

LEAFLET

<http://www.sassafrasaudubon.org/>

MARCH/APRIL 2007

President's Note:

Don't Miss the Party!

by John Lawrence

Now is the time, if you haven't already done so, to make your reservations for the SAS Spring Meeting and Dinner at the Fourwinds Resort on Sunday, March 25. Starting at 5:30 p.m., the evening will feature a



buffet dinner followed by Jeff Riegel's up-to-date presentation of the Al Gore program on global warming, "Earth's New Reality--Truth and Consequences." Early birders can meet at 4:00 p.m. at the Fairfax beach for bird watching. This will be a great chance to hear the latest on global warming, while enjoying a good dinner and catching up with friends. And everyone's invited--you don't have to be a member to come--so please spread the word!

In case you haven't been there before, the Fourwinds Resort is easy to find and just 15 minutes southeast of Bloomington. Located in the Fairfax State Recreation Area on Lake Monroe, the Fourwinds' address is 9301 S. Fairfax Rd. From Bloomington, simply take Walnut St. south to Fairfax Rd., then turn left and follow it straight to the Fairfax SRA and the resort. From south of Bloomington, turn right onto Smithville Rd. from St. Rd. 37, then right on Fairfax and straight on to the Fourwinds. There are plenty of signs, so you can't miss it.

We haven't had a big get-together of SAS members and friends in a while, so we hope everyone can make it. Just clip the reservation form on Page 6 of this *Leaflet* and drop it in the mail with your check no later than March 17. We look forward to seeing you there! 

Spring (and Spring Nature Expo) Coming Soon!

Snow has been blowing--a half inch of ice coating everything and temperatures hovering too near the zero mark. Will spring ever get here? Rest assured, it will, and the area's newest event, the Spring Nature Expo, is a great place to kick your "outdoor" season into high gear. "At Eagle Watch Weekend, we continuously get requests for programs about all sorts of nature's splendors. The only way we can begin to fulfill these requests is to create a whole new event," says Jeff Riegel, Director of BirdCountry.US and coordinator of the event. "That's where the idea of the Spring Nature Expo hatched."

This year's event will be held Friday through Sunday, April 13-15, at the Fourwinds Resort and Marina on Lake Monroe. Complete details are still being worked out, but programs will include Northern Saw-whet Owl research findings, Monarch Watch, Frogwatch USA, and other citizen science projects, nature photography, the "lost art of falconry," Eastern box turtle research, and Indiana's bats. Two special presentations will highlight the weekend. One will be "Reptile Conservation on a Landscape Level" by Dr. Bruce Kingsbury (IUPU-Ft. Wayne), arguably Indiana's top herpetologist. The second feature program will be "An Evening with Aldo Leopold" featuring Naturalist Jim Eagleman from Brown County State Park and John Schaust, Chief Naturalist with Wild Birds Unlimited, both of whom are "self-described disciples" of Aldo Leopold, the Father of Wildlife Conservation in America.

"We get more requests for snake programs than anything else," says Riegel. "Brittany Davis (Brown County State Park naturalist) will fill that void with her excellent program on the pit vipers of Indiana." Bird walks, salamander searches, and a wildflower walk with Gillian Harris of the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society (INPAWS) will top off the weekend.

The complete event agenda and a downloadable brochure will be available on the Web at www.BirdCountry.US.events_home.htm. Registration for any or all programs for the weekend is only \$10. Online and mail-in registration opens Sunday, March 4. Walk-in registrations the weekend of the event are welcome. For more information, log onto www.BirdCountry.US or contact Jeff Riegel at 812-335-8137 or jkriegel@att.net. Special overnight accommodations are available from the Fourwinds Resort and Marina. For room reservations, contact the Fourwinds at 812-824-2628 or www.fourwindsresort.com.

Yes, there has been snow on the ground. Car-door locks have been frozen, but spring and the Spring Nature Expo are just around the corner. See you there! 

CAN YOU NAME THIS BIRD

This noisy fellow looks like he could use a hair (feather) cut. You are likely to find him near our local lakes or streams, even during the winter. The answer is on page 7.



Photo by Jeff Hammond



SAS Calendar

March/April 2007

All SAS-sponsored outings and programs are free and open to non-members. Watch our Website (<http://www.sassafrasaudubon.org/>) and the Bloomington Birds e-mail list for announcements about other upcoming outings and activities.

Saturday, March 17, 8:00 a.m.

Waterfowl and Early Land Bird Migrants

Join us for a morning trip to a variety of wetland sites on both Lake Lemon and Lake Monroe. We should see many species of surface-feeding and diving ducks, eagles, hawks, and early land bird migrants. Meet on the northeast side of the K-Mart parking lot on E. 3rd St. at 8:00 a.m. We expect to return around noon. Contact Jim Mitchell at jmitchel01@insightbb.com or 812-824-8198.

Friday and Saturday, March 23 and 24

Trip to Prairie-Chicken Lek Near Effingham, IL

Jim and Susan Hengeveld are leading a trip to the Prairie Ridge Natural Area south of Effingham, IL, on March 23 and 24. We did not get a blind this year; however, we can see the birds relatively easily with scopes from the office as has been done on previous outings. There is less of a time commitment at the lek because we don't have to stay as we would in the blinds. Birds seen on previous trips in addition to Greater Prairie-Chicken include Short-eared Owls, Eastern Meadowlarks, Horned Larks, American Golden-Plovers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Northern Harriers, and Loggerhead Shrikes. We need to be on site very early Saturday morning, which means staying in the Effingham area Friday night. Contact Susan Hengeveld at shengeve@indiana.edu or Jim Mitchell at jmitchel01@insightbb.com or 812-824-8198 for more information..

Friday, March 23, 5:00 p.m.

Caves: Life Beneath the Forest

The Hoosier National Forest is sponsoring a premiere event, "Caves: Life Beneath the Forest," to provide families with the opportunity to learn about the array of unusual and rare species that live in caves. This event is designed to showcase Indiana's caves and cave life, and will center around a 30-minute educational video sponsored by the Hoosier National Forest, Indiana Karst Conservancy, and the National Speleological Society. The event will be held at the Buskirk Chumley Theater in Bloomington. For details, visit www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/events/cave_film_event.htm.

Sunday, March 25, 5:30 p.m.

Sassafras Audubon Society Meeting and Dinner

See the "President's Note" on Page 1 for details.

Thursday through Sunday, April 12-15

Spring Nature Expo

See the article on Page 1.

Friday, April 20

SLT Spring Frog Songs and Serenades Hike

Sycamore Land Trust (SLT) board member Dr. Vicky Meretsky of IU SPEA will lead this program. Learn about frog species, songs, and behaviors by visiting them in their homes. For more information check www.sycamorelandtrust.org.

Saturday, April 21, 9:00 a.m.

Children's Bird Outing at Griffy Lake

In celebration of Earth Day 2007, children of all ages are invited to join premier birders Sandy Belth and Dawn Hewitt as they look for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other birds and animals at the Griffy Lake Nature Preserve. There will also be craft projects. Meet at the Griffy boat launch and nature center at 3300 N. Headley Rd. at 9:00 a.m. Bring binoculars if you have them. We expect to be finished birding before noon. For further information contact Jim Mitchell at jmitchel01@insightbb.com or 812-824-8198.

Wednesday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.

Watching Spring Warblers

Don Gorney, chair of the Indiana Bird Records Committee, will discuss spring warblers. American wood warblers have been fascinating generations of birders with their rich songs and beautiful colors. Probably no other family of birds has so many fans and admirers in the United States. Indiana birders are fortunate to have 36 of the 38 eastern wood warblers pass through or nest in the state each year. Don will discuss the most common warblers with tips for finding them and identifying them in the field. 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.

Friday through Sunday, April 27-29

Brown County Wildflower Foray

Past SAS president Cathy Meyer and well-known wildlife artist Bill Zimmerman will lead a trip on Saturday, April 28. This part of the Annual Wildflower Foray will feature birds of the upland forest--including warblers, thrushes, and tanagers. Meet at T.C. Steele State Historic Site, at 7:00 a.m. For more information, go to www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/events/wildflower.

Saturday, April 28, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Spring Bird Feeder Cleaning

Bring your bird feeders to Bloomington Hardware for a thorough spring cleaning. Volunteers to help with cleaning are needed. Contact David Daniels at wubloomington@sbcglobal.net to volunteer. Funds raised from feeder cleaning support SAS projects.

2007 Bird-a-Thon Set

by Cathy Meyer

Don't be surprised to see birdwatchers on the roads of Monroe County on May 5. The annual Bird-a-Thon will be held that Saturday from midnight to midnight. Teams of 3-6 birders will compete for prizes by finding as many species as possible within the county and earn money for their favorite charity by soliciting pledges before the event. There are prizes for the most species found and the best rookie team. Teams may find as many as 175 species during the 24-hour challenge. Teams must register by April 15 at Monroe County Parks and Recreation, 209 W. 7th. The \$15 per person fee includes a t-shirt, information, and awards. There is a potluck dinner hosted by SAS the following day to turn in tallies. Pick up applications at Monroe County Parks and Recreation or Wild Birds Unlimited, sponsors of the event. Call 349-2805 or e-mail cmeyer@co.monroe.in.us for more information. 



62 Birders Locate 95 Species on Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count

by Don Whitehead

The 31st edition of the annual Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 16, 2006. A wonderful crew of 62 individuals working in 11 teams contributed to the day's effort. Some owlers began as early as 3:30 a.m. and the last groups finished at 6:00 p.m.--a long but rewarding day of birding. We worked by car, on foot, and one intrepid team spent 4 hours in a boat on the lake! The teams logged 18 hours of owling, 101.5 party hours of day birding, 474 miles of driving (contributing to global warming!), 34 miles on foot, and 5 miles by boat. To our advantage was the fact that mild weather provided us with open water. To our disadvantage was the lack of wind later in the day, which limited our raptor count. The end result was 95 species and 8,124 individuals. An additional 4 species were seen in the "count-week" period (three days before and after the count).

The total of 95 species is a little above average for our count, but well below our high of 109. But, in retrospect, it was a lot better than we expected, given the paucity of birds seen in the weeks preceding the count, and the amazingly low waterfowl tallies prior to the count. There had been no significant cold fronts to move waterfowl southward for some time; hence, no interesting loons or "sea ducks" were around.

We added no new species to our 31-year total, and no rarities. There were, however, a number of good birds--including 3 Horned Grebe, 10 Black Vulture, 3 Wood Duck, 12 American Wigeon, 1 Northern Shoveler, 15 Northern Pintail, 5 Lesser Scaup, 1 Ruddy Duck, 29 Bald Eagle, 2 Rough-legged Hawk, 2 Golden Eagle, 1 Northern Bobwhite, 4 Sandhill Crane, 5 Wilson's Snipe, 1 Long-eared Owl, 12 Northern Saw-whet Owl, 4 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 5 Eastern Phoebe, 31 Horned Lark, 3 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1 Winter Wren, 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 7 Hermit Thrush, 4 Yellow-rumped Warbler, 8 Savannah Sparrow, 2 Rusty Blackbird, and 10 Brown-headed Cowbird.

The eagle tally was about average--29 Balds (19 adults and 10 imm.) and 2 Golden (1 adult, 1 imm.). We recorded our first Golden Eagle in 1988 and had a maximum of 4 in 1992 (all in view at the same time from Cutright!). The birds seen during the count week, but not recorded on the count, were Red-necked Grebe, Greater Scaup, American Pipit, and Pine Siskin. Winner of our CBC "sweepstakes" was the European Starling (boo! hiss!) with 1,256 individuals; Dark-eyed Juncos garnered second place with 715. Of particular interest were the Long-eared Owl located by the Hengeveld "field team" (which responded to Jim's imitation of a screech-owl and then to a recording of long-ear vocalizations) and the amazing 10 Saw-whet Owls found by Lee Sterrenburg in the Maumee Bottoms and along Tower Ridge Rd.

A number of major misses occurred on this year's CBC--no Double-crested Cormorants, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ruffed Grouse, Purple Finches, or Pine Siskins. It clearly was not a "winter finch" year (note also the very low count of Red-breasted Nuthatches). The lack of Canvasbacks and Redheads fits the general pattern of very low counts of diving ducks (e.g., only 2 Bufflehead and 4 Goldeneye). It is of note that we recorded only seven House Finches --the lowest count since 1990 (House Finches first appeared on our count in 1987; our high was 269 in 1994). The obvious decline in recent years is probably a reflection of disease.

The CBC ended with the traditional potluck and tally hosted by Henry Wahl (our host for the 31st consecutive year--an incredible record!). We had great food and fun--a wonderful way to conclude a good day in the field. My sincere thanks to all who participated. It is very clear that the more eyes and ears we have in the field, the better we do. And special thanks to Don Allen for providing his boat and to the two "field teams." Without their good birds, we would have had a relatively poor count. Hope we will see you all on the count next year. 🐦



Don Whitehead and Lee Sterrenburg (center) compiling results of Lake Monroe CBC after the potluck. Photo by Bob Dodd

94 Species Talled at First Annual Goose Pond Christmas Bird Count

by Lee Sterrenburg

The first annual official Goose Pond Christmas Bird Count took place on December 20, 2006. Twenty-nine people participated in this SAS-sponsored event. The results were spectacular for a new count. We tallied 94 species and 73,781 individuals. An additional 3 species were found during the count week. Our Goose Pond CBC species total of 94 was apparently the second highest count in Indiana this year, topped only by Lake Monroe with 95 species. The count circle includes the entire Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife

Area in Greene County, most of Greene-Sullivan State Forest, and almost all of Hawthorn Mine in Sullivan County. The WRP/NRCS wetland and grassland restoration project at Goose Pond FWA is helping to redraw the map for wintering birds on Indiana CBCs.

Our results made some stunning contributions to Indiana CBC history. Among the many highlights were the first ever multiple sightings of 2 AMERICAN BITTERNS on an Indiana CBC, the

continued on page 5

Goose Pond CBC *continued from page 4*

first ever 1 KING RAIL on an Indiana CBC, and the second ever 1 PRAIRIE FALCON on an official Indiana CBC. Several other species registered the highest numbers of individuals ever for Indiana CBCs dating back over a century to 1900. Those new high tallies included an impressive 4 MERLINS, 65 SHORT-EARED OWLS, 4 MARSH WRENS, 8 LE CONTE'S SPARROWS, and 2 DICKCISSELS. Dickcissels are supposed to be in South America



© Susan Hengeveld

Merlin Photo by Susan Hengeveld

at this time of year. Other rare species on the day were 1 BARN OWL, 1 PINE WARBLER at the local breeding colony in Greene-Sullivan State Forest, 2 VESPER SPARROWS, and 1 BREWER'S BLACKBIRD. Wow! A single WHOOPING CRANE winged its way past one of the parties at Goose Pond. This introduced species is not currently countable on Indiana CBCs. But it remains thrilling to see nonetheless. The grasslands and marshes produced fine tallies of 88 NORTHERN HARRIERS and 29 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS. The ditches, weedy field edges, and wetlands at GPFWA are emerging as great wintering habitat for sparrows. Some totals included 147 SAVANNAH SPARROWS, 450 SONG SPARROWS, and 469 SWAMP SPARROWS.

The future looks bright for this new count. At least at the present time, Hawthorn Mine remains a top spot for wintering raptors in Indiana. Greene-Sullivan SF adds woodland species that we would not get otherwise. When completed in 2008 or 2009 the circa 4970 acres of wetlands within the Goose Pond FWA restoration project will be one of the largest accessible wetlands on an Indiana CBC and one of the most significant CBC wetlands anywhere in the upper interior of the USA.

Participants were Marc Allaire, Don Allen, David Beery, Ross Brittain, Jim Brown, Mike Clarke, James Cole, Janet Creamer, David Daniels, Jerry Downs, Brad Feaster, Maureen Forrest, Terri Greene, Don Gorney, Jess Gwinn, Jim Hengeveld, Susan Hengeveld, Ross Hill, Bill Holladay, Andrew Mertz, Nancy Martin, Jim Mitchell, Keegan Ramey, Jeff Riegel, Robert John Ripma, Peter Scott, Lee Sterrenburg (compiler), Betsy Whitehead, and Don Whitehead. Thanks to all who helped. Our thanks also to the evolutionary populations of birds that have responded so wonderfully to the diverse restoration efforts in the strip mines, grasslands, and wetlands. Please come join us next year on this exciting CBC. 🐦

McCormick's Creek Christmas Bird Count Yields 73 Species

by Sandy Belth

The 20th annual McCormick's Creek Christmas Bird count went very well. We had 18 participants in five teams. This was our

second highest count ever with a total of 73 species plus two count-week birds, Sandhill Cranes and Black Vulture. We just missed tying the count record of 75. The day began with partly overcast skies and a temperature of 39° F rising to a high of 59° F. Highlights included a Merlin, a Sora (which will only be the second state record), Marsh Wren, Sedge Wren, Brewer's Blackbird, Bald Eagle, American Woodcock, Wood Duck, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and a Rufous Hummingbird, which is believed to be a state first on a Christmas bird count. McCormick's Creek State Park continues to have a high count of Brown Creepers with 14 being found on count day. A record number of 14 harriers was spotted by Mike Clarke covering the Flatwoods area. Several more harriers were seen in other areas of the count circle.

Following is the species list and numbers: 373 Canada Goose, 1 Wood Duck, 6 Gadwall, 2 American Wigeon, 135 Mallard, 10 Hooded Merganser, 2 Wild Turkey, 10 Northern Bobwhite, 1 Pied-billed Grebe, 9 Great Blue Heron, BLACK VULTURE (count week), 1 Bald Eagle, 20 Northern Harrier, 4 Cooper's Hawk, 9 Red-shouldered Hawk, 44 Red-tailed Hawk, 29 American Kestrel, 1 MERLIN, 1 Sora, Sandhill Crane (count week), 11 Killdeer, 1 American Woodcock, 1045 Ring-billed Gull!, 279 Rock Pigeon, 401 Mourning Dove, 7 Eastern Screech Owl, 8 Great Horned Owl, 3 Barred Owl, 1 RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD, 10 Belted Kingfisher, 8 Red-headed Woodpecker, 71 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 56 Downy Woodpecker, 13 Hairy Woodpecker, 39 Northern Flicker, 22 Pileated Woodpecker, 1 Eastern Phoebe, 170 Blue Jay, 421 American Crow, 50 Horned Lark, 154 Carolina Chickadee, 77 Tufted Titmouse, 72 White-breasted Nuthatch, 15 Brown Creeper, 68 Carolina Wren, 1 SEDGE WREN, 1 MARSH WREN, 2 Golden-crowned Kinglet, 82 Eastern Bluebird, 52 American Robin, 21 Northern Mockingbird, 1202 European Starling, 11 Cedar Waxwing, 29 Eastern Towhee, 82 American Tree Sparrow, 24 Field Sparrow, 2 Fox Sparrow, 104 Song Sparrow, 30 Swamp Sparrow, 20 White-throated Sparrow, 17 White-crowned Sparrow, 137 Dark-eyed Junco, 1 Lapland Longspur, 195 Northern

Cardinal, 99 Red-winged Blackbird, 23 Eastern Meadowlark, 12 Rusty Blackbird, 2 BREWER'S BLACKBIRD, 20 Common Grackle, 31 House Finch, 88 American Goldfinch, 84 House Sparrow.

We ended the day with the traditional potluck and tally. As usual there was a fantastic spread. A big thank you goes out to all the participants who worked so hard to make



© Susan Hengeveld

Rufous Hummingbird.

Photo by Susan Hengeveld

this a great count: Jeff Belth, David and Ingrid Beery, Mike Clarke, Jerry Downs, Jess Gwinn, Donald Hall, Nancy Martin, James Mitchell, Pat Newforth, Keegan Ramey, Dick Repasky Joan Tenhoor, and Don and Betsy Whitehead. We especially wish to thank Chuck and Nancy Buckles for allowing us to visit their hummingbird feeder to view the Rufous Hummingbird and for all their help in providing supporting evidence for the bird. 🐦

Chinook IBA--A Great Birding Area That Might Have Been

by Bob Dodd

The last three *Leaflet* articles about Indiana Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have recounted environmental success stories. Unfortunately, the Chinook IBA has the makings of an environmental tragedy. You may not realize it, but chances are you have passed right through the middle of the Chinook IBA many times. This area, which consists mainly of reclaimed surface mines, lies a few miles east of Terre Haute in Vigo and Clay Counties. It is bisected by Interstate Highway 70 with approximately half of the IBA on either side of the highway. Perhaps you have seen the sign for the Indiana Fish and Wildlife Area on the north side of the highway between the Brazil and first Terre Haute exits.

A large part of the area consists of grassland growing on the reclaimed mine, which at least until recently was owned by the Midwest Coal Company. In addition to grasslands, the IBA includes several ponds and wetland areas. Part of the area, especially in the northwest section, is farmland. About 2300 acres (a fourth of the IBA) in the northeast portion consists of the state-owned Chinook Fish and Wildlife Area. The state first leased this area in 1982 and opened it in its present status in 1997. As with other Fish and Wildlife Areas, this one was purchased with funds from hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses as well as federal funds from taxes on hunting and fishing equipment.

The grassland, planted with non-native grasses, supports many grassland bird species. It contains a breeding population of over 300 Henslow's Sparrows, which are on the Audubon watchlist as a species



Short-eared Owl. Photo by Jeff Hammond.

of global concern. Other common species are Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Common Yellowthroat, Field Sparrow, Horned Lark, and Northern Bobwhite. The site also is inhabited by numerous raptors, especially in the winter, including Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, and Short-eared Owl. In many respects this IBA is like the Universal Mine IBA featured in the July/August *Leaflet* article and the site of annual SAS trips led by Lee Sterrenburg.

When the IBA was designated over a year ago, commercial development was listed as a major threat to the area. Unfortunately for bird conservation, establishment of an industrial park in the southern portion of the area appears to be completed. Indeed earth-moving work and road closures are occurring in this area. The Terre Haute Economic Development Corporation lists the Chinook property in its inventory on industrial sites. A key to development of the area is construction of a new interchange on I-70 between Brazil and Terre Haute. This would modify additional property in the IBA. At least at the moment the 2300 acres owned by the state are secure. An article in the Terre Haute *Tribune-Star* last February reported on preliminary studies for installing the interchange, upgrading roads, and providing utilities to the area. Nowhere in the

article was any mention made of habitat destruction or the fact that the development would occur in a designated IBA. All indications suggest that the development will continue and that a large part of the IBA will be lost.

On our late November trip to Chinook we encountered few grassland birds. The ideal time to bird this area would be in the late spring to early summer. The wetlands and ponds harbor winter waterfowl and we saw many Northern Harriers patrolling the area. Last June several SAS members briefly visited the southern part of Chinook on their return from Universal Mines. We were fortunate to have a superb view of an American Bittern at the edge of the cattails beside a pond. The roads to that pond are now closed. Although birding at Chinook should be excellent at times, based on reports from the Indiana Bird List, nearby Universal Mine is better. So given the choice as a spot for a birding expedition you might opt for Universal, particularly in view of the changes that are taking place in the southern part of the Chinook area. 

Adopt-an-Owl Nets \$360



The SAS-sponsored Adopt-an-Owl raised \$360 this year, down from \$845 the previous year. Funds from this program are used to defray expenses connected with the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding program, conducted each fall by SAS. We would like to acknowledge the following people for their support of the program: Sarah Lambrecht; Erin, Jack, and Quinn McNeil; David Rupp; Yves St. Denis; and Judy Stewart and Michael Fulton. Although the 2006 banding season is over, it is never too late to adopt-an-owl as we look forward to the fall of 2007. Just mail your adoption fee of \$30 per owl to SAS at P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402. 

 Sassafras Audubon Society 	
Spring Meeting and Dinner	
Sunday, March 25, at 5:30 p.m.	
at the Fourwinds	
(9301 S. Fairfax Rd., Bloomington, IN)	
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) no later than March 17 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*

start with 94 species counted. Although the numbers were down a bit this year, the Lake Monroe count of 95 species still was the highest in the state. In addition to great habitat diversity, one of the reasons the Lake Monroe count is high is because we have a large number of participants. But we could use more. It is a super experience and a chance to see areas and birds that you may never have seen before, and probably you will be in the company of some expert birders. It is a time to hone your birding skills--or if you are not concerned about your birding skills it is still a great opportunity to observe some of nature's gems. If you do not want to spend the entire day on the project you are welcome to participate for a shorter time. So make a note (a belated New Year's resolution?) to participate in one or more of the CBCs this coming December.

Our treasurer, Marc Allaire, passed on some really good news at our last Board meeting. We have already received more than \$1600 from the sale of our birding guide. Because the National Audubon Society paid the cost of printing the guides, all of that money will go to projects related to our adopted Important Bird Area at Goose Pond. The SAS Board has not made a decision about spending the bird guide money, but high on our list of priorities is construction of a viewing platform somewhere in the area. If you have not yet purchased a guide we hope that you will do so soon and add this valuable bird-finding tool to your library. It also would make an excellent gift for a bird-watching friend. We especially want to thank Dawn Hewitt for publicizing the guide in her Sunday column in the *Herald-Times*. We had a big burst of orders shortly after that column appeared.

Speaking of Goose Pond, we would like to remind you to be sure to sign in at one of the two kiosks at Goose Pond-Beehunter Marsh whenever you visit the area. In a recent posting on the Indiana Bird List, Sue Vernier of Evansville reported that she attended a meeting at which the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area was discussed. One of the comments at the meeting was that the number of wildlife

viewers seemed to be low compared to hunters. This likely is due to the fact that many wildlife viewers are not signing in at the check-in kiosks. Wildlife viewers are not used to doing that as hunters are. It is important to let IDNR know that the area is being frequently used by people interested in seeing the wildlife and not just hunting. One of the kiosks is at the intersection of County Roads 200S and 1000W. The other is on the south side of the east-west section of State Highway 54 about three miles south of Linton. 🐦



Spring bird feeder cleaning set for April 28. Mark you calendar!

Activists' Corner

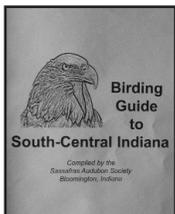
by Jess Gwinn, Conservation Coordinator

The proposed budget for the three federal wildlife refuges in Indiana foresees staff reductions from 16 employees now to 10 employees in 2009. These refuges comprise around 63,000 acres and attract close to 100,000 visitors a year. Cuts this deep will severely compromise the ability of the remaining staff to effectively manage these properties as directed by federal statute. All three of Indiana's refuges--Big Oaks, Muscatatuck, and Patoka River (plus the Cane Ridge WMA)--have been designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs), and each supports bird populations that are significant from the state, continental, and global conservation perspective. For instance, with over 700 breeding pairs of Henslow's Sparrows, Big Oaks supports the fifth largest breeding population in the U.S. for these endangered birds. With fewer personnel and decreased funding, how will the staff effectively manage Big Oaks' grasslands for these sparrows? Likely, the habitat will continue to revert into a landscape that will not support the breeding requirements for this bird. Cane Ridge supports the sole breeding population of federally endangered 'Interior' Least Terns east of the Mississippi, and Muscatatuck provides an important stopover property for the reintroduced Whooping Cranes with Operation Migration. With the recent calamity in Florida where all but one of this year's class of Whooping Cranes were killed in a storm, protecting these refuges takes on an even greater importance. Least Bittern, King Rail, Cerulean Warbler, and Prothonotary Warbler are just a few of the other priority birds (not to mention all of the other creatures) which breed in these Hoosier refuges.

Please contact your representative and senators about the future National Wildlife Refuge funding reductions. When analyzing global bird populations, Indiana shares a large responsibility for King Rails, Whooping Cranes, 'Interior' Least Terns, and Henslow's Sparrows, and without adequate staffing at our refuges, the future conservation of these birds will be further left in doubt. Go to www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=IN to contact your senators. Go to www.house.gov/writerep/ to contact your representative. Make certain to tell them about your own experiences visiting National Wildlife Refuges.

Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana

Mail me ___ copies of the *Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana*.



___ \$8.00 (member price)

___ \$10.00 (non-member price)

Add \$1.50 per guide to cover shipping costs.

Name: _____

Address: _____

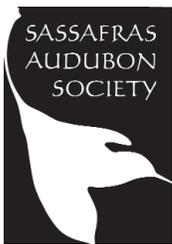
City/State/Zip: _____

Mail your completed form along with your check (made payable to Sassafras Audubon Society) to: Sassafras Audubon Society, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402.

All funds from sale of the guide go to SAS projects at Goose Pond FWA, our adopted Important Bird Area.



**Answer to Name That Bird:
Belted Kingfisher**



P.O. Box 85
 Bloomington,
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Cold Latches Its Talons Onto Eagle Watch Weekend by Jeff Riegel

The 7th Annual Eagle Watch Weekend is in the books and the key word for the weekend was “COLD.” But that didn't stop a number of SAS members from setting up their scopes, loaning folks their binoculars, and imparting their knowledge of the local avifauna to the nearly 300 people in attendance. (It has been rumored that all SAS volunteers have indeed thawed since that day and have been spotted around town with all fingers and toes intact.) Most folks attending this year's event found eagles sometime during the four-day event. One sighting was a very close fly-over of an immature bird at Paynetown, and a not-to-be-outdone adult at Cutright gave everyone excellent looks from about 50 yards as it flew past our line of cars. Eagles weren't the only highlight at Cutright. Two coyotes found themselves trapped on the outer peninsula and the only way to get away from the cars coming at them was to run right past all of them--one down one side of the line of traffic and the other down the other side--both only about 50 feet away. Back to the birds. We tallied 51 species for the weekend including Cackling Geese at both the Fairfax and Fourwinds beaches and a special appearance by the Western Grebe that had been sighted in the area about a week before by Don Whitehead. While it was a little secretive, it was seen on both Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

Other birds that we usually don't see in Indiana made an appearance, thanks to the folks at Return to the Wild in Nashville, IN. In two presentations, Laura Edmunds, Patty Reynolds, and Kaylee Witt showed off, among others, their Eurasian Barn Owl, an Augur Buzzard, and, of course, Been Ben, their unreleasable Bald Eagle. When they first got him (her), due to its size it was thought to be a male and its name was “Ben.” DNA analysis later determined that the bird was, in fact, a female, so its name was changed since it had always “been Ben.” Other programs during the weekend revolved around such diverse subjects as beginning birding, analyzing the flight of birds, climate change, owling, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and the conservation of our oak-hickory forests. Children were treated to their own programs, thanks to naturalists from Brown County and McCormick's Creek State Parks. But no Eagle Watch Weekend is ever complete without C-52, Indiana's most photographed eagle, and Maria Abel-Crecelius and Tom Riley from Patoka Lake. Once again, Tom and Maria, thank you so much for all you do in educating folks about Indiana's eagles.

While Eagle Watch Weekend has four great sponsors (BirdCountry.US, Fourwinds Resort and Marina, Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Sassafras Audubon Society), the event could not happen without tremendous support from folks at IDNR's Division of State Parks and Reservoir and Division of Fish and Wildlife, Return to the Wild, and Wild Birds Unlimited. Plans are already underway for the 2008 event to be held at the Fourwinds on February 7-10, 2008. Mark your calendars and, until then, Happy Birding.