

## Frogwatch Workshop

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) will host a Frogwatch USA workshop for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer. The workshop will be March 10, 1-5 p.m., at the Camp Cullom Nature Center, near Frankfort. It will be a workshop to train volunteers about the Frogwatch USA program and to teach them how to monitor amphibians in central Indiana. The workshop is open to anyone (if under 18 with parent or guardian) with an interest of helping wildlife in your local area.

Wendell Zetterberg, Jr., Volunteer with Frogwatch USA and the Indiana Amphibian Monitoring Program, will speak about Frogwatch USA and Indiana's native frog and toad species. Brianne Lowe, Soil Conservationist with the USDA will speak about wetland identification and conservation.

Frogwatch USA, a joint partnership of the National Wildlife Federation and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), is a long-term frog and toad monitoring program educating citizens on how to get involved in their community to:

- Collect and report information about frog and toad populations in the United States.
- Foster an understanding of the importance of protecting wetland habitats.
- Provide an opportunity to learn about and establish a closer relationship with the natural environment.

To register for the workshop contact:

Wendell Zetterberg, Jr.  
[wzetterberg@hotmail.com](mailto:wzetterberg@hotmail.com)  
765-249-2298

## Red-tail Conservancy

Barry Banks, Executive Director of Red-tail Conservancy Land Trust will be the guest speaker for the March 12, 2007 chapter meeting. The mission of Red-tail Conservancy is to preserve, protect, and restore natural areas and farm land in east central Indiana while increasing awareness of our natural heritage. Red-tail has been successful in acquiring a number of properties in and is supported by many RCAS members. Barry will present a pictorial tour of some of the properties and updates on what is coming up this spring. Join us at 7:00 for refreshments and fellowship. Barry will begin the virtual tour of Red-tail properties at 7:30.

Volunteer at <http://www.frogwatch.org> or <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/naamp/>  
Be Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) at <http://www.parcplace.org>  
Check out Wendell's blog at <http://wendellsfrogblog.tripod.com/>  
Look in the links section for a Herpetological Society: <http://www.hoosierherpsociety.org>



## Inside...

- Discover the Horned Lark in a new "Bird of the Month Article."
- Check into the new website features.
- Mark your calendars for the upcoming Living Lightly

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# The Horned Lark: March Bird of the Month

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*Horned Lark:*  
*Eremophila alpestris*  
By: Helen Twibble



The horned lark is the only representative of true larks in the New World. It is named for the tiny “horns,” or feather tufts on each side of the head. These tiny “horns” are not always visible, however. A little larger than a song sparrow, the lark measures from seven to eight inches in length. It has a soft, tawny color on its back with a light underside. These small birds walk instead of hop, and run instead of fly, but will take to the air to avoid cars passing by while they are feeding on or near the road. As they take off in flight, a black tail is revealed and one might see a black bib and soft yellow throat.

Except in parts of the Southeast, the horned lark is a common bird throughout North America. It nests from the Arctic Circle down through Central America. This true lark is one of the earliest nesting birds. Even in northern states, nests may be found in February when the first set of eggs is destroyed by severe snowstorms. As many as three broods may be raised each year. As early as January a male establishes his territory. In his courtship flight he ascends quietly high above the ground and sings a high-pitched tinkling song as he circles. When the song ends, he dives headfirst with wings closed. Just as he seems destined to crash, he opens his wings and pulls out of the dive. A monoga-

mous union is then formed between the pair of larks. The female selects the nesting site and spends a day or two digging a small depression on bare ground using her bill and feet. Her bill is sharp and strong for digging, and her feet are equipped with long hind claws to aid her in preparing the nest site. In all the various lark habitats over the continent, the color of the lark may vary, but the nest is always the same: a small scrape lined with grasses, hair and feathers and placed at the base of a grass clump or bush. There are usually four little balls of black and white feathers in the nest which have hatched from greenish-gray eggs with brown speckles.

Horned larks prefer grasslands and open habitats with low, sparse vegetation where they may feed on small seeds and insects picked from the ground. The short stout bills are well adapted to this varied diet. It is said that the more barren and unattractive an area, the better it seems to suit the horned lark. When cover begins to grow and develop, even tall grass and weeds, the birds desert it. Each breeding pair seems to need some bare exposed earth within its territory. This may help in the lookout for predators, according to some sources. While driving through open country where horned larks abound, you might notice flocks of small sparrow-sized birds feeding along the shoulder of the road or even on the road. They will flush as you drive by, circle overhead and land when your car has passed by, in the exact same spot to continue foraging. In snowy times the open road is the birds' only open place to find weed seeds,

spilled grain or grit. In summer, unpaved roads are also used for dusting the feathers.

The horned lark can be found as a permanent resident throughout Indiana, however, the greatest population concentration seems to be in the northern counties, probably in prairie lands. A great number appear to winter in southern Indiana, but it is not believed they remain to breed there. It is difficult to determine migration numbers and dates because of the presence of larks throughout the year. Cutting of forests and cultivation of land have benefited the horned lark and its ability to flourish. Larks inhabit open areas such as cultivated fields, golf courses, airports, native grasslands, pastures and vacant lots. They may also be seen in small numbers at bird feeders when snow is on, and may sometimes be found with livestock near barns and in feedlots. Horned larks have been found to eat foxtail, lamb's-quarters, pigweed and wheat. They like cracked corn at feeders and glean grain from livestock droppings and from fields spread with manure. It appears that the horned lark is a beneficial breed of bird flourishing on the Hoosier scene.

### Did you know...

A mesh potato bag can make an economical and efficient bird feeder. Fill a 5-10 lbs mesh potato bag with 2-3 lbs of unsalted peanuts in the shell. Tie the top and hang from a shepherd's hook or tree limb. It will attract many types of birds who peck holes in the shells and extract a nutmeat. This feeder not only feeds birds, but provides many hours of entertainment for the shut-in or the avid bird watcher. The only disadvantage is this type of feeder is not squirrel-proof.)

# Audubon Website Update

Have you seen a bird at your feeder that's left you completely stumped? Think you've identified a Pygmy Nuthatch at your feeder, and you need confirmation from other birders? Send us a reasonably high-quality photo (a .jpg is preferred) to [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com), along with a description of the circumstances surrounding the sighting, including the area where you live or saw the bird (Indiana sightings are given priority), habitat in which you saw the bird (creek bed, pine forest, etc.), time of year, and any other identifying marks that might not show up well in the photo. We'll publish your photo and description at our website ([www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)), and ask our website visitors to take their best shot at identifying the bird. The correct answer and particularly interesting speculations about the previous month's Mystery Bird will be published each month.

The February Mystery Bird of the Month was submitted by Betsy Irwin and is now posted at our website [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org). If you think you know what the bird is, send your best guess to [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cooperaudubon@gmail.com) by **March 10**. Be sure to include your name and any defining clues that you used to identify it!

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## Living Lightly Fair

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Several months ago we told you about the Living Lightly Fair which leaders of our Audubon Chapter started planning more than a year ago, along with leaders of the Five Rivers Sierra Club and the Cope Environmental Center. We are now grateful to have Minnetrista as a supporting partner of the fair and to have various foundations, corporations, businesses, and individuals as financial sponsors for the fair. Enthusiastic support from the community has been overwhelming, and we want to make sure that all of you – our faithful Audubon members – are involved!

In each month's *Chat*, between now and June 2, we'll provide you with the latest update on the fair plans: speakers, field trips, music, children's activities, vendors/exhibitors, and more! You can find out the very latest by going to the Living Lightly website [www.livinglightlyfair.org](http://www.livinglightlyfair.org).

Even though the fair is three months away, we need to line up volunteers *now*! On June 1 and the weekend of the fair itself, we will need dozens of volunteers to help set up and take down tables and chairs, direct traffic, clean up trash, and tend to many other small, but vital, duties.

If you would be willing to donate a few hours of your time on June 1, 2, 3 or 4, please send your name, telephone number and email address to [sustainablelivingfair@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablelivingfair@gmail.com). If you would be willing to take on more responsibility, please call Barb Stedman at 288-2890. We'll help match up your talents and interests with planning responsibilities that still need to be addressed.



### What Is Living Lightly?

Living Lightly – A Resource Fair for Sustainable Lifestyles – promises to be one of the most exciting events

ever to come to East Central Indiana! The fair is aimed at educating and inspiring homeowners, renters, and commuters of East Central Indiana about practical ways to live more sustainably, saving money and resources for themselves and future generations.

Strategies for living simpler and healthier lives, alternative energy sources, construction and remodeling that saves energy and materials, energy-efficient transportation, organic gardening, landscaping with native plants, healthy homes and yards: These are just a few of the topics that the Living Lightly Fair will present through two days of events, on the weekend of June 2 & 3.

Fair-goers will get to hear more than two dozen speakers, browse displays by dozens of vendors and exhibitors, listen to great music, and go on field trips to area sites that show sustainable practices in action. Special events will be available for kids as well. And admission to the fair will be free, thanks to the generous support of our sponsors.

Minnetrista's Garden Fair and Farmers Market will be happening right across the street, so fair-goers can plan on a full weekend of great activities!

# Robert Cooper Audubon Society



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## Dates for Your Calendar

**Mar. 10:** Mystery bird guesses due

**Mar. 16:** Articles due for April *Chat*. Send to Beth Simmons at basimmons2@bsu.edu.

**Chapter Website:** [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)

**Email:** [audubon@bsu.edu](mailto:audubon@bsu.edu)

## Meetings

Program meetings are held on the **second Monday** of each month (except July & August) at

Minnetrissa Cultural Center  
1200 N. Minnetrissa 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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