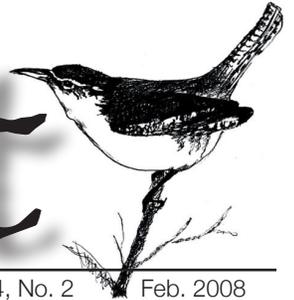


The Chat



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

Volume 34, No. 2 Feb. 2008

February 11: Natural Resources

Join us on February 11 when we welcome Tom Swinford from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources as our guest speaker. Mr. Swinford is a Regional Ecologist for DNR's Division of Nature Preserves. His presentation will introduce us to some of East Central Indiana's natural areas. Refreshments and social time get underway at 7:00 PM at the Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie with our featured program commencing at 7:30 PM. Meetings are open to the public.

Board Opening

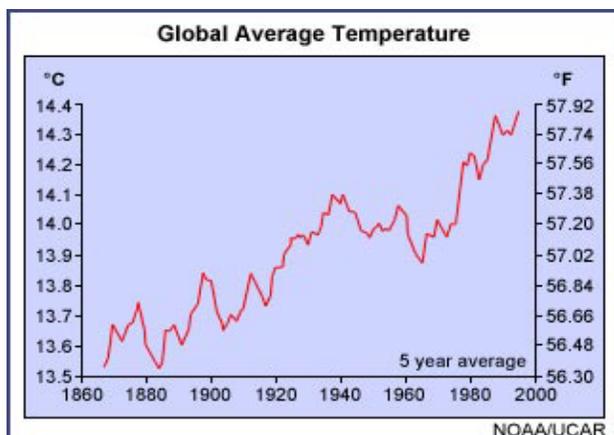
It turns out our newly elected Treasurer is unable to accept and fulfill the role. Due to other commitments, Past Treasurer, Barb Butler, can extend her service in this capacity for only a short time longer. The position of Chapter Treasurer needs to be filled as quickly as possible. Please contact a member of the board if you would consider this position.

Bird Seed Sells Coordinator

Our ongoing sale of bird seed will be discontinued until a volunteer can be found to coordinate the sale, pickup and delivery of the seed. Seedy Sally's in Pendleton provides us with high quality seed and the income from seed sales sponsors our youth camp and scholarship awards. Please contact Bonnie Nicholson or Barb Butler if you are able to help the chapter in this way.

Understanding Global Warming: **What is it?**

Part 1 of a 6-part series on the facts about Global Warming



Global warming is the increase in Earth's surface temperatures. Scientists say that Earth's surface temperatures rose by an estimated 1.3 degrees F in the last hundred years. In fact, eleven of the last twelve years rank among the warmest since temperatures were first recorded in the late 19th century. The chart to the left plots the global average temperature from the late 19th century to the year 2000.

Information from:

<http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming/GetTheFacts.php#really>

The Ladderbacked-Woodpecker: February Bird of the Month

Ladderbacked-Woodpecker:
Dryobates scalaris
By Helen Twibell



To visit this month's bird we will need to travel outside of Indiana to the western, southwestern United States from California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Oklahoma and Texas, south into the tropics. Although there are several woodpeckers in the ladder-backed category, only the Mexican woodpecker is actually named ladder-backed woodpecker along with its traditional name mentioned above. It is one of the smaller woodpeckers (7") within most of its range that is marked with barred black-and-white back, strong black-and-white facial pattern forming a triangle. The male has a red cap and the female has a black cap. The most numerous of the woodpecker family in Texas, it replaces the downy in more arid areas. It is trusting and familiar and is found regularly on ranches, village yards and parks. The ladder-backed AKA Mexican woodpecker can also commonly be found in woodlands and mesquite thickets. In more arid regions it feeds in agave, yucca, cactus and other desert vegetation. It feeds low, often on the ground. Besides the usual woodpecker diet of insects, it eats fruits of cactus and other wild plants.

A cavity in a decayed tree

branch about 12 feet above ground near water is where the ladder-back's nest may be found. When the branch slopes, as is often the case, the 1 ½ " diameter entrance is on the underside. The bird nests also in fence posts, telephone poles, agave, yucca and cactus.

The reason for describing the Mexican woodpecker-ladder-backed woodpecker in more detail is to help establish the fact that this is the only one that could be found with the 'ladder-backed' name given to a single species of the woodpecker family. All other woodpeckers with barred backs may be grouped into a general category according to eastern, western, southern or northern. For years casual bird watchers in this middle section of Indiana have been heard to refer to certain woodpeckers as ladder backs. It may be surmised that the species called "ladder-backed" around here is probably in many cases the red-bellied woodpecker. When questioned about the appearance of their ladder-backed visitor, observers may say that it's about robin size, but are always a little vague in giving a complete color description, but instead say that it is a bird someone has told them is a "ladder-back". Before questioning these bird watchers it is imperative to know what one is talking about. So with the help of Sibley, Audubon and National Geographic bird

guides this writer was able to come up with some informative findings. The main point is, out of all ladder-backed woodpeckers found during research only one bears the actual species name of ladder-backed or Mexican woodpecker. All other woodpeckers called ladder-backed are members of a large group with this similarity of white bars on the back going up to the nape of the neck.

In Indiana those which qualify as members of the ladder-backed category are the red-bellied, yellow-bellied sapsucker with a blurry-looking ladder pattern and yellow-shafted flicker (partial back pattern). In the west we see the Mexican or ladder-backed woodpecker, the nuttall, gila, golden-fronted and Williamson's sapsucker. In the south is the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and in the north the American three-toed woodpecker.

We realize that the list above is by no means complete, but we at least have enough information to understand that the ladder-backed woodpecker is a part of a large group country-wide. We can also realize that this woodpecker, along with all other types of woodpeckers is a beneficial bird to have around. Together with all types of woodpeckers they consume great quantities of wood-boring insects and so help keep our woodlands more disease free.



New Novel Takes on Endangered Species and Extinction

Submitted and written by Kieran Suckling

How the Dead Dream, a new novel by conservationist-writer Lydia Millet, tells the story of an ambitious young real estate developer in L.A. who, in the wake of a personal crisis, becomes obsessed with rare and vanishing animals and starts breaking into zoos at night to be close to them.

Millet, an award-winning novelist married to Center for Biological Diversity founder and policy director Kieran Suckling, has penned one of the first American novels to approach the emotional and aesthetic implications of the extinction tragedy. *How the Dead Dream* is notable for its thoughtful engagement with the social and personal effects of massive species loss:

He soon learned to recognize the signs of an animal's imminent disappearance ... Sometimes a group or individual took up the cause of an animal or a plant and could muster the rationale for a lawsuit, and often the courts favored the victim; but the victim remained a victim and for each victim whose passing was noted thousands more slid away in the dark. From where he stood they succumbed with great ease; from where he stood they had always been invisible anyway.

How the Dead Dream is Millet's sixth novel; her fifth, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*, also had an environmental theme, exploring the moral, cultural and philosophical legacy of nuclear weapons by bringing the Manhattan Project physicists who invented the atomic bomb into modern-day Santa Fe. Her best-known early book, *George Bush, Dark Prince of Love*, tells the comic story of an obese trailer-park dweller named Rosemary who falls in love with, and stalks, George Bush Senior during the Persian Gulf War.

Millet, who did her graduate degree at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment before going to work at NRDC in 1996 and then the Center for Biological Diversity in 1999, says all her novels have a political side. "There's been a kind of a divorce, in American literature, of fiction and politics — an implicit understanding in literary circles that it's tasteless for the two to go together, that any direct reference to large or abstract social problems is expository and therefore a slap in the face to the kind of realism that dominates the form. I don't like that divorce; I don't believe novels should confine themselves to interactions between individuals around self-realization issues in their personal lives. I think novels are also called to depict people in conflict with the greater world, grappling with the shape of that world — the difference between how things are and how they might want them to be."

There's no shortage of personal stories in *How the Dead Dream*: while the book's conflicted protagonist, T., struggles by night with ideas of human aloneness and what it might mean to be a "last" animal, he's also building sprawling subdivisions by day, grappling with his suicidal mother and his father's desertion of her in favor of a new lifestyle in Key West, and fending off attacks by his brutal business partner Fulton as he fends off equally aggressive matchmaking efforts by Fulton's wife. It was Millet's love for both disappearing animals and deeply flawed human characters that drove her to write the novel, she says — one in which the absurd frequently meets the sublime.

Available from publisher Counterpoint in January '08, *How the Dead Dream* has already been voted one of the top books of the year by both the National Book Critics' Circle and the American Library Association's Booklist. Reading Group Guides to help in book clubs and classes are available for conservation-focused audiences at <http://www.softskull.com/files/HtDDguideB.pdf>.

Robert Cooper Audubon Society



Robert Cooper Audubon Society
Lis Mitchell
2700 S. Cecil Rd.
Muncie, IN 47302

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 544
Muncie, IN

Dated Material- Please Deliver Promptly

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

Feb. 11: February Program

Feb. 15: Articles due for March *Chat*. Send to
Beth Simmons at basimmons2@bsu.edu

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



Printed on
recycled
paper 25%
post-con-
sumer fiber

Officers

President: Bonnie Nicholson 886-5099
Vice President: Jon Creek 348-4019
Recording Sec.: Barb Butler 284-5661
Treasurer

Directors

2007-09 Phil Tuttle 289-4251
Marcia Johnson 288-5629
2006-08 Dave Cramer 260-726-9492
Jane Duckworth 282-2161

Committee Chairs

Education: Pam Kistler 284-0946
Field trip: Blanche Townsend 284-0391
Hospitality: Cynda Turner 289-9390
Membership: Jane Duckworth 282-2161
Lis Mitchell 289-0513
Newsletter ed.: Beth Simmons 812-343-8927
Program: Bonnie Nicholson 886-5099
Publicity: Barb Stedman 288-2890
Conservation: Charles Mason 288-9937