



# Cooper's Talk

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

## How Might Tree Swallows Acclimate to a Warming Climate?



Tree Swallow  
Photo: Garth McElroy/VIREO

Adapting to a rapidly changing climate will be especially challenging for birds. The National Audubon Society reports that “2/3rds of North American birds are at an increasing risk of extinction from global temperature rise.” Birds can cope with the typical heat of Indiana summers by panting, feather fluffing, and extending legs during flight. However, extreme heat events can be lethal or negatively affect birds’ body condition, brain development, reproductivity and the survival of chicks.

In response to climate change, most bird species are expected to adjust their range northward or to higher altitudes.

However, Tree Swallows have been the

exception. Populations have been increasing in mid-Atlantic states and Texas, where it is warmer. Mary Woodruff, recipient of the 2019 Fox Research Grant, sees this shift in population to warmer climes as an opportunity “to experimentally investigate how wild Tree Swallow chicks respond to heat and the degree to which they acclimate.”

Mary will share the methods and results of her study to help us better understand the challenges of a warming climate. Join us on Wednesday, March 11, at Kennedy Library, 1700 W McGalliard Rd, in Muncie. Chapter business and refreshments will begin at 7 pm, followed by Mary's presentation at 7:15.

## Support the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act of 2019

By Brandon Connare

Native populations of birds, bees, butterflies, and many other pollinators have taken a staggering blow over the last few decades. The loss of pollinators is not only of significant ecological consequence, but also economic, as many American farmers depend on them for crop pollination.

The U.S. Senate is currently reviewing a bill introduced last November, the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act of 2019, that would provide support for pollinators across the country. This act would create a program allocating \$5 million per year in federal grants. Available to state departments of transportation, tribal groups, and federal land management agencies, these funds are specifically to be used for pollinator-friendly practices, including:

- Planting and seeding of native grasses and wildflowers, including milkweed
- Reduced herbicide and pesticide use
- Avoidance of nonnative grasses in planting and seed mixes
- Modified roadside mowing practices to support pollinators and their habitats

Please join us in support of the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act by contacting Indiana senator Mike Braun. Senator Braun is a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, which has been tasked with reviewing the Monarch and Pollinator Highway Act. You can voice your support by contacting Senator Braun at <https://www.braun.senate.gov/contact-mike>

## Field Trips

*Field trips generally occur as scheduled, but may be canceled when inclement weather or poor road conditions exist. Check the RCAS Facebook page or contact field trip coordinator, Catherine Kubo, at 703.352.1238. All trips are open to club members and non-members alike, and beginners are always welcome.*

March 28, 9 -11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

### **Mounds State Park**

Join our monthly field trip at Mounds State Park. Meet at the feeder viewing station inside the Visitor Center. Binoculars will be available.

March 29, 1:00-3:00 pm: 5975 N. Mechanicsburg Road, Middletown, IN

### **Weed Wrangle at Fall Creek Woods**

Let's spread the word....The Robert Cooper Audubon Society is co-hosting a weed wrangle with Red-tail Land Conservancy and Henry County-RIPS. The event will include education, demonstration, and active participation. Dress for outdoor work and bring gloves and drinking water.

*Field trips are open to all, members and non-members alike.*

April 3-4: Linton, IN

### **Goose Pond**

We have the opportunity to Join Dr. Kamal Islam and some of his BSU students on Saturday, April 4, for a field trip at Goose Pond, near Linton, Indiana. Goose Pond is one of the most spectacular birding sites in the state. We will spend several hours there. Consider bringing something to drink and a snack. Also bring rain gear, waterproof boots, etc., just in case. Those wishing to drive down on Friday, April 3 could stay at McCormick Creek State Park. We will take an early Saturday morning bird hike and breakfast there before heading to Goose Pond to meet with Dr. Islam and his students.

Directions and information on lodging are posted on [cooperaudubon.org](http://cooperaudubon.org). Contact Catherine Kubo for further details, at [cpaulskubo@gmail.com](mailto:cpaulskubo@gmail.com) or 703.352.1238.

April 11, 8-10:30 am: 5993 N. Messick Road, New Castle, IN 47362

### **Summit Lake State Park**

The spring wildflowers along Prairie Trail will delight us as we listen for migrating warblers. We will meet at the Prairie Trail parking area at 8:00 am and proceed south along the trail. Driving directions are on the website.

**TENTATIVE** April 18, 9:00 am to Noon: W Kilgore Ave, Muncie, IN 47304

### **Service trip at Dutro-Ernst Woods**

Take action by joining us for a morning of service at Dutro-Ernst Woods, an urban oasis in Muncie. This 33-acre Red-tail Land Conservancy nature preserve is in the process of prairie restoration, which will create a bird- and pollinator-friendly habitat.

We will remove invasive plant species like garlic mustard and Asian bush honeysuckle, and pick up some trash. Dress for outdoor work, bring gloves, drinking water and, optionally, loppers. Check the website for updates on this schedule.

April 25, 9 -11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

### **Mounds State Park**

Join our monthly field trip at Mounds State Park. Meet at the feeder viewing station inside the Visitor Center. Binoculars will be available.

## Field Trips, cont.

May 2, 8:30 am: Pefly Road, Lagro, IN, 46941

### Salamonie River State Forest

Salamonie River State Forest is a great place to find migratory warblers as well as arriving summer residents. It also has many spring wildflowers. The reservoir hosts a variety of waterfowl.

We will meet at the Hominy Ridge Picnic Area in the Salamonie River State Forest at about 8:30 am. We will bird in the forest during the morning and then picnic at Hominy Ridge. After lunch we will explore other areas around the reservoir. Bring a sack lunch, something to drink, waterproof boots, and dress for the weather.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science lot at 7:15 am. Driving directions are on our website.

May 9 or 10, 8-10 am: 801 E. 10th St., Anderson, IN

### Edgewater Park/Killbuck Wetlands

On Saturday, May 9, we'll look for spring warblers and other migratory songbirds and waterfowl in Anderson! We'll gather at Edgewater Park at 8 am and walk along the paved river trail. Then afterwards we'll drive a short distance to Killbuck Wetlands (at the south end of the Shadyside Park system), where we'll pick up the trail again. We'll be done a bit before 10 am, giving everyone time to head over to the annual native plant sale at Mounds State Park.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot, on Ball State's campus, at 7:25 am. Directions for driving on your own are on our website. Questions? Email Barb Stedman at [bastedman@gmail.com](mailto:bastedman@gmail.com). On the day of the event, you can phone her at 765-212-4424.

May 30, 9 -11 am: 4306 Mounds Road, Anderson, IN

### Mounds State Park

Join our monthly field trip at Mounds State Park. Meet at the feeder viewing station inside the Visitor Center. Binoculars will be available.

Saturday, June 6, 9 am: 7324 Yohne Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46809

### Fox Island County Park

Fox Island is an Allen County Park. It includes 270 acres dedicated as a state nature preserve, and encompasses a variety of habitats including marsh, wooded sand dunes, wetland forests, and restored prairie.

We will meet at the Nature Center parking lot at 9 am. There is a \$2 per person entry fee. Those wishing to carpool will leave from the Cooper Science lot at 7:45 am. See the the website for directions to drive on your own.

*Peak of spring migration occurs in April & May—let's go birding!*

## Can you help?

Please consider lending your time and talents to help RCAS further its goals to protect and enhance the quality of our natural environment through education, advocacy, and recreation. From working with youth, to preparing position papers, to contributing to the newsletter and

website, to field-trip leadership and coordination, we have many opportunities. If you are looking for ways to contribute, contact Annette Rose, president of RCAS, at [rosenflowers@hughes.net](mailto:rosenflowers@hughes.net).

## Monthly Programs

March 13, 2019, 7:00 pm, Kennedy Library

### Are Tree Swallows Adapting to a Warming Climate?

See front page for program description.

April 8, 2019, 7:00 pm, Kennedy Library

### Stockbridge Audubon Society: History of the First Audubon Chapter in Indiana

Join us for our April program, which will feature Terri Gorney's presentation on the Stockbridge Audubon Society. Stockbridge Audubon, founded as Allen County Audubon in 1899, was the first Audubon chapter in Indiana and is one of the oldest in the country. The chapter's namesake was Charles Stockbridge, a taxidermist whose collection of over 200 birds now resides at Earlham College. In 2019, Terri traced this collection back to its origins and will share that story with us.

May 13, 2019, 7:00 pm, Kennedy Library

Adam Phelps, IDNR State Waterfowl Biologist, will speak. Check on line for his topic.

## 2019 Christmas Bird Count: December 15, 2019

By Annette Rose

The winter of 2019 marked 120 years of Christmas Bird Counts, sponsored by the National Audubon Society. This citizen- science survey is a cherished tradition and it provides data that can assist scientists to better understand population trends.

As part of the 2019 count, fifteen volunteers from the Robert Cooper Audubon Society devoted part of their day to count every bird they saw and heard within a 15-mile- diameter circle around Muncie on December 15, 2019. Volunteers counted 53 species and 3,259 individual birds while taking bird feeder counts and traveling more than 175 miles.

The day was overcast with temperatures ranging from 24 to 28°F, though Prairie Creek Reservoir and local quarries were free of ice. Thus, it was not a surprise that four of the most abundant species were those that prefer water habitats, including the Canada Goose (575), Mallard (306), Ring-billed Gull (228), and American Coot (152). Sandhill Cranes (250) were also numerous. Though in much fewer numbers, a variety of waterfowl were observed, including Hooded Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Bufflehead, and Black Duck.

As in years past, the highest count was

of the exotic European Starling, though numbers have declined over the past three years with 2,316, 899, and 698 in 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively. Because Starlings do not migrate and prefer black-oil sunflower seeds, they seem to have a competitive advantage over local and migrating breeding birds. Cornell Lab suggests two strategies to suppress Starling populations:

- select feeders with short perches and small ports; and
- monitor nest boxes and remove nests.

The rarest sightings—two immature Black-crowned Night-herons—were observed by Alexander Sharp and Kurt Emmert on Prairie Creek Reservoir near the closed bait shop. Thanks to Kurt's photography skills, we were able to submit visual evidence of this red-eyed bird perched just above the water's edge.

Thanks to all the volunteers, including Jim Schowe, coordinator, Catherine Kubo, Jim and Rose Jeffrey, Kim McKenzie, Rachael Thompson, Barb Stedman, Martha Hunt, Beth Gonser, Taiping and Sandy Ho, Kurt Emmert, Alexander Sharp, Jim Flowers, and Annette Rose.

Learn more about the trends in bird populations by exploring the Christmas Bird Count Trends Viewer located at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/where-have-all-birds-gone>



Snowy Owl from the Charles Stockbridge Collection. Photo taken in the 1950s. Learn about the owl's history!



Black-crowned Night Heron seen on our CBC. (Photo by Kurt Emmert.)

## Conservation Award Winners for 2019

With a renewed sense of urgency about threats to our planet, the Robert Cooper Audubon Society recently celebrated the vision and labor of one organization and four individuals from East Central Indiana, bestowing conservation awards on those who exemplify conservation excellence and provide hope for a biodiverse future.



Representatives of Friends of the Limberlost (L-R): Ken Brunswick (chair of Limberlost Swamp Remembered Committee), Randy Lehman (treasurer), Curt Burnette, Connie Ronald, Terri Gorney (VP), and Willy DeSmet (president), receiving the Cooper Award from our chapter president, Annette Rose

The chapter's highest honor – the Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award – was presented to the **Friends of the Limberlost**. Incorporated in 1994, Friends has worked tirelessly to preserve and promote interest in the legacy of Indiana writer Gene Stratton-Porter. Over the decades, the organization has purchased and restored more than 1,800 acres of the Limberlost wetlands, which now provides habitat for breeding, overwintering, and migrating birds, including nesting Bald Eagles and Blue Grosbeaks, overwintering Short-eared Owls, and migrating



Whooping Cranes, to name just a few. The Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award was awarded to **Terri Gorney**. Terri is a historian, author, vice-president and successful grant

writer for the Friends of the Limberlost, and portrayer of historical conservation leaders, including Gene Stratton-Porter.

**Barbara Hesselgrave** was awarded the Phyllis Yuhus Habitat Preservation Award. Barb exemplifies the practical strategies that suburbanites can employ to create a healthy habitat for birds. On her quarter-acre suburban yard, Barb has eliminated 50% of the grass and planted native shrubs and perennials that provide structure, protection, and food for resident birds.



The Richard Greene Public Service Award was bestowed upon **Anne Maddox**, a nature artist who inspires onlookers with renderings of ecosystems, where the interdependencies of plants, insects, birds, and mammals are depicted in rich, botanically-accurate detail.



Our chapter celebrated the efforts of **Andrew Glover** with the Charles D.

Wise Youth Conservation Award. As part of his quest to become an Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America, Andrew and his team restored trails, fought invasive species of plants, and installed signage in Trojan Woods in New Castle.

Andrew explained, "We try to leave nature alone.... Fallen trees stay where they land. If necessary, we take the trail around it and leave it to decay naturally."



Special thanks go to chef Lois Altman, who created delectable desserts for the reception, and all the supporters who donated items for the silent auction, as well as those who bid on them. All proceeds support our chapter's conservation and education projects.

*Photos for this article courtesy of Robert Williams.*



# Robert Cooper Audubon Society

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## Fox Student Grant Applications Due March 14

Applications are now being accepted for the Robert Cooper Audubon Society's 2020 Fox Student Grant. This annual award funds bird-centered student research projects through a generous donation provided by RCAS members Josie and Geoff Fox.

The Fox Student Grant is open to both undergraduate and graduate degree-seeking students and provides up to \$1,000 to purchase supplies and/or support for travel and field research expenses. The research proposal must focus on bird species native to Indiana, including migratory species that breed in Indiana. Proposals for

study of habitat critical to breeding and wintering grounds of these species will also be considered.

Full application details are provided on the RCAS web site. Complete applications must be submitted by 5 pm EST on March 14, 2020. Recipients of grants will be announced no later than April 6.

Clay Delancey and Garrett MacDonald, as graduate students in biology at Ball State University, received the Fox Student Grant in 2016 and 2017, respectively, followed in 2019 by Mary Woodruff, a Ph.D. student in the Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior Graduate Program at Indiana University.

### Chapter Leadership

#### Officers

President:	Mary Annette Rose	764-774-3134
Vice-President:	Robert Williams	
Treasurer:	Robert Williams	
Secretary:	Kim Lee	

#### Directors

2019-2021	Kamal Islam
	Kim McKenzie
2018-2020	Catherine Kubo
	Jim Schowe

#### 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.

### About Cooper's Talk

#### © 2020

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

#### Submissions

All are invited to submit photos, articles, and events for publication by emailing items to [admin@cooperaudubon.org](mailto:admin@cooperaudubon.org)

#### 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 and, typically, held at the Muncie Kennedy Library at 7:00 pm. For updates on the schedule, refer to our website.

#### Contact us

Chapter Website: [www.ccooperaudubon.org](http://www.ccooperaudubon.org)  
Find us on Facebook!  
Email: [admin@cooperaudubonn.org](mailto:admin@cooperaudubonn.org)