

The Chat

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

Volume 35, No. 3 May/June 2009

May 11: The Wildlife Resqu Haus

Our speaker for our May 11 meeting will be our chapter's own Diana Shaffer, founder and director of the Wildlife Resqu Haus in Yorktown. For more than 45 years, Diana has been rehabilitating injured, ill, and orphaned wild animals, specializing in birds of prey.

In March this year the NWRA (National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association) honored her with the highest award in the nation for wildlife rehabilitators: the Lifetime Achievement Award. Diana, long known as "the Bird Lady" of East Central Indiana and surrounding counties, was given the award "in recognition of her dedication and work for the benefit of the wildlife and public education."

For her program in May, Di-

ana will give a slide presentation highlighting some of the most fascinating bird patients she's worked with over the years. She'll also bring along two or three of her education birds (she has a red-tailed hawk, kestrel, screech owl, barred owl, and peregrine falcon) and let us get a close look at birds that we usually see only through binoculars.

Refreshments and time to socialize will begin at Minnetrista at 7:00 p.m., with the chapter meeting at 7:15. Diana's program will get underway by 7:30. As always, the program is free, non-Audubon members are welcomed. This is a wonderful program for adults and children, so bring the entire family!

For more information about



Diana Shaffer with the star of her education programs -- her 22-year-old red-tailed hawk.

Diana's Lifetime Achievement Award, including the full text of the presentation speech and a photo, visit our website, at www.cooperaudubon.org.

June 8: Member Slideshow

Have you snapped a great shot at the backyard feeder or maybe captured some wonderful scenes of nature during your travels? We want you to share them in our member slideshow, June 8, at Minnetrista. Every participant will have the opportunity to share a brief explanation of each image.

To submit images:

You may submit up to 10 images, in digital format. Please number them in order of priority (1=most important) in case we receive too many for the time allotted.

Please email images to cooperaudubon@gmail.com, to the attention of Barb Stedman. Or, if you prefer, you may submit your photos by mail by sending a CD to Barb Stedman at: 5424 N County Road 500 E, Albany, IN 47320.

Provide your contact information, name, phone and e-mail. Deadline for submissions is June 1.

Letter from the President

As I complete my term as RCAS President at the end of June, I will be beginning an exciting new chapter in my life. I have accepted a position with Bandelier National Monument near Los Alamos, New Mexico as a clerk in the park's fire program.

Having served most of my term in absentia due to my summer park employment, I must thank the board members who stepped up and did the real work of making 2008-09 a successful year for the chapter. As I write this the board is working to fill open positions for the coming chapter year. Positions of President, Program Chair and Membership Chair remain unfilled. Robert Cooper Audubon Society needs interested members to take an active role in board participation. No one job consumes a great deal of time but a full board is necessary for our chapter to continue to meet conservation and education goals and provide good chapter programs. Many board members have served numerous times in various positions and have done a great job; but all organizations need new faces on their boards to bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Please consider serving on the RCAS board in the coming year. If you are interested or have any questions, contact any board member to express your interest. We would love to have you!! Have a great summer.

Bonnie Nicholson

June meeting elections

At our regular program meeting on June 8, we will be voting on candidates for several board officers (assuming that candidates step forward for all open positions) and the 2009-2011 directors.

In order to approve their successors, however, we need your help! Please make attendance at the June 8 meeting a priority, so that you can offer your "yea" or "nay."

The slate of nominees will be announced at www.cooperaudubon.org in mid- to late May.

Garden Fair Volunteers Needed

We're looking for volunteers to help staff our Audubon table at this year's Garden Fair, at Minnetrista. The Garden Fair runs from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Sat., June 6, and 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. on Sun., June 7. Please call Barb Stedman at 288-2890 if you're willing to help for a two-hour shift either day.

Be sure to visit our booth at the Garden Fair, which will include a full weekend of plants to peruse and buy, demonstrations, refreshments, and more. See www.minnetrista.net for details.

Binoculars for Young Birders

Do you have a pair of good used binoculars that could be donated to help young bird-watchers? RCAS will be collecting used binoculars March through June. Our first outreach for the binocular drive will be a donation of ten pairs to the Muncie Children's Museum for their June summer camp. If you have upgraded to a new set or just have an extra pair of binoculars gathering dust on a shelf, you can help build a new generation of birdwatchers and nature lovers. Bring your donated binoculars to the next meeting.

Living Lightly Fair News

Coming to the Living Lightly Fair, Sept. 19, at Minnetrista: Mike McGrath, host of National Public Radio's *You Bet Your Garden*, who'll be talking about "The Seven Secrets of Successful Organic Gardeners." Visit www.livinglightlyfair.org this summer for more information!

Northern Sawwhet Owl: May & June Bird of the Month

Northern
Sawwhet Owl--*Ae-
golius acadicuss*
By Helen Twibell



*Continued from the
March/April Chat*

The owl population is probably greater where these animals are found in great numbers. Pellets deposited on the ground beneath the roosting places can be dissected to determine feeding habits. They may contain skeletons of the owl's prey. The pellets are small and dark.

The female, slightly larger than the male, will lay five to six white eggs in a hole in a tree, usually in a flicker hole, but can be a natural cavity. The nest is unlined and usually quite small. Nesting generally takes place between March and July in the breeding areas. The incubation period is 26-28 days long. The female does this while the male brings her food;. The male may firmly peck anyone venturing too near the nest at this time, also.

The saw-whet owl lives mainly in the northern and western United States, southern Canada and parts of Alaska. It likes to migrate along the Atlantic coastline or down the Ohio River Valley. Juveniles are more likely to migrate than adults.

The saw-whet owl has two main types of calls--a primary courtship call and a territorial call. It only vocalizes during breeding season which is usually between March and May. The primary courtship call can be emitted in 1 ½ notes per second. The saw-whet can do this for several hours without stopping. This call sounds like the whetting of a saw, thus giving the saw-whet its name. The territorial call, or one that establishes the owl's territory, has very short clear notes. It sounds like this--one clear whistle,

pause, three clear whistles, pause, one clear whistle. There are few records of calling by Indiana birds.

The saw-whet seems to be very tame, and it is said that it can live in captivity. Since the Northern saw-whet is almost entirely nocturnal, it roosts quietly in dense foliage during the day. During this time is when the owl is extraordinarily tame and may be approached closely and even handled. It might be found by pulling back dense pine branches six feet up or near the ground in tangled vines and brush. One more unusual sighting was one found sitting on the edge of a cradle in a child's bedroom. (It would seem that great care should be exercised in any undertaking to tame a wild creature such as this. It does, after all, become a fierce bird of prey at night in the natural life. How taming is handled is not explained in this sighting. It would be interesting to know.)

The situation with the Northern saw-whet in Indiana is not too clear, probably because the bird's population here is not a dense one. We know saw-whets are resident in the state but not in abundant numbers. It is believed that this little owl is likely to be found anywhere in Indiana throughout the winter in small numbers. Little is known about the summer distribution but it seems the birds prefer to settle in the northern part of the state. There is no large or conspicuous migration through Indiana and no published records of finding a nest or eggs of this owl in the state, although we do know there are studies of young ones after they have left the nests. There seems to be no conservation information on the little Northern saw-whet owl, however, could we perhaps help boost the numbers of this appealing little bird by planting more pine trees and pine forests?

See you in the fall...

The Chat is going on summer vacation for July and August but will resume with the September issue. Likewise, our chapter meetings will be on hiatus during July and August but will be back in action for the annual fall picnic. Be sure to mark the tentative picnic date Sunday, September 13 on your calendar!

To stay informed about RCAS events over the summer, remember to visit our chapter website, at www.cooperaudubon.org. Better yet, send a note to cooperaudubon@gmail.com to receive email notices about upcoming events.

IAS Great May Day Bird Count

The Indiana Audubon Society Big May Day Count will be conducted on Saturday, May 9, 2009. The IAS BMDBC is always held on the second Saturday in May which is also International Migratory Bird Day. The count is statewide on a county-by-county basis. Participants may count either in the field or at feeders.

If you are interested in participating in Delaware County, please contact county compiler, Bill Grummer, at billcarolee@comcast.net or 765-254-1943

Robert Cooper Audubon Society



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The Chat is published 7 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.

Dates for Your Calendar

- May 9** Big May Day Bird Count
May 11 Meeting @ Minnetrista The Wild-
life Resqu Haus
June 6-7 Garden Fair
June 8 Member Slideshow
August 21 Articles due to Beth Simmons for
Sept./Oct. Chat: basimmons2@bsu.edu
September 19 Living Lightly Fair

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Meetings

Program meetings are held on the **second Monday** of each month (except July & August) at Minnetrista Cultural Center
1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway
Muncie, IN



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7:00 p.m.: Coffee & Gathering
7:15 p.m.: Chapter Business
7:30 p.m.: Scheduled Program

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