

The Chat



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

Volume 36, No. 4

Sept./Oct. 2010

September 12th: **Picnic and Tour of Christy Woods**

We'll kick off our 2010-11 program season with a picnic and nature walk at the Christy Woods picnic shelter, at the south edge of Ball State's campus, on **Sunday, Sept. 12.**

The picnic will begin at **1:00 p.m.** Please bring a hot or cold dish, salad, or dessert to share and your own plate, cup, and flatware. Audubon will supply hamburgers (from local, free-range, all-natural livestock or poultry), veggie burgers, and drinks.

Afterwards, Cheryl LeBlanc – curator of the Wheeler Orchid Collection at Christy Woods and longtime Audubon newsletter editor in the 1990s – will lead us on a guided tour of this natural gem.

Christy Woods' beautifully maintained 18 acres include mature forest, prairie, and wetlands, as well as two greenhouses. A special treat will be a tour of the Orchid Collection.

Be sure to bring your binoculars to look for the many migratory birds that stop over at Christy Woods on their way south each fall. And bring a friend or two as well!

Driving and parking directions: Enter the Christy Woods parking lot from University Ave., just east of Tillotson Ave. See map on p. 5.

October 11th:

Habitat Restoration at Zeigler Woods

Once again, the Robert Cooper Audubon Society has been busy with habitat restoration! Join us on **October 11** to learn about one of the largest conservation projects our chapter has ever undertaken, at the Zeigler Woods Nature Preserve in Henry County. The preserve's 129 acres consist of 79 acres of high-quality upland forest and 50 acres of former cow pasture that's now populated largely by non-native plant species.

Our Audubon chapter, led by Jon Creek and Jeff Ray, collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Fund and the Indiana DNR Division of Nature Preserves to restore the grassland to native plant species—creating attractive habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife. Key funding for the project was generously provided by Marjorie Zeigler, who, with her husband Sherman, purchased the land 20 years ago and donated it to the Nature Conservancy.

At our October meeting you'll see how the project progressed from start to finish, with photo-documentation provided by Ball State landscape architecture student, Thomas Fraley. You'll also get a glimpse of the preserve's future, with drawings that show what the property is expected to look like in the coming years.

Refreshments and time to socialize will begin at Minnetrista at 7:00, followed by the chapter meeting at 7:15 and the program at 7:30. As always, non-Audubon members are welcome, so bring a friend!



Former pasture at Zeigler Woods Nature Preserve

Late-breaking news: The Robert Cooper Audubon Society has just been named a recipient of a \$20,000 TogetherGreen Innovation Grant! The grant will fund a major chapter project to restore habitat along a 25-acre section of Cardinal Greenways. (Continued on p. 4.)



September/October Field Trips

Saturday, September 25th, 9:00 AM

Mounds State Park in Anderson

Mounds State Park, located off I-69 east of Anderson, features 10 unique "earthworks" built by a group of prehistoric Indians known as the Adena-Hopewell people. The largest earthwork, the "Great Mound," is believed to have been constructed around 160 B.C. Archaeological surveys seem to indicate it was used as a gathering place for religious ceremonies."

For this trip, we will meet at the Visitor Center of Mounds State Park at 9 AM.

From there, we can walk the grounds and boardwalk in search of birds, and also tour the earthworks with a naturalist who will discuss the history of the area.

Directions: From Chesterfield, turn south onto S.R. 232, which becomes Mounds Rd. After a couple tight curves, look for park entrance on right. From Anderson, take S.R. 232 east from S.R. 9. Park entrance will be on left. The Visitor Center is straight ahead after entering the park.

See www.cooperaudubon.org for maps.

Please feel free to carpool from Cooper Science parking lot (see map at right) at 8:30 AM with the field trip



Saturday, October 23rd, 9:00 AM

Fall Tour of Vann Property

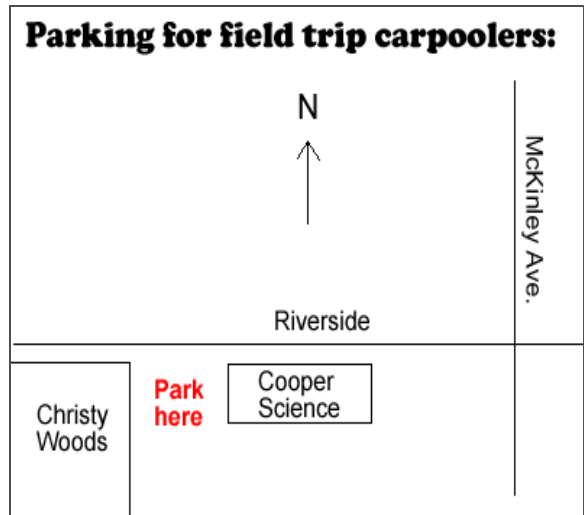
Weather permitting, on Oct. 23 we'll take an informal guided tour of the wonderfully diverse acreage of John and Carolyn Vanns' Springport property, which includes woods and prairie. Afterwards, Carolyn will be providing bagels, juice, and coffee.

Carolyn is a biology professor at Ball State, and John is a marketing professor who emphasizes sustainability in his courses.

Directions: Head south on S.R. 3 from Muncie. Turn right (west) into Henry County Rd. 950 N. Cross railroad tracks carefully (no sign), go to first stopsign (Prairie Rd.) and turn left. Go ~1/2 mi. past row of houses. At bottom of curve, look for mailbox on right, drive on left. Address: 9044 N Prairie Rd.

See www.cooperaudubon.org for a map.

Please feel free to carpool from Cooper Science parking lot at 8:15 AM with the field trip coordinator.



Others coming up...

Sat., Oct. 9, 8:30 AM – **Waterfowl Viewing at Summit Lake State Park.**

Meet in the Nature Area, which is at the intersection of Henry County Roads 500 E and 750 N. Please feel free to carpool from Cooper Science parking lot at 7:45 AM with the field trip coordinator.

Sat., Nov. 20 – **Sandhill Cranes at Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area.**

Details to be announced at a later date.

September/October Bird of the Month

Northern Harrier:
Circus cyaneus
By Helen Twibell



The northern harrier is a raptor and at times may be called marsh hawk or hen harrier.

A long-tailed, long-winged hawk, the harrier flies low over fields in a zig-zagged fashion

with wings held high in an open V and with body tilting from side to side while foraging for its quarry. (This could be considered a good field identifying characteristic.)

The adult hen is brown and is somewhat larger than the male, who is pale gray with black wing tips. The bird is a slender hawk with long legs. A dependable identifying mark is a visible white patch on the rump above the long tail. The length is about 18"-19" and the wingspread is 42".

The habitat of the northern harrier is open wetlands, meadows, pastures, prairies, grasslands, croplands and river bank woodlands. Although this hawk has suffered from extensive and none-too-wise drainage of marshes and from wanton persecution, it has survived better than most birds of prey. In many places its feeding grounds have expanded as forests have been replaced by low growth. Its habit of nesting on the ground makes it less vulnerable to human disturbance than hawks that build tree nests, even though it is exposed to animal predation.

Small mammals up to the size of rabbits are the primary food. Though it is not a fast flier, the bird's hunting method, aided by the long, rudder-like tail, enables it to surprise and catch a good many birds, frogs, snakes, crayfish, large insects, carrion and fish. In migration and on wintering grounds, harriers often gather in large commu-

nal groups in areas where meadow mice are plentiful.

This hawk is said to harry its prey, thereby acquiring its name "harrier." The northern harrier, unlike other hawks, relies on its hearing as well as its vision to capture prey. The feathers of the face are stiff and help transmit sound. The face feathers form a pronounced "facial disk" much like that of an owl.

Most male harriers mated with one or two females, and some have been known to have five mates in a season. On the nesting territory, in a courtship ritual, the male dives and climbs, dives and climbs in what one observer likened to a series of capital U's--or he may tumble from high up.

When nesting begins, the hen incubates the five eggs which are white or pale blue with a few brown spots. The eggs are laid in a nest which may be on the ground in or near to a low meadow or marshy area and placed where shrubs and tall weeds afford concealment. In dry spots the nest may be a loose cup of weed stems and grasses, but in wet areas it may be a substantial mound of grasses on a stick foundation or saddles on a sedge tussock or willow clump.

The male provides food for his nesting mates, and when he brings it to each individual hen, she flies up, he drops his prey, and she catches it in mid-air--or they may make the exchange claw to claw, without alighting.

The northern harrier breeds all across Alaska and Canada except for the southernmost part. It inhabits the northwestern states of the U.S. and southern Canada year round. Migration from the north takes the birds to eastern and southwestern U.S. and down through Central America to the northernmost tip of S. America.

So where is Indiana in this harrier population analysis? The Field Checklist tells us that the northern harrier is a rare breeder in summer here and an uncommon resident in spring, fall and winter.

In earlier years the northern harrier seemed to be a more common resident of northern Indiana. However, in the past 20 or 30 years, most of the harrier population, such as it is, seems to be in southern Indiana. Ripley and Sullivan counties have been named as the location of a minimal number of nesting harriers. A Blackford County resident reported seeing a northern harrier hen at the farm pond in Sept. of 2009 at migration time. She described it so aptly that there was no question that it was a northern harrier hen: brown, long tail and facial disk like an owl. It rested on the ground for a long time, eyeing the bird feeder, then after a day's visit, flew away.

One conservation report of the total N. American northern harrier population states that the status quo is rated "Least Concern." However, another writer says that the harrier is endangered in Indiana, Illinois and other Midwest states. Since the locations of harrier nests (marshes and less worked grounds) are not usually visited as much by birders, it is possible there are more harriers nesting here than believed.



Living Lightly Fair

Sept. 18, 9 am–4 pm, at Minnetrista

Living Lightly, a resource fair for sustainable lifestyles, will soon be here! This year's fair will take place on Saturday, September 18, at Minnetrista, in Muncie. The day is packed full of speakers, vendors in the Green Marketplace, music, art, kids' activities, and more – all with the aim of inspiring fair-goers to live more sustainably and save resources, energy, and money in the process!

Featured speaker Ian Cheney, co-creator of the documentary *King Corn*, will get us thinking about the resources we take for granted in a day – especially food – at 10 a.m. At 1 p.m. he'll show his newest film, *Big River*.

The focus on food will continue throughout the day with the chance to see what community gardens in our region are up to.

Best of all, admission – including speakers and music – is FREE! Pre-registration for the children's mini-camps is strongly encouraged.

Visit www.livinglightlyfair.org for complete information about the day's activities.

Living Lightly Fair schedule of events			
Time	Music	Children	Speakers
9:00am			Terry Black: "Wind and Solar for Homes and Businesses" Lynn Jenkins: "Eight Tips for an Earth-Friendly Yard" 9:00-9:50
9:30am			
10:00am	BSU Graduate Woodwind Quintet 9:30-10:30	Mini Camp* 10:00-12:00	
10:30am		Minnetrista Theatre Preserves Performance 10:30-11:15	FEATURED SPEAKER Ian Cheney: "Our House in Space" 10:00-11:15
11:00am			
11:30pm			Stephanie Hays-Mussoni & Alison ClarkZajdel: "Green Parenting" Jonathan Spodek: "The ecoREHAB Approach to Sustainable, Energy- Efficient Housing Renovation" 11:30-12:20
12:00pm			
12:30pm	FEATURED MUSIC Brad Leftwich and the Hogwire Stringband 12:00-1:00	Minnetrista Theatre Preserves Performance 12:30-1:15	Ian Cheney: <i>Big River</i> Muncie Premier 1:00-1:50
1:00pm			
1:30pm	Ron Beach and Ric Dwenger 1:30-2:30	Mini Camp* 1:00-3:00	Bill Stant: "Socially and Environ- mentally Responsible Investing" David Gulyas: "Creating Green Interiors" 2:00-2:50
2:00pm			
2:30pm		Minnetrista Theatre Preserves Performance 2:30-3:15	Jason Donati & Colby Gray: "Urban Organic Gardening" Pat Jones: "Acquiring Professional Skills for the Wind Power Industry" 3:00-3:50
3:00pm			
3:30pm	Busted Knuckle 3:00-4:00		
4:00pm			

Green Marketplace all day: see www.livinglightlyfair.org for details
*Pre-register online at Living Lightly Fair

TogetherGreen Grant - cont'd from p. 1:

Joining forces with Muncie-Delaware Clean and Beautiful, Cardinal Greenways, and Red-tail Conservancy, our chapter will educate and enlist the help of youth organizations and other community groups that serve low-income neighborhoods. Project volunteers will remove invasive species and plant native trees and native grasses in the 25-acre site.

Work is scheduled to get underway very soon, especially outreach and education activities and volunteer work days. Details will follow at www.cooperaudubon.org and other media.

If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Tom Reeve, at munciebeautiful@gmail.com or call 765-216-5866.

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year TogetherGreen initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for the environment.

Send Us Your Nominations!

Our November program will honor individuals and organizations that have made noteworthy contributions to the environment in our region, perhaps even the state, in these categories:



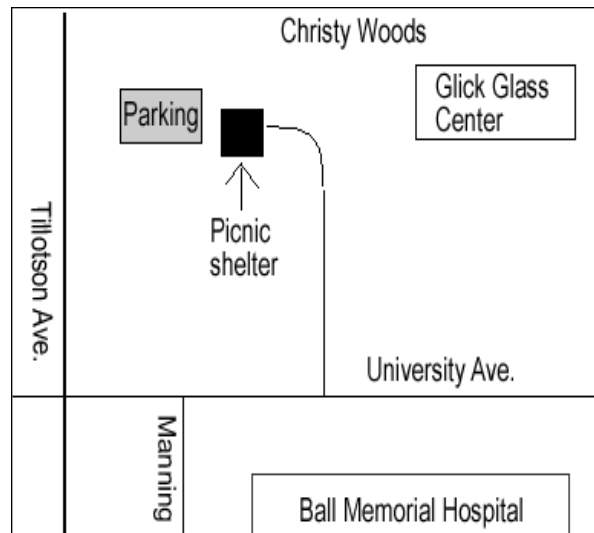
- Robert H. and Esther (Munro) Cooper Conservation Award: the chapter's highest honor, for overall contributions to, conservation of, and appreciation for, the natural environment
- Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation: for development or preservation of habitat that contains significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations
- Richard Greene Public Service: for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns
- Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award: for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and /or adults on conservation issues and practices
- Charles Wise Youth Conservation Award: for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under the age of 18

To make the event a success, we need your help. If you know of an individual or organization that deserves recognition for its service to the

natural environment in any of the above categories, please send your nomination, along with a description of the nominee and his or her contact information, to Barb Stedman, at bastedman@gmail.com, or the following address: 5424 N County Road 500 E, Albany 47320. *Be sure to include your own name, phone number, address, and email address.*

Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region and they need no affiliation with the Audubon Society. Nominations must be received by **October 8**.

Continued from p. 1 - "Picnic and Tour of Christy Woods"



Board Comings and Goings...

Thanks to Cynda Turner, who, on June 30, finished several years of service to our chapter as Hospitality Chair! Taking her place is Doris Cheney, joined by Sara Jarvis, our new Education Chair.

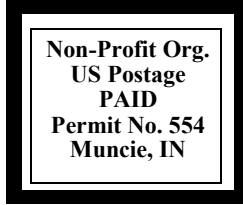
Thanks also go to the many board members who will continue to guide our chapter in the coming year – Jon Creek, Barb Hesselgrave, Nona Nunnally, Dave Cramer, Frank Meeker, Phil Tuttle, Joel Jeffcoat, Charlie Mason, Sarah McKillip, Laurie Lindberg, Lois Rockill, and Meredith Sims.

As the new board looks ahead to the coming year, we hope you'll join us for more of our monthly programs and field trips, starting with our September 12 picnic at Christy Woods. If you have ideas for activities and programs, please let us know!

Robert Cooper Audubon Society



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Dated Material– Please Deliver Promptly

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.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Dates for Your Calendar</u></p> <p>Sept. 12: Picnic, Tour of Christy Woods Sept. 18: Living Lightly Fair Sept. 24: Mounds State Park Field Trip Oct. 9: Waterfowl viewing at Summit Lake Oct. 11: Zeigler Woods Restoration Program Oct. 23: Fall Tour of Vann Property Nov. 20: Sandhill Cranes at Jasper-Pulaski</p> <p>Cha Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Meetings</u></p> <p>Program meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except July & August) at Minnetrista 1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway Muncie, IN</p> <p>7:00 p.m.: Coffee and Gathering 7:15 p.m.: Chapter Business 7:30 p.m.: Scheduled Program</p> <p> Printed on recycled paper 25% post-consumer fiber</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Officers</u></p> <p>President: Barb Stedman 288-2890 Vice-President: Jon Creek 348-4019 Recording Sec.: Barb Hesselgrave 284-5661 Treasurer: Nona Nunnelly 284-0751</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Directors</u></p> <p>2009-2011 Joel Jeffcoat 286-2896 Phil Tuttle 289-4251 2010-2012 Dave Cramer 260-726-9492 Frank Meeker 289-5635</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Committee Chairs</u></p> <p>Conservation: Charlie Mason 288-9937 Education: Sara Jarvis 759-5167 Field Trip: Sarah McKillip 287-8464 Hospitality: Doris Cheney 288-0981 Membership: Laurie Lindberg 282-7516 Newsletter Ed. Meredith Sims 317-640-8205 Program: Lois Rockhill 287-8698 Publicity: <i>Position Vacant</i></p>
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