



Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Northern Bobwhites in Indiana

On June 9th, Ryan Owen, Senior Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Indiana will give a presentation covering Northern Bobwhite life history, habitat requirements, and habitat management and creation opportunities. Northern Bobwhite and other grassland birds have been on the



Ryan Owen, Senior Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Indiana

decline in Indiana for several decades. The cause of this decline is multifaceted, but one core reason for the downturn is the loss of suitable habitat. In this discussion, Ryan will cover strategies, opportunities, and cost-share program information that listeners can use to improve the habitat on

their lands or advocate for habitat creation in their communities.

Ryan has been a Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever for 5 years. The Farm Bill Biologist program in Indiana was started in 2016 and is a partnership between Pheasants

Forever and Quail Forever, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Indiana Department of Natural Resources. There are currently four Farm Bill Biologists in Indiana, and Ryan serves as the leader of the team. The team works closely with these agencies to provide technical assistance and promote programs geared toward creating and improving wildlife habitat across the state. Ryan holds a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management from Purdue University and, prior to this position, was employed as a utility arborist for eight years. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's mission is to conserve pheasants, quail, and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public access, education, and conservation advocacy.

The presentation will be by Zoom, with the general meeting starting a 7:00 pm, June 9th. Watch your email or check the RCAS website or Facebook page prior to the meeting for login instructions.

Work To Begin on Environmental Education Center

By Annette Rose and Catherine Kubo

Ball State University (BSU) will soon begin construction on an exciting new project to expand the Rinard Orchid Greenhouse and Environmental Education Center in Muncie. Plans for a multipurpose nature lab, with an environmental education focus and space for 40 to 60 students, have been in the works for the last few years. Fundraising has reached \$1.6 million and Pridemark Construction has been selected as the contractor.

The greenhouse is part of the BSU Field Station properties, which in 2019-2020 hosted over 10,000 visitors. The greenhouse sponsors education programs for the university, local students, community members, and regional visitors. This project will enable expansion of these programs by providing classroom and outdoor learning spaces not available in the current facility. Requests far exceed the current facility's capacity, and the Field Station as a whole lacks a central

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Field Trips

Everyone is welcome at field trips and programs. Binoculars are available on request.

June 26, July 31, and August 28, 9 am to 11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN
Mounds State Park

Our monthly walks at Mounds continue through the summer. Come check in on our local breeders! Meet in the viewing area of the Visitor's Center at 9 am.



July 24, 10 am: 3499 S Bird Sanctuary Rd,
Connersville, IN

Hummingbird Banding at Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary

Join Amy Wilms, Master Bird Bander since 2017, to observe these tiny jewels of the summertime forest and field being banded. In case of rain, this event will be canceled, since banding will not occur.

Please note that, as of early May, most trails at Mary Gray remain closed as staff work to remove overt dangers caused by the emerald ash borer and the ash trees it has killed. Trail 6, the Wetland Trail, has reopened, and the service road to the fourth pond is passable.

Photo from the Mary Gray Bird Sanctuary Facebook page

Programs and Events

June 9, 7 pm: Via Zoom

Program: Quail Conservation in Indiana

Presentation by Ryan Owen, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Senior Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, Northeast Indiana.

For in-person events, please follow current guidelines on face masks and social distancing. Please monitor www.cooperaudubon.org for cancellations and updates.

Environmental Center...continued from page 1

gathering location, so the new facility will be immediately put to use upon its planned completion by spring of 2022.

Can you help? The RCAS Board is currently seeking donations to assist in outfitting the outdoor learning patio of this environmental education center. The donations will fund a bench (\$10,000) or memorial paving stones (\$500 - \$1,000) with an RCAS inscription as a reminder to future visitors of our mission to protect wildlife and educate others about the natural world. Please consider joining

RCAS in making a donation to further environmental education in our community, for this generation and the next! Please make your check payable to Robert Cooper Audubon Society, with a note for "environmental education center" and mail to P.O. Box 1635, Muncie, IN 47308.

Learn more at

<https://www.bsu.edu/academics/center/sandinstitutes/fseec/properties/christywoods/greenhouses/orchidgreenhouse/greenhouse-expansion>.

Jane Brooks Hine: An Indiana Bird Woman

By Terri Gorney

I was first “introduced” to Jane Brooks Hine while transcribing Maurice McClue’s journal, Natural History Memorandum (1919-1957), for the Charles McClue Nature Reserve in Steuben County. Maurice was an Angola attorney born in 1878. He mentioned Jane Hine’s bird notes on the Dickcissel. This piqued my interest in Jane. No one in my Indiana birding community knew anything about her when I began my research in 2008.

Jane Brooks was born in 1831 in Lake County, Ohio, and moved to Erie County, Ohio, when she was six. She attended Oberlin College in 1852-53 and became a teacher until her marriage in 1857 to Horatio Hine. The couple had six children. In 1861 they moved to land in northern DeKalb County that Horatio’s father had bought in the 1830s. The land had been left pretty much in its natural state, a perfect habitat for a lifelong student of birds and nature such as Jane.

Through my friend Bob Wilder, I found some of Jane’s descendants and discovered that she kept birding journals and wrote poetry. These relatives, Jean Falkner and Maynard “Butch” Hine, generously allowed me to copy her journals. Butch farms some of the original ground that his great-great-grandmother Jane once owned.

The ink in the first journal was so pale that I needed to digitalize it to read it. It was written in the old-fashioned English of the 19th century. Reading Jane’s words was like reading a slice of Indiana birding history. Some of her writings were dated and others were not. Most, I believe, are from the 1880s and 1890s.

She wrote of her family’s homestead, “This farm in part lays [sic] between two heronries. The largest is a mile and a half north near where our swale joins Cedar Creek just above Cedar Lake, the other, two miles south at a pond called Indian Lake.”

Jane described “at least 20 snipes eating on the [roots of] flags” (wild irises) on their farm for four days in April 1884. An avid naturalist, she got up in the night to watch them feed by the full moon.

On March 5, 1891, Jane recorded, “The Acadian Flycatcher arrives here early in May and remains through the summer to

work for the interests of those who own forests containing beech trees and as such forest[s] are the rule here, we have the birds quite evenly distributed.”

In another entry she penned, “if you have tangles of shrubbery on your lawn, or berry patches in your garden, [the catbird] may raise a brood near your house.”

In her time, Jane was a well-known lecturer and writer. She became known as the “Bird Woman of Indiana.” A generation older than Gene Stratton-Porter, she was one of four women who contributed to Amos Butler’s Birds of Indiana, 1898. Her best-known writing was her chapter in the 1911 Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game for Indiana, entitled “Game and Land Birds of an Indiana Farm.”

I was honored when asked to write a short biography of Jane for the U.S. Geological Survey website. She has over 400 bird sightings listed in the American Phenology Bird Project on www.USGS.gov. She was a member of the National Ornithology Society, and after her death the Society published a booklet as a memorial to her.

In 2009, I was asked to teach in the persona of Jane at the Allen County Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) class. I have done so since 2010, as well as three times for the Wells County IMN classes and once for the IMN Jr class. I think Jane would be pleased to know that she is still teaching in the 21st century.

I have uncovered other articles of Jane’s, mostly in Indiana newspapers. However, Jane’s Dickcissel article that first piqued my interest thirteen years ago still remains elusive.

Watery Road to Heron Town

By Jane Brooks Hine (1831-1916)

*No barren road
Leads travelers on
Its dusty way
To Heron Town:
But
Tangled willows,
Sweet swamp roses,
Sword grass meadows,
Bogs of rushes,
Wild flag blossoms,
Wiry sedges,
Stately cat-tails,
Ferns and mosses
Line all the road
That stretches on
Its swaly path
To Heron Town.*



NATURE'S REPEATED REFRAINS

By Abby Molino

I sat at my desk reading Rachel Carson. In *The Sense of Wonder* she wrote she received many letters from people who “have been steadied and reassured by contemplating...the deeper meaning of the world of nature.... There is something symbolic, as well as actual beauty, in the migration of birds...as in the ebb and flow of the tides...something infinitely healing in these repeated refrains of nature.”

I stopped reading and looked at the figurine on my desk. Seven Cattle Egrets are sitting atop an African elephant. The egret's genus, *Bubulcas*, is from Latin for herdsman, reflecting the white heron's association with cattle herds. They are also called cow birds or cow cranes. Their Arabic name is *abu qerdan* for “father of ticks,” which explains the egret's affinity to herd animals.

I left my desk and walked downstairs to check the status of nature's repeated



Brown-headed Cowbird

refrains at my bird feeding stations. There I found a corral of cow birds—but not of the egret variety. My Brown-headed Cowbirds (Latin: *Molothrus ater*) were in a throng of Red-winged Blackbirds, grackles, doves, and several sorts of sparrows, with the usual smattering of finches, cardinals, robins, jays, and

woodpeckers—busily eating me out of house and home.

My son looked over my shoulder and said, “I hate those ugly, nest-robbing cowbirds!” I know he's not alone in his sentiment, but to be fair—they are native to North America. The bison herds they used to follow are gone. The forests were cleared. Their available habitat increased. These whistling, gurgling, chattering, obligate brood parasites naturally moved eastward.



Kirtland's Warbler

And in doing so, they have caused significant declines in more appealing bird species, such as Kirtland's Warbler. One female cowbird can lay an egg a day—in another bird's nest and destroy the host egg—for several weeks, easily totaling 40 eggs a season, up to 70 if she's exceptional. That's one female.

In their favor, cowbirds eat insects.

Their summer diet is 50/50 insects to seeds. The seed portion increases to 90 percent in winter. My cowbirds disappear in winter, likely to the southern United States or Mexico. But this north central Indiana region is a potential year-round range. My cowbirds will also move west to the rolling pastures of the near-by Angus farms in a few more weeks, as the weather warms up.

And though the Angus will likely appreciate fewer insect pests, the damage to other bird populations has already begun. Host eggs have been destroyed; cowbird eggs are in their place. Soon, at my house, mother doves will be feeding little cowbird parasites. And we must remember the story of the Michigan Kirtland's Warbler whose documented breeding pairs bottomed out in the 1960s and '70s at 167 pairs. Of those nests, 70 percent were parasitized by cowbirds, yielding less than one Kirtland's Warbler per nest. Federal protection started in 1967. Michigan also reverted agricultural land back to forests. Cowbirds don't live in forests. Michigan also trapped cowbirds. In response, the warbler population slowly and steadily rebuilt over the next five decades. Gradually, as forested land increased, cowbird trapping was decreased. And, in October 2019, Kirtland's Warbler was removed from the federal endangered list.

It must be recognized and remembered, however, that the laborious recovery occurred only because of sustained intervention and management by scientists, wildlife experts, and conservationists. Yes, Kirtland's Warbler has been delisted. We must joyously celebrate its recovery!

But biologists now call it a conservation-reliant species. Its habitat must forever be managed. Forever. Because if we stop managing its forests, the slide back into endangered status—or worse, extinction—will begin. The need gives great purpose to our involvement with Audubon Society. If we are persistent in our dedication to the world of nature, then the infinite healing of nature's repeated refrains will be there to steady and reassure future generations of birds and humans alike.

Photos from
<https://www.audubon.org/file-id-guide/bird/>

Who Cooks For You? Peter, Peter!

By Willy DeSmet

I recently came across another phone app by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and it blows my mind.

Called BirdNET, it identifies the species of bird by the bird song. Granted, it's a work in progress; it's not perfect. In fact, Cornell calls it a prototype and encourages feedback so they can improve it.

Here's how you use it.

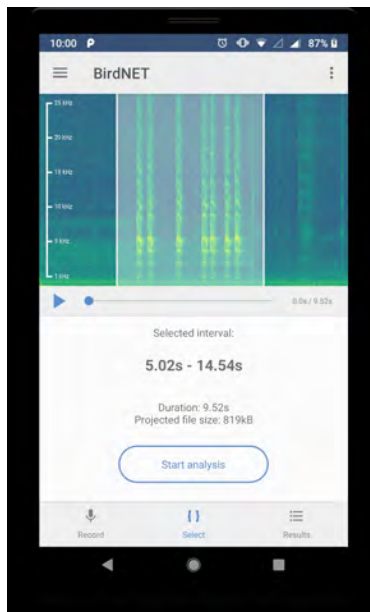
When you hear a bird song or call that you want to identify, you open the app. It will start recording the sound and show a scrolling graph. You watch the graph as you wait for the bird to make the sound again. You'll see a bunch of spikes in the graph. You press PAUSE and highlight the part where the bird sang. (You can press PLAY to make sure that you got the correct sound segment.) You press Analyze and wait. After a few seconds the app returns an analysis. If it recognized a bird species, it will tell you. It will also tell you how "confident" it is in the identification. If it recognized two different birds it will tell you, but if the songs overlapped it may be confused and unable to identify.

Here is one limitation: for an on-the-spot identification your phone has to have a data connection, because the app takes the selected sound bite and uploads it to a server in Germany, where it is processed. If you have no cell phone connection, then you can save the sound bite and get it analyzed later, when you do have a connection, but you of course will not have an on-the-spot identification. Cornell hopes to have a stand-alone version in a few years, where your phone does all the work and you won't need to have a connection.

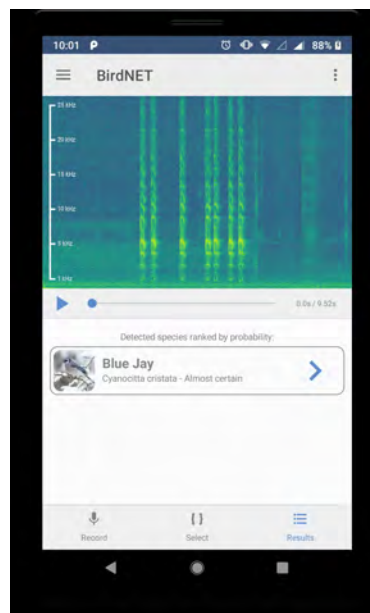
Cornell collects all your submissions to improve their system, as well as to study migration patterns and so on. (They remove all identifying information except location and time stamp.)

The app currently recognizes 984 of the most common North American and European birds, and they are working on more. If you set your location (turn on the GPS), the app will only consider

Using BirdNET



1 Make a recording and highlight an area of interest



2 Submit for analysis and review the result

3 Access additional species information

Images from <https://birdnet.cornell.edu/>

the species that are to be expected at that location. (You don't have to keep the GPS turned on if you don't want to: the app will use the last known location if it does not get a new GPS reading.)

You can further limit the number of species that the app will consider to birds expected to be present at that time of year. There are other settings you can fiddle with to improve your success.

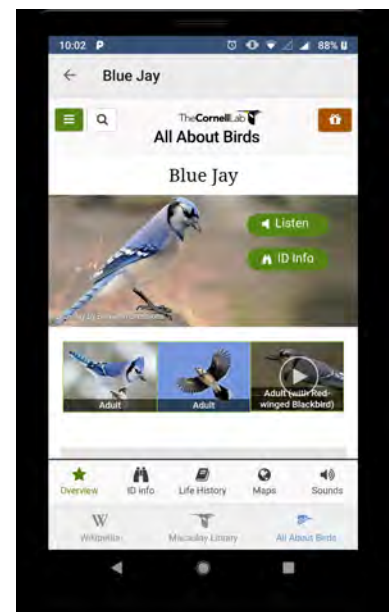
There are direct links to Wikipedia, Macaulay library, and eBird, giving information about the species, pictures, and other sound samples you can play to compare.

The app has several additional features. One of them is called "Observations," and I think it is great for learning bird calls. Every time you submit (or save) a sound sample, the sound sample (and location) is saved in your personal list of "observations." You can go back to them and listen to your recording (again and again if you want to), now knowing which bird it is.

I have used this app only for a short time and I am not a good "birder by ear," but I am impressed. I would be interested to hear what other people think of the app.

The app is available for both the Android and iOS platform, and it is FREE!

Check it out at <https://birdnet.cornell.edu/>





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About RCAS

Membership

Robert Cooper Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph counties. To join, visit the RCAS web site.

Officers

President:	Mary Annette Rose	765-774-3134
Vice-President:	Rose Jeffery	
Treasurer:	Robert Williams	
Recording Secretary:	Bethany Darby	

Directors

2019-2021	Kamal Islam	Kim McKenzie
2020-2022	Catherine Kubo	Jim Schowe

Programs and Field Trips

Most programs and field trips of the Society are free and open to the public. Programs are generally scheduled from October through June on the second Wednesday of the month. For updates on the schedule and meeting locations, refer to our website.

Contact us

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

Election of Officers

On the agenda for the June 9 RCAS meeting is the election of chapter officers and directors for two-year terms beginning July 1. If you are interested in serving on the RCAS Board or have suggestions to make to the Nominating Committee, please email Annette Rose at rosenflowers@hughes.net by May 9. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates at the meeting. Positions vacant or soon to be so include the office of Treasurer and Chairs for Publicity (Social Media and email), Programs, and Advocacy.

Save the Date

The RCAS Fall Picnic will take place at Mounds State Park Locust Shelter on September 25, noon-2 pm. Please plan to join us for food and fun! Check the fall newsletter for more details.

About Cooper's Talk

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Cooper's Talk is published four times per year for members of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society. All are invited to submit photos, articles, and events for publication by emailing items to admin@cooperaudubon.org