

Update on the Fairview Chimney

by Dawn Hewitt

Plans to build a Chimney Swift tower at Bloomington's Fairview Elementary School to replace the existing chimney are moving along.

To recap: Hundreds of mosquito-eating swifts roost in the massive old brick chimney that will be torn down with the old school after a new, "green" school is built on the other side of the property. Neighbors, birders, and historic preservationists hoped the old chimney could be preserved as a standalone structure, but a structural engineer ruled that impossible without hugely expensive modifications to support it. So Bloomington City Councilman Chris Sturbaum designed a smaller but stylistically similar tower to be built near the old chimney, partially constructed with used bricks from the old chimney. But that plan would require that the old chimney be torn down before the new chimney is built,

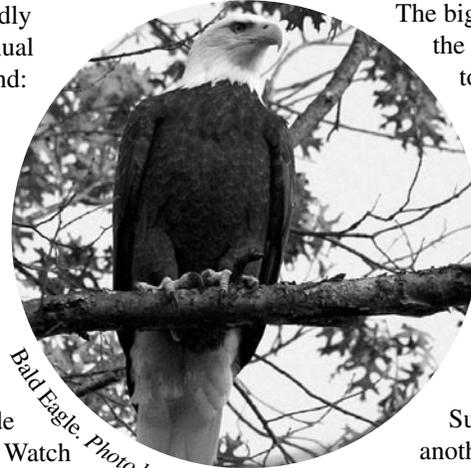
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Spring Banquet Set for March 29

Be sure to mark your calendar for the SAS annual spring banquet on March 29. The location is yet to be determined but will be at a restaurant in Bloomington. Details of timing and program have not yet been decided, but you can depend on a great time for fellowship with other members and presentation of the annual Barbara Restle and Don Whitehead awards. We will include details and a registration form in the March/April *Leaflet*. 🐦

A Season on the Wing: Ninth Annual Eagle Watch Weekend *by Jeff Riegel*

BirdCountry.US proudly presents the ninth annual "Eagle Watch Weekend: A Season on the Wing," at Chapman's Restaurant and Banquet Center (East Third Street and Highway 446), Friday, Feb. 6, through Sunday, Feb. 8.



Bald Eagle. Photo by Scott Evans

Friday's events include the fifth annual Eagle Watch Weekend Bird Count, a special program on the habits and history of bald eagles, a new program by SAS members Jim and Susan Hengeveld on the differences between male and female birds, an owl prowl, and astronomy walk.

Saturday will feature SAS Outing Coordinator Jim Mitchell with a special bird walk for beginners, two programs just for the kids, bird song recordist Geoffrey Keller with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and live birds of prey from Return to the Wild.

The big event of the weekend, the Eagle Watch Caravans to view eagles in the wild, will occur throughout the afternoon, with many SAS members on hand at various sites on Lake Monroe to show you the treasure trove of eagles we have right here in our own backyard.

Sunday will start with another bird walk led by SAS Vice President Dave Daniels, a program for photographers of all skill levels on catching those spectacular winter shots, as well as a new program on becoming a landlord — for the birds, of course.

The complete schedule, brochure, and pre-registration information are available at www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com or www.BirdCountry.US. You can also register over the phone by calling Ann at (812) 335-8137, and walk-ins the weekend of the event are always welcome. 🐦



CAN YOU NAME THAT BIRD?

This one may be a little difficult for the backyard birder, but if you are lucky you may see him on the ground under your feeder this winter. A color photo would help with this fellow. He has a bit of yellow in front of his eyes. Be sure to check his chin. The answer is on page 7.

Photo by Jeff Hammond

Editor's Note: *Chimney Without Smoke, Thanks IU, Let the Grass Grow*

by Bob Dodd

As Dawn Hewitt reports in this *Leaflet*, prospects look good at Fairview School for building a swift-friendly replacement chimney and monument to the old schools. We especially would like to thank Bloomington City Councilman and preservationist Chris Sturbaum for taking the lead in designing and working on funding for the new chimney. Dawn Hewitt has performed yeoman service in publicizing the project. Several other people, SAS members and nonmembers, have made significant contributions in working on a solution to this problem. And especially we thank the SAS members and friends who have already contributed to the swift fund. Does your own house have a masonry chimney? If it is uncapped, you may be providing a nesting site. If it is capped, why not consider opening it so the swifts can move in next summer?

We are pleased to see that the IU Sustainability Task Force has made some environmental- and bird-friendly changes to the IU campus. IU has decided not to mow the cross country course on a regular basis. This allows a broad expanse of grassland that provides an excellent habitat for a wide variety of birds as well as giving native grasses a chance to displace the introduced and invasive grasses and forbs. In this *Leaflet* Bernie Sloan notes the increased variety and number of birds "in his backyard," the cross country course, this year. The extensive area west of Tulip Tree Apartments, also IU property, has not been mowed. Some may prefer the appearance of closely clipped lawn, but tall grass fields waving in the breeze with a variety of shades of brown and green have a different kind of beauty as well

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The board normally meets on the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. All SAS members are welcome to attend. Contact the president or another board member to learn more details and meeting locations, or e-mail SAS@sassafrasaudubon.org.

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

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JOIN SAS

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

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Thank you for supporting Sassafras Audubon Society!

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





SAS Calendar

January/February 2009

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, Jan. 17, 8 a.m.:

Raptors and Other Winter Residents

Join us on a half-day trip to local hot spots to search for raptors and other winter residents. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 8 a.m. We will return before midday.

Chimney Update *continued from page 1*

leaving the swifts without a roost during that construction season.

So the current plan is to build the new tower out of new materials soon, before the old chimney is torn down, and while the swifts are in the Amazon. By the time the birds return, there will be two chimneys next to each other. The doomed, old chimney will be capped to prevent swift access, and it is hoped the birds will be lured to the nearby tower built just for them.

However, the Monroe County Community School Corp. has no money at all for this project. It can't even afford all the amenities it wanted for the school building. So Sturbaum came up with a plan in which the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association would fund one-third of the \$10,600 price tag, if the Foundation of Monroe County Community Schools would come up with one-third and the public would come up with one-third.

Tina Peterson, director of the school foundation, said so far, two donors have contributed a total of \$200, but school board member Lois Szabo-Skelton is confident other school benefactors will be chipping in soon to meet its \$3,500 goal.

Sassafras Audubon Society has agreed to accept donations from the public for this project, and so far, \$2,445 has been donated. Soon, several dedicated supporters plan to go knocking on doors of businesses in the neighborhood, and possibly homes. Everyone in Bloomington benefits from the free mosquito-eating service the Chimney Swifts provide, and we want to encourage them to stay.

But it's tough economic times for businesses and residents, so it might take a lot of \$5 and \$10 donations to get the job done, rather than a few \$100 contributions. But that's OK. The more folks who help with this project, the more people will take an interest in the success of Chimney Swifts in Bloomington, and maybe in Fairview School, too, and that's a good thing.

I hope all the members of Sassafras Audubon Society will be able to spare just a few dollars for this project, although big contributions won't be declined! Write a check to SAS and put "Fairview Chimney Swift Tower" on the memo line. Send it to SAS, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402-0085. Every dollar will help. 🐦

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m.: **Brown County Hills Project**

Dan Shaver, project director for The Nature Conservancy, Brown County Hills Project Office, will give a presentation about on-the-ground management practices that help TNC preserve the Brown County Hills forests. These practices, which include management of invasive plant species, can be applied not only to TNC lands, but also to any similar properties with similar habitats. The presentation will take place in Room 1B of the Monroe County Public Library on Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday, Jan. 31, 8 a.m.: **Eagle Watch Preview**

Don Whitehead will lead participants to Lake Monroe to search for Bald Eagles in anticipation of the upcoming Eagle Watch Weekend. The Lake Monroe area in January can contain high concentrations of wintering Bald Eagles that have migrated south after their home waters have frozen. Whitehead will take us to prime spots on the lake for finding eagles. We will also see what other wintering birds and wildlife might be present. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 8 a.m. We will carpool to the lake areas and return before midday.

Friday, Feb. 6, to Sunday, Feb. 8: **Eagle Watch Weekend**

See the article elsewhere in this issue and check the Eagle Watch Weekend Web site at www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com for details.

Friday, Feb. 13, to Monday, Feb. 16: **Great Backyard Bird Count**

See the article elsewhere in this issue and check the GBBC Web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc for details.

Saturday, Feb. 21, 6 a.m.: **Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area**

Lee Sterrenburg will lead us on an early morning outing to see the geese, cranes, raptors, and wildlife at the Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area. We want to get an early start so we can view any early migrating geese and Sandhill Cranes before they begin their pre-dawn flights. Meet in the northeast corner of the Wal-Mart parking lot (near the gas pumps) on West Second Street (Ind. 45) in Bloomington at 6 a.m. We will carpool to Goose Pond and return in the afternoon.

Wednesday, Feb. 25, 7 p.m.: **Birds in the Lilly Library**

Professor Joel Silver will lead us on a special tour of the Lilly Library. See the article elsewhere in this *Leaflet* for details. Attendance is limited to 25 people. Contact Bob Dodd at dodd@indiana.edu or (812) 339-2976 for reservations (after Jan. 7 by phone).

Sunday, March 1, 7:30 a.m.: **Early Migrants**

Join Jim Mitchell as he leads us to local hot spots in search of early migrating waterfowl and other birds. Meet in the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (near Bloomingfoods) on East Third Street in Bloomington at 7:30 a.m. We will carpool to the lake areas and return before midday. 🐦

Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson — A Review

by Bob Dodd

In *Birdwatcher* Elizabeth Rosenthal tells the story of a man who rose from humble beginnings in a small western New York town to become a much-honored icon to all people who love nature, especially birds. Roger Tory Peterson was born in Jamestown, N.Y., to immigrant parents who lived “hand to mouth”. His childhood was not particularly happy and his schooling was irregular. He did not enjoy the regimentation of school and frequently was AWOL, but somehow he managed to graduate. Peterson became fascinated with birds at age 12 when he came upon a sleeping flicker, which sprang to life under his touch. After that encounter there was no turning back. Peterson worked as a furniture painter in Jamestown when he had completed high school. As soon as he had enough money, he journeyed to New York City where he took art lessons and became involved in the local birding world, including membership in the

Bronx County Birding Club, an informal group that spawned several renowned birders. In those early years, Peterson worked just enough with decorative painting of furniture to live on and do a bit of traveling. Ultimately he became a teacher in a summer nature camp and then at a private school. His big breakthrough came in 1934 with publication of his groundbreaking *A Field Guide to the Birds*, the book that revolutionized bird-watching and ultimately

opened this hobby to millions of people. The secret to the success of this book was its carefully crafted drawings that emphasized the important field marks needed for identification. Also bird descriptions were brief and to the point.

Peterson’s career took off from that point with employment by the National Association of Audubon Societies as education director. After a stint in the Army during World War II, Peterson became a freelancer earning a very comfortable living by writing, lecturing, painting, and leading nature trips. Among the many books that Peterson authored were *A Field Guide to Western Birds* (the original guide included only eastern U.S. birds), *A Field Guide to the Mexican Birds*, and a co-authored *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. With his European guide, he developed an international reputation and had friends and associates around the world. His closest association was with Englishman James Fisher, with whom he co-authored the celebrated book *Wild America*. Peterson was involved in many conservation causes, one of the most notable being his work as well as that of Rachel Carson and others that led to banning of DDT. Peterson received many honors during his lifetime, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom presented by Jimmy Carter and the Linnaeus Gold Medal presented by the King of Sweden.

The first section of *Birdwatcher* follows Peterson’s life in a chronological order. But less than halfway through the book, Rosenthal switches to various topics such as conservation, travels with the Lindblad Expeditions, relationships to other birders, photography, and painting. In addition to printed source material, much of the book is based on interviews with over 100 colleagues, family, friends, and acquaintances. The numerous quotes from these interviews give considerable insight into Peterson’s complex personality. He indeed was obsessed with birds, but his interests included all aspects of the natural world. He was very competitive and much concerned with his legacy. Some noted that he had a very high opinion of himself, but others pointed out how giving and open he was to his friends and admirers. Whatever your opinion of Peterson as a person, there is no denying the tremendous contributions he made to nature education, recreation, and conservation. The world is a much better place for the fruits of his long, eventful life.

Rosenthal has made an important contribution in documenting the story of this fascinating person. As I was reading the last few pages of the book, I found myself hoping that Peterson could live a bit longer to finish all of those projects he still had in motion. And I also wanted the book to continue with its many insights into the life of this unique person. 🐦



Editor’s Note *continued from page 2*

as being an inviting home to many bird species and other life forms. Thank you, IU, for acting on our concern for the environment.

As I have been driving around the area for the last few months, I have noticed many broad fields that have been mowed to look like green carpets. Yes, they have a kind of spic and span beauty, but do we really need that much grass monoculture? What if we would allow some of those fields to return to tall grass as IU is doing with some of its property? The birds, butterflies, and a variety of insects as well as native grasses and wildflowers would benefit greatly. If you have a large piece of property that does not have to be mowed, why not consider letting the grass grow? Not only will you be helping the environment but you also will be helping your bank account by saving on gas and equipment maintenance. You will be keeping a bit of CO2 out of the atmosphere. If you know about other properties where you might have influence (church or park property for example), you might suggest a no-mowing policy. Why not speak up for the birds? 🐦

Photos on Display Through Jan. 24

If you have not yet seen the photo display “Natural History Photos: Focus on Southern Indiana” at the Monroe County History Center, you still have a few days before the exhibit closes on Jan. 24. The exhibit includes images of birds, butterflies, and scenic views in our area. SAS and the Bloomington Photography Club are sponsoring the display. The MCHC is located at Sixth and Washington streets in Bloomington. 🐦



Eastern Screech Owl — time to wake up! *Photo by Scott Evans*

IU Graduate Student Presentations

by Stephen Friesen

Beginning this semester, SAS will host graduate student presentations about bird biology and/or conservation, bringing together the local birding community and IU's research body. The public is encouraged to attend. Below are summaries, prepared by the presenters, of the first two programs. Dates, times, and locations for the talks will be announced on the SAS Web site and SAS Friends e-mail list.

January: Jonathan Atwell & Danielle Whittaker

This presentation looks at two recently diverged junco populations following a unique colonization event in the S. California junco subspecies. In San Diego County, the native breeding range of juncos has historically been in the mountains that are at higher elevations (>4500 feet) and include forest or wooded canyon habitats, and these areas are at least 70km inland from the coast. However, juncos winter in coastal areas. In the early 1980s, some juncos decided to stay and breed in urban San Diego (UCSD campus), establishing a small (70 pairs) and isolated colonist population in a radically novel habitat with respect to both climate (coastal, Mediterranean vs. temperate, montane) as well as urban vs. wildland habitats. There are a lot of interesting biological differences that have emerged post-colonization, some of which appear to have rapidly evolved (<30years!) differences in sexually selected plumage, boldness behavior, as well as differences in social behavior, hormone levels, immune function, etc. We are comparing many hormonal, behavioral, and morphological traits in the colonist and an ancestral-range population, and complementing the field studies with a captive common garden study to evaluate plastic vs. genetic differences.

February: Dustin Reichard

Northern Mockingbirds lack a species-specific song and instead amass large song repertoires through mimicking the songs of other species and sounds from their environment. This provides a unique problem for mockingbirds in recognizing members of their own species by song, especially in cases where their geographic ranges overlap with other species of mimics, such as the Brown Thrasher and Gray Catbird. My research investigates the vocal cues that mockingbirds use to differentiate between their own song and Brown Thrasher song. To do this, I record normal mockingbird song and then alter it using computer software to make it more similar to Brown Thrasher song. I then play these altered songs to territorial mockingbirds and see how strongly they respond, which indicates how likely they are to recognize the altered song as mockingbird or thrasher. 🐦

In My Backyard: Big Green Big Year Satisfies

by Bernie Sloan

I define “yard” differently than most people. My real yard is small, so I’ve redefined “yard” to include anywhere I can walk to without crossing a street. I haven’t done it (yet), but I could walk the two miles from home to Griffy Lake without crossing a street.

While my redefined “yard” technically covers two square miles, I only frequent a small portion: the IU Cross Country (XC) Course, which is a very short walk from home. The IU XC course is an unremarkable plot of land by Monroe County standards: 45 acres of grass on the course itself and a 20+ acre meadow immediately adjacent to it, bordered by forested ravines. But the varied habitat attracts both grassland and woodland birds. And the area around the XC course is home to some interesting mammals as well, including a good-sized herd of white-tailed deer, red and gray foxes, coyotes, and at least one bobcat. The area is also home to native prairie and woodland plants and wildflowers, although the prairie plants only started sprouting up this year as IU implemented a new mowing policy on the XC course.

I tallied 161 bird species from my “yard” during 2008, including highlights like Bald Eagle, Black Vulture, Northern Shrike, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Sandhill Crane, all seven Indiana woodpecker species, four owl species, eight flycatcher species, six vireo species, 30 warbler species, 17 sparrow species, and 14 “raptor” species (vultures, eagles, hawks, and falcons).

I feel obligated to make a BIG point before everyone rushes off to the IU XC course thinking it’s a birder’s paradise: It’s not. As I said earlier, it is a fairly unremarkable parcel of land by Monroe County standards. Yes, I observed 161 species from this “yard” during 2008. But those 161 species were the result of a lot of legwork. By my estimates, I spent at least 600 hours on the XC course doing field observations in 2008. And there is a real feast-or-famine aspect to birding on the XC course as well. You may have one really good day, and then suffer through several disappointing days afterwards. The “famine” days outnumber the “feast” days.

So, what’s my point? Early in 2008 I was inspired by the BIGBY movement. BIGBY is a birding acronym for “big green big year.” The basic premise of the BIGBY movement is to encourage birders to bird locally and reduce their carbon footprint. The BIGBY movement believes that it is not necessary to travel far and wide to have a satisfying birding experience. I think that my experience in



2008 proves this point. I succeeded in identifying 161 bird species in a relatively unremarkable area without using an ounce of gasoline. I believe that birding locally can be very satisfying. All we need to do is stay alert and pay attention to what is happening around us. The results can be very rewarding. 🐦

Wild Turkey. *Photo by Jerry Downs*

2008 Northern Saw-whet Owl Migration Season Report

by Ross Brittain

The seventh year of the migration study of the Northern Saw-whet Owl, sponsored by SAS, started on Oct. 20 this fall and ended on Nov. 29. This study is part of Project OwlNet (www.projectowl.net) and is designed to analyze the migratory population dynamics of these secretive little owls in southern Indiana, by capturing and banding migrating owls in Yellowwood State Forest (YSF, Brown County) and in Newark (Greene County). The saw-whet owl is the smallest of all the birds of prey that occur in Indiana, weighing only about 85 grams on average. They breed in northern Indiana, but breeding pairs are very rare in the Bloomington area.

We had 77 individual saw-whet owls this year in YSF (56 at our main station and 21 at the substation), compared to 197 during last year's irruption. However, 56 is right on our average for the five years previous to the irruption of 2007. Additionally, Jess Gwinn had 63 in Newark compared to 244 in 2007, which was a little higher than his average from the previous four years before last year's irruption. However, the results of this year's banding operations showed a different pattern than the previous three years, particularly in the percentage of hatch-year birds. (Hatch-year birds are those that fledged this past breeding season.) Typically, we have around 55 percent to 60 percent hatch-year birds migrating through southern Indiana, but this year there were only 10 percent hatch-year saw-whets. The lack of young this year exceeded our previous low of 32 percent in 2004 and indicates that the owls had a very poor breeding season. Second-year owls (saw-whets that were hatched in 2007) comprised more than 53 percent of the captures, which was a little higher than usual. Apparently, many of last year's young survived last winter but did not breed well, likely due to lack of sufficient prey. The sex ratios showed the usual high percentage of females (92 percent) compared to males (4 percent). The percentage of females is slightly higher than years past (80 percent).

The highlights for the season included eight foreign recaptures of saw-whet owls in YSF and one in Newark that were originally banded someplace else. In fact, one of the foreign recaptures in YSF was originally banded by Gwinn in Newark this past spring. At least five of the foreign recaptures came from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan as part of a breeding bird-banding study at Whitefish Point Bird Observatory, and one more came from Hawk Ridge in Duluth, Minn. Usually, the biggest push of migrant owls comes between Nov. 1 and Nov. 19, but this year the peak occurred a little earlier, in late October, with the largest night on Nov. 1.

Local recaptures were abundant this year, with 17 recaptures of saw-whets after their original capture in YSF. However, the 17 local recaptures were from 11 different owls, with an average duration of 10.1 days between first and last capture. Jess Gwinn also had an amazing 35 local recaptures, but we have not tabulated how many different birds these captures came from at this time.

As the coordinator for the Yellowwood State Forest NSWO Banding Station, I would like to thank my colleagues, Jeff Riegel, Vicky Meretsky, Jeffrey Hammond, and new team members Jim Hengeveld, Susan Hengeveld, and Gary Miller for all of their hard work and dedication in being willing to spend some long, cold nights in the woods. Also, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who came out to help us set up and check the nets, even on those

slow nights. There are too many of you to mention by name, but your efforts were greatly appreciated. Most of all, I would like to thank Sassafras Audubon Society for your continued support of this project. Without the contributions of those who donate to our Owl Adoption Fund, this study would not be possible. 🙏



This Halloween, while trick-or-treaters donned their costumes, Julie Dales drove out to Yellowwood State Forest to scare up some owls. She describes the experience as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for hands-on learning about Northern Saw-whet Owls, such as the one above that she's getting ready to release. Says Dales, "The cuteness factor of these owls is indescribable." *Photo by Susan Hengeveld*

Feb. 25 Program Features Tour of Lilly Library

We have arranged a very special tour of the Lilly Library for our Feb. 25 meeting. Joel Silver, curator of books for the library, will show us a number of bird- and nature-related items in the Lilly Collection. The highlight will be showing a volume from the original Audubon *Birds of America* Double-Elephant folio (1827–1838). This has been described by some as "the most beautiful book ever" and is certainly one of the most valuable. A few years ago a complete set in excellent condition sold for over \$8 million. We will also see a copy of the less rare and spectacular, but nevertheless beautiful octavo edition of Audubon's *Birds of America*. Among the other bird-related books we will see is the 1754 edition of Mark Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina*, which contains beautiful engravings. Silver will talk about the Lilly Library in general and discuss methods of printing illustrations in ornithological books.

The Lilly Library is not usually open in the evening, but they are making an exception for our tour. We will enter via the main door where a receptionist will direct us to the appropriate room. Because space is limited we must limit attendance to 25 people. Please contact Bob Dodd at dodd@indiana.edu or (812) 339-2976 (after Jan. 7 by phone) if you would like to attend. We will take the first 25 people. 🙏

President's Note:

My 2009 Christmas Wish List

by Jeff Riegel

A couple of weeks before Christmas Day, I came home and went through my usual routine of checking my e-mail to see if there was anything that absolutely had to be taken care of immediately. I noticed one from National Audubon Society about their Holiday Wish List and got to thinking about what I wanted for the holidays. A new pair of shoes would have been nice, but I didn't want someone else buying my shoes. A gift card (of an unlimited amount, of course) from any one of several large home improvement stores would have been great, but that's being too selfish. How about peace in the world? A nice thought, but we wish for that every year and never seem to eke out more than a few months. It's now too late for my wish list to get to Santa, so I'll work on next year's list.

But I feel that I should be thinking big, thinking beyond my closet, my house, my life, my time. I should be thinking about what is best for all, what is best for the plants and animals we all love, what is best for our environment, what is best for our country, what is best for our planet. So here's my 2009 Christmas Wish List (in no particular order):

1. I wish the United States to become *the* world leader in stopping global warming.
2. I wish for increased mileage standards for all companies that sell cars and trucks in the U.S.
3. I wish political ideology to be kept out of science. Period.
4. I wish the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would be permanently protected, once and for all.
5. I wish for a strengthened, not weakened, Endangered Species Act.
6. I wish to witness the elimination of the multi-million-dollar backlog of maintenance on our national lands, including those administered by Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. (I'll wait until next year to wish for the same thing to happen on our state lands. After all, I am not a greedy person.) As a bonus, I would like to see our National Forests taken out of the Department of Agriculture and put in the Department of the Interior.

As we enter 2009, we will also enter, hopefully, a new America. A new leader will take office Jan. 20. It is no coincidence that the things I have on my wish list for one year from now are the very things that President-elect Barack Obama said he would do in a questionnaire with the National Audubon Society, printed in *Audubon* magazine (Sept.–Oct. 2008).

I'll add one more thing to the list: I wish for millions of new "green" jobs to be created. That alone could start the ball rolling on many of these other things.

What's on your wish list? What can we work on here in south-central Indiana to make some of these things happen? Are there changes we can make in our everyday lives to help? Since we were all part of the problem, how can we all be part of the solution?

So there it is, my 2009 Christmas Wish List. And as much as I would love to see it, world peace is too much to ask for. Or is it? 

Activist's Corner:

Commitment Continues During Exciting Time in Conservation

by Bob Dodd

This is the first time in ages that the Activist's Corner has not been written by Jess Gwinn. After many years as chair and only member of the Conservation Committee, Jess is receiving a well-deserved break. Stephen Friesen is the new chair of our Conservation Committee, which will now be more than a single person. We are organizing the committee and plan to have a more traditional Activist's Corner in the next issue.

We would like to thank Jess for his many years as our conservation chair, and we look forward to his continuing service to SAS as a spokesperson for conservation causes. SAS has a long tradition of leadership in the cause of environmental preservation, and Jess has continued that tradition and been our representative in many conservation battles. At times Jess may have felt like "a voice crying in the wilderness" as SAS has increased its emphasis on education and nature appreciation in recent years. But our commitment to conservation continues, as indicated by the decision to expand the Conservation Committee.

This is an exciting time for conservation. President-elect Barack Obama has given many indications that he will be much more environmentally friendly than the Bush administration. The National Audubon Society and other environmental groups are actively engaged in discussion with the Obama transition team to facilitate a return to an emphasis on environment and clean energy as top national priorities. There are many environmental battles that continue to be waged, but we now have increased hope for ultimate victory. The most urgent of these is progress on reducing greenhouse gases and stopping global warming. A transition to "green energy" will not only help reverse global warming but potentially can be a tremendous boost to the sagging economy.

The Obama team is considering a number of projects to create jobs for the unemployed that involve environmental improvement on public lands. Perhaps permanent preservation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will become a reality after seemingly endless battles. The Endangered Species Act has been weakened by recent executive orders by the Bush administration. Let's hope those changes can be reversed so that our vulnerable species receive the maximum amount of protection.

Now is the time to let the new administration and your representatives in Congress know that you support these and other environmentally friendly programs. Let's do our part to make the coming years a true environmental renaissance. 

 Answer to Name That Bird:
White-throated Sparrow

We Need Your Help in the Great Backyard Birdcount, Feb. 13–16

Backyard birders, be prepared. February 13–16 is the big weekend for the 2009 Great Backyard Birdcount. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society jointly sponsor the project with support from Wild Birds Unlimited. To participate, all you need to do is identify and count the birds in your yard (back, front, or side will do). You can easily report your results online at www.birdcount.org. It takes less than five minutes to submit your list (unless you have a very large number of birds to report!). It is a fun game — but it is not really a game because the data collected from thousands of submitted lists help researchers track trends in bird numbers and migration. This is your chance to make a valuable contribution to an important scientific project.

If you would like to be more ambitious, you can expand your backyard to include local parks, lakes, or country roadsides. Those data expand the value of the survey beyond the urban or suburban setting. That would also be a way of increasing our



local species totals. You may also submit photos of birds seen in your count. The top five

Northern Cardinal — the most frequently listed bird on the Great Backyard Birdcount.

Photo by Susan Hengeveld

photos receive prizes, such as binoculars and bird feeders. Check out the GBBC Web site at www.birdcount.org for the simple rules and directions.

Last year, Bloomington counters submitted 229 GBBC lists, the highest total in the state, well above the 147 lists sent in by Evansville birders. The Bloomington total of 75 species was below the 83 totaled by Evansville and tied for second place with Indianapolis. Bloomington birdwatchers, do not let our championship in Indiana list totals slip away this year. In fact, let's try to be in the top 10 lists for the country. Last year Birmingham, Ala., was No. 10 with 258 lists, so we are within striking distance.

We would like to see other communities in our area join the competition. The following cities and towns in our area submitted lists last year (in order of number of lists): Martinsville, Nashville, Bedford, Bloomfield, Ellettsville, Mitchell, Columbus, Unionville, Linton, Gosport, Heltonville, Harrodsburg, Oolitic, Eminence, Spencer, Morgantown, Brooklyn, Monrovia, and Worthington.

Participation by school children as class projects is one of the reasons for the large number of lists from Bloomington. Nancy Martin has had great success with this program at Jackson Creek Middle School for the last several years. School teachers — why not try participation in the GBBC as a way to teach your students an appreciation of nature. Parents — this is a way you can encourage your children to share in your love of birds and nature. 

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