



# Cooper's Talk

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

Volume 40, No.3

May/June 2016

## RCAS Fox Student Grant



RCAS awards funds for bird-centered student research projects through a generous donation provided by RCAS members Josie and Geoff Fox. This year, the Fox Student Grant is being awarded to Ball State graduate student Clayton Delancey. Clayton will receive \$1,000.00 to purchase radio-transmitters and field supplies for his research on the Cerulean Warbler, a neotropical migrant species of conservation concern. Clayton completed his undergraduate education at Penn State and gained experience as a bird bander with the U.S. Forest Service. During this time, Clayton had the opportunity to study Cerulean Warbler ecology and was taught how to apply tracking methods, including the use of radio-transmitters and geolocators, to study Cerulean Warbler movement after fledging. As a graduate student, Clayton is applying his knowledge and experience to further study fledgling Cerulean Warbler dispersal in Southern Indiana, as well as post-breeding season movement of Cerulean Warblers. RCAS looks forward to supporting Clayton and this important research.

## Red-tail Land Conservancy – Barry Banks

**Wednesday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.**

Red-tail Land Conservancy is a land trust that preserves, protects, and restores natural areas and farmland in East Central Indiana. Founder and Executive Director, Barry Banks, will speak about Red-tail's mission, contributions to the community, and the future of the organization.

*Program meetings are held at: Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch.*

*7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments, 7:15 pm: scheduled program.*



***Elections will be held at our June monthly meeting for the following positions: treasurer, secretary, and two directors for 2016-2018. Nominations will be accepted from the floor or interested persons may contact RCAS President, Sarah McKillip, ahead of time!***

## 2016 RCAS Costa Rica Trip

### *In search of the Resplendent Quetzal and other natural wonders*

By Carol & Kamal Islam

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*Our group at Carara Biological Reserve - Photo taken by our guide, Willy Aguilar*

On March 5, 2016, a small group of RCAS members embarked on an 8-day adventure to experience and discover the amazing birdlife and biodiversity of Costa Rica. To the credit of the keen observational abilities of our group and working well as a team, we saw a total of 255 species of birds! This included some of our summer migrants in Indiana such as Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted & Blue Grosbeaks, Summer Tanagers, Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, and Wilson's, Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, and Golden-winged warblers that were making their way up north. We saw 21 species of hummingbirds. In addition, we saw 21 species of amphibians and reptiles, including brightly-colored and venomous coral snakes, poison dart frogs, and Costa Rica's iconic "little green ambassador", the red-eyed tree frog. We saw 11 species of mammals, including the three toed sloth, agouti, coatimundi, and squirrel, howler, and white faced capuchin monkeys. It was reassuring to see the diversity of native species of plants and animals sharing the same wild spaces.



*Crowned Woodnymph, Carol Islam*



*Red-eyed tree frog, Kamal Islam*



*Black-mandibled Toucan, Carol Islam*

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With our capable and well-organized Costa Rican guide, we experienced 5 unique ecosystems. In the Caribbean lowlands, we got our first good looks at the Collared Aracari and Black-mandibled Toucans, Laughing Falcons, and leaf-cutter ants. Hiking in the tropical rainforest environs of Braulio Carrillo National Park, we were very lucky to see the elusive Bare-necked Umbrellabird, which is glossy-black in coloration and rather plain looking but has a distinctive umbrella-shaped crest. We were fortunate to see several species of antbirds attracted to raiding army ants along our trail. At the Paramo, where we stood at about 11,300 ft. above sea level, we were greeted by the Volcano Junco, a species which is unique to this high elevation ecosystem. In the cloud forest of San Gerardo de Dota, brilliant Flame-colored Tanagers and sassy Long-tailed Silky Flycatchers caught our attention. In a mid-elevation forest near the Panama border, we were lucky to see another elusive species, the Three-wattled Bellbird with a unique call sounding like a hammer hitting an anvil. Also in the same area, we were thrilled to finally see a male Resplendent Quetzal worthy of its regal name with its colorful plumage and long streamer-like tail feathers. On our last day in the Pacific lowlands, we birded at the beach and saw many Magnificent Frigatebirds, Wood Stork, Brown Pelicans to name a few. In the Pacific lowland forest of Carara Biological Reserve, we observed Scarlet Macaws clinging on what appeared to be their nesting tree. Later that day by boat on the Tarcoles River, we spotted Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, Roseate Spoonbills, nesting Boat-billed Herons, Mangrove Swallows, and Green Kingfisher, and many more species. Our boat captain took us within a few yards of an American crocodile which was partly submerged in the water near the riverbank. Its huge size was alarmingly impressive and immediately earned our respect.

***On June 15th, Kamal Islam and other RCAS members will be speaking about their adventures in Costa Rica for our monthly program! Join us at 7:00 p.m. at Kennedy Library to hear more!***



*Birding at the Arenal Volcano Observatory - Photo by Carol Islam*

## Upcoming Events

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### Indiana Dunes Birding Festival

*May 5 - 8*

The second annual Indiana Dunes Birding Festival will be **May 5 - 8**. Registration for the festival is open. Information from last year's festival can be found at <[indianadunesfestival.com](http://indianadunesfestival.com)>.

The festival will feature many ornithologists and events, as well as great birding opportunities. Visit the festival website for additional details!

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### Salamonie River State Forest

*Saturday, May 14*

Meet at the **Hominy Ridge Picnic Area** in the **Salamonie River State Forest** at about **8:30 a.m.** We will bird in the forest during the morning and then have a picnic at Hominy Ridge. After lunch, we will explore other areas around the reservoir. Bring a sack lunch, something to drink, waterproof boots, and dress for the weather.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science lot at 7:15 a.m.

To get there on your own, follow I-69 north to IN-218 toward Van Buren/ Warren/Berne. Turn left (west) onto IN-218 and follow it to IN-105. Turn right (N) on IN-105. Take IN-105 to IN-124 and turn left. Take IN-124 to 600-East and turn right (N). Follow 600-East to 250 South and turn left. Look out for Dam Road which should come up pretty quickly on the right. Turn right onto Dam Road and traveling north take the left fork--Pefley Road into the Salamonie River State Forest. Follow signs to the Hominy Ridge Lake Picnic area. This is a rather convoluted route, but there is sometimes nice birding along these county roads. A site map can be downloaded from the Salamonie Lake DNR website.

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#### Monthly Mounds State Park Bird Walk

*Sunday, May 29*

Meet at the visitor center at 9 a.m.

#### Biking and Bird Cardinal Greenway

*Saturday, June 11*

We will gather at the **Depot Visitor Center** on Wysor St. in Muncie at **8 a.m** and bike down to the Red-tail Nature Preserve. Bring your binoculars, plenty of water, and a snack.

#### Strawtown Koteewi Park

*Saturday, June 25*

This Hamilton County park is 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, wooded riparian area, and meadow. Bring a sack lunch.

We will meet in Muncie at the Cooper Science lot at 7 a.m. Travel from Muncie will take about 50 minutes.

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### Upcoming Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society (INPAWS) Trips

**Saturday 14 May, 10 AM:** Cheryl LeBlanc has agreed to give us a tour of the Rinard Orchid Greenhouse in Christy Woods, Riverside Avenue, Muncie. There is always a lot to see and learn, from blue frogs to fascinating pollination strategies. No charge.

**Saturday 4 June, 10 AM:** Professor Paul Rothrock will lead us through the gardens of the Indiana Museum of Art in Indianapolis. The gardens have an incredible collection of native and exotic plants!

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## Black Vultures

*By Karen Blank, RCAS Member and PAWS, Inc. Employee*

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I recently read the Cooper's Talk RCAS newsletter and noticed the article and picture for the 2015 Muncie bird count. Of interest was the photo of the Black Vultures sighted at PAWS by Barb Stedman and Martha Hunt.

I work at PAWS, and this was indeed a unique autumn for us with our Black Vulture friends who continually frequented Garfield's home! They would line up on the roof...15-20 of them! Several of us laughed that we hoped this was not a sign....since we have an aging staff.

In late fall, they started perching on the railing of our top floor porch. You can see they were quite the show-offs in a picture taken by Jim Davis himself (from inside the building). At first I wasn't too fond of them...my office actually faces that porch through our windows in the atrium, and I could see them daily. After a couple of weeks I started looking forward to watching them sunning, spreading their wings and playing, running up and down the rail.



*Photo by Jim Davis*

These birds actually became quite tame as you can see in the pictures. They started getting off the railing and actually standing at the door looking into the building! We could go up and take pictures of them looking in right on the other side of the door from them; they were not fazed at all by our being so close. Every day they were here at Paws through November and up to our Christmas break. While we were having our staff Christmas party, they perched watching us through our atrium windows and coming to the door peering in as if to say "can't we join the fun?"

I have a new appreciation and enjoyment of these amazing birds. Vultures had been the only species of bird I couldn't quite warm up to...until they won me over being quite friendly and entertaining. I look forward to them returning (I hope) next year!



*Photo by Karen Blank*

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## Thank You to RCAS Volunteers!

A special thank you goes out to RCAS volunteers Doris Cheney, Micayla Jones, Carol Islam, Kim McKenzie, and Robert Williams, for their help volunteering at the April 16 Harvest Soup Kitchen fundraiser dinner. RCAS and The Harvest Soup Kitchen (HSK) have begun a volunteer exchange program, in appreciation of the hard work put into our Fall Awards banquet by RCAS member and chef Lois Altman. Lois is the board director of the non-profit, Muncie-based soup kitchen. In 2015, the HSK served over 75,000 meals. Thanks again to all of our volunteers!

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**Robert Cooper  
Audubon Society**

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**Dates for Your Calendar**

- May 5-8: Indiana Dunes Birding Festival**
- May 14: Salamonie River State Forest**
- May 18: Barry Banks – Monthly Program**
- May 29: Mounds SP Monthly Bird Walk**
- June 4-5: Minnetrista Garden Fair**
- June 11: Bike and Bird Cardinal Greenway**
- June 15: Kamal Islam – Monthly Program**
- June 25: Strawtown Koteewi Park**

**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  
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 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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