

# The Chat



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

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Sept/Oct 2013

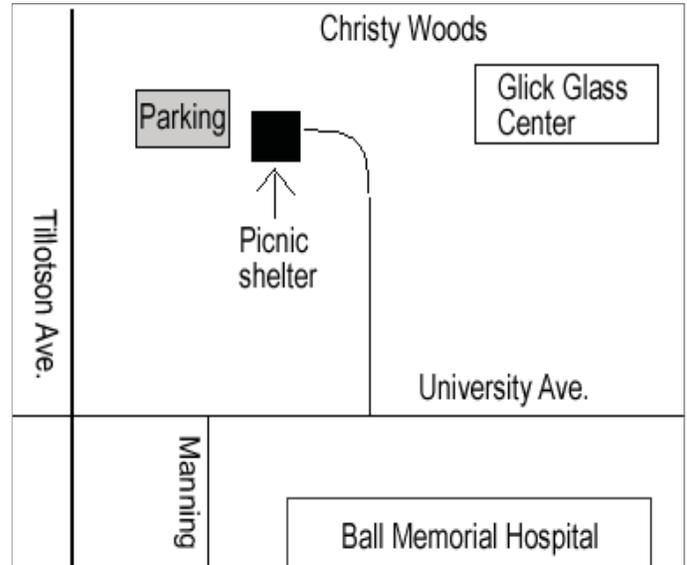
## Sunday, Sept. 8, 1 pm It's picnic time!

Join us on Sunday, September 8, for a fall picnic and nature walk at the Christy Woods picnic shelter to kick off our 2013-2014 program season. The picnic will begin at 1 pm and end by 4 pm.

Please bring a hot or cold dish, salad, or dessert to share and your own tableware. Audubon will provide hamburger/vegetarian burgers, drinks, and sides (the meat will be free-range, all-natural).

Afterwards, we'll have the opportunity to tour Christy Woods' 18 acres of prairie, forested habitats, and wetland. Be sure to bring your binoculars to look for the many fall migratory birds that stop over at Christy Woods on their way south each fall.

Christy Woods' shelter is located on the corner of Tillotson and University Avenues in Muncie. Enter Christy Woods parking lot from University Avenue.



## Monday, Oct. 14, 7 pm Wildlife Resqu Haus

Diana Shaffer, who founded the Wildlife Resqu Haus 50 years ago, will talk about the work she does as a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. She'll bring a couple of her education birds, and she'll share some of the highlights of her work in caring for injured, ill, and orphaned birds, mammals, and other critters.

Come to our first program of the season and learn what wildlife rehabilitators do and why our chapter has supported Diana's important work in rehabilitating and releasing native wildlife. Her presentation will be followed by Q & A.

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



*Diana Shaffer in 2003 with Furbee, a screech owl and one of her favorite education birds*

## Send us your nominations!

Our November 11 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 Yuhas 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

*Continued on page 3*

# Upcoming field trips

Saturday, August 31

## Cooper Farm Prairie

Come and enjoy the high summer prairie! We will begin birding at **8 am** at Cooper Farm, west of Muncie on Bethel Ave., making our way through the prairie restoration to the back wood line.

We'll then rendezvous with John Taylor, land manager for Ball State's field stations, back at the Cooper farmhouse for an update on the prairie and plant walk. We expect to wind up activities between 10 and 10:30.

*Carpooling* from Cooper Science is encouraged. We'll leave from the Cooper Science lot at **7:45 am**. (The lot is on Riverside Ave., between Christy Woods and the Cooper Science building on Ball State's campus.)

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Saturday, September 14

## Salamonie Reservoir

We'll meet at Hominy Ridge Picnic Area in the Salamonie River State Forest at about **8:15 am**.

After a morning of birding in the forest, we'll picnic at Hominy Ridge, so bring a sack lunch and something to drink. After lunch we'll check out other areas around the reservoir and the Nature Center.

*Carpoolers* will leave from Cooper Science at **7 am**.

*To get there on your own:* Follow I-69 north to State Rd 218 toward Van Buren/Warren/Berne. Turn left (west) onto State Rd 128 and follow it to State Rd. 105.

Turn right (north) on State Rd. 105, then left on State Rd. 124. Follow it to County Rd. 600 E and turn right (north). Follow 600 E to County Rd. 250 S and turn left.

Look out for Dam Rd., which should come up pretty quickly on the right. Turn right (north) there and take the left fork – Pefley Rd. – into the Salamonie River State Forest. Follow signs to the Hominy Ridge Picnic Area.

This is a rather convoluted route, but there is sometimes nice birding along the county roads. A site map can be downloaded from the Salamonie Lake DNR website.



*Salamonie Reservoir*

Sunday, September 29

## Eagle Creek Park

We'll join in the weekly Eagle Creek (Indianapolis) bird hike, which occurs year-round from 9-11 am. The hike, led by members of Amos W. Butler Audubon Society, usually brings out many excellent birders. Meet at the park's Ornithology Center at **9 am**. 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 head west on I-465 (the north 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 Rd.

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Saturday, October 5

## Muscatatuck Natnl. Wildlife Refuge

At Muscatatuck, Indiana's first National Wildlife Refuge, management for waterfowl, other migratory birds, and endangered species is a high priority!

We'll begin our exploration of the refuge at the visitors center at **9:30 am**. Bring a sack lunch and a drink.

*Carpoolers* will leave from Cooper Science lot at 7am.

*To get there on your own:* Take I-69 south to I-465 south in Indianapolis. Take I-465 south 17 miles to I-65 and head south for about 57 miles. Exit onto US-50 east / East Tipton St. toward N. Vernon. The park is 3 miles east of the I-65 / US 50 interchange at Seymour, IN. The main entrance is on US 50, and on the right.

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Saturday, October 19

## Goose Pond

This will be our first autumn trip to Goose Pond to see the other side of the migration! Lisa Bowman, whose birding expertise and knowledge of the area greatly enriched our spring trip, has generously agreed to lead us again.

We plan to do some birding and hiking at Morgan Monroe State Forest on Friday. If enough people are interested in this possibility, we'll try to arrange for a volunteer guide.

On Saturday morning we'll gather at the Linton McDonald's and rendezvous with Lisa, then head to Goose Pond.

While McCormick Creek's Canyon Inn is completely sold out for that weekend, accommodations should be available at any one of several area motels for Friday evening.

Rose Jeffery, Field Trip Chair, *needs feedback about this trip* to be sure enough people are interested to make it worth Lisa's time. **Email her** at [rosemariejeffery@gmail.com](mailto:rosemariejeffery@gmail.com) if you think you'll attend and let her know if you're interested in visiting Morgan Monroe as well.

# Living Lightly Fair

Sept. 21, 9 am - 5 pm, Minnetrista

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

This year's fair will take place on **Saturday, Sept. 21**, 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 in the process!

The **featured speaker** will be **Will Allen** – the son of a sharecropper, former professional basketball player, ex-corporate sales leader, and now farmer. The founder and CEO of Growing Power, a farm and community food

Come to a “meet and greet” with Will Allen at the Downtown Farm Stand, 125 E. Main St. in Muncie, on Friday, Sept. 21, from 7:00-8:30 pm.

center in Milwaukee, Allen is widely considered the leading authority in the expanding field of urban agriculture. He promotes the belief that all people, regardless of their economic circumstances, should have access to fresh, safe, affordable and nutritious foods at all

times. In 2010 he was named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 World's Most Influential People.

Allen's featured talk, from **10:00-11:15**, will be “**Growing healthy, sustainable food in your local community.**” At **2:30** he'll give a workshop demonstration on **composting**, followed by a book-signing.

The rest of the day's **speakers** will cover a wide range of topics: DIY rain barrels, raising chickens, passive strategies for conserving energy in the home, worm composting, organic gardening, the importance of buying local foods (especially meats), and glass recycling.

**Children** will find plenty to do all day at Curious George's Curiosity Center, and throughout the day



**Curious George** himself will make several appearances!

The ever-popular **River of Fish** – which allows everyone, from children to adults, to make a clay fish – will again be brought to Living Lightly by Ball State's Clay Guild. And fair-goers will get to vote for their favorite works in a **sustainable art show**, sponsored by BSU's Students for a Responsible Consumerism,

Throughout the day, fair-goers can browse the vendors and exhibitors in the Green Marketplace and grab a bite to eat from Payne's Restaurant or The Island.

The day will end from **3:45-5:00** with the **music of Salaam**, a wonderful Bloomington-based ensemble that has an expansive repertoire of Middle Eastern and North African music. Its eclectic style also ventures into the sounds of jazz, rock, blues, classical and avant garde.

Enjoy a glass of wine from Wilson Winery while you listen!

Visit [www.livinglightlyfair.org](http://www.livinglightlyfair.org) for complete information and a schedule of the day's activities.

Admission to the entire day's events – including speakers and music – is **FREE!** The Robert Cooper Audubon Society remains a proud sponsor of the fair. Come visit our tent!

## Nominations, continued from page 1

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 organization or individual who deserves recognition for his or her service to the natural environment in any of the above categories, please *send your nomina-*

*tion*, along with a description of the nominee and his or her contact information, to Sarah McKillip at [sarahrmckillip@gmail.com](mailto:sarahrmckillip@gmail.com) or at 2804 W. Sun Valley Pkwy. Muncie, IN 47303.

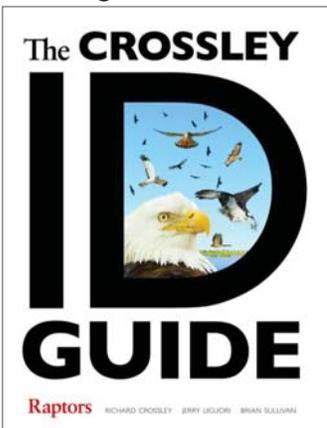
Nominations must be received by **Oct. 14.** *Be sure to include your own name, phone number, address, and email address.*

Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region and they need no affiliation with the Audubon Society. A list of past recipients is linked from our website, [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org), at the bottom of the “Monthly Programs” page.

# Bird Identification and Beyond by Willy De Smet

In case you missed it, *The Crossley ID Guide – Eastern Birds* by Richard Crossley was published in 2011 (Princeton Uni. Press). *Eastern Birds* covers over 660 species in 529 pages. It's a hefty book: 7.5 by 10 and 1.25 inches thick. At 2 lbs., this is not a field guide that you slip in your pocket. It is "flexibound," which means it will stay open if you put it on a flat surface.

The species illustrations show a photographic background of a typical landscape where the species can be found (shoreline, wood's edge, backyard, etc.) and contain several (dozens for some species) high-quality photographs showing the birds at different distances, in different plumages, from different angles and in different natural postures.



Species accounts include habitat and behavior information as well as which species it may be confused with and how to tell them apart. Range maps extend to the whole U.S. and Canada.

Overview pages (e.g., "walking waterbirds") show members of a group in relative sizes. The text introducing the different bird groups provides a

lot of helpful information to differentiate species and ages.

Overall, it's a nice book with lots of photographs and useful information.

A related volume dedicated to raptors, *The Crossley ID Guide: Raptors*, was published in April this year (I haven't held it in hand yet), and a Crossley ID Guide for Britain and Ireland will be published in October this year.

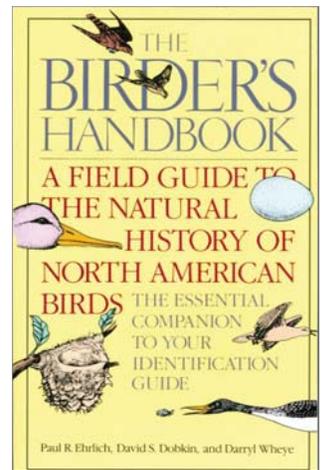
I recently became aware of a book that's been around for many years (1988): *The Birder's Handbook – A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds, The Essential Companion to Your Identification Guide*, by Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin and Darryl Wheye (Fireside/Simon & Schuster), 785 pages.

It covers "All Species that Regularly Breed North of Mexico" (some 650 species, including western birds).

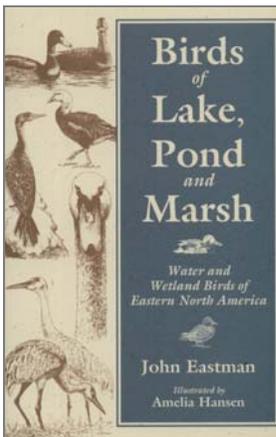
This is in fact two books in one: "species treatment" on

the left-hand pages and a collection of "general essays" on the right-hand pages.

The species information is somewhat "concentrated": symbols and icons represent nest location and type, diet, foraging techniques, egg type, hatching time, and so on. The text elaborates on these topics and includes some interesting observations. The "essays" include such topics as territoriality and territorial display, disease and parasites, brood parasitism, molting, origin of bird names, and so on. To some extent they relate to the species accounts on the opposite page. There is a lot of cross-referencing and citing of source publications. The bibliography and index are extensive.



Another publication I would recommend if you are interested in the life, ecology, and behavior of specific birds is an excellent series of three books by John Eastman: *Birds of Field and Shore; Birds of Forest, Yard and Thicket; and Birds of Lake, Pond and Marsh*. (Stackpole Books). Fewer species are covered in these books than in the *Birder's Handbook* (and only eastern birds), but the accounts are much more extensive and are written in a more entertaining way. John Eastman also wrote another



(similar) three-volume series (*The Book of Field and Roadside, The Book of Swamp and Bog, and The Book of Forest and Thicket*) about the trees, shrubs, and wildflowers of eastern North America as well as the animals associated with them.

While not a field guide, it contains a lots of entertaining and interesting information. By the way, Stackpole (the publisher) carries a large catalogue with many interesting nature-related books.

## Bird Town Indiana!

On **Saturday, Sept. 14, at 2 pm, Geneva** (in Adams County) will be officially designated a "Bird Town Indiana" at the Visitors Center of the Limberlost State Historic Site (west side of US 27).

"Bird Town Indiana" is a designation awarded by the Indiana Audubon Soci-

ety to Indiana communities that demonstrate an active and ongoing commitment to the protection and conservation of bird populations and habitat.

**You are invited!** It's a great excuse to get out there, meet other birders, and see the area.

There are several wonderful birding locations in the area: Loblolly Swamp Nature Preserve, Limberlost Wetlands,

Rainbow Bend, Bird Sanctuary/Music of the Wild, and so on. Bald eagles are nesting right at the edge of town.

The Indiana Audubon Society just started the Bird Town Indiana program, and Geneva is the first town to file and qualify.

Find out more about the program at [www.indianaaudubon.org](http://www.indianaaudubon.org). (Click on "Bird Town Indiana," at the top right.)

# Bird of the Month: Double-crested Cormorant

 by Helen Twibell

*Phalacrocorax  
Auritus*



The double-crested cormorant is the most familiar cormorant in the East. This gangly, prehistoric-looking fishing bird has short

legs and matte black coloring.

Though it looks like a combination of a goose and a loon, it is a relative of the frigatebird and boobies and is a common sight around fresh and salt water across North America. The word "cormorant" is derived, through French, from the Latin *corvus-marinus*, or "sea crow."

The bird is solidly built and has an orange throat pouch and orange skin around the face and chin. Also, it has a long, slightly s-curved, snake-like neck and a long bill that tilts upward when it swims; the bill is hooked on the end for catching and grasping fish.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the double-crested cormorant is its bolt-upright or "spread-eagle" pose when perched on a dock, rock, tree limb, or channel marker, with wings wide open to dry, after diving for fish.

As with all cormorants, its feathers are not waterproof, and the bird must spend time drying out after spending time in the water. Incomplete waterproofing helps reduce buoyancy, a valuable attribute for a diving seabird. This trait – plus the cormorant's 32" length, 51" wingspan, and weight of about 5 lbs. – causes it to ride low in the water with head sticking up like a periscope.

When these birds leave the water to fly in the air, they travel in a v-shaped flock that shifts as the birds

alternate bursts of choppy flapping with short glides, much like geese in flight. The cormorants, however, fly silently and only make grunting and squawking noises at the nest.

The solid, heavy-boned birds are experts at diving to catch small fish. They obtain their food by diving from the surface and swimming under water with the help of their wings to depths of 5 to 25 feet. They eat some fish under the water but bring larger ones to the surface to feed upon.

Perch, bullheads, carp, crappies, sticklehead, and similar fish of lesser value, plus animals like salamanders, make up a large part of their freshwater food. The birds have a remarkable ability to expand their mouths and stretch their esophaguses to swallow large prey. The large fish they swallow can be seen as a prominent bulge in the neck as they go down.

On the breeding ground during the courtship period, the adults have extra curly black feathers over the eyes, called "nuptial crests," for which the species is named. The male performs a grotesque display for the female. During nest-building time, the male brings sticks to the female, who builds the nest. Both parents help with incubation and feeding of the young.

It is not clear how much nesting occurs in Indiana. But where breeding takes place, cormorants usually build nests in cypress trees in colonies around lakes, along rivers, along rivers on rocky islets, or on cliff ledges. The nests in trees are compactly woven out of sticks and weed stems and lined with leafy twigs and grasses. Those built on rocks are often raised on a foundation of seaweeds and trash and are sometimes made wholly of such material.

Feathers, green fir twigs, and all sorts of odd objects are used in the

lining. The 3 or 4 eggs are light blue with a chalky covering. When chicks are 10 days old, they join other chicks to form creches. When they are a month old they join even larger creches, but the male and female still feed them. Eventually the chicks are old enough to venture into the water.

It is said that when a wildlife agent came to Hovey Lake Fish and Wildlife Area in Posey County in Indiana 18 years ago, the only double-crested cormorants there were the ones pictured in the refuge's bird books. The hook-billed predatory waterfowl had once been common throughout North America, but, like the bald eagle, was nearly decimated by the use of the pesticide DDT. It was considered extinct by early the 1970s in Indiana and most other states.

Environmentalists came to the rescue and, as a result, an amendment to the Federal 1918 Migratory Bird Act brought the double-crested cormorant under the protection of the federal government. It made a comeback with a vengeance! Now 4,000-5,000 or more cormorants may be expected to arrive at Hovey Lake in October during the migratory flights.

This is only one location, of course, and there are, no doubt, many other lake and river stopovers for the cormorants in Indiana. Unfortunately, though, it is feared that the double-crested cormorant will soon join the ranks of one-precious wildlife that are now perceived as pests. The more waterfowl there are, the greater the destruction of valuable underwater habitats for fish and plants necessary to maintain healthy waterways.

There is no hunting season in Indiana for cormorants. The control and management of their populations have been placed under the jurisdiction of Indiana wildlife agencies.

## **Robert Cooper Audubon Society**

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**What's your favorite birding app for an iPhone or iPod? Send your 100-word review to us at [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com), and we may print it in a future *Chat* article. (Please let us know if we can quote you and identify you by name.)**

### **Dates for Your Calendar**

**Aug. 31:** Cooper Farm prairie field trip

**Sept. 8:** Chapter picnic

**Sept. 14:** Salamonie field trip

**Sept. 14:** Bird Town Indiana reception

**Sept. 21:** Living Lightly Fair

**Sept. 29:** Eagle Creek Park field trip

**Oct. 5:** Muscatatuck field trip

**Oct. 14:** Wildlife Resqu Haus program

**Oct. 19:** Goose Pond field trip

**Oct. 26:** October Owl Prowl (see *Tweet*)

**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.

### **Officers**

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