

# The Chat



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

Volume 38 , No. 5

Nov./Dec. 2012

Friday, November 16, 5 pm & 6 pm

## Owls in Indiana: Owl Prowl!



*Great Horned Owl, itsnature.org*

Have you ever wondered what predatory birds come out after dark in eastern Indiana? On owl-filled evening at **Kennedy Library** is in store for all ages!

Beginning at **5 pm on Friday, Nov. 16**, the Junior Audubon Society will host the November Owl Prowl

with Dr. Tom Sproat of Northern Kentucky University. He will present an **interactive program about owls geared for kids** with fun-fill activities!

Accompanying him will be three live owls common to East Central Indiana. Be sure to bring your cameras, as there will be opportunities for up-close looks at these amazing creatures of the night! Children must be accompanied by their parents for this event. Admission is free.

Directly after the children's program, at **6 pm**, Dr. Sproat will present a **program for adults** with the same three species of live owls that make East Central Indiana their home. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about Indiana's nocturnal predatory birds and this chance to view these spectacular creatures up-close. Bring your questions – AND your cameras!

The public is welcome. No charge for admission.

Monday, December 10, 7 pm

## Waterfowl Migration

Do you know where, how, and why waterfowl migrate? At our December meeting, Adam Phelps, a wildlife biologist with the Indiana Department of Fish and Wildlife, will discuss the migration of waterfowl (primarily mallards, Canada geese, and wood ducks) within Indiana as well as the Mississippi Flyway.

Particular attention will be paid to what banding can tell us. He will touch on how relatively small-scale positive habitat changes seem to be affecting large-scale movement patterns in these birds. Please join us in what is sure to be an informative evening on these fascinating creatures.

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



*Adam Phelps bands a Canada goose in South Bend, IN*

Monday, November 19, 6 pm

## \* Conservation Awards Banquet \*

Join us for a very special evening as we honor the 2012 recipients of our chapter's annual conservation awards. This year's banquet is set for **Monday, November 19, from 6:00-8:30 pm**, at **MCL cafeteria**, at the Muncie Mall. The evening will begin with dinner, followed by door prizes, presentation of the awards, and a brief presentation with pictures from each award winner.

Dinner will be purchased individually from the cafeteria line and brought into our reserved MCL banquet room. Because diners can purchase as much or as little food as they like from the line, no reservations are required. Opening remarks and seating begin at 6:00 pm. Banquet-goers will be released to the food line shortly thereafter.

Contact Sarah McKillip with questions at [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu) or 765-287-8464.

This is an inspiring, fun-filled evening, so please join us and bring your friends and family!

## Birdseed for sale

Birdseed from Seedy Sally's in Pendleton may be ordered on a monthly basis. Types for sale include supreme mix, black oil, thistle, and suet cakes, in bags ranging from 10-50 lbs. Birdseed purchases may be picked up at the monthly meetings at Kennedy Library.

Contact Sarah McKillip for pricing and placing of orders: [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu) or 765-287-8464. All proceeds benefit our local chapter.

Sunday, November 11

## Field Trip: Summit Lake

This November we will be off to have a wonderful autumn day observing the waterfowl of the area. Our destination is Summit Lake, where we hope to see a variety of migrating waterfowl, under the expert guidance of Randy Jones.

We'll gather at the intersection of Henry County Rds. 500 E and 750 N at **noon** on Sunday, Nov. 11. (See [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org) for a map.) Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science lot (on Ball State's campus) at **11:15**. We hope that you won't miss this beautiful day before winter's chill begins to set in!

Rose Jeffery, Field Trip Chair: [rosemariejeffery@gmail.com](mailto:rosemariejeffery@gmail.com)



Summit Lake waterfront



## There's a Sign for That!

Interpretive signage is now up at the Hughes Nature Preserve! The next time you visit the preserve, you'll find four signs that provide visitors with information about the site's history, invasive plant species, and the work that our chapter did to restore the habitat there.

The preserve is a 5.37-acre property, plus surrounding acres, near the intersection of Brady St. and the Cardinal Greenway in Muncie. As autumn gives us one last colorful hurrah, it's the perfect time to visit the area.

Visit our website ([www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)) for a map of the preserve's location.

Sunday, November 4, 1-4 pm

## Work Day at Hughes Nature Preserve

Join us for another wonderful work day at the Hughes Nature Preserve in Muncie! We need help cutting and treating new bush honeysuckle growth, moving brush piles, and cleaning up trash.

Wear work clothes, including work shoes/boots and gloves, and bring your own water bottle (and loppers, if you have any).

We'll gather at the intersection of Brady St. and the Cardinal Greenway. Visit [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org) for a map. Questions? Contact Jon Creek (765-348-4019).

December 3 & 4, BSU Alumni Center

## \* Book Sale \*

### Donations & volunteers needed!

Our chapter is teaming up with the BSU chapter of the American Society for Microbiology to hold a book sale in the Ball State Alumni Center on **Dec. 3 and 4** (Monday & Tuesday) from **9 am to 6 pm** each day.

To make the sale a success, we need your donations! You can bring your hardcover books, softcover books, DVDs, and CDs to the Nov. 16 chapter meeting or the Nov. 19 banquet.

Volunteers are also needed for the event, to work in two-hour shifts on both days of the sale. If interested and available, please contact Sarah McKillip, at 765-287-8464 or [smregister@bsu.edu](mailto:smregister@bsu.edu).

If you're a fan of fiction, nonfiction, biography, mystery, religious, vintage, or any other genre you could possibly imagine, you're likely to find something special during this two-day event. Proceeds from the book sale will benefit the Robert Cooper Audubon Society's conservation projects and efforts, so be sure to pop by to pick up a fresh read and help a worthy cause in the process.

# Nov./Dec. Bird of the Month: Mute Swan

by Helen Twibell



*Cygnus olor*

Mute swans were introduced to North America from Europe in the late 1880s as an ornamental species. First raised in captivity, escaped swans established wild populations in a number of states, Indiana included.

A mute swan is a very large bird, measuring 56-62 inches in length and weighing 25-30 pounds. It has a long curved neck and is both beautiful and graceful, thus adding to the scenery of any lake. The swan is all white with a prominent black knob at the base of its large orange bill. The knob is larger on the male, or cob, than on the female, or pen. It often swims with its wings arched over its back.

The mute swan hisses loudly when it feels threatened or is disturbed. A loud trumpeting is rarely heard, but the wings, with an eight-foot wingspan, make a distinctive whirring sound in flight.

Though normally docile when not breeding, swans may attack people, mammals, and other birds that get too close to their nests during breeding season. Typical nests are piles of sticks, roots, and sometimes even trash on an islet in the shallow margin of a pond or on a lake bank near the water. The 5 or 7 eggs in each nest are tinged with gray or blue-green. The young, cygnets, are dingy gray-brown, becoming whiter with age. They usually stay with the parent swans about four months.

The mute swan feeds almost exclusively on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), sometimes known as bay grass. An adult swan can consume eight pounds of SAV daily, year round, with potential to eat or otherwise destroy twenty pounds of SAV in a single day.

The resulting impact on the East coast of the U.S. is tremendous. For

example, in Maryland's portion of Chesapeake Bay, there are currently 3,600 mute swans. In 10 years, if populations are unchecked, the Bay will have 20,000 mute swans eating 58 million pounds of bay grass a year. Adverse ecological impacts quickly multiply. By destroying grass beds, the swans are also destroying the homes of seahorses, pipefish, crabs, juvenile fishes, ducks, and herons, thus affecting the whole ecosystem.

The Chesapeake Bay is only one example. Many other locations on the Atlantic coast and across the country will be ruined if swan populations are not controlled – an effort endorsed by every state and provincial wildlife management agency along the Atlantic coast in the U.S. and Canada, and by the National Audubon Society. Mute swans have a tremendous reproductive capacity and have no natural predators, so in time they can overpopulate and damage every area in which they become established.

Although non-lethal methods to control population growth will continue to be used, lethal control is considered necessary to reduce the number of swans. The quickest and most humane way (according to reports) to make a 67 percent decrease in the swan population is to kill adult birds by shooting, and/or live trapping followed by euthanasia, plus egg addling (shaking of eggs to prevent hatching of cygnets). Techniques such as harassment, exclusionary devices, and behavioral modification generally are not very effective.

All of these Department of Natural Resources (DNR) controls were issued in the early 2000s, and most of them may be conducted only upon receipt of a special permit issued by the Fish and Wildlife Services. In 2012 one current issue is that the Michigan Humane Society is demanding a moratorium on lethal control of free-ranging mute swans.

Fortunately, at least for now, mute swans are not in great number in Indiana. Some, however, are attracted to the

northern part of the state because of wetlands and a climate to their liking. The highest population seems to be in northeastern Indiana, where the lakes tend to be shallower.

In Indiana the mute swan is currently protected, so a permit is required to remove one. The DNR had looked at the possibility of using lethal means to decrease the swan population in its nesting areas in northern Indiana, specifically Chapman Lake, St. Joe River, Palestine Lake, Deward Lake, Barbee Lakes, Tippecanoe Lake, Backwaters/Webster Lake, Lake James Chain, Crooked Lake, Dallas Chain and Indiana Chain. An aerial survey and discussions with residents determined that lethal action was unnecessary.

Instead, according to a 2008 report, non-lethal methods to decrease the swan population would be used: destruction of nests, egg oiling and egg addling. Additional steps would be taken by the DNR, including public instruction about interaction with wildlife and swan removal on a case-by-case basis when nesting swans become a particular threat to humans, wildlife, or habitat. The DNR plans included using input from local concerned residents to help make choices in swan control, with annual reassessment as to how to proceed.

Mute swans are not "bad" animals. They are just animals that have been introduced to areas in which their behavior and biology can present a danger to the ecosystem. One fact that may be against them is that they do not migrate to far distances as the trumpeter and tundra swans do. They move only to fairly close waters that are open in winter.

The future of mute swans and their place in our ecological systems will be in the hands of DNR officials, scientists of all states involved, and concerned citizens working together to formulate a humane, intelligent, and workable plan for the management of the mute swan population.

## **Robert Cooper Audubon Society**

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### **Chapter-only membership renewals due January 1**

You can join our chapter two different ways: 1) by joining the National Audubon Society (NAS), 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 NAS membership. Chapter-only

members do not receive the *Audubon* magazine, but every penny of their membership dues goes to our local chapter.)

To **become a new member** of our Audubon chapter or **renew** your chapter-only membership, send your dues (basic membership is \$20/year),

to Phyllis De Smet, Membership Chair, 2884 S. Blaine Pike, Portland, IN, 47371. **Be sure to include your address, phone number, and email address.**

For other membership options or to use the official membership renewal form, visit [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org).

#### **Dates for Your Calendar**

- Nov. 4:** Hughes Nature Preserve Work Day
- Nov. 11:** Summit Lake field trip
- Nov. 16:** Owls in Indiana/Owl Prowl program
- Nov. 19:** Conservation Awards Banquet
- Dec. 3-4:** Alumni Center Book Sale
- Dec. 10:** Waterfowl Migration program
- Jan. 1:** Chapter-only membership renewals due

**Chapter Website:** [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)  
**Email:** [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto: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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