

Photo Exhibit Set for October

The Sassafras Audubon Society and the Bloomington Photography Club are sponsoring a special photography exhibit titled "Focus on the Natural History of Southern Indiana." The exhibit will open at the Monroe County History Center on Oct. 1 and will be up through January. Members of both sponsoring organizations are invited to submit photos for inclusion in the exhibit. Although we expect to emphasize birds, photos can be on any aspect of the natural environment, including a few scenic views, perhaps some flowers, and several photos of animals of all sorts (especially butterflies). The history center is planning an opening reception for the public on Oct. 10. SAS and BPC are also planning a special program on nature photography at the history center sometime during the exhibit. Check the next *Leaflet* for details.

Members of SAS and BPC of all skill levels are invited to submit entries for jurying for the exhibit. As they have more experience with arranging photo shows, BPC will organize the exhibit. Photos submitted for jurying should be matted but not framed before the exhibit. Each member may submit up to five photos. To cover the cost of honoraria for the judges, you are asked to contribute \$2 per photo. Jurying is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 7 in Lyman Hall of the First Presbyterian Church. Please contact Glen Darling, president of BPC, at glen@printmasteronline.com by July 1 to let us know that you plan to submit photos and how many. You will receive further instructions concerning dates and time for the jurying and requirements for framing of photos for the exhibit.

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Reichman, Whitehead, Sterrenburg Receive Awards at Annual Banquet

by Jeff Riegel

Put together 29 species of birds, one dead beaver, a fantastic dinner, maybe a glass of wine, three very special awards, and a great program full of birds that most of us will never see, and you have the makings of this year's Sassafras Audubon Society's Annual Dinner.

Several of us got together a little early on a drizzly March 30 and found those 29 species throughout the Fairfax area of Lake Monroe before heading to the Fourwinds Resort and Marina for the social hour and dinner prepared personally by the Fourwinds' food and beverage director, Michael Gebhart. It is easy to see why he has the job he has.

After dinner, it was time for recognizing those SAS members who have been so instrumental in the success of our organization, both yesterday and today. You might remember last year when we gave Barbara Restle the Lifetime Achievement Award for all she did in the early years of our Society and continues to do today. This year we awarded the first Barbara Restle Founder's Award to the second president of the Sassafras Audubon Society, Ruth Reichmann. As Barbara wrote for the award presentation, "Ruth knew in her bones that in order to effectively change a point of



Recipients of awards at the SAS annual banquet are, from left, Lee Sterrenburg, Ruth Reichman, and Don Whitehead. *Photo by Susan Hengeveld*

view in corporate America, we needed to walk in the shoes of men and women who were, in part, responsible for the pollution to which we were all exposed." Taking into account all those who were affected by the environmental issues of the day was just one of Ruth's talents, and SAS probably would not be the organization it is today without her guidance and hard work in those early years.

The SAS board of directors also wanted to recognize a lifetime of achievement for conservation work. The vote was unanimous; Don Whitehead received the award for all the work he has done, especially at Lake

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CAN YOU NAME THIS BIRD

If this fellow were not so common and such a pest, we would consider him quite handsome. As it is, we would like to send him back home. Answer on page 7.

Photo by Jeff Hammond



Editor's Note — *Who Are Our Readers?*

by Bob Dodd

Every good editor should know as much as possible about his or her readers. When I first became editor of the *Leaflet* a few years ago, I did not give the question of the nature of our readership much thought. I probably assumed that a large portion of our readership is strongly committed birders whose hobby is a major part of their life. But on further thought, that is clearly not the case. Not that our readers do not love birds and enjoy watching them, but for most of our readers, birds are probably secondary to other interests. To appeal to the more casual bird watcher, we have included items such as "Name This Bird" and "In My Backyard."

Another assumption that the editor has made that is clearly erroneous is that practically all of our readers live in Bloomington and Monroe County. I recently asked our database manager, Lynda Walker, if she would send me a copy of our membership list with addresses. At the time her most recent list was for September 2007. A surprising number of our members come from cities and towns other than Bloomington. The list Lynda provided included all of our 564 members who were also members of the National Audubon Society. We had an additional 64 local members who did not belong to the national organization. Of the 564 members on the national list, 286 are from Bloomington (including most of Monroe County). That is slightly more than half of our membership. But that means that almost half of our members are not from Bloomington. Forty-three of our members are from Martinsville, followed by 42 from Columbus and 39 from Nashville. Mooresville contributes 27 members, Bedford

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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: _____

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

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

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

Sassafras Audubon Society

Board of Directors

- Jeff Riegel, President (jkriegel@att.net)
- David Daniels, Vice President
(wbubloomington@sbcglobal.net)
- Tom Platt, Student Vice President
(tgplatt@indiana.edu)
- Mark Allaire, Treasurer (wdcreeper@AOL.com)
- Bernie Sloan, Secretary (bgsloan2@yahoo.com)
- Bob Dodd (dodd@indiana.edu)
- John Lawrence (j.w.lawrence@hotmail.com)
- Nancy Martin (nmartin@mccsc.edu)
- Jim Mitchell (jmitchel01@insightbb.com)
- Keegan Ramey (keramey@indiana.edu)

Committee Chairs

- The committees welcome help from volunteers.
- Conservation Coordinator: Jess Gwinn
- Database Manager/Membership Coordinator:
Lynda Walker (wdcreeper@AOL.com)
- Education Coordinator: Tom Platt
- Field Trip Coordinator: Jim Mitchell
- Fund-Raising Coordinator:
Bob Kissel (812-336-2907)
- Program Coordinator: Nancy Martin
- Publicity Coordinator: John Lawrence

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)

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- Contributing Editor: Bob Kissel
- Editorial Assistant: Joann Dodd
- Layout: Julie Dales
- Mailing: Maureen Forrest

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.

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SAS Calendar

May/June 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 jlmitchell33@comcast.net or (812) 824-8198.

Saturday, May 10: IMBD ‘Wings Over Muscatatuck’

Muscatatuck National Wildlife Reserve, just east of Seymour, Ind., is celebrating International Migratory Bird Day with a full day of events. In addition to bird walks, banding demonstrations, and programs for all ages, there will be guided birding tours of the closed area at 6:30 a.m., 8:30 a.m., and 10:30 a.m., each scheduled for one and a half hours. Reservations and a fee of \$5 are required for the tours of the closed area. There will be booths, exhibits, and displays; and the bookstore is open all day! For more information or to reserve a spot on the tours, contact Alicia Froedge at Jackson County Visitor Center at (888) 524-1914.

Saturday, May 10: Greene County Big May Day Count

Volunteers are needed to help count birds in Greene County. The May Day count is part of the North American Migration Count, which

Editor’s Note *continued from page 2*

18, Morgantown 17, and Spencer 15. Smaller numbers come from 23 additional Indiana cities and towns. More recent data show that we also have six out-of-state members. So are we covering things of interest to our non-Bloomington members? We are probably not doing as good a job as we should. Non-Bloomington members, let us know what you would like to read in the *Leaflet*. Better yet, send us (dodd@indiana.edu) bird-and nature-related items from your community that we can include in future issues.

The editor would like to add his word of appreciation for all that the late Henry Wahl did during his long and eventful life to promote a love of our natural environment and especially his contributions to SAS. I was very fortunate to visit with Henry just a few weeks before his death. At that time he was full of energy and of stories about his eventful life and the early days of SAS. We can all be grateful to people like Henry and the other founders of SAS for the groundwork they laid upon which we continue to build today. 🐦

Photo Exhibit *continued from page 1*

This exhibit will be a great opportunity for SAS to showcase our organization and to promote an appreciation of nature by members of the community. The two sponsoring organizations will have displays describing their organizations and encouraging membership application. SAS will also highlight our endowment campaign and Goose Pond sponsorship. Check through your photo collection for suitable items to submit and be sure to come to the Monroe County History Center next fall to enjoy what we expect to be an outstanding exhibit of nature photography. 🐦

helps researchers get a “snapshot” of bird migration each spring and fall. You don’t need to be an expert birdwatcher to help. Volunteers are needed to help man teams that will roam the county or to count birds at their Greene County homes, feeders, and yards. To volunteer or for more information, contact the count coordinator, Jess Gwinn, at (812) 876-8623 or jagmo@bluemarble.net.

Saturday, May 17: IMBD at SRA Hardin Ridge

Check the Hardin Ridge Web site at www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/events/Inter_migratory_bird_day.htm and the local media for details.

Wednesday, May 28, 7 p.m.: Birding with Children

Nancy Martin will discuss her use of birding to teach middle school science. The program will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, May 31, 6 a.m.: Breeding Bird Atlas — Western Owen County

Don Whitehead will lead a trip into western Owen County as part of the Breeding Bird Atlas project. Target species are Blue Grosbeaks, grassland birds, and more. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 6 a.m. We will carpool to the BBA areas and return before midday.

Saturday, June 7, 6 a.m.: Hillenbrand FWA

See article in this *Leaflet* for details. James Cole and Lee Sterrenburg will lead this trip. We will depart from the northeast corner of the Super Wal-Mart parking lot (near the gas pumps) on West Second Street at 6 a.m. We plan to end by noon and we may have lunch in Dugger or Linton on the way back, for those so inclined. The return to Bloomington will be by early afternoon.

Saturday, June 14, 7 a.m.: Breeding Bird Atlas — Hindustan Block

Mike Clarke will lead a “blockbusting” outing to the Hindustan block (mostly Morgan–Monroe State Forest) as part of the BBA project. Meet in the northeast corner of the Super Wal-Mart parking lot (near the gas pumps) at 7 a.m. We will caravan from there.

Wednesday, June 25, 7 p.m.: Butterflies of Southern Indiana

To help everyone get ready for the upcoming Monroe/Brown County Butterfly Count, Sandy and Jeff Belth will present a slide show about our local butterflies. Identification tips, habitats, and caterpillar host plants will be discussed. The program will be held in Room 1-B of the Monroe County Public Library. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, June 28: 11th Annual Monroe/Brown County Butterfly Count

See the article in this issue of the *Leaflet* for details. For more information or to be placed on a team, contact Jeff Belth at (812) 825-8353 or at jeffrebelth@aol.com.

Saturday, July 12: Goose Pond FWA Community Birding Day

Watch the SAS Web site and the local media for details about this upcoming event. 🐦

Activist's Corner

by Jess Gwinn, Conservation Chair

Nuclear power, simply put, is the use of radioactive fission to generate heat to boil water. Radiation comes in many forms from many elements, virtually none healthy for the human body. Every dose of radiation we receive we carry for the rest of our lives — every X-ray, CT scan, etc. While much of this radiation passes through our bodies harmlessly, some damages genes and other cell parts. This damage often lies dormant for many years before manifesting into a tumor or cancer. The more radiation we are exposed to, the more likely the incidence of cancer. Also the more likely the genetic damage will be passed to our children.

Near Chernobyl, thousands of cases of additional thyroid cancer have occurred since the accident. An area of 100,000 square miles was severely contaminated with radiation. Vast areas throughout the rest of Europe and the northern hemisphere were likewise irradiated and remain so. These areas still produce food stuffs contaminated with radiation (from Cesium, Iodine, Strontium, Thorium, Plutonium, etc.) and will for essentially eternity.

What to do with all of the radioactive waste? Nobody knows. Untold thousands of tons of deadly radioactive waste sit in storage all over the world outside of nuclear facilities while the nuclear industry tries to figure out what to do. Also, the decommissioning of nuclear plants (never been done) will be a technological nightmare. They haven't found an answer in 60 years and they never will. This material will

be deadly for tens of thousands of years. Does anyone really think there is a technological fix that can withstand thousands of years of geologic testing?

Then there is coal, Indiana's energy of choice. The mantra is that coal is abundant and cheap. Coal is cheap only when the external costs are unaccounted. Whether the coal is mined by stripping, digging, or blasting the tops off mountains, the environmental degradation is huge. Reclamation often only patches the damage, leaving the land unusable for many purposes — another ill-begotten legacy we leave our descendants. Other external costs such as the many deleterious health consequences from the pollution generated by burning coal are likewise never considered.

Another pipe dream offered by coal apologists is that carbon dioxide produced from burning coal can be sequestered underground instead of released into the atmosphere where it contributes to global warming. Once again this reliance upon an unproven technology to solve another problem is more of the same industry hubris. The technology simply does not exist and can never be proven reliable because like nuclear waste, the carbon dioxide must be interred essentially forever. When the containment system leaks (which is inevitable, given the length of time the system will be in place), the release of this carbon into the atmosphere will be catastrophic.

Simply put, we need to invest our resources into renewable energy, not just for the energy, but for the economic, environmental, health, and other social benefits.

Annual Banquet *continued from page 1*

Monroe, documenting birds and their behaviors, work that has gone on for decades and continues even today. At that same board meeting, it was also determined that many other people work hard for avian conservation today and that an annual award should be given for that work as well. Because of Don's work spanning more than a quarter century, at this year's dinner, we also awarded the first Donald R. Whitehead Conservationist of the Year Award. Once again, the vote was unanimous. The Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area has been put on the national birding map by Lee Sterrenburg. While Lee continues to reside just outside of Bloomington, it's clear that he lives at Goose Pond, and the area would not be known for what it is today without him. This award was just one that Lee has received for his commitment to Goose Pond, and I think more are on the horizon. 🐦



Eight past and present presidents of SAS: Left to right (standing) Bob Kissel, Bill DeVille, Ruth Reichman, Cathy Meyer, Jeff Belth, Jeff Riegel. Kneeling Dawn Hewitt, John Lawrence. *Photo by Susan Hengeveld*

Congratulations to Ruth, Don, and Lee. These awards pale in comparison to what the birds and the Sassafras Audubon Society owe you for everything you have done and continue to do. "Thank you" is such an inadequate phrase; we'll never be able to say it enough.

Once the plaques had been awarded, it was time for everyone to add to their life lists, that is if you happen to have a list of birds you've seen only in pictures. Jeff Hammond, husband of our secretary, Laura Hammond, recently had the opportunity to go on a photography excursion to the Falkland Islands. The pictures he brought back were even more than we have come to expect from one of Indiana's premier nature photographers. It was a great presentation with wonderful pictures, a lot of biological information on birds none of us had ever seen, and, of course, plenty of humor mixed in. Great program, Jeffrey! Thank you for sharing with us.



King Penguin. *Photo by Jeff Hammond*

Obviously, this year's banquet was a great success, but next year we want even more folks to join us. At the end of the evening, I suggested that everyone bring a friend along next year. Susan Hengeveld thought four friends would be better. Let's split the difference and set our goal for next year's event — 100 people. See you in March 2009. 🐦

Fourth of July Butterfly Count Set for June 28 *by Jeff and Sandy Belth*

On Saturday, June 28, we will conduct the 11th Annual Monroe/ Brown County "Fourth of July" Butterfly Count. We encourage all who are interested in butterflies to join us, no matter what your level of identification expertise. The Fourth of July butterfly counts are conducted in the same fashion as the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts: a 15-mile-diameter circle is mapped and split into sections, or territories. Our circle is centered at Crooked Creek boat ramp and includes Paynetown, Cutright, Allen's Creek, portions of Brown County State Park and Yellowwood State Forest, the Deam Wilderness, and more. The sections are parceled out to field parties, or teams, which cover as much varied habitat as possible and count as many butterfly species and individual butterflies as they can find during the course of the day (usually from about 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). At the end of the day, we meet and tally our results. Our count often has the highest species count in the state and occasionally the highest count in the Midwest.

Although our count has been conducted since 1997, the first Fourth of July counts were started more than 25 years ago by members of the Xerces Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of invertebrates. The name was chosen to mimic the popular Christmas Bird Counts, and like the bird counts, the counts are rarely held on the actual holiday. They are usually conducted two or three weeks before or after July 4; the time is adjusted to correspond with the annual peak of butterfly diversity within the area of the count. For our area, that peak usually occurs around the end of June. Several years ago, the administration of the counts was transferred from the Xerces Society to the North American Butterfly Association, an organization formed to educate the public about the joys of non-consumptive, recreational butterflying, including observation, photography, listing, gardening, rearing, and conservation.

The butterfly counts are a fun way to learn more about butterflies, meet others with similar interests, and help to monitor our local butterfly populations. We hope you can join us! If you are interested, please call Jeff or Sandy at (812) 825-8353 or contact Jeff at jeffreylbelth@aol.com. 🐦

CAN YOU NAME THIS SKIPPER?

This common skipper is named for the whitish-silver patch on its hindwing. Its caterpillars feed on the leaves of Black Locust trees. Look for it in your garden or along woodland edges. The answer is on page 7.



Photo by Jeff Belth © 2001

Endowment Total Nears \$23,000

by Bob Kissel

As we near the end of the first year of SAS's endowment campaign, pledges are just under \$23,000! Since my last report, we have received a number of both generous as well as symbolic contributions. Current or former Sassafras Audubon board members John Byers, Cathy Meyer, and Jeff Riegel and his company, Bird Country US, made their pledges to the future of SAS and our conservation efforts. Our "brother in arms," Sycamore Land Trust, added to the capital campaign, as did Marilyn Lang from Bloomington and the Stewarts from Connecticut.

I would like to spotlight pillars of bird-watching, SAS, and conservation Lee Sterrenburg and Don and Betsy Whitehead. Reflecting the decades of their dedication to SAS and birding field work, both the Whiteheads and Lee were most generous in ensuring the long-term viability of SAS's efforts in places like Goose Pond or our Saw-whet Owl banding station. We thank each and every endowment fund contributor for the trust you place in SAS and the responsibility of environmental stewardship.

As the SAS capital campaign closes out its first year, the success has invigorated as well as humbled your board of directors. We now will move to a second phase in trying to reach our admittedly ambitious two-year goal of \$50,000 by recruiting pledges from individuals and businesses outside the immediate SAS family. If you know a person or firm that might want to support the environment and conservation through SAS's efforts, please contact me. 🐦

SAS Loses an Old Friend, Henry Wahl

by Don Whitehead

Henry Wahl passed away on Saturday, March 29, and thus Sassafras Audubon lost one of its oldest and most loyal friends. Henry and his wife, Cecilia, were part of the group that founded our chapter and for all of their remaining years were active and enthusiastic supporters. They were instrumental in organizing and initiating the Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count, which has run every year since 1976. Henry was an avid birder and participated in many of the counts in the early years. As many of you know, the Christmas Bird Count always finishes with a potluck and tally — Henry and Cecilia hosted that event in their house until her death. They were absolutely wonderful hosts. In the following years, Henry continued to host the potluck in the party room of his condominium complex on East Second Street. Henry was a joy to be around — such a witty and engaging storyteller. He will be missed by all of us — and I, in particular, will miss the many inquisitive phone calls from him, which usually began, "Don, I had the strangest bird at my feeder today" Farewell dear friend — and our heartfelt thanks for all that you have given us for these many years. 🐦

Answer to Name That Bird:
House Sparrow



Green Kingfisher. *Photo by Susan Hengeveld*

Unique SAS Outing Planned for Hillenbrand Fish and Wildlife Area

by James Cole

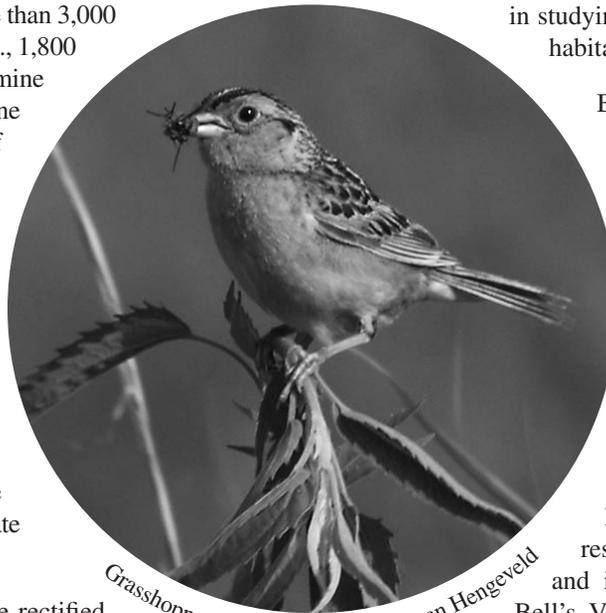
On Saturday, June 7, members of the SAS are invited to participate in a unique field trip to Hillenbrand Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene County, Indiana. This outing will encompass more than the usual birding and camaraderie associated with the typical trip — we will be conducting an inventory of the property following the conventions of the renowned Rapid Assessment Program. Few ornithological studies and inventories have been conducted at Indiana’s Fish and Wildlife Areas, so SAS members will be helping fill a critical data void. The trip’s resultant citizen science can further our understanding of this property’s role in southwestern Indiana for preserving critical bird populations, as well as serve several conservation initiatives, including a potential site nomination for Indiana’s Important Bird Areas Program. All you need to help with this scientific venture is a pair of binoculars, an understanding of bird identification, and the willingness to trek around Hillenbrand looking for birds.

Why the focus on Hillenbrand FWA? At least on paper, the property maintains a contiguity of prime habitat that should attract an enclave of threatened birds. Located along SR59 just 10 minutes north of Goose Pond, Hillenbrand protects more than 3,000 acres of habitat, and at least 60 percent (i.e., 1,800 acres) of this former reclaimed surface mine is managed as tall grass prairie. Thus, one could reasonably expect to find several of Indiana’s endangered obligate grassland and area-sensitive birds, like Henslow’s Sparrow and Sedge Wren, as well as a mosaic of declining grassland species such as Northern Bobwhite, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. But this is all conjectural at this point since few people, if anyone, actively bird the premises and report their sightings; we don’t have a firm understanding of what species nest on the property, nor do we have an astute estimate as to what their relative populations are.

This lack of avifaunal knowledge can be rectified in June by the planned RAP inventory and volunteers from SAS. The Rapid Assessment Program was created in 1990 by Conservation International to quickly provide the biological information necessary to catalyze conservation action and improve biodiversity protection. Standard RAP expeditions, which typically last three to four weeks and are often conducted in ecological “hot zones” around the globe, bring together teams of professional scientists to

conduct rapid, heuristic assessments of the biological value of selected areas. Unlike some of CI’s assessments in places like the cloud forests of Peru and Ecuador, our RAP expedition to Hillenbrand FWA will last only one day, and it will be composed of SAS’s knowledgeable, enthusiastic bird watchers. However, our protocols will analogize CI’s in a significant way — we will be collecting and analyzing the diversity of selected groups of organisms (birds!) to further actions for on-site and regional biodiversity conservation.

One initiative that can assist in conservation actions for the birds and habitats at Hillenbrand FWA is Audubon’s Important Bird Areas Program. IBAs are recognized worldwide, and they are a valuable, science-based tool for conserving and restoring ecosystems and wildlife habitats. By working through partnerships to identify places that are critical to birds and then engaging local communities and property managers in developing conservation plans for such sites, Audubon works to minimize the effects that habitat loss and degradation have on bird populations. The cooperative triumvirate of SAS, IBA Program, and IDNR management at Goose Pond FWA, for instance, has shown the efficacy of such partnerships in studying bird populations and working to protect habitat.



Grasshopper Sparrow. Photo by Susan Hengeveld

But first things first — we need to know what birds reside at Hillenbrand and whether their populations constitute an IBA designation. Three of the IBA selection criteria can be answered by this summer’s RAP assessment: does Hillenbrand (1) support significant numbers of one or more bird species listed as endangered; (2) contain an assemblage of Indiana’s “responsibility species”; and (3) encompass an outstanding regional example of a representative, rare, or threatened habitat type? Examples of endangered and responsibility species we’ll be searching for and inventorying include Northern Bobwhite, Bell’s Vireo, Sedge Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow’s Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Dickcissel.

Following the conclusion of the trip, populations for such birds will be compiled and eventually will be enrolled into an official IBA nomination packet. After being supplemented with some land cover information determined through GIS analysis by the IBA coordinator, the Hillenbrand site nomination can then be evaluated by the Indiana IBA Technical Committee.

So channel your inner Ted Parker and consider joining other SAS citizen scientists to perform a RAP assessment at Hillenbrand FWA on June 7. With enough participants, we’ll be able to break into teams and thoroughly cover the entire property. You’ll help enumerate bird populations at a previously unstudied FWA, and you’ll advance SAS’s and the IBA Program’s understanding of what birds nest on which properties in southwestern Indiana. The outing will be led by Lee Sterrenburg, Indiana IBA Technical Committee member, and James Cole, Indiana IBA coordinator. If you have any questions about the Hillenbrand trip, feel free to contact James at jcole@audubon.org. 🐦

By working through partnerships to identify places that are critical to birds and then engaging local communities and property managers in developing conservation plans for such sites, Audubon works to minimize the effects that habitat loss and degradation have on bird populations.

President's Note: *The Only Constant*

by Jeff Riegel

If there is one thing we all have in common, it's our love of birds and birding. It doesn't matter whether you watch birds from the comfort of your dining room over a cup of coffee in the morning or you're traveling thousands of miles to see more and more of our feathered friends. It also doesn't seem to matter much what kinds of birds are around at any given moment in time because we all know that five minutes later, something will have changed. That change is another thing we all have in common, not only in our birding endeavors, but our lives as a whole — constant change.

The same holds true for your Sassafras Audubon Society as well — change. In just the past couple of years, we've seen Goose Pond, our adopted Important Bird Area, evolve into one of the premier birding spots in the state, and it could very well become a destination birding locale for the entire Midwest. Lake Monroe changes at the same time, a fact to which our own Don Whitehead, recipient of the Lifetime Conservationist Award, can attest. Yellowwood Lake and State Forest, Morgan–Monroe, Flatwoods Park, Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge, and a host of other locations in SAS's area of coverage follow the same rule — the only constant is change.

That constant change has once again reached the SAS board of directors, too. Over the next couple of months, we're going to say "good-bye" to some of our dearest friends as their lives, along with everything else, change. Lynda Walker has done an amazing job as membership coordinator for us, streamlining the process of tracking our membership and helping it grow and grow. Lynda and our excellent treasurer, Marc Allaire, will soon be on their way to new challenges and opportunities in Florida, and not only will they be missed on the board, but their friendship will leave an empty spot in our hearts as well.

Last month, Terri Greene had to leave her duties as our *Leaflet* formatter. Not only has Terri done a fantastic job with the newsletter, she saved us a decent chunk of money we used to spend to "job out" those duties. Luckily, Terri is not leaving the area, so we'll still see her smiling face and perky personality at many of our outings and events.

Another change happening right now will also have effects on the board, our Society, and personally for me and many of you as Laura Hammond, our secretary, and her husband, Jeffrey, head for new horizons in the Atlanta area. I first met Jeffrey when I was looking at the Fourwinds Resort and Marina as a better location for Eagle Watch Weekend. Before long, the two of us were heading out every weekend to photograph whatever nature plopped down in front of us. And every evening when we got back in town, Laura had a fantastic meal on the table for us. It wasn't long before we became steadfast and, hopefully, lifelong friends. Laura has quipped more than once, "When Jeffrey and I got married, I gained a husband and a brother." I feel the same way; Jeffrey and Laura *are* the brother and sister I never had, and I will sorely miss them.

Strange as it may seem, all these changes are going to totally mess up my winter vacations as well. When Ann and I head for Sanibel Island each winter, we always stop by my Dad's in Lake City, Fla., along the way, in both directions and spend a day with family down there. Now we're going to have to add two more stops to the trip, one in Atlanta to visit Jeffrey and Laura, and another farther down the

Florida peninsula to see Marc and Lynda. Basically, we're going to have to add at least another week to our vacation just to have the time to stop and see all of our friends along the way.

But our losses will also bring gains in the way of new friends who will step forward to join us on the board of directors and our extended family of birders in south-central Indiana. Bernie Sloan, who has done a tremendous job revising our Society's bylaws, has already stepped forward to assume the duties of secretary, and we have a great prospect for membership coordinator as well. Beginning with this issue of the *Leaflet*, you'll see the work of Julie Dales, our new *Leaflet* layout expert. Julie has been on numerous outings and attended several events with us, so she will be familiar to many of you. Welcome aboard, Julie. That leaves us with two spots to fill on the board: treasurer and Bernie's at-large position. If you would like to join us and help shape the future of the Sassafras Audubon Society, just drop me a note or contact any of the board members listed in the *Leaflet*.

As for the emptiness we will feel in our hearts, no one can fill those niches. But our hearts are big and we always have room for more friends. 

In My Backyard by Bob Dodd

It is old news now, but if you missed Dawn Hewitt's *Herald-Times* article, you may not be aware that Bloomington is still the state champ in participation in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count that was held Feb. 18–21. Bloomington residents submitted 229 lists this year, up from 199 last year. The second-highest total in the state was 147 from Evansville participants. Indianapolis was third with 141 lists. Early in the count weekend, Bloomington was running slightly behind Evansville, but a big push at the end sent the local list number way ahead of other participants. Likely a large part of that final push was due to participation by Nancy Martin's Jackson Creek Middle School science class. Nancy has her students participate in the GBBC as a special project. This is a great way to introduce and encourage young people to love nature. Bloomington listers filed a total of 75 different species, slightly lower than the 83 listed by participants from Evansville.

Indiana listers recorded 132 species and 382,182 individuals. The Common Grackle was the most abundant species. Second most common was the Red-winged Blackbird, followed by Canada Goose and European Starling. The Canada Goose was the most common bird in Bloomington counts. Nationally 85,725 lists were submitted. A total of 635 species were identified. As in past years, the most frequently reported bird was the Northern Cardinal, and the Snow Goose was represented by the most individuals. New York had the most checklists and Texas the most species with 333. Charlotte, N.C., had the most lists with 493. Corpus Christi, Texas, had the most species with 185.

Thanks, Bloomington GBBC participants, for keeping Bloomington No. 1. Most of the lists that put us on top came from backyard bird watchers like most of our readers. If you did not participate in 2008, please make a point to do so in 2009. If we had only 30 more lists submitted, we would have been in the top 10 in the country! Let's make that our goal for next year. 



Answer to Name That Skipper:
Silver-spotted Skipper

Buenos Birding!

by Keegan Ramey

Greetings to everyone back in Indiana! I am finishing the last week of my 12-week internship at the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Arizona. However, by the time you all receive this *Leaflet*, I will be hard at work in the sweltering inferno, otherwise known as the Salton Sea. I will be working on the same project as last summer with the U.S. Geological Survey, involving the reproductive success of Black-necked Stilts in a recreated wetland habitat, along with several other side projects.

While here at the Buenos Aires NWR, I have been spending the bulk of my work hours doing surveys for the endangered Pima Pineapple Cactus. In 12 weeks and around 200 hours of searching, the other two interns and I have found just 29 of them. They sure are elusive little buggers. When one is discovered, we take measurements, mark it with our GPS, and note the surrounding vegetation. These surveys are done so that the fire crews can carry out the prescribed burns on the refuge, without destroying the cacti in the process. The PPC surveys have certainly been tedious, but while out in the field, I have gotten to enjoy the great weather and scenery. We are surrounded by mountains, blooming wildflowers, and plenty of animal life, including sightings of pronghorn and javelinas.

Aside from the PPC surveys, I have also conducted surveys for the “Cactus” Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and the “Mexican” Spotted Owl and worked at the captive breeding facility for the endangered

“Masked” Northern Bobwhite. I have also been able to do some outreach programs with local schools, including a stint as the National Wildlife Refuge’s Blue Goose mascot. Needless to say, they have been keeping me busy here.

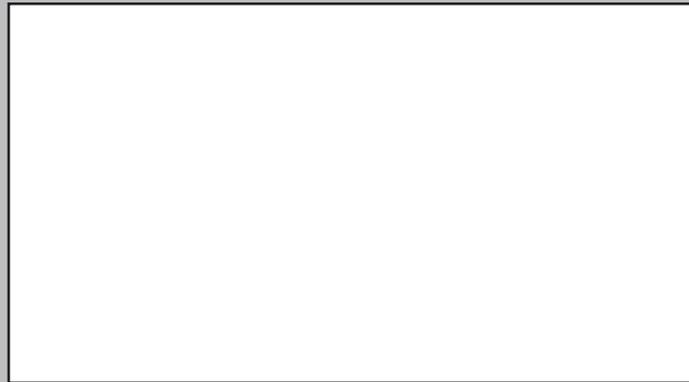
One of the most rewarding jobs has been leading interpretive hikes in the Brown Canyon unit of the refuge, in the Baboquivari Mountains. I took one man from the Chicago area, a couple from Wisconsin, and a couple from Tucson on guided walks along a two-mile trail leading to a natural arch bridge. Along the trail I pointed out the area’s flora, fauna, and historical points of interest to the guests. I’m sure I learned as much from the people I led on the hikes as they did from me. Leading these hikes was a welcome respite from the typical work days, and the tips weren’t bad either!

The weekends here have been just as busy as the weekdays. Bird watching is what most of my weekends have been centered around. I have gone to Madera Canyon a few times, the Patagonia area, and the Huachuca Mountains. Some of the highlights have been the Northern Pygmy-Owl, an Elf Owl, a Zone-tailed Hawk on a nest, a Harris’s Hawk, a Montezuma Quail covey, a Flame-colored Tanager, two Black-capped Gnatcatchers, and a Green Kingfisher, just to name a few.

I will be writing next from the Salton Sea. I’m looking forward to working with the Stilts again, but certainly not looking forward to the heat. Until next time, happy birding! 

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