



Cooper's Talk

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

Volume 40, No.5

Nov/Dec 2016

Join us for the annual conservation awards banquet!

Monday, November 14 6-8 p.m.



Join us for an evening recognizing those who make a positive contribution to our environment and community. We will also hold our Second Annual Silent Auction, which last year successfully raised funds to support local education and conservation projects.

The banquet and silent auction will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 4800 W. Bradford Dr., in Muncie.

All proceeds benefit education programs and conservation projects of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society. Auction items will be available at the end of the evening. Please bring check or cash for payment.

Tickets are \$18 each. Mail a check made out to "Robert Cooper Audubon Society" to Doris Cheney at 500 S Umbarger Rd, Muncie, IN 47304. RSVP by November 10 to (765)288-0981.

Christmas Bird Count 2016

Saturday, December 17, 9 a.m.—12 p.m.

Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count is a longstanding citizen science project to document bird population trends.

Part of the fun is discovering the unexpected. Last year, for example, volunteers found Black Vultures and Merlin, as well as Sandhill Cranes, Barred Owl, and Red-headed Woodpecker.

If you would like to join us in the field, or would prefer to remain home and count at a bird feeder, please contact Robert Williams at rbrt.j.wllms@gmail.com or (765)730-8427.

Tippecanoe River State Park and Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area

Saturday, November 19

See Sandhill Cranes at what should be peak migration. Meet at **Tippecanoe River State Park** at **1:45 p.m.** After birding the park for a couple hours, we will head over to Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area about 30 minutes west. We will watch the cranes coming back at dusk.

Dress warmly! Bring a flashlight, snack, water, and maybe lunch to eat in the car on the way there. We will stop for dinner on our way back to Muncie.

Directions from Muncie: take I-69 north to US-26. Head west to US-31 and turn right toward South Bend. North of Kokomo US-31 intersects with US-35. Take US-35 north toward Logansport. Near Logansport continue north on US-35. Tippecanoe River State Park is on US-35 just north of Winamac on the right.

Travel time takes just over two hours. Those who wish to caravan, meet at Cooper Science parking lot at 11:30 a.m.

Mounds State Park Bird Hike

Sunday, November 27, 9 a.m.

Monthly Mounds State Park hikes will continue on the **last Sunday of the month**. Meet at the **Visitor Center** at **9a.m.** We will provide binoculars and a scope. The hike ends with cookies and a review of which species we recorded.

Sierra Club's National Beyond Coal Campaign – Jodi Perras

Monday, December 5, 7 p.m. at Kennedy Library

A recent Audubon Society report classified 314 species – nearly half of all North American birds – as severely threatened by climate change. Here in Indiana, our industries and electric utilities are responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all states but Texas. The Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign is working to reduce Indiana's reliance on coal-fired power plants and increase renewable energy and energy efficiency. Jodi Perras, manager of the Beyond Coal Campaign in Indiana, Michigan, and Kentucky, will discuss Indiana Michigan Power's AEP-Rockport power plant – the nation's sixth largest carbon polluter and second most toxic power plant in the state. Indiana Michigan Power is asking to raise customer bills to keep burning coal at the Rockport plant for the next 30 years or more. We will learn how Audubon members can get involved to support a transition to cleaner forms of energy and reduce the impacts of climate change.



Meetings are held at **Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch**. 7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments, 7:15 pm: scheduled program

Rare White Hummingbird Steals the Spotlight at California Garden

By Kara Guzman



Photo: Brad R Lewis

In the Australian Gardens at the University of California, Santa Cruz Arboretum, a dozen Anna's Hummingbirds dart between golden banksia flowers and various pink and white blooming shrubs. Their feathers are bright, iridescent shades of emerald, pink and gray. The grove is awash with color.

Except for one strange bird that's sitting in a cypress tree, watching the flurry of feeding and fluttering. It's an Anna's Hummingbird—and it's almost entirely white.

Not much is known about the mysterious white hummingbird that's been there since May except that it has leucism, a developmental condition resulting in the loss of pigmentation. Unlike albino

birds, which can't produce the pigment melanin, leucistic birds produce melanin but can't deposit it into their feathers. Albino birds also have red or pink eyes, but this hummingbird's eyes are black, along with its bill and feet.

What makes this bird extremely rare is that it is almost entirely white, says Steve Gerow, bird records keeper for the Santa Cruz Bird Club. Most leucistic birds are only partially affected, and have white patches of feathers amid colored plumage.

Some of its feathers are darker than others, giving clues to its sex and age. The bird is definitely male and likely hatched in the last six months, Gerow says. "That's all I know and I don't really know if there's much more possible to be known at this point."

Mostly, the bird has stuck to the Australian Gardens since May, chirping, sipping nectar and flitting between banksia bushes and cypress trees.

The bird also performs the courtship display typical of male Anna's Hummingbirds—climbing 100 feet into the air and bombing straight down. November is the start of breeding season for the species, which peaks in January through March. Though the bird doesn't have its adult plumage yet, it's possible it could breed, Gerow says. It's still unclear whether the bird's leucism will make it less attractive to females, since feather color plays a role in courtship.

Its lack of camouflage also may make it more susceptible to predators such as hawks and feral cats. Melanin makes feathers strong and durable, so this bird's extensive leucism probably means that its feathers are weak, making flight and insulation more difficult.

Todd Newberry, a retired University of California, Santa Cruz biology professor, says that in his 70 years of birding, he's never seen a bird like it. He's visited the Anna's Hummingbird close to 100 times, and he usually finds it close to the arboretum's Hummingbird Trail.

"The way to find it—the way it is with any rare bird—is to look for people looking at it," Newberry says.

Roughly 1,000 people have stopped by to see the hummingbird since May, according to the arboretum. The bird was still there as of October 12, and visitors are welcome.



**Robert Cooper
Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 1635
Muncie, IN 47308-1635

Dates for Your Calendar

Nov 14: Conservation Awards Banquet
Nov 19: Tippecanoe SP & Jasper-Pulaski FWA
Nov 27: Mounds SP Bird Hike
Dec 5: Monthly Program: Jodi Perras
Dec 17: Christmas Bird Count

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

Program meetings are held at
Muncie Public Library, Kennedy Branch
 1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN
 7:00 pm: chapter business & refreshments
 7:15 pm: scheduled program

Cooper's Talk 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.

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