

The Chat



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

Volume 40, number 5 | November/December 2014

Conservation Awards Banquet

Thursday, November 13

Join us for our annual conservation awards banquet. You will find out which individuals and organizations have been doing great things to help protect the environment in our part of Indiana. You'll also get to enjoy an amazing meal prepared by professional chef, Lois Altman, who also happens to be a member of our Audubon chapter! Vegetarian and vegan needs can be accommodated.

The dinner will be held from **6-8 p.m.** at the **Unitarian Universalist Church**, at 4800 W. Bradford in Muncie.

Tickets are \$15 each and must be purchased by November 9. To purchase your tickets, make checks payable to the Robert Cooper Audubon Society and mail to:

Robert Cooper Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1635
Muncie, IN 47308-1635

Alternatively, checks or cash can be dropped off to Robert Williams, chapter Treasurer, (765) 730-8427.

~BANQUET MENU~

~Roasted acorn squash with double rice pilaf and dried cherries~

~Braised fall vegetables~

~Chocolate "pot de crème"~

Served with:

~Simple green salad with house-made dressing~

~Homemade bread~

Passenger pigeon presentation at Minnetrista

Monday, November 10



Joel Greenberg, one of the nation's top passenger pigeon experts and author of *A Feathered River across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction*, will be speaking at **Minnetrista** at **7 p.m.** His visit, co-sponsored by our chapter and Minnetrista, is one of several local events dedicated to the passenger pigeon this fall.

Greenberg is a leader of Project Passenger Pigeon, a nationwide movement commemorating the 100-year anniversary of the bird's extinction. In *A Feathered River* he examines historical accounts of the birds, which once numbered in the billions, and the relentless efforts that drove them to extinction by 1914. His book reminds readers about the impact of humans on other species that likewise might be facing extinction.

Visitors are invited to come to Minnetrista early on the 10th in order to tour a passenger pigeon exhibit that runs from November 1 to March 1. Free admission to the exhibit will be offered on this evening only.

Support the Mounds Greenway Plan

"Don't Dam It!" signs are available to place in your yard, your car bumper, or anywhere else. Contact Rose Jeffery, 765-747-9699.

Upcoming Events

Summit Lake Field Trip

Saturday, November 1

We'll meet along CR 500 south of CR 750 at **9 a.m.** and bird at Summit Lake. If the weather is good, we may check out Prairie Creek on the way back towards Muncie.

Muncie Christmas Bird Count

Sunday, December 14

Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a citizen-science program that combines the joy of bird watching with the scientific aim of documenting population trends. People of all ages and skill levels are invited to participate. Binoculars are available for those without their own.

Volunteers will meet up with their assigned groups at **8 a.m.**, and then set out to count birds in and around Muncie. A hot lunch will be provided at 11:30 a.m.

Alternatively, at **1 p.m.**, families may bring young children to participate in a one-hour, **kid-friendly CBC at the Minnetrista Cultural Center**. We'll help little ones track and record birds outdoors, and then head back inside for some seasonal treats and hot chocolate. Coloring sheets, fun photo-checklists, and binoculars will be provided.

Participants are also welcome to count the birds at their home feeders.

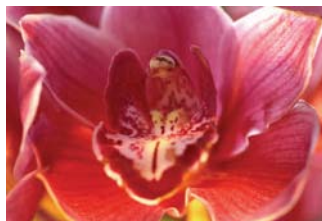
If you'd like to join us, please contact the CBC coordinator, Robert Williams, at either robert.j.williams@comcast.net or (765) 730-8427.

Orchid Varieties and Cultivation

Wednesday, December 17

At our December chapter meeting, Russ Vernon will deliver a lecture on orchid varieties and cultivation. Vernon's company New Vision Orchids shows incredible specimens throughout the country and provides useful tips and tricks on how amateur enthusiasts can successfully grow their own plants. Vernon will present specimens from his own collection and will be happy to answer questions about proper orchid care.

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



Minnetrista Monthly Bird Walks

Sunday, November 9

Sunday, December 14

Beginning in November, we will be leading a monthly bird walk at **Minnetrista** (meet in the lobby) in conjunction with the passenger pigeon exhibit. These walks will be from **1-3 p.m.**, every second Sunday of the month between November and March. The December walk will be a special Christmas Bird Count for the kids. These bird walks are family-friendly and open to the public.

Conservation Project Report:

Osborne Park woods habitat restoration, New Castle

Jon Creek, conservation chair

Osborne Woods is a rare example of a flat woods habitat in a city park that still has a partial herbaceous layer of spring and fall wildflowers and various sedges. Plus, the park boasts an assortment of large native trees and no honeysuckle or autumn olive.

The goal of this project was to restore the native grasses and augment the population of wildflowers and trees. This was to create better wildlife habitat and to provide the area youth and citizens with an example of the original Tipton till plain flat woods. A big advantage of this site is its accessibility to the public compared to nature preserves that tend to be isolated from populations and rarely visited.

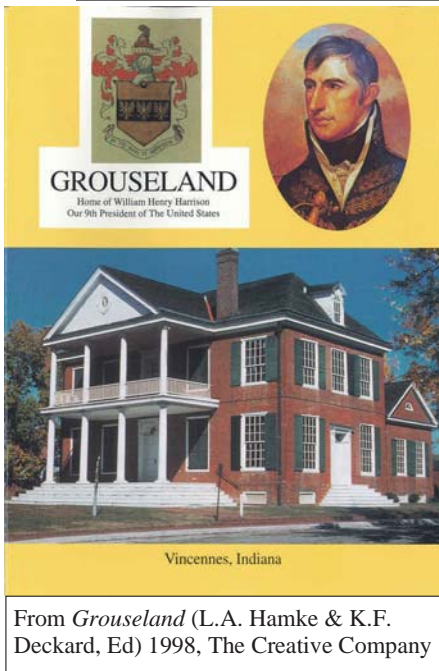
The restoration work began in late summer 2013 with a glyphosate application to kill the non-native grasses after the native forbs had gone dormant. In the early months of spring in 2014, a native grass and forb mix was planted by Jon Creek and project manager Jeff Ray. The seeds were sourced from Spence Restoration Nursery with the assistance of Spence manager Kevin Tungsveck. Kevin has been RCAS's advisor and seed supplier on all of our restoration projects and is an invaluable partner in our restoration work. Our goal is to always plant local genotype seed as opposed to seed sourced from other areas of the country.

In late April, six volunteers led by Jeff planted 450 trees on the 12-acre site. The species included red oak, white oak, bur oak, shagbark hickory, shellbark hickory, redbud and hazelnut.

(Continued on pg. 4)

William Henry Harrison and the Ruffed Grouse

John L. McKillip (jlmckillip@bsu.edu)



Those who hunt the ruffed grouse with a shotgun exert more effort, knowledge, and ammunition than for any other game bird, owing to the elusive nature of these ground-nesters. Those who hunt them with camera rarely fare any better. William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), our ninth president, falls into the first category of grouse enthusiasts, perhaps just short of this pastime being called an obsession. In fact, in the years prior to his presidency, the Indiana Territory Governor and soon-to-be Army General named his Vincennes mansion and grounds Grouseland, for its abundance of these gamebirds. Today, Grouseland is open as a National Historic Landmark that features this early brick home as the center of Territorial political life in the early 19th Century.

The native habitat of the ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) in Indiana is small, and in the southernmost range of this species. Harrison was fortunate to have such an ideal habitat for ruffed grouse sur-

rounding his Federal-style mansion on the Wabash River in Vincennes. The lifestyle Harrison wanted to recreate in Indiana was that of the Virginia planter elite. One can imagine this home often being visited by famous names such as Tecumseh, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and Aaron Burr, with Harrison perhaps taking some of these guests on grouse hunts in the brushy woods surrounding the property. Because Harrison used “freed” indentured black servants, it was likely these men who flushed the grouse out of the brush during hunts. Each spring, Harrison and others would have heard the repeated characteristic drumming of male grouse. This noise is made by the rapid movement of air across the wings, rushing inward to fill the voids created by the rapid beating, eliciting a series of small sonic booms audible for great distances through the wilderness depending on conditions. Drumming not only attracts females but also defends territory from other males.

Alert ruffed grouse lay motionless in the leafy litter and brush on the ground as a defense mechanism, staying silent, still, and well-camouflaged. When a predator approaches too closely, the grouse explodes from the ground and flies nearly straight up, usually frightening the trespasser, at least briefly enough to allow for the grouse to escape. In the absence of a direct threat, ruffed grouse are quite content to peck around on the ground within a very small territory throughout the changing seasons. In fact, the ruffed grouse does not migrate and spends its entire 2-3 year lifespan within this several acre range.

The ruffed grouse is so named for its distinguishing dark-colored neck feathers, or “ruff,” particularly large in the male, and the ruff is a consistent color throughout its entire geographic range. However, those birds in the southern areas, such as in and around Grouseland, will have rusty red *tail* feathers, while the species in Canada all have gray tail feathers. The current status of the ruffed grouse, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), is a species of least concern.

Harrison’s Grouseland stands today as the “Birthplace of Hoosier Hospitality,” and even now is serenely situated on a large knoll specifically selected by Harrison himself. The extended two-year construction (1802-1804) no doubt was the result of Old Tippecanoe’s resolve to have the first brick house in the Indiana Territory at a time and place when bricks were very hard to acquire. This same level of determination was also needed during Harrison’s forays into the woods to acquire his favored ruffed grouse, and later, after his second campaign attempt in 1840, as he finally acquired the U.S. Presidency.

The author is grateful to Dr. Nicole Etcheson, Ball State University Dept. of History, for proofreading this article.



Ruffed grouse male and female, from the collection of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company (orig. drawn by John J. Audubon; engraved, printed, & colored by R. Havell)



Mounds State Park Monthly
Bird Hikes Continue

Join us on the last Sunday of each month from 9-11 a.m. for our monthly bird hikes at Mounds State Park (meet at the visitor center). These hikes have proven to be quite popular with the public, and are a great opportunity to introduce new birders to the joy of being outside and observing our avian counterparts.

Dates for Your Calendar

- Nov. 1:** Summit Lake field trip
- Nov. 9:** Minnetrista Bird Walk
Last chance to purchase banquet tickets
- Nov. 10:** Joel Greenberg Passenger Pigeon Presentation at Minnetrista
- Nov. 13:** Conservation Awards Banquet
- Nov. 30:** Mounds SP Bird Hike
- Dec. 14:** Christmas Bird Count
CBC for Kids at Minnetrista
- Dec. 17:** Orchid Program and monthly meeting
- Dec. 28:** Mounds SP Bird Hike

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org

Find us on **Facebook!**

Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Program meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except July, August, September, & November) at **Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch**
1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN
7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments,
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.

Osborne Park (continued from pg. 2)

The reliable rains of the spring and early summer were ideal for the establishment of all the plantings and the prospects for restoration success is good.

Osborne Park is on the northeast side of New Castle and can easily be found under that name in Mapquest. The restoration area is on the back side of the park, behind the shelters and parking lots, etc. There is a walking trail that circles through the site. Visitors will find it a pleasant destination with its open pastoral sense along with the scattered mature native trees.

Officers

President:	Sarah McKillip	765-287-8464
Vice-President:	Willy De Smet	260-726-6693
Recording Sec.:	Carol Islam	765-284-9872
Treasurer:	Robert Williams	765-730-8427

Directors

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	Jim Jeffery	765-747-9699
2014-2016:	Annette Rose	765-741-8376
	Kevin Tungsveck	765-354-2775

Committee chairs

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Education:	Deborah Brown	765-747-9332
Field Trip:	Rose Jeffery	765-716-0299
Hospitality:	Doris Cheney	765-288-0981
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