



# Cooper's Talk

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

Volume 40, No.2

Mar/Apr 2016

## Indiana's Nongame Bird Program Wednesday, March 16 at 7 p.m.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources monitors and manages nearly 50 at-risk bird species, each of which faces a unique suite of threats. Allisyn Gillet will talk about the state's nongame bird program, focusing on several major conservation projects including the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon restorations and Interior Least Tern management. She will end with a note on how you can get involved in these projects and contribute to the conservation of the state's beautiful avifauna.



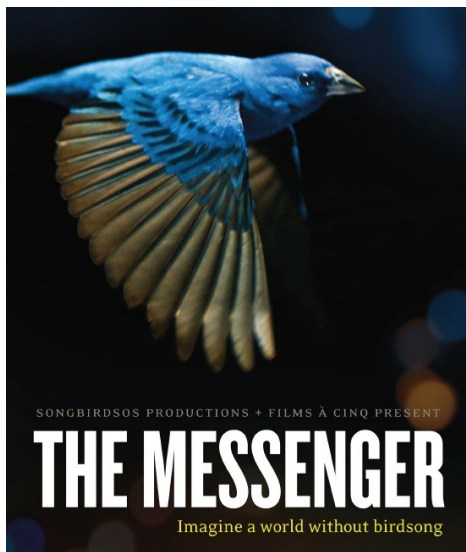
Photo by Amy Kearns

Allisyn is the nongame bird biologist for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. She graduated from Rutgers University, Cook College with a B.S. in biology and natural resource management. She received her Master's from Columbia University in conservation biology and from the University of Missouri - St. Louis in ecology, evolution, and systematics. She has worked with many species of birds, from Bobolinks to Galapagos Hawks, to study various conservation issues such as environmental contamination and disease transmission.

## Film Screening: The Messenger

Saturday, April 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Join us at **Pruis Hall** on Ball State's campus for a free screening of a new documentary film, *The Messenger*. "The Messenger is a visually thrilling ode to the beauty and importance of the imperiled songbird, and what it means to all of us on both a global and human level if we lose them ... Once again they have something to tell us, and the message is not a comfortable one." Following the film, a panel of experts will further discuss bird conservation. Free parking is available in the parking garage just behind Pruis. *For more information about the film, visit [songbirdsos.com](http://songbirdsos.com). For more information about the screening in Muncie, visit [cooperaudubon.org](http://cooperaudubon.org).*



# Upcoming Events

## Birding with Jim Schowe

**Saturday, March 19**

RCAS member, Jim Schowe, will lead a bird hike on his 24acre property. Please dress for the weather: the woods could be muddy if the ground is unfrozen. Gather at **Jim's home at 9 a.m.**

Directions from Muncie: Take US-35 heading south. Turn left onto US-36 E. Turn right onto S 1000 W. Jim's home will be on the left at **9501 S 1000 W, Losantville**. Allow 35 - 40 minutes travel time.

*Those who wish to caravan or review directions, meet at the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at 8:20 a.m.*

## Mounds State Park

**Sunday, March 27 & April 24**

Monthly Mounds State Park hikes will continue on the last **Sunday of the month**. Meet at the **Visitor Center at 9 a.m.** The \$5 entrance fee will begin at the park in March. We will provide binoculars and a scope. The hikes end with cookies!

## Limberlost Swamp & Loblolly Marsh

**Saturday, April 9**

Limberlost is becoming a premiere birding site! RCAS will join members of Stockbridge Audubon at **9 a.m.** at the **Visitor Center** in Geneva. Please bring a sack lunch!

Directions from Muncie: From N Broadway, continue north on SR-67. In Portland, SR-67 takes a left. In Bryant, continue onto US-27 (rather than going right to stay on SR-67). The visitor center will be on the right at **200 E 6th St., Geneva**. Allow 1 hour for travel time.

*Those who wish to caravan or review directions, meet at the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at 8:00 a.m.*

## Red-tail Nature Preserve

**Saturday, April 16**

Join us for a combined birding and service trip! We will bird the Red-tail Nature Preserve prairie and should see warblers and other spring migrants. After birdwatching, we will help improve the site by pulling garlic mustard and removing bush honeysuckle. Bags and tools will be provided, please bring garden/work gloves and water! Meet at the **parking lot at 8:30 a.m.** We will finish by 11:30 a.m.

Directions from Muncie: Take the bypass to SR-35 heading south. Turn left onto County Road 650 S. Go to the stop sign and turn left onto County Road 461 E. The parking lot is on the left.

*Those who wish to caravan or review directions, meet at the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at 8:10 a.m.*

## Big Oaks NWR & Clifty Falls State Park

**April 23-24**

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge is a 50,000acre refuge that is globally recognized for its important bird habitat. Over 200 species of birds can be found at the property as well as the federally endangered species, Indiana Bat. The refuge is only open to the public by special appointment. Project Director, Joseph Robb, will be giving us a birding tour of the property. Meeting location will be sent out closer to the trip.

After birding most of the day at Big Oaks, the group will head to Clifty Falls State Park. A block of 10 rooms have been reserved at Clifty Inn at Clifty Falls State Park for April 23. Call 877-563-4371 and use code: 0423RC to get the group rate of \$112. The rooms will be held until **March 20th**. The group will bird at the State Park Sunday morning before heading home.

Please inform **Rose Jeffery** if you plan to attend this trip.

## Indiana Dunes Birding Festival

**May 6 - 8**

The second annual Indiana Dunes Birding Festival will be May 5 - 8. Registration for the festival is not open yet. Information from last year's festival can be found at [indianadunesfestival.com](http://indianadunesfestival.com).

RCAS has reserved a block of 10 rooms at the Hilton Garden Inn, Chesterton, IN, for May 6 & 7. Call 219-983-9500 and mention Robert Cooper Audubon Society to get our group rate of \$109 /night. **Rooms will be held until April 7.**

## Birds Throughout History

### Pigeons of War

By John L. McKillip



All homing pigeons share the blue rock pigeon, or rock dove (*Columba livia*), as their common ancestor, but the modern homing pigeon was the product of generations of careful breeding and training. Proper and complete training a reliable messenger took about eight weeks from the time a bird hatched.

The use of homing pigeons for military communication was first documented some 2,000 years ago by Roman soldiers. During World War I, both sides used pigeons as couriers for important messages. During this time, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established a pigeon service in 1917, on orders from General John Pershing.

Although communication methods improved dramatically in the years following World War I, pigeons were still used in WWII. In some cases, pigeons were taken across enemy lines by patrols in pursuit of valuable information, and were returned with news on location and strength of enemy troops,

and other information. In some instances, difficult terrain made radio communication impossible. In combat, the birds could be released under fire, and most succeeded in delivering their messages.

A pigeon could carry maps, photos, and lengthy messages in a capsule the size of a cigar tube attached to the bird's back, and most of these messages were not coded, since homing pigeons were extremely dependable at arriving at their destination.

As WWII droned on, pigeon clubs stepped forward to raise thousands of prize-winning birds to be donated to the war effort. Later, the army developed a special cage and parachute apparatus for dropping pigeons from aircraft to supply isolated troops with a means of communication. The device was also used to drop thousands of pigeons over the countryside during the June 1944 Normandy Invasion. French civilians were asked to send back detailed information about German installations and troop movements.

The concept of pigeon messenger service was a significant success in the War effort. The British Royal Air Force (pictured) determined that one in every seven of its crewmen who were rescued after being forced down at sea owed his life to a message sent by pigeon. For certain operations, pigeons were even standard aboard American bombers and naval vessels.

### 2015 Muncie Christmas Bird Count

Nineteen volunteers turned out in the field and at feeders for the 2015 Muncie Christmas Bird Count. 4,080 birds from 46 species were tallied, including two species new to our count: Black Vulture and Merlin.

Black Vultures, which are unusual in our area, were sighted at Paws, Inc. by Barb Stedman and Martha Hunt. Other highlights include Sandhill Cranes, a Red-headed Woodpecker at Larry Souders' feeder, and a Barred Owl found by Sarah Fischer and Micayla Jones.

The count concluded at the home of Rose and Jim Jeffery, who generously provided hot soup, homemade bread, and holiday cookies.

RCAS wishes to thank all who contributed to the success of this important citizen-science project.

For a complete list of species seen, visit our website.





**Robert Cooper  
Audubon Society**

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**Dates for Your Calendar**

- Mar 16:** Monthly Program - Allisyn Gillet
- Mar 19:** Birding with Jim Schowe
- Mar 27:** Mounds Bird Walk
- Apr 9:** Limberlost Swamp & Loblolly Marsh
- Apr 9:** The Messenger Film Screening
- Apr 16:** Red-tail Nature Preserve
- Apr 23-24:** Big Oaks NWR and Clifty Falls SP
- Apr 24:** Mounds Bird Walk

**Chapter Website:** [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)  
**Find us on Facebook!**  
**Email:** [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com)

Program meetings are held at  
**Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch**  
 1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN  
 7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments  
 7:15 pm: scheduled program

*Cooper's Talk* 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.

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