



Cooper's Talk

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

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Nov/Dec 2015

Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment Bird Research – Jeff Riegel

Wednesday, December 9th, 7 p.m.

The Hardwood Ecosystem (HEE) is a long-term, collaborative research project currently underway in the state forests near Bloomington. HEE supervisor and Indiana birder extraordinaire Jeff Riegel will speak about the various bird-related projects at the HEE, including breeding bird surveys, migratory and wintering bird surveys, Ruffed Grouse surveys, territory mapping efforts, and a new bird banding project.



Join us for the annual conservation awards banquet!

Monday, November 16, 6-8 p.m.



Our annual conservation awards banquet and silent auction will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 4800 W. Bradford Dr., in Muncie.

We will have a dinner prepared by RCAS member and professional chef Lois Altman. Presentations by our award winners will follow dinner and a silent auction.

Tickets are \$18 each – contact Robert Williams, at rbt.j.wllms@gmail.com or (765) 730-8427.

Proceeds will benefit local conservation activities and educational outreach.

Upcoming Events

Work Day at Hughes Preserve

Saturday, November 7, 9 a.m.

Join us for a work day directed by Jon Creek. We will be doing maintenance control of invasive plants, especially Asian bush honeysuckle. Bring lobbers, digging (pointed nose) shovels, saws-alls, pullers, etc. If you do not possess any of these interesting implements, come anyway! We will have some extra equipment on hand, and we will need plenty of people to apply herbicide.

With the removal of so many invasive bushes, there has been strong growth of ground plants, including those with stickers and burs. Bring leather or rubberized gloves if you have them, and a nylon jacket may also help to cut down on the number of adherent burs. Bring water and a light snack. We will pause for a brief walk-through of the site, led by Jon. He will highlight the work done on the project and lessons learned in the course of the work.

We plan to meet at 9 a.m. and finish by noon. Everyone is invited to Rosemarie Jeffery's house for chili afterwards. The preserve is across from the intersection of E. Wysor St. and N. Brady St. Parking is available along Brady St.

Tree Hike at Christy Woods

Saturday, November 14

We will meet Prof. Kem Badger at Christy Woods for this joint field trip with INPAWS. As Prof. Badger explained to our group a few years back, "the leaves just get in the way." Come and learn how to identify trees from bark and bud scars!

"Those Awesome Raptors!"

Saturday, November 14, 1-2 p.m.

Join us for a birds of prey program at the Kennedy Branch Library! This event is mainly aimed at kids. Tom Sproat will bring owls and a hawk or two. Refreshments will be available. This event will last approximately one hour. We hope to see you there!

Birding at Summit Lake State Park

Sunday, November 15, 1 p.m.

Join us at Summit Lake State Park! Many species of waterfowl are on the move right now, such as Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, and Red-breasted Mergansers. We will be surveying the lake and ponds, and then we will walk a bit into the woods. We will meet near the intersection of Henry Co. Rds. 500 E. and 750 N.

Mounds State Park Bird Hike

Sunday, Nov. 29, 9 a.m.

Monthly Mounds State Park hikes will continue on the **last Sunday of the month**. Meet at the **Visitor Center** at **9 a.m.** We will provide binoculars and a scope. The hike ends with cookies and a review of which species we recorded.

Christmas Bird Count 2015

Sunday, December 20, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a longstanding citizen science program that combines the joy of bird watching with the scientific aim of documenting population trends.

From 9 a.m. to noon, groups of volunteers will count birds at different sites in and around Muncie. Previous counts have recorded as many as 56 different species, ranging from winter visitors, such as the tiny Golden-crowned Kinglet, to year-round residents like the Great Blue Heron. Beginning bird watchers are welcome, and binoculars will be available for participants to borrow.

If you'd like to join us in the field, or would prefer to remain home and count at a bird-feeder, please contact the CBC coordinator, Robert Williams, at either rbrt.j.wllms@gmail.com or (765) 730-8427.

The About Birds Program

By Doris Cheney



Children from the Whitely neighborhood explored the fascinating world of birds this summer with volunteers from RCAS. With funding provided by the National Audubon Society, ten pairs of binoculars and fifty copies of the book *About Birds* were purchased and distributed to day-care and summer enrichment programs in Muncie's underserved communities.

Retired educators Doris Cheney and Jill Jereb created a lesson plan that combined a group reading and discussion of *About Birds* with hands-on activities, such as an examination of study skins, instruction in binocular use, and a bird walk. Dr. Kamal Islam generously provided a variety of study skins, including a specimen of a Great Horned Owl that proved especially fascinating. Since many of the children had never had the opportunity to study a bird up close, allowing them to hold the specimens prompted a number of thoughtful questions regarding the bird's life habits, diet, and manner of death.

RCAS reached a total of 162 children from ages 3 to 17 years old on 7 different days of the summer. Three visits were to day care centers: Huffer Memorial, Precious Hearts, and Kingdom Care. The other visits were to the Motivate Our Minds Summer Camp and the AIM Program at the Muncie Career Center. The AIM program included children from the Boys and Girls Club, Buley Community Center, Motivate Our Minds, and the Ross Community Center. Since the visits have ended, the binoculars and books have been given to the Whitely Neighborhood programs included. We hope that the children will continue to enjoy birds, and that RCAS can continue educational programs in underserved neighborhoods in East Central Indiana communities.

A special thank you goes out to Robert Williams, who joined Doris and Jill three different days as photographer, capturing the enthusiastic children and lending a hand in binocular instruction and the art of bird watching.

Thank You to RCAS

By Claire Nemes

This past summer, the American Ornithologists' Union and Cooper Ornithological Society held their annual joint meeting at the University of Oklahoma. Thanks to a generous travel award from RCAS, I was able to attend the conference, where I gave a presentation about our research on Cerulean Warblers through Dr. Kamal Islam's lab at Ball State University.



As a graduate student, it was simultaneously intimidating and invigorating to meet and talk with well-known pioneers in the field of avian research and conservation. Each morning, the day kicked off with a plenary speaker, ranging from established, well-respected experts from established, well-respected experts to up-and-coming young scientists working on cutting-edge research. Afterwards, the day was filled with 15-minute presentations on every bird-related topic one could think of. While many presentations featured research conducted within the United States, the conference attracted attendees from all over the world. One particular symposium focused specifically on avian research and conservation in Mexico, and many other presentations highlighted studies in the Neotropics. My roommate turned out to be a PhD student studying brood parasitism by a species of cuckoo in Australia, and I made friends with a researcher studying Crab Plover migration in Oman.

Though attended by numerous renowned ornithologists, the conference was a fantastic experience for students as well. The organizers took pains to organize events such as a career panel discussion and lunch meetings so that students could talk with scientists in small groups. The poster session provided a great opportunity to chat one-on-one with fellow students and more established researchers about even more fascinating topics. Though I was a little anxious to be in the presence of so many brilliant researchers of all ages, it was a nonetheless a supportive atmosphere and I received good feedback on my presentation.

I also can't neglect to mention the birding! August can be a slow time of year for many species, but the early morning field trips each day yielded a number of great birds. Mississippi Kites were frequently observed prowling for dragonflies, which they often eat on the wing. Technicolor Painted Buntings still sung from atop shrubby trees, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were everywhere - once we counted 15 on a single power line!

The AOU/COS conference was an incredible experience for a student of ornithology. I am extremely fortunate to have been able to attend and present on our Cerulean Warbler research in Indiana, and can't thank the Robert Cooper Audubon Society enough for the travel grant. This support was a tremendous help in allowing me to attend the conference. Thank you!

Birds Throughout History

The Icelandic Institute of Natural History

By John L. McKillip

While on sabbatical in Iceland during Autumn 2015, I am teaching at the University of Akureyri, the base for The Icelandic Institute of Natural History (IINH). This collaborative group of scientists conducts basic and applied research on the nature of Iceland, with a focus on botany, ecology, taxonomy, geology and zoology. The Institute maintains scientific specimen collections and databases, assembles literature on the natural history of Iceland, and operates the Icelandic Bird Banding Program (called Bird Ringing Scheme by the locals). Occupying three floors of Borgir (see accompanying photo), one of two large buildings at the University, the staff are actively engaged in several important activities, including:

- *Breeding distribution of Icelandic birds*
- *Brent goose monitoring*
- *Christmas Bird Count*
- *Gyr Falcon monitoring (national bird of Iceland)*
- *Monitoring of cliff-breeding birds*
- *Monitoring of ptarmigan populations*
- *Population ecology of Black Guillemot*
- *Recording of seabird colonies*
- *Research on Common Scoters*
- *White-tailed Eagle monitoring*



The Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) is the most common bird in Iceland, i.e., the bird with the largest population. It is found only on sea cliffs and islands. Photo: Erling Ólafsson.

During the spring migration beginning in late March, an extensive list of birds can be spotted in Iceland. Throughout the year in the area around Akureyri and nearby Lake Myvatn (“midge lake”), this region can become arguably the best birding destination in Europe, especially for waterfowl and cliff birds. This is but one reason why personnel at the IINH actively collaborate with international agencies and initiatives including the Bern Convention for conservation of European wildlife, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, and the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Program. These ties keep the global community aware of bird species native to Iceland, and the status of each. One well-known species is the Atlantic Puffin (pictured), which is a national symbol in Iceland, and one that unfortunately still appears on restaurant menus in finer dining establishments in Reykjavik and Akureyri. The puffin is now on the red list and is considered endangered according to the European Commission and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Icelandic Institute of Natural History: <http://en.ni.is/>



**Robert Cooper
Audubon Society**

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Dates for Your Calendar

- Nov. 7: Work Day at Hushes Preserve**
- Nov. 14: Tree Hike at Christy Woods**
- Nov. 14: “Those Awesome Raptors” Program**
- Nov. 15: Birding at Summit Lake**
- Nov. 29: Mounds SP Bird Hike**
- Nov. 16: Annual Awards Banquet**
- Dec. 9: HEE Bird Research— Jeff Riegel**
- Dec. 20: Christmas Bird Count**

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Find us on Facebook and Instagram!
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

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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