

Tern Islands Now Under Construction at Goose Pond

A new island is in the making at Goose Pond. Most of the modification of Goose Pond has been to add water to what had been farm fields, but this summer the DNR, with funding from the Wildlife Diversity Program, is adding an island at the south end of the main pool. The hope is that the island will become a sanctuary for the endangered Interior Least Tern. This island is modeled after the very successful tern islands at Cane Ridge Wildlife Management Area in Gibson County south of Gibson Lake. Those two islands have been nesting sites for Least Terns and other birds for the last few years. To date, no Least Terns have been seen at Goose Pond, but the hope is that they will be attracted to an island not far from Cane Ridge. Black-necked Stilts also use the Cane Ridge islands, so even if the terns do not immediately appear, the island will be a valuable conservation feature.

Why do terns and stilts benefit from an island? The main advantage is that it restricts land-based predators such as raccoons. Another advantage is that it will be surrounded by an electric fence to further discourage predators. The Cane Ridge islands also include decoys to attract the terns. Preliminary plans include a possible webcam, which will allow remote monitoring of the island. If weather permits, DNR hopes to have the approximately three-acre island completed this summer.

Two Work Days Scheduled at Goose Pond for August, September

This summer SAS will be sponsoring two work days at Goose Pond FWA, our adopted IBA. The first work day will be Aug. 19, when we will be spraying herbicides on the invasive plant phragmites. The second work day will be Sept. 20, when we will concentrate on killing some of the woody vegetation that has been creeping into the wetlands. Work on both days will begin at 8 a.m. and last until about 11 a.m. Plan to be at the Goose Pond office on SR 59 south of Linton at 8 a.m. for a short orientation. If you have a sprayer you may want to bring it as we have limited numbers of sprayers, especially for the phragmites work day. For the woody eradication day, some volunteers will be needed to cut the stem while others will spray the stump to retard re-sprouting. Keeping ahead of these invasive plants early on in the restoration will go a long way toward maintaining a high-quality wetland in the long run. If you have questions, contact Jess Gwinn at jagmo@bluemarble.net.

President's Note: *Decisions, Decisions, Decisions*

by Jeff Riegel

A few short weeks ago, on May 31, I got a call from Susan Hengeveld, our Webmaster and a close friend. Don Whitehead and a group of SAS birders had found a mega-rarity, a Fork-tailed Flycatcher, in Owen County. This was a species never seen before in Indiana. The mind starts running — to go or not to go — that is the question.



Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Photo by Susan Hengeveld

I weighed all the pros and cons. Pro — the chances of me getting a life bird in Indiana were next to zero, and the chances of one just 40 miles or so from home, even rarer. I should go. But the price of a gallon of gas is approaching \$4. I should stay home. I'd get the chance to see a lot of friends, many of whom I don't get to visit with very often. I should go. No matter what the price of gas is, there is still my carbon footprint to take into account. I should stay home. Through my purchase of carbon credits, my van is 100 percent carbon neutral (up to 8,000 miles this year and I am well below that). I should go. What about the bird itself? Accounts abound of so many people chasing one bird that the bird itself must alter its behavior in order to avoid those very same people. I should stay home. This is the first day off I've had in four weeks. I should go. On and on, pros and cons, to go or not to go.

Fast forward to today. News just came of four Boy Scouts being killed in a tornado in Iowa, another 50 or so injured. That puts us up to 118 dead from tornadoes this year — a 50 percent increase from last year and we're only halfway through the year. We're recovering from floods right here at home with more than 2,000

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NAME THAT BIRD ?

This fellow is quite a singer with a large repertoire. But don't go near his nest or you may be bombarded. Answer on page 4.



Photo by Jeff Hammond

Editor's Note: *Conservation, Volunteering, and the BIGBY*

by Bob Dodd

You will notice in this issue of the *Leaflet* a note urging Indiana University to preserve bird habitat on the cross country course and another asking the Monroe County Community School system to preserve the chimney of the old Fairview School as a haven for Chimney Swifts. This is in addition to Jess Gwinn's "Activist's Corner" concerning excessive logging in the state forests. SAS has a long history of taking stands on environmental issues, and it is good to see that we continue that tradition. We hope that you agree and will contact our government officials from the local to national level. Your input can make a difference. An example at the national level is the continued protection from drilling of the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge. Strong support from conservation organizations and especially the many individual appeals have convinced Congress to prohibit petroleum exploration in the refuge. Perhaps we can have similar success at the local level.

Each year at this time the SAS board looks ahead to our annual meeting and especially to who might be new board members. We always seem to find a few excellent volunteers willing to serve our organization and keep it vital. Usually we ask people who have been involved in outings, programs, or people that current board members think would be appropriate. But it would be great to have members volunteer whom we do not know or did not think about as board members. If you are

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JOIN SAS

Support *Sassafras Audubon Society* local educational programs, outings, and conservation projects by being a Friend of SAS. Friends receive membership in SAS, the *Leaflet* bimonthly newsletter, and a 10 percent discount on selected items at the *Bloomington Wild Birds Unlimited* and *Bloomington Hardware* stores. Support national conservation efforts through the *National Audubon Society* and receive *Audubon* magazine along with automatic chapter membership in SAS. But, because NAS dues primarily support national projects, we encourage you to also become a Friend of SAS. As a Friend, you will have the satisfaction of supporting your local chapter and its local projects!

Sassafras Audubon Society Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Friend of the Sassafras Audubon Society | \$20/year x ____ year(s) | \$ _____ |
| | Includes chapter membership in SAS | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | National Audubon Society Membership | \$20 for first year | \$ _____ |
| | Special introductory offer (regularly \$35/year) | | |
| | (Renewals go through National Audubon Society) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Additional Contribution to SAS | | \$ _____ |
| | | Total enclosed | \$ _____ |

Mail your completed application along with your check to: Sassafras Audubon Society, Attention Membership Coordinator, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402. *Thank you for supporting Sassafras Audubon Society!*

For more information about membership, e-mail us at SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org.

Sassafras Audubon Society

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The board of directors normally meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. All SAS members are welcome to attend. Please call the president or another board member to learn more details as well as the meeting location or e-mail SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org.

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We invite readers to submit material for consideration for publication. Contact the editor at dodd@indiana.edu or 812-339-2976.

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SAS Calendar

July/August 2008

All SAS-sponsored outings and programs are free and open to non-members. Watch our Web site (www.sassafrasaudubon.org) and the *Bloomington Birds* e-mail list for announcements about other upcoming events. For more information, contact Jim Mitchell at jl Mitchell33@comcast.net or (812) 824-8198.

Saturday, July 12: Goose Pond Community Birding Day

If you are interested in attending, helping, or leading groups, see note in this *Leaflet* or contact Lee Sterrenburg at sterren@indiana.edu.

Saturday, July 19: Goose Pond Butterfly Count

For more information see the article in this *Leaflet* or contact Jess Gwinn at jagmo@bluemarble.net.

Wednesday, July 30: Monarch Larva Monitoring Project

Monarchs, Monitoring, Milkweed and Migration! Free hands-on training for anyone interested in monarch butterflies or monarch monitoring projects for home, schools, or parks. Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area, Linton, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Registration deadline is July 21. For more information or to register, contact Marie at the Natural Resources Education Center at (317) 562-1338 or at nrec@dnr.in.gov.

Wednesday, July 30: Birding in Yemen and Djibouti

Last November, David Daniels went on a birding trip to Yemen and Djibouti. Daniels will give a presentation about his experiences in these exotic lands. His talk will feature pictures of some of the special birds of Southwest Arabia and the Horn of Africa, as well as some of the cultural and scenic aspects of the region. The program will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, Aug. 16: Goose Pond Work Day

For more information see the article in this *Leaflet* or contact Jess Gwinn at jagmo@bluemarble.net.


Saturday, Aug. 23: Migrating Shore Birds

Lee Sterrenburg will lead us to Goose Pond sites looking for migrating shorebirds. Meet at the northeast corner of the Super Wal-Mart parking lot (next to the gas pumps) on West Second at 6:30 a.m. We'll look for marsh birds, shorebirds, and other birds of the season.

Wednesday, Aug. 27: Spring Break in Ecuador

Susan and Jim Hengeveld will share their experiences during an 11-day trip last March in Ecuador, including four and a half days in Amazonia in eastern Ecuador, five and a half days in cloud forest on the west slope, and portions of two days in Andean highland habitat. The program will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, Sept. 6: Migrating Birds

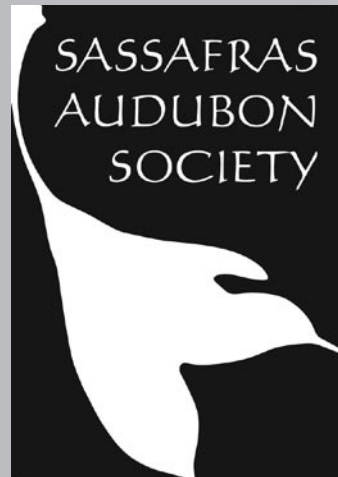
Join Jim Mitchell as he leads us to local hot spots looking for migrating birds. Meet at the northeast corner of the Kmart parking lot on East Third (next to Bloomingfoods) at 8 a.m. 


Membership to Vote on Bylaws Changes at September Meeting

by Bernie Sloan

The bylaws of the Sassafras Audubon Society were last updated in 1999. The National Audubon Society changed some of the required terms and conditions that must appear in local chapter bylaws. In the process of implementing these required changes the SAS board of directors decided

to review the SAS bylaws in their entirety, in case other changes might be warranted.




The board approved a draft revision of the bylaws at its May 5, 2008, meeting. The SAS general membership will vote on these revisions at the September 2008 membership meeting. Please check the SAS Web site for more information about the proposed bylaws revisions. 

Editor's Note *continued from page 2*

interested in birds, conservation, or nature in general, we would love to have you volunteer to serve SAS as a board member or in some other capacity. If you are not sure you want to consider joining the board, you might think about joining us for one of our work days at Goose Pond or at the feeder cleaning this fall. That would be a great way to start serving your local Audubon Society. From personal experience I can vouch for this being a great way to make new friends and share good times with folks with similar interests.

Last March we mentioned the BIGBY challenge. BIGBY is the acronym for the Big Green Big Year. The idea is to see as many bird species as possible without using a private motorized vehicle. There are varieties of BIGBYs, including the public transportation BIGBY and the self-propelled BIGBY. But the local people I know about are doing the walking BIGBY. Don Wiesler, who lives on the southeast side of town, has totaled 77 BIGBY species to date. He has spotted most of those birds within a few blocks of home with occasional additions from walks on the IU campus, downtown, and the rails-to-trail path south of town. Bernie Sloan has an impressive 112 species in his neighborhood, including the IU cross country course and the Pete Ellis Drive area. Jim Hengeveld has a super-impressive 171 BIGBY species (Susan trails by two at 169). They see most of their BIGBY birds from their deck plus Little Africa and on long walks to Yellowwood Lake.

Many people are probably doing non-BIGBY year counts. Jim Mitchell is at 175 and Dave Crouch is right behind at 173. Don Wiesler has totaled 158 species to date. I am behind last year's pace at only 134. That's a long way to go to 200. 

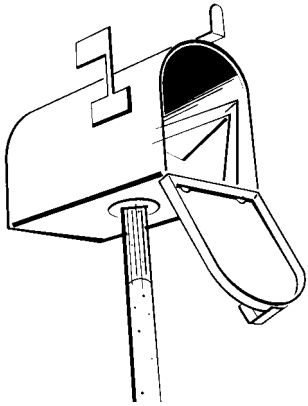
The Activist's Corner

by Jess Gwinn, Conservation Chair

“Timber harvest and silvicultural treatments are viewed as the ecological equivalent or more socially and economically acceptable mimic of natural disturbances that have historically maintained oaks on the drier sites across their range.”

This has to be my most favorite sentence in the recently released draft Environmental Assessment of the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry management plan. Taking cues from the management plan of the Hoosier National Forest, the DOF has crafted a timber-harvesting plan necessitated by speculative ecologic imperatives. The new plan, in a nutshell, is, “If we don’t cut down the oak hickory forest at an accelerated pace, we will no longer have an oak hickory forest.” You would think that Indiana was a treeless wasteland until Europeans appeared and miraculously “managed” our hardwood forests into being.

The EA is interesting in that the DOF slipped in a piece of legislation a few years ago exempting itself from environmental review. This clandestine act is still under judicial review. The DOF claims this EA is a good faith effort on its part to gather comments on its new direction. Considering how little they have heeded past comments I don’t see much influence in our voices. However, if we sit by idly, they will later claim that their plan was supported by the public. So once again I ask you to contact the DOF and let them know what you think about their new plan. By July 12 write to:



State Forester
IDNR — Division of Forestry
402 W. Washington, Room W-296
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Or e-mail: forestryinfo@dnr.in.gov
with “State Forest EA” in the
comment line.

Talking points: Throughout the plan are numerous references to the need for openings in the forest canopy to accomplish a myriad of benefits to multiple forest components

from trees to plants to birds, etc. Moreover, the plan states many times that there is such a thing as a “naturally occurring opening.” Unfortunately, the plan never acknowledges that these naturally occurring openings may have the exact same or at least similar effect on the forest as the artificial openings created by timber harvesting. The enabling legislation for the state forests “allows” timber harvesting. It does not require it. It certainly doesn’t say anything about harvesting up to 5 percent of the state forest acreage annually. We want our state forests managed with kid gloves and with recreation the priority. The currently proposed plan places timber management at the peak of priorities, often to the exclusion or interruption of other uses. Let our state forests grow into the old-growth, highly diverse forests they were when Europeans arrived. These are the types of forests that are in short supply throughout the state, with only public forests capable of filling the need. 🐦

 Answer to Name That Bird:
Northern Mockingbird

An Open Letter:

Save the Birds on the IU Cross County Course



by Bernie Sloan

Last fall the National Audubon Society published a list of the top 10 common bird species in decline. The Eastern Meadowlark was No. 6 on that list, with a 72 percent population decline since 1967. Other grassland birds appear on the list as well. These birds nest in grassy areas, and their nesting and breeding suffers when these areas are mowed at the wrong time of year.

The Indiana University cross country course offers good potential habitat for grassland birds, as long as the grass is mowed with breeding/nesting seasons in mind. Eastern Meadowlarks are common there in the early spring as they search for nesting sites. The cross country course has about 40 acres of grass, only a small portion of which is dedicated to running trails. There are more than 30 acres that could be mowed less often than they are now.

The Sassafras Audubon Society recommends a mowing policy that takes nesting grassland birds into consideration, that reduces the use of increasingly expensive fuel, and that does not interfere with the use of the cross country course by recreational runners and the cross country teams. This sounds like a win-win scenario.

The Sassafras Audubon Society further recommends that it be consulted in the development of a mowing policy for the Indiana University cross country course. The Sassafras Audubon Society has a number of respected biologists as members, so the group can provide sound advice. 🐦

SAS to Host Inaugural Goose Pond Butterfly Count

by Jess Gwinn

On July 19, SAS will host the first-ever Goose Pond butterfly count. This is the second butterfly count for SAS following the long-established Lake Monroe count and using the same methodology.

Besides Goose Pond and Beehunter Marsh, the count circle contains Greene Sullivan State Forest, the Dugger Unit of GSSF, much of Hillenbrand FWA, the Linton Conservation Club, and part of Minnehaha FWA. This means there is plenty of good habitat for folks to get out and explore while looking for our little lepidopterid friends.

With the ongoing restoration of Goose Pond, this count will provide useful data on how the improving habitat affects butterfly diversity and populations. If you are interested in participating, contact Jess Gwinn at jagmo@bluemarble.net. 🐦

In My Backyard: *Are Hawks Welcome?*

by Bob Dodd

Do you have photographs that you have taken of birds around your feeders? Jim Mitchell, my birding buddy and SAS outings coordinator, recently sent me a photo of a Red-Shouldered Hawk that was a frequent visitor to his feeder. Bird lovers have mixed feelings about hawks around the feeder. They like seeing the majestic birds, but they do not like the idea of losing songbirds that they have attracted to the feeder. It seems like a dirty trick to play on those poor birds! But Jim was pleased to find that the victim of his resident hawk was a European Starling. Now if we could just get feeder hawks to confine their attention to starlings, cowbirds, and House Sparrows, we would have the best of both worlds.

Chuck and Pam Flowers, local bird lovers, sent me an interesting photo of two Downy Woodpeckers sharing a suet cake. Our experience has been that usually woodpeckers are not so accommodating. Usually smaller species especially vacate the suet when a larger relative appears on the scene.

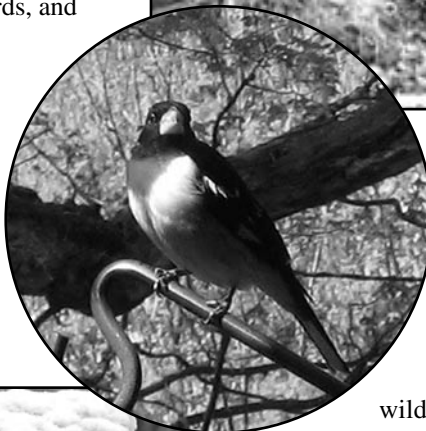
Last May seemed to be a great year for Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at our feeders.

If you have a photo you would like to share with other *Leaflet* readers, we would be pleased to have a copy.

Every five years the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducts a survey of the number of people who are bird and wildlife watchers. They recently released the results of their 2006 survey (it seems like they are a bit slow in publishing their numbers). Results show that 71 million people are



Top right — Red-shouldered Hawk dines on a European Starling. *Photo by Jim Mitchell*



Center — Rose-breasted Grosbeak waits its turn at the feeder. *Photo by Bob Dodd*

Bottom left — Mr. and Mrs. Downy Woodpecker share suet on a snowy winter day. *Photo by Chuck and Pam Flowers*



wildlife watchers (up 7 percent from the 2001 survey). Almost 50 million of these are bird watchers. So we have lots of company in our interest in birds and other wild things.

In the last month or two you probably completed your Indiana state tax return. Did you notice the place where you were invited to contribute part or all of your refund to the Indiana Non-game Wildlife Fund? If you did not do it this year, why not plan next year to contribute to wildlife in this way? Hunters and fishers contribute to game wildlife funding when they buy their license and some of their equipment. Of course, in some cases hunters and birders have mutual interest in maintaining healthy stocks of birds. Bird watchers benefit from the efforts of groups such as Ducks Unlimited. In fact, you might consider buying a duck stamp. The stamps themselves are beautiful and the money raised from their sale goes to conservation efforts. 🐾

Spring Feeder Cleaning Nets \$690

by David Daniels

The annual spring feeder cleaning held on April 26 was a great success. Thanks to the generous support of those people who brought their feeders for cleaning, SAS earned \$690. The proceeds will be used for SAS conservation programs and educational activities. The feeder cleaning would not be possible without the time and effort put in by the volunteers who gave up part of a sunny Saturday. We had help from Bob Dodd, Nancy Martin (who also contributed her power washer and tent), Jim Mitchell, and myself. Thanks also to Vickie Davison and her staff at Bloomington Hardware for hosting the event. 🐾

Nature Photo Exhibit Set for October at Monroe County History Center

Don't forget about the SAS and Bloomington Photography Club exhibit, "Focus on the Natural History of Southern Indiana." The exhibit will open at the Monroe County History Center Oct. 1 and will be up through January. Members of both sponsoring organizations are invited to submit photos for inclusion. Jurying is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 7 in Lyman Hall of the First Presbyterian Church. Please contact Glen Darling, president of BPC, at glen@printmasteronline.com as soon as possible to let him know how many photos you plan to submit. See the May/June issue of the *Leaflet* for details. 🐾

Leaders Needed for Community Birding Day at Goose Pond

by Lee Sterrenburg

The third annual Goose Pond FWA Community Birding Day will take place on the evening of July 12. The event is sponsored by Friends of Goose Pond. The theme this year is “Coming Home to Roost.” We’ll be trying to watch herons and egrets going to roost for the evening, plus whatever else we might see in the way of marsh birds, migrant shorebirds, etc. This is potentially a good date for seeing King Rail families out foraging, if we’re so lucky and we go to the right place. There will hopefully be a brief ice cream and cobbler social somewhere in Linton before we head out to the field (perhaps starting the social at 7 p.m.). As in the previous two years, we are in dire need of leaders to help out with this birding event for the Linton and



Greene County communities. In previous years, we’ve had a cap of about 40 participants. Many are beginning or youth birders. We try to have a healthy ratio of leaders to participants. Sassafras Audubon Society and Amos W. Butler Audubon Society have supplied the leader contingents for the two past years, and we hope they will do so again this year. As the event approaches, more details and confirmation on meeting times and locales will appear on the IN-BIRD-L and Bloomington-birds-L listservs. We do need your help, and birds on this date could be good. 🐦

This Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, an unusual visitor to Indiana, appeared at Goose Pond in June. *Photo by Jerry Downs*

President’s Note *continued from page 1*

homes destroyed or severely damaged in Martinsville and Columbus and other points in our immediate area. One of my field technicians lost her Martinsville apartment and the project lost a vehicle, totaled from sitting in five feet of water. More storms, possibly severe, are forecast for later today. When we sit back and take into account what is happening all around us, things that are having devastating effects on birders and non-birders alike, grabbing a chance to see a Fork-tailed Flycatcher seems trivial at best.

Or is it? There is no doubt that we have tremendous challenges facing us in the immediate future. The war in Iraq, an economy that seems to be caught in a downward-spiraling vortex, a Presidential election that is sure to become more and more heated as we all face a decision that could very well determine the fate of our nation for years to come, an educational system that in many cases seems a joke, and, of course, that pesky global warming thing and its associated climate change. I could go on, but it’s too depressing.

Enter a single Fork-tailed Flycatcher. The only way that many people can cope with making decisions like filling up the gas tank or filling our refrigerators, making the house payment or paying the electric bill, spending a day’s wages just to go to work for the rest of the week or finding a new job closer to home, is to find some sort of release, a simple way to spend just an hour or two getting away,



An informal convention of birders viewing Fork-tailed Flycatcher. *Photo by John Lawrence*

leaving all of today’s challenges behind if only for a very short time. Another item in the pro column in my decision-making process to chase one bird in a field in Owen County.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher, here I come. And it was, indeed, a great day with very close looks at the bird that didn’t seem to be the least bothered by our presence. In fact, it approached us! (That was to change later in the day, but I’ll leave the subject of birding ethics for another issue of the *Leaflet*.) I saw many friends I hadn’t seen in quite a while, and met many new ones, most of whom I knew only by name on a listserv, all members of the Indiana birding community. It didn’t matter if they were members of our own Sassafras Audubon Society, the Lafayette area’s Sycamore Audubon Society, Louisville’s Beckham Bird Club, or the Ohio Ornithological Society — we’re all part of the same birding community. It was great to finally put faces to names and have a chance for a “real” conversation — you know, one of those things where you don’t have to bother hitting the Enter, Delete, or Shift key — a sort of a megarrarity in and of itself nowadays. When all the pros and cons are considered, it was the right choice.

I know birders in many areas of the country. I’ve birded with Kenn Kaufman, Don and Lillian Stokes, Bill Thompson III and Julie Zickafoose, and many other “big names.” But those aren’t relaxing times; they actually add more challenges to a life that has plenty of them already. The relaxing times, my times of release from today’s challenges, locally, nationally, and even globally, come from right here at home, from all my SAS friends. Our Sassafras Audubon Society has some 650 members, but many of you I’ve never met. I’ve seen your names on mailing lists and membership databases, but the chance to meet new folks within our own birding community is a lot of what Sassafras Audubon Society is all about. Look at our calendar of outings and programs. See what can fit into your schedule. Weigh all the pros and cons, and maybe we’ll meet at Lake Monroe, Goose Pond, or Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge. And it certainly doesn’t have to wait for an opportunity at a Life Bird.

A world-renowned birder once said, while looking out over a flock of Black-bellied Plovers, “That’s a Life Bird for me.” “You’re kidding, right? You’ve never seen a Black-bellied Plover?” “I’ve never seen *that* one.” Now that’s a release! Just a tiny little break found in just one sentence from an old friend. It makes me wonder what great sentences I’ll hear from my new friends. See you soon. 🐦

173 Species Found on Greene County Big May Day Count

by Lee Sterrenburg

On Saturday, May 10, 2008, Sassafras Audubon Society conducted its second annual Greene County Big May Day Bird Count. Jess Gwinn organized the count. We had six parties in the field, doubling the number of parties on our initial try last year in 2007. Our results this year were 173 species recorded in Greene County. This figure far surpasses the 153 species we recorded on our initial count last year.

Areas covered included Goose Pond FWA, Hillenbrand FWA, the Combs Unit of Martin State Forest, the Greene County side of Greene–Sullivan State Forest, and woods and fields near Solsberry.

We enjoyed nice weather all day. One party started at 1:15 a.m. in calm winds, clear skies, and temperatures that got down to 39° F before dawn. Skies remained clear most of the day. The afternoon high temperature reached 69° F, with moderate winds eventually up 8–12 mph, becoming calm again toward sunset. Skies became overcast with a few scattered sprinkles after sunset.

Contributing to the fine count total on May 10 were 33 species of warblers, including one BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER and two GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS; 15 species of shorebirds at Goose Pond FWA, including 11 BLACK-NECKED STILTS, one WESTERN SANDPIPER, and two WILSON'S PHALAROPES; 11 species of diurnal raptors, including two OSPREYS, four NORTHERN HARRIERS, one MERLIN, and one PEREGRINE FALCON; a good showing of marsh birds with eight AMERICAN BITTERNS, four BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, two KING RAILS, six VIRGINIA RAILS, 14 SORAS, and two COMMON MOORHENS; nine species of ducks, including four GADWALLS and one AMERICAN WIGEON; and 11 species of sparrows and allies, including one VESPER SPARROW and a gratifying-for-the-county tally of 69 state-endangered HENSLOW'S SPARROWS. We recorded all the seasonally expected thrushes, including a nice all-party count of 45 SWAINSON'S THRUSHES. We recorded both the state endangered wren species with 14 SEDGE WRENS and three MARSH WRENS. There was a nice total of 127 BOBOLINKS. Ponds on the Greene County side of Hawthorn Mine contributed one COMMON LOON, and the Greene County side of Greene–Sullivan State Forest produced four CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOWS. A late migrating WHOOPING CRANE was certainly an unusual species for Big May Day Count time. The Indiana Bird Records Committee does not yet accept this introduced species as established, and the crane does not count toward the day's species total. But it was an interesting bird for some parties to see while looking for warblers and thrushes.

We didn't have too many obvious gaps or omissions. One could hope for two or three more species of flycatchers. Nobody managed to find a Cedar Waxwing. The only gulls and terns were three RING-BILLED GULLS and one BLACK TERN at Goose Pond FWA. That scene might improve after the two large Goose Pond Main Pool units go on line and are full of water.

Participants were Don Allen, Jim Brown, Mike Clarke, John Eakin, Scott Evans, Maureen Forrest, Forrest Fleischman, Terri Greene, Jess Gwinn, Donald Hall, Jim Hengeveld, Susan Hengeveld, Jim Mitchell, Lee Sterrenburg, Joan ten Hoor, Betsy Whitehead, and Don Whitehead.

An Open Letter:

Save the Fairview School Chimney

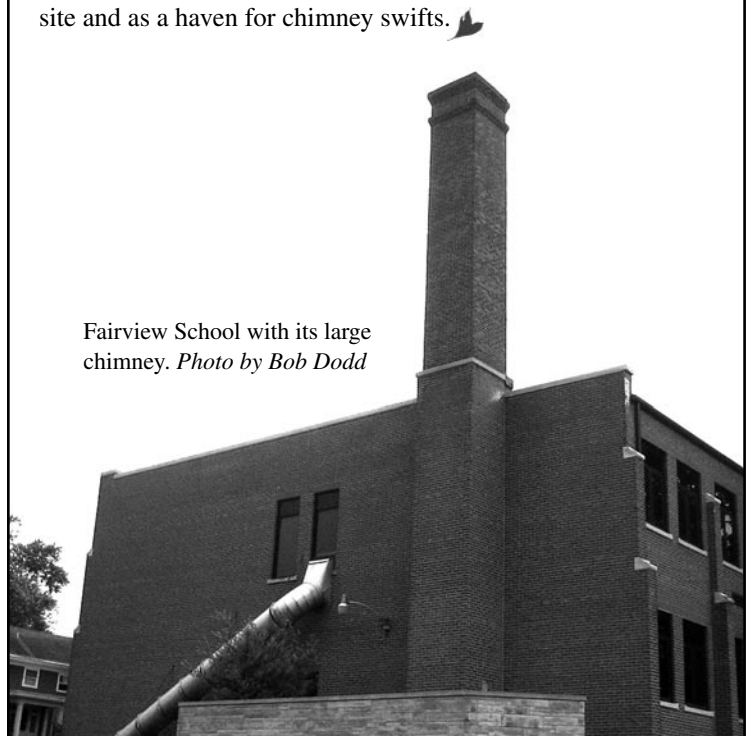
by Bob Dodd

As the Monroe County Community School Corp. considers the future of the old Fairview School building, the Sassafras Audubon Society asks that you save a real treasure for birds and the environment — the school's chimney. Each fall and to a lesser extent in the spring, Chimney Swifts use the chimney as a roosting site when they migrate between their winter home in Central and South America and their summer home in North America. Large masonry chimneys such as the one at the old Fairview School are favored roosting sites.

What is a Chimney Swift and why should we worry about saving a roosting site for them? Swifts are one of the most useful and interesting urban birds. You may have noticed them flying above city buildings on a summer evening. They look like cigars with wings that beat alternately from side to side. On a fall evening at about dusk the birds make a spectacular show. Hundreds of birds circle around the chimney in gradually tighter circles with a few birds at a time abruptly dropping into the opening. Not only are these birds entertaining to watch, they also are useful as voracious consumers of mosquitoes and other flying insects. They are one of nature's ways of controlling these pesky nuisances. This interesting and useful bird is declining in abundance mainly due to loss of roosting and nesting sites as big old chimneys are destroyed and residential chimneys are capped. There is an organization dedicated to preservation and increase in population size of chimney swifts, with a Web site at www.chimneyswifts.org.

We would suggest that if the old Fairview School is to be replaced, that MCCSC incorporate the old chimney into the new building. Alternatively, the old chimney might remain standing beside the new building as a memorial to this historic site and as a haven for chimney swifts.

Fairview School with its large chimney. Photo by Bob Dodd




Monroe County Birdathon Participants Tally 155 Species

by Cathy Meyer

On Saturday, May 3, four teams competed to find the most species in Monroe County limits. The rain had stopped by the time we started and a beautiful spring morning followed. The afternoon was very windy and several roads around Lake Monroe were under water. Waterfowl had mostly departed, shorebirds were scarce, and lots of spring migrants had not arrived yet, but a total of 155 species were found by all the teams combined. The winning team, the Mudhens — Jim Brown, Jo Hargeshemier, Jess Gwinn, and myself, representing Monroe County Parks and Recreation, found 133 of them. The other teams represented Sycamore Land Trust, SAS, and Fish and Wildlife agencies. It was a fun — and exhausting — day, followed by a great dinner at the Whiteheads' on Sunday and prize baskets supplied by David Daniels at Wild Birds Unlimited. The results have been compiled and can be e-mailed to anyone interested.

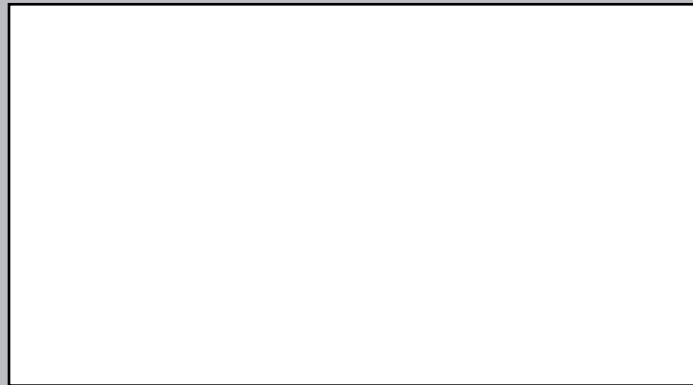
Some of the interesting birds included a Snow Goose, a few Blue-winged Teal, a Red-breasted Merganser, Wild Turkeys, Bobwhite, a few Common Loons, two Great Egrets, Cattle Egret, several Black Vultures, Osprey, many Bald Eagles and Red-tails, a Harrier, Sharp-shins, Coopers, Red-shoulders, broadwings, a few Kestrels, an immature Golden Eagle, Soras, Coots, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, snipe and woodcock,

Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls, Forster's and a Common Tern, a couple of Yellow-billed Cuckoos; Screech, Barred, and Great Horned Owls; Whip-poor-wills, swifts, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, kingfishers, and all seven woodpeckers. Most flycatchers had not arrived but there were plenty of phoebes and kingbirds, as well as a few Acadian, pewees, Great Crested, and Least. White-eyed, Yellow-throated, Red-eyed, and Warbling Vireos were found in good numbers. All of the expected swallows were seen, many of them flying low over the water in the gusty wind. Bank Swallows were found nesting in a bank of Brummett's Creek. Red-breasted Nuthatches were found. Also found were House Wrens and Carolina Wrens and a Sedge Wren at the Bean Blossom Bottoms boardwalk, several late Ruby-crowned Kinglets, very few migrant thrushes — only Swainson's, and one Cedar Waxwing. Nesting warblers were in place, but few of the later migrants. There were 30 warbler species found. Summer and Scarlet Tanagers were seen. A Clay-colored Sparrow was found by one team at Stillwater, along with Lincoln's, Savannah, Grasshopper, Henslow's, Swamp, White-crowned, White-throated, and other sparrows. Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks, a single Bobolink, many Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and one Purple Finch were also found. 



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