


Endowment Campaign Tops \$17,000

by Bob Kissell

Your Sassafras Audubon Board of Directors is pleased to announce that our endowment campaign, started this past summer, now has pledges amounting to over \$17,000! We heartily thank our most recent donors Marc Allaire & Lynda Walker, Judith Lawrence, Keegan Ramey, Steve Dunbar, Bernie Sloan, Laura Hammond, John Lawrence, John Vint, Steve Cotter, Martha Wailes, and Fred & Sandy Churchill for their commitment to conservation and belief in SAS efforts in environmental education and preservation, now and into the future.

We would like to highlight recent gifts from Fred & Sandy Churchill and Sarah Frey. They both opted to give SAS significant gifts in a multi-year commitment. The Churchills, naturalists and environmentalists over the long haul, were most generous in their gift of appreciated stocks in 2008 and 2009. Sarah Frey, firmly committed to local environmental activism, pledged her endowment contribution in the form of cash payments spread over the next year.

The SAS endowment campaign is set up to accept your contribution in whatever form is best for your financial situation. The Sassafras Audubon family encourages our members to foster the legacy of conservation by adding to the growing list of endowment contributors.

And please don't forget to join SAS at Monroe County Public Library's auditorium on Wednesday, January 30, at 7 p.m. to learn about the great progress in wetlands restoration at Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area, the cornerstone of the SAS endowment and conservation focus. Our panelists will be James Cole, Brad Feaster, and our own Lee Sterrenburg. 

Eagle Watch Weekend 2008: A Celebration of Success

by Jeff Riegel

In 1967 the Bald Eagle came to the forefront of American conservation when it was placed on the newly authorized Federal Endangered Species List. Although no one knew it at the time, it would be forty years before our nation's symbol could be delisted, but that finally happened June 28, 2007. This year's Eagle Watch Weekend will celebrate the success of not just Indiana's reintroduction program, but similar conservation programs nationwide that enabled this historic event to occur. Sassafras Audubon Society, BirdCountry.US, and the Bloomington/Monroe County Convention and Visitors' Bureau are principal sponsors of Eagle Watch Weekend.

This year's Eagle Watch Weekend will take place February 8-10. The location of the weekend events had not been determined by the deadline of this edition of the *Leaflet*, but will be announced by January 1, 2008.

Eagle Watch Weekend, the largest event of its kind in the state, will kick off with the fourth annual Eagle Watch Weekend bird count on Friday morning. Mike Clarke, former SAS Board member, will lead the outing. That afternoon will feature a special look into the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment, the largest study of its kind ever attempted in Indiana, presented by Jeff Riegel, SAS President and Field Research Supervisor for the study. That program will be followed with a look at the effects of global warming and climate change on birds. Drs. Jim and Susan Hengeveld, long-time leaders in the local birding community, will present this special program, a new addition to Eagle Watch Weekend. Friday evening, Ross Brittain will lead an owl prowl at Lake Monroe, an outing that constantly ranks high in popularity among eagle watchers.

Saturday, February 9, will begin with a program on the basics of birding by Brown County State Park Naturalist Jim Eagleman followed by a program on birds "just for the kids and kids at heart" by Brown County SP naturalist Brittany Davis. Historically the busiest time of the weekend, bus tours to see eagles in the wild will take place from noon to 4 p.m. with buses, sponsored by Bloomington/Monroe County CVB, leaving every half hour to local eagle viewing hotspots on Lake Monroe. Numerous volunteers from SAS will bring their optical equipment and eagle expertise to assist with the hundreds of people that attend these tours every year. Another program designed for the younger among us will take place at 2 p.m. and a special program with live raptors will take the stage at 4 p.m. Plans are being finalized for the evening program, but look for something totally unique to Eagle Watch Weekend.

Sunday morning will begin with a bird outing to the lake with Marc Allaire, SAS Treasurer

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Photo by Jeff Hammond

NAME THIS BIRD

Can you identify this fellow noted for his raucous song and bright red wing patch? The answer is on page 6.

Editor's Note: *New Year's Resolutions Past and Present and a Birder's CD*

by Bob Dodd

In the January/February issue of the *Leaflet* for 2007 your editor went out on the limb with several birding-oriented New Year's resolutions. So now is the time to review those resolutions and perhaps renew them for this year. Well, I did manage to identify more than 175 bird species in Indiana during 2007. In fact, as I write this, my total stands at 196. With a bit of luck on the Christmas bird counts I might get to 200 before the year is over. I guess I should make 200 species my goal for 2008. In addition to setting a goal for the number of birds seen during the year, here is a list of additional resolutions that I am going to try to keep this year. You might consider a similar birding resolution list for yourself.

- ' Attend as many SAS outings as possible, at least one a month.
- ' Go on at least one butterflying outing.
- ' Attend as many evening SAS programs as possible (last Wednesday of the month).
- ' Contribute to the SAS endowment program.
- ' Participate in at least one Christmas Bird Count.
- ' Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count and in Eagle Watch Weekend.
- ' Attend the SAS spring banquet.
- ' Participate in a work day at Goose Pond.
- ' Help with the Saw-whet Owl banding program.
- ' Keep my bird feeders and birdbath filled.

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JOIN SAS

Support *Sassafras Audubon Society (SAS)* 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% discount on selected items at the *Bloomington Wild Birds Unlimited* and *Bloomington Hardware* stores. Support national conservation efforts through the *National Audubon Society (NAS)* 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: _____

- | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------|
| Y | Friend of the Sassafras Audubon Society | \$20/year x ____ year(s) | \$_____ |
| | Includes chapter membership in SAS | | |
| Y | National Audubon Society Membership | \$20 for first year | \$_____ |
| | Special introductory offer (regularly \$35/year) | | |
| | (Renewals go through National Audubon Society) | | |
| Y | 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.

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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 January/February 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 jmitchel01@insightbb.com or 812-824-8198.

Sat., Jan. 19, 8 a.m.: Raptors and Other Winter Residents

Join Don Whitehead as he leads us on a half-day trip to local hot spots searching for raptors and other winter residents. Winter's leafless trees should make it easier to spot perching birds. Meet in the northeast corner of the Kmart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on E. 3rd St. in Bloomington at 8 a.m. We will return before midday.

Wed., Jan. 30, 7 p.m.: The Birds of Goose Pond FWA— An Unparalleled Example of Wetland Restoration in Indiana

This special event will be held in the Monroe County Public Library auditorium and is free for all to attend. See the article on the back page of this *Leaflet* for details.

Sat., Feb. 2, 8 a.m.: Eagle Watch Preview

Susan and Jim Hengeveld will lead participants to Lake Monroe to search for Bald Eagles in anticipation of the upcoming Eagle Watch Weekend. The Lake Monroe area in January can contain high concentrations of wintering Bald Eagles that have migrated south after their home waters have frozen. The Hengevelds will take us to prime spots on the lake for finding eagles. We will also see what other wintering birds and wildlife might be present. Meet in the northeast corner of the Kmart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on E. 3rd St. in Bloomington at 8 a.m. We will return before midday.

Fri., Feb. 8 to Sun., Feb. 10: Eagle Watch Weekend

See the article on page 1 of this *Leaflet*. Check the Eagle Watch Weekend Web site at www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com and watch local media for details.

Fri., Feb. 15 through Mon., Feb. 18: Great Backyard Bird Count See the article on page 6 of this *Leaflet* or check the GBBC Web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc for details.

Sat., Feb. 23, 6 a.m.: Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area

Lee Sterrenburg will lead us on an early morning outing to see the geese, cranes, raptors, and wildlife at the Goose Pond FWA. We will make an early start so we can view migrating geese and Sandhill Cranes before they begin their predawn flights. Meet in the northeast corner of the Wal-Mart parking lot (near the gas pumps) on W. 2nd St. (SR 45) in Bloomington at 6 a.m. We will carpool to GPFWA and return in the afternoon.

Wed., Feb. 27, 7 p.m.: Program to be announced

Mark this date on your calendar and watch the SAS Web site for the program topic. The event will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library and is free for all to attend. Light refreshments will be served.

Sun., Mar. 2, 7:30 a.m.: Early Migrants

Jim Mitchell will lead us to local hot spots in search of early migrating waterfowl and other birds. Meet in the northeast corner of the Kmart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on E. 3rd St. in Bloomington at 7:30 a.m. We will carpool to the lake areas and return before midday.

Sat., Mar. 8, 7:30 a.m.: Early Migrants

Jim Mitchell will lead a repeat of the March 2 outing. 

Eagle Watch Weekend 2008 *continued from page 1*


and one of the best birders in the state. We strongly encourage birders of all levels to attend this morning's carpool trip. At 10 a.m., Jeff Hammond, Hammond Photography, will showcase some of his work, but possibly more importantly, he'll tell folks "the rest of the story." Think of otters licking the lens or taking your wife birding and photographing at the dump on your honeymoon—you get the idea. The weekend will wrap up with SAS President Jeff Riegel looking into his crystal ball to see how birds will fare in the future. How many more will be delisted? How many more will be added to the list of endangered birds in this country? And most importantly, how can you help in either case?

Registration for any or all parts of the weekend is just \$10 for adults and \$4 for children 12 and under. And in keeping with the theme of the weekend, a portion of the proceeds from this year's event will be donated to the SAS Endowment Campaign to benefit conservation projects



Jeff Riegel (left) and Mike Clarke (at scope) help participants search for eagles. *Photo by Jeff Hammond*

at Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area, Sassafras Audubon Society's adopted Important Bird Area (IBA). Jeff Riegel, Director of BirdCountry.US and Eagle Watch Weekend's coordinator said, "I am very pleased to be able to make these dollars available for work at Goose Pond. Government agencies tend to get a lot of credit for work done around the country in the name of conservation, and rightfully so. But organizations such as the Sassafras Audubon Society give so freely of their time, money, and expertise, that they deserve our very special thanks and a helping hand at the same time. I hope everyone comes out to Eagle Watch to help their efforts at Goose Pond, perhaps the most unique fish and wildlife area in the state."

Complete information for the weekend, brochures, mail-in registration forms, and instructions for phone-in or online registrations are available at www.BirdCountry.US or Eagle Watch Weekend's official Web site, www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com or by calling 812-335-8137. On behalf of the Sassafras Audubon Society, we hope to see you there. 

Birding in China

by Marc Allaire

In the fall of 2006 and of 2007 I traveled to Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, to teach some business classes. Fortunately for me, the Chinese school year includes an early October break, the perfect opportunity to venture out for a little exploring and birding.

More than 1200 bird species have been recorded in China. This is not surprising given the size of the land mass (greater than the US) and the diversity of the ecosystems, from the tropical forests of Yunnan province to the harsh climate of some of the highest mountain peaks in the world. The first year I ventured for four days to Beidaihe, Hebei province, on the coast of the North China Sea and a 4-hour drive from Beijing. In 2007 I traveled to Qinghai province at the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau for six days. It would be difficult to think of two destinations so radically different.

Beidaihe has been labeled as one of the top migrant traps in Asia. But being on the coast, the most densely populated part of the country, I was struck by the pressure being put on the environment. Every square meter is put to some use, agriculture (including growing corn!), shrimp farming, and dwellings to lodge all involved. Qinghai province on the other hand is still relatively pristine because of its isolation. There is some grazing, but the spectacular mountains remain for the most part just that.

In Beidaihe I hired an excellent local guide, and in Qinghai was able to join a Rockjumper tour as a “part-time” participant. Getting around China is becoming easier as internal flights are more numerous, but traveling 2000 kilometers can still eat up a whole day because of long layovers between flights. Accommodations ranged from close to luxurious on the coast to “clean but basic” on the Tibetan plateau.



Countryside in Qinghai Province, China. Photo by Marc Allaire

What About the Birds . . .

What did I see? Some familiar birds (Barn Swallow, Cattle Egret), some “Alaska specialties”—species North American birders hope to spot on their travels to the 49th state (Black-tailed and Barred-tailed

Godwits), Asian migrants (Siberian Rubythroat, Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Little Ringed Plover) and, of course, some Chinese specialties. In this last group I saw Blue Magpie (one of the lifers I ticked off standing on the Great Wall), Przevalski's Rosefinch (a bird now in its own family), Palla's Sandgrouse, Tibetan Snowcock (great views, well worth the hike at high altitude), Gansu Leaf-Warbler (a little green job, nests only in Central China, wintering grounds unknown). On campus I became familiar with some of the local birds: Brown Shrike, Light-vented Bulbul, Little Egret, and migrating White Wagtails.

. . . and the Birders?

In the four days I spent at Beidaihe, at the peak of fall migration, I saw a grand total of two other birders. In fact, my guide and I were curiosities, and I spotted a number of people taking our pictures. In Qinghai, our group did not cross paths with any other birders. Birding is viewed as a “western” hobby and very few Chinese partake in this activity. 🐦

Activists' Corner

by Jess Gwinn, Conservation Chair

This week the fight for common sense regarding transportation issues in Indiana was dealt a low blow by a federal judge who issued summary judgment in favor of the State of Indiana and several other defendants in a lawsuit over the planning process for the new terrain I-69. The lawsuit was brought by the Hoosier Environmental Council with Citizens for Appropriate Rural Roads, Sassafras Audubon, and several individuals. The lawsuit contended that throughout the entire planning process for the new interstate, the State of Indiana through the DOT (Department of Transportation) and its contractors continually massaged numbers to force a conclusion that the route to be chosen could only be the new terrain route through Bloomington. Miraculously this was the route originally chosen nearly 20 years ago as the preferred alternative. Opposition will continue as the final EIS has yet to be filed. Meanwhile, the projected cost for the new terrain route has increased to 4 billion (with a “B”) dollars. With no foreseeable means to pay for the entire highway, the state still plans on beginning construction next year with the 770 million dollars it has in the bank. Evidently the theory being that once it gets started, no one will dare cancel it so the money will have to be found somewhere.

In an interesting aside, a day before the lawsuit decision, Bloomington was told that it was denied a 1 million dollar grant to help pay for a pedestrian/bike path through downtown on an abandoned railway. How are these events connected? The administration of the City of Bloomington declined to participate in the lawsuit. Likewise it declined to amend its MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) to remove I-69 from its long-range plan. Removing I-69 from the MPO would drive a virtual nail through the new terrain coffin. The explanation for this sheepishness being that Bloomington would lose favor with DOT and have all of its transportation projects put on permanent hold. Evidently when one fails to follow the principled route out of political expediency, they tend to fail on both accounts.

President's Note by Jeff Riegel

Another year has come and gone. During 2007 we all witnessed a tremendous upsurge in environmental awareness around the world, most of which was centered on global warming. I think it is now safe to assume that everyone is paying more attention to nature, realizing that everything on this planet is wrapped into the web of life. Will this continue or even grow in 2008? Your guess is as good as mine for the world as a whole, but I can say that for the members of the Sassafras Audubon Society, our conservation activities will only increase.

An example of environmental awareness by our umbrella organization, the National Audubon Society, can be found in the latest Watchlist, released in late 2007. More than 200 species are listed on either the Red or Yellow lists. The Red List includes "species . . . declining rapidly and/or have very small populations or limited ranges, and face major conservation threats . . ." Criteria for inclusion on the Yellow List are "species that are either declining or rare." What does this mean to us in southern Indiana?

Let's be realistic. Conservation efforts for the Bermuda Petrel aren't going to be at the top of our local concerns, and the Hawaiian Crow doesn't stand much of a chance here either. But there are 60 other Indiana connections to the Audubon Watchlist. That's how many species we share with the national list. But even with 60 species, the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel and Ancient Murrelet aren't going to raise a lot of concern down here. So, let's narrow it down to the five-county area that SAS covers. That trims Indiana's 60 species to about half. Within that list there are some notable birds: Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Red-headed Woodpecker. Thirty species of Watchlist birds in the SAS area certainly demand our attention.



Red-headed Woodpecker.
Photo by Susan Hengeveld

But we can narrow it down even further. Last year SAS adopted the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area, one of Indiana's Important Bird Areas (IBA). Of the Watchlist species, 19 of them have been found at Goose Pond, including such notables as the Short-eared Owl. In fact, the Goose Pond 2006 Christmas Bird Count tallied the largest number of Short-eared Owls found on any CBC anywhere in the nation! Goose Pond also contributed presumably wintering American Bitterns, the state's second record of a Prairie Falcon during a CBC (another apparent wintering bird), and the state's first CBC record of a King Rail. Obviously, the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area screams "conservation opportunities" for SAS.

On Wednesday, January 30, you'll have an opportunity to hear a lot more about Goose Pond as our monthly program features the three

people most responsible for bringing this unique property to the forefront of Indiana bird conservation: James Cole, Indiana's IBA Coordinator; Brad Feaster, Property Manager of Goose Pond; and our own Lee Sterrenburg, who knows the birds at Goose Pond probably better than everyone else combined. The program will be in the auditorium of the Monroe County Public Library.

In 2007 SAS also launched its Endowment Campaign, published the *Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana*, and secured grants from the National Audubon Society for conservation work. Proceeds from these sources have and will continue to provide much-needed funds for conservation work at Goose Pond. Our Endowment Campaign has already secured more than \$17,000 and a portion of the proceeds from this year's Eagle Watch Weekend will be donated to the account as well.

I cannot think of a more exciting time to be honored as the President of such a tremendous organization as SAS. 2007 was a tremendous year for the environment, but 2008 may well become the brightest of many shining stars in environmental history around the world and right here in southern Indiana. I hope you'll join us in reaching for those stars throughout the year. 🐦

Annual Spring Banquet Set for March 30 at Fourwinds

SAS will hold its second annual spring banquet on March 30 at the Fourwinds. Festivities begin at 4 p.m. with a birding outing in the Fairfax area. The banquet will officially start at 5:30 p.m. with a social time followed by a buffet dinner at 6 p.m. After dinner we will have a brief program of awards and then a presentation by Jeff Hammond including photos from his trip to the Falkland Islands. We hope you can join us for this festive occasion and meet fellow nature and bird lovers. The cost is \$29. Please return the completed form below by March 22 if you plan to attend.

 Sassafras Audubon Society 	
Spring Meeting and Dinner	
Sunday, March 30, at 5:30 p.m.	
at the Fourwinds	
Name:	_____
Phone:	_____
Guest(s) Name(s):	_____

Number of seats _____ x \$29/seat = \$_____ enclosed.	
Please complete the reservation form and mail along with your check (made out to Sassafras Audubon Society) to: Sassafras Audubon Society, PO Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402.	
<i>Thanks for your support!</i> <i>We look forward to seeing you at the dinner.</i>	

Editor's Note *continued from page 2*

- ' Take my feeders to SAS spring and fall feeder cleaning days.
- ' Write 10 letters or e-mails during the year to government officials in support of conservation issues.
- ' Take some action(s) to help reduce CO₂ emissions (see Terri Greene's article below).
- ' Enjoy my natural surroundings each day.

I recently corresponded with all of the other local Audubon societies in Indiana asking them to advertise our *Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana* in their newsletters or on their Web sites. I received positive responses from several of the societies. I also offered to advertise any projects they might have. The Amos Butler Audubon Society in Indianapolis has a very special birding CD that all serious (or even semi-serious) birders should have: Kenneth J. Brock's *Birds of Indiana*. This CD includes information on the occurrence of all species of birds identified in Indiana. It contains information such as population trends, documented occurrences of rare species, and migration times. This would make a nice addition to your field identification guide. It will give you more details and specifics about the birds in our own state. If you wish to order a copy (\$20 plus \$2.62 shipping and handling), send a check to *Brock's Birds of Indiana* CD, 7835 Tufton St., Fishers, IN 46038. Alternatively you can order it on line at www.amosbutleraudubon.org/. 🐦



The Green(e) Report

by Terri Greene

I resolve to become more "green" in 2008. Specifically, I resolve to finally start replacing my light bulbs with the energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs).

Suddenly everyone is chiming in with suggestions on how to be "green." Radio commercials are offering tips on how to use less energy—not in order to cut costs, but to slow global warming. Even Bloomington's newspaper *The Herald-Times* has gotten into the spirit of things with its "Down to Earth" page on Thursdays. But are people listening? More importantly, are people reacting?

We are all busy. Learning to do something a different way takes time and effort. And, sometimes it is difficult to know exactly what the best option is. Cost can also be a deterrent (although many "green" efforts save dollars). Going "green" can be overwhelming—especially if you try to do it all at once. So, take a deep breath and assess what you are already doing "green" and then look at what else you might do. Take it a step at a time. So, you can't afford to put up solar panels? Turn down the thermostat a few degrees. Maybe a new, more fuel efficient vehicle isn't in your budget, but driving your current vehicle less makes a contribution to the battle against global warming. It just takes a little organization to run errands after work and avoid an extra trip into town on the weekend.

Don't beat yourself up, though, if you can't avoid that Saturday shopping trip occasionally. The idea is to do things that you're able to do as often as you can do them so that you will continue to do them. Once they become a part of your life, add other "green" habits. Maybe turning off the light or buying that melon from the local farmers' market doesn't seem like much, but it adds up. So, listen and react. It's not too late to add specific "green" resolutions to your New Year's list . . . which reminds me, I need to pick up some CFLs on my way home from work tomorrow. 🐦

Count for Fun, Count for the Future! Great Backyard Bird Count, February 15-18



Tufted Titmouse gets a free meal. *Photo by Susan Hengeveld*

February 15-18 is the time when we can defend our title. Last year more people in Bloomington participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count than in any other city in the state—including Indianapolis. Last year local participants submitted 199 lists. Let's try for at least 225 this year. Our total of 57 species was well below the state record of 90 reported by Evansville listers last year. Let's see if we can top them this year. As a matter of fact, the national championship for lists is not out of reach. Last year's champion was Charlotte, NC with 519 lists. If each of our 600+ members would submit even a single list for one day we could top that. If every member participated on each of the four days we would be unbeatable! This is also a good time to encourage your friends who are not so involved in bird watching to join in the fun. Who knows, it may turn into a life-long hobby. Nancy Martin encourages her middle school science students to participate. What a great way to teach the next generation to appreciate nature.

You can be a part of this fun weekend and also contribute to a major scientific project during the GBBC. People all over the continent will be counting birds on that weekend. They submit their data to a website maintained by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, www.birdcount.org. These reports produce a real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and around the world and contribute valuable information for science and conservation. You can spend as little as 15 minutes in the comfort of your home counting the birds that come to your feeder. If you are more ambitious you can spend as much time as you like on each of the four days of the count. You can even spend the entire day in the field if that fits your fancy. Check the website above for the simple rules. And help keep Bloomington number one! 🐦

Answer to Name That Bird:
Red-winged Blackbird

Ruth Reichman and David DeVile

Recall Early Days of SAS

by Bob Dodd

The editor recently had the opportunity to meet with the first president of SAS, David DeVile, whose term began in 1970, and Ruth Reichman, who served as president from 1972-1974. David and Ruth both live in the Nashville area where they were active in the 1960s and 70s in preventing rampant, unplanned development. Ruth and David had many stories about the exciting early days of SAS. At that time our organization was at the forefront in a number of conservation causes. Lake Monroe had only been in existence for ten years, and real estate groups were attempting to obtain permission to build homes on the lake shoreline. The Corps of Engineers also had preliminary plans to channelize part of the Wabash River in the New Harmony area and build a reservoir on Lost River. Partly due to efforts by SAS with the help of studies by the Indiana Geological Survey, these projects never got beyond the planning stage. The Marble Hill Power Plant got well beyond the planning stage, but was eventually abandoned partly due to objections by SAS and other environmental groups. Ruth noted that in the early days of our organization there was a separate affiliated student Audubon group. As was the case with many student groups at the time, the student Audubon organization was more militant in its approach than the parent club. Ruth mentioned that the student president, Jim Jontz, was arrested during protests at Marble Hill. SAS was deeply involved in efforts to establish a wilderness area in the Nebo Ridge region south and east of Lake Monroe. A modified version of that effort was eventually designated as the Charles Deam Wilderness Area, a magnificently wild area in southeastern Monroe County that we enjoy today. Ruth, Barbara Restle, and others led the fight to save Lilly-Dickey Woods near Nashville from desecration by a power line in the 1970s.

Ruth and David mentioned many of the people who were active and supportive of the organization in those early days. Several of these people are still members today, but many have died since that time. They mentioned Henry Wahl as being an early force in SAS. Henry is still a member and a great help to SAS in hosting the potluck party at the end of the Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count. Henry and other members of SAS were instrumental in reactivating the Monroe County Historical Society and saving the old Carnegie Library at Sixth and Washington Streets in Bloomington. David and Libby Frey were active members in the early days as was Don Whitehead, who led some of the earliest birding trips, as he still does today. Don organized the first Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count in 1975, and he continues as the leader of that event. Although Lynton (Keith) Caldwell was never an officer, he was a supportive and important member. John Patton, Indiana State Geologist and head of the Indiana Geological Survey, contributed greatly to some of the early SAS conservation victories. Rey Carlson was particularly active in the Nebo Ridge project.

Ruth and David pointed out that SAS was formed in 1970 in part due to the urging of the National Audubon Society president, Elvis Stahr, who had just resigned as president of Indiana University. He and the local organizers saw the need for a strong local advocate for the environment. The original name of SAS was Indiana Sassafras Audubon Society, but because the Indiana Audubon Society objected to inclusion of the word Indiana, it was later shortened to Sassafras Audubon Society. Well-known wildlife artist Bill Zimmerman designed the original sassafras leaf logo for the

organization. (Note, Jeffrey Belth. designed the present sassafras leaf-warbler). David brought along the original charter for SAS from the National Audubon Society. We will place the charter with other early historical records of the organization. We can be thankful for the efforts of all of those early officers and supporters of SAS and their many accomplishments in preserving the environment in southern Indiana. 🐦

In My Backyard

by Bob Dodd

Have you ever had a bird kill itself by striking a window of your house? If you have been feeding birds for any time at all, the answer is almost certainly yes. The larger the window the more strikes you have probably seen. It is sad indeed to find a dead bird below your window, and especially if it is not a common bird. What can you do about it? You likely have heard about putting silhouettes of hawks or owls on the window or other objects to make them more visible. One of the solutions I like but is not so appealing to my wife is not to wash the windows so the soiled surface makes them more visible. Recently famous birder David Sibley devised a potential solution—or at least a help to prevent window strikes. Because birds can see shorter wavelengths of light, he experimented with various substances that reflect UV radiation that is not visible to us but is to birds. He had the most success with yellow highlight markers, the type used to highlight material in books (you probably used them with your school textbooks). Sibley and his family made a three-inch square grid on the window, which was hardly visible to our eyes, but much more apparent to the birds. While this did not completely eliminate bird strikes, it reduced them considerably. He suggests putting the grid on the inside of the window as rain washes the ink off the outside.

Sibley admits that although this method helps, it is not 100% effective. A method that seems to be 100% effective are bird screens. This is a commercial product available on the Web and at a few retail outlets. Bird screens are made of thin fiberglass threads that are barely visible. They are attached slightly away from the window so that when a bird hits the screen, it will “bounce” back without striking the window. I wonder if any of our readers have these. If so let us know about your experience with them.

Have you ever seen an unusual bird at your feeder? A friend of mine recently gave me a photo taken by his sister in California of a bird they could not identify. Well, I could not identify it either. It looked like nothing in the Sibley or other guides. Its bright colors suggested that it would be a desirable bird to have in a cage, so I suspected that it was an escaped cage bird. This is not uncommon. In fact several exotic wild species

such as the Monk Parakeet (and perhaps the European Starling for that matter) started out as cage birds that escaped. I asked another friend, who has cage birds, if she recognized this particular variety. She did not off hand, but after checking suggested that it was an African Weaver of some sort. I went to my East African field guide and found a couple of candidates that looked close to the bird in the photo, but the photo was not adequate to make a positive identification. 🐦



Monk Parakeet, an escaped cage bird gone wild. Photo by Susan Hengeveld

Special SAS Program on Goose Pond Scheduled for January 30

by Bob Kissell

You are cordially invited to a special panel discussion "The Birds of Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area: An Unparalleled Example of Wetland Restoration in Indiana" on Wednesday, January 30, 2008, at 7 p.m. in the Monroe County Public Library Auditorium. Our speakers, James Cole, coordinator of Indiana Audubon's Important Bird Area (IBA) program; Brad Feaster, Indiana Department of Natural Resources property manager of Goose Pond FWA; and Lee Sterrenburg, coordinator of Sassafras Audubon's bird monitoring project, will discuss the status and future of the ongoing wetlands restoration at Goose Pond and associated Beehunter Marsh. SAS is the sponsoring organization of the Goose Pond Important Bird Area.

Goose Pond FWA is roughly 8000 acres of a former glacial era lakebed comprised of heavy clay soil and poor drainage in central Greene County, south of Linton. Decades of unsuccessful attempts to drain, tile, and farm ended in November 2005 when the state of Indiana, together with a number of Goose Pond project partners and supporters, purchased this historic wetland. Wetland restoration being done by the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an attempt to restore this small part of the great expanse of wetlands that historically defined western Indiana up to the 19th century.

The restoration at Goose Pond is producing the most extensive wetlands between Kankakee Sands to the north and Cane Ridge to the south. Goose Pond also becomes an important component of an expanding avian flyway and post-breeding dispersal corridor in the central Midwest. When completed, the restored wetlands at Goose Pond and Beehunter Marsh will be around 5000 acres with the remainder of the WRP easement in grassland, oak savannah, and wooded bottomland. To date, restoration of the Goose Pond FWA wetlands and grasslands has altered significantly the breeding, migration, and post-breeding dispersal of a surprising and encouraging number of bird species in Indiana. 🐦



Cole



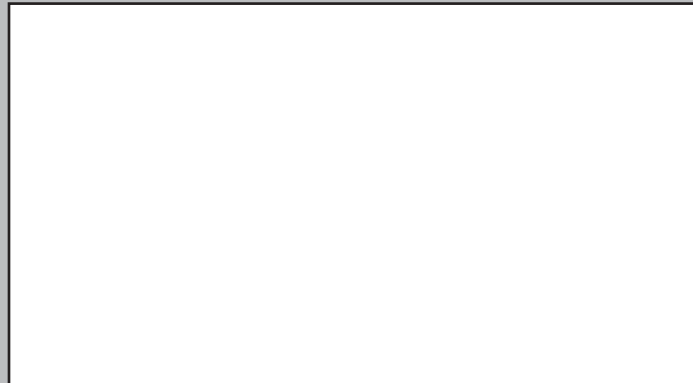
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