

President's Note: *An Ode to Spring*

by Jeff Riegel

As I am writing this, we're dealing with snow, freezing rain, temperatures in the teens, and wind chills lower than that. By the time it reaches your hands, the weather will have gotten better (we hope) and the birding will signal the spring migration has begun. While overall, my favorite time of year is autumn, my favorite birding time of the year is, without a doubt, spring and all the marvels that migration brings with it.

Some birds in our area are already on the nest, Great Horned Owls for instance. And the Bald Eagles, if not on eggs, surely will be in just a few short days. We've already heard a mild upsurge in morning song from such familiars as Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and a handful of others, but it's nothing compared to what we know is coming. That's one of the many great things about birding--we pretty much know what is coming. But I doubt that keeps many of us from going out with our eyes and ears focused on the unexpected.

Last year I found a very early Cerulean Warbler while preparing for some survey work in the Hoosier National Forest near Orleans. This year I'll be doing the same thing, but in areas that haven't been surveyed for two years. While the purpose of the work is to document the breeding birds in the Hoosier, the preparation work is what excites me the most because that work starts in March, putting me in the woods right in the middle of spring migration. After finding the Cerulean last year about two weeks earlier than the previous early record, I'll be taking extra care to document all of my "firsts" this spring.

This spring will also bring us more opportunities to spend time with birds and other birders, undoubtedly the nicest group of people I have ever known in my life. SAS

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Backwoods Area in Morgan Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests in Danger

by Jess Gwinn, Conservation Chair

In an accelerated effort to rid the state of Indiana of all those pesky hardwood trees, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources has proposed logging within the previously protected 3000-acre backwoods area of Morgan Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests. The backwoods area was conceived in the 1980s as a protected area where Indiana residents could visit to attain the kind of seclusion and sanctuary not readily found elsewhere in the state; however, in its fervent rush to liquidate all state-owned assets before the next election, the current administration in 2005 proposed increasing logging of our state forests by over 500%. This level of logging is unprecedented and unsustainable. Visit any of our state forests to view the rapacious onslaught of this senseless mandate. Now they want to impose this same kind of damage onto the only pseudo-protected area within the state forest system. Tell them enough is enough.

Write to: Robert Carter, Director
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
402 W. Washington St., Room 256
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Talking points: Logging our state forests compacts the soil, damages the remaining trees and plants in the forest, degrades the forest for many closed canopy nesting birds and other wildlife species, outright kills many animals, diminishes the forest for recreational users, and unfairly competes against private timberland owners, depressing the value of the timber market. 🐦

Endowment Fund Tops \$20,000

by Bob Kissel

In just its first six months, your Sassafras Audubon endowment campaign recently passed \$20,000 in pledges! Jess Gwinn and Maureen Forrest, Eric Denlinger, Joann and Bob Dodd, John Eakin, Dawn Hewitt, Jane Billyeald, and John and Leah Ketcham made generous end-of-2007 contributions. Linda Raymond and Michael Cain, our endowment campaign's first contributors in late 2006, made an additional gift last December. Former

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CAN YOU NAME THIS BIRD

This one is a bit tricky as she has a cousin who looks a lot like her. Note the size and relative length of the bill of this common visitor to suet feeders. The answer is on page 4.

Photo by Jeff Hammond



Editor's Note: *BIGBY, Member Number*

by Bob Dodd

In early January a number of postings on the Bloomington and Indiana bird lists and on the Web reported numbers of birds that various individuals had seen in Indiana during 2007. Some also included the number of birds they had seen in their own yard. Perhaps you recall an entertaining book published a few years ago entitled *The Big Year*. The participants in a Big Year competition attempt to find more bird species in the selected area than the other competitors. Jim Hengeveld reported on a new listing idea being suggested by Richard Gregson of Quebec, Canada. See his Web site at www.sparoworks.ca/bigby.html for details. He calls his list "the Big Green Big Year" or BIGBY. The idea is to keep CO2 out of the atmosphere by avoiding travel in private vehicles while birding. The BIGBY can have several forms including the walking BIGBY in which all birds must be seen by walking from your home, the self-propelled BIGBY in which you can travel by bicycle, boat, or any other self-propelled vehicle, and the public transportation BIGBY. Gregson invites birders to register for the competition. At this writing he has 229 birders registered from around the world including Great Britain, Germany, France, Taiwan, and Australia as well as the U.S. and Canada. Three Hoosiers have registered. But you don't need to register to give it a try just for fun. Probably the simplest type of BIGBY is the yard BIGBY in which you only count birds seen in your own yard. Local birder and SAS Board member Bernie Sloan likes this idea, but he defines his yard to include the IU Cross Country course and Griffy Lake! Of course it would be hard to beat Jim and Sue Hengeveld for yard birds with their deck overlooking Lake Lemon.

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Sassafras Audubon Society

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Bob Kissel (812-336-2907)
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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.

SAS Website

<http://www.sassafrasaudubon.org/>
Webmaster: Susan Hengeveld (shengeve@indiana.edu)

Leaflet Staff

Editor: Bob Dodd
Contributing Editor: Bob Kissel
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Direct address changes and requests for single issues to: Lynda Walker, Database Coordinator; PO Box 85; Bloomington, IN 47402.

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

The SAS *Leaflet* is printed by Fine Print on tree-free paper. The *Leaflet* is published six times per year by the Sassafras Audubon Society on approximately the first of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

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: _____

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------|
| <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.



SAS Calendar

March/April 2008

SAS-sponsored events are free and open to everyone. Watch our Web site (www.sassafrasaudubon.org/) and the *Bloomington Birds* e-mail list for notices of other upcoming events. For more info, contact Jim Mitchell at jmitchel01@insightbb.com or 812-824-8198.

Saturday, March 8: Early Migrants

Join Jim Mitchell in search of early migrating waterfowl and other birds at local hot spots. 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 by midday.

Saturday, March 15: Muscatatuck NWR

Mike Clarke will lead us to Muscatatuck NWR to seek migrating waterfowl, raptors, and other birds. Maybe we will see an otter or two. 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 Muscatatuck and return in the afternoon.

Sunday, March 30: Annual SAS Spring Banquet

The spring banquet will be Sunday, March 30, at the Fourwinds Resort. Activities begin at 4 p.m. with birding in the Fairfax area. Social time is at 5:30 p.m.; a buffet dinner at 6 p.m. A brief awards program will be followed by a presentation by noted nature photographer Jeff Hammond. We hope you can join us. Non-members are also welcome. The Fourwinds Resort is located in the Fairfax SRA on Lake Monroe. Drive south on Fairfax Rd. through Sanders and Smithville. The resort is near the end of the road. If you plan to attend, return the form below by March 22.

Saturday, April 5: Local Hot Spots

Expert birder Don Whitehead will lead us to area hot spots in search of local and migrating 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 hot spots and return by midday.

Saturday, April 5: Evening Timberdoodle Trek

Join Monroe County Naturalist Cathy Meyer at one of the county's best-kept secrets, Flatwoods Park, for an early evening's search for the elusive American Woodcock. Woodcocks (sometimes called Timberdoodles) are rarely seen except in their mating season when they become almost conspicuous with an elaborate courtship flight. Flatwoods Park is excellent woodcock habitat and these birds have been seen performing their courtship ritual there on early spring evenings. We'll also listen to hear which spring frogs are becoming active and keep our eyes open for any other creatures of the evening. Meet at the parking lot at Flatwoods Park at 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 20: Wildflower Walk

Jess Gwinn will lead a walk at Greens Bluff Nature Preserve on Sunday, April 20. The walk will be moderately strenuous and will focus on spring wildflowers and migrating songbirds. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Hedding Cemetery parking lot at the end of Hedding Rd. (From State Rd. 43 in Clay Township, Owen County, turn west onto Sherfield Rd. After about a mile turn left at a "T" intersection onto Hedding Rd. Take the left fork in the road and follow another quarter mile to the cemetery.)

Friday-Sunday, April 18-20: Spring Nature Expo

There's no better time than spring to get out and enjoy all the things that nature brings us each and every day. Plan now to attend the Spring Nature Expo: Our Little Piece of the Planet. Find details on the Web at www.BirdCountry.US or www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com.

Friday-Sunday, April 25-27:

Brown County Wild Flower Foray

For information, check the Web at www.tcsteele.org or www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/events/wildflower.

Saturday, April 26: Spring Feeder Cleaning

Details on page 8 of this *Leaflet*.

Wednesday, April 30: Recording Bird Songs

Nashville resident Geoff Keller is world famous for his exquisite recordings of bird songs, over 3000 of which are archived at Cornell University. Join us for his presentation at 7 p.m. in Rm. 2B of the Monroe County Public Library.

Saturday, May 3: Monroe County Bird-a-Thon

Details on page 8 of this *Leaflet*. 

Don't Miss an Outing! Sign up for SAS Updates Via E-mail

 by Lynda Walker

Join the SAS e-mail list to receive reminders of bird and nature outings, educational programs, and volunteer opportunities. To sign up, send an e-mail to listserv@indiana.edu and put Subscribe SAS-friends-L in the body of the e-mail. Alternatively, e-mail Susan Hengeveld (shengeve@indiana.edu) or me (lywalker@indiana.edu) and we'll add you to the list. This list is open to everyone. Your e-mail address will not be sold or given to any third parties; it will be used exclusively to keep you informed of SAS news and events. You can un-subscribe at any time by sending an e-mail to listserv@indiana.edu with Unsubscribe SAS-friends-L in the body of the e-mail or by sending an e-mail to either Susan or Lynda at the addresses above. 

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.

Thanks for your support!
We look forward to seeing you at the dinner.

Goose Pond CBC Yields Highest Species Total in Indiana

by Lee Sterrenburg

The second annual Goose Pond Christmas Bird Count took place on Wednesday, December 19, 2007. The count is sponsored by Sassafras Audubon Society. We had thirty-four participants in the field in eleven parties plus three feeder watchers in Linton. The count recorded 103 species, plus one non-countable Whooping Crane and one additional Count Week species. The total number of individuals was 31,861.

The count circle is located in Greene and Sullivan Counties and features diverse avian habitats. The circle includes all of Goose Pond FWA, all the forested parts of Greene-Sullivan State Forest, Hawthorn Mine, the city of Linton, and extensive agricultural fields in the eastern and southern portions of the circle. A major reason for starting up the Goose Pond CBC was to help monitor the progress of the wetland and grassland restorations undertaken by the WRP/NRCS on the 7200-acre easement at Goose Pond FWA. The restored shallow water wetlands at GPFWA when completed will encompass approximately 4970 acres. GPFWA bird life also benefits from approximately 1400 acres of big bluestem prairie grass restoration. The ecological restorations are making a positive area-wide impact on Indiana bird life.

On December 19 we were greeted by clear skies, mild temperatures ranging from 31 to 44 F, and light West winds to 6 mph. Several nights leading up to the count were below freezing. Two nights before saw a low of 15 F. Shallow standing water at Goose Pond FWA was frozen. The deeper strip mine pits at Hawthorn Mine were generally open. We were worried about the effects of the prolonged drought on the Goose Pond FWA wetland impoundments. How

would lingering or over-wintering wetland associated species fare? Our potential worries dissolved when we



Short-eared Owl. Photo by Jeff Hammond

found at our lunchtime meeting that we already had an eye-popping 97 species. By the end of the day and after more diligent searching and walking we wound up with a grand total of 103 species. That number topped last year's impressive total of 94 species on the inaugural GP CBC.

Heading the list of unexpected finds was a stunning flock of (16) RED CROSSBILLS in GSSF by the team of Jess Gwinn, Ross Brittain, Maureen Forrest, and Jeff Riegel. The (1) wintering PRAIRIE FALCON showed up at Hawthorn Mine, found in the afternoon by Jim Hengeveld, Susan Hengeveld, and Keegan Ramey. This was the second straight year we've recorded PRFA at Hawthorn Mine. The wetlands at GPFWA harbored (2) AMERICAN BITTERNs for the second year in a row. Other species of note included (2) MERLINS, (1) NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL, (2) NORTHERN SHRIKES, (2) MARSH WRENS, (1) LE CONTE'S SPARROW, and two flocks of BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS totaling (35) individuals. Winter irruption year birds included (67) RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and (69) PINE SISKINS, the latter at

Ivy Kardokus's feeders in Linton. We again recorded high numbers of SHORT-EARED OWLS with (63), thanks especially to Don Whitehead's team at Hawthorn Mine. Other raptor totals featured (78) NORTHERN HARRIERS, (29) RED-SHOULDERED HAWKS, (62) RED-TAILED HAWKS, and (39) ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS. The repeats by American Bittern, Prairie Falcon, Whooping Crane, Marsh Wren, and Le Conte's Sparrow for the second year running suggest that these that species are attempting to stake out wintering grounds in our area. The extensive grassland, edge, weedy, riparian, and wetland habitats of GPFWA and environs again produced gratifying numbers of wintering sparrows. They included a prodigious (3138) AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS plus (318) SAVANNAH SPARROWS, (662) SONG SPARROWS, and (453) SWAMP SPARROWS. Grassland and agricultural habitats also turned up (341) EASTERN MEADOWLARKS. Having up to eight parties out walking all day contributed to those totals.

Our total of 103 species was the highest species tally among all Indiana Christmas Bird Counts this year. With not all results yet posted the next highest species counts were apparently Lake Monroe (93), Terre Haute (90), and Patoka Lake, Sullivan County, and Western Gibson County all with (89).

Special thanks to Goose Pond FWA Property Manager Brad Feaster who participated in the count, helped with access, and has been very effective at maintaining and enhancing critical habitat for all the diverse bird life on the GPFWA property. Huge thanks to all our participants in the field: Sandy Belth, Gary Bowman, Lisa Bowman, Ross Brittain, Jim Brown, Mike Clarke, Mike Clay, James Cole, Janet Creamer, Dave Crouch, David Daniels, Bob Dodd, Jerry Downs, John Eakin, Brad Feaster, Maureen Forrest, Steve Gilstrap, Don Gorney, Terri Greene, Jess Gwinn, Jim Hengeveld, Susan Hengeveld, Ross Hill, Bill Holladay, Steve Housefield, Bob Kissel, Jim Mitchell, Keegan Ramey, Jeff Riegel, Eric Ripma, Rob Ripma, Lee Sterrenburg (compiler), Pat White, Don Whitehead. And our feeder watchers: Connie Goodman, Ivy Kardokus, Shelley Williams.

McCormick's Creek CBC

Totals 75 Species by Jeff and Sandy Belth

The 20th Annual McCormick's Creek Christmas Bird Count was a great success due to 19 participants who spent December 29th in six parties covering the count circle. This year we are pleased to announce the highest count yet with a total of 75 species seen on count day. The previous high was 74. No additional birds were seen during count week. Temperatures for the day ranged from 33° to 40° F. The wind was from the NW at 0-5 mph. The day began with overcast skies changing to partly cloudy in the late afternoon. Highlights include a Mute Swan seen in the Gosport section, a Northern Bobwhite, and a Marsh Wren seen in the Bottom road section, a Merlin seen in the Flatwoods section, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the Park, a Wilson's Snipe, a Saw-whet Owl, a short-eared Owl, a Hermit Thrush, and 2 Red-winged Blackbirds. A count high of 8 American Bald Eagles was spotted (7 adults and 1 basic - 1). McCormick's Creek State Park continues to have a high count of Brown Creepers with 18 seen on count day. A potluck and tally was held at the Belth home at the end of the day. A big thank you to all participants who made this a special high count this year. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. 🐦



Lake Monroe CBC: Abortive Start But Successful Completion

by Don Whitehead

The 2007-08 Christmas Bird Count was a tale of weather and frustration. Our schedule called for the CBC to be carried out on December 15--the first Saturday of the count period and our traditional CBC date. We were organized and in the field with 13 teams and 66 people. Many groups were out owling in the wee hours of the morning. We started with some apprehension, as the weather forecast was ominous. The last iteration of the forecast, however, suggested that the wintry conditions would be mostly north of us. This turned out to be far from correct. By 6:15 snow was falling and by 7:30 it was heavy. At least in the vicinity of the lake visibility was nil and road conditions were rapidly becoming dangerous. After consulting as many teams as we could reach by cell phone (reception is very spotty in portions of our count circle) we decided to opt in favor of safety and cancelled the CBC. Unfortunately, we could not reach some teams and they continued to bird through the weather until the end of the day. We held the potluck at Henry Wahl's condominium, reviewed the day's events, and discussed what to do next. There was an overwhelming sentiment to try again, and we chose January 3 as the day for a second try.

This is the first time in the 31-year history of the Lake Monroe CBC that we were done in by weather. Of interest, the birding that was carried out during the day tallied 84 species with an additional 12 "Count Week" species (birds seen within 3 days of the count, but not recorded on the actual day). Thus, at least 96 species were in the area. Not bad for the conditions and with only three teams completing the day.

The actual CBC was completed on January 3 with 46 people working in 13 teams. This was fewer people than usual because it was a weekday and many others were out of town for the holidays. Our expectations were not high, because a major cold front moved in several days prior to the count, dropping temperatures into the low single digits. The end result was that the shallow water in North Fork, Middle Fork, and Pine Grove froze--making good waterfowl counts impossible. Furthermore, much of the main lake also froze, including all of the area east of the causeway, the area visible from Paynetown, and much of the water off of Fairfax. The low temperatures also made visibility over the remaining areas of open water difficult because of low, swirling fog and heat distortion. Despite these negative aspects we did remarkably well on the day, a tribute to really hard work by those who spent the day in the field. We tallied 93 species and 9722 individuals. The species total was well below our all-time high (109), but well above our average; thus, it was a good day.

The high points of the day included a Palm Warbler found in the Ramp Creek area by Rob and Eric Ripma (the first time ever on our CBC), a Northern Shrike found in the Mourning Dove management field near North Fork Refuge by Jeff and Sandy Belth and Bob Dodd (only the second time ever on our CBC), two Merlins found in the fields area by the Hengevelds and Lee Sterrenburg, and a Lincoln's Sparrow found at Fairfax by Bob Kissel. Other very good birds included Black Vultures (20 of them! An all-time high for the count), two Golden Eagles, 36 Bald Eagles (an all-time high), a Rough-legged Hawk (a bird that is increasingly difficult to find, given the changes in the fields area), and a Red-throated Loon. Other good

birds included Sandhill Crane (an overflight of 42 birds), Northern Saw-whet Owl (5), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (5), Eastern Phoebe (1), Hermit Thrush (7), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1), Savannah Sparrow (2), and Rusty Blackbird (5).

Of interest was the low count for House Finch (18)--the lowest number since 1991-1992 (the species was first recorded on our count in 1987-88). Evidence of the "irruptive" year for northern "finches" was provided by Red-breasted Nuthatch (50--second highest count ever), Purple Finch (14), and Pine Siskin (9). The species "sweepstakes" was won by Dark-eyed Junco (1275 individuals), with Canada Goose second (1274), and American Tree Sparrow third (872). The various groups found 3 "Count Week" birds as a result of before and after scouting--Canvasback, Surf Scoter, and Black Scoter.



Palm Warbler. Photo by Susan Hengeveld

There were many significant "misses," birds we usually get or ones that had been seen just prior to the count (or tallied on the abortive count on December 15). This list included Wood Duck, Northern Pintail, Northern Bobwhite, Double-crested Cormorant, Wilson's Snipe, Long-eared Owl, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing, and Common Grackle.

All things considered, it was an outstanding count, although we lost our "first place standing" in the state to the wonderful Goose Pond CBC. Congratulations to Lee Sterrenburg for organizing that remarkable count. My heartfelt thanks to all of you who braved the weather and worked so hard on January 3--and to those who braved impossible conditions on December 15. Hope to see you all next year on December 20. Save that day! 🐦

Editor's Note *continued from page 2*

Last month we had our usual 675 copies of the *Leaflet* printed. That usually is enough for every address on our membership list plus several extras for our files and to give away at SAS events. I was surprised to learn from Maureen Forrest that there were only two copies left after the mailing. Further checking showed that our membership list has grown so that we need to print more copies. What a nice problem to have! We actually have 648 members as of the end of 2007. Sixty-five of those are "Friends of SAS". Our mailing list also includes some non-members such as government officials and other Audubon societies.

Apology from the Editor: In an article in the January/February *Leaflet* concerning Ruth Reichman and Bill DeVille, the editor mistakenly identified Bill as David. The first president of SAS was Bill DeVille, not David DeVille. The red-faced editor extends his sincere apology to Bill. 🐦

Volunteers Needed for “Leave No Child Inside” Program by Angie Smith

The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department, in collaboration with Sycamore Land Trust and Monroe County Community School Corporation, is hosting the second year of Leonard Springs Nature Days. This program was developed to help kids learn about our environment while meeting state science standards and getting them excited about careers in life sciences. We will host nine 6th-grade classes, more than 500 students, through an array of hands-on learning stations. To make this a quality, educational experience we need 16 volunteer facilitators per day.

If you are interested in helping to “Leave No Child Inside,” volunteer your time to facilitate one of ten stations focusing on karst topography, creek monitoring, wetland bird habitat, forest ecology, or soil composition. A set of instructions, talking points, and materials will be available to help you through the day, and we’ll offer volunteer training days to orient you to the program and address questions.

You may sign up for an 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift on any of the days:

Tuesday-- March 25, April 1, 8, and 15
Wednesday-- March 26, April 2

We would like you to sign up for the corresponding rain date: Thursday rain date for Tuesday programs, and Friday rain date for Wednesday programs. Bloomington Parks and Recreation will provide a volunteer orientation for all station facilitators on March 21, 22, and 24; times TBD. Plan to attend to get the station basics and orient yourself with the park. Contact Kim Ecenbarger, Special Services Coordinator, at ecenbark@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3739 or Angie Smith, Natural Resources Coordinator, at smithan@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3759 for more information or to sign up for a slot.

Endowment Fund continued from page 1

SAS board member John Byers was the first contributor in 2008. Sassafras Audubon Society current board of directors sincerely thanks our recent as well as our past endowment participants. Your generosity and belief in SAS is most appreciated and humbling.

We hope you were among the 115+ people who attended the SAS program on Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area on January 30. The knowledge and enthusiasm of presenters James Cole, Brad Feaster, and Lee Sterrenburg was palpable. We learned about its history, the exciting changes in bird migration and breeding, and future development plans for this remarkable state property. In fact, the work and changes at Goose Pond may become a model for wetland restoration across the nation. The audience went home hopeful and as equally determined as our speakers to nurture Goose Pond as a viable successional wetlands.

SAS encourages you to contribute to our endowment fund and thus join the widening circle of sponsors of SAS's work at Goose Pond as well as our other conservation projects. The SAS board of directors pledges to utilize each and every endowment dollar judiciously in the best interests of local conservation and education. Together, we can make a difference in our environment, now and into the future. 🐦

Interested in Volunteering? SAS Needs Your Help!

Join our newly organized volunteer database and help us with conservation and fundraising events. Send your name, telephone number, and e-mail address to SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org and let us know you'd like to be added to the volunteer database. We'll contact you in advance of the date we need volunteers to see whether you're interested and able to help at that time. 🐦

2007, A Banner Year for Owl Banding and Adopting by Marc Allaire



The 2007 season was a banner year for Northern Saw-whet Owl banders: a record total of 447 owls were caught in mist nests, banded, and released. The breakdown of the total is 199 from Yellowwood State Forest and 248 from the Newark banding station. The season was also noteworthy for the record number of owls that were adopted: 34! Funds from the owl adoptions are used to finance the field research looking to

better understand the migratory movements of these diminutive denizens of the night. If you would like to jump on the bandwagon (it's never too late), owl adoption forms are available for download on the SAS Web site, sassafrasaudubon.org.

PHOTO: Northern Saw-whet Owl by Lee Sterrenburg

President's Note continued from page 1

has numerous outings planned for the next couple of months and some great evening programs as well. For instance, our second annual dinner banquet will be held March 30 at the Fourwinds Resort and Marina. As part of the evening, we'll be recognizing those who have been major influences in our organization in the past, and some of those who continue to be driving forces today. In addition, award-winning photographer Jeff Hammond will share his images and stories from his recent trip to the Falkland Islands. Be sure to get your reservations in for this great evening. Look for more information in this issue of the *Leaflet*.

And that's not all. Geoffrey Keller, a bird song recordist who has worked with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for many years, will be our guest speaker at the April program. If you have listened to any of the bird songs on the Cornell Web site, you have probably heard some of Geoffrey's work.

April will also bring the Second Annual Spring Nature Expo to the Fourwinds. Frogs and flowers, bats and birds, and a whole lot more will grab us by both arms, shake us to make sure we're awake, and inspire us to get out and enjoy nature.

Bird counts, IMBD events, and still more migration continues through May. Is it any wonder that spring tends to be a favorite time of year for many birders? So the question becomes, does spring get you out to enjoy birds, or do the birds get you out to enjoy spring? The answer doesn't really matter; either way it's a win-win situation. And life doesn't give us many of them. I, for one, plan to take every advantage of this one. See you out there. 🐦

Wahl Recalls Early Years with Sassafras Audubon Society by Bob Dodd

If you have ever participated in the Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count, you should be familiar with Henry Wahl. Henry has hosted the post-count potluck dinner for all 33 years of its history. In the early years he was an active participant in the count, but in recent years mobility problems have limited his contribution to providing the venue for the dinner and compilation. During the early years of SAS Henry served as vice-president. He has fond memories of SAS pioneers Barbara Restle, Ruth and Eberhard Reichmann, Libby Frey, Rey Carlson, and others. He praised their environmental work. He is still much concerned about environmental matters and especially mentioned his opposition to the new terrain I-69 project. In addition to his work with SAS, Henry was the major force in the move to save the old Carnegie library at Sixth and Washington Streets in Bloomington, the present location of the Monroe County History Center. He recounted the battles with “city hall” and others who had alternate ideas of what should happen to the property, mostly involving tearing down the old library. He had high praise for Bill and Gayle Cook, who have been staunch supporters of the history museum and have helped make it an outstanding feature of our community.

Henry had a long and eventful career in the navy, serving as an officer in the Pacific Theater during WW II. He spent much of his time in the Solomon Islands where he was assigned to the Combat Information Center directing air missions. He had some close calls, but managed to make it through the bloody campaign. He recalls one time when a higher officer commandeered the plane he was assigned to take to Hawaii. The plane disappeared on the flight and was never found. After the war Henry continued to serve in the navy and was assigned to Palau Island in the western Pacific. His experiences on that assignment are chronicled in a book written by him and his wife Cecilia entitled *Number One Pacific Island*. After the navy years Henry and Cecilia returned to the Bloomington area where Henry tried his hand at cattle farming, but allergies soon put a stop to that. Henry then had a long career as an administrator with the Halls of Residence at Indiana University.

Henry said his interest in birding started early. He recalls that as a youngster suffering from asthma he would sometimes sleep outside in the summer. It was a joy to wake up to the songs of birds and the sight of clouds drifting across the blue sky. He remembers birding trips with SAS members in the early days of the organization (and before it was formed) especially with Rey Carlson, Norris Wentworth, and others. Henry and Cecilia traveled extensively, and Henry took the opportunity to go birding in many foreign lands. His life list totals something in the 1800-1900 range. Henry recalls a particularly exciting trip to South America when he was birding with an expert in the area. They saw a bird that was only known from museum specimens. They were the only living people who had ever seen that bird in the wild.

Henry’s interest in birds continues unabated. He is surrounded by numerous beautiful bird pictures and other art works in the lovely large condo where he lives. He enjoys watching birds come to his feeders but said the numbers were down at the moment because of a lurking Cooper’s Hawk. 🐅

In My Backyard by Bob Dodd

The battle between human and squirrel goes on. I mentioned in an earlier column a bird feeder manufactured by Droll Yankee that spins when a squirrel manages to leap on it. The spin is rapid enough that the startled squirrel gets flipped off before he has a chance to enjoy his ill-gotten gains.

That feeder was on the pricey side so we decided not to buy it. But this Christmas I received a less expensive device from my wife that works on the same principle. It consists of a battery-powered motor that spins a hook from which you can suspend just about any type of feeder (see photo). The extra weight of a marauding squirrel is enough to activate



Feeder hanging from squirrel spinner.

Photo by Bob Dodd

the motor which vigorously spins the feeder and perching squirrel, which (not being firmly attached) is flung by centrifugal force to the side. When we first installed the device we spent quite a bit of time hoping for an entertaining view of the action. We never have seen a squirrel land on the motorized feeder, but in almost two months we have never seen any evidence that the feeder has been subjected to a bushy-tailed raid. It sounds almost too good to be true that it will be a permanent solution to the squirrel problem, but so far so good. The device was available at the local Co-op feed store.

Are you a fortunate person who has bluebirds in your neighborhood? You may not see as many this year because last summer was not a good year for fledging bluebirds. Dan Sparks, Brown County Bluebird Society (BCBS) president, reported on the Bloomington bird list that bluebird numbers were down last summer by 42% compared to 2006. This was probably due to the negative effect on nesting activity caused by the ice storm in February 2007. We can hope that the weather this late winter and spring will not produce a similar disturbance. Even though 2007 was a poor year for fledging bluebirds the BCBS reported that 1210 bluebirds fledged from its monitored boxes. Bluebird boxes often host other desirable species. Last summer the BCBS boxes fledged 747 Tree Swallows, 207 Carolina Chickadees, and 81 House Wrens.

When you receive this *Leaflet* you will still be seeing winter birds (and year-round birds) at your feeder. But it is time to start looking ahead. In a few weeks (early April) you should be putting out your hummingbird feeder. It is always fun to spot your first hummer of the new year. You might also note when you see your last junco. I always hope to see a hummer before all of the juncos are gone. That usually does not happen but occasionally does. 🐅

Special Nature Photo Exhibit

SAS and Bloomington Photography Club members will be invited to submit nature photos for a special exhibit to open on October 1 and run through mid-January at the Monroe County History Center. Emphasis will be on birds, but other nature photos are also desired. Look for details in the next issue of the *Leaflet*.



© Susan Hengeveld

Announcing Upcoming Events . . .

The **Annual Spring Banquet** is set for Sunday, March 30, at Fourwinds. See details on page 3.

The **SAS Spring Feeder Cleaning** will be Saturday, April 26, at Bloomington Hardware on S. College Mall Rd. Drop off your feeders between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. and pick them up between 2 and 4 p.m. Sorry, but we can't take suet feeders or hummingbird feeders. The cost is \$4 for small feeders and \$6 for large feeders. Proceeds will go toward SAS conservation and educational programs. **Volunteers are needed.** Contact David Daniels at 812-333-2121.

The **2008 Bird-a-Thon** will be held that Saturday, May 3, 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. Prizes for the most species found and the best rookie team are awarded. 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 event sponsors: Monroe County Parks and Recreation (209 W. 7th St.) or Wild Birds Unlimited (1101 N. College Ave.) in Bloomington. Team registration deadline is April 15. For information, contact Cathy Meyer at cmeyer@co.monroe.in.us or 812-349-2805.

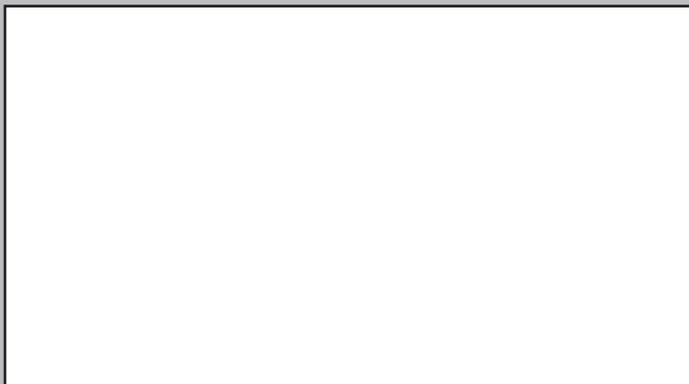
SAS will co-sponsor the **Jordan River Fest** on Sunday, May 18, from 2-4:00 p.m. at the Indiana University Art Museum. The fest with its theme of rivers will be held in conjunction with the museum's spring exhibition, Thomas Hart Benton and American Waterways. (Thomas Hart Benton was instrumental in the campaign to prevent damming of the Buffalo and Missouri Rivers.) Noted author Scott Russell Sanders will present readings related to Midwestern waterways, including pieces by John James Audubon, Mark Twain, and James Wright. Tom Rosnowski and friends will perform waterway-related music. Bloomingfoods will serve regional snacks. SAS will provide an educational display concerning the importance of watershed.

PHOTO: Louisiana Waterthrush by Susan Hengeveld

See *Calendar* on page 3 for other events and outings.

DISCOUNT COUPON

Show this coupon with your address label to receive a 10% discount on purchases (excluding books and optical equipment) from the **Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Bloomington, Indiana**, or for a 10% discount on items in the bird department at **Bloomington Hardware**. Please keep the coupon for future purchases. Coupon expires April 30, 2008.



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