



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Indiana Forests and Wildlife: Ball State University (BSU) Graduate Student Research Symposium

March 15 RCAS Program

Join us for a short symposium of current graduate student research on Indiana forests and wildlife, presented by Brit Nahorney, Kathryn McGowan, and Nate Golub.

Topics will include old growth forests, Cerulean Warblers, and bats! Learn about what makes an old growth forest and where you can find these places in Indiana. Also, hear about current research on the state-endangered Cerulean Warbler, involving its diet, prey populations, and gut microbiome. Then, the latest on bat research here in Delaware County.

More from the presenters:

Brit Nahorney -

My research in the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment in south-central Indiana investigates the gut microbiome diversity and bacteria abundance as well as the diet of adult Cerulean Warblers (*Setophaga cerulea*) and Lepidoptera

larvae availability within Cerulean Warbler territories.

Kathryn McGowan -

My research is focused on what aspects of human-altered landscapes impact bat abundance and distribution. Echolocation data were collected across Delaware County during the summers of 2021 and 2022.

Nate Golub -

Old growth forests are those untouched by human presence or unnatural disturbance. Specifically, these kinds of woods are defined by the presence of very large, very old hardwood trees, aged between 150 to 200 years old or older. Sadly, there are only a few of these forests remaining in Indiana.

The meeting will start at 7 pm at the BSU Nature Lab at 2500 W. University Ave on the BSU Campus. Parking is available in front of the greenhouse, and is free after 5 pm. The building is handicap accessible.



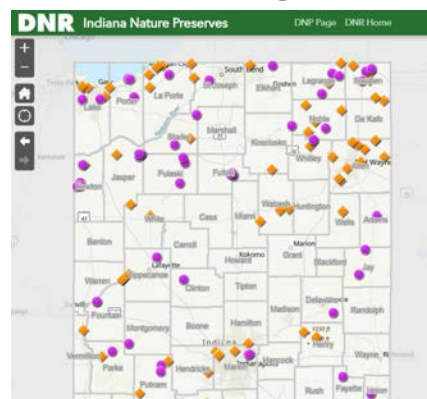
Cerulean Warbler
Photo by Julian
Grudens

INDNR Nature Preserves: the East-Central Region

April 19 RCAS Program

In April, we are pleased to have Ryan Smith joining us to speak about the Indiana Department of Natural Resource's (INDNR) Division of Nature Preserves, with a focus on the preserves here in the east-central region. Ryan will tell us more about these important areas and about what his job as the regional ecologist for the division entails.

Ryan Smith, INDNR Nature Preserves regional ecologist



Field Trips

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

March 11 and April 8, 9 am to 11 am, and May 13, **8 am to 10 am**: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park

Come join us for one of our Second Saturday walks at Mounds State Park. Spring wildflowers, nesting local breeders, and migrants passing through—what could be better? Meet at the Visitor's Center. State Park fees apply. Please note that the May walk will start at 8 am rather than the customary 9 am. This will permit participants to attend the Friends of Mounds Native Plant sale, scheduled to start at 10 am the same day.

Saturday, March 25, 9 am to 11 am: Henry County, IN, meet-up location to be announced



Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary in spring
Photo from Indiana Audubon
indianaaudubon.org/mgbs-facilities/

Service Trip on the Wilbur Wright Trail

The Wilbur Wright Trail keeps growing. Participate in an early spring brush clearing event on Saturday morning, March 25, to help get the 2023 season started. In case of rain, the event will be rescheduled for March 26. Watch for RCAS emails in March for more details, or check our website at www.cooperaudubon.org.

Saturday, April 22, 8:30 am: 3499 S Bird Sanctuary Rd, Connersville, IN
Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

The Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary is owned and operated by the Indiana Audubon Society and is located south of Connersville in Fayette County. The sanctuary consists of over 700 acres of mixed habitats and should provide some excellent spring sightings. For our walk, meet at the main parking area at the end of the drive at 8:30 am. Consider bringing a picnic lunch if it is warm enough.

Saturday, April 29, 8 am to 10:30 am: E 650 S Rd, Selma, IN

Red-tail Nature Preserve

Last year our spring walk here found 47 species, including four warbler and three vireo species, plus a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and an Orchard Oriole. Meet at the parking lot off S 461 E just north of the E 650 S intersection.

Saturday, June 3, 8:30 am: Pefley Rd, Lagro, IN

Salamonie River State Forest

This beautiful forest should be a great place to see some migrants, as well as birds returning to their breeding grounds and those who never left. The reservoir hosts a variety of waterfowl.

We will meet at the Hominy Ridge Picnic Area in the Salamonie River State Forest at about 8:30 am. We will bird in the morning and then picnic, weather permitting. After lunch we will explore areas around the reservoir. Bring a sack lunch.

Sunday, June 18, 1 to 3 pm: 4407 West Kilgore Avenue, Muncie, IN

Service Trip at Dutro-Ernst Woods

Take action by joining us to weed-wrangle at Dutro-Ernst Woods, an urban oasis in Muncie. Our focus will be on pulling garlic mustard, and we will also pick up some trash. Dress for outdoor work, and bring gloves and drinking water. We will supply bags for disposal.

This Red-Tail Conservancy park is only a few years old, but it is already becoming a refuge for wildlife. Fewer invasive plants will help the native ecosystem to thrive.

Programs and Events

March 15, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W University Avenue, Muncie, IN

Indiana Forests and Wildlife: BSU Graduate Student Research Symposium

Join us for a short symposium of current graduate student research on Indiana forests and wildlife, presented by Brit Nahorney, Kathryn McGowan, and Nate Golub.

Attend in person or register in advance for the webcast at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwofuuqpjsuGtGRJjZFzP8mi7-XMuVh5B4V>

April 19, 7 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W University Avenue, Muncie, IN

Indiana Department of Natural Resources Nature Preserves (INDNR): The East-Central Region

Ryan Smith, the regional ecologist for the INDNR Division of Nature Preserves, will tell us about Indiana's nature preserves, with an emphasis on those in the east-central part of the state.

Attend in person or register in advance for the webcast at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwof-yvqT8pE9KIk1FWWnPz-uMEBy4wtZex>

May 17, 7 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W University Avenue, Muncie, IN

Program To Be Announced

We are not quite ready to tell you about our May program, but it will be a good one. Check the website or watch for an email later this spring announcing the speaker and topic. Not receiving our emails? Send an email request to admin@cooperaudubon.org, and we will happily add you to our distribution list.

Attend in person or register in advance for the webcast at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYpfuqtqDopGNAKeM57iH2OuRe11muFGbKq>



Spring comes to Indiana—Hepatica, Shooting Star, and Spice Bush in bloom at Mounds State Park in March of 2020
Photos by Catherine Kubo

BSU Spring Songbird Banding Demonstrations to Start in March

Each year in the spring and fall semesters, graduate students studying biology and ornithology in the lab of Dr. Kamal Islam host public songbird banding demonstrations on Ball State properties. This spring, demonstrations will be held on one as-yet-to-be-determined morning a week, from mid-March to late-April, at the Cooper Farm Property in Muncie. This is a great opportunity for all ages to see wild birds up close while researchers catch and release them after recording measurements and other data. Contact Julian Grudens (julian.grudens@bsu.edu) in March for more information.



Dark-eyed Junco at a banding station
Photo by Julian Grudens

2022 Christmas Bird Count—SANJO

By Terri Gorney Lehman, count compiler

The Southern Adams Northern Jay Ouabache (SANJO) Christmas Bird Count was part of the 123rd annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This was the eighth year of this circle, which was formerly the Adams County CBC. There has been a CBC in Adams County since 1948.

Robert Cooper Audubon Society has been part of the CBC since I became compiler. Audubon members from Mississinewa Audubon Club (Marion) and Stockbridge Audubon Society (Fort Wayne) have participated as well.

This year we had the count on December 31. It was a mild day in the 40s. All the field teams had good birds and birds that the others did not see. Rose and Jim Jeffery and Curt Burnette covered the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve and around that area.

Their list included six Northern

Harriers, nine Northern Pintails, a Sandhill Crane, and a Ring-billed Gull.

A surprise awaited Friends of the Limberlost board member Melissa Fey at Oubache State Park, which was part of

her territory. She spotted a Short-eared Owl there. I find no record of this owl being seen in the park before.

Ryan Smith, the new Indiana Department of Natural Resources east-central regional ecologist, and Greg McCallister hiked the trails at Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve and drove the surrounding area. They had two Rough-legged Hawks, White-throated Sparrows, and Swamp Sparrows as part of their list.

Rose Young, Randy Lehman, and I covered the old gravel pit in Geneva, the Red Gold Wetlands, and the Wabash River off of Co Rd S 125E. We had a Brown Creeper, a Northern Mockingbird, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Yellow-rumped Warbler on our list.

April Raver, of Marion, is a regular participant. She covered the Rainbow Bend area. She had a Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a Red-breasted Nuthatch on her list.

The population of Bald Eagles is increasing around the Limberlost Conservation Area. This year, twenty were recorded. In all, 52 species were tallied. Next year, the SANJO CBC will go back to its normal date of January 1, 2024. Thank you to all who participated.



White-crowned Sparrow
from this year's SANJO CBC
Photo by Randy Lehman



Pair of Bald Eagles seen on this year's SANJO CBC
Photo by Randy Lehman

2022 Christmas Bird Count—Delaware County

By Jim Schowe, count compiler

The Delaware County Christmas Bird Count for 2022 took place on Saturday, December 17. The skies were mostly cloudy with a very few peeks of blue during the early counting period. The temperature was just above the freezing point with enough wind to make that seem quite a bit colder. The counters met at the Brown Planetarium parking lot at about 8:45 am so assigned area maps and tally sheets could be given to those who wanted to spend their day benefiting the environment by counting our feathered friends.

Those participating were: Sandy and Taiping Ho, Barb

Stedman, Martha Hunt, Annette Rose, Jim Flowers, and new counters Andrew Slack, Brian Wolfe and Drew Bailey. Counting from her home was Nona Nunnally, who documented each of her sightings. Thanks to all who participated; the count could not have happened without your help.

I was very lucky to be paired with Andrew Slack, who has literally been around the world counting bird species. As we birded, he talked about trips to Africa, Europe, Asia, and South and Central America. He is also a dedicated naturalist who has spent many hours volunteering at the Red-tail Land Conservancy pulling invasive plants and improving their properties. Truly, he is a fascinating birder and conversationalist.

Sandy and Taiping had the territory in the southeastern area of our count circle, the area that includes Prairie Creek Reservoir. Their area produced two species that have not been spotted in the five years that I have been compiling records, a White-winged Scoter on the reservoir, and a Northern Shrike, perched near the shore. The National Audubon

Society indicates that east-central Indiana is within the uncommon winter range for the Northern Shrike, and there is photographic evidence from a dozen

years ago in eBird of the bird at nearby Summit Lake. So, a rare sighting! I am very happy this one showed up for our count.

Our final counts show a total of 50 species and 3,680 individual birds, with European Starlings making up almost half of the total count. My team alone saw several hundred in a flock at the Muncie airport right next to a flock of about 100 crows. The teams

drove approximately 175 miles and walked for about three miles. At noon we met at a local restaurant to share experiences and sightings. Of course while enjoying our break the sun came out and beckoned us to continue.

If you think you may like to participate in next year's count but the date is in conflict with your plans, remember that many other nearby Audubon Societies have counts that may be on different days. It is a good way to meet like-minded people, contribute to citizen science, and enjoy a day in the field. I hope to add your name in next year's compilation. Happy birding!



Mystery raptor, later determined to be an immature Red-shouldered Hawk
Photo by Martha Hunt

Christmas Bird Counts are a great way to contribute to a citizen science effort that stretches back over 100 years while enjoying a fun day of winter birding. Keep them in mind come December!



Face-off with a Horned Lark
Photo by Martha Hunt



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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

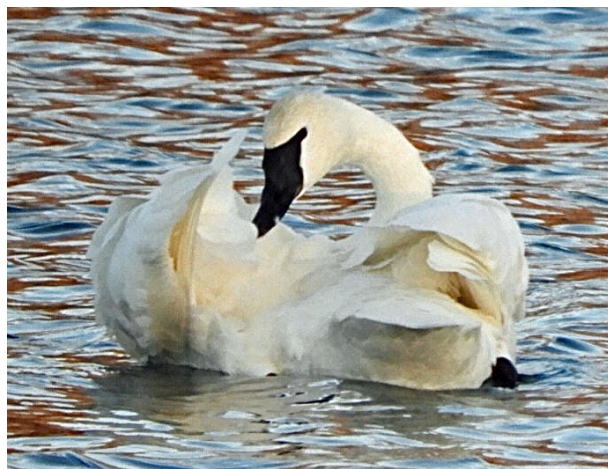
Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org

Find us on Facebook!

Email: admin@cooperaudubon.org

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From the Gallery



Trumpeter Swan, one of a mixed flock of 23 Trumpeter and Tundra Swans that wintered in Madison County this past season
Photo by Lois Rockhill

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