



# Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

## Saving Marshlands, Saving Birds: The Story of Eagle Marsh and Wetland Protection in Indiana

October 15 RCAS Program



Our October speaker, Ms. Cammy Sutter, is the executive director of the Little River Wetlands Project

Join us for an inspiring presentation on Eagle Marsh, one of Indiana's largest wetland restoration projects, and the remarkable journey that transformed flooded cornfields into a thriving 800-acre wildlife preserve. Now home to over 250 species of birds, including threatened and endangered species, Eagle Marsh stands as a testament to the power of conservation and community action. Discover how this once-degraded landscape became a vital sanctuary for birds, fish, and other wildlife—and a beloved destination for birders and nature enthusiasts.

In addition to the marsh's origin story, the presentation will explore the ongoing challenges of managing and maintaining such a dynamic ecosystem. Learn how wetland habitats support healthy bird populations, why wetlands are essential to biodiversity, and how state and federal legislation impacts their protection. Whether you're an avid birder, a

conservation advocate, or simply curious about Indiana's natural heritage, this program will deepen your appreciation for the importance of wetlands and the work being done to safeguard them for generations to come.

Our presenter, Ms. Cammy Sutter, executive director of the Little River Wetlands Project (LRWP), joined the LRWP staff in 2024, bringing a passion for both land management and non-profit leadership. She is a master naturalist and holds a Bachelor of Science from Purdue Fort Wayne with concentrations in organizational leadership and business. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, caring for her woodland property, and volunteering with Woman Within International.

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.

## RCAS Awards Nominations Due September 20

**Know a conservation hero who deserves some recognition? Send us your nomination today!**

Each year, Robert Cooper Audubon Society celebrates individuals and organizations who make noteworthy contributions to conservation and environmental education in our region. Help us celebrate a local conservation hero by submitting a nomination to Rose Jeffery at [admin@cooperaudubon.org](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org).

When submitting a nomination, please describe the nominee's contributions and

provide contact information. Nominations are due by September 20. Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region or be affiliated with the Audubon Society, but their work should have an impact on our region.

See page 6 for the categories for this year's awards. A list of past recipients is linked from the RCAS website at the bottom of the "Monthly Programs" page.

## Field Trips

*Everyone is welcome at field trips and programs.  
Loaner binoculars are always available.*

### September 13, October 11, and November 8, 9 am to 11 am: 4306 Mounds Rd., Anderson, IN **Mounds State Park**

Our monthly walks at Mounds tend to attract a wider variety of participants than any of our other outings. Come and meet some new folks and welcome them into the birding community! Meet at the Visitor's Center at 9 am. State park fees may apply.

### September 20, 8 am to 10:30 am: 6814 S. 900 E., Upland, IN

#### **Taylor University trails**

With Taylor student Heidi Gibson as our guide, we'll look for warblers and other early migrating passerines in Taylor's 145-acre arboretum and expansive "wilderness" area, which briefly touches on the Mississinewa River. If time allows, we may also look for birds at the Upland Lions Club lake.

Meet at the Randall Environmental Center parking lot, located at 6814 S. 900 E. (aka S. 8th St.), Upland, on the west side of the road, at 8 am.

### September 27, 8:30 to ??: 2000 151st St., Carmel, IN

#### **Cool Creek Park & Ritchey Woods Nature Preserve**

We'll be joining the Amos Butler Audubon Society and expert birder Keith Starling on their weekly visit to Cool Creek Park, in Hamilton County, an outstanding central Indiana location for spotting migrating passerines, including warblers. After a couple hours of birding, we'll gather in the Nature Center for donuts and coffee and put a list together of all birds seen by the group.

Afterwards, we'll head over to nearby Ritchey Woods Nature Preserve, where the swamp trail and boardwalk may allow us to see even more migrating species. Bring a sack lunch, and we'll picnic together at Ritchey Woods before heading home.

When you enter the park, continue on past the Nature Center (follow signs), and we'll meet in the north parking lot at 8:30 am. (Hang to the right at the "Y" in the road, where restrooms are located, and park in the lot there. Our website will also have a map of the park, with the parking lot clearly identified.)



Westwood Park  
in Henry County

### October 4, 8 am to 10 am: 1900 S. County Rd. 275 W., New Castle, IN

#### **Westwood Park**

Westwood Park, in Henry County, offers a beautiful 180-acre lake, with a trail that will take us through the surrounding woodland and along the lake's edge. With luck, we'll see late shorebirds and migrating passerines as they make their way through our area.

After entering the park, go straight, toward the boat launch. Meet at the Big Oaks Picnic Area parking lot, on your left, at 8 am. Admission to the park is \$5 per vehicle.

### November 14 through 16

#### **Jasper-Pulaski & Indiana Dunes**

We'll head toward northwestern Indiana on Friday, November 14, and stop at **Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area** around dusk to see Sandhill Cranes stopping over on their fall migration. This won't be peak migration time, but in the last three years, as many as 12,500 individual cranes have been seen gathering there in mid-November.

We'll spend the night in the **Indiana Dunes area** before an early start on the morning of November 15 to look for migrating waterfowl along the **Lake Michigan shore**. Scoters, jaegers, Red-throated Loons, and Long-tailed Ducks are common at this time of year, along with random rarities and vagrants that the Dunes are known for. Admission to the Indiana Dunes State Park is \$7 for in-state vehicles. Admission to the National Park, for up to 7 days, is \$25 per vehicle.

That evening, at 6 pm (Central Time), we'll participate in the **Saw-whets & S'mores** event at the Dunes, hosted by the Indiana Audubon Society. We'll observe captured owls being banded during hourly checks and enjoy s'mores around a campfire in between checks.

## Field Trips, continued

Register for the owl-banding event *well in advance* at [tinyurl.com/NSWO-banding](https://tinyurl.com/NSWO-banding). Click on the “More options” link and select November 15. After clicking on the red “Reserve a Spot” button, you’ll be prompted to confirm and pay \$12.51 per person (or \$7.18 per person if you’re a member of Indiana Audubon Society). You can cancel and receive a refund up to 7 days before the event.

The next morning, we’ll make one final visit to the Lake Michigan shore, to see if we can spot any other waterfowl, before heading home.

**Lodging:** Participants are asked to secure their own lodging well before November 14. Both Al & Sally’s Motel ([www.alandsallys.com](http://www.alandsallys.com)) and Spring House Inn are well-rated, affordable options in the immediate vicinity, and several hotel chains are also nearby: Quality Inn (Portage), Holiday Inn Express (Portage), and others.

**What to bring:** The weather will likely be brisk, with average November temperatures in the Dunes ranging from 50 degrees in the daytime to 35 degrees at night. The observation tower at Jasper-Pulaski is almost certain to be cold and windy as the sun goes down, so bring warm clothes (winter coat, hat, and gloves).

Also be sure to pack a sack lunch for Saturday, and bring a lawn chair, snacks, and a flashlight for the owl-banding event.

Interested individuals should contact Barb Stedman, field trip chair, no later than October 25, at [bastedman@gmail.com](mailto:bastedman@gmail.com). She’ll provide more details via email.



Sandhill Cranes over  
Pulaski County  
Photo by Jack Eichner/  
Audubon Photography  
Awards

## Programs and Events

September 6, noon to 3 pm: Sunset Shelter, Summit Lake State Park, 5993 N. Messick Rd, New Castle, IN

### Annual RCAS Picnic

This year, we will hold our annual picnic at **Summit Lake State Park**, followed by an afternoon birdwalk. Please bring a dish to share and, to reduce waste, please provide your own place setting and drink container. Drinks will be provided. State Park fees may apply.

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

### Saving Marshlands, Saving Birds: The Story of Eagle Marsh and Wetland Protection in Indiana

Executive director of the Little River Wetlands Project Cammy Sutter will give a program on Eagle Marsh, one of Indiana’s largest wetland restoration projects, and the remarkable journey that transformed flooded cornfields into a thriving 800-acre wildlife preserve.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

[bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/Fw0BczZxT6iAf5MiRg1MkQ](https://bsu.zoom.us/j/7w0BczZxT6iAf5MiRg1MkQ)

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

### Exploring Brazil’s Pantanal, Cerrado, and Amazonia: Jaguars, Capybaras, Macaws, and More!

Kamal Islam, professor emeritus of ornithology at Ball State University, will speak about a 2024 trip he led to Brazil, the most biologically diverse country in the world. He will share trip highlights and some of the group’s photos of the spectacular birds and other wildlife they saw.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

[bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/xf1hkLLiQKSKMNlppBTASg](https://bsu.zoom.us/j/xf1hkLLiQKSKMNlppBTASg)

Early December—look for an announcement soon about time, location, and how to RSVP

### 2025 RCAS Conservation Awards

In early December, we will host a reception for our 2025 RCAS Conservation Award winners. Light hors d’oeuvres will be followed by presentations from the awardees.

[www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)



# Jane Hine Journal Donated

By Terry Gorney Lehman

Earlier this year, a small journal by Jane Brooks Hine featuring eleven bird

"characters" was donated to the Indiana Historical Society (IHS). My guess is the journal was written in the 1890s. Jane wrote in an old-fashioned script, and I transcribed the manuscript for IHS to make it more accessible for researchers.

Jane was born in Ohio in 1831. She and her husband, Horatio Hine, moved their young family to

Sedan in Dekalb County in 1861 and settled on land his father had purchased in the 1830s. She called her home Birdlawn.

Jane had a life-long interest in birds; the US Geological Survey credits her with over 400 bird sightings. She wrote articles on different birds and spoke to farmers, children, and other groups about the value of birds.

Her best-known writing was a 25,000-word piece published in the Biennial Report of Fisheries and Game for Indiana in 1911. Titled "Game and Land Birds of an Indiana Farm," the article described birds she had studied and featured 60 colored pictures.

Her work was widely recognized. In September of 1914, Jane was invited by President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson to a play called Sanctuary Bird Masque at their summer residence in Cornish, New Hampshire. Unfortunately, ill health prevented her from attending. She died in February of 1916, just shy of her 85th birthday.

The following is one of the bird "characters" from her journal. It was written for bird lovers of all ages.



Young Eastern Phoebe  
Photo by Robyn Newman/  
Audubon Photography  
Awards

## Phoebe

I am a bird that people love. I am dull of color and homely of farm, and my song is only a simple one, yet people love.

This is not strange, we all love those who trust us; and, I have such trust that you need not be surprised when I make my nest within the shed where the cattle lie and the children play; or beneath the bridge from which the boys cast their fishing lines and over which you ride. If a railroad bridge suits us I and my mate [raise]our brood there and do not mind the noise of trains that pass above us.

My time of coming to you in the spring is a few days later than that of the robin. You may hear my pleasant "phe' be, phe' be, phe' be" as soon as I arrive. I come directly to the shed, or bridge where I am used to nesting and remain near it, solitary but cheerful, until my mate arrives, a week or two later.

I am domestic and quiet in my tastes. I love the society of my mate but not other birds. Phoebe Birds are not seen in companies.

I do not hop nor walk, it is my wings that take me wherever I go.

I do not go on the ground except to gather material for my nest and sometimes to perch upon a clod that is higher than the earth about it.

I have a restless tail. I am constantly flipping it.

I seldom taste of fruit or seeds, I live upon flies and other small winged insects. To get these insects I sit on some bare branch or fence or weed stalk and quietly watch until I see one passing by, then fly out into the air, snap him up, and return to the perch I left, or alight upon another near one.

I often catch mosquitoes before they are old enough to fly—while they are yet skimming about in their boats. I can swoop down from my perch and flip one off from the water without wetting my feathers, though if I wet them a trifle I do not mind.

*(continued on page 5)*

# Exploring Brazil's Pantanal, Cerrado, and Amazonia: Jaguars, Capybaras, Macaws, and More!

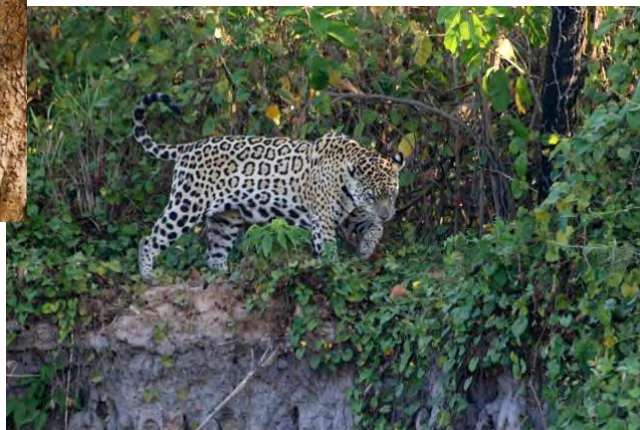
November 19 RCAS Program

Brazil is known to be the most biologically diverse country in the world, with the largest tropical rainforest area on earth and two thirds of the entire Amazon rainforest. It has six large distinct terrestrial biomes—geographical land regions characterized by specific climates as well as specific animal and plant life. In 2024, Kamal Islam, professor emeritus of ornithology at Ball State University, led a group trip to experience three of these terrestrial biomes in Brazil by road and by boat. They explored the **Pantanal** which is the world's largest freshwater wetlands and considered to be a world-class hotspot for birders, wildlife enthusiasts, and photographers; the **Cerrado**, which, according to The Nature Conservancy, is the "the most biologically rich savanna"; and **Amazonia** which is the southern

part of Brazil's greater Amazon rainforest, well known for its ecological importance and rich biodiversity.

Kamal's presentation on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure will feature trip highlights and group members' photos of the spectacular birds and other wildlife they saw.

Hyacinth Macaw (left) and Jaguar (below), Pantanal, Brazil, August/September 2024.  
Photos by Kamal Islam



## Jane Hine Journal...continued from page 4

I bathe; I skim through the water without pausing in my flight—skim through it and back to my perch. It takes a number of these swooping plunges to complete my bath. I take my time about it, stopping to dress my feathers a little after each plunge.

For our nest we must have a shelf like place so close beneath some shed roof or bridge floor that there is only room for us to slip in over its rim. If you have no such shelf like place in your farm yard shed make one by nailing a strip of board to its rafters. Perhaps I and my mate may come and build a cup of mud upon it and within this cup place a neat, soft nest made of hay, grass, and bits of twine. Here may be four or five milk white eggs laid in it; but do not handle them for it is likely we shall leave our nest if you do.

And when our young birds have flown, do not disturb the nest for we may wish to use it again. We have been known to make one cup serve to raise our two broods of one summer, and those of the next year, also.

I am the last one of my tribe to leave you when summer is over. Near some slow moving stream or swaly place where insects are bred I linger until about the middle of October.

I winter in the southern part of the United States.

# An Update from the Schowe Homestead—Swallows and Honeybees

By Jim Schowe

I am no ornithologist—my conclusions about birds come from casual observations and from books written by those much more knowledgeable than I. So, read on with that caveat in mind.

I see three swallow species on my place. We have the purple-on-top, brown-on-the-bottom Barn Swallow. We have the dark-blue-on-top-with-a-white belly Tree Swallow, and we have my favorite, the Purple Martin.

At my wife Jane's suggestion, we erected three martin poles, offering a total of 36 housing units, each consisting of a plastic gourd. This year almost every gourd has a tenant pair, an above-average occupancy rate. The many missing leaves on my pear trees are a good sign that the martins have supplemented the nesting material I supplied after cleaning the gourds last autumn.

It seems to me as I watch them hunt, that Barn Swallows prefer to hunt from ground level to about twenty five feet up. Tree Swallows seem to hunt from about twenty feet to maybe seventy feet, and the Purple Martins from fifty feet to well over one hundred and fifty feet. All these birds are insect eaters and I have to wonder what insects occupy this highest echelon. They must be plentiful to support so many martins. I can't observe small flying

insects at such a height but I do have my suspicions.

Here on my homestead, I have three bee hives. This year for the first time all three hives survived the winter and emerged in the spring healthy and eager to get to work. One of the hives was so healthy and well populated that half the mature bees and the original queen left the hive in search of a new home. This is a natural phenomenon called swarming. Most beekeepers don't want this to happen. Me, I do not care if they swarm; I am not in beekeeping for the honey but to support the species. Inspection of the 'swarmed' hive showed many queen cells ready to hatch, fly, mate, and return to continue the egg-laying operation. Only one mated queen will inhabit the hive so the first one back usually becomes the colony's new queen, and the hive dispatches later returnees. Virgin queens will mate with many drones, and they mate high in the sky, from one hundred to over three hundred feet.

When I checked my hive yesterday, after giving it enough time for a new queen to return and start laying, I found no eggs or larvae—a sure sign that no queen returned. No problem, I can purchase a new queen in a few days and the hive will not suffer. But now I think that I have at least partially answered my question of what insects the Purple Martins are feeding on up so high—preoccupied honey bees! Without my intervention, it might not be possible for a honeybee hive to thrive so close to a large martin colony.



Purple Martin, Maymoor Park, Redmond, Washington State  
Photo by Mick Thompson

## RCAS Awards...continued from page 1

The categories for the 2025 RCAS annual awards are:

- Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award:** for overall contributions to, conservation of, and appreciation for the natural environment;
- Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award:** for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and/or adults on conservation issues and practices;
- Richard Greene Public Service Award:** for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns;
- Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award:** for development or preservation of habitat that contains significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations; and
- Charles D. Wise Youth Conservation Award:** for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under the age of 18.

**Send your nominations to Rose Jeffery at**  
[admin@cooperaudubon.org](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org)



## Highlights from RCAS 2024-2025 Field Trips--it was a great season!

*Informative guides*



*Glorious wildflowers*



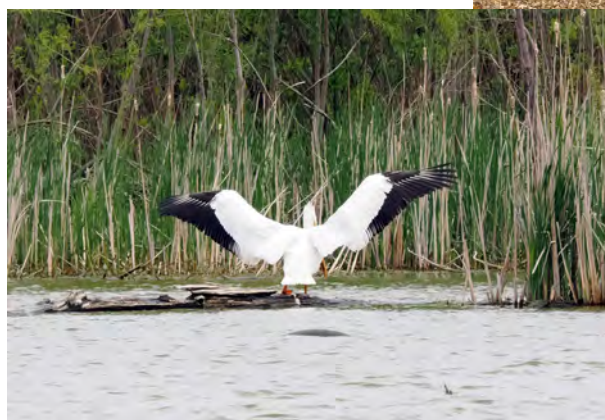
*Warblers in their spring finest*



*Peaceful trails*



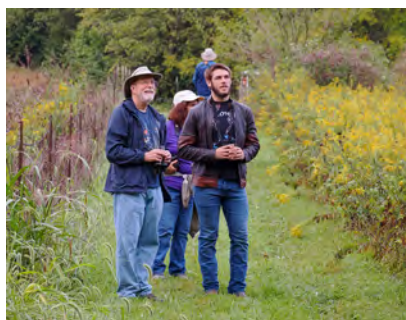
*Birds on the water*



*Plumage puzzles*



*The companionship of fellow birders*



Do you know about a hidden birding gem in your area? Send your suggestion for a future field trip to Barb Stedman, field trip chair, at [bastedman@gmail.com](mailto:bastedman@gmail.com).

## Join Us in the Fall and Start Another Year of Wonderful Memories!

Photos by Martha Hunt

[www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)



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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
2024-2026	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](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org).

### Contact us

Chapter Website: [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)  
Find us on Facebook!  
Email: [admin@cooperaudubon.org](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org)

## RCAS in the Community



Photo by Kendalynne Ross

RCAS volunteers had a busy spring. We participated in educational activities, represented the club at community events, rolled up our sleeves for workdays, maintained existing bird boxes, sighted a location for a new kestrel box, and hosted a walk for a local state senator. We are grateful for all the opportunities to contribute, and we had fun. We are planning more community service events for the fall. Why not join us?

## About Cooper's Talk

### © 2025

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](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org)