

The Chat



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

Volume 38 , No. 4

Sept./Oct. 2012

Sunday, September 9, 1:00 pm

Time for a Picnic!

This year, we'll begin our 2012-2013 program season with a picnic from **1-4 pm at McCulloch Park** in Muncie on Sunday, September 9.

Please bring a hot or cold dish, salad, or dessert to share and your own tableware. Audubon will be providing hamburger/vegetarian burgers, bread, drinks, and sides (the meat will be free-range, all-natural). Afterwards, we'll have the opportunity to play Frisbee golf, tour Hughes Nature Preserve, or just stroll along the White River.

Be sure to bring your binoculars, Frisbees, and friends. This is a family-friendly park with lots of playground equipment, so feel free to bring children along as well.

Driving directions: The north entrance to McCulloch Park is located at the corner of Martin Luther King Blvd. (formerly Broadway) and Centennial in Muncie. From the north entrance, our picnic shelter is the first shelter on the left, next to the Frisbee golf course.

WIPB summer events a success with Junior Audubon members

This summer, our local PBS television station, WIPB, invited the Robert Cooper Audubon Society (RCAS) to join in two of its summer events for children.

The first event, on May 5, was held in partnership with the Cardinal Greenway and the popular children's television program *Dinosaur Train*.

While visiting the RCAS booth, children got up close and personal with a turkey vulture specimen and learned about the shared ancestry of birds and dinosaurs. They also got to try out binoculars, look through field guides, take home bird coloring sheets, and sign up to be a Junior Audubon Society member, complete with a certificate and copy of the *Tweet* newsletter.

Our next event was the Family Fundae at Minnetrista on June 24. While there, kids received a Junior Audubon Certificate and stamp for visiting our booth after observing nearby birds. At both events, RCAS signed up over 25 children and families to begin receiving our newsletter.

A big thank you goes out to Debbie Brown, our Education Chair and Junior Audubon leader, for getting local children interested in birds and nature.

October 8, 7:00 pm

Bats and Wind Energy

The US represents 20% of the world's installed wind energy power. Indiana is the third-fastest growing state in wind energy capacity, ranking 13th in the nation with 1,340 megawatts of wind power.

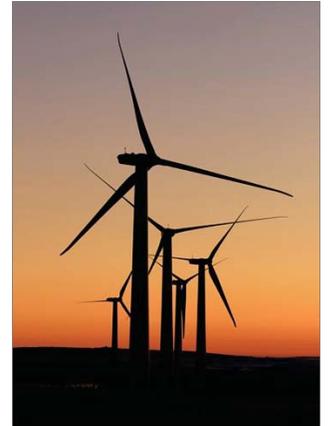
Harnessing the power of wind has great potential for our future energy demands, but it is not entirely environmentally neutral.

Concerns over bat fatalities at wind turbines were first realized in 2003, when an estimated 1,300 to 4,000 bats were killed at a wind facility in West Virginia. In 2004 the Bat and Wind Energy Cooperative was formed to initiate research on this issue. Currently annual bat fatalities are estimated in the hundreds of thousands, and with the added mortality related to White-Nose Syndrome there is concern about regional extinction of certain bat species.

For our October program, Michael Schirmacher, Wind Energy Fields Project Biologist for Bat Conservation International, will discuss research methods aimed at reducing bat fatalities at wind energy facilities.

This talk is perfect for anyone interested in understanding more about the issues of renewable energy.

Chapter business will begin at **7 pm at Kennedy Library**. The program will get underway at 7:15.



Work day at Hughes Nature Preserve: Saturday, Oct. 20, 9:00 am

Join us for a 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. Loppers and heavy black garbage bags would be appreciated, too.

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

Upcoming Field Trips

Rose Jeffery, Field Trip Chair: rosejeffery@gmail.com, 765-716-0299

Sept. 1: Fox Island

Fox Island is a 605-acre park in Allen County; 270 acres are a State Nature Preserve. The park has a variety of different habitats, including a marsh, seasonal ponds, a wetland forest, and even a dune!

On Saturday, Sept. 1, Jim Haw will lead us on a joint field trip with the Stockbridge Audubon chapter. Meet at Fox Island at the Bird Observation Building parking lot at **7:30 am**. Please note that there is a \$2 entrance fee.

Carpoolers from Muncie will meet at **6 am** at the Cooper Science parking lot on Ball State's campus.

To get there on your own: Take I-69 north to exit 99/299* (Lower Huntington Rd. toward the airport expressway). *Exit 99 was to be renumbered 299 in August.

Turn right onto Lower Huntington, then take the first left to stay on it. Take the second left onto Branstrator Rd., then turn right onto Yohne Rd. Fox Island, at 7324 Yohne, is on the left.

After you enter the park, go straight through a 4-way stop just past the gatehouse and continue to the end of the road. Turn left into the parking lot for the meeting house.

Oct. 6: Mucatatuck NWR

Established in 1966, Muscatatuck was Indiana's first National Wildlife Refuge. Its mission is to restore, preserve, and manage a mix of forest, wetland, and grassland habitats. Management of waterfowl, other migratory birds, river otters, and endangered species is a high priority.



On Saturday, Oct. 6, Muscatatuck volunteer Dave Crouch will lead us on a tour of the refuge, starting at **9:30 am**.

Carpoolers will leave from Ball State's Cooper Science parking lot at **7 am**. Bring a picnic lunch. If the birding is good, we may continue after lunch, or simply explore the park.

To get there on your own: Take I-69 south to I-465 south in Indianapolis. Follow I-465 17 miles to I-65 and head south for app. 57 miles. Exit at 50A to merge onto US 50 E / E Tipton St. toward N Vernon and travel 0.7 miles.

Turn right onto US 31 S and travel 0.3 miles. Then turn left onto E County Rd 500 N and travel 0.6 miles to the park entrance. Meet at the visitor center, which is near the entrance, on the right. The park's address is 12985 US 50 E, Seymour.

Oct. 14: Eagle Creek Park

On Sunday, Oct. 14, we'll join the weekly Eagle Creek Park bird hike, which occurs year round from **9-11 am** each Sunday. The hike is led by members of Amos W. Butler Audubon Society and begins at the park's Ornithology Center. The park entry fee is \$5 per car.

Carpoolers will leave the Cooper Science lot at **7:30 am**.

To get there on your own: Take I-69 south to Indianapolis and merge onto I-465 west. Follow I-465 onto its south loop. Take exit 21 and turn right onto westbound 71st St.

After the junctions with Lafayette Rd. and I-65, 71st St. turns into Eagle Creek Parkway. The park will be on the right. After entering the park follow signs for the Ornithology Center. The park's address is 6515 Delong Road.

Call for Nominations

Our November 19 awards banquet will honor individuals and organizations that have made noteworthy contributions to the environment in our region, perhaps even the state, in these categories:

- Robert H. and Esther (Munro) Cooper Conservation Award: the chapter's highest honor, for overall contributions to, conservation of, and appreciation for, the natural environment
- Phyllis Yuhás Wildlife Habitat Preservation: for development or preservation of habitat that contains significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations
- Richard Greene Public Service: for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns
- Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award: for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and /or adults on conservation issues and practices
- Charles Wise Youth Conservation Award: for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under age 18

To make the event a success, we need your help. If you know of an individual or organization that deserves recognition for service to the natural environment in any of the above categories, please send your nomination, along with a description of the nominee and his or her contact information, to Sarah McKillip at smregister@bsu.edu or at the following address: 2804 W. Sun Valley Pkwy. Muncie, IN 47303. *Be sure to include your own name, phone number, address, and email address.*

Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region and they need no affiliation with the Audubon Society. Nominations must be received by **October 10**.

Living Lightly Fair: Sept. 15, 9 am - 5 pm

Living Lightly, a resource fair for sustainable lifestyles, will soon be here!

This year's fair will take place on **Saturday, Sept. 15**, at Minnetrista. The day is packed full of speakers, vendors in the Green Marketplace, music, art, kids' activities, and more – all with the aim of inspiring fair-goers to live more sustainably and save resources, energy, and money!

The **featured events** this year will be:

- Bob Schildgen, aka “**Mr. Green**,” who’ll tackle the sometimes confusing questions of green living. Send your questions to sustainablelivingfair@gmail.com by Sept. 2, and you may win the opportunity to have dinner with Bob on Sept. 14!
- The showing of ***Bag It***, an entertaining and inspiring documentary that asks, “Is your life too plastic?”
- Appearances by **Sid the Science Kid** every hour on the half-hour, along with the opportunity to experience Sid’s Science Lab all day long.
- The **music of Jennie DeVoe**, one of the Midwest's most highly respected and well-known independent singer/

songwriters. If you like, enjoy her concert with a glass of wine from Wilson Winery.

The day’s other events include a **sustainable art show**, sponsored by Students for Responsible Consumerism, and the tremendously popular **River of Fish**. With help from the Ball State Clay Guild, participants create a clay fish and add it to the ever-expanding “river.”

Speakers will cover a wide range of topics: the importance of buying and eating local foods, solar and geothermal energy for homes and businesses, home energy assessments, building with natural materials, and landscaping with native plants.

Visit www.livinglightlyfair.org for complete information about the day’s activities. And remember that Living Lightly – including speakers and music – is FREE, thanks to the fair’s generous sponsors!



Bird of the Month: Common Merganser by Helen Twibell



Mergus merganser



immerse,” plus *anser*, or “goose.”

The merganser is a large diving duck, about 25-27” in length. Its large body, which is long, thin and heavy, causes it to ride low in the water. The male, mainly whitish in appearance, has a green head, black back, white sides, chest and neck, and pointed reddish bill.

The female merganser has a body the same shape and size as the male’s, with a gray body, white chest, and long, pointed red bill. She has a rust-red head with ragged “hair” on the back (actually a shaggy crest of fine feathers), which can appear combed to the side, care-

fully brushed back in a beautiful fluffy do, pulled back and slicked down, or sticking out over all her head, much like a modern “spike” or punk do.

The merganser is often called “sawbill” because of the fine, tooth-like serrations along the side of the long red bills that help in grasping slippery fish, which constitute their main diet. Common mergansers are shallow water divers that feed on small fish in no more than 10 or 15 feet of water.

Mergansers are reported on waters around Muncie in season. In winter, most of the wintering mergansers in Indiana have been recorded in the northern part of the state, and are reported to be one of the most common ducks on Lake Michigan in winter. Large winter congregations have been observed on lakes and reservoirs, but when these freeze over, the birds frequent the largest rivers that are free of ice, especially the Tippecanoe, St. Joseph, and Wabash.

Mostly a fresh-water duck, the merganser prefers clear water in which to see its prey with greater ease. When feeding, it swims with its head under

water to the eyes, diving as it locates food. It feeds chiefly on fish, but in some waters will eat large quantities of eels, crayfish, frogs, and aquatic insects. Most of the fish consumed are 2-6”, with occasional catches up to 15”.

Since the merganser is a diver and swims underwater to find food, its feet are near the tail, which causes it to walk more vertically when on land. Also, the merganser must run several feet on the water before taking off in flight, instead of jumping directly into the air.

In the past there have been conflicting reports on the possible negative effect that mergansers have on game and food fish. However, more recent research has found that the birds actually help keep fish populations below carrying capacity in wilderness lakes, thus promoting rapid growth in the fish that are left. Mergansers do not seem to be attracted to salmon or trout streams except when forced from quiet waters by winter freezing.

There are no reports to be found of nesting mergansers in Indiana. All the population maps show breeding

Continued on page 4

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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



Bird of the Month, cont'd from page 3

grounds across Canada from eastern Alaska, Newfoundland, south to mountains in California, northern New Mexico, Great Lakes, and northern New England. Pairs are formed in the late winter and, until then, one is likely to find flocks of 5 to 20 composed entirely of either males or females.

On the breeding grounds, nests are

found usually on wooded rivers and ponds and are built in down-lined tree cavities, on the ground, or in an abandoned hawk nests. This is a strategy that requires the downy young to leap to the ground and follow their mother to water just hours after they hatch.

Females often lay eggs in other merganser nests – a practice called “dumping” that may result in broods of up to 15 per mother. The male leaves

the female as soon as she begins to incubate the eggs. Any orphans are taken in by other mothers.

Migrants that have wintered in northern Mexico and Georgia arrive in Indiana in March, and most leave by mid-May for the breeding grounds. Fall migration begins in October, but it is not clear how long some of these birds stay in Indiana before leaving for wintering grounds in the south.

Dates for Your Calendar

- Sept. 1:** Fox Island field trip
- Sept. 9:** Chapter picnic
- Sept. 15:** Living Lightly Fair
- Oct. 6:** Muscatatuck NWR field trip
- Oct. 8:** “Bats & Wind Energy” program
- Oct. 10:** Award nominations due
- Oct. 14:** Eagle Creek Park field trip
- Oct. 20:** Hughes Nature Preserve work day

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.

Officers

Co-Presidents:	Sarah McKillip	765-287-8464
	Jon Creek	765-348-4019
Recording Sec.:	Jennifer Wagner	845-536-3285
Treasurer:	Robert Williams	765-730-8427

Directors

2011-2013:	Joel Jeffcoat	765-286-2896
	Phil Tuttle	765-289-4251
2012-2014:	Dave Cramer	260-726-9492
	Willy De Smet	260-726-6693

Committee chairs

Conservation:	Charlie Mason	765-288-9937
Education:	Deborah Brown	765-747-9332
Field Trip:	Rose Jeffery	765-716-0299
Hospitality:	Doris Cheney	765-288-0981
Membership:	Phyllis De Smet	260-726-6693
Newsletter Ed.:	Meredith Sims	317-640-8205
Program:	Jennifer Wagner	845-536-3285
Publicity:	Barb Hesselgrave	765-228-9673