

# The Chat



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

Volume 37, No. 5

Nov./Dec. 2011

November 14

## Conservation Awards Banquet

Join us for a very special evening as we honor the 2011 recipients of our chapter's annual conservation awards. This year's banquet is set for Monday, November 14, from 6:00-8:30 p.m., at Minnetrista.

The evening will begin with dinner, followed by door prizes, then presentation of conservation awards, which includes an opportunity for all award winners to "show and tell" us about their accomplishments in protecting natural resources in East Central Indiana.

Dinner will be a buffet from Pete's Duck Inn, offering your choice of vegetarian lasagna or roast beef, plus scalloped potatoes, marinated vegetables, bread, dessert,

and beverages. The cost is **\$16 per person**, and reservations are required.

To place your reservation, **fill out the form on page**

**3**. Send it, along with your check, payable to Robert Cooper Audubon Society, to Nona Nunnelly at 1302 N. Alden Rd., Muncie, IN 47304. **Reservations must be received by Monday, November 7.**

If you have questions about reservations, contact Nona Nunnelly at 284-0751 or [nanunnelly@aol.com](mailto:nanunnelly@aol.com). For all other questions, contact Sarah McKillip at 765-287-8464, or [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu).

This is an inspiring, fun evening, so please join us and bring a friend. You won't be disappointed!

**Reservations  
Due Nov. 7**

**Want to continue getting  
this newsletter  
in the mail?**

**Let us know by Dec. 15!**

To save money and reduce waste, beginning January 1, 2012, you will no longer receive the *Chat* in print form, unless we hear from you.

By December 15, please tell us if:

- You would still like to receive the *Chat* in print form

OR

- You would like to receive it electronically, via email. (It can also be downloaded from our website, [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org).)

Email your preference to us at [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com). Or contact Sarah McKillip at 765-287-8464.

December 12

## "Saving Pelican 895"

Our December program will be a public viewing of the HBO documentary *Saving Pelican 895*.

This film highlights the amazing work done by dedicated wildlife professionals and volunteers to save birds in the wake of the BP oil spill disaster. Audubon believes the film provides an inspiring and positive example of how people can come together to care for the voiceless victims and protect the health of our Gulf coastal environment. You can watch the film's trailer at [www.hbo.com/documentaries/saving-pelican-895/](http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/saving-pelican-895/).

Join us at **7 pm on Dec. 12 at Minnetrista** to see this inspiring film! The event is free and open to the public, so bring a friend.

Please note our **NEW START TIME**: Chapter business and refreshments will both begin at 7:00, and the program will get underway at 7:15.



# Field Trips and Special Events

## October 22 “The Big Year”

Join the Robert Cooper Audubon Society on Saturday, Oct. 22, to see *The Big Year*. This comedy film (based on the book by Mark Obmascik) follows three friends who set out across the country to see as many birds as they can in one year. You can watch the trailer at [www.thebigyearmovie.com](http://www.thebigyearmovie.com).

The film is currently showing at Showplace 12, behind the Muncie Mall. Audubon members will be attending the 4:50 matinee on Oct. 22, and discount tickets are available if we hear back from at least 10 people. **If interested, please contact Sarah McKillip** at [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu) or 765-287-8464.



Owen Wilson, Steve Martin, and Jack Black, in *The Big Year*

## November 12

### Tour of Paws wastewater treatment facility

Mark your calendars for our trip to Paws, Inc., to tour the solar aquatic treatment facility. Paws is the headquarters of Jim Davis and the team of cartoonists who create Garfield. Its wastewater treatment greenhouse treats waste by solar energy, plants, and animals, in much the same way that nature does.

The tour, led by Bill Duell, manager of the facility, will begin at 9 am at the greenhouse and is expected to last 1 to 1½ hours. The tour will be indoors and is, for the most part, handicap accessible.

Those wishing to carpool should meet at the Cooper Science parking lot, on Ball State’s campus, at 8:35 am.

To get there on your own: Take S.R. 67 north from Muncie. Turn right on County Rd 450 N. Go a little over half a mile, and just after a hill turn right on County Rd 312 E. Go past the house on the corner and you’ll see a drive to your left. That’s the entrance to the Paws greenhouse, where parking is available.

## October 30

### Summit Lake & Zeigler Woods

On Sunday, Oct. 30, we’re taking a field trip to Summit Lake & Zeigler Woods, to look for waterfowl and see the results of habitat restoration work that our chapter facilitated in 2010. Carpoolers will leave the Cooper Science parking lot (BSU campus) at 12:15 pm. The group will gather at the intersection of Henry Co. Rds. 500 E & 750 N at **1 pm**. Full details can be found in the last issue of the *Chat* or at [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org).

## December 17

### Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the US, Canada and 18 countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period to count birds. Last year’s count set an all-time high, with 2,160 individual counts conducted and a record total of 60,753 participants.

Count volunteers search for birds within a designated 15-mile diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear throughout the day. It’s not just a species tally; all individual birds are counted, giving an indication of the total number of birds within the circle that day. If observers live within a CBC circle, they may

arrange in advance to count the birds at their feeders and submit those data to the count compiler. Each count is conducted between December 14 and January 5.

Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to participate, regardless of one’s birding skills! CBC participants are organized into groups or field parties, and inexperienced observers are partnered with seasoned CBC veterans. Each field party then covers a prearranged and specific area within the local count circle. You don’t have to commit to the whole day; you can participate for as long as you like, for a half day or even a few hours.

This year’s local count will be held **Saturday, December 17**. Contact Jon Creek at [jcreek34@yahoo.com](mailto:jcreek34@yahoo.com) or 765-348-4019 to sign up.

# Banquet Reservations

Number of guests (@ \$16 per person): \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner option (please indicate number for each guest): \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian \_\_\_\_\_ Non-vegetarian

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and return it, along with your check, payable to Robert Cooper Audubon Society, to: Nona Nunnally, Treasurer  
1302 N. Alden Rd.  
Muncie, IN 47304

**Reservations must be received by November 7.**

## It's time to renew your chapter-only membership!

In case you didn't know, you can join our chapter two different ways: 1) by joining the National Audubon Society, which automatically makes you a member of our local chapter, or 2) by opting for chapter-only membership, separate from or in addition to your National Audubon Society (NAS) membership. (NOTE: Chapter-only members do not receive the *Audubon* magazine.)

**Chapter-only membership sends every penny of your membership dues to our local chapter, to help fund conservation activities, youth scholarships, and other chapter projects**, while your NAS membership gives us only \$2.50 per person.

To **become a new member** of our Audubon chapter or **renew** your chapter-only membership, please send the form below, along with your check made payable to the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, to:

Laurie Lindberg, Membership Chair  
4614 W Burton Dr.  
Muncie, IN 47304

Chapter-only memberships run from January to December. Your membership will begin or be renewed in January.

**I want to become or a chapter-only member or renew my membership at the following level (please check your choice):**

\_\_\_\_ Student - \$15    \_\_\_\_ Basic - \$20    \_\_\_\_ Supporting - \$50    \_\_\_\_ Partner - \$100

I want to maintain my membership in the NAS, but here is my gift for the local chapter: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

I want to receive *The Chat* newsletter in print form \_\_\_\_\_, via the U.S. Postal Service, or in electronic form \_\_\_\_\_, as an email attachment. (Please check box of your preference. Email saves us money!)

# **Nov./Dec. Bird of the Month: Ruffed Grouse**

## **Ruffed Grouse**

*(Bonasa umbellus)*

By Helen Twibell



The ruffed grouse was once one of the most highly esteemed game birds in North America.

Formerly it was most likely present in all of Indiana except for the prairie and other open land. It has been able to sustain itself in the

heavily forested hills of the south central region of the state, from which it was never completely removed.

According to the "Indiana Hunting Guide" for 2005-2006, twenty counties (mostly southern) allow hunting of the ruffed grouse in season: Bartholomew, Brown, Clark, Crawford, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Lagrange, Martin, Monroe, Morgan, Ohio, Orange, Owen, Perry, Scott, Steuben, Switzerland and Washington.

According to Mumford and Keller, the ruffed grouse was a permanent resident in varying abundance in suitable forested areas in the state. In the 1950s grouse were purchased from Wisconsin and released in sparsely populated areas. After this, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources began restocking grouse in sections of the state with birds that had been trapped in Indiana. In 1982 grouse were recorded in 28 counties.

Ruffed grouses do not live in flocks or groups, and during most seasons are widely dispersed. For this reason an ideal habitat must be able to supply the bird's seasonal needs in an area of about 25 acres. An extensive area of dense woodland of any type is not good ruffed grouse habitat, and the establishment of scattered farms in the

once virtually unbroken forest greatly benefited this species.

The birds need conifers for winter roosting cover, a not too dense hardwood stand for nesting and food. They also need brushy land for escape cover and as a source of berries, sunny openings for dust baths and insect food for the young. Farms that are abandoned and orchards that are going back to forest furnish nearly ideal grouse habitats until the growing trees reach such a number that they kill out the shrubs and close up all the openings.

If you should be walking in a dense woodland and a large chicken-like bird of about 18 inches roars away from almost underfoot, showing a finely barred fan-shaped tail with a black terminal band, it is a ruffed grouse.

The general color of the upper parts, and especially the tail, may be reddish-brown or gray since the grouse has two distinct color phases. The black neck ruffs and tail are longer in the male.

The nest is a hollow in the ground, lined with leaves and placed at the base of a tree, stump or rock and concealed by low shrubs or branches and sometimes may be hidden under a log.

The 11 or so eggs are creamy to pinkish-buff and may be spotted with brown. When the young hatch and have dried off, they leave the nest. They can fly 25 feet by the time they are 12 days old.

In the fall broods break up and the young wander often for miles, until they locate suitable habitats where no other grouse are living to drive them away. During this time some young birds have been known to fly through windows or strike buildings, and are said to be crazy.

In winter this grouse grows comb-like snowshoes on its toes and hunts dense evergreen covering for roosting.

Territoriality breaks down so that it may share roosting with others of its kind. During bitter cold and high winds the grouse leave the trees and bury themselves in the snow overnight or until the storm is over.

Ruffed grouse begin life on an insect diet, but soon add fruit, seeds and leaves, and in fall, buds. Buds of yellow, black and paper birch, aspens, apple, cherry and blueberry are staple for fall and winter, supplemented by fruits of dogwood, hawthorn, grape and greenbrier, acorns, beechnuts, and leaves of sheep sorrel, wintergreen and laurel. In summer they favor seasonal fruits and the leaves of plants such as sedges, strawberries, blackberries and jewelweed, plus a few insects.

An interesting fact about the male grouse is that he has a definite territory with one or more sheltered logs, mounds or rocks on which he stands when 'drumming' the air with quick beats of his wings. In spring females are attracted to the males' territory, but there is no pairing since, like many grouse, the species is promiscuous.

The male drums sporadically, all year and may do so quite actively in the fall. At a distance the famous drumming gives more the effect of a pulsation in the air than a distinct sound. When one is closer it is heard as slow beats, widely spaced, that increase in frequency until they become a muffled roar that fades out as it ends.

The ruffed grouse is not a migratory bird, but there is considerable local movement, especially in the fall. It can still be considered a 'fair game' bird as long as suitable habitat exists. But in many areas when the forests are maturing and eliminating the necessary undergrowth to sustain this species, wild turkeys are increasing and the grouse are decreasing.



**"Like" Audubon on Facebook, and you could win a trip to the Galapagos Islands!**

Visit [www.facebook.com/NationalAudubonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/NationalAudubonSociety) for details.

*Our chapter is on Facebook, too! Just look for Robert Cooper Audubon Society.*

# Together Green wrap-up

by Jon Creek

The Cardinal Greenway-Hughes Woods habitat restoration project has successfully moved toward completion. This project was part of the National Audubon Together Green grant program that was sponsored by Toyota; RCAS had been selected from a national pool in August, 2010, to receive funding for our project. Our local partners were Cardinal Greenways, Red-tail Conservancy, Muncie Delaware Clean and Beautiful, and Blue Ash Consulting.

By the end of August, the Project had involved 150 volunteers contributing almost 1,000 hours of their time, removing invasives, planting native species, and cleaning up the property. An additional 85 schoolchildren took part in the educational activities of the project.

A total of 1,000 native trees and shrubs were planted in Hughes Woods and along the Greenway from Jackson Street to Hackley Street. In addition, 1,200 native grass plugs were planted in front of the levee wall between Phillips Quarry and the Greenway. The long stretch of 90-degree weather made watering of the plants imperative for their survival and most of them made it through the heat and dryness successfully.

The project produced an unforeseen bonus for woodpeckers, nuthatches and creepers. Over 100 medium to large invasive trees (white mulberry, tree of heaven and honey locust) were killed, turning them into food sources and nesting habitat as they decay in the coming years. They will eventually be replaced in the overstory by the oaks that we planted, therefore providing much more food for all wildlife.

Even though the official end of the TG grant was August 30, work will continue for at least the next year. We will follow up with spraying the invasive seedlings that will sprout next spring and we will spread native grass seeds this winter for 2012 germination. Due to the dominance of honeysuckle and the spraying of invasive seedlings, there is currently almost no cover at all in the wooded areas of Hughes. The goal is to populate the understory with native plant cover and suppress invasive species.

We will be erecting informative signage explaining the history of the site as well as the restoration process, in order to educate the public and Cardinal Greenway trail users about the Hughes Woods restoration project. Small identifying signs will identify some of the most prominent species that have been planted by the project volunteers.



**We're moving!** Starting in January, our monthly meetings will be held at the Muncie Public Library Kennedy Branch, located at 1700 W. McGalliard Rd. in Muncie. Meetings will begin at 7 pm, with chapter business and refreshments, and programs will begin at 7:15 pm.

## Digital Avian Collection

Ball State University Libraries and the Biology Department have collaborated to bring a bird specimen collection to the web. The collection includes 52 specimens found in North America, South America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

Of particular note in the collection is the Passenger Pigeon, an extinct species once native to North America. The last Passenger Pigeon died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. Visit this link to check out the collection: <http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm4/collection.php?CISOROOT=/AvnSpcmns>.

## Feed the birds, send a kid to camp!

Don't forget that we're selling birdseed, to raise funds for our Youth Ecology Camp Scholarship Fund! If you place an order by the first of the month, you can pick up your seed at the next chapter meeting.

An order form was included in the Aug./Sept. 2010 Chat, but you can also download it at our website ([www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)).

## **Audubon Society Book Sale Donations**

We need your gently used books, DVDs, and CDs! **On Nov. 28 and 29**, we will have a book sale to benefit Robert Cooper Audubon Society. If you have items to donate, please contact Sarah McKillip at [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu) or (765) 287-8464.

### Book sale event details:

Nov. 28-29, 9:00 am-2:00 pm, at the Ball State University Alumni Center

Hardbacks: \$2

Paperbacks: \$1

DVDs: \$2

CDs: \$1

## Robert Cooper Audubon Society



Robert Cooper Audubon Society  
Nona Nunnely  
1302 N. Alden Rd.  
Muncie, IN 47304

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*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.

### **Dates for Your Calendar**

- Oct. 22:** “The Big Year”
- Oct. 30:** Summit Lake field trip
- Nov. 7:** Banquet reservations due
- Nov. 12:** Paws water treatment tour
- Nov. 14:** Conservation banquet
- Nov. 28-29:** Book sale
- Dec. 12:** “Saving Pelican 895”
- Dec. 15:** Newsletter format requests due
- Dec. 17:** Christmas Bird Count

**Chapter Website:** [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)

**Email:** [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com)

### **Meetings**

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

1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway  
Muncie, IN

**7:00 p.m.:** Chapter Business

**7:15 p.m.:** Scheduled Program



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### **Officers**

- |                 |                 |              |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Co-Presidents:  | Sarah McKillip  | 287-8464     |
|                 | Jon Creek       | 348-4019     |
| Recording Sec.: | Jennifer Wagner | 845-536-3285 |
| Treasurer       | Nona Nunnely    | 284-0751     |

### **Directors**

- |           |               |              |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| 2010-2012 | Dave Cramer   | 260-726-9492 |
|           | Willy DeSmet  | 260-726-6693 |
| 2011-2013 | Joel Jeffcoat | 286-2896     |
|           | Phil Tuttle   | 289-4251     |

### **Committee Chairs**

- |                |                  |              |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Conservation:  | Charlie Mason    | 288-9937     |
| Education:     | Debbie Brown     | 747-9332     |
| Field Trip:    | Rose Jeffery     | 716-0299     |
| Hospitality:   | Doris Cheney     | 288-0981     |
| Membership:    | Laurie Lindberg  | 282-7516     |
| Newsletter Ed. | Meredith Sims    | 317-640-8205 |
| Program:       | Jennifer Wagner  | 845-536-3285 |
| Publicity:     | Barb Hesselgrave | 228-9673     |
| Pres. Emeritus | Barb Stedman     | 288-2890     |