September 2026 to November 2026
Volume 52, Number 3

# Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

## Cranes over Indiana

October 21 RCAS Program

The Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) is an endangered species that once had an estimated population of 10,000 birds across North America. In 2026, the population consists of about 700 individuals in the wild and with around 130 more under human care. Please join us for a program about the Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population given by Mary Callaghan, an assistant outreach biologist for the International Crane Foundation. The program will explore historic threats to this species and its reintroduction to the Midwest. Come hear this story of creativity and perseverance and also learn how to get involved in the conservation of this charismatic bird species.



Mary Callaghan next to a Whooping Crane nest

Mary Callaghan is stationed in Indiana, where Sandhill and some Whooping Cranes spend their winters. In her role as assistant outreach biologist, she provides educational programming to inspire conservation involvement, monitors Whooping Cranes as they utilize Indiana's wetlands, and collects data on Sandhill Crane habitat use patterns. She has a bachelor of science degree in ecosystem science and sustainability from Colorado State University and is an avid birder.

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.

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 and Service Trips

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



Greater Yellowlegs, a likely sighting for our trip to St. Marys

Saturday, September 5, 8:30 am to noon: Grand Lake State Park Shelter House #3, St Marys, OH 45885

## St. Marys Fish Hatchery and Mercer Wildlife Area

Spend your Saturday of Labor Day weekend with us as we join forces in Western Ohio with the Tri-Moraine Audubon Society for a trip to the Grand Lake/St. Marys/Celina area. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources operates a state fish hatchery at the eastern end of Grand Lake, and by early September several of the ponds will be drained for the season. The hatchery's 26 ponds, both drained and full, attract shorebirds, gulls, waterfowl, and other birds as they migrate through the state.

At the southwest corner of Grand Lake we'll explore 1,408-acre Mercer Wildlife Area, which offers varied bird habitat including cropland, meadows, ponds, and extensive shallow wetlands that connect to Grand Lake. After exploring both birding hot spots, we'll enjoy lunch along the beautiful shore of Grand Lake, so bring a sack lunch and beverage.

We'll rendezvous at the Grand Lake Saint Marys State Park shelter house #3. See our website, cooperaudubon.org, for a map, or search for "Grand Lake shelter house #3" in Google Maps.

September 12 and October 10, **8 am to 10 am** and November 14, **9 am to 11 am**: 4306 Mounds Rd., Anderson, IN

## Mounds State Park

Come join a Second Saturday walk at Mounds State Park. **The start time on these walks is 8 am for the duration of daylight savings time and reverts to 9 am in November.**

Meet at the Visitor's Center parking lot. Fall gives us a chance to see some southbound migrants and, by November, the first of our winter visitors. Come join us! State Park fees may apply.

Saturday, September 19, 8:30 am to 10:30 am: 913 W. Harrison St., Hartford City, IN

## Wilderness Park and Prairie

For this trip we'll head to the south side of Hartford City, where John Velasquez—a member of both our chapter and the Mississinewa Audubon Club—will lead us on a bird walk through Wilderness Park and Prairie. These two adjacent properties offer trails through 24 acres of woodland and four acres of prairie restoration where we'll look for migrating songbirds and enjoy the late-summer prairie forbs and grasses.

We'll meet in the park's parking lot.

***We recommend closed-toed shoes for all field trips, and, during mosquito season, insect repellent!***

Saturday, October 24, 9 am to 11 am: 1597 South Morristown Pike, Greenfield, IN

## Thornwood Nature Preserve

We'll join the Greenfield Birders for their final autumn bird walk at Thornwood Nature Preserve, a 40-acre woodland located southeast of Greenfield. Adam Wilson will be our leader for the walk, which will take us through pasture and mixed forest.

We'll meet in the preserve's parking lot.

Saturday, October 31, 8:30 am to 10:30am: 5975 N. Mechanicsburg Rd., Middletown, IN

## Fall Creek Woods

While we'll still be on the lookout for birds (as always!), the highlight of this trip will be fall foliage and beautiful landscapes. We'll walk a 0.75-mile loop trail that winds through Smith-Crisler Nature Preserve, a dedicated state preserve located within Fall Creek Woods, which is a property of Red-tail Land Conservancy in Henry County.

Red-tail's website notes that the property "features massive trees, steep bluffs, and a wandering creek. Visitors can experience many stages of growth of an Indiana forest, from young trees to towering ancients . . . A large stand of maple trees makes this a dazzling autumn destination."

We'll meet in the park's parking lot.

## Field and Service Trips . . . *continued*

Sunday, November 8, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm: 1701 S. Perdieu Rd., Muncie, IN

### Service Trip at Dutro-Ernst Woods

We will meet at Dutro-Ernst and attack Asian Bush Honeysuckle and other invasive plants at this urban preserve. Please bring loppers if you have them, wear gloves, and dress for the weather.

## Programs and Events

September 26, noon to 3 pm: Big Oaks Shelter at Westwood Park , 1900 S County Road 275 W, New Castle, IN

### Annual RCAS Picnic

This year, we will hold our annual picnic at **Westwood 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. Please note there is a $5 per vehicle fee to enter the park. Having been stormed out of our June meeting for the second year in a row, we will once again hold a short business meeting at the picnic in order to elect RCAS officers for the current year. Please see the summer newsletter for the slate being proposed by the nominating committee and also for two proposed changes to our bylaws.

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

### Cranes over Indiana

Please join us for a program about the Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population given by Mary Callaghan, an assistant outreach biologist for the International Crane Foundation.

Attend in person or register in advance for the webcast at:
bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/zegZ5InnTde397KQev_1Ww

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

### Wild Borneo: Island of Natural Wonders

Borneo is the world's third largest island and well known for its plant and animal biodiversity. It is home to over 620 bird species, including 60 endemic species of birds found nowhere else in the world. British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace explored Southeast Asia extensively in the mid-1800s. This is where he, independently from Charles Darwin, formulated the theory of evolution by natural selection. Inspired by both Wallace and Darwin and their scientific discoveries, Kamal Islam traveled to Borneo in May 2025 to explore its biodiversity and evolutionary history. Please join him for a presentation on his journey to see unique birds such as hornbills and broadbills; primates, including oragutans; the world's largest flower; and many more natural wonders.





Left, Black-and-yellow Broadbill, Sabah, Borneo
Photo by Kamal Islam
Above, Kamal, followed by a troop of Pig-tailed Macaques, also in Sabah

Attend in person or register in advance for the webcast at:
bsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/A_v1GC44QJ26ag1q2MJLoA

December 2, 6 pm to 9 pm: BSU Alumni Center, 2800 W. Bethel Ave., Muncie, IN

### 2026 RCAS Conservation Awards

Save the date to celebrate our 2026 Conservation award recipients. Look for details on the event and how to make a reservation, coming later this year.

# A Tricolored Heron Visits Loblolly Marsh

By Terri Gorney Lehman

On June 15 the Department of Natural Resources east central regional ecologist Ryan Smith called me to say he believed there was a Tricolored Heron at Loblolly Marsh. A few minutes later, a photo of the bird came through to my phone. Ryan was off trail by a repaired levy on the southwest side of the marsh doing invasive plant control when he spotted the shy bird. A Tricolored Heron is a nice bonus for coming to work on a Monday! Ryan's observation was a new record for the marsh and for Jay County. It is now listed as bird 222 on the eBird checklist at Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology.

Once the word was out, a number of birders from central Indiana came up to try to see the bird. Some tried a couple times before they were successful. It also took my husband, Randy, and me more than one outing to spot the bird. We had too many commitments that week until Friday when we were able to try twice. No luck. Saturday, I was out at 6:00 am for an hour and still no luck. But the highlights of the morning were a beautiful sunrise and hearing a Least Bittern call. Saturday evening we went out at dusk (the heron was mostly seen at either dawn or dusk). At 8:30 pm, we were in the location where Ryan first spotted the bird. As we were leaving, the heron gave us a brief view and a soft vocalization as it flew over the water. A short time later we watched as it disappeared into the foliage.



We went out again on Sunday at dawn to try to get photos. We met Tony and Patricia Rettig who were also on the search. Patricia was already at the location next to the levy where Ryan had first seen it. She spotted the bird perched a short distance away. We all had nice views and she and Randy were able to get photos. And we made new friends!

This is the second unusual heron this year for our area. On April 15, Matthew and Kristy Smith spotted an adult Little Blue Heron at the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve. That bird stayed in the general area for a week. Randy and I were out birding at the time it was spotted and were able to see the bird shortly after the Smiths reported it. In Indiana and Ohio this year, several little blues have been spotted.

Cheers to these two unusual heron visitors to the Limberlost wetlands this year.

(Right) Tricolored Heron
Photo by Randy Lehman

(Below) Loblolly Marsh at dawn
Photo by Terri Gorney



# Invasive Plants—Test Your Knowledge

*Invasive plants—you've heard people railing against them, but what do you really know about them? Take our quiz to find out. Then go to our web site to download an article with more information and lots of helpful links. (Quiz answers and photo credits on page 7)*

1. When conservationists use the term "invasive" they mean
   a) any plant growing where it is not wanted
   b) any plant that is exotic or introduced, i.e., it was not found in the U.S. prior to European colonization
   c) a plant introduced into a new ecosystem that proliferates and poses a threat to native species
   d) any plant with an aggressive growth habit

2. Which of the following are invasive in East Central Indiana (choose all that apply)
   a) Canada goldenrod
   b) Japanese knotwood
   c) Asian bush honeysuckle
   d) multiflora rose

3. A plant is termed allelopathic if it
   a) has thorns
   b) grows well in dry environments
   c) puts out chemicals in the soil that discourage the growth of other plants
   d) is poisonous if ingested

4. TRUE or FALSE? It is okay to plant invasive species in your yard if you live in town, far from any parks or natural areas.

5. Match the invasive with its photo
   a) burning bush
   b) garlic mustard
   c) Bradford pear
   d) dame's rocket

***Introduced, exotic, invasive--what does it all mean? Try our quiz, download the article, and, best of all, come out for a service day to help fight invasives!***

iii.



ii.



i.



iv.



# An Update from the Schowe Homestead

By Jim Schowe



Pawpaw blossom and nascent fruit
Photo by Agnieszka Kwiecień, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Each issue of our newsletter for the last few years has had an article about the work and successes on our property here in Randolph County. We have planted trees, fought invasive species, and erected bird houses, just to name a few of our many projects. So, perhaps you are sitting there reading my boastful page and wondering if all is roses on the homestead front with never a failure in sight. However, I will tell you, not everything turns out as planned.

This spring in East Central Indiana was a rather wet one. Maybe not as soggy as some past seasons but we did have plenty of rain. The weather was also cool, and several of our fruit trees did not produce flowers, although one or two flowered well. My pawpaw trees had hundreds of flowers, and upon close inspection tiny little pawpaws were growing on them. Some pawpaw flowers can produce up to six fruits from a single bloom. Oh, wow! This is going to be a great year for Indiana's only native "tropical fruit". I was planning on who to give fruit for taste testing in late August when it would be ripe and then—for some reason—each and every fruit dropped from the trees with nary a one left. What happened?? Who knows? I could look at it as a failure, but really it was just a disappointment. Maybe my pawpaw trees in the woods had a different result. Maybe I can learn from the event.

My plans to cultivate huge black raspberries didn't pan out either. The berries we picked from the specially selected raspberry seeds I had planted were just normal berries. This was the third year for this project. I had hoped for grape sized fruit but that did not happen. Our plants were merely healthy, productive raspberry bushes. Disappointment again but, also, in a way, success. I learned from what nature was trying to teach me. Experience is the best teacher and if you don't try, you don't get the chance to learn.

# In Memoriam: John Cheney

RCAS is mourning the passing of long-time member John Cheney, who died in July at the age of 85. John's welcoming presence at the sign-in table has been part of our program meetings and special events for many years, and we will miss him very much. Our sympathies are with his widow, Doris Cheney, RCAS hospitality chair, and the Cheney family.

An on-line obituary for John may be found at the Rozelle-Johnson website

# RCAS Awards . . . *continued from page 1*

***Send your nominations to Rose Jeffery at***
admin@cooperaudubon.org

The categories for the 2026 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.

# Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses

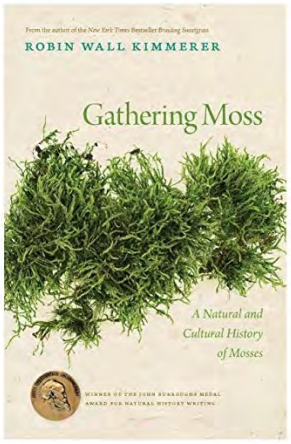
## By Robin Wall Kimmerer

**Oregon State University Press, 2003, 168 pp.**

Book Review

Mosses don't usually grab our attention; they are part of the scenery, an element of the background. Sometimes they are featured in art, to set an atmosphere or emotion, but rarely as a starring character.

Nevertheless, mosses are part of the web of life. They are an essential part of functioning eco-systems and play an important role in ecological succession.




If you want to know more about their life cycle and reproduction, explore some different species and their habitats, and learn how they help build and maintain those habitats, you should read *Gathering Moss* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I believe you will come away with a better understanding of how mosses live and with an appreciation of how their lives are intertwined with the lives of countless other beings. You may even gain an empathy for this part of the natural world that usually goes unnoticed.

Beyond the plain subject matter of mosses, what makes this book so special to me is the writer and her approach. Kimmerer combines her knowledge and curiosity as a scientist with indigenous knowledge from her native American background (Potowatomi), personal stories about her field work, and ecological empathy. The narrative is both informative and thought provoking. We are all part of nature. She hopes to instill reverence and striving for reciprocity in our relationship to it.

*Gathering Moss* is Kimmerer's first book, published in 2003. You may be familiar with Kimmerer's other books, like the hugely successful *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Not only has she written several fascinating books, she has various interviews and presentations (including a TED talk) available on her website.

Kimmerer has also written an essay for Emergence Magazine on the topic of mosses titled "Ancient Green—Moss, Climate, and Deep Time." You can read it or listen to her narrate the story here.

Questions of morality and ethics are more relevant than ever. Kimmerer's is a voice that should be heard.

*-Reviewed by Willy DeSmet*

## Answers to the Invasives Quiz on Page 5

All photos via Wikimedia Commons

1. c
2. b, c, and d. Canada goldenrod is local to our area although it does have a very aggressive growth pattern and can be troublesome if you are trying to establish a diverse prairie ecosystem.
3. c
4. FALSE. Fruits and seeds can be spread by animals or wind and invade natural habitat even if they originated deep in the city. And some invasive plants can harbor pests that attack our desirable native species. Even plants that were supposed to be sterile when imported can become fertile over time, as has happened with the Bradford pear. And our native birds and insects don't thrive on introduced plants. Plant a native instead and support our local ecosystems!
5. a) i The ridged stems of burning bush, photo by Salicyna, CC BY-SA 4.0
   b) iii Garlic mustard in bloom, Katja Schulz, CC BY 2.0
   c) ii Bradford pear in bloom, photo by C. E. Price, public domain
   d) iv Dame's rocket (with four petals, as opposed to the five of our native phlox), photo by AnRo0002, public domain

***Act on your invasives knowlege by joining us for a service day at Dutro-Ernst on Novemeber 8! See page 2 for details.***

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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 * | *candidate |
| Recording Secretary: | Annette Rose * | |

## Directors

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2025-2027 | Julie Bruner | Pam Stults * |
| 2026-2028 | Kristy Tuttle * | Kelly Miller * |

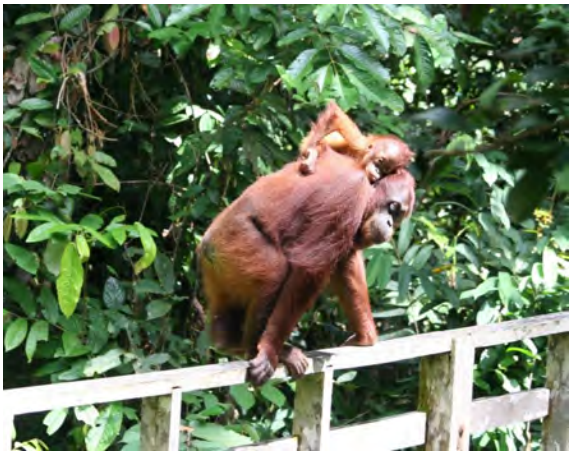
## Committee Chairs

| | |
|---|---|
| Programs: | Kamal Islam |
| Field Trips: | Barb Stedman |
| Membership: | Martha Hunt |
| Education: | VACANT |
| Conservation: | Jeff Ray and Jim Schowe |
| Advocacy: | Brian Wolfe |
| Hospitality: | Doris Cheney |
| Communications: | Barb Stedman, website |
| | Julie Bruner, Facebook |
| | Jim Jeffery, mailing list |
| | Catherine Kubo, newsletter |

## Contact us

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Find us on Facebook!
Email: admin@cooperaudubon.org

# Come to the November program and hear about Kamal's trip!



Bornean Orangutan, Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, Sabah, Borneo, May 2025. Photo by Kamal Islam

## Programs and Field Trips

Most RCAS programs and field trips are free and open to the public. For updates and reminders, refer to our website or join our mailing list by sending a request to admin@cooperaudubon.org.

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Cooper's Talk, the newsletter of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, is published four times per year. Please submit photos, articles, and events for publication by emailing admin@cooperaudubon.org