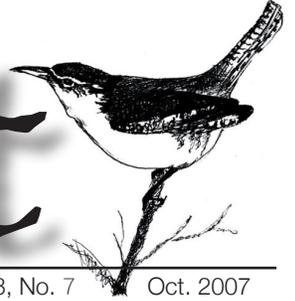


# The Chat



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

Volume 33, No. 7 Oct. 2007

October 8:

## Status of the Cerulean Warbler in Indiana: Is there hope for this rapidly declining species?

The Cerulean Warbler is a tiny migratory species that breeds in eastern and central North America and winters in southern South America. For the past 7 years, Dr. Kamal Islam and his students have been studying this declining species in southern Indiana. Kamal's presentation will introduce the plight of this species followed by aspects of its natural history that have been uncovered from studies in southern Indiana, and end with future direction of his research program.

### Audubon Banquet

**WHAT** The annual Audubon Banquet

**WHERE** Minnetrista on Monday, Nov. 12 at 6 p.m.

**DETAILS** It will be buffet style and serving will begin at 6:15. This year the event will be catered by Bella Avanti. The main dish is CHICKEN PARMESAN or MOSTACIOLLI with Alfredo or Marinara sauce. Potatoes, veggies, salad, bread and an assortment of pies will round out the menu. Coffee, ice tea or water will be provided. Reservations are needed. Please specify a meat or vegetarian choice.

**COST** \$15.75 per person.

You can send money to: Cynda Turner  
4300 W Moore Rd  
Muncie In 47304

You can also make payment to Barb Butler or Cynda Turner at the October 8th Audubon meeting.

### Combat Global Warming

Global warming affects birds and other wildlife in countless ways, and can even cause extinctions. You can help! Consider adopting a few of these energy-saving tips to protect the homes of not only future humans, but also countless birds, reptiles, and other organisms.

**New driveways** Consider driving less by taking public transportation, walking, bicycling, or carpooling. Drive a more energy-efficient vehicle. Take off any rooftop carriers when not in use.

**Go for shade** Plant leafy trees around your house. Each year, the average yard tree cleans 330 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. An average tree absorbs ten pounds of pollutants from the air each year.

**Go organic** Whenever possible, select organic produce. The pesticides used to kill pests also kill the organisms that help keep carbon dioxide in the soil.

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# Eastern Screech Owl: October Bird of the Month

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*Eastern Screech Owl: Otus asio*  
By Helen Twibell



Known as gray owl, red owl or screech owl, the eastern screech owl is quite a unique bird for its size of 8-10 inches in length and two-foot wing span. Although it is classified as a raptor, as are other owls, it is very different from other birds of prey in its anatomy, feather structure and hunting techniques. It seems to be the only owl which exhibits dichromatism, a condition where some are gray, others reddish. A single brood may have some of both phases. Many color variations may come about between the red and gray birds. Under the appropriate conditions these shades may furnish camouflage.

Screech owls may be heard throughout the year in Indiana, but are most commonly heard calling in spring and fall. Courtship begins in late winter, and it's believed that this may account for so many responding to the taped bird calls in the Christmas count. (Screech owls get very curious and may come close when an imitation of their call is being played.)

Nests are made in large tree cavities in pine groves, bridges or where it's suitable for nesting. The eggs are laid on wood chips found in the cavity. Usually a clutch contains 4-6 eggs which hatch from March to April. The female does the incubating while the male brings

her food. The downy young owls are snowy white, and adults are very bold in defending them. In towns parent screech owls have been known to knock the hats off passers-by on the sidewalk under the nest. When the young are self-sufficient by the end of summer, a process called dispersion occurs. Young birds may leave the territory where they are raised and move to new locations. Females seem to travel farther away than males. This variance in distances insures against breeding with members of their own families, since most species appear to avoid inbreeding. In many species dispersal is the least understood phase of the birds' life cycle. Ornithologists have been able in recent years to track owls and other birds through the use of banding and newly developed radio transmitter devices.

One other outstanding characteristic of the screech owl is its eerie call. Its voice is a low, tremulous whistle often rising at first, then falling. It has a plaintive, mourning quality and is sometimes described as a whinny. One summer evening as I was sitting reading by the open living room door, I heard a trembling, eerie call coming from across the field and moving from place to place in the darkness. After hearing the call the second or third time, I got up and locked the screen door. (I was alone downstairs at the time.) I had never before heard anything like it and have never heard it since. I now am convinced that it was a screech owl

out there in the night.

Mice, shrews and insects are tops with this owl, and he may snap up a chipmunk, flying squirrels, frogs, snakes, lizards, cecropia moths, starlings, sparrows and many other birds. The varied dietary habits of the screech owl cause it to be able to find habitats in a great many places. It is a fierce hunter. These owls fly low as they hunt along roads. Because of this habit, many are killed each year by cars and trucks since small mammals and insects that they like are sometimes plentiful along country back roads.

Many bird lovers may think that the screech owl is a baby great-horned owl because of his small size. His appealing looks or his ability to kill small vermin may cause some birders to choose to attract one to their yards with a flicker-size nest house. It is necessary for it to have a three inch opening and wood chips on the floor. Before considering installing such a house, those people are admonished to consider the safety of any small dogs or cats they might have, should an owl actually take residence in the house. Owls may be more likely to visit a yard if it has plantings to house rabbits, mice and shrews. Many of these owls living near homes in wooded areas have been known to crash into big picture windows or sliding doors. Injury may occur, or even fatality.

Eastern screech owls are abundant permanent residents of Indiana, and their calls can be heard throughout the year.

# Conservation award nominations

## Due Oct. 9

You still have a few days to nominate an individual or organization that has made a noteworthy contribution to the environment in one of these categories:

- **Robert H. and Esther (Munro) Cooper Conservation Award:** the chapter's highest honor, for overall contributions to, conservation of, and appreciation for, the natural environment
- **Phyllis Yuhás Wildlife Habitat Preservation:** for development or preservation of habitat that contains significant wildlife and/or native plant life populations
- **Richard Greene Public Service:** for active involvement in serving the public's environmental interests and concerns
- **Clyde W. Hibbs Conservation Education Award:** for excellence in educating the area's children, youth, and /or adults on conservation issues and practices
- **Youth Conservation Award:** for excellence in conservation practices by a youth under the age of 18

Nominees do not need to reside in our chapter's seven-county region or have any affiliation with the Robert Cooper Audubon Society.

Send your nomination, along with a description of the nominee, to Bonnie Nicholson at [nickrb69@yahoo.com](mailto:nickrb69@yahoo.com), or at the following address: 9898 College Corner Rd., Greens Fork, IN 47345. Be sure to include your own name, phone number, address, and email address. Nominations must be received by October 9. Winners will be announced at the awards banquet on November 12.

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### Upper Midwest Audubon Conference

Register now for the 3rd Annual Upper Midwest Regional Audubon Conference, Declining Species, Declining Habitat: Reversing the Trend, in Bloomington, MN, on October 13 & 14.

Hear experts on birds of grasslands, forests, wetlands and even the typical backyard spell out how birds are doing and how their habitats are faring. Speakers will share their expertise and success stories in workshops, plenary sessions and field trips, with plenty of time for networking and socializing.

To register, go to:  
<http://mn.audubon.org/index.html>.

### Mission Migration

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to help a flock of birds safely migrate to its destination from your own living room. Audubon's science department has a new video game, Mission: Migration. that lets you guide migratory birds through storms, airplane traffic, and other common obstacles while learning how your actions affect their safety.

Play the game now at:  
[http://ny.audubon.org/BirdSci\\_game.html](http://ny.audubon.org/BirdSci_game.html).

# Robert Cooper Audubon Society



Robert Cooper Audubon Society  
Lis Mitchell  
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Muncie, IN 47302

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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

**Oct. 8, 7 p.m.:** Speaker  
**Oct. 19:** Articles due for November *Chat*. Send to Beth Simmons at basimmons2@bsu.edu  
**Nov. 12:** Annual Awards Banquet

**Chapter Website:** [www.cooperaudubon.org](http://www.cooperaudubon.org)  
**Email:** [cooperaudubon@gmail.com](mailto: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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