



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Celebrate Conservation Heroes with Us!

December 4 RCAS Program

In the midst of so much negative news about the state of our environment and the lack of leadership at the national and state levels to address the problems, it is good to step back and recognize the excellent work being done in East Central Indiana by people who do care about conservation and are acting to make a difference. On December 4, we will gather to honor some of them. The occasion is our annual Robert Cooper Audubon Awards Ceremony. We are pleased to announce the following awards.

Mary Amanda Wells will receive the **Charles D. Wise Youth Conservation Award** for her creative and physical work with HC-RIPS (Henry County Removes Invasive Plant Species) and other conservation projects.

Erica Oliver will receive the **Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award** for her wonderful work at the Ball State University Environmental Education Center.

Hamilton County Department of Parks and Recreation will receive the **Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award** for their work to provide rich habitat for plants and

wildlife in East Central Indiana.

SICIM / DIPP (State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management / Delaware County Invasive Plant Project) will receive the **Richard Greene Public Service Award** for their work to identify and help eliminate invasive plants in Indiana and Delaware County.

And finally, **Bill Buskirk** will receive the **Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award**. This award honors a lifetime of contributions to understanding and protecting our regional environment. Bill Buskirk has enriched ornithology both scientifically and vocationally through his work at Earlham College, as well as avocationally as a passionate birdwatcher and supporter of ornithological and conservation groups regionally and statewide, including Indiana Audubon.

Please come to the ceremony on December 4 from 6 to 9 pm and hear from the award winners themselves as they tell us more about their work. The event will be held at the Ball State University Alumni Center, 2800 West Bethel Avenue, Muncie, Indiana.

If you plan to come, please RSVP at cooperaudubon@gmail.com by November

20, and please include the number in your party. Your responses will help us arrange for the appropriate amount of light appetizers, thus avoiding food waste.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Tom Sproat presenting
at the 2015 RCAS
Awards Ceremony
Photo by Martha Hunt



Field Trips

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



Barred Owl at
Mounds State Park,
December 2016
Photo by Jeff Timmons

December 14, January 11, and February 8, 9 am to 11 am:
4306 Mounds Rd., Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park

Our Second Saturday walks at Mounds State Park continue. Come experience the beauty of the river and the woods in winter, and search for our hardy winter-resident birds.

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

Saturday, December 28, 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 28. 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. The Jefferys will host a post-count open house for teams finishing up midday or wanting to stop in

for a mid-count warmup. To participate, please contact Jim Schowe at jim.schowe@gmail.com.

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

Saturday, February 1, 9 am to 10:30 am: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave.,
Muncie, IN

Christy Woods Winter Tree ID Walk

John Taylor, land manager and restoration ecologist for Ball State's field properties, will lead a winter tree ID walk through Christy Woods. We'll learn how to use bark, buds, branching patterns, needles, and other clues to identify trees in the middle of winter. Meet at the Nature Lab, where our monthly programs are held.

Saturday, February 15, noon to 3 pm: Selma, IN

Great Backyard Bird Count

Participate in the 2025 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/>

Saturday, March 1, 9 am to noon: 4306 Mounds Rd., Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park Service Trip

Last year in March RCAS spent a morning removing invasive burning bush from a glade along the river at Mounds. It has been gratifying during our monthly walks since then to see the reemergence of natives in that area, including numerous pawpaw shoots. Join us for a service trip to continue this rewarding work.

Meet in the Friends Shelter parking lot at 9 am. Dress for the weather and bring work gloves, loppers, and drinking water.

Programs and Events

December 4, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Alumni Center, AH 133A, 2800 W. Bethel Ave., Muncie, IN

2024 RCAS Conservation Awards

On Wednesday, December 4 (a departure from our usual third Wednesday program date), we will host a reception for our 2024 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/tJwtfuipqDsiE9RBqbWDe_lviH9wZxfMwnV

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January 15, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

The State of Recycling in East Central Indiana

Susan Eichhorn is the assistant director of the East Central Indiana Solid Waste District (ECISWD), which serves the counties of Delaware, Grant and Madison and provides waste reduction education as well as funding to support local recycling centers. Eichhorn will give a brief overview of her organization and talk honestly about the current state of recycling and waste reduction in the area. She will discuss related challenges facing ECISWD and the citizens of the communities it serves, as well as looking to the future.

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

https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAlcuquqTgiHtBNJRg7XCxETcnSVV_3qCS_h

Invite your neighbors!

RCAS winter programs promise to be of interest to birders and non-birders alike!

Susan Eichhorn, left, and John Vann, below
Photos provided by the presenters

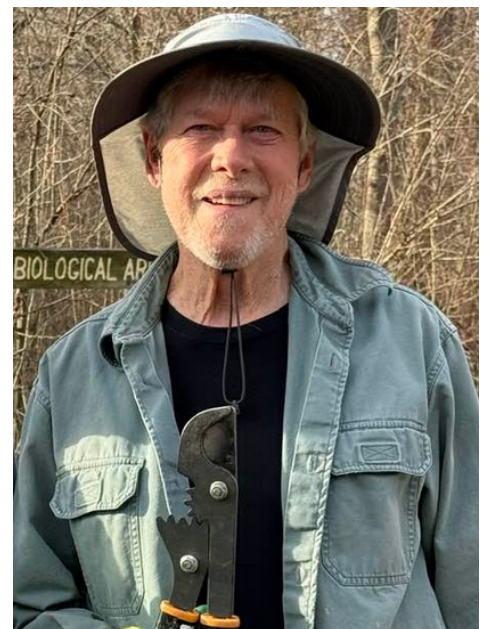
February 19, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

Home Electrification and the Inflation Reduction Act

There are two ways that home owners can reduce carbon emissions and save money. One is to produce their own electricity with solar panels. Another is to reduce consumption of natural gas (or propane) by trading out their gas appliances for electric ones. The Inflation Reduction Act provides tax incentives and rebates for replacing gas appliances with electric ones, for installing solar panels, and for purchasing electric cars and chargers. In this presentation Dr. John Vann, associate professor emeritus at Ball State University and board member of Solarize Indiana, will describe the electric alternatives and the tax incentives and rebates that support their purchase.

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

<https://bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUufu6qqzsqE9WnZ-UxhzSpvx3V5jvUSyhN>



Finally a Successful Bid...

By Willy De Smet

Wetlands support migrating and local birds, wildlife, and native plants. They are also important to people, absorbing and filtering groundwater, controlling erosion, and reducing flooding. In Indiana, where ninety percent of our historic wetlands have been lost to development and protections for remaining wetlands are being eroded, the reclamation and restoration done by groups such as Friends of the Limberlost in Adams and Jay counties is of critical importance. Read on for an update on the Friends' latest land acquisition. And please consider making a donation toward its restoration fund.

To donate to the Friends of the Limberlost wetland account, write a check to Friends of the Limberlost, mention that it is for wetland restoration, and mail it to Randy Lehman, 131 North Drive, Geneva, IN 46740

Since our last purchase of wetland acreage (the Royer property, purchased in 2020 and now very successfully restored), Friends of the Limberlost has been to two land auctions. At both we were quickly and badly outbid. The last one, in December 2022, was for eight acres of open land in the Loblolly Marsh floodplain that went for \$17,000/acre. Since this failed attempt, the board of directors has accepted the reality that we must bid much higher for land than we have in the past.

In June we learned that another property, adjacent to the Loblolly Marsh, was to be auctioned off in July in six parcels, two of which we were interested in. Ken Brunswick had seen that land 40 years ago when it had last been logged and reported that it consisted of woods and a pasture with a small wetland that would be easy to restore by cutting one tile. We went to look at it with

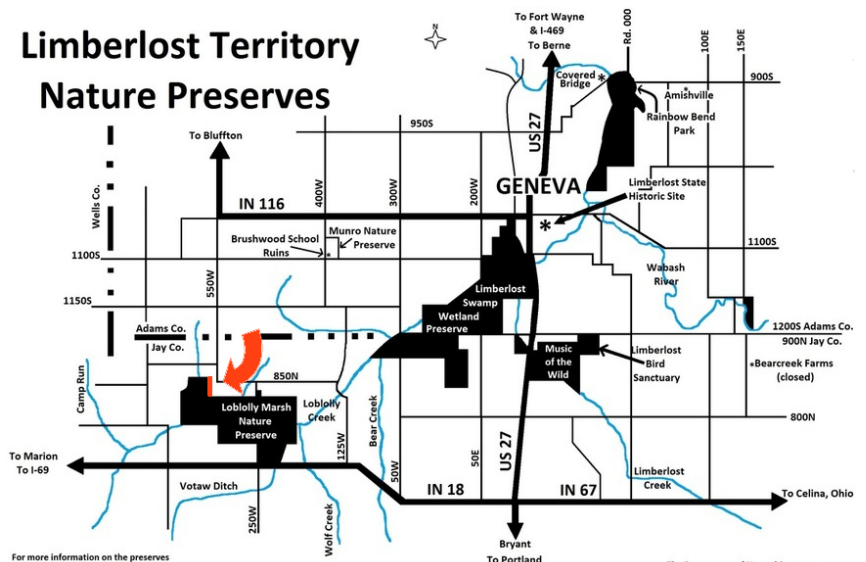
Department of Natural Resources regional ecologist Ryan Smith and found a healthy woods with few invasive plants and many nice natives, including the Baxter's Violet, which is found in only a few counties in Indiana.

All that made these two parcels a high priority to acquire. As expected,

bidding at auction was extremely competitive. In the end, we were able to acquire one of our parcels, a ten-acre plot, for \$232,000. We managed to purchase this property without taking out any bank loan, thanks to five generous major donors and numerous other smaller donations made by our membership. Needless to say, this purchase does not leave us with much money in our wetland account, and we have other projects.

Land auctions come up suddenly, not giving us much time to do fundraising for a specific property prior to the auction. We count on our available funds and sometimes also on possible bank loans and estimates of future donations. After a land purchase, we must replace our available funds through fundraising. So, we welcome any donations to help us build up our wetland account balance for restoration, future land purchases, and projects that enhance the visitor experience to these wetlands.

Limberlost Territory Nature Preserves



For more information on the preserves or how to rent-a-naturalist, contact the Limberlost SHS naturalist at 260-368-7428 or cburnette@indianamuseum.org

The Limberlost Lives Again!

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Nature Preserves, manages these preserves.

A Prairie in Progress

Text and photos by Elizabeth Ploog

I was the recipient of the RCAS Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award in 2022. At that time, my prairie was two years old and finishing its



second season of blooms. Currently, it is in the fourth growing season, and the impact on pollinators and other wildlife is clear. I am seeing more monarchs than ever before, as well as many other butterfly species and too many bees to count. I often see Eastern Bluebirds and Indigo Bunting on the edges, as well as American Goldfinches nibbling on seed heads all winter long. Rabbits are common occupants, and I even saw three wild turkeys in the area, as well as a couple of coyotes. I have also noticed spots where deer have bedded down.

The prairie is constantly changing; not just month to month as different flowers bloom, but also from year to year in the varying concentrations of those flowers. For example, last year I saw very few nodding onions, but this year I found a couple of large sections of them. Last year I discovered one rattlesnake master and one prairie dock; this year I found seven and six respectively.

I spend a lot of time observing and contemplating. The prairie invites meditation, but it also requires work, such as invasive species eradication. I am constantly monitoring by walking the entire 9.75 acres (and later in the summer by driving the Landmaster along mowed paths) in search of Canada goldenrod, Canada thistle, black locust saplings, and any other undesirables. In the case of Canada goldenrod, it has been strategically mowed since 2022. This year I am seeing the benefit—partridge pea, asters, and others are filling in the spaces that were once Canada goldenrod. I should point out that the goldenrod is native and a very good pollinator; the problem with it is that it is extremely aggressive and would take over the prairie.

Next year, the prairie will be burned for the first time which promises a dramatic change in the composition of flowers the following year.

Left: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on blazing star. Below: Rattlesnake master and partridge pea.



Winter Water Sources for Birds

By Brian Wolfe

Plunging temperatures and scarcity of food can make winter particularly stressful for birds. Bird lovers can help with some easy steps to make water readily available for the birds attracted to their landscapes.

A simple and low-cost solution is to place a shallow pan of water in an easily accessible spot. You may want to place a

couple of small rocks in the water to give the birds a perching place too. A pan of water like this will need to be changed frequently so the water remains clean and unfrozen.

If you have the time and resources, a deicer like those used in livestock watering troughs can be placed in a large pan of water and set on the ground or

(continued on page 8)

An Update from the Schowe Homestead—Tree Planting

By Jim Schowe

I tried today to take an inventory of the number of trees I have planted on our little piece of land in the last thirty-five years. Honestly, I lost count somewhere over one hundred trees. Maybe I should count the species and record why I planted those trees in particular.



I guess the first plantings weren't trees as such but rather habitat enhancing thicket shrubs such as staghorn sumac. The sumac is doing quite well and feeding birds through the winter months.

Another early planting group we placed here were evergreens. There were several white and Austrian pines already on the property. Since these softwoods provided great roosting areas for birds I decided to plant more, and evidently the local environment suited the pines I planted well. All my softwood plantings took root and are still alive today. Several

years ago my wife Jane spotted a pair of Long-eared Owls in the pines and pointed them out to me. We still look for owl pellets, hoping to see the owls again.

The Robert Cooper Audubon Society monthly meeting several years ago had a speaker from Purdue University who cited a study showing that oak trees are not naturally repopulating in Hoosier woodlands. Oaks in general need a lot of sunlight to support their early growing patterns. Our forests have been taken over by shade-tolerant maples, hickory, and, prior to the emerald ash borer infestation, ash trees. So in more open areas I have planted black,

white, red, scarlet, and chinquapin oaks. My favorite oak, "Phil", was given to me as an acorn-attached sprout with a single leaf; it is now seven feet tall.

Wanting to create diversity, I planted a wide variety of trees. Have you ever seen persimmons growing in the woods? Thanks to a local nursery, I was able to gain some fruit, save the seeds, and start a small patch. Persimmons take a male and female tree to produce fruit, so planting several improves the odds of future persimmon puddings at Christmas.

And of course we have a tulip poplar. How could we not have the state tree of Indiana represented?

Pawpaws are another odd fruit that have found a home here. You either love their taste or hate it. It is kind of like the broccoli of native Indiana fruit. In addition, we planted the usual fruiting trees like apples, cherries, and pears, along with blueberry bushes. So far, except for the apples, we haven't seen any fruit. Too bad.

A favorite tree species I planted was *Taxodium dissectum* (spell checker goes crazy with scientific names) or bald cypress. Cypress trees are native to Indiana but naturally found in the southwest part of the state. An interesting aspect of cypress is their one-thousand-year life expectancy and their rot resistance. I use cypress for almost all of my outdoor wood projects. Planter boxes made twenty-five years ago are still in use today.

We always have our eyes open for new varieties of native trees to plant for future generations.



Above:
Eastern Bluebird, female
and immature male, *Rhus typhina* (staghorn sumac),
Erie County, New York
Photo by William Massaro/
Audubon Photography
Awards
Right: Magnolia Warbler,
Diospyros virginiana
(common persimmon), Rock
Creek Park, District of
Columbia
Photo by Kaleb Friend/
Audubon Photography
Awards

The Peregrine, by J. A. Baker

New York Review of Books, 191 pp., \$16.95

Book Review

One of the many pleasures of a bookshop is serendipity. Last summer, in Wisconsin, I found *The Peregrine* by J.A. Baker on the shelves with other book reissues from the New York Review of Books. Baker, who lived his whole life in Essex, on the east coast of England, “came late to the love of birds.” He became obsessed with peregrines and observed them for many years before constructing this narrative of his walks on and near the Essex shore from October through April in the 1950s and '60s. For Baker, during this time, “the eye becomes insatiable for hawks.” This was not an idle pursuit. Peregrines were under threat because of pesticide use, and Baker himself faced a serious illness. His relentless and lyrical description of death underscores a feeling of dread even as his beautiful and evocative prose allows us to share in his exhilaration. One description of the peregrine’s stoop will suffice:

For a thousand feet he fell, and curved, and slowly turned, and tilted upright. Then his speed increased, and he dropped vertically down. He had another thousand feet to fall, but now he fell sheer, shimmering down through dazzling sunlight, heart-shaped, like a heart in flames....In ten seconds the hawk was down, and the whole splendid fabric, the arched reredos and immense fan-vaulting of his flight, was consumed and lost in the fiery maelstrom of the sky. (p. 135)

Baker joins arms with the best nature writers by intertwining the experiences of human and peregrine. In the bloody activities of the hawk and in its vulnerabilities, Baker identifies with his subject. After coming upon the remains of a woodpigeon, “the bones...still dark red,

the blood still red,” he found himself “crouching over the kill, like a mantling hawk.” Baker and the peregrine together “shun men. We hate their suddenly uplifted arms, the insanity of their flailing gestures, their erratic scissoring gait, their aimless stumbling ways, the tombstone whiteness of their faces”: A sobering description of the dominant species intent on its own “progress” at the expense of the rest of the world.

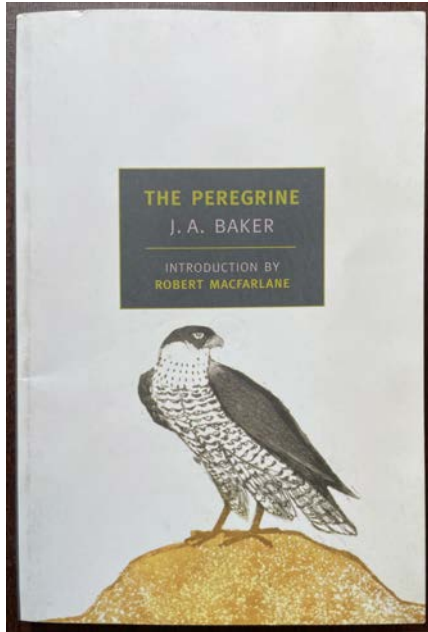
The geography of the action is the eastern coast of England—specifically Essex—and the picture Baker paints of land and sea recalls a Turner painting (“Dark clouds gloomed low in the cold north wind”). Baker’s prose is beautiful, and Anglophiles will also enjoy the unfamiliar, twee names for birds: jackdaw, skylark, chaffinch, fieldfare, and greenshanks. Also, his terminology for *Falco peregrinus* differs from our usage. While we

refer to a peregrine falcon, Baker more precisely refers to a tiercel peregrine (the male) and a falcon peregrine (the female).

Mr. Baker has the last word as his exultation at the flight of the peregrine anticipates the joy we look forward to whenever we go out to look at birds or anything else in the natural world for that matter:

[The peregrine] slipped smoothly through the wind, as though she were moving forward on a wire. This mastery of the roaring wind, this majesty and noble power of flight, made me shout aloud and dance up and down with excitement. Now, I thought, I have seen the best of the peregrine; there will be no need to pursue it further; I shall never want to search for it again. I was wrong of course. One can never have enough. (p. 149)

—Reviewed by Jim Jeffery





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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:	Rose Jeffery
Vice-President:	Catherine Kubo
Treasurer:	Jim Flowers

Directors

2023-2025	Brian Wolfe	Julie Bruner
2023-2025	Jim Schowe	Kristy Tuttle

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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Winter Water...continued from page 5

mounted on a railing or stand. Many such deicers have a sealed heating element with a built-in thermostat that turns on when the ambient temperature is at or below 35°F and turns off at 46°F. Such a setup would require an outdoor electrical outlet and a heavy-duty outdoor extension cord. It may prove less hands-on but would still need to be cleaned every few days.

Suggested resources:

<https://www.ruralking.com/chicken-bucket-waterer-deicer>

<https://farminnovators.com/wildbirds/>

<https://birdschoice.com/collections/heated-bird-baths>

<https://shopbackyardbirdcenter.com/collections/bird-bath-accessories-1>

<https://order.wbu.com/shop/bird-baths-&-houses/bird-baths-&-water/20%22%20Heated-Bird-Bath>

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