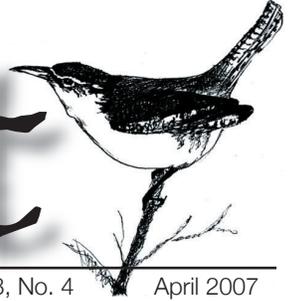


The Chat



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

Volume 33, No. 4 April 2007

April 9 program: **Confronting Climate Change**

“The number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes has almost doubled in the last 30 years.... Malaria has spread to higher altitudes in places like the Colombian Andes, 7,000 feet above sea level.... The flow of ice from glaciers in Greenland has more than doubled over the past decade....”

Al Gore’s Academy Award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* is just one of many voices convincingly arguing that such phenomena are the result of climate warming, and that we human beings play a key role in that warming.

For our April program, Dr. John Vann will present evidence that the climate is warming, evidence of the links between human activity and the greenhouse gases that are causing that warming, and ways humans can change their behaviors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

John was one of 50 individuals selected to participate in the inaugural training program of The Climate Project (www.theclimateproject.org), in Nashville, Tennessee, in order to continue the initiative begun by *An Inconvenient Truth*. The Climate Project is a not-for-profit movement aimed at educating individuals and communities about climate warming, and challenging them to take action. Its first initiative is the training of 1,000 lecturers, like John, who can take that message across America.

An Associate Professor of Marketing at Ball State, John teaches several courses on sustainability and has played an integral part in the university’s sustainability movement over the last ten years, currently serving as Ball State’s Green Initiatives Coordinator.

Join us on April 9 for this very important message that affects all of us! Coffee and conversation will begin at 7:00 at Minnetrista, followed by the chapter meeting at 7:15. John’s program will get underway at 7:30. As always, the public is welcomed, so bring a friend!

Local Alaskan Lecture

Stockbridge Audubon Society in Fort Wayne will host NAS Alaska Field Coordinator Taldi Walker who will present “From the Black Oystercatcher to Black Gold: Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska.” The program begins at **2 p.m. April 22** at the Fox Island Park Nature Center in Fort Wayne.

For more information, go to:
www.foxislandalliance.org
www.indianaaudubon.org/guide/sites/foxisle.htm

Garden Fair

On **June 2 & 3**, the Garden Fair will be held at Minnetrista Oakhurst Gardens.

Volunteers will be needed to help staff the chapter booth. Despite the seemingly distant date, please begin to consider helping out at this event. Seedy Sally’s of Pendleton will be helping us to create a really great display for our chapter!

The Tree Swallow: April Bird of the Month

Tree Swallow:
Tachycineta bicolor
By Helen Twibell



The tree swallow, or white-bellied swallow, is a member of the family which National Geographic calls “a group of accomplished aerial-foraging songbirds.” A small body of water is an integral part of their habitat, as these birds do most of their feeding as they skim low over such areas. The tree swallows tend to be more solitary while feeding than other North American swallows. While migrating, tree swallows often forage alone all day, yet may congregate in huge flocks that roost together. The tree swallow is one of few birds capable of digesting the wax in bayberries, an important food source for tree swallows wintering in the southern United States.

Tree swallows are harder than other swallows and can survive on seeds as well as berries in colder months. Some of these wintering birds have been seen picking seeds from pond ice. Tree swallows are the easiest of the swallow family to identify because of their clear white underparts and blue or blue-green upper plumage. The female remains partly brown above until her third breeding year, when she

appears more iridescent blue-green like the male. Upperparts of the young are brown and underparts are white. The tree swallow is sparrow-sized at 5” to 6 1/2 “.

The wild nests of tree swallows are natural tree cavities or ones cut by woodpeckers. Tree swallows are monogamous breeders. The female builds the nest and incubates the 4=6 white eggs. The male helps feed the young, and two broods are produced in a season. The nest cavity is lined with grass and the inner cup is made of feathers. Not only do tree swallows use feathers in their nests, but they also enjoy playing with them. They drop a feather and then retrieve it as it floats in the air. The voice of the tree swallow consists of varied twittering of a sweet, liquid quality, often run together into a rippling chatter.

Breeding as far south as Virginia and as far north as Alaska, tree swallows are familiar denizens across North America. Those who leave the north, winter from North Carolina and the Gulf Coast, Mexico and California south through Cuba to Guatemala. They are the first to arrive in the spring in mid March.

Formerly the tree swallow was most abundant in the northern half of Indiana. It has undoubtedly expanded its

breeding range in the southern half of the state because of numerous reservoirs and other impoundments that now provide nesting habitat.

Human activity has increased or stabilized the number of tree swallows by creating nesting sites. Much of their native habitat has shrunk, notably swamps and wetlands. Despite all societal changes, the tree swallow seems to have survived in good form so far, and at this point is in no apparent danger of extinction.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wings Over Muscatatuck

The 8th Annual Wings Over Muscatatuck Festival will be held **May 13**. This day long event includes three field trips to closed areas of the National Wildlife Refuge. For a printable brochure which includes registration form, go to: www.jacksoncountyin.com/newsletter/wingsbrochure2006.pdf

For more information, go to: www.foxislandalliance.org www.indianaaudubon.org/guide/sites/foxisle.htm

Living Lightly

As discussed in the March issue of *The Chat*, Living Lightly will be **June 2-3**. Please remember to volunteer and represent the chapter.

New Directions for RCAS Conservation

This spring RCAS conservation takes a big step forward in habitat restoration work in East Central Indiana with key prairie and wetland plantings in Delaware, Henry and Jay Counties.

In late 2005, the RCAS board, under the leadership of president, Mike Lannoo, approved the planting of emergent wetland vegetation in suitable areas specific to Sandhill Crane migration routes. A National Audubon Society grant was obtained, plus pledges from several private individuals, all to purchase the wetland plants from Spence Restoration Nursery in Muncie. As it turned out, Mike, the driving wheel of the project, got sidetracked by his career move to IU Terre Haute, and only one site was established in 2006. The reins of the project were then picked up by a new conservation team headed by Jeff Ray, Bill Grummer and Jon Creek. We also have five private landowners cooperating on habitat restoration projects on their lands. With the working relationships and agreements forged, and with the plans in place, the on ground restoration work now begins in earnest.

The spring wetland plantings are now planned for Westwood Park, Summit Lake SP, and the Lobolly Marsh Nature Preserve in Jay and Adams Counties.

Prairie restoration is the second initiative, and RCAS has organized a major habitat restoration project along 1.5 miles of the Mississinewa River corridor. This project involves three adjacent landowners who have completed restoration projects on their land, but are interested in working with their neighbors to create a joint habitat project to further enhance wildlife. The important bonus of this project is that two of the properties directly connect Ginn Woods, the large old growth forest owned by Ball State University, with the river corridor. The initial work involves conversion of two fescue cow pastures into native prairies, benefitting many bird species. Wild turkeys already reside in the area and hope is to reestablish the bobwhite. Most funding will be provided by DNR and the US Fish and Wildlife Partners in Wildlife.

Jeff Ray is coordinating a 20-acre prairie planting in Henry County north of Summit Lake. This privately owned property surrounds a remnant pioneer cemetery that is a source of original genotype seed for local projects of this type. DNR and US Fish and Wildlife are providing funding and Summit Lake SP will be a major partner in the ongoing development of the property. In this project the landowners will be contributing their own labor along with the partner organizations.

As plans and budgets have been developed it has become clear that our Cooper Audubon conservation program could readily use additional funds to cover extras that are not included in the DNR-US Fish&Wildlife grants which are limited to certain levels. We need funds to enhance the wildflower seed included in the prairie mixes, and for wildlife friendly trees and shrubs. Please consider contributing to this ongoing habitat work by contacting Jon Creek at jcreek34@yahoo.com. We would be pleased to show you any of these project sites and explain what we are doing.

All prairie restoration sites were fallow fescue or weed fields that had previously been pastures or farmland. The owners were positive about converting them to wildlife habitat when presented with the option, but did not know how to accomplish that on their own. If you own or are aware of possible properties like this please let us know. Significant sized fallow fields could be a future bird refuge.

A Note from the President

An opportunity to spend the summer working at Cape Hatteras National Lakeshore for the National Park Service means I will be out of the area from April through September. I did not want step down from my position as chapter president so soon after taking the spot, especially since it would leave the chapter in a position of having neither a President nor a Vice President. So I continue to hold the office and, with the help of board members and volunteers, chapter year activities are scheduled through June. I look forward to returning to an active role in the fall. Have a great spring and summer.

Bonnie

Robert Cooper Audubon Society



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The Chat is published 10 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.

Dates for Your Calendar

April 9, 7:30: Confronting Climate Change
April 13: Articles due for May *Chat*. Send to
Beth Simmons at basimmons2@bsu.edu
April 22: Fort Wayne Alaskan Lecture
May 13: Wings Over Muscatatuck Festival
June 2-3: Living Lightly Fair

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org
Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Meetings

Program meetings are held on the **second Monday** of each month (except July & August)
at Minnetrista Cultural Center
1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway
Muncie, IN

7:00 p.m.: Coffee & Gathering
7:15 p.m.: Chapter Business
7:30 p.m.: Scheduled Program



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