



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

The Making of a West African Ornithologist

From local ornithological capacity development in Africa to global bird conservation coordination

March 19 RCAS Program



Dr. Samuel Ivande, conservation coordinator (birds) at the Global Center for Species Survival at the Indianapolis Zoo, will be our guest speaker for the March 19 RCAS program

Dr. Samuel Ivande is a conservation biologist and ornithologist who enjoys studying and working with birds as focal species to better understand and contribute to the conservation of the natural world. He is currently the conservation coordinator (birds) at the Global Center for Species Survival at the Indianapolis Zoo.

His talk will begin with a short story about his rather fortuitous introduction to ornithology in Nigeria, and will cover some of his ornithological research, capacity-building, and citizen science endeavors while working as a research and teaching fellow at the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI)—West Africa's foremost ornithology training institute. At APLORI his research focused on bird migration but also included the conservation of threatened and endemic birds in West Africa. His capacity-building work

included teaching field ornithology to undergraduate and graduate students in Nigeria, Ghana, and Liberia, while his citizen science work included the establishment and management of one of the largest citizen science projects in West Africa, using birds and birdwatching to increase public engagement for bird conservation in the region.

Dr. Ivande will also talk about his current work. He supports field conservation partners through the Indianapolis Zoo's field conservation grants program and, through the Indianapolis Zoo's Global Center for Species Survival, provides coordination support for one of the largest volunteer networks of conservationists and bird species experts under the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. He will conclude the talk by sharing his experience learning about birds in Indiana and engaging with the local birding community here.

The program will start at 7 pm at the Ball State University Nature Lab at 2500 West University Avenue on the BSU campus. Parking is available in front of the greenhouse and is free after 5 pm. The building is handicap accessible.

In Case You Missed It

Have you wanted to attend a monthly program but were unable to make the date? RCAS is now posting videos of our talks on our YouTube channel. Open the YouTube app or website, search for Robert Cooper Audubon Society, and

choose the Video tab. You can even subscribe to our channel to be notified when new videos are posted.

So if you can't join us in person or live on Zoom, you still don't have to miss out. We hope to connect with you soon!

Field Trips

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



Immature Red-tailed Hawk,
seen at our December
Mounds State Park walk
Photo by Rose Jeffery

Center at 9 am.

**March 8, April 12, and
May 10, 9 am to 11 am:**
4306 Mounds Rd.,
Anderson, IN

Mounds State Park

Join us for a Second Saturday walk at Mounds State Park. The woods awaken from their winter sleep, migrating birds put in their fleeting visits, and summer breeders return—spring is a wonderful time to get outdoors for a walk that is rewarding to beginners and old-timers alike.

Meet at the Visitor's

Shrader-Weaver Nature Preserve

Our focus for this trip will be the glorious spring wildflowers of Shrader-Weaver Woods, in Fayette County, but we'll also be on the lookout for early spring migratory birds. Meet at the preserve's parking lot, located at 5299 North County Road 450 West, Connersville.

Saturday, April 5, 9 am to 11 am: 5299 N. County Road 450 W., Connersville, IN



Celery Bog, West Lafayette
Photo by Abby Shaw

and fens, and where we'll hope to see some grassland species like Dickcissel and Bobolink.

Bring a sack lunch and water bottle, and note that Prophetstown charges an \$8 fee for in-state vehicles.

Saturday, April 26, 9 am to ? : 1620 Lindberg Rd., West Lafayette, IN

Celery Bog Nature Area and Prophetstown State Park

We'll travel to Celery Bog Nature Area, located on the northwestern outskirts of West Lafayette. The 195-acre preserve, named one of the top five sites for migratory songbirds in Indiana, has trails that will take us through woodland, savanna, prairie, and marsh.

Meet at the Lilly Nature Center parking lot, located at 1620 Lindberg Road, West Lafayette, at 9 am. Or, to carpool, meet in the parking lot of Ball State's Nature Lab (where our monthly program meetings are held) at 6:45 am.

After leaving Celery Bog we'll head a few miles northeast to Prophetstown State Park, which features restored prairies, wetlands,

(Field trips continued on page 3)

Field Trips...continued from page 2

Saturday, May 3, 8:30 am to noon: 1730 Airport Rd., Centerville, IN

Cope Environmental Center

This trip will take us to the Cope Environmental Center, where Jeremy Proeschel, the program manager, will lead us on a bird walk through some of Cope's 130 acres, which include prairie, wetlands, ponds, and a conifer trail. Meet at the Living Building parking lot, located at 1730 Airport Road, Centerville.

After we're done birding, we'll explore the center's Living Building, which meets seven rigorous standards of sustainability, including standards for the use of water, energy, and materials.

NOTE: There is a \$5 per person fee for participants, which supports the work of Cope, a not-for-profit organization.

Saturday to Sunday, May 24 to 25, time and meeting place details to be determined

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge and Clifty Falls State Park

This overnight trip will take us to two gems of southeastern Indiana. Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, a 50,000-acre refuge operated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, has the largest population of Henslow's Sparrows east of the Mississippi River. Federally-endangered Cerulean Warblers also nest there, along with Worm-eating Warblers.

Because access to the refuge is restricted and we must have a Fish and Wildlife service officer lead our trip, the day and hours for our time at Big Oaks will not be determined until early May. If you are interested in participating in this trip, please contact Barb Stedman, RCAS field trip chair, by May 1 at bastedman@gmail.com.

The other half of our trip will be spent at Clifty Falls State Park, known for its beautiful waterfalls and rugged cliffs, but also its nesting bird species like the Louisiana Waterthrush, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Scarlet and Summer Tanagers. *Please note that the trails we'll walk at Clifty Falls are rated rugged or moderately rugged.* Clifty Falls charges a \$7 fee for in-state vehicles.

To allow time for both destinations—and perhaps even Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, near Seymour—we're making this an overnight trip and we ask that you secure your own lodging. Clifty Inn rates are \$169/night, but more affordable options can easily be found online. Those who prefer may participate in only one day's activities.

RCAS Celebrates the 2024 Conservation Awardees



At our monthly meeting in December some 60 members of RCAS had the pleasure of hearing from our 2024 conservation awardees about their work. From Amanda Wells, just starting her career in conservation, to Bill Buskirk, sharing reflections on a lifetime devoted to the study and enjoyment of birds, it was an inspiring evening. If you were not able to join us, you can see a video posted on our YouTube channel, at <https://youtu.be/oYB1SqTL7bI>

RCAS 2024 Conservation Award winners (from right to left): Amanda Smith and Bruce Oldham, accepting for Hamilton County Department of Parks and Recreation, Phil Clay, accepting for State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management/Delaware County Invasive Plant Project, Bill Buskirk, Erica Oliver, and Amanda Wells

Programs and Events

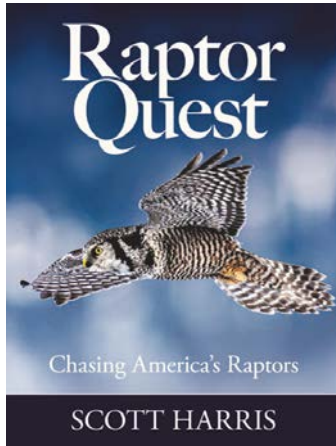
March 19, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

The Making of a West African Ornithologist

Dr. Samuel Ivande will speak about what brought him to ornithology, his work in West Africa in education, research and conservation, and his work here as conservation coordinator (birds) at the Global Center for Species Survival at the Indianapolis Zoo.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/95729180970?pwd=4DoRhXNhA8CnPC7iCMMsQLoygyOMB1.1>



Images provided
by Scott Harris

April 16, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

RaptorQuest: Chasing America's Raptors

Our speaker, Scott Harris, will join us live via webcast. He has spent 17 years chasing 53 Raptors across 34 states—his version of a Raptor Big Year. His book, *RaptorQuest*, is about his adventures, misadventures, successes, and failures—from minus 36 degree days to ones over 100 degrees, and from the satisfaction of getting on the bird just in time to the frustration of missing one by minutes. It's about the birds, of course, but it's also about the people he met, the things he learned, and why he's already working on his next adventure.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/94673522097?pwd=5ESPZ57toD1loqEiilIEVl3GXUr5qv.1>



May 21, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

Birding Las Vegas

Our May speakers are Randy and Terri Lehman. In April 2024, they took a vacation to Las Vegas. Through sales at work, Terri earned three nights at Caesars and airfare for two people. They added days and stayed a week. They were able to enjoy the incredible scenery and bird some great places, namely, Red Rock Canyon, Sunset Park, Desert National Wildlife Refuge, Sloan Canyon Conservation Area, Clark County Wetlands Park, Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge and the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve. They enjoyed the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve so much they stopped there twice. By the end of the week, they had 26 lifers and a different impression of Las Vegas than your typical tourist.

Terri Lehman is the Secretary of the Friends of the Limberlost, President of the Society of Indiana Pioneers, and compiler for the SANJO Christmas Bird Count and the Berne Breeding Bird Survey. Randy Lehman is the retired site manager of Limberlost State Historic Site and treasurer and newsletter editor for Friends of the Limberlost.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

https://bsu.zoom.us/j/92706289077?pwd=W_rEpNd7799JV5oKUQee8vw3GtTya02.1



Verdin at Henderson Bird
Viewing Preserve
Photos by Randy Lehman



I eBird—You Should Try It!

By Lois Rockhill

I have been a contributor to citizen science for many years, collecting information on the species and numbers of birds I see and feeding that information to the Cornell School of Ornithology via an app called eBird.

This free app for iPhone and Android has enabled over a million people from every country in the world to contribute observations that have resulted in a bank of data accessible to all and important to the scientific community.

When I started seriously birding I kept track of birds I saw by writing the date and place of each sighting next to its picture in my field guide. I then moved up to using the checklists often available at state parks, checking off each of the species. Finding eBird gave me the opportunity to record place, date, and how many of each species I saw in a given area, and to include any notes I thought might be important about the species seen or the general area birded.

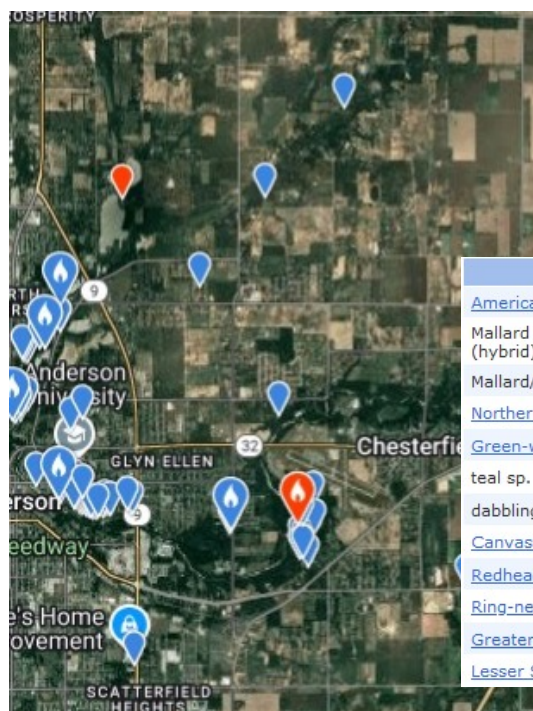
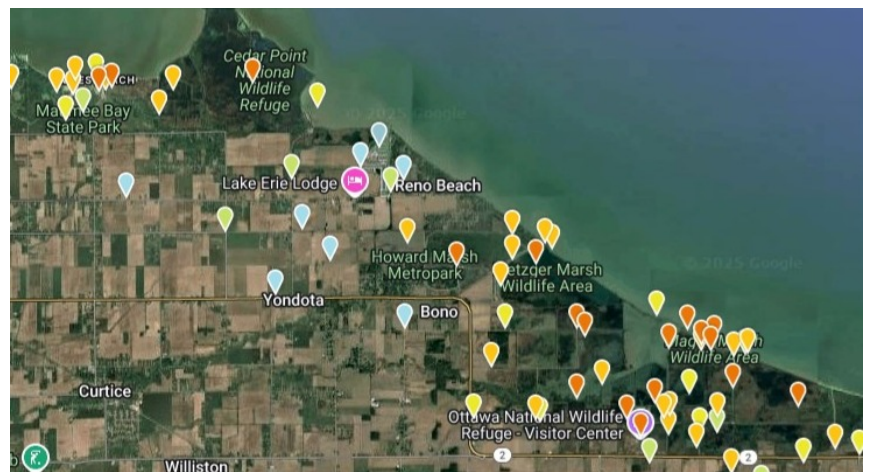
As eBird became more popular with birders and because information was recorded and submitted almost in real time, all of our entries, together, began to tell important stories about where specific species are at specific times.

Researchers can now track changes from year to year and match their eBird findings to climate changes and loss of habitat and can detect thriving bird communities in protected areas, to mention a few important links.

As driven as I am to record my findings of the birds I see, I realize there is no requirement to do so. However, I would like to encourage everyone who enjoys their backyard birds, visits to local parks, or birding trips farther afield, to record what you see. Even if occasional, the data are still important!

eBird checklists in East Central Indiana for January 2025

Madison	203
Grant	69
Delaware	68
Henry	39
Jay	16
Blackford	6
Randolph	2



eBird provides valuable data for the public as well as researchers. Wondering if there are any Golden-crowned Kinglets around? eBird will highlight recent sightings in red (left). Planning a trip and wondering where to bird? Hotspots in warmer colors have more sightings and can be clicked on for details (above). Waiting for the wintering ducks to come in? eBird histograms show species abundance by month (below). You can explore these and more at <https://ebird.org/explore>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
American Black Duck	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mallard x American Black Duck (hybrid)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mallard/American Black Duck	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Northern Pintail	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Green-winged Teal	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
teal sp.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
dabbling duck sp.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Canvasback	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Redhead	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Ring-necked Duck	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Greater Scaup	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Lesser Scaup	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Southern Adams Northern Jay Ouabache Christmas Bird Count

Text by Terri Gorney Lehman and photos by Randy Lehman

The Southern Adams Northern Jay Ouabache (SANJO) Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on January 1, 2025—a good way to begin a 2025 bird list. The circle was well covered with a record of 34 counters: thirty were in the field, two counted birds on their farm and feeders, and two counted at their feeders at Lake of the Woods.



Two of many: Lapland Longspur, above, and Horned Lark, below

This count was created from the old Adams County CBC which was begun by the Cardinal Audubon Club in 1947 (they disbanded in 2015). In the 1980s, the date was set at January 1 and that tradition continues. This was the tenth year of the count being a national Audubon Society count circle. The circle includes Ouabache State Park and all of the Limberlost Conservation Area.



Local Geneva birders were joined by three Audubon chapters: Robert Cooper Audubon Society, Mississinewa Audubon Club, and Three Rivers Birding. Those participating from RCAS were: Rose and Jim Jeffery, Annette Rose, Jim Flowers, Catherine Kubo, and Randy and Terri Lehman. Curt Burnette manned the Visitor Center for us. Our youngest counter this year was Piper

Gerlach, age ten, who went out with her dad, Matt, and friends. Twenty-four participants enjoyed a chili and potluck lunch at the Limberlost Visitor Center.

The weather was not the best as it misted rain in the morning and there were snow flurries in the afternoon. The day before recorded 2.5 inches of rain. However, the Wabash River, Limberlost Creek, Loblolly Creek, Rainbow Lake, and Lake of the Woods were all open, and we had good access to all our sites.

The highlight of the day was seeing the large flocks of Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks found in old cornfields along country roads around Geneva. We counted a total of 840 individual longspurs and 337 larks. Melissa Fey spotted a Turkey Vulture, a first for the SANJO count. A record number of 216 American Robins were counted. Ryan Smith found twelve Sandhill Cranes first thing in the morning. He and Greg McCallister located five Red-winged Blackbirds. Randy Lehman, Larry Bieberich and I had a Common Grackle. American Kestrels were represented by 22 individuals. A total of 46 species were recorded.

As the compiler, I want to thank everyone who participated on this 125th anniversary of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Delaware County Christmas Bird Count

By Jim Schowe

December 28th was the Robert Cooper Audubon Society's date to participate in the National Audubon Society (NAS) Christmas Bird Count. The temperature was comfortably above freezing, the winds were calm, and a threatening sky kept its rain to itself.



A confiding White-breasted Nuthatch posed for this portrait during the Delaware Count CBC
Photo by Andrew Slack

RCAS had seventeen counters in this year's CBC. Sixteen were in vehicles and one counted at a bird feeder. Even more pleasing was the fact that four people who never participated in the CBC joined us. The new counters were: Laura Bowles, visiting from Dallas, Texas, Pam Howie from Hagerstown,

Mari Paton, and Dave Polk. Also participating were Barb Stedman, Martha Hunt, Annette Rose, Jim Flowers, Rose and Jim Jeffery, Brian Wolfe, Andrew Slack, Catherine Kubo, Kristy Tuttle, and from the Greenfield area, Janet Ridenour and Julie Bruner. Fortunately there are many very qualified birders in our group—thanks to all!

This year we recorded 5,465 individual birds and 44 species on count day. Three additional species were reported during count week. Some of the more uncommon sightings were a pair of Peregrine Falcons seen on the top of the AT&T building first thing in the morning, seven Wild Turkeys
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An Update from the Schowe Homestead—Berry Picking

By Jim Schowe

It is Black Friday and I am doing what I do best, staying put. I guess I did spend some time in my workshop making bird houses for the RCAS awards ceremony raffle, but other than that I'm staying inside my house.

While in the shop I started thinking about, of all things, black raspberries. You know, those pesky, thorn-covered purple stems that cut into your body as you do some serious bird watching. Well, picking those little berries has been one of my favorite pastimes since way before we bought this property. Jane, my wife, introduced me to berry picking when we were first married more than forty-six years ago. We would take my old pickup down country roads looking for raspberries growing in the space between the road and any fence along the way. Jane was five months pregnant with our first child on our first excursion to gather the tiny but juicy fruits. At first the mosquitoes and heat bothered me, but with the help of bug spray I learned to live with the discomfort. The following year of picking found our son, Ryan, strapped in a backpack on my back, too young to help but good company for the younger me. Jane always made pies from

the berries and we froze the rest. It wasn't until a few years later that I tasted seedless black raspberry jam. I was hooked, and I've been making jam ever since.

It took four sons to wear out that backpack. Each one rode 'shotgun' for berry-picking and every other outdoor activity until they were too big to ride. I guess that is how I bonded so well with my boys. My youngest son, Paul, still picks with me religiously each year. We have identified certain berry canes that produce very large, almost double sized, berries that are good-tasting and have plenty of juice. We are now trying to cultivate a strain of berries from those canes. It's an ambitious undertaking, especially for a seventy-four year old guy like me. But I do have that younger helper to carry on if I am unable to. Our project will take several years to complete but should be well worth the effort. Wouldn't it be nice if they prove to have fewer thorns, too?

As the snow flies this Black Friday, I am looking out at well-mulched cuttings in our raised beds, waiting for spring to give us a progress report. I'll let you know in June how it is going.

Feeder Birds in Winter

By Catherine Kubo

During our sub-zero days in January several RCAS members reported that their backyard bird feeders were exceptionally well used. As described in Bernd Heinrich's fascinating book, *Winter World*, birds use a mixture of strategies to survive the frigid weather. The smaller the bird, the more challenging that is. The medium-sized song birds in these photos have their feathers all puffed out to provide extra insulation. The feeder feasts help them add as much body fat per day as they will need to power the shivering that creates heat to get them through each cold winter night.

According to Heinrich, they can shiver in their sleep. When it is minus 3 out, I am glad we don't have to do this and can just

watch these amazing creatures from the comfort of our homes!



American Robin, above, and Eastern Bluebird, left
Photos by Catherine Kubo and Rose 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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not far from Prairie Creek reservoir, one Sharp-shinned Hawk, and two Northern Mockingbirds. Last year our count reported 56 species, but only 3,754 individuals. The absence of wintering duck species was notable this year, with only our year-round Mallards putting in an identifiable appearance.

NAS collects CBC data via an on-line form that compilers fill out. Data include species and individual counts, weather, mileage both driven and walked, and mode of transportation, i.e. auto, walking, snowmobile, skies, snowshoes, airplane, bicycle...There is more, but you get the picture. My first year entering the data almost drove me crazy, but each year gets easier. This year, we changed from paper tally sheets to having each team enter its observations in eBird. Now I am not sitting at my kitchen table with 30 sheets of paper trying to sum up the numbers. It certainly makes for an easier and, hopefully, more accurate accounting to NAS.

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