



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Join Us for a Celebration of Conservation Leaders

December 6 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 6 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 **Scott Fetters** with the **Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation**

Award. Scott is a private lands biologist with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. It is not just a job with him; he is passionate about land restoration. Among his many other notable accomplishments, Scott has assisted Friends of the Limberlost through every phase of the acquisition and restoration of over 1,700 acres of wetland and wetland-associated uplands for the Limberlost Conservation Area.

The **Clyde W. Hibbs**

Conservation Education Award will go to **Stacey Allred, David Lamb, Jack Kwiatkowski, Michelle Harris, Cresta Hancock, and Janet Jenkins** for their efforts to plan and implement Summer Learning Fun at Camp Adventure. In 2023, this educational program provided rising third graders within Muncie Community Schools, the Inspire Academy, and Burris Laboratory School with four weeks of day camp at a 40-acre outdoor learning center in Delaware County called Camp Adventure. The program also served to build the pedagogical skills of teacher education candidates at Ball State University. Stacey Allred and David Lamb originated the concept and secured initial

funding. Stacey has served as director of Summer Learning Fun at Camp Adventure for seven years. This year, Cresta Hancock and Janet Jenkins led the summer coursework for teacher education majors at Ball State University. Jack Kwiatkowski serves as the facilities director of Camp Adventure and Michelle Harris is the camp co-director.

The **Richard Greene Public Service Award** celebrates initiatives that serve the public's environmental interest. This year we celebrate the **Whitely Community Council (WCC)** for their work to improve their community through twice-yearly clean-ups, maintenance of vacant lots, curb weeding, and programs such as Year of Color and Yard of the Month. In addition, organizers and volunteers have cleared abandoned lots and blighted properties during some of the clean-ups. Frank Scott, WCC president, and Ken Hudson lead this effort, which creates a better environment for people and wildlife, by providing, among other things, more flowering plants, fewer plastics and chemicals in the environment, and fewer places for mosquitoes to breed.

The **Phyllis Yuhás Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award** will be given to **John Huber** for his contributions to the Growing Home™ Habitat Certification program. John has been an integral part of this conservation and wildlife habitat-building program since its inception in 2021. John has mentored individual gardeners, represented the program and its goals at Minnetrista's Farmer's Markets each Saturday, helped to author the Growing Home™ guide, and given numerous presentations on transforming gardening practices to create a functional space for wildlife.



Scott Fetters, private lands biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and this year's Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award recipient

Photo by Terri Gorney Lehman

Field Trips

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



Intrepid birders enjoying the beauty of the White River in winter
Mounds State Park, January 2022
Photo by Catherine Kubo

December 9, January 13, and February 10, 9 am to 11 am:
4306 Mounds Rd., Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park

Second Saturday walks at Mounds State Park continue. Winter can be a challenging time to get outdoors for humans. But the rewards are worth it. Join us to see what winter species we can find. Kinglets, sapsuckers, creepers—come spring, they'll be gone!

Meet at the Visitor's Center at 9 am. State Park fees are waived in winter.

Saturday, December 16, 8:45 am: 2111 Riverside Ave.,
Muncie, IN

Delaware County Christmas Bird Count

Join us for the Delaware County Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 16. 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 community health guidance at the time.

Monday, January 1, 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 Monday, January 1. Contact Terri Gorney Lehman at 260-413-5671 (cell) or bandtgorney@aol.com for more details.

Saturday, January 20, 10:45 to noon: Limberlost Visitor Center, Geneva, IN

Limberlost Historic Cabin Tour

Please join us for a winter indoor field trip to the Limberlost Historic Cabin. We will meet at the Limberlost Visitor Center at 10:45 am, and attend the 11 am tour of the cabin. Tickets are required and can be purchased in advance at <https://www.indianamuseum.org/historic-sites/limberlost/>

There have been many renovations at the site, so if you have not visited in a while, come check it out!

Saturday, February 17, noon 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 noon to 3 pm at the home of Annette Rose and Jim Flowers, 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

December 6, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Alumni Center, AH 133A, 2800 W. Bethel Ave., Muncie, IN

2023 RCAS Conservation Awards

On Wednesday, December 6 (a departure from our usual third Wednesday program date), we will host a reception for our 2023 RCAS Conservation Award winners. Light hors d'oeuvres will be followed by presentations from the awardees.

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

[https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJscOugpjooG9xqZtBVqXoBtvpFyFs9UTkS](https://bsu.zoom.us/j/9876543210)

January 17, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

Bird Mortality from Collisions with Glass:

What we've learned. What we need to know. What you can do.

Dr. Christine Sheppard from the American Bird Conservancy will join us via Zoom at the Nature Lab to educate and inform about bird window collisions. This presentation will explain why birds collide with glass, how mortality from collisions with glass is causing bird populations to decline, and what solutions are available, especially for home windows.

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

[https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEpcu6opjgiE9Y7LGc9QcEMDBKJnG_xUWIu](https://bsu.zoom.us/j/9876543210)

February 28, 7 pm to 9 pm: Pruis Hall, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

A Film Screening of "Horseshoe Crab Moon"

Join us for a free and open-to-the-public film screening at 7 pm in Pruis Hall Auditorium on the BSU Campus. Doors will open at 6:30 pm. The program is jointly presented by RCAS and the BSU Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Please note that this program will occur on the last Wednesday of the month rather than our usual third Wednesday.

"This 48-minute documentary film follows scientists, researchers and citizen scientists who are studying the decline of the horseshoe crab along the East coast, and in particular the Delaware Bay. Horseshoe crab numbers have been declining rapidly over the last few decades due to the downturn in the Delaware Bay's water quality, and the over-harvesting of horseshoe crabs for bait. The film also looks at the resulting crash of the Red Knot, a globe-trotting sandpiper, which depends on horseshoe crabs eggs for sustenance during its incredible migrations. The number of migrating Red Knots has dropped nearly 80% in the last few years." —Bullfrog Films

"This skillfully told powerful film tells the story of one of the most endangered birds in the world and the web of life across continents. Although the decline of the Red Knot is heartbreaking, this documentary makes clear that it doesn't have to become a victim of the extinction crisis we are creating. Human actions are driving its decline, and our actions can save it." —Tierra Curry, senior scientist, Center for Biological Diversity

Fifty Years of RCAS History

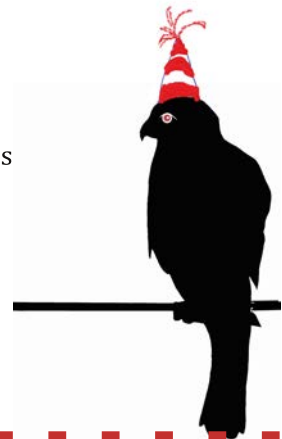
On April 6, 2024, we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our chapter's founding. We hope you have already marked your calendars and will join us! Invitations will go out after the first of the year.

In the meantime, here is some RCAS trivia to get your memories flowing:

What bird was previously used for the chapter's logo?

What was the chapter's first name?

If you know the answers, then you probably have some early reminiscences of the chapter. Write to Barb Stedman (bastedman@gmail.com) or Sarah Williams (sarahrmckillip@gmail.com) and share them. The festivities will feature a walk down memory lane, and we would love to include yours.



Wetland Restoration at One Year

By Terri Gorney Lehman



Wilson's Phalarope
(above) and Spotted
Sandpiper
Photos by Randy Lehman



In mid April, I wrote an article about restoration of a ten-acre plot that Robert Cooper Audubon Society and others helped the Friends of the Limberlost purchase. It is at the corner of County Road 250W and County Road 850N and was added to the acreage at the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve. United States Fish & Wildlife biologist Scott Fetters visited the restoration in late July. He was pleased with the progress and said it was the best restoration that he had done. High praise from someone who has been doing restorations for many years. Here are some highlights from Year One.

Late April and early May: Solitary Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, and Semi-palmated Plovers;

May 7-10: a Wilson's Phalarope, found by Randy Lehman and me (best bird recorded this year, in my opinion!);

Mid May: Least Sandpipers, Hooded Mergansers, Wild Turkey, Great Blue

Heron, Dunlin, Semi-palmated Sandpiper made appearances, along with Tree, Barn and Rough-winged Swallows;

June: a female Mallard with eight young and a Green Heron that was spotted by Bill Hubbard and was seen for a week;

Early August: a Ruby-throated Hummingbird perched in the shrubby area of the upland portion of the tract;

October: a nice mixed flock of American Goldfinch, Eastern Bluebirds, and House Finch in the shrubby area and weedy bean field of White Oak on the north side of County Road 850N. This is the next area to be restored as this is the last year for farming that portion of White Oak. We also heard a Swamp Sparrow in this area.

This summer has been drier than usual. It will be interesting to see this area when we have normal or above normal rains.

Thank you to Robert Cooper Audubon Society for helping the Friends of the Limberlost purchase this property and with the wetland restoration project. We think this is the beginning of a good birding area that will get better with time.

My Thoughts: Spring Walk

By Jim Schowe

It is early April and during my stroll today in my woods I was able to see trillium, blood root, Dutchman's britches, and other wild flowers whose names I do not know. Soon I am sure that the morel mushrooms will start jumping into my collection sack, saving me all that bending and picking. Yeah right! Even with many years of experience, they are hard to find. So I will do the bending down to search and pick when the time comes.

On this recent walk, some of the day's satisfaction left me when I felt compelled to pick up trash in the woods. Would you believe that in my hour long walk I picked up the remains of three Mylar balloons each one with a different printed saying: *Happy Birthday, Farewell, Congratulations!* But the true message is *Litter*, plain and simple. Not only is it an eyesore and a waste of scarce helium, but Mylar can clog farm machinery, smother

plant life, and if eaten by animals, kill the consuming animal. Once plastic has been created it is never gone. You find smaller pieces, yes, but the micro plastics persist and make their way into wildlife, waterways, and the humans who use these natural resources.

Just yesterday on the television news there was a story of a group of people mourning the loss of a loved one with a balloon release. About thirty gas-filled inflatables went aloft. Wouldn't it have been better to have planted a tree or spread bird seed as a memorial? Or to have made a charitable donation, or done a day's community service? There are many ways to make a statement without adding trash to our environment. We at Robert Cooper should do our individual bests to encourage smarter choices by our friends, families, community members, and ourselves.



In Memorium: Janet Tuhey

On October 6, our chapter lost one of its former leaders, Janet (Cox) Tuhey, at the age of 71.

Janet was an outstanding birder who pursued her love of animals as a wildlife biology student at Ball State University in the 1970s. She further honed her naturalist skills as an employee of Ball State, working at Christy Woods from 1980 to 1992.

She served as our chapter's field trip chairperson from 1997-1999 and then as president from 1999-2001, when our chapter was still known as the East Central Indiana Audubon Society.

Bonnie Nicholson, another former president of our chapter, shared this memory:

"I met Janet through Mary Gough, and for many years Janet and I partnered for the Henry County Spring and Christmas Bird Counts. Our friendship was forged rambling along those

county roads in her Blazer with our binoculars, sacks full of snacks, and a thermos of coffee. I learned a lot from her. She had an excellent ear and tried hard to help me learn bird identification by call. I never hear a Warbling Vireo that I do not think of Janet. We enjoyed a number of camping and birding trips, including a memorable trip to Michigan to add the Kirtland's Warbler to our lists."

As Janet's family commented in her obituary, "Janet will live on in nature." Memorial contributions may be sent in Janet's name to our chapter (cooperaudubon.org/about/membership/), the Nature Conservancy, or the Indiana Donor Network.



RCAS to Sponsor Two Wood Thrush for Project Melody

By Catherine Kubo

Come spring, do you look forward to hearing the first Wood Thrush ornamenting the resurgent forest with its flute-like song? Wood Thrush are in decline in Indiana and throughout their range, and researchers want to understand why and how we can best conserve this species. To that end, a range-wide study, spear-headed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (NFWS), and involving state agencies, non-governmental organizations, clubs, and private citizens, will kick off this coming year. The Indiana Audubon Society (IAS) has launched Project Melody to coordinate participation for our state, and RCAS has signed on to sponsor the tagging of two birds. The study will use the Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus), an international collaborative research network that consists of radio-telemetry based tracking stations along with project and data management services.

Motus has been growing rapidly and there are now more than 1,700 Motus tracking stations located across North and South America, with a few in Europe. With that density, range-wide tracking has become an option. Criteria for choosing an initial species to track included that the bird was in decline, that it was large enough to hold a tracking tag, and that it

was sufficiently easy to catch and tag. The Wood Thrush, which is on the Species of Greatest Conservation Need lists in 25 states, met all of those criteria. Twenty-three states have signed on to participate, each state responsible for tagging 25 birds. Selva, a South American partner, will band an additional 140 birds. All the birds will be tagged within detection distance of a Motus receiver, increasing the odds that the birds' location histories will be retrieved when they return the following year. A pilot project carried out in Missouri and involving 25 birds recovered data from 18 of them, an outstanding recovery rate.

An excellent Webinar about this project, given by Sarah Kendrick, migratory bird biologist with the Midwest Region NFWS, is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NlEELBZCX3U-iforg8l6Q7BjbEUx6PD5/view>.

And if you are interested in more background about Motus, visit the website at Motus.org where you can view an interactive map of Motus stations and learn more.

Wood Thrush
Photo by Lori Lawson



Advocating for Indiana Wetlands

By Annette Rose and Audubon Great Lakes

Each fall and spring thousands of birds, such as soras, snipes, and herons, migrate to and through Indiana, many in search of wetlands. These bodies of water, which come in all sizes and shapes, provide Indiana's birds with places to rest, eat, and take shelter to sustain their long journeys. Protecting these places will protect vulnerable wildlife.

The National Audubon Society reports that 40 percent of all plant and animal species live or breed in wetlands. But they're not just important for wildlife. They provide clean water, flood and drought protection, and opportunities for recreation. Nationally, 148 million residents watch wildlife recreationally –and here in Indiana, recreationists who use wetlands help support the state's outdoor recreation economy, which generates more than \$15 billion in consumer spending a year.

The Clean Water Act prohibits discharging pollutants into "the waters of the United States." On May 25, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a long-debated ruling that limited the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act to wetlands that have a "continuous surface connection" with a

navigable water body. Now, the states will determine the fate of non-connected wetlands. In 2021, Indiana legislators significantly reduced state wetland protections. The Hoosier Environmental Council estimates that over 300,000 more acres of Indiana wetlands are in jeopardy during the coming legislative session.

Robert Cooper Audubon Society is working to prevent further wetland loss in Indiana. On October 23, we led a bird walk with Senator Scott Alexander (R-Muncie) and representatives of Audubon Great Lakes, to emphasize the importance of protecting wetlands, prairies, and forests in East Central Indiana. We experienced the wonder of fall migration at Red-tail Nature Preserve, a vital stopping place for vulnerable marsh birds like the Swamp Sparrow, and got to see up close how birds depend on our natural resources.

Thank you, Senator Alexander, for joining us to discuss the importance of Indiana's natural spaces for protecting and conserving wildlife. Protecting natural spaces will help ensure a healthy and resilient future for Indiana.

Pictured: First row, left to right: Annette Rose, Rose Jeffery, Senator Scott Alexander
Second Row: Jim Jeffery, Jim Schowe, Adam Forrer (policy director, Audubon Great Lakes)
Third Row: Erv Rockhill and Lois Rockhill
Photo by Sarah Northam, Hallowell Consulting



Advocating for Indiana Wetlands: What You Can Do



Birders enjoying the wetlands at Red-tail Nature Preserve
Photo by Sarah Northam, Hallowell Consulting

Be a Voice for Birds and Healthy People!!

1. Contact your state representative and state senator and convey your concerns about preserving and restoring Indiana's wetlands.
2. Join the leadership of Robert Cooper Audubon Society! We are seeking volunteers to help with advocacy, email communication, education, and publicity.
3. Keep informed about conservation issues by joining Audubon Great Lakes' Action Alert at <https://gl.audubon.org/take-action>.
4. Send the Hoosier Environmental Council photos, short videos, descriptions, and stories about your local wetland so that they can use this information in policy discussions. Email them at comments@hecweb.org

Indiana's wetlands provide citizens with numerous ecosystem services. Our wetlands:

1. Enable rainwater to infiltrate soils and replenish groundwater for our wells;
2. Slow stormwaters and reduce flooding of homes, roadways, and infrastructure;
3. Provide a cost-effective pollutant filter, reducing runoff of nutrients, pesticides, oil, and other pollutants into our streams and surface waters;
4. Store floodwaters and maintain surface water flow during dry periods;
5. Provide recreation and tourism opportunities.



P.O. Box 1635
Muncie, IN 47308-1635
cooperaudubon.org
cooperaudubon@gmail.com

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
2023-2025	Kamal Islam	Brian Wolfe

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

Page 8

From the Gallery



In addition to cropland, the Davis Purdue Agricultural Center, in Randolph and Jay Counties, contains a forested area and a small engineered wetland that recently hosted this charming Swamp Sparrow. Look for a field trip this spring where we will check out this venue.

Photo by Lois Rockhill.

About Cooper's Talk

© 2023

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