

The Chat



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

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October 13: **MOUNTAIN TOP REMOVAL ROAD SHOW TO VISIT RCAS**

Our October 13 meeting will offer a unique look at an environmental issue Hoosiers may know little about.

It's called "mountain top removal." Coal mining companies in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky blast away on the mountains, removing hundreds of feet from their tops. The resulting rock and debris clog mountain streams. What remains is barren grassland where splendid hardwood forests once towered. Hundreds of thousands of acres have already been devastated in this way.

Lexington Kentucky environmentalist Dave Cooper and a growing group of activists hope to see the coal industry abandon this type of "mining". The Mountain Top Removal Road Show began in 2003 to increase awareness of the issue. The environmental message is shared along with the music and culture of Appalachia in a very special slide presentation.

Join us at 7:00 PM on October 13 at the Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie for this special program. Refreshments and social time will be followed by the program at 7:30.

To learn more about the Mountain Top Removal Road Show, visit www.mountain-roadshow.com

Field trip chair needed

Our chapter has had no steady Field Trip Chair for two-and-a-half years. It's time for someone to step up to the plate and get our chapter outdoors again! (We're a birding organization, after all!)

If you enjoy birding, this is a fun and easy job. Four to six months each year you get to think of places you've always wanted to bird, then invite other interested Auduboners to join you! Past Field Trip Chairs are happy to give you ideas for places to go and tips on logistics. If interested, email Bonnie Nicholson at nickrb69@yahoo.com or Barb Stedman at bastedman@gmail.com.

Canada Goose: October & November Bird of the Month

Canada Goose:
Branta Canadensis
By Helen Twibell



Remember the “good old days” when we anxiously awaited to watch the migrating Canada geese flying southward in a V-formation, honking loudly as they passed over?⁹ This was a sure sign that fall had passed and winter was on its way, and this migration would be the last time we would see the huge birds for a while. Then five or six months later we would hurry out to see them returning north, a reliable sign that spring was just around the corner. Those were exciting times. Nowadays we may see the Canada geese flying in V-formation during migration seasons, but we also may see them in other locales within the community all year. The giant Canada goose which resides in Indiana doesn’t migrate or migrates only short distances across the state or to a neighboring state to find food or available water in more severe weather. The regular migraters are usually of the smaller species of Canada goose from more northern regions than Indiana and may go as far south as Mexico to winter.

There are seven subspecies of Canada geese existing in N. America, but the vast majority of the birds that stay in

Indiana are the giant Canada geese or Maxima (*Branta canadensis maxima*). The N. American Canada geese range in size from three to twenty-four pounds and 20” to 48” in height. The average life span is 10-25 years and one goose has been known to reach 42 years, (in captivity).

Even though there are size variations in the total N. American Canada goose population, their physical traits are very similar. Grown Canada geese have grayish brown wings, breasts, backs and sides. Trails are black, as are feet, legs, bills and heads. The necks are long with distinctive white cheek patches which usually extend down over the throat. Males and females physical appearances are identical, though the males tend to be larger than the females.

Adult geese begin nesting at three years, and they usually mate for life. The pairing begins in February and nesting activities begin in the middle of March through the last of April. The nest is made in a bowl shape of grasses and feathers from the female’s breast. It can range from 12” to 40” in size. The nest sites are variable, but usually are found within 150’ of water. Ideal nesting places may be found on muskrat houses; artificial nesting structures; at the base of large trees; under shrubs; in masses of cattails; in

flower boxes and landscaping structure in urban and suburban areas; in doorways; flower boxes or any place which would conceal them from predators. The clutch may be from 2-12 eggs, though five is average. The female lays an egg every 1 ½ days, and incubation begins when they are all laid. The eggs hatch in 28 days, and the goslings which emerge are a yellow color with greenish-gray heads. They get adult plumage in 3-4 months. This is when the adults’ fierce protection of them ceases, since by then they can fly.

The diet of the Canada geese is mainly vegetarian, including grains, grasses, seeds, sedges, aquatic vegetation, legumes and succulents. These birds may be seen feeding either mornings or late afternoon in waste grain fields where harvesting has left grain on the ground. When the grain is not available they seek out green vegetation as food. They love tender grass shoots and so sometimes graze on lawn grass as well as aquatic plants.

In some instances the Canada geese of Indiana have become a nuisance, what with their droppings and discarded feathers. In June and early July the Canada geese undergo a complete molt. It usually takes a month for each bird to shed and replace all feathers.

Look for the conclusion of this article in the November Chat.

Conservation award nominations Due Oct. 20

Our November 10 program will honor individuals and organizations that have made noteworthy contributions to the environment in our region, perhaps even the state, in 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 Yuhus 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

To make the event a success, we need your help. If you know of an individual or organization that deserves recognition for its service to the natural environment in any of the above categories, please send your nomination, along with a description of the nominee, to Bonnie Nicholson, at 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. Award nominees need not reside in our chapter's seven-county region and they need no affiliation with the Audubon Society. Nominations must be received by October 20.

Trying something new in November

Change can be good for the soul – and for an Audubon chapter!

This November, instead of having our annual conservation awards banquet, we're going to trim down the evening a bit.

We'll still have plenty of festivities, but instead of a full meal and a speaker, we're going to have time to socialize over hors d'oeuvres and a program that focuses entirely on our award winners. You'll get to hear them tell about their conservation activities and show us a few photos of their work – as educators, as habitat protectors, as public servants, and as leaders of conservation movement, both present and future.

Full details will follow in the next Chat, but for now, mark November 10 on your calendar! It promises to be a wonderful evening and perhaps the start of a new tradition at the Robert Cooper Audubon Society.

To make the evening a success, we need your nominations. See the article above and tell us who you think is making a difference in East Central Indiana and beyond!

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

Oct. 13, 7 p.m.: October Program and meeting

Oct. 20 : Nominations for November awards banquet are due

Oct. 24 : Articles due for November *Chat*. Send to Beth Simmons at basimmons2@bsu.edu

Nov. 10: Annual Awards Banquet

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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