



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Birds of Preys: Predators of the Sky

Birds of prey--eagles, hawks, falcons, kites, osprey, and owls--have exceptional vision, sharp talons, and hooked beaks. This unique combination of characteristics makes them especially adept at identifying and killing prey. They serve an important ecological role in balancing populations of rodents, snakes, and insects.

Our name sake, the Cooper's Hawk, is a medium-sized accipiter distinguished by short, broad wings and long legs. Cooper's Hawks frequent woods and feeders in residential neighborhoods in search of medium-sized birds, such as jays and robins. An adult has a blue-gray back and head with a thick dark band on the tail. The upright posture and reddish streaks across the breast certainly presents a striking pose in full sunlight. However, differentiat-

ing a Cooper's from a Sharp-shinned Hawk can be quite a challenge because of their similarities in form and plumage.

Throughout North America, the Red-tailed Hawk is the most common bird of prey seen in open country. This buteo is easily identified by its prominent size (17 to 22 inches), broad wings, and a wide, cinnamon-red tail when looking above. However, the plumage of Red-tailed Hawks is quite variable with both light and dark-morph birds occurring across the U.S.

Learn more about identifying raptors in flight by visiting <https://www.audubon.org/news/identify-raptors-flight> and attending our special live bird program.

Birds of Prey April 25th Program

On Thursday, April 25, at 6:30 p.m., Take Flight! Wildlife Education will present "Birds of Prey" for a special program co-sponsored by Minnetrista. With several live raptors native to North America, Take Flight! Executive Director Mark Booth will discuss the natural history, physiological adaptations, and ecological significance of these birds.

Mark Booth has been teaching people about nature and the importance of biodiversity for more than 30 years. After starting his career as a nature director at a Cub Scout camp during high school, Mark is a former zookeeper and head bird trainer at the Indianapolis Zoo. He is also a federally licensed and practicing Master Falconer.

Mark's program will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Minnetrista, located at 1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway in Muncie. Bring the entire family! As with all monthly Audubon programs, "Birds of Prey" is free and open to the public.

April 25
Program

6:30 pm
Minnetrista



Mark Booth, executive director of Take Flight! Wildlife Education, holding Rose, a Red-tailed Hawk.

Field Trips & Events

April 20, 9am-Noon: 4407 W. Kilgore Avenue, Muncie, IN

Service Trip to Dutro-Ernst Woods

Let's help the [Red-Tail Land Conservancy](#) develop and maintain a native prairie and woodland habitat for birds. During this service trip, we will remove invasive plant species, pick up refuse, and plant a tree. Come prepared with work gloves, loppers, and a shovel or adze. We will gather at the parking lot on Perdieu Road at 9:00 am.

April 25, 6:30-8:00 pm: Minnetrista, 1200 North Minnetrista Pkwy, Muncie, IN

Hummingbirds of Indiana

Mark Booth of Flight! Wildlife Education presents "Birds of Prey". This special program includes several live raptors. Bring the family!

April 26, 4-6:00 pm: John F. Kennedy Library, Muncie, IN

Spring Fest

Members of Robert Cooper Audubon Society will staff an information booth during this neighborhood celebration of Spring! We will share our passion for birds and conservation while enjoying food and live music provided by the Melody Makers.

April 27, 9 -11 am: 4643-5013 W. Bellsville Pike, Nashville, IN

Birding at Stone Head Nature Preserve

Randy Jones, an outstanding birder, will lead our explorations of [Stone Head Nature Preserve](#), a 122-acre privately-owned property in Brown County. This beautiful preserve has four habitat types, including wetland, riparian (river corridor), meadow and forest. Prominent among these is Zimmerman Wetland Bird Habitat which has six restored wetland impoundments.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science lot on the Ball State campus at 6:50 a.m.

Directions: The preserve is located at 4643-5013 W. Bellsville Pike, Nashville, and is about 2 hours from Muncie. Take I-69 S to I-465 S, then get on I-65 S. At Columbus, take exit 68 onto State Rd. 46 W. After 10 miles (just after the small town of Clarksdale), turn left (south) onto Valley Branch Rd. After 4.4 miles turn left (south) onto State Rd. 135. In ½ mile, turn left onto W. Bellsville Pike. We will meet in the parking lot near the entrance.

April 27, 9 -11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

Birding at Mounds State Park

Watch for neotropical migrants by joining our monthly field trip at Mounds State Park. A representative from Robert Cooper Audubon will meet you at the parking lot near the visitors center. Binoculars will be provided.

May 8, 7:00-8:30 pm: John F. Kennedy Library, Muncie, IN

Hummingbirds of Indiana

Amy and Carl Wilms, resident managers of Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, share their research on hummingbirds at our monthly program meeting.

May 25, 9 -11 am: 306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

Birding at Mounds State Park

Join a representative from Robert Cooper Audubon for a spring bird walk. Rufous-sided tohees, Northern Orioles, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers may brighten your day. We meet at the parking lot near the visitors center of Mounds State Park. Binoculars will be provided.

June 12, 7:00-8:30 pm: Ball State Alumni Center, Muncie, IN

E-Bird, BirdCast and Other Digital Birding Tools

Learn about the fascinating digital tools for identifying hotspots, population trends, and migration patterns of our fine-feathered friends.

Help Fund the Student Research Grant

Supporting degree-seeking students who conduct bird-centered research is a win-win-win proposition. These budding researchers hone their methodological skills while working under the able tutelage of a seasoned researcher at a university. Their work adds to the body of knowledge about birds. We members of Robert Cooper Audubon Society receive an informative presentation from the researcher at the conclusion of their study.

We extend a special “thank you” to Josie and Geoff Fox for funding three student researchers since 2016. In 2016, Clayton Delancey used radio transmitters to track the movement of fledgling Cerulean Warblers. His work revealed key variables in identifying where these vulnerable fledglings move to when leaving their nests.

Described for the first time, Garrett MacDonald’s 2017 study examined “the geographic variation in Cerulean Warbler

song across the entire core of the species’ breeding range.” His results did not find evidence for geographically-structured singing (i.e., dialects) which supports the theory that genes flow between breeding populations.

Most recently, we are happy to announce that Mary Woodruff, graduate student from Indiana University, is the recipient of the 2019 award. Mary will study how Tree Swallows acclimate to a warming climate by experimentally heating the nest boxes of chicks and measuring their physiological and behavioral responses.

I hope you agree that Robert Cooper Audubon Society should continue its “Student Research Grant.” To that end, we invite **donations** to fund a \$1,000 grant in 2020. All donations--large or small--are appreciated. Please mail your generous donations to P.O. Box 1635, Muncie, IN 47308.

Support the
next generation
of avian
researchers!

May Program

Hummingbirds of Indiana: A Research Project at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

If you missed the November 2018 program meeting of Robert Cooper Audubon Society, you may not have known that Alexander Sharpe served as an able substitute for the Carl and Amy Wilms. We are delighted to reschedule their presentation on the amazing hummingbirds of Indiana for 7:00 pm on May 8 at Kennedy Library.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is our only breeding species in Indiana, however, not much is known about them. The Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, owned and operated by the Indiana Audubon Society, Inc. is trying to find out more about these jewels of the sky. For instance, we know when the first birds in spring arrive to our feeders, but we seek answers to other questions, such as:

- How long do our first birds stay – and are they in migration or local birds who breed here?
- When do the first breeding females arrive and when do they start showing signs of egg production?
- How many broods do our Central Indiana Ruby-throated Hummingbirds raise?

Through their banding research, they are hoping to answer some of these ques-

tions! During this program, they will share insights into the banding process and the results of what they have learned so far.

About the Presenters

Carl and Amy Wilms are the Resident Managers at the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary, located near Connersville, Indiana.

Carl is a retired middle school teacher and received his PhD in education the same year he retired. He focuses a lot of his time eradicating invasive plant species the property to ensure a quality habitat for bird species for the future.

Amy is a Master Bird Bander and bands songbirds, Northern Saw-whet Owls, and hummingbirds. She is one of less than 110 Master Banders with a permit to band hummingbirds in the US. She loves teaching others how to band and develop their research projects, and enjoys learning more every chance she gets.

Learn more about Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary at <https://indianaudubon.org/places/united-states/indiana/connersville/birding-guide/mary-gray-bird-sanctuary/>



May 8, 7:00 pm
Kennedy Library



Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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Can you HELP?

Cooper's Talk is an important service provided to members of Robert Cooper Audubon Society. This newsletter alerts us to future opportunities to join field excursions, attend program meetings, advocate for the birds, participate in conservation activities, or simply keep in touch with others who strive to protect and enhance the quality of our natural environment.

Could you help sustain this newsletter?

Please volunteer for or nominate someone to serve as editor, writer, or graphic designer by contacting Annette Rose at rosenflowers@hughes.net.

Society Leadership

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About Cooper's Talk

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Cooper's Talk is published five times per year for members of Robert Cooper Audubon Society.

Submissions

All are invited to submit photos, articles, and events for publication by emailing items to admin@cooperaudubon.org.

Membership

Robert Cooper Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph counties.

Programs and Field Trips

Most programs and field trips of the Society are free and open to the public. Programs are typically scheduled from October through June on the second Wednesday of the month and held at Kennedy Library at 7:00 pm. For a schedule of field trips, refer to the Society website at www.cooperaudubon.org.

Contact Us

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Find us on Facebook!
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