



# Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

## It's Time for Our Annual Celebration of Conservation Heroes!

Thursday, December 4, RCAS Program

Come and celebrate with us!

Each year we gather to honor individuals or groups who have worked to improve the natural environment in East Central Indiana. The event is free of charge and will include light appetizers and a raffle. The main focus will be on our awardees.

We are pleased to announce the following awards.

The **Charles D. Wise Youth Conservation Award** is given for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under the age of 18. This year the award goes to **Chayson Brown** for his work to add three boot scrapes with interpretive signs to trails at the Limberlost Conservation Area.

The **Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award** is given for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and/or adults on conservation issues and practices. This year the award goes to **Diana Bowman** for her decades of teaching about science and the environment.

The **Phyllis Yuhas Wildlife Habitat Preservation Award** is given for the development or preservation of habitat with significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations. This year the award goes to **Ryan Smith** for his work in the Limberlost Conservation Area.

The **Richard Greene Public Service Award** is given for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns. This year the award goes to **Keith Morris**, who has had a long connection with river ecosystems and has worked to improve them in several areas, including our own White River.

The **Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award** is given to honor overall contributions to conservation of and appreciation for the natural environment. This year the award goes to **Sheryl Myers** for her work founding and guiding conservation organizations and furthering environmental



Sheryl Myers, recipient of the 2025 Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award

education. This work began when she was still a student and is ongoing post-retirement.

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](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com) by November 20, and please include the number in your party. Your responses will help us arrange for the appropriate number of light appetizers.

We look forward to seeing you there!

*It is always  
inspiring to hear  
from our award  
winners—come  
join us!*

## Field Trips

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

December 13, January 10, and February 14, 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.

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

Saturday, January 3, 8:45 am: 2111 Riverside Ave., Muncie, IN

### Delaware County Christmas Bird Count

Join us for the Delaware County Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, January 3. 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](mailto:jim.schowe@gmail.com).

Sunday, February 15, 11 am to 2 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 11 am to 2 pm at the home of Annette Rose and Jim Flowers, on Prairie Creek Reservoir. Please register by emailing Annette at [rosenflowers@hughes.net](mailto:rosenflowers@hughes.net). Regardless of where you are birding, additional instructions for Great Backyard Bird Counting are available at <https://www.birdcount.org/participate/>

## Eagle Watching with Indiana Audubon Society

We're all invited to join the Indiana Audubon Society (IAS) on any of its January and February eagle watches, at locations where Bald Eagles are known to gather in the winter for feeding and roosting. Each trip is led by an expert birder from the Indiana Audubon Society, and the trips to Salamonie and Mississinewa Lakes offer especially good opportunities for bird photographers.

Preregistration is required and costs \$7.18 for IAS members and \$12.51 for non-members. (An Indiana DNR annual entrance pass or gate fee may also be required to enter certain birding areas.)

Trip dates and locations:

- January 17 (2-5 pm): Salamonie Lake
- January 18 (2-5 pm): Mississinewa Lake
- January 31 (8-11 am): Turkey Run State Park
- February 1 (8-11 am): Turkey Run State Park
- February 14 (9 am-12 pm): Monroe Lake
- February 15 (9 am-12 pm): Monroe Lake



To register: Go to [indianaaudubon.org/events](http://indianaaudubon.org/events) and scroll down to select the date and location of your choice. Click the "Read more" link to get complete details about the trip, including the rendezvous point. Click on the "Get tickets" button to register and pay.

These trips fill quickly, and participation is limited to 20 people per trip, so register early!

## Programs and Events

December 4, 6 pm to 9 pm: BSU Alumni Center, AH 133A, 2800 W. Bethel Ave., Muncie, IN

### 2025 RCAS Conservation Awards

On Thursday, December 4 (a departure from our usual third Wednesday program date), we will host a reception for our 2025 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/j/97166435291?pwd=OnaYMHGt3voZMhbIDpBbV7saybe7H3.1>

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

### Movement Ecology of Migratory Birds Using Motus Technology

Kaitlyn Young, doctoral student at Louisiana State University and a recipient of a 2024 Josie & Geoff Fox Graduate Student Grant, will talk about her use of Motus technology to investigate the movement ecology of two species with poorly understood migratory paths: the Eastern Towhee and the Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/97166435291?pwd=OnaYMHGt3voZMhbIDpBbV7saybe7H3.1>

February 18, 7 pm to 9 pm: BSU Nature Lab, 2500 W. University Ave., Muncie, IN

### What Bird Poop Can Reveal About Microplastics

Victoria Moreira, a recent graduate of West Chester University with a Master of Science in biology and a recipient of a 2024 Josie & Geoff Fox Graduate Student Grant, will describe her study on microplastics in bird fecal samples, the insights they provided on where birds may be encountering microplastics, and what the future of this issue and its research lookslike.

Attend in person or join the webcast by Zoom at:

<https://bsu.zoom.us/j/92758479207?pwd=1QRWXS3wEsfB3ctwXMFvWZUsW9aID.1>

## Preventing Window Strikes: What Works and What Doesn't

By Catherine Kubo

In the fall of 2023, McCormick Place, the big conference center in downtown Chicago, made national news for a terrible reason. On one night during bird migration, the center, which has a large expanse of glass facing Lake Michigan, caused over 1,000 bird fatalities due to window strikes. The photographs of row after row of dozens of species of songbird carcasses were shocking to see.

What happened next is the good part of the story. That summer, the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, the building's owner, completed a \$1.2 million project to reduce bird fatalities. The project included covering over 120,000 square feet of the building's glass with small white dots, placed two inches apart. The approach has proven effective—collisions at McCormick Place are down over 95% and other Chicago building owners are investigating similar projects.

Perhaps you have seen bird silhouette decals applied to windows, intended to produce the same result. But testing has shown that silhouettes are not effective, especially if placed more than two inches apart. Birds just attempt to fly around them. You can watch a short video at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_QzFT0AI1A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_QzFT0AI1A) about the test set-up used for these studies (don't worry, no birds are harmed).

White dots are not the only option. If you have lethal windows of your own, this pamphlet from Audubon can help determine what measures you can take. <https://nationalaudubon.app.box.com/s/cukvi7fkqeic6c1z2ecixg2k86sbnv2>

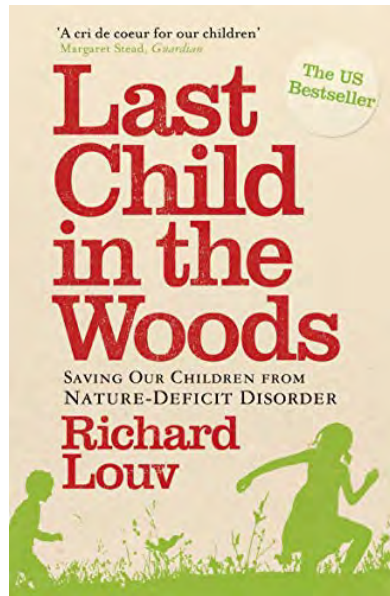
Strikes on residential buildings one to three stories high account for around 44% of the total window strike fatalities each year. We can all do our part to help reduce that number.

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



# Winter Reading

By R. Brian Wolfe



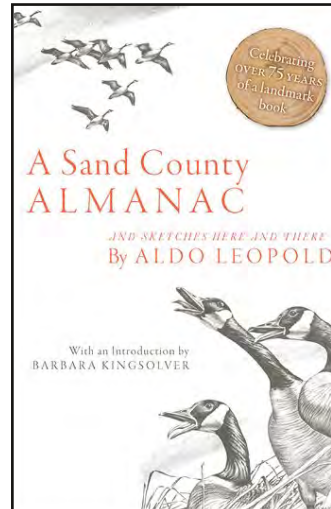
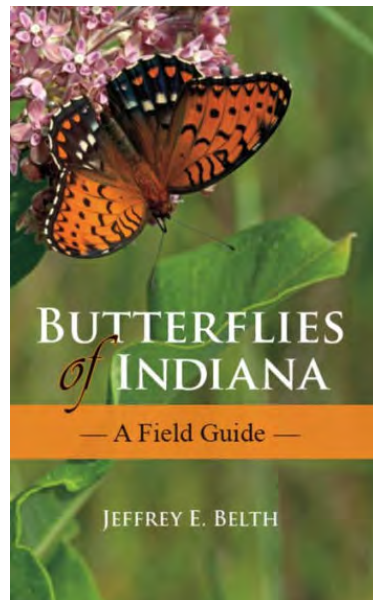
The following three books would make wonderful additions to your winter reading list. While not directly related to birding, they will nicely expand your knowledge of nature and increase your enjoyment of the outdoors.

Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Algonquin Books, 2006, \$13.95) explores the current divide between children and the outdoors. Louv directly links the absence of nature in the lives of children to some of today's most disturbing health concerns:

rising obesity, attention disorders, and depression. The claims are based on

Louv's extensive research, and he offers practical solutions to introduce children to nature and, in so doing, reduce these childhood health concerns.

*Butterflies of Indiana: A Field Guide* by Jeffrey E. Belth (Indiana University Press, 2013, \$20) can be thought of as the "Sibley's of Butterflies." As a winner of NOBA (the National Outdoor Book Award) and acclaimed by the Lepidopterists Society as "unquestionably the finest local butterfly field guide ever



produced," this pocket-sized field guide is well organized with full color photographs, concise identifying descriptions, and lots of background information on the 149 species of butterflies, skippers, and moths found in Indiana.

Finally, Aldo Leopold's classic *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*, in a recent edition with an introduction by Barbara Kingsolver (Oxford University Press, 2020, \$15.95), is a worthy read (or reread). Originally published in 1949, *A Sand County Almanac* is a landmark in the history of ecology. According to the San Francisco Chronicle "We can place this book on the shelf that holds the writings of Thoreau and John Muir."

Part 1 includes a short essay for each month of the year; these describe Leopold's musings on the flora and fauna on his farm in southern Wisconsin and their behaviors as the seasons change. Part 2 comprises sketches describing his conservation experiences over 40 years in Canada, Mexico, and around the United States. Essays in Part 3 wrestle with philosophical questions concerning conservation that American culture has struggled with for over a hundred years. Happy reading!



# Atlantic Puffin Comeback: Over Fifty Years of Research

By Annette Rose



The Atlantic Puffin—a squat, tuxedoed ocean flyer with flaming beak and feet—nests in colonies on remote rocky islands of the Atlantic Ocean. During the nineteenth century, the colonies of puffins on many of these low-lying islands were extirpated by eggging and by hunting, both for meat and for feathers to adorn fashionable mavenes.

Historically, the southernmost range of breeding puffins extended to Maine’s Eastern Egg Rock, a treeless 7-acre, 20-foot rise near Maine’s Muscongus Bay. With inspiration from efforts to restore Peregrine Falcons to the eastern United States and historical records of a breeding colony, Stephen W. Kress, a young seabird enthusiast and emerging researcher, envisioned a plan to restore puffins to Eastern Egg Rock.

Beginning in 1973, Kress along with dedicated students, volunteers, and support from the National Audubon Society and the Canadian Wildlife Service, began relocating puffin chicks from Great Island, Newfoundland, to Eastern Egg Island. At every turn, he encountered logistical barriers and challenges in catching, housing, and fostering the development of pufflings (baby puffins). With relentless perseverance and creativity, Kress systematically tested and refined various techniques to reintroduce Atlantic Puffins and Arctic Terns to the island. Among these techniques was the use of social attraction—using audio recordings, decoys, and mirrors—to attract adult birds. Known as Project Puffin, the successful endeavor has resulted in about 180 breeding pairs in the colony,

although the nesting population fluctuates each year with water temperature and the forage fish population near the island.

Kress and co-author, Derrick Jackson, share this life’s work in *The Puffin Plan: Restoring Seabirds to Egg Rock and Beyond* (2000). From seeing a “spark bird” during elementary school in Ohio to serving as a bird life instructor at Hog Island Audubon Camp, the book describes a journey of

observation, inquisitiveness, creativity, and persistence, critical qualities for a leader in seabird research. Kress went on to become the founder of the Audubon Seabird Institute, and his techniques and mentorship have had global impact. In 2024, The Pacific Seabird Group recognized Kress with its Lifetime Achievement Award, noting that his pioneering techniques in social attraction and seabird chick translocation have been used for at least 138 seabird taxa in more than 500 locations worldwide.

Want to learn more? Take an armchair journey while reading *The Puffin Plan*, available for \$15 at Project Puffin Seabird Shopping Experience. Or, sometime between early June and mid-August, plan a trip to the Project Puffin Visitor Center in Rockland, Maine—then take a Puffin Cruise that circles Eastern Egg Island. The onboard interpreters are informative and the cruise can yield sightings of hundreds of Atlantic Puffins, Arctic Terns, Black Guillemots, and if you are lucky, the occasional Razorbill.

Atlantic Puffin (left); Razorbill (below); and puffins, Laughing Gulls, and a Black Guillemot on the rocky slopes of Eastern Egg Island (previous page)  
Photos by Jim Flowers





# An Update from the Schowe Homestead

By Jim Schowe

The spring and summer hustle and bustle of my feathered friends has started to subside. The Purple Martins showed up right on time this year and claimed their nest sites. I can't tell you exactly how many martins fledged, but there were many. On July 20, I was able to use my phone to video the swirling cloud of parents and fledglings, about a week before they began their migration. Now, on August 10, there are still a few juvenile stragglers who stop by the gourds to roost each night. Gee, I miss their chattering.

Let's talk pawpaws—or *Asimina triloba*, if you prefer. I ordered and planted several cultivar pawpaw trees about six years ago. For the first time this year I saw flowers on two trees. I told my wife I was going to pollinate the flowers using a Q-tip and a steady hand. But when I looked at the flowers, I discovered tiny green fingers that were all set to grow into fruit. No need for any Q-tips. I just checked and have about a dozen rather large fruits that should ripen within the next month. So far, the pawpaws I planted in my woods have not flowered although they have been in the ground for more than ten years.

Remember "Phil"? It's the oak tree I planted when it was only a single leaf with an acorn attached to it. Well, Phil is now looking down on me as I pass by, and I can see it while sitting at my place at the dinner table a mere 200 feet away. AWESOME!

Don't let Phil know, but I have another named tree. "Doris" was given to me by RCAS board member Doris Cheney about three years ago; she received it in a package of trees after she donated to the Arbor Day Society. She gave me several trees but only this one—a flowering crab apple—survived long enough to write about. Doris, the tree, is about six feet tall and only a single trunk but is definitely alive, and I see it every time I drive into our driveway. I want to thank Doris, the person, for her generosity.

My honey bees seem to be doing well, but due to an injury I have to wait until I have help to open the hives. We did have to re-queen one hive after a bee swarming left the hive queenless. The hive accepted the

new queen and has thrived.

This year was a terrific year to pick wild black raspberries. In two pickings we got way over two gallons of berries. The canes I am trying to cultivate were too young this year to rate their progress but I'm hopeful.

On a sad note, I witnessed the demise of five young bats this summer. Two of the young were newly born and had no fur on them when found. Three more kept falling out of the bat house that we have had up for more than twenty years. I called Dr. Tim Carter, biologist and bat specialist, for information. Unfortunately, this year he has had to take many calls concerning injured/dead bat infants. I hope that next year will be a better one for our flying relatives.

Look for more updates in the next issue.



Image of the Ferndale variety of black raspberries (*Rubus occidentalis*), with this specimen originating in Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Pomological Watercolor Collection. Rare and Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland. Watercolor by William Henry Prestele (1838–1895)

# USGS Bird Science Programs Deserve Our Support

Although the science is solid on how to bring birds back from the brink of extinction, the 2025 State of the Birds report shows an alarming “net loss of 3 billion birds in North America over the past 50 years.” Effective and cost-efficient management of common and migratory birds depends on reliable science and data. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) conducts various programs that help ensure federal dollars are spent wisely and provide predictability for the public and the business community.

Two USGS Ecosystems Mission Area programs provide essential insights into bird migration, avian population changes, and what can be done to protect and conserve birds: The **Bird Banding Laboratory** and the **Breeding Bird Survey** provide foundational science and data collection that guide the bird conservation efforts of federal and state agencies, non-

profit organizations including the National Audubon Society (NAS), and the resources used by you and me. “We can’t afford to lose the foundation on which so much of North

America’s bird conservation has been built,” says Stuart Mackenzie at Birds Canada. “If we do, the recovery will take years, if not decades. The costs to birds and biodiversity may be irreversible.”



Audubon Delta Director of Conservation Science, Dr. Erik Johnson, bands a Prothonotary Warbler, at Palmetto Island State Park in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana on May 27, 2025. Audubon Delta is deploying barometric pressure geolocators that collect data on the flight heights of migrating birds to help keep birds safe by guiding offshore wind turbine siting along Louisiana's coast. Photo by Sydney Walsh/ Audubon

It's time for each of us to take action. Please urge your US senators and representatives to fully fund and support the vital work of the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory and Breeding Bird Survey. Remind your congressional delegation that:

- “...thriving bird populations contribute over \$100 Billion to the US economy, while supporting 1.4 million jobs and \$90 billion in labor-related income. However, claw-backs, firings, and reductions-in-force within the USGS put these programs in jeopardy. Continued federal investment in these programs is essential. These programs support state fish and wildlife agencies, inform aviation safety for the Air Force, and help track the movements of diseases like avian influenza.” The USGS's programs help ensure that federal dollars are spent wisely and provide predictability for the public and the business community.
- Birds control insect populations, pollinate plants, and distribute seeds across our landscape.
- Birds are “canaries in the coal mine,” providing an essential alarm of the quality of our air, water, and soils for human health.
- Birds instill beauty and wonder in our daily lives.

In East Central Indiana, your congressional delegation can be reached at

Senator Todd Young: <https://www.young.senate.gov/contact/>

Senator Jim Banks: <https://www.banks.senate.gov/contact/>

Representative Marlin Stutzman (3rd district): <https://stutzman.house.gov/contact>

Representative Victoria Spartz (5th district): <https://spartz.house.gov/contact>

Representative Jefferson Shreve (6th district): <https://shreve.house.gov/contact>



# Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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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  
Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Ploog

### Directors

2024-2026	Jim Schowe	Kristy Tuttle
2025-2027	Brian Wolfe	Julie Bruner

### 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)

## Sticking the Landing



Atlantic Puffin  
Photo by Martha Hunt

## 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](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org)