



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Join Us for a Celebration of Conservation Leaders

December 14 RCAS Program

Protecting, conserving, and educating others about the natural spaces where wildlife thrives is the mission of Robert Cooper Audubon Society. Please join us at 7 pm on December 14th at the Alumni Center of Ball State University to celebrate individuals who lead these efforts in East Central Indiana.

Receiving our life-time achievement award, we honor **Helen Steussy, MD**, with the **Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award** for her decades of leadership in environmental conservation. Helen was a co-founder of the Red-Tail Land Conservancy. She is known for her

FLIGHT ... for the Land journey, a cross-country bicycle ride from Oregon to New Hampshire to raise awareness and money for land conservation. More recently Helen has waged war on invasive plants in New Castle city parks and has been a constant champion for native plants. Since 2019 she has led

Henry County Removes Invasive Plant Species (HC-RIPS.) HC-RIPS holds informative monthly meetings, has a strike team, and conducts landowner surveys.

Leading a statewide effort to rid our landscape of invasive plant species, **Dawn Slack** will be recognized with the **Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award**. As project coordinator for the Indiana Invasives Initiative, Dawn has been an inspiring educator and environmental leader in our region. Her efforts have led to more than 650 educational presentations throughout the

state. In the past four years the group has visited over 800 landowners and has written management plans for roughly 90% of them.

The **Richard Greene Public Service Award** celebrates initiatives which serve the public's environmental interest. This year we celebrate **Krystal Stanich's** leadership in organizing and implementing the Cool Climate Fest that occurred on April 30 at the Arts Park in New Castle. The Cool Climate Fest strove to increase awareness about the threats of climate change and strategies to mitigate and adapt to a warming world. Krystal is the teen and adult services manager at the New Castle-Henry County Library and a member of the Climate Action Team.

The **Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award** will be given to **Elizabeth Ploog**. With the assistance of Kevin Tunesvick, Elizabeth has been on a quest to transform a 9.75-acre soybean field into a prairie with native grasses and forbs since her retirement in 2021. Elizabeth has been an avid gardener and butterfly watcher for many years.

Celebrating the efforts of youth, twelve-year-old **Charles Hendrickson** will be recognized with the **Charles D. Wise Youth Conservation Award**. Charlie is an accomplished beekeeper in Delaware and Randolph Counties and has a special talent for finding queens in hives and swarms. While volunteering at the Indiana Beekeepers Association during the Indiana State Fair, Charlie helped teach visitors about the importance and life cycle of our bee pollinators. Charlie is the son of Mark and Stefanie Hendrickson and a student at Monroe Central.



Field Trips

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

December 10, January 14, and February 11, 9 am to 11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park

Our Second Saturday walks at Mounds continue. The winter walks are a great way to get outdoors and search for some seasonal favorites like Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Meet at the Visitor's Center at 9 am. State Park fees are normally waived in the winter months.

Saturday, December 17, 2111 Riverside Avenue, Muncie, IN

Delaware County Christmas Bird Count



Sharp-shinned Hawk was among the species reported in the 2021 Delaware County CBC
Photo: by Alan Kolnik/Audubon Photography Award

Join us for the Delaware County Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 17. Those counting by car will meet at 8:45 am in the parking lot of the Charles W. Brown Planetarium on the Ball State University campus. You can also count from home or from a stationary blind or bird feeding station. To participate, please contact Jim Schowe at jim.schowe@gmail.com. Carpooling and the traditional after-count luncheon will depend on Covid levels at the time.

Saturday, December 31, 8 am: Limberlost Visitor Center, Geneva, IN

SANJO Christmas Bird Count

Southern Adams Northern Jay Ouabache (SANJO) will hold its Christmas Bird Count this year on Saturday, December 31. Contact Terri Gorney Lehman at 260-413-5671 (cell) or bandtgorney@aol.com for more details.

Sunday, February 19, 1 pm to 3 pm: Selma, IN

Great Backyard Bird Count

Join the 2023 Great Backyard Bird Count from the comfort of your own home or join RCAS friends from 1 pm to 3 pm at Annette Rose's home on Prairie Creek Reservoir. Please register by emailing Annette at rosenflowers@hughes.net. Regardless of where you are birding, additional instructions are available at

<https://www.birdcount.org/participate/>

Programs and Events

We will be offering hybrid programs—face-to-face and web cast—during the upcoming seasons. URLs for web-cast registrations are included below.

December 14, 7 pm to 9 pm: Assembly Hall, BSU Alumni Center, 2800 Bethel Avenue, Muncie, IN

2022 RCAS Conservation Awards Program

On Wednesday, December 14 (a departure from our usual third Wednesday program date), we will host a reception for our 2022 RCAS Conservation Award winners. Light hors d'oeuvres will be followed by presentations from the awardees. Come and be inspired!

Register in advance for the web-cast at:
<https://bsu.zoom.us/join/register/tJYrde6tqDwqE9EdrAr48O45zkIZUFcyFDW>

Programs and Events, continued

January 18, 7 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W University Avenue, Muncie, IN

The Kirtland's Warbler: From the brink of extinction to a new model for endangered species conservation

Our January program will feature a presentation by William Rapai, author and the executive director of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, about the conservation effort to save the Kirtland's Warbler.

Register in advance for the web-cast at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/7891234567>

February 15, 7 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W University Avenue, Muncie, IN

The Language of Birds

In February, we will host a talk by Nathan Pieplow, author of the *Peterson Field Guide To Bird Sounds Of Eastern North America*. Come find out what all the chatter is about!

Register in advance for the web-cast at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/7891234567>

2023 RCAS Programs Feature Nationally-Recognized Authors

Our first two programs of 2023, featuring nationally-recognized authors, promise to be enlightening.

The Kirtland's Warbler: From the brink of extinction to a new model for endangered species conservation

The Kirtland's Warbler is an iconic species in Michigan, nesting primarily in the jack pine forests of the northern Lower Peninsula. As recently as 1987 there were fewer than 400 birds in the entire population. Today there are more than 4,000, and the population continues to grow. Considered a "recovered" species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kirtland's Warbler was removed from the Endangered Species List in October 2019.

That's a reason to celebrate, but it doesn't mean we can wash our hands and

walk away. Conservation of the Kirtland's Warbler has special challenges. Unlike other animals removed from the Endangered Species List, the Kirtland's Warbler will require continued human intervention to ensure its survival.

William Rapai is the author of *The Kirtland's Warbler: The story of a bird's fight for survival and the people who saved it* and the executive director of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, a nonprofit created to support Kirtland's Warbler conservation.

The Language of Birds

All around us, the birds are constantly telling us who they are and what they are doing. In this talk, **Nathan Pieplow** unlocks the secrets of their language. You'll listen in on the pillow talk of a pair of Red-winged Blackbirds, and learn the secret signals that Cliff Swallows use when they have found food. You'll learn how one bird sound can have many meanings, how one meaning can have many sounds, and how, sometimes, the meaning isn't in the sounds at all. This talk from the author of the *Peterson Field Guide To Bird Sounds Of Eastern North America* will be an accessible, entertaining introduction to a fascinating topic.



Bird Banding at Christy Woods, Fall 2022

Summary by Julian Grudens, M.S. student with Dr. Kamal Islam's lab at Ball State University

Every year our lab at BSU conducts bird banding for public education and research on migrating birds. Starting with August 24th this year we have banded every Wednesday morning and will continue until mid-November. Luckily the

weather has been great and the birds plentiful. For those who have not had the opportunity to join us yet, I'll give a quick introduction before the summary!

Bird banding is the process in which we capture, measure, and release songbirds, after attaching a small aluminum band around the leg which has a 9-digit unique number identifying that bird and the

data associated with it. This process is coordinated and licensed through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) so that all data from banded birds are stored in a central database.

Birding and bird banding are exciting ways to see the seasons change as



Golden-winged Warbler

different species move through Indiana by the week during migration. The timing of passage for each species is dependent on its resource needs and has evolved over thousands of years to maximize its survival. Most of the species we catch are migrants, like warblers and thrushes, just stopping in for a day or two to forage on insects and fruit to fuel their energy reserves for the continued journey south. Others, like the American Goldfinch and White-breasted Nuthatch, are here all year.

As of October 19th, 2022, we have banded 277 birds of 40 species! Weekly list below:



Black-throated Blue Warbler

August 24th: 13 banded of 8 species;

American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, House Wren, American Goldfinch, Carolina Chickadee.

August 30th: 8 banded of 7 species;

Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush.

August 31st: 28 banded of 13

species; Wilson's Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Redstart, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Goldfinch, Canada Warbler, Carolina Chickadee, Bay-breasted Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch.

September 7th: 11 banded of 6

species; Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, American Goldfinch, Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush.

September 10th (pollinator party event at the nature lab): 30 banded of 12 species;

Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Goldfinch, House Wren, Cape May Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's Thrush, Tufted Titmouse, Gray Catbird, American Robin.

September 14th: 34 banded of 13

species; Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, American Goldfinch, Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-white Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, White-breasted Nuthatch.

September 21st: 17 banded of 7

species; Magnolia Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, American Goldfinch, Canada Warbler, House Wren, Ovenbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

September 28th: 52 banded of 7

species; Orange-crowned Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, Downy Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, American Goldfinch.

October 5th: 18 banded of 5 species;

American Goldfinch, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Blue Jay.

October 12th: 10 banded of 6

species; Chestnut-sided Warbler, Northern Parula, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch

October 19th: 56 banded of 13

species; Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Northern Cardinal.

The Royer Restoration Takes a Big Step Forward

By Willy DeSmet

Two years ago opportunity knocked: the owners of a piece of land that the Friends of the Limberlost (FOL) had had their eyes on for many years wanted to sell it. With the help from a lot of friends, including RCAS and individual members, we were able to purchase the land.

We were very excited about it. This particular piece of land abuts the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve to the south, the White Oak Nature Preserve to the north, and a privately owned, previously restored nature area to the east.

The restoration will (re-)create a diverse wetland and sedge meadow habitat that will benefit migratory waterfowl and nesting birds, including Mallards, Blue-winged Teal, Sedge Wrens, Marsh Wrens, and American Woodcock. The new flora will also provide an excellent habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Besides creating additional wildlife habitat, the restoration will complement the adjacent restored wetlands and provide wildlife corridors to them.

When we bought this piece of land it was being farmed, but the farmer had often lost his crop due to flooding. We had hoped to start the restoration as soon as the previous owner got his crop off. Since the farmer had kept the weeds down to grow his crop, the soil would have been ready to go. But, unfortunately, COVID hit and the restoration was delayed. We had to use a cover crop and repeated mowing and spraying to keep

the weeds down, which entailed additional expenses before the restoration even began.

When restrictions eased, contractors had big backlogs. Timing also needed to take the weather into consideration. This field frequently floods, and although we want to return it to wetland, soil needs to be dry and firm enough to work with heavy equipment.

Eventually everything aligned and in the last week in September the ground work was finished: the removal of drainage tile, installation of a solid tile to maintain upstream drainage, excavation to construct a low berm along the adjacent ditch, installation of a vegetated emergency spillway, creation of depressions for the water holding areas, and so on. A diverse

native wetland and sedge meadow seed mix was installed in the first week of October.

That will be it for this year, except for paying the bills. The next couple of years will require more weed control,

especially until the natives get established.

It will take several years before it looks natural, and it may take additional work and planting. But after two years of delays, we're

excited with the progress.

Next spring, after some good rains, we hope to find the "new" hydrology working and see some of the native plants starting to sprout up.



Removal of drainage tile
Photo by Ken Brunswick



Earth moving—shaping the contours and depressions, creating "potholes" and emergency spillway
Photo by Randy Lehman



Seeding
Photo by Ken Brunswick

Thanks to US Fish and Wildlife Service, who provided \$8350 toward native seeding and \$2500 in cost share for the excavation work; and also to Ducks Unlimited, Inc., who provided \$1,000 in support. This does not cover the whole cost of the restoration by far, but it helps. Although we are not doing a separate fundraiser for the restoration expenses, we are gratefully accepting donations. Donate to the restoration efforts by writing checks to Friends of the Limberlost and mailing to Randy Lehman, 131 North Drive, Geneva, IN 46740

RCAS Limberlost Field Trip

Text and photos by Terri Gorney Lehman

On September 17, Limberlost hosted an RCAS field trip. Eighteen birders met at the Limberlost Visitor Center, including our hosts, Randy Lehman, Curt Burnette, and Terri Gorney Lehman. Besides RCAS

members, there was a man from Anderson, a couple from Muncie, and a Geneva woman. It was a nice fall day to explore areas of the Limberlost new to most of those attending.

We began at Limberlost Park with a trail that is only a couple years old. This is a gravel trail that winds along the bottom lands of the Wabash River. It leads to the South Adams Trails and the Iron Railroad Bridge (now a walking trail) over the Wabash River.



Along the trail

Limberlost Park is a county-owned park that starts at the Ceylon Covered Bridge on the north side of Geneva and leads to Fields Park which is paved and has a little more grassland habitat. From the covered bridge to the iron bridge is approximately 1 mile.

After a short break at the Visitor Center, we went to the Bird Sanctuary and the Music of the Wild. The Bird Sanctuary was the first preserve established by the Limberlost Conservation Association, in 1947. A bonus at the Bird Sanctuary were the wildflowers. Music of the Wild Preserve is next to the Bird Sanctuary. It is named for a Gene Stratton-Porter book by that name, and part of the book takes place in this area.

Some of the birds seen were Red-shouldered Hawks, Great Horned Owl, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Nashville and Tennessee Warblers, and Carolina and House Wrens.

We thank those who came and hope that RCAS members will return and continue to explore the Limberlost Conservation Area.

Limberlost lives again!



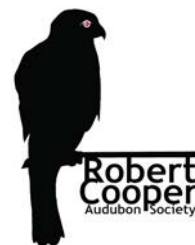
Sneezeweed being visited by a Western Honey-bee

Can You Help?

Volunteer ... your talents and time can make a difference!

Lend your talents and time to sustain or expand the services and programs of Robert Cooper Audubon Society. Our goals are to protect and enhance the quality of our natural environment; educate our members and others about the natural world and the special relationship that humans have with it; serve our members by providing educational programs, field trip activities, and other programs of interest; and to

advance the goals and activities of the National Audubon Society. Please contact Annette Rose, rosenflowers@hughes.net, to discuss possibilities.



www.cooperaudubon.org

Field Notes on a Grasshopper Sparrow

Text and photo by Lois Rockhill

When I saw the little sparrow with the large beak and flat head, I knew I had something special. I was birding one of the few wet spots in Madison County when I drove down a farm lane to a small stand of trees bordering a field that held a lot of water from when the rains were consistent.

Both sides of the lane were unmowed.

The grasses in late August were tall. As I slowly followed the lane around the trees, I could see little birds foraging on the ground ahead. I

stopped and hoped I could get a good look through the windshield. Movement to my left caught my eye. I could see a sparrow exploring some debris, popping in and out of sticks and things left on the ground. I quickly took some photos, put them through Merlin's



photo ID, confirmed with iBirdPRO's photo sleuth, and was all smiles when the bird was identified as a Grasshopper Sparrow.

After checking my Sibley *Guide to Birds*, it looks as though the pretty little bib pattern on my bird indicates it is a

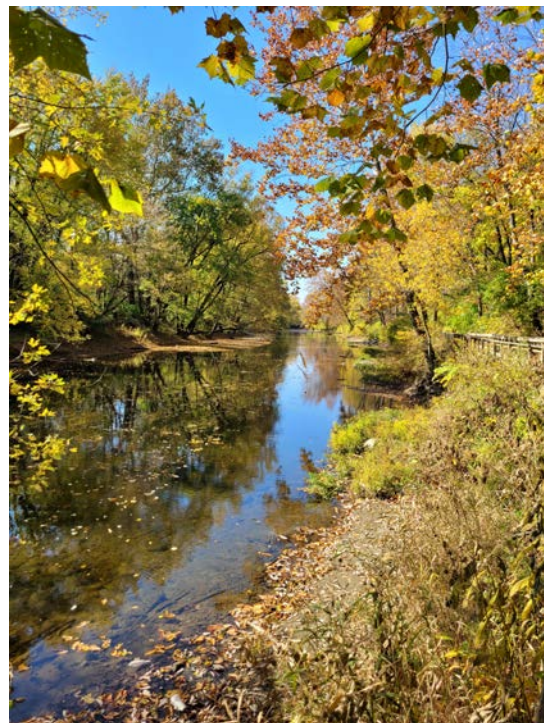
juvenile. Sibley says that this species is in the genus *Ammodramus*, a genus of typically short-tailed, large-headed, and intricately patterned sparrows. They are considered secretive and are usually found singly in

tall, dense grass which, in my experience, makes them very difficult to see and identify. This little bird looked like it was happily exploring its world, and I was so pleased to have shared a few moments as it did.

Autumn on the White River

Photos by Catherine Kubo

Sparse rainfall led to low water levels this year and a river so clear that you could see bottom all the way across.





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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 website.

Officers

President:	Mary Annette Rose	765-774-3134
Vice-President:	Rose Jeffery	
Treasurer:	Jim Jeffery	

Directors

2022-2024	Catherine Kubo	Jim Schowe
2021-2023	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 third Wednesday of the month. For updates and reminders on the schedule and meeting locations, refer to our website or join our distribution list by sending a request to admin@cooperaudubon.org.

Contact us

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



Lincoln's Sparrow, Delaware County, October 2022
Photo By Martha Hunt

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