

The Chat



Newsletter of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, serving East Central Indiana

Volume 39 , No. 2

Mar./Apr. 2013



Alice Cahill's grand prize winner of the Audubon Photography Awards captures a quick northern flicker.

Monday, March 11, 7 pm

One-second Identification

Birds are quick and bird-watching can get tough, especially when birds are on a mission and moving swiftly. If you've ever wanted to have a better shot at catching sight of a bird and seeing that it's the rarity you've been hoping to spot, this is the night for you.

This talk is great for those who dream about the one that got away. Or maybe you just don't understand how someone could glance at a bird and ID it right away.

Jeff Riegel, a Field Technician Supervisor for the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment, is here to help! With over 30 years of birding experience, he will help you pinpoint what to look for when you only have a few or just one second! Don't miss this interactive presentation on **March 11** to help you brush up on your birding skills just in time for the birding season. All experience levels are welcome.

Chapter business and refreshments will begin at **7 pm at Kennedy Library**, followed by the program at **7:15**.

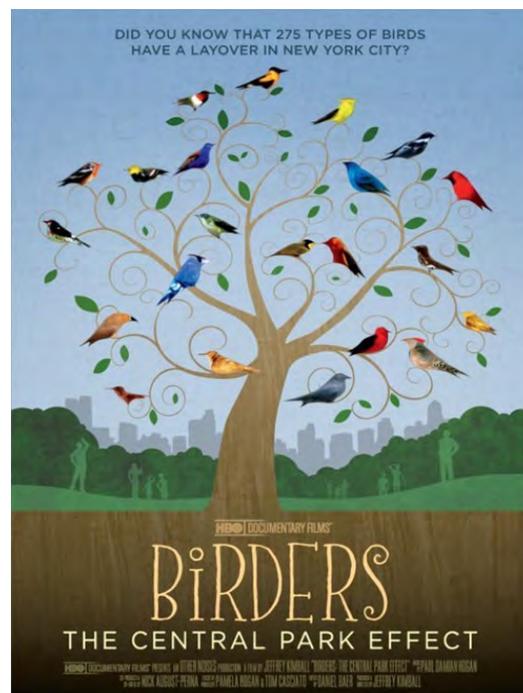
Monday, April 8, 7 pm

Birders: The Central Park Effect

On **April 8** we will be showing the family-friendly movie *Birders: The Central Park Effect*. The film reveals the extra-ordinary array of wild birds who grace Manhattan's celebrated patch of green and the equally colorful, full-of-attitude New Yorkers who schedule their lives around the rhythms of migration.

Acclaimed author Jonathan Franzen, an idiosyncratic trombone technician, a charming fashion-averse teenager, and a bird-tour leader who's recorded every sighting she's made since the 1940s are among the film's cast of characters. Featuring spectacular wildlife footage capturing the changing seasons, this lyrical documentary transports the viewer to a dazzling world that goes all but unnoticed by the 38 million people who visit America's most famous park each year.

Chapter business and refreshments will begin at **7 pm at Kennedy Library**, followed by the program at **7:15**.



May 3-4 field trip to Magee Marsh: Lodging reservations due in March! See page 3 for details.

Field Trips: March/April

Kestrel program at Limberlost *Sunday, March 3*

The Stockbridge Audubon Society is sponsoring a program about American kestrels, presented by James Canada. It promises to be very interesting and will include some demonstration birds. The program begins at the new Limberlost Visitors Center at **2 pm**.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at **12:40 pm**.

To get there on your own: From Muncie take N. Broad-

way and continue north on State Rd 67. Follow 67 through Albany and Portland, where you'll turn left on 67 (aka State Rd 27 and Meridian St. at this point).

At the traffic light in the small town of Bryant, continue straight (north) on 27. (State Rd 67 turns right at this point; don't turn there or you'll end up in Ohio!) Once in Geneva, turn right into the Visitor Center parking lot at State Rd 27 and 6th St. The address is 200 E 6th St, Geneva.

Saturday, March 23 **Loblolly Marsh**

This will be a joint field trip between Robert Cooper and Stockbridge Audubon Societies. We hope to find plenty of waterfowl and enjoy getting to know some of our Fort Wayne colleagues.

We'll meet at the Limberlost Historic Site in Geneva at **9 am**. Bring a sack lunch; if the birding is good,

we'll continue after a picnic lunch.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at **7:45 am**.

To get there on your own: From Muncie take N. Broadway and continue north on State Rd 67. Follow 67 through Albany and Portland, where you'll turn left on 67 (aka State Rd 27

and Meridian St.).

At the traffic light in the small town of Bryant, continue straight (north) on 27. (State Rd 67 turns right at this point; don't turn there or you'll end up in Ohio!) Once in Geneva, turn right into the Visitor Center parking lot at State Rd 27 and 6th St. The address is 200 E 6th St, Geneva.

Woodcock Watching *Sunday, March 24*

We'll gather at Barb Stedman and Martha Hunt's home at **7:15 pm** and head out to the field to watch and listen to woodcocks displaying – a sure sign of spring! Bring warm clothing, a **flashlight**, and (if the ground is muddy) boots. Bring binoculars, too.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at **6:55 pm**. Because of very limited parking, carpooling is recommended and appreciated!

To get there on your own: From

the Muncie Mall, take Broadway north and stay right at the "Y." Go through one traffic light and go under the Muncie bypass. Almost immediately after that, turn right at the first road, County Rd 350 N. (Look for the green "Desoto" sign and the collision business at that corner.) Go just over 3 miles to the second stop sign and turn right onto County Rd 500 E.

Counting the house on the corner, Barb and Martha's is the second house on the left. Look for the white picket



fence and large Norway spruces in the front. Park in front of the garage or along the picket fence.

The address is 5424 N County Rd 500 E, Albany. Warning: Mapquest directions are wrong! Call 288-2890 if you get lost.

Saturday, April 13 **Edgewater Park**

Edgewater Park in Anderson is a well-known spot to see warblers and other spring migrants. On **Saturday, Apr. 13**, we'll walk the park's paved trail alongside the White River.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus at **8 am**.

To get there on your own: From Muncie, take State Rd. 32 east through Yorktown, Daleville and Chesterfield. At State Rd. 9 (Scatterfield Rd.), turn left (south). Turn west (right) on 10th St. We'll gather in the park entrance parking lot (on the left) at **8:30**.

Salamonie Reservoir *Saturday, April 27*

On **Saturday, Apr. 27**, we'll rendezvous with members of Stockbridge Audubon who know the Salamonie Reservoir (in Huntington County) very well. Jim Haw and Sandy Schacht will lead us on bird hike to see (we hope!) various waterfowl and migratory birds, perhaps even rails and bitterns.

Meet at the Hominy Ridge Picnic area in the Salamonie River State Forest at about **8:15 am**. We'll bird in

the forest during the morning, picnic at Hominy Ridge, then explore other areas around the reservoir after lunch. Bring a sack lunch, something to drink, waterproof boots, and appropriate clothing for the weather.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot at **7 am**.

To get there on your own: Follow I-69 north to State Rd. 218. Exit there and go left (west) to State Rd. 105.

Turn right (north) and follow 105 to

State Rd. 124. Turn left (west) and stay on 124 to County Rd. 600 E. Turn right (north).

At County Rd. 250 S, turn left (west). Look for Dam Rd, which should come up quickly on the right. Turn right. Stay left at the fork in the road, onto Pefley Rd. That'll take you into Salamonie River State Forest.

Follow signs to the Hominy Ridge Lake Picnic area. (We recommend downloading the park map from the Salamonie Lake DNR website.)

Overnight field trips:

McCormick's Creek SP & Goose Pond *Fri.-Sat., Apr. 5-6*

Join us for a two-for-one field trip for some great spring birding! We'll spend the night of **Friday, Apr. 5**, at McCormick's Creek State Park, at Canyon Inn (see below), then take an early morning birding hike through the park the next morning. McCormick's Creek is a lovely park, and we can expect to see many wildflowers.

Afterward we'll head to Goose Pond, located southwest of Indianapolis near Linton, and spend several hours birding there. Goose Pond is one of the most spectacular birding sites in Indiana, with more than 8,000 acres of wetland and prairie.

Those unable to join us at McCormick's Creek Park are welcome to meet us at Goose Pond. Contact Rose Jeffery, Field Trip Chair, to arrange a rendezvous time. Bring a snack, a drink, raingear, waterproof boots, binoculars, and field guides.

Room reservations at Canyon Inn: A room with 2 full beds is \$89.99. Call 877-563-4371 for reservations.

Don't delay too long in making your reservation! Rooms will soon disappear as we get closer to Apr. 5.

To get to McCormick's Creek State Park: From Indianapolis take I-70 west to US 231 (Cloverdale exit). Head south on 231 to State Rd. 46. Turn east and follow 46 to the park entrance.

To get to Goose Pond from McCormick's Creek: Follow State Rd. 46 back to US 231 and continue south to Switz City. From there take State Rd. 54 west into Linton. In Linton take Main St. (State Rd. 59) south directly into Goose Pond. We'll gather at the parking lot and information kiosk off State Rd. 59 shortly after entering the Goose Pond area. See property map at the IDNR website. <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-GoosePondMap.pdf>

Contact Rose Jeffery for further information at 765-747-9699. During the field trip you can reach her at 765-716-0229. Email is rosemariejeffery@gmail.com.

Magee Marsh Birding Festival *Fri.-Sat., May 3-4*

Magee Marsh, Crane Creek, and the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, located along Lake Erie in northern Ohio, are together considered one of the top 10 birding sites in all of North America! The highlight of the year is the spring Birding Festival, when

hundreds of species pass through on their way north each year.

Our group will gather at Maumee Bay Lodge at nearby Maumee State Park on the evening of **Friday, May 3**, in order to get an early start to Magee Marsh the next morning.

Maumee State Park is about 10 miles east of Toledo on the shores of Lake Erie. The resort-like lodge has a full-service restaurant on site. If you arrive early enough on Friday, you can enjoy exploring the park on your own that day. ***Continued on p. 6***

Bird of the Month: The Sora

by Helen Twibell

Porzana carolina



The sora is a small water-bird of the family *Rallidae*, or rail, sometimes referred to as the sora crane or sora rail.

This small quail-sized

bird will top the scales at anywhere from 1.7 to 4.0 oz, and measures about 8¾" in length with a wingspan of 12-13".

The heavy short, chicken-like yellow bill and black face are good field characteristics of the adult. The breast is gray and the upper parts are mottled brown, while the lower abdomen is banded with black and white.

The characteristic call is a "whinny," a rapid series of a dozen or more clear, pleasing notes run together on a descending scale.

Soras, our most abundant rails, range over most of the continent and are the most often observed of the species in Indiana, becoming more numerous in marshes during migration.

Soras nest in every little fresh-water marsh, bog or riverside reed patch, even on the outskirts of large cities, and use areas with a wide range of water depths. They are often observed in water less than one foot deep, although in some heavy populated areas, it may be 15-20" deep. In areas of deeper water, soras wade on mats of floating vegetation.

A good time to observe soras is in early morning or toward dusk at the edge of a marsh opening when these laterally compressed birds – from which the expression "thin as a rail" comes – slip out between the cattails without disturbing the stalks. They then work along the marsh edge and

out on the lily pads and other floating vegetation to pick up insects, mollusks and other small animals.

The soras are very curious creatures, and a clap of the hands or hitting the oar against the boat or splash of a rock in the water will often start a call in one place, then another call farther over, until a whole series of calls reveals their presence all over a dense marsh grown over with cattails and high weeds. In fact, they are more often heard than seen. They are skulkers and would rather walk than fly when disturbed. Although soras flush more readily than some rails, they usually do no more than fly off weakly.

During migration, some individuals fly as far as 3,000 miles to the West Indies or Bermuda, often in vast numbers. Migration flights are performed at night, usually at such low altitudes that many soras are killed by striking buildings or other obstacles.

The soras' habit of vacating the marsh the night of the first frost produces great migratory waves. Also some are forced down by the inclement weather and may be found dead on city streets and under power lines and telephone lines.

Many soras migrate to southern states where they become seed eaters and concentrate in great numbers wherever they find extensive beds of wild rice. They inhabit some of the broad marshes along southern coastal rivers, and to some extent, the salt marshes. Inland they visit corn and grain stubble fields, rank weed growths and brushy hillsides.

Soras migrating back up north to Indiana usually arrive in April and May, and they may depart the breeding grounds as early as July, although the main fall migration does not get underway until the end of August and is usually completed by

November.

When soras arrive in April in our state, nesting begins. The nest is a cup of woven dead leaves and anchored to growing cattails or other emergent marsh plants a few inches above the water, or on a pile of material placed on top of a grass tussock. This is usually placed in or near a fairly open place in the marsh. However, if the water level fluctuates, the nest may be abandoned and the birds move to a more suitable site.

Sometimes the nest is on the ground in low-lying meadow land or in crop fields. Often an arch made of vegetation nearby hides the eggs. There may be 14 to 18 eggs in the nest, so in this case they must be arranged in two or three layers so the bird can cover them.

Both parents incubate the eggs for about 19 days, and the eggs hatch over a period of about 13 days. The nestlings are "precocial" and are able to walk and swim short distances by the end of their first day. Young soras are independent in about four weeks. Usually there is just one brood per season.

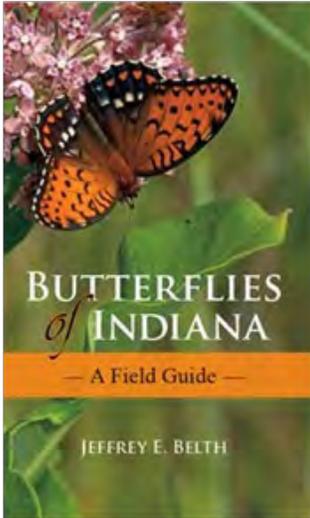
Despite heavy hunting and heavy migration losses, these prolific birds – who are capable of producing clutches of up to 18 eggs per pair during a single breeding period – seem to remain abundant as long as their habitats of shallow marsh sites are intact. They have earned the Conservation Status of "Least Concern."

They are classified as migratory game birds and may be hunted during the period from September 1 to November 9 (2012 report), which requires an Indiana hunting license and an HIP registration number, plus a knowledge of bagging limits and other required hunting regulations.

Butterflies and Moths - A Tale of Two Field Guides

Book reviews by Willy De Smet

Two new field guides caught my attention in the past year: *Butterflies of Indiana* (Jeffrey Belth, Indiana University Press; December 19, 2012; 344 pages) and the new *Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America* (David Beadle and Seabrooke Leckie, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; April 17, 2012; 624 pages). The underlying philosophy for both is to observe and identify without killing.

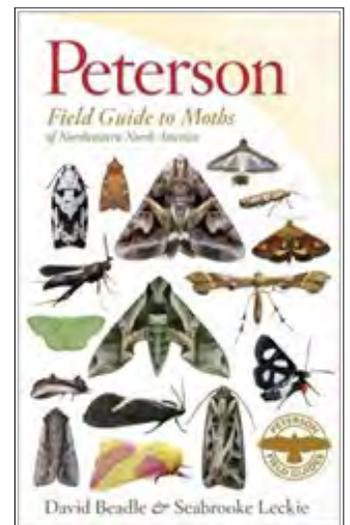


Jeffrey Belth has been photographing butterflies in Indiana for 25 years and has been working on this book for several years. It shows in the end product. The field guide part is very well thought-out and intuitive in use without being superficial. The photographs of live specimens in natural poses (often with top and side views, gender and seasonal variations) are on the right hand page. Facing them on the left-hand page are the species descriptions. One of the features I really like (among many) is that the arrows on the pictures – pointing to distinguishing field marks – are numbered the same as the descriptions. There's also relevant information on behavior and host plants as well as updated range maps.

Besides the excellent identification guide, the author has included some very good chapters on the butterfly life cycle and behavior, on Indiana's natural regions and their relevance to the occurrence of specific species of butterflies, and much more. Two special features really stood out to me: an excellent short course in butterfly photography and a guide to the "larval hosts and adult nectar sources." The latter tells you which specific species of caterpillars and butterflies you are likely to find on which plants, and shows you pictures of these plants. While the Quick Keys, the easy-to-understand language and the intuitive organization make the guide easy to use for beginners, it has so much in-depth and up-to-date information that even the experienced butterfly enthusiasts will find this book worth having.

Anyone interested in the butterflies of Indiana should get this book. Up to now (as far as I can tell) there was no butterfly field guide for Indiana available and this one is excellent. In spite of the large amount of great information in the book, it still fits in the back pocket of your jeans.

While *Butterflies of Indiana* covers every species you are likely to encounter in Indiana, the *Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America* does not cover every species of moth found in the North Eastern U.S., despite covering some 1500 species in its 624 pages. The authors had to limit themselves to the more common species. This is not a re-edition of any previous Peterson field guide for moths. It is a brand new one: different authors, different approach. This field guide also has the species descriptions on the left-hand page facing the photographs on the right (an improvement, I think, from previous moth guides that had pictures and descriptions in separate parts of the book). The photographs are of live specimens in natural positions and often in top and side views. Arrows on the pictures point to field marks but are not indexed. Approximate range maps are included.



This field guide is a bit harder to use than the one for butterflies I just described. There is an index page showing where different families/groups start in the book, but a beginner who is not familiar with the different groups and families may need a bit more time to figure out where in the book to start looking. This book also has useful information on life cycles, how to find and attract moths, and so on.

Even nature lovers often think of moths as drab, unremarkable cousins of butterflies, but they are mistaken. Some species are really spectacular in color, size and shape. Just browsing through this book makes you eager to go out and go look for them. I was impressed by this *Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America*. You ought to have a look at it when you have a chance.

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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(Magee Marsh, cont. from page 3)

The group will gather for dinner at the lodge.

We'll spend Saturday morning at Magee Marsh, which is about 24 minutes away, then explore other nearby areas in the afternoon. We'll head home mid- to late afternoon.

Our group can lock in a special

rate of \$122.98 for rooms with two full beds. (This rate is not available to individuals during the Birding Festival.) Rose Jeffery, Field Trip Chair, has held 10 rooms just for our group until late March. After that, we lose the hold!

To reserve your spot, please send your name, address, and other

contact information to Rose Jeffery, at rosemariejeffery@gmail.com, and send payment to Robert Williams, RCAS Treasurer. Make checks out to the Robert Cooper Audubon Society and put "Maumee Bay Lodge" in the memo line. Send your check to Robert Williams, Treasurer, at 4600 W. Bradford Dr., Muncie, IN, 47304.

Dates for Your Calendar

- Mar. 3:** Kestrels at Limberlost Historic Site
- Mar. 11:** One-second Identification program
- Mar. 23:** Loblolly Marsh
- Mar. 24:** Woodcock Watching
- Apr. 5-6:** McCormick's Creek State Park
- Apr. 8:** *Birders: The Central Park Effect* program
- Apr. 13:** Edgewater Park
- Apr. 27:** Salamonie Reservoir
- May 3-4:** Magee Marsh Birding Festival

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org

Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Program meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except July, August, & September) at the

Muncie Public Library Kennedy Branch

1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN



7:00 pm: chapter business

7:15 pm: scheduled program

The Chat is published 5 times a year by the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph Counties.

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