergraduate years at Purdue, Herb spent time with familiar names within the birding community, including Russ Mumford, Mickey Weeks, Homer Erickson, and many others.

During his college career, Herb took time to enlist in the Marine Corps where he toured the South Pacific and was part of the United State's presence in China following the surrender by Japan during WWII. In 2012, Herb and 86 other WWII veterans took part in the Gold Star Mothers Veterans Honor Flight to Washington D.C. Herb and his fellow vets toured several monuments including the National WWII Memorial.

Herb has always loved to hunt and fish. He is especially fond of duck hunting, arriving early to see and hear the marsh and wetland area come alive. Herb gained an appreciation for birds, wildlife and conservation through hunting and his outdoor hobbies and career. Most recently, Herb found a rare Long-tailed Duck swimming in a lake in eastern Vigo County.

Herb's professional career is quite astonishing. His first job was with the Indiana Fish and Game Conservation Department. His next job took him to "Bluegrass Cooperage" where he inspected timber throughout Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. This white-oak timber was inspected by Herb and processed into whiskey barrels. Next, Herb went to work for a new pulp mill in Georgia owned by the Mead Corporation. Herb's fourth job took him overseas to Africa where he worked for a subsidiary of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. He then returned to the U.S. where he worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the state of Florida. As a plant and pest control employee he was involved in rooting out the Mediterranean fruit fly and thus protecting the state's citrus crop. This job involved at times, flying via helicopter searching for evidence of the fruit fly insect and larvae.

Herb returned to Indiana in the 1960's where he joined the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry. He eventually became the DNR Superintendent in Martin County, serving forestry needs throughout south-central Indiana.

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Member Spotlight: Herb Krauch, continued

Purdue then came calling, where Herb spent ten years of employment working for the university in northern Indiana where he was one of only five foresters at that time. Herb would later become Purdue Extension's first state wildlife specialist. His wife's career included working as hostess in the Purdue Memorial Union and Stewart Center. Herb retired in 1987.

Herb has also traveled and worked other short-time jobs in many exciting places around the world including Casablanca, Paris, Canary Islands, and Spain.

Over the years, Herb has served in the following capacities: Society of American Foresters, Representative to the National Wildlife Federation and President of the Indiana Wildlife Federation. In 1991 he received the Indiana Wildlife Federation President's Award. In 1988, Herb received the National Wildlife Federation Honorary Member Award. This award acknowledges long-term, outstanding service to the Indiana Chapter of the Wildlife Society by an individual retired from professional employment.

All of us from the Wabash Valley Audubon Society would like to thank Herb for becoming a valuable part of our organization. We also thank Herb for his service to our country during WWII.

Midwinter Eagle Survey on the Wabash River, January 8, 2013

Results are for the Wabash River from the Ohio River north to the Tippecanoe/Carroll county line: A total of 121 bald eagles were seen (86 adults and 35 immature); includes 10 (8 adult, 2 immature) in Illinois. Eagles were counted via helicopter. The following are number of eagles per county along the Wabash River:

Posey County – 25 (21 ad, 4 im); 4 (3 ad, 1 im) were actually on the Illinois side of the river when first spotted.

Gibson County – 3 ad (2 were in Illinois)

Knox County – 8 (6 ad, 2 im); 3 (2 ad, 1 im) were in Illinois

Sullivan County – 5 (2 ad, 3 im)

Vigo County – 5 ad (1 was in Illinois)

Parke County – 17 (10 ad, 7 im)

Vermillion County – 24 (11 ad, 13 im)

Fountain County – 8 (6 ad, 2 im)

Warren County – 3 (2 ad, 1 im)

Tippecanoe – 23 (20 ad, 3 im)

John S, Castrale, Nongame Bird Biologist, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife

WVAS would like to welcome the following new members or transferred members of the National Audubon Society to the Wabash Valley Audubon Society. WVAS is the local chapter for several counties in the area.

Ronald Robertson

Eldon Buckles

Cheryl Voll

Phillip Pierce

Shirley Badner

Monica McNabb

Tammy Crichfield



Summary of Terre Haute's 53rd Christmas Bird Count by Peter Scott

Conditions preceding count day (12/15/2012): seasonally mild weather overall, with three freezes of shallow ponds (to 25 degrees F) in preceding week. No snow yet. Summer was very dry.

Weather on count day: a southern front brought 0.22 inches of rain from sunrise to 9:30 am, making early morning birding unproductive. We had to wait it out. Little rain after 10 am. Wind speeds were rather high at airport (15-20 mph), but not bad at ground level with sheltering vegetation.

We had several regional and local rarities. Red Crossbill (second record ever) is the signature of a winter finch invasion year, along with good counts of Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Harris's Sparrow is our second record, in a weedy river-bottom area like 6 years ago. The Vesper Sparrow (first record since 1992) was in a modest patch of grassland at Duke Energy plant.

Lingering waterbirds at JI Case Wetland included 1 Great Egret (first record), 2 Blue-winged Teal, 6 Least Sandpiper, and 1 Wilson's Snipe as well as 19 Killdeer. These had all been present for a week or more, staying through a period when the wetlands froze over half of its surface.

Among waterfowl, we had only one goose species and no swans, mostly dabbling ducks (missing a few semi-regular ones) rather than divers (Ring-necked, Scaup). Shovelers and Hooded Mergansers were common. The best waterfowl spots were Hulman Street ponds, JI Case Wetland, Duke Energy, and Sandford Road pond. The lake at Springhill-Davis roads was frustrating, with hundreds of ducks pouring in at nightfall, too late for identification. Two adjacent busy roads make duck wariness understandable.

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Horned Grebe is becoming almost regular on big lakes (3 years in a row), and Eurasian Collared-Dove (second year) seems established in the Graham Grain neighborhood.

Blackbirds were abundant in southeast quadrant near Riley and Honey Creek, which is often the case. Over 2000 Red-winged Blackbirds, 3000 Grackles, 5000 starlings were seen at evening, along with some cowbirds and 35 Rusty Blackbirds, a species we often miss.

Fruit-dependent Cedar Waxwings (394) and American Robins (888) were numerous.

Among raptors, we had 10 Bald Eagles, and the usual Peregrine Falcon at ISU. One Harrier was an all-time low that we attribute to rainy damp weather. Cooper's, Red-shouldered, Red-tailed hawks and Kestrels were fairly common. The Short-eared Owl was in its usual spot, Hulman Airfield.

The best conifer area, St Mary of the Woods College, was watched for winter finches, and yielded two Red Crossbills, siskins, and red-breasted nuthatches.

We reached 40 participants for the second time. The usual number is in the mid-thirties. Our count could comfortably expand to 50 observers.

The total of 83 species is near the ten-year average of 85. Three times in last ten years we reached 90 or 91. This year we did well on really rare species and got almost all normal ones, and not so well on species seen on 4 to 7 of the previous 10 counts. Lack of frozen water meant waterfowl were not concentrated. The weather made it harder to work for uncommon passerines such as ruby-crowned kinglet, brown thrasher, savannah sparrow.

Regarding Galliformes: Wild Turkeys have seemed scarce (dry summer may have hurt production), but 27 were seen in three areas. Bobwhite quail continue to be so scarce that it takes luck to run into a winter covey, or else you have to know where one is and be there for sunrise covey calls. Most quail in Vigo County now occur south and east of the count circle.

For the 3rd year, our American Crow count was under 20,000 (15,000 this year). For 13 previous years it ranged from 20,000 to 66,000. Crow dispersion work in last 3 winters may have convinced many to move to Bloomington, where we hear numbers are building. Almost no crows roosted in the old core downtown area.

Photo: Susie Dewey and Peter Scott. Susie hosted the evening countdown at her home on Terre Haute's east side. Many of the count participants were in attendance. Thank you Susie and Peter for being such a great friend and member of our organization.



Barn Owl Box Installed

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Wabash Valley Audubon Society (WVAS) recently put their labor and resources together to install a barn owl box. The barn owl box was placed in a pole barn located in the former Chinook Mine. This abandoned mine and its reclaimed grasslands are important to many endangered birds and is located in an area just 3 miles to the east of the Terre Haute International Airport. The Wabash Valley Audubon Society owes a special thanks to Mr. Peter Sacopulos and the entire Sacopulos family for making the barn owl box project possible.



Barn Owl Box Installation Volunteers: Left to Right are Nicholas Brown (WVAS), Amy Kearns (IDNR), Jeremiah Latta (Latta Construction) The barn owl box is also pictured.



Barn Owls: WVAS member Joe Dickson photographed these barn owls utilizing a barn owl box in the Temecula Valley of California.

Barn Owls in Indiana

“We use ta’ have em’ here years ago”

This is an all-too-familiar response encountered by biologists while studying the barn owl. In Indiana, the barn owl was once a common resident. Although, their number has declined so severely that barn owls are now considered an endangered species in the Hoosier State. The barn owl is one of many wildlife species suffering from drastic changes in the use of farmland. In the 1920’s, ’30’s and ’40’s, Indiana’s countryside was dominated by large tracts of pastures and hayfields, necessary for livestock. These grasslands also fed large numbers of rodents such as meadow voles -- the major food of barn owls. Down the road, livestock became less important and grasslands were gradually converted to row crops. When the barn owl’s hunting areas disappeared, this mouser could no longer survive. Loss of hunting ground was not the only problem for barn owls. A lack of secure nest sites has also played a role. Barn owls are cavity nesters, making homes in large, hollow trees, especially silver maple and sycamore. These types of old trees are either lost to natural causes, cut for firewood, or removed from urban settings because they are judged a hazard. Where natural cavities are scarce, barn owls will nest in man-made structures. They select old barns and silos in rural areas, and will also adapt to urban situations where they often nest in bell towers or church steeples. However, these structures are also disappearing from the Indiana landscape. Tightly-constructed metal buildings and glass-lined silos are replacing the open buildings of the past.

How You Can Help

Barn owl box plans are available by contacting either the Wabash Valley Audubon Society or the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Do you know of a location where barn owls are being seen or do you have a barn that might be a good location for a barn owl box? The chance of a barn owl using a nest box is greater if fallow pastures, hayfields, wet meadows or marsh edges are nearby. If you would like assistance constructing and/or installing a box, just contact WVAS at 317-696-6246. We would be glad to help!

More on Barn Owls

Having barn owls around can be a real help to farmers. These owls are expert mousers that can help check harmful rodent populations. A pair of adult barn owls can capture up to 1,000 rodents per season to feed themselves and a brood of hungry owlets.

Barn owls select a place to nest during late March or April. They usually lay 6 eggs and incubate the clutch for 32 days. Barn owls are very sensitive to disturbance while incubating and will often abandon the nest if disturbed. No matter how great the temptation, do not peek into your box during this period (April 1 to May 30)! Since incubation begins after the first egg is laid, owls from the same clutch hatch at different times. If food is scarce, the youngest owlets will starve or may even be eaten by larger siblings or by the parents. An average of 3 to 4 young usually survive and fly from the nest at 8 to 10 weeks of age. Often, a nest of young barn owls can be a vocal bunch. Late in the nestling period (late June to early July), the young beg for food from the parents. Begging owlets begin calling just after sunset and continue all night.

A college student's turtle project takes a dark twist

A Clemson University student who set out to determine how to help turtles cross the road ended up getting a glimpse into the dark souls of some humans.

Nathan Weaver put a realistic rubber turtle in the middle of a lane on a busy road near campus. Then he got out of the way and watched over the next hour as seven drivers swerved and deliberately ran over the animal. Several more apparently tried to hit it but missed.

"I've heard of people and from friends who knew people that ran over turtles. But to see it out here like this was a bit shocking," said Weaver, a 22-year-old student at Clemson's School of Agricultural, Forest and Environmental Sciences.

To seasoned researchers, the practice wasn't surprising.

The number of box turtles is in slow decline, and one big reason is that many wind up as roadkill while crossing the asphalt, a slow-and-steady trip that can take several minutes.

Sometimes humans feel a need to prove they are the dominant species on this planet by taking a two-ton metal vehicle and squishing a defenseless creature under the tires, said Hal Herzog, a Western Carolina University psychology professor.

"They aren't thinking, really. It is not something people think about. It just seems fun at the time," Herzog said. "It is the dark side of human nature." Herzog asked a class of about 110 students getting ready to take a final whether they had intentionally run over a turtle, or been in a car with someone who did. Thirty-four students raised their hands, about two-thirds of them male, said Herzog, author of a book about humans' relationships with animals, called "Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat."

Weaver, who became interested in animals and conservation through the Boy Scouts and TV's "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, wants to figure out the best way to get turtles safely across the road and keep the population from dwindling further.

Among the possible solutions: turtle underpasses or an education campaign aimed at teenagers on why drivers shouldn't mow turtles down.

The first time Weaver went out to collect data on turtles, he chose a spot down the road from a big apartment complex that caters to students. He counted 267 vehicles that passed by, seven of them intentionally hitting his rubber reptile.

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He went back out about a week later, choosing a road in a more residential area. The second of the 50 cars to pass by that day swerved over the centre line, its right tires pulverizing the plastic shell.

"Wow! That didn't take long," Weaver said.

Other cars during the hour missed the turtle. But right after his observation period was up, before Weaver could retrieve the model, another car moved to the right to hit the animal as he stood less than 20 feet (6 meters) away.

"One hit in 50 cars is pretty significant when you consider it might take a turtle 10 minutes to cross the road," Weaver said.

It takes a turtle seven or eight years to become mature enough to reproduce, and in that time, it might make several trips across the road to get from one pond to another, looking for food or a place to lay eggs. A female turtle that lives 50 years might lay over 100 eggs, but just two or three are likely to survive to reproduce, said Weaver's professor, Rob Baldwin.

Snakes also get run over deliberately. Baldwin wishes that weren't the case, but he understands, considering the widespread fear and loathing of snakes.

But why anyone would want to run over turtles is a mystery to the professor.

"They seem so helpless and cute," he said. "I want to stop and help them. My kids want to stop and help them. My wife will stop and help turtles no matter how much traffic there is on the road. I can't understand the idea why you would swerve to hit something so helpless as a turtle."

Jeffrey Collins, The Associated Press, Dec. 27, 2012

Turtle Girls: Left to Right: Heather Martin, Amber Slaughterbeck, Ellen Lunsford



Heather, Amber and Ellen provided a fascinating presentation during the January WVAS member meeting. During the past three years they have rescued over 2,000 turtles from traffic as they try to cross U.S. 40 and the railroad tracks at U.S. 150 by the Wabashiki Fish and Wildlife Area. Please contact any WVAS board member to find out how you can help save turtles in 2013.

2013 Annual Banquet and The James Mason Award

Save the date! This year's Wabash Valley Audubon Banquet will be held on Wednesday April 17th. Location to be determined. Social hour begins at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. This year we are pleased to have Mr. Brendan Kearns as our guest speaker. As a reminder, the James Mason Award is awarded at our annual banquet dinner every spring to an individual or group that has demonstrated a commitment to bird conservation and/or environmental education in Indiana, particularly in the Wabash Valley. Nominations are being accepted through April 1st. The winner will be presented an award plaque during the April 17th banquet. If you would like to make a nomination, please contact a board member or Phil Cox, philwcox@gmail.com

Past winners of the award (and their affiliations) include:

- 1990 Jack Munsee, WVAS, ISU Life Sciences
- 1991 H. Samuel Phipps, Indiana DNR
- 1992 Keith Ruble, Vigo County Parks Dept.
- 1993 Terri Moore, Indiana Natural Resource Commission
- 1994 Marion Jackson, WVAS, ISU Life Sciences
- 1995 Paul Carmony, The Nature Conservancy
- 1996 Amy Mason, WVAS, Indiana Audubon Society, Indiana Garden Club
- 1997 James Gammon, DePauw University
- 1998 Marshall Parks, WVAS, ISU Life Sciences
- 1999 John Bacone, Indiana Dept of Natural Resources
- 2000 "Six from the Sixties", WVAS founders: Ruth Erickson, Betty Munsee, Ken & Pearl Eslinger, Henry & Margaret Tamar
- 2001 no award given
- 2002 Charles Keller, co-author of Birds of Indiana
- 2003 Alan Bruner, WVAS, Indiana Audubon Society
- 2004 Gene Muench, WVAS
- 2005 John Whitaker, ISU Center for NA Bat Research and Conservation
- 2006 James McDonald, Indiana landowner practicing conservation and stewardship of his land
- 2007 no award given
- 2008 TREES Inc., Terre Haute, Indiana
- 2009 Peter Scott, WVAS, ISU Biology
- 2010 Susie Dewey, WVAS
- 2011 Max Miller, Riverscape
- 2012 Phil and Brenda Milliren
- 2013 ??????????????



Events All events are open to the public. If you have a topic you would like to present please contact WVAS. If additional information is needed call one of the officers listed below:	February	March	April
	7 WVAS Board Mtg, 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Traverse Pie Company, 3rd & Cherry St.	7 WVAS Board Mtg, 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Traverse Pie Company, 3rd & Cherry St.	4 WVAS Board Mtg, 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Traverse Pie Company, 3rd & Cherry St.
WVAS OFFICERS 2012 President: Phil Cox philwcox@gmail.com Vice-President: Carissa Lovett carissa.lovett@terrehaute.in.gov Secretary: Ellen Lunsford mabel819@aol.com Treasurer: Phil Milliren philiren@msn.com Conservation: Phil Cox Education: Carissa Lovett Board member: Lucinda Berry Helen Vermillion Joe Dickson Shelley Arvin Nicholas Brown Social Chair: Margaret Tamar, Membership Chair Brenda Milliren, breniren@msn.com Newsletter Editor: Marty Jones indth33@yahoo.com Bird Count Compiler: Peter Scott, peter.scott@indstate.edu	15 -18 The Great Backyard Bird Count. See www.birdsource.org/gbbc	9 Water Off a Duck's Back, 10:30 a.m. at Dobbs Park Nature Center. Find out what species visit the park and surrounding areas. Call 812-877-1095.	13 Birding with the Wabash Valley Audubon Society, 10 a.m. to noon. Join a member of the WVAS at the Dobbs Park Nature Center, 5170 E. Poplar Street.
	16 Birding with the Wabash Valley Audubon Society, 10 a.m. to noon. Join a member of the WVAS at the Dobbs Park Nature Center, 5170 E. Poplar Street.	16 Birding with the Wabash Valley Audubon Society, 10 a.m. to noon. Join a member of the WVAS at the Dobbs Park Nature Center, 5170 E. Poplar Street.	13 Walk Through the Wildflowers, 1:30 p.m. Dobbs Park. Pre-registration Required. Call 812-877-1095.
	20 Member Meeting Presentation by Diana Hews, 7:00 p.m. Vigo County Public Library. See page 1 for more information.	20 Member Meeting Presentation by Matt Williams, 7:00 p.m., Dobbs Park Nature Center. See page 1 for more information.	17 52nd Annual WVAS Banquet. Kleptz Restaurant in Seelyville. Social hour begins at 6:00 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m. followed by a presentation by Brendan Kearns.
	23 Dobbs Park Invasive Species Education/ Work Day, 9 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Call 812-877-1095.	23 Dobbs Park Invasive Removal Day, 9 a.m. to noon. Call 812-877-1095.	20 Earth Day Celebration St. Mary of the Woods, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Recent Nature Photographs

Short-eared Owl, Universal Mine,
Vermillion County, Indiana, Jan 2013.
Photographed by Mike Hannum



Loggerhead Shrike, Brazil Lagoons, Clay
County, Indiana, December 16, 2012.
Photographed by Jim Sullivan



“Geese at their Greatest”
White-fronted Geese,
Universal Mine, Vermillion
County, Indiana, January
2013. Photograph by Ben
Cvengros



PUZZLE

All Abird!

You won't need binocs to find the 39 winged critters we've hidden in this grid, reading across, down and diagonally. Once you've circled them all, the leftover letters will reveal something that a fellow flier—Charles Lindbergh—had to say about birds, long after he had returned to earth for good.



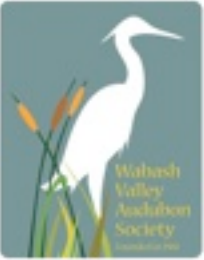
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PELICAN
PHEASANT
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QUAIL
RAVEN
ROBIN
SPARROW

SWALLOW
SWAN
TERN
THRUSH
TOUCAN
WOODPECKER
WREN



Wabash Valley Audubon Society
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Audubon Help Needed

NOTICE

Wabash Valley Audubon currently has openings for the following positions: board member, newsletter editor, memorial fund. Some of the most valuable gifts that an organization can receive have no price tag on them. Only an hour or two of volunteer work each month can really make a difference. To learn more contact Marty Jones, 317-696-6246, indth33@yahoo.com

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