

The CHAT



Volume 41, number 3

May/June 2015

Newsletter of the **Robert Cooper Audubon Society**, serving East Central Indiana

Columbus Zoo Keeper to Speak at Upcoming Chapter Meeting

Mike Zedekar was born and raised in Muncie and attended Ball State University before ending up at the Columbus Zoo in Ohio, where he has worked for over 20 years. Starting off as a reptile keeper, he moved on to the zoo's herbivore and carnivore building before progressing to the Congo expedition and African forest building where he has spent the past decade.

On behalf of the zoo, Mike has traveled to exotic locales around the world, including a research trip to Botswana to study ungulates, and trips to Borneo as part of the orangutan species survival plan. Mike works mainly with great apes, including gorillas, bonobos, and particularly orangutans, his specialty. Mike will be showing a DVD of his own creation and sharing stories about his many adventures with the zoo's primates.

Mike will be speaking at our meeting on **Wednesday, May 13**. Chapter business and refreshments will begin at **7 p.m.** at **Kennedy Library**. Speaker at **7:15**.



Bioblitz Volunteer Opportunity, May 16-17

A Bioblitz is an intensive survey of life forms in a geographic area. Volunteers form teams to count birds, insects, amphibians, plant species, etc. This year's Bioblitz is at Hills of Gold near Columbus, IN. This area will be hilly and some of the hiking may be a bit challenging.

For more information about joining the bird team, contact Kirk Roth (rothkirk@hotmail.com) or if you are interested in coordinating with other RCAS members, contact Rose Jeffery (rosemariejeffery@gmail.com).

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Upcoming Events

Chad Williams:

I Killed My Venus Flytrap!

Wednesday, June 10, 7 p.m.

Carnivorous plants have long been a subject of curiosity. A plant that can actually eat insects: really? There are more than 600 different carnivorous plants in the world that lure, capture, and digest insects to help supplement the nutrients they cannot obtain in their natural environment. The most common—the Venus Flytrap!

Chad Williams is the founder and Chair of the Indiana Young Birders Club and board member of the Indiana Audubon Society. He is also a past President of the Central Indiana Orchid Society and a member of the International Carnivorous Plant Society. He's been growing carnivorous plants as a hobby for the past 28 years and it all started from a single Venus Flytrap bulb that he purchased for 88 cents from a magazine ad.

From windowsills and terrariums to outdoor mini-bogs, there are many carnivorous plants that can be grown with little more effort than a common house-plant. Chad will introduce you to the world of carnivorous plants and discuss some basic growing points and common pitfalls so that your next Venus Flytrap won't end up in the trash can. He will demonstrate how easy it is to plant your own "mini-bog" for your porch and patio and will also have some carnivorous plants available for sale.

Chapter business and refreshments will begin at 7 p.m. at **Kennedy Library**. Speaker at **7:15**.



Venus Flytrap by Mark Freeth

Salamonie Reservoir

Saturday, May 2, 8:15 a.m.

We will meet at **Hominy Ridge picnic area** in the Salamonie River State Forest at about **8:15 a.m.** We will bird in the forest during the morning and then picnic at Hominy Ridge. Bring a sack lunch and something to drink. After lunch we will check out other areas around the reservoir and Nature Center. The drive to Salamonie from Muncie should take just over one hour.

Directions from Muncie: Follow I-69 north to IN-218 towards Van Buren/Warren/Berne. Turn left (west) onto IN-128 and follow it to IN-105. Turn right (north) on IN-105. Take IN-105 to IN-124 and turn left. Look out for Dam Road, which comes up quickly on the right. Turn right onto Dam Road and take the left fork-Pefley Road-into the Salamonie River State Forest. Follow signs to the Hominy Ridge picnic area. A site map is available at the Salamonie Lake DNR website.

NOTE: We will not have an official field trip to Magee Marsh this year. The Biggest Week in American Birding Festival has become so popular that it is difficult to reserve a block of rooms at a reasonable rate. Many from our area are making arrangements to attend the festival on their own. Check out the festival website for more information: www.biggestweekinamericanbirding.com

Indiana Dunes Birding Festival

May 7-10

Members are encouraged to attend part or all of the inaugural Indiana Dunes Birding Festival. For more information, check out the festival website: www.indunesbirdingfestival.com. There is also a Facebook page (Indiana Dunes Birding Festival) and a Twitter account (@indunesbirdfest).

Strawtown Koteewi Park

Saturday, May 23, 8 a.m.

Strawtown Koteewi Park is a Hamilton County park located west of Anderson near Cicero, IN. We will meet at **8 a.m.** for a morning of birding. Habitats there include some prairie restoration, woodland riparian, and meadow. Bring a sack lunch.

Directions from Muncie: Take Wheeling to SR-28 heading west. Continue on SR-28 nearly to Elwood and turn left (south) on SR-37. Continue on SR-37 to Strawtown Ave. and turn right. We will meet at the **visitor center** on the north side of the road. Travel from Muncie will take about one hour.



Eagle Creek

Sunday, June 14, 9 a.m.

We will join members of the Amos Butler Audubon Society on their weekly Eagle Creek bird hike from **9-11 a.m.** This group includes many expert birders and different groups cover various habitat in the park. A final list is then compiled when all gather for snacks and socializing. Consider bringing an edible contribution for the snack table. We will gather at the **ornithology center** at the park. Park entrance is **\$7 a car**.

Directions from Muncie: Take I-69 south to Indianapolis and merge onto I-465 West. Follow I-465 on its north loop. Take exit 21 for 71st Street and turn right onto westbound 71st St. After the Lafayette Road intersection and entrances onto I-65, 71st Street turns into Eagle Creek Parkway. The park will be on the right. After entering the park, follow signs for the Ornithology Center.

Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

Saturday, June 20, 8:15 a.m.

If you came to our chapter meeting in April, you heard Amy Wilms sharing all of the wonderful reasons to visit this sanctuary just outside of Connersville. We will gather at **8:15**.

Directions from Muncie: Take US-35 southeast about 14 miles to SR-1 and turn right (south). Follow SR-1 to Connersville where you will pick up SR-121 south. Continue south on SR-121 to W. County Rd. 350 S., where you will turn right. Travel about 3.4 miles to the sanctuary, which is well marked at **3499 S. Bird Sanctuary Road, Connersville**. Travel time from Muncie is about 1.5 hours.

Bring a picnic lunch to eat at the sanctuary. If the weather is good and we have the energy, we may stop at Shrader-Weaver Nature Preserve after lunch before heading home.

Cardinal Greenway Bicycle Birding

Saturday, July 25, 8 a.m.

We will gather at the **Depot Visitor Center on Wysor St.** in Muncie at **8 a.m.** and bike down to the Red Tail Preserve, which is just off the trail. Bring your binoculars, plenty of water, a snack, and, of course, a bike!

Mounds State Park

**Sundays, May 31, June 28, July 26,
and August 30, 9 a.m.**

Monthly Mounds State Park hikes will continue on the **last Sunday of each month** throughout the summer. Bring your family and friends and meet at the **Visitor Center** at **9 a.m.** We will provide binoculars and a spotting scope. These hikes usually end with cookies for all!

Spotlight on Citizen Science eBird

By Danny Pirtle

With our increasingly connected world, it is becoming easier for citizens to make and share everyday sightings of birds around the world. The eBird database is probably the most successful example of the potential for universal sharing of bird observations.

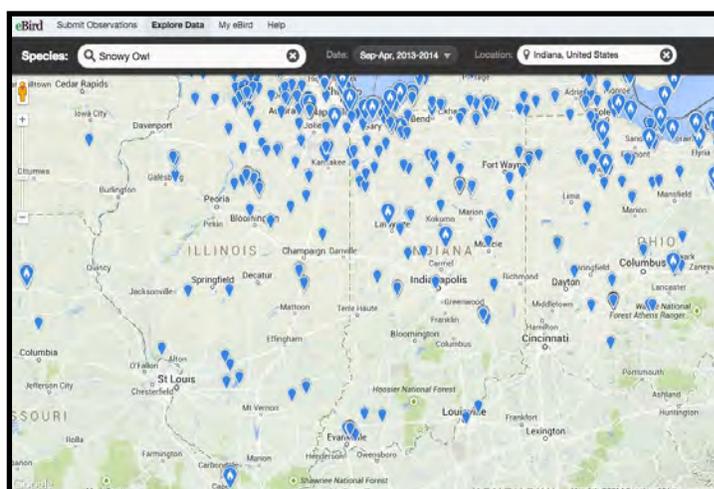
An online database, eBird is simple in concept, yet provides an invaluable amount of bird data every day. In short, anyone around the world can use the eBird website to record sightings of birds by reporting the date and time, location, and a checklist of all the bird species they sighted at that spot. All of these checklists are compiled into what is now the most complete record of bird sightings across the planet.

A joint effort of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, eBird was launched in 2002. In its first 12 years in existence, more than 100,000 people have submitted observations, recording more than 100,000,000 bird sightings of at least 10,240 different species and subspecies.

The importance of a collection of data this size cannot be understated. With information collected by eBird participants, scientists can address questions about avian distributions and abundance in an unprecedented way. The database makes it easier for scientists, as well as everyday citizens, to visualize and interpret trends in populations of individual species or birds of a given region.

Additionally, anyone with an eBird account can look at any of the data submitted. So, nonscientist-birders can use eBird when planning an upcoming birding field trip. By using the data search feature, beginning and advanced birders alike can use eBird to figure out where and when to bird for target species.

Registration for the site is free and anyone in the world can submit their observations to the database. Check out <<http://www.ebird.com>> for more information and to get started sharing your own, personal observations!



An example of a map produced by eBird. This map shows all Snowy Owl sightings in Indiana and Illinois during the winter of 2013-2014. Clicking on a blue marker would reveal information about that individual sighting.

News from the President - Sarah McKillip

- We are excited to announce that we will be enlisting the help of a student intern from Ball State. Shelbie Freeman will be working with us this summer to give a fresh, modern look to our website, logo, and newsletter, among many other miscellaneous tasks. Keep an eye out for her hard work in the coming months. Welcome aboard, Shelbie!
- We will be holding elections for new members of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society board in June. Nominees will be announced at a later date via email and posted to the website before the June meeting.
- Minnetrista will be hosting a Garden Fair on June 6 and 7. Vendors will have deals on plants, tools, decorations and more as you begin your gardening endeavors this summer. This should also be a great chance to meet fellow gardeners and exchange tips for gardening success. We encourage our members to check it out!

Birds Throughout History

Tower of London Ravens

By John L. McKillip



Seven ravens, native to the Northern Hemisphere, have been kept as long-term residents in and on the grounds of the Tower of London since the reign of King Charles II (1660-1685). The reason and origin of the ravens in the Tower has long been disputed, but many believe that the ravens began using the Tower as a roost while awaiting their turn to pick the corpses of those unfortunate enough to be executed during the 16th and 17th Centuries (1). Many years later, tradition dictated that six ravens (with one in reserve), each with one clipped flight feather per wing, be kept at all times to protect the Crown and the Tower. If they were lost or flew away, Britain would lose global power and influence. Interestingly, at one point King Charles II insisted that due to the excessive raven droppings in the White Tower observatory in the late 1600s, the entire telescope be relocated to Greenwich, after which the King commissioned the new Greenwich Observatory in 1675, and kept the ravens.

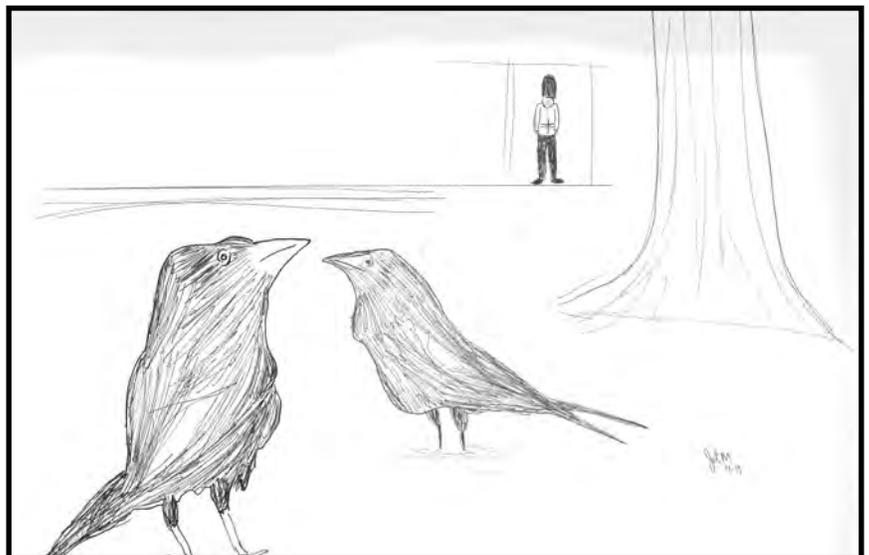
During World War II, Winston Churchill feared that the ravens would perish in the Blitz bombing. So he had additional birds brought in and enlisted as soldiers of the Kingdom, even issuing each one attestation cards, just as the police and soldiers carried. Over the years, countless tourists and many dignitaries have visited the ravens for a photo opp. Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, was recently impressed with the Tower of

London Ravens' vocal skills, with one of the birds apparently greeting each member of the President's security team with a squawky "good morning." Such fame and attention necessitate that the birds be individually banded for naming and identification. A strict dietary regime of fresh meats, hand-selected vegetables and vitamin supplements are issued daily, all paid for courtesy of the people.

Over the years, specific ravens have stood out for their unique personality traits or unusual behaviors. Legend tells of two ravens many years ago – "James Crow," and "Edgar Sopper" (refer to the expert drawing by the author that accompanies this article). Following the death of James Crow, Edgar became lonely, but quickly realized that by playing dead, he could garner much attention and food from human visitors. Edgar's trick was so convincing that the "Ravenmaster" yeoman mistakenly entered the grounds one morning to remove the still, lifeless body of this clever raven. Then the Ravenmaster picked up the "corpse." Edgar came to life, bit the man's finger smartly, and flapped off, croaking loud, raven laughter, as if to mock the surprised and injured yeoman.

Reference

- (1) Impey, E., & Parnell, G. 2000. *The Tower of London: The Official Illustrated History*. Merrell Publishers, in assoc. with Historic Royal Palaces (pg. 34).



Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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Dates for Your Calendar

- May 2:** Salamonie Reservoir Field Trip
- May 7-10:** Indiana Dunes Birding Festival
- May 13:** Chapter Meeting/Mike Zedekar
- May 16-17:** Bioblitz at Hills of Gold
- May 23:** Strawtown Koteewi Field Trip
- May 31:** Mounds State Park Bird Hike
- June 10:** Chapter Meeting/Chad Williams
- June 14:** Eagle Creek Field Trip
- June 20:** Mary Gray Sanctuary Field Trip
- June 28:** Mounds State Park Bird Hike
- July 25:** Cardinal Greenway Bicycle Birding
- July 26:** Mounds State Park Bird Hike
- August 30:** Mounds State Park Bird Hike

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Find us on **Facebook!**
Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Program meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except July, August, & September) at
Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch
1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN
7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments
7:15 pm: scheduled program

The Chat is published 5 times a year by the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph Counties



Magnolia Warbler by Kelly Colgan Azar

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