



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Connecting Communities and Building Conservation Capacity for the Full Annual Cycle of Birds

September 8 RCAS Program

Over the past year, we've read distressing news about the gradual but relentless loss of over three billion birds since 1970 and the sudden demise of thousands more in the past migration season. Birds, especially migrants, need our help. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP), a non-profit conservation



Isabel Vargas (left) and Natalie Sanchez banding a Black-headed Trogon at the MoSI-affiliated research station in Pitilla, Northern Costa Rica. Photo courtesy of IBP

science organization, has launched a new initiative to establish connections between conservation organizations in Indiana and other parts of the Upper Midwest with a network of nearly 100 conservation partners from Mexico to Argentina in protecting and studying migratory birds

on their wintering grounds.

A key element of this collaboration is an IBP-established network of research and monitoring stations across the tropics called the Monitoring Overwinter Survival (MoSI) program. MoSI operates in areas where North American breeding birds spend up to eight months of the year. A more complete understanding of the annual cycle for these birds will lead to more effective conservation efforts.

Join us for our September RCAS meeting to learn more about IBP, the MoSI program, and the support being provided by multiple Audubon chapters. Two IBP members, Steven Albert, M.S., assistant director for demographic monitoring programs, and Lauren Helton, staff biologist and scientific illustrator, will join us via Zoom on September 8 at 7 pm. Co-sponsored by Ball State University's chapter of The Wildlife Society. Register at <https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJord-grqTwvGdNNtodkLH7DygLSOfqv-vNu>

Tern the Page Book Club

By Terri Gorney Lehman

In November 2020, I had an email from Bird Watcher's Digest. It offered subscribers a \$25 discount on the \$175 cost for a new book club sponsored by the National Audubon Society to benefit the Hog Island Audubon Camp. Since I had a birthday coming up and it was for a good cause, I joined. I am glad I did. It was a great experience and I plan on joining again this fall.

Eva Matthews Lark and Lindsay McNamara were the moderators. The four

books reviewed were: *Birds of Maine* by Peter Vickery; *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* by J. Drew Lanham; *The Nature Explorer's Sketchbook* by Jean MacKay; and *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds* by Scott Weidensaul.

We met twice monthly from January through April, 2021, via Zoom. At the first meeting of the month we discussed the book. Meetings included lively interchanges, fun exercises, and multiple

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Field Trips

Everyone is welcome at field trips and programs. Binoculars are available on request.

September 25, October 30, and November 27, 9 am to 11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN



Barred Owl fledglings at Mounds State Park, June 26, 2021
Photo by Lois Rockhill

Mounds State Park

The last Saturday of each month brings a walk at Mounds State Park. The June walk gave us great views of a family of Barred Owls. What will we find this fall?

Meet outside the Visitor's Center at 9 am. State Park fees apply.

October 9, 9 am to 11 am: Intersection of Messick Rd and CR 300N, New Castle, IN

Birding at Wilbur Wright Trail Project

If you have not had a chance to walk this trail recently, come check out the changes! We will meet at the intersection of Messick Road and CR 300N at 9 am. Park in the grass parking area.

October 23, 9 am to 11 am: 6515 Delong Rd, Indianapolis, IN

Eagle Creek Park

Eagle Creek Park is the largest park in Indianapolis and one of the largest municipal parks in the United States. It is a well-birded park and attracts a wide variety of birds, with over 280 species recorded.

Meet outside the Ornithology Center at 9 am. A \$6 entrance fee for out-of-county visitors is collected at the gate.

November 7, 1 pm to 3 pm: 5993 North Messick Road, New Castle, IN

Summit Lake State Park

We'll meet at the Beach House parking lot at 1 pm. The first of the wintering ducks should have arrived, so bring a scope if you have one. And if not, there will be scopes to share. State Park fees apply.

For in-person events, please follow current guidelines on face masks and social distancing. Please monitor www.cooperaudubon.org for cancellations and updates.

Tern the Page Book Club...continued from page 1

breakout sessions where we met with two to three other book club members. We were able to meet different people each time. Most of the people were from the east coast. There were no others from Indiana. The closest to this area was a man in St. Louis and a woman in Pennsylvania.

The second meeting each month was a "Meet the Author," which was great. The exception was Jean MacKay. She was with us both nights in March. Besides the discussions and the author sessions, we had a dedicated website and Facebook

page in which the moderators shared items and we shared birding-related items and information about the authors.

After this experience, I have new places that I would like to bird and I hope to attend a camp program at Hog Island. I would encourage anyone who likes reading about birds, meeting new people, and learning new things, to sign up later this year for the 2022 Tern the Page Book Club. Learn more at

<https://hogisland.audubon.org/programs/book-club>

Programs and Events

September 8, 7 pm: ZOOM meeting

Monitoring Overwinter Survival (MoSI) Program of The Institute for Bird Populations

Presented by Steven Albert and Lauren Helton. MoSI is a partnership program with Latin American countries on collaborative effort for bird conservation.

September 25, Noon to 2 pm: Mounds State Park, Anderson, IN

RCAS Annual Picnic

We'll gather at the Locust Grove Shelter and share our favorite dishes while striving to reduce waste by bringing our own place settings and drinking containers.

October 13, 7 pm: Ball State University Alumni Center, Muncie, IN

Treasures & Discoveries: Birds & Places of 2021

RCAS members share images and stories of their 2021 birding joys. To participate, contact Annette Rose (rosenflowers@hughes.net) by October 8.

November 4, 7:15 pm: Ball State University Foundational Science Building, Muncie, IN

Using Live Birds of Prey to Teach About Raptor Biology

Join Dana Gehlhausen, interpretive naturalist at Patoka Lake, for this Thursday evening program, co-sponsored with the Ball State University Wildlife Society.

November 8, 7 pm: Ball State University Alumni Center, Muncie, IN

Why Eagle Marsh Attracts So Many Birds

This Monday evening program will be presented by Betsy Yankowiak, director of preserves and programs, Little River Wetlands Project.

RCAS Awards Nominations Due October 4

Each November, Robert Cooper Audubon celebrates individuals and organizations who make noteworthy contributions to conservation and environmental education in our region. Help us celebrate an unsung conservation hero by submitting a nomination to Annette Rose at rosenflowers@hughes.net

When submitting a nomination, please describe the nominee's contributions and provide contact information. Nominations are due by October 4. Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region or be affiliated with the Audubon Society.

A list of past recipients is linked from the RCAS website at the bottom of the "Monthly Programs" page. Categories for this year's awards are as follows:

Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award: the chapter's highest honor, for overall contributions to, conservation of, and appreciation for the natural environment;

www.cooperaudubon.org

Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation

Education Award: for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and /or adults on conservation issues and practices;

Richard Greene Public Service

Award: for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns;

Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat

Preservation Award: for development or preservation of habitat that contains significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations; and

Charles D. Wise Youth Conservation

Award: for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under the age of 18.

You can watch short video clips about the 2020 awardees on our YouTube channel at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_aeuGpdckvVJMeYnXgcw3g

Know of a local unsung conservation hero?... Submit nominations to rosenflowers@hughes.net

Plan to join us for our December program when we will feature this year's winners—December 8 at 7:30 at the Ball Statue University Alumni Center

Extending the Wilbur Wright Trail

Report from Jeff Ray

Work progressed this spring on adding to the Wilbur Wright Trail in Henry County. One mile of trail west of Messick Road, 0.82 mile from CR 300N to CR 500E, and 0.85 mile west of CR 600E are now clear of brush (honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose) and fallen, dead, and in-the-way trees, thanks to the efforts of volunteers Sonny Carter, Ted Bullens, Todd Thalls, and Jeff Ray. Evan Taylor of Central Indiana Hydroseeding was hired to "mow" 0.91 mile of the corridor.



Before



After



Trestle bridge, yet to be redecked

Next up is to redeck the trestle bridges, add railing, and put up signage and birdhouses. The Wilbur Wright Trail will one day extend from New Castle in Henry County to Losantville in Randolph County, where it will connect to the Cardinal Greenway, the longest rail-trail in Indiana.

My Thoughts...2021

By Jim Schowe

How much can a little work improving the environment, spread over several years, help nature regain some of its previous glory? Here's a quick story of our efforts.

As some of you already know, a few years back my wife, Jane, and I moved from our Delaware County home to property in Randolph County we purchased more than 30 years ago. For most of those 30 years we just maintained the appearance of the land by mowing and planting a few trees. When we bought the 24-acre parcel at auction, we had four sons living at home who could help with the mowing, weeding, planting, etc. We never intended to make the property a residence. Well, time passes and we found ourselves doing almost all the work as the boys grew up and made lives of their own. Traveling back and forth from Muncie to the southwest corner of Randolph County took a toll, and it was time to cut the ties with Delaware County and make our move.

The year 2014 found us breaking ground on our new, much smaller house. Until 2017 the house stood mostly unused, as we still had commitments in Muncie and could not relocate full time. Maintenance on the property was much easier, though. We did not have to make the long drive back to Muncie after a day's mowing. A warm shower and soft bed awaited us on site. Still, there was much more work to be done to restore the land back to a time before honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and autumn olive. So a full-time move took place in 2018.

Since our move, we have added honey bee hives (which are much harder work than I imagined) and planted cherry trees, pears, oaks, persimmons, pawpaws, chestnuts, blueberries, strawberries, and sweet gums. We have added a few raised garden boxes in the yard too. Most of the new plantings are small and need a few years until we can harvest fruit. Near the bee hives I planted a patch of native, pollinator-friendly wild flowers from seeds we got from Spence Nursery. Because I am writing this in late May,

there is not much to report on the wildflowers. The black raspberries will soon be ripe and my legs will be a bloody mess from the thorns. But the berries are so worth it!

We put up bat houses several years ago. It took time for the bats to find them, but find them they did, and now return every year. It is fun watching them leave the houses to catch flying insects. There are two wood duck boxes on the property but Tree Swallows and Eastern Screech Owls seem to like the accommodations better.

In my opinion, my greatest success has been the population of Purple Martins. This is the first year that mature martins are inhabiting our man-made gourds. There appear to be two or perhaps three mating pairs: Counting these super-active birds is hard. They mix with Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows, and we have aerial dog fights each day, with more than twenty birds chirping and flying about. There are no victors, although I guess in a way I win by getting to watch. It is so gratifying to see our hard work paying dividends.

There is much more that I could write about. But instead I will end by urging all our members to do what they can to preserve our natural heritage. You don't have to buy acreage to help; many small acts can add up, and the returns are priceless.



Adult male Purple Martin

Photo: John-Alexander Kay/Audubon Photography Awards, from <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/purple-martin>

Why Eagle Marsh Attracts So Many Birds

November 8 RCAS Meeting



White Pelicans in flight
Photo by Brian Wood

On November 8 the monthly RCAS meeting will feature a talk by Betsy Yankowiak with Little River Wetlands Project about wetland restorations in Fort Wayne. The group will learn about the unique connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds and why restoring wetlands is important for this flyway. From pelicans to the recent Golden Eagle sighting, we will learn about the over 250 bird species recorded at the Eagle Marsh Nature Preserve and the best places to view birds during a visit. Betsy Yankowiak is currently the

director of preserves and programs at the Little River Wetlands Project (<https://www.lrw.org/>). She has worked for the non-profit organization for over 14 years overseeing the management of the 1300+ acres of protected areas, along with facilitating the wetland education, volunteer, and land conservation programs. She has a graduate certificate in fire ecology, management, and technology and is certified as a wildland firefighter (FFT2) and prescribed burn manager. In August, she will graduate with a master of natural resources degree from the University of Idaho.



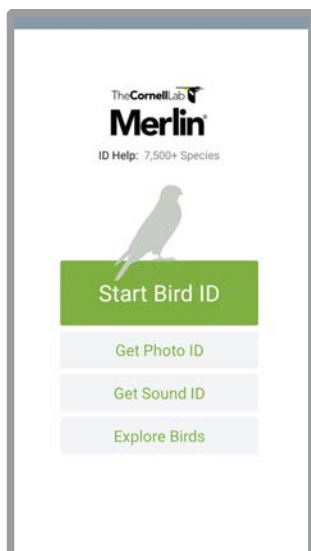
Late summer at Eagle Marsh
Photo by Brian Wood



Planters, including Betsy Yankowiak
Photo by Grace Danel

Bird Song Identification—An Update

By Catherine Kubo



Perhaps you read Willy DeSmet's piece in the last issue of Cooper's Talk about using BirdNET to figure out what birds you are hearing. Maybe you have checked it out for yourself. Now Cornell Lab of Ornithology has come out with an even newer bird song identification tool. This one is associated with its popular birding app, Merlin. Once you have Merlin installed, go to its home page, select Get Sound ID, and follow the instructions to download the Sound ID extension. The app's functionality is similar to BirdNET's, the biggest difference being that Sound ID gives a running report of all the species it detects, rather than having you stop the track, highlight a song, and

request an analysis. Sound ID currently supports 450+ birds in the U.S. and Canada and will be expanded via frequent updates.

Both apps are fun to use and can bring an additional dimension to your birding. But you do need to double-check the results, especially if they are identifying something unusual or unfamiliar. During a mid-summer walk in my suburban neighborhood, I was surprised to see Worm-eating Warbler listed among the cardinals, Chipping Sparrows, peewees, and House Wrens. I assume that the app mistook the morning songs of annual cicadas for the buzzy, insect-like trills of Worm-eating Warblers. Trust, but verify!

RCAS Volunteers Assist with Nature Preschool Program...

By Emma Dragoo, photos by Robert Williams

This summer, RCAS members generously donated time, patience, and love for all “creature friends” – not just the feathered kind-- as they read stories,

shared specimens, answered questions, and demonstrated the best way to handle a pair of binoculars! The Nature Preschool program at Mitchell Early Childhood and Family Center is led by Emma Dragoo, the

center’s outdoor educator. Through this summer’s partnership with RCAS, 50 students were able to experience this birding program in a number of group sessions. The group ages ranged from 3-5 years old to 6-11 years old. During each session, volunteers read *About Birds*, by Cathryn Sill, illustrated by John Sill. They also discussed characteristics of birds relating to their beaks and other parts of their anatomy, examined packaging of bird food with tips on how to attract birds, made comparisons to help grasp measurements (such as figuring the weight of a cardinal in jelly packages!), and helped the children understand the importance of the Audubon Society. The



children especially liked being able to observe and handle the bird specimens and discovering that birds are pollinators! The volunteers loved

discovering that the children were bursting with knowledge about birds. Doris Cheney, Rose Jeffery, Annette Rose, Jill Jereb, Sarah Williams, and Robert Williams

were flexible and willing participants in bird hikes with each group of children, not only providing advice on birding and binocular use, but also celebrating the sightings of many local bird species!



...And with an Anderson City Parks Bird Call Workshop for Kids

By Catherine Kubo, photos by Lois Rockhill

Meanwhile in Madison County, RCAS volunteers Lois Rockhill and Catherine Kubo helped out with an Anderson City Parks workshop where children learned about bird song, assembled their own



bird calls, and took a walk to see and hear birds. About a dozen children enjoyed telling about birds they could see

in their neighborhoods and then listening to the sounds they make. Building the Audubon bird calls proved to be fun too, as did the walk at Shadyside Park to stand on the bridge and look and listen. With all the newly minted bird calls in use, we gave the birds something to listen to as well!





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About RCAS

Membership

Robert Cooper Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph counties. To join, visit the RCAS web site.

Officers

President:	Mary Annette Rose	765-774-3134
Vice-President:	Rose Jeffery	
Treasurer:	Jim Jeffery	
Recording Secretary:	Bethany Darby	

Directors

2020-2022	Catherine Kubo	Jim Schowe
2019-2021	Kamal Islam	Kim McKenzie

Programs and Field Trips

Most RCAS programs and field trips are free and open to the public. Programs are generally scheduled from October through June on the second Wednesday of the month. For updates on the schedule and meeting locations, refer to our website.

Contact us

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Find us on Facebook!
Email: admin@cooperaudubon.org

Participate in the October Program

What are your memorable birding moments so far this year? We are going to dedicate the October 13th program to a member "presentation pitch-in." Share an image or story of your 2021 birding joys. To participate,



contact
Annette
Rose
(rosenflowers@hughes.net)
by
October 8.

White-
throated
Sparrow
Photo by
Rose Jeffery

About Cooper's Talk

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Cooper's Talk is published four times per year for members of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society. All are invited to submit photos, articles, and events for publication by emailing items to admin@cooperaudubon.org