

Register Now for SAS Spring Banquet

The SAS Spring Banquet will be held this year on Sunday, March 28. We are going to Terry's at Westbury, which has recently reopened under the original owners. Join us for the social at 5:30 p.m. with cash bar; and dinner at 6 p.m. with a short meeting, conservation awards, and a guest speaker. The speaker will be announced on the SAS website and Friends of SAS e-mail list as soon as confirmation is obtained.

Cost is \$30 per person, and the deadline to register is March 22. Be sure to send in the registration form found on page 6 of this *Leaflet*.

CAN YOU NAME THAT BIRD?

This common feeder bird especially likes suet and often seems to "stand on his head" to get it. Answer on page 3.



Photo by Jeff Hammond

Future of SAS Discussed at Special Meeting

by John Eakin and Jim Mitchell

The last issue of the *Leaflet* featured a challenge from Vice President Don Allen inviting members of SAS to assess the organization and its potential future. At its December meeting the SAS board decided to hold a special meeting in January to follow up on Allen's concerns, which had been triggered by difficulties encountered during the fall in filling the presidency and other leadership positions. This special meeting took place on Jan. 19; 29 people attended.

Changes in the bylaws of SAS: The first order of business was to make some needed changes to the organization's bylaws to allow individuals to serve on the board for as many consecutive two-year terms as they are elected to, and to permit the president to succeed himself or herself given that he or she is re-elected every two years. These changes enlarge the pool of people willing and able to serve on the board. Both changes to the bylaws passed unopposed. Following the adoption of these amendments, Jeff Riegel was unanimously elected to fill the vacant position of president.

The mission of SAS: The meeting then shifted to a general discussion of SAS's purpose and how to advance it. SAS's mission statement emphasizes the goal of promoting the public's "understanding of the value and need for conservation" through environmental education and advocacy. While SAS was deeply involved with environmental activism in its early years, it is now more focused on environmental

outreach and education. SAS targets these goals through the programs, outings, and other activities it organizes.

Attracting more SAS members and participants in SAS activities:

(1) *participants:* While there was general agreement that SAS's activities do promote environmental outreach and education, there was also a sense that SAS needs to attract more people to join and participate in these projects. It was observed that SAS could do a better job of helping people feel welcome and a part of the group rather than outsiders. It was also suggested that by making its programs quarterly instead of monthly and doing more to promote them, SAS might improve attendance, which has fallen in recent years. Offering more variety in the scheduled outings might help draw new people. One idea was to have outings that start at times other than close to dawn — other organizations have seen a five-fold increase in attendance by starting in the afternoon. Similarly, hikes with different agendas (e.g., trees, frogs, wildflowers, salamanders, etc.) could be offered, including hikes with no agenda at all (straight hiking).

(2) *membership:* Currently there are approximately 125 Friends of SAS. Vice President Don Allen proposed trying to raise that number to approximately 300 people. More members would help SAS to staff its volunteer projects and also its finances, since the chapter keeps all the money from

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Leaflet Moves to Online-only Version in July

The *Leaflet* will not be mass printed and mailed after the May/June issue. **We need your e-mail address** to ensure that we can inform you when the *Leaflet* has been posted to the SAS website. You should receive about six e-mails a year to inform you of these postings. SAS will not sell or distribute your e-mail address to other entities. Send your e-mail addresses to Ann Maxwell at ndrew@att.net. If you wish to receive a printed version of the *Leaflet*, please contact us now by calling Jim Mitchell at (812) 824-8198.

President's Note *by Jeff Riegel*

Just a short note this issue to say, "I'm baaa-aaack." I have got to learn to stay awake during these meetings, for the darnedest things can happen if you doze off for just a minute or two. My election to the president's position was just one of the things that happened during our special membership meeting in January. First and foremost was the unanimous voice that screamed for SAS to continue as an active conservation and education organization. I certainly concur or I wouldn't be in this position (and wouldn't deserve to be, either).

But I took a few more things away from the meeting as well, among them the need for SAS to update its web presence. In the not-too-distant future, look for us to add membership transactions, renewals, sales of our birding guides, and possibly some other things, to www.sassafrasaudubon.org.

While we increase our web presence, we will be decreasing our print presence with our award-winning newsletter, the *Leaflet*.

Producing and mailing this valuable resource is the single largest expense this organization has each year. The challenge is how to become more cost-efficient, while still producing a quality product. Posting the *Leaflet* to our website will help to solve this problem. [*Editors' note: see story on page 1.*]

Many at the meeting stressed that SAS needs to do what it does best: programs and outings. I wholeheartedly agree. In addition to the outings and programs you are used to seeing from us, expect some outings that start at times other than the crack of dawn and look for us to add more diversity to our outings and programs. Snakes, trees, wildflowers, the stars ... the list is nearly endless, and so is the list of things that your SAS Board of Directors hopes to achieve in the next year or two. As always, if there is something in particular you would like to see from our organization, or if you would like to pitch in and help out in any of a number of ways, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. 

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!

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

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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.

SAS Website

www.sassafrasaudubon.org

Webmaster

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We invite readers to submit material for consideration for publication. Contact the editors at eakin@indiana.edu and jlitchell33@comcast.net.

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.



SAS Calendar

March/April 2010

All SAS-sponsored outings and programs are free and open to nonmembers. Watch our website (www.sassafrasaudubon.org) and the *Bloomington Birds* e-mail list for announcements about other upcoming events.

Saturday, March 13: Early Migrants

Meet at the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (behind Bloomingfoods). Jim and Susan Hengeveld will lead us in search of early migrants. We will leave at 7 a.m. and return mid-afternoon. For more information contact Don Allen (donandchar2@gmail.com).

Saturday, March 20: Muskatatuck NWR

Meet at the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (behind Bloomingfoods). We will leave at 7 a.m. and carpool to Muskatatuck. Dave Crouch will meet us at the Visitors Center and lead us around the property. We will return mid-afternoon. For more information contact Don Allen (donandchar2@gmail.com).

Sunday, March 28, 5:30 p.m.: SAS Spring Banquet

Terry's at Westbury. Social at 5:30, cash bar; dinner at 6 p.m. Speaker TBA on Friends of SAS listserv and website. See mail-in form in this issue of the *Leaflet*.

Saturday, April 10: In Search of the Late-Risers

We will begin this outing at 11 a.m. so you can enjoy a leisurely morning or finish all your chores before joining us. Meet at the northeast corner of the K-Mart parking lot (behind Bloomingfoods). Bring water and a snack. We should return by 5 p.m. For more information contact Don Allen (donandchar2@gmail.com).

Friday, April 23, thru Sunday, April 25: Spring Wildflower Foray

Get information about the many activities at www.tcsteele.org.

Friday, April 23, and Friday, April 30, 7–9:30 p.m.: Frogs and Rails: Looking & Listening at the Bean Blossom Bottoms Nature Preserve

(Rain date for April 23 is April 30; for April 30 is Monday, May 7.) Stroll on the Sycamore Land Trust boardwalk at the Bottoms, as SLT board member Professor Vicky Meretsky of IU SPEA teaches about frog song, species, and behavior. SLT Assistant Director John Lawrence will also guide participants in looking for rails, secretive marsh birds. Bring binoculars if you have them and water to drink. Each of the two programs is open to the first 25 people who respond. Free for SLT members; nonmembers, \$5 per adult or \$10 per family. Please R.S.V.P. by April 20. Include your phone number. Please R.S.V.P. to info@sycamorelandtrust.org or (812) 336-5382 ext. 100. For more details, see www.sycamorelandtrust.org/calendar.

Friday, April 30, thru Sunday, May 2: Hill Country Warbler Fest

Join many Midwest bird enthusiasts for a weekend of activities. For more information see the article in this issue of the *Leaflet* or go to www.BirdCountry.US/warblerfest/.

SAS Receives Grant from NAS

Sassafras and Wabash Valley (Terre Haute) Audubon Societies have received a grant from the National Audubon Society to purchase a mobile radio telemetry tracking unit for the Goose Pond FWA. Whooping Cranes are beginning to visit areas in Indiana, and this device will allow Goose Pond personnel to keep track of them when they are in the area. Some Sandhill Cranes have also been fitted with radio transmitters, and the telemetry unit will track them as well. Brad Feaster, Goose Pond property manager, had mentioned his desire for this tool to Lee Sterrenburg, who in turn contacted Don Allen, and Don brought Phil Cox (Wabash Valley president) into the project. Thanks to Phil, Brad, and Don, who prepared the grant request. 

Late April, date TBA: Dedication of the Fairview Chimney Swift Tower

Check the SAS website and the local media for the date and time.

Saturday, May 1: Monroe County Bird-a-thon

The annual Monroe County Bird-a-thon will be held from midnight to midnight. Teams of three to six 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. Teams must register by April 15. The \$15 per person fee includes a T-shirt, information, and awards. SAS will host a potluck dinner the following day to turn in tallies. Pick up applications at Monroe County Parks and Recreation, 214 W. Seventh St., Suite 110, or Wild Birds Unlimited, sponsors of the event. For further information, call Cathy Meyer (812) 349-2805 or e-mail cmeyer@co.monroe.in.us.

Saturday, May 8: Greene County Big May Day Count

Help count birds in Greene County. The May Day Count is part of the North American Migration Count. You don't need to be an expert birdwatcher to help. Volunteers are needed to form 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 15: SAS Bird Feeder Cleaning

The warm days of spring are here, and SAS's Spring Feeder Cleaning on Saturday, May 15, is the perfect opportunity to rid your feeders of the dirt, grime, and gunk that accumulated over the winter. Drop off your feeders at Bloomington Hardware on South College Mall Road between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., and pick them up between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Sorry, but we can't take hummingbird feeders or suet feeders. Proceeds go toward SAS conservation and educational programs. Volunteers are needed. If you would like to help for a few hours (or all day), please contact Jim Mitchell at (812) 824-8198. 



Answer to Name That Bird:
White-breasted Nuthatch

2009 Lake Monroe CBC: The 34th Edition

by Don Whitehead

The 34th annual Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2009. The conditions were miserable — visibility terrible because of misting snow and rain — and very little wind. In addition, in the weeks prior to the count, there had been very few passerines and waterfowl counts were low. Accordingly, our expectations were not high. Yet we did remarkably well: an amazing 67 people participated in the count, the second highest number in our 34 years! With that help, we turned up 95 species (the 19th time we have topped 90, but well below our record count of 109), a very good tally considering the conditions. A total of 11,659 individuals were counted on the day.

We found a number of exceptional birds during the day. The clear highlight was a beautiful adult Lesser Black-backed Gull seen off of the launch ramp at Cutright in the late afternoon, the first time we have seen that species on the count. This represents the 153rd species that we have found in our 34-year history (plus an additional two “count week” birds). A very active Palm Warbler was found foraging in the northwest corner of the campground at Paynetown, only the second time we have had one on the CBC; it was seen by many observers off and on during the day. The teams working in the Fairfax area found a Surf Scoter (fourth time on our CBC) and a Red-throated Loon (ninth time). Lastly, the team working in the Middle Fork region found a remarkable eight Tundra Swans, third time for the count.

Other good birds included: Wood Duck (six), Horned Grebe (17), Bald Eagle (33), Rough-legged Hawk (two — a great find, given the fact that we have lost almost all of the good field habitat southwest



Lesser Black-backed Gull. Photo by Jerry Downs

of the lake), Golden Eagle (one — an adult), Sandhill Crane (four), Northern Saw-whet Owl (10 — a remarkably high number given the fact that the banding program netted very few this fall), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (four), Eastern Phoebe (five), Horned Lark (65), Red-breasted Nuthatch (20), Winter Wren (two), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (two), Hermit Thrush (23), American Pipit (one), Yellow-rumped Warbler (seven), Savannah Sparrow (four), Rusty Blackbird (36), and Pine Siskin (one).

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2009 Goose Pond CBC: Another Successful Count

by Lee Sterrenburg

We enjoyed another highly successful count at the fourth annual Goose Pond Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 16, 2009. The temperature ranged from 13 F to 32 F with clear skies all day. Most of the shallow water was frozen and some of the deeper strip mine pits remained open. We had 43 observers in the field in 15 parties plus two feeder watchers. We recorded 108 species and 272,015 individuals. We observed two non-countable introduced species, Trumpeter Swan (five) and Whooping Crane (four). Snow Goose was a count week bird only. For the third year in a row the Goose Pond count had the highest species total among all CBCs in Indiana.

The varied habitat contributes to the high species total. The count circle is located mostly in Greene County with portions in Sullivan and extreme northern Knox Counties. The circle includes all the restored wetlands and prairie grasslands of Goose Pond FWA, all the forested parts of Greene-Sullivan SF, Hawthorn Mine on the Greene and Sullivan County sides, the city of Linton, and agricultural lands east and south of GPFWA.

An unexpected highlight was a virtual clean sweep on the rarer wrens, with a House Wren, a Winter Wren, a Sedge Wren, and a Marsh Wren all found on count day. One American Bittern kept intact our record of never missing this rare winter species. The newly expanded wetlands at Goose Pond FWA produced two new species for the count: one Great Egret and four surprising Black-crowned Night-Herons. One Barn Owl was only the second ever on the count.

The 23 species of waterfowl included 65 Greater White-fronted Geese, nine Cackling Geese, 11 Tundra Swans, and seven Blue-winged Teal. Raptors once again did well with 11 Bald Eagles, 68 Northern Harriers, 11 Cooper's Hawks, 89 Red-tailed Hawks, 45 Rough-legged Hawks, 35 American Kestrels, one Northern Saw-whet Owl, and 68 Short-eared Owls. One would not want to be a vole in this count circle! Shorebirds made major contributions with three Least Sandpipers, six Dunlins, and one Wilson's Snipe. Other birds of note included one Northern Shrike and one Brown Thrasher. Sparrow numbers were generally down from previous counts, partly due to extensive flooding in the GPFWA grasslands. We still managed to record 1,993 American Tree Sparrows, 116 Savannah Sparrows, 591 Song Sparrows, and 219 Swamp Sparrows. One Lincoln's Sparrow was new to the count. Icterids turned up five Rusty Blackbirds, one Brewer's Blackbird, 285 Eastern Meadowlarks, and a whopping 250,474 Common Grackles. An evening grackle flight estimated at a quarter of a million birds accounted for most of the numbers for that species.

We knew we were doing well when we had already tallied 100 species at the lunchtime break. The varied habitats and a highly dedicated group of participants continue to make the Goose Pond CBC an exciting annual event. Sincere thanks to all participants. We are grateful to the Indiana DNR for maintaining Goose Pond FWA as a prime wintering habitat for birds. Please come join us on the Goose Pond CBC next year. 

Don Whitehead Retires as Lake Monroe CBC Compiler

by Bob Dodd

The following is a statement read by Bob Dodd at the potluck dinner on Dec. 19, 2009, after the Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count. Don Whitehead had announced that he was retiring as compiler for the count.

This is a very important and historic occasion in the life of the Lake Monroe Christmas Bird Count and the Sassafras Audubon Society. For a quarter of a century, more than half the life of the 34-year history of the Lake Monroe CBC, Don has been our leader. This is the last time we gather around as Don marks up the tally. These have been great years. Many of them have been years when our count was the most productive in the state. Then somebody had to come along with a big idea about turning the Goose Pond area back into a wetland and the GP CBC has taken over as the premiere CBC in the state (at least in terms of totals). Don, you have many very good friends here tonight and many more who have been at previous counts but who are no longer with us.

Some of us had the idea a month or two ago that there should be some sort of recognition of your contribution not only to the Lake Monroe CBC but also to the Sassafras Audubon Society in many capacities. When we circulated the idea that we were thinking about a nice framed bird print of some sort, we had some great suggestions and one fantastically generous offer from a person who prefers to remain nameless. So at this point I would like you to open the result of our endeavor.

Lake Monroe CBC *continued from page 4*

The “sweepstakes” winner was European Starling with 2,037 individuals. Dark-eyed Juncos were second with 791. Remarkable was the amazingly low count of House Finches, only six, seemingly indicating a steady decline in recent years — disease? The big misses included both species of vulture, cormorants, and many species of duck.

Count week birds (seen within three days of the count) included Long-tailed Duck, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, and Merlin. Thus a total of 99 species were seen within the count period.

The long day (begun by some at 3 a.m.!) ended warmly and sumptuously with a great potluck at Cedar Crest — our heartfelt thanks to the Sycamore Land Trust for the use of their handsome headquarters. It is such a perfect place to hold the potluck and tally.

This was the 25th year that I have been the compiler for our CBC, and my last. It is time for someone else to enjoy the organization and compilation. My warm thanks to the hundreds of birders who have worked those counts and helped make the Lake Monroe CBC one of the best in the state. You made it a joy to be part of.

Lastly, no words can express my thanks to SAS for the recognition and gift you gave for my work with the count. It is impossible to tell you how much that meant. As Betsy has said to many people, “I have known Don for 28 years and that is the first time I have seen him speechless!” I am still humbled by your expression of thanks. 🐦



A speechless Don Whitehead. Photo by John Lawrence

[At this point Don opened a package containing a beautifully framed original Audubon print.]

Let me offer an explanation to Don and the rest of you. This is an original John James Audubon print taken from one of the original 200 or so double elephant folios. Several of those folios were dismantled and the prints sold individually. In a way that is a shame, but in a way we are glad because there is no way we could have talked the Lilly Library into donating a complete folio to Don. But Don does have an anonymous friend who volunteered to donate this print for this special occasion.

We had experts at the Lilly Library check the print to verify that it is from the original Havell edition. They pointed out several features such as the watermark, plate edge mark, raised ink, and other fine points that identify this as an original print and not a later lithograph or print (some of which themselves are valuable). It is probable that Mr. Havell himself lifted this print from the copper plate. Audubon was more likely traveling around painting more birds or selling more sets at the time. Needless to say, it is an extremely valuable print, probably worth a few thousand dollars. In order to have it properly restored and framed, we asked your friends for help. They very generously came through with more than enough to have the print restored by a professional art conservator and framed with museum-quality archival materials. We even had several dollars left over to contribute to a conservation cause of your choosing, Don. *[Don chose to have this money contributed to WildCare.]*

This particular bird is the Northern Shrike. I could not help but think how ironic it was that Don’s team was traveling all around Hawthorn Mine on the Goose Pond CBC last week looking unsuccessfully for a Northern Shrike. Unfortunately, this one is much too late to be counted, but I would like to think that Audubon found these birds that he blasted out of the air in southern Indiana when he was living in Henderson, Ky., and making frequent trips across the Ohio River to harvest birds.

Thanks again, Don, for your many years of service. 🐦

Warbler Fest to Feature Renowned Ornithologist

by Jeff Riegel

South-central Indiana is home to the third largest nearly contiguous deciduous forest in the eastern United States. While populations of many neo-tropical migrant birds are in decline, populations in this area may, in fact, be increasing, a trend noticed in several research projects being conducted throughout our local forests. In other words, we have much more than just an excellent area for birding, we have an area that needs to be promoted not just locally, but regionally, and even nationally.

Enter the Hill Country Warbler Fest. The inaugural event is being held April 30–May 2 at the Fourwinds Resort on Lake Monroe. Sponsors for the Hill Country Warbler Fest include Sassafras Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, BirdCountry.US, and SORA Productions. The event will feature numerous programs by birding experts from throughout the region and outings to various birding hotspots during the peak of spring migration when the trees will be full of birdsong. And there is no one better able to help us all understand that birdsong than the keynote speaker for the event, Donald Kroodmsa.

Kroodmsa is the author of *The Singing Life of Birds* and, more recently, *Birdsong by the Seasons*. He is a former professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts whose award-winning work on birdsong is legendary. “Having a person of Don’s stature at the Hill Country Warbler Fest will certainly put a focus on the need for us all to work harder and smarter to protect this irreplaceable forest resource,” says event coordinator Jeff Riegel. Programming information and registration for this event can be found at www.BirdCountry.US or call Jeff at (812) 275-5708. 

Sassafras Audubon Society Spring Meeting & Dinner Sunday, March 28 at Terry’s at Westbury

Social 5:30 p.m. • Cash bar • Dinner 6 p.m.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Guest(s) name(s): _____

Number of seats _____ x \$30/seat \$ _____ enclosed

Please complete this reservation form and mail along with your check (made out to Sassafras Audubon Society) to: Sassafras Audubon Society, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402. **The deadline for reservations is March 22.**



McCormick’s Creek CBC

by Jeffrey Belth

The McCormick’s Creek Christmas Bird Count was held on Jan. 2, 2010. Twenty-two participants braved the cold and tallied 69 species. Highlights included Snow Goose (one), Cackling Goose (one), Green-winged Teal (three), Hooded Merganser (two), Rough-legged Hawk (four), Northern Saw-whet Owl (one), Short-eared Owl (three), Winter Wren (one), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (one), Hermit Thrush (one), American Pipit (two), Cedar Waxwing (six), Pine Warbler (one), Savannah Sparrow (one), Eastern Meadowlark (one), and Purple Finch (two). Many thanks to all who participated and to Betsy and Don Whitehead for hosting the tally.

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Future of SAS *continued from page 1*

FOS dues. Soliciting *BLOOM* magazine for an article about SAS might also help to draw in new members. Student membership was once strong but is now virtually nonexistent. Ideas suggested to improve student representation in SAS included: advertising in the *Indiana Daily Student* and on the *IDS* website; advertising in *SPEA* and in the Department of Biology; using Facebook or Twitter for advertising (these may have the added advantage of fostering a virtual community); creating a SAS booth at the IU activities fair; working with undergraduate advising services; and scheduling hiking outings that might draw more students and younger people.

SAS and the National Audubon Society: SAS’s relationship with NAS was also discussed. Should SAS cut ties with NAS, given that the chapter gets only \$3 a year for each person in its service area from the NAS dues? Doing so would entail losing \$1,200-\$1,300 a year, grant opportunities, and potentially our Goose Pond adoption.

Website revisions: Susan Hengeveld and Eva Allen are working to improve the SAS website so that it can be used to accept donations and new memberships. The revisions will add a page on Goose Pond and seek to make the website more interactive. Susan is looking for suggestions and help with these revisions.

Leaflet goes electronic: Following a discussion of the costs and benefits of mailing printed copies of the *Leaflet*, there was general agreement that major reductions in *Leaflet* production costs could be achieved. [Editors’ note: In fact, the board has decided that the *Leaflet* will not be mass printed and mailed after the May/June issue. After that the *Leaflet* will be posted on the SAS website. See related notice on page 1 of this issue.]

SAS endowment: Bob Kissel stated that SAS should start spending some fraction of its endowment currently invested with Vanguard. The board needs to identify how much money should be drawn out each year. Once that amount is determined, the board needs to think about how the money should be used.

The future of SAS: A motion that SAS continue working toward its goals passed without objection. It was noted that doing so will require increased involvement from the membership. 

Eagle Watch Weekend Soars Through Storm by Jeff Riegel

The 10th anniversary Eagle Watch Weekend soared through a winter storm Feb. 5–7 to a sunny and calm Sunday with nearly 100 fans braving snow and cold to share friendship, knowledge, and laughter at Eagle Pointe Golf Resort on Lake Monroe.

The weekend started Friday morning with a few hardy souls on the sixth annual EWW Bird Count. Later that day, BirdCountry.US Director and wildlife biologist Jeff Riegel welcomed attendees and gave them a detailed look at the life cycle of the Bald Eagle. Brad Feaster, property manager at Goose Pond FWA, and Lee Sterrenburg presented a slide tour of the Goose Pond wetlands. Master Falconer Laura Edmunds spoke about falconry, with the assistance of Beau, a Harris's Hawk she trained for the sport. Wings in the Night became an indoor owl prowl with photographs and facts about Indiana's owls.

On Saturday, highlights included the Eagle Watch Caravans, with volunteers from SAS acting as guides at each stop. The Monroe County–Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau and Rural Transit provided warm buses for everyone to tour the Fairfax State Recreation Area and see Bald Eagles. At one time, nine eagles were gathered on a deer carcass, which even attracted a coyote. Some lucky people even saw a Golden Eagle! Certified Interpretive Guide Brittany Davis led entertaining and informative games for the younger birders. Susan Hengeveld, Ph.D., explained how birds sing, and Geoff Keller debuted his latest two-CD set, *Bird Songs of the Brown County Hill Country*. Laura Edmunds and the members of Return to the Wild brought live birds to visit Saturday evening, with Ben, the Bald Eagle, capping off the show.

Sunday started with sunshine for the final birding outing of the event. Jeff Riegel spoke about birds' habitat and what we can do to enhance it. Jeff Hammond of Hammond Photography shared some of his experience photographing birds.

The staff at Eagle Pointe Golf Resort went out of their way to accommodate us with good food, snow-plowing, and long hours of work. The Department of Natural Resources cleared the way for our buses at Fairfax, and the Monroe County Highway Department made it possible for everyone to drive safely to and from Eagle Pointe. Planning has already begun for Eagle Watch Weekend 2011, so mark your calendar for Feb. 4–6; then watch www.eaglesatlakemonroe.com and www.BirdCountry.US, for the details. 

Consider This: Let the Grass Grow Under Your Feet

by Bob Dodd

John and Jim have kindly invited me to write a regular column for the *Leaflet* about “any topic of your choosing.” I hope they will not regret giving me that much latitude. I am not sure what to call the column, or even if we should give it a name. But I was inspired by the title Roger Tory Peterson used for his column in *Bird Watcher's Digest*: “All Things Reconsidered.” I certainly cannot compete with Peterson as a writer or in any other respect, but I thought “Consider This” would be an appropriate title for the sort of conservation issues I am thinking about discussing.

In his “The Activist” column Jess Gwinn used to address his comments mostly to elected officials and bureaucrats, but I am going to take a chance by directing my call for changed behavior to you, the reader. In a *Leaflet* last fall we asked you to give up drinking bottled water. This time we are asking you to leave the lawn mower in the garage. Have you ever admired the vast, perfectly manicured lawns that we see around suburban homes and public buildings? They are beautiful in a very domesticated sort of way. It is rather like having a golf course in your front yard.

But those huge, perfect green lawns are not good for birds or other wildlife — well, actually birds like starlings, grackles, and even robins rather like them. But imagine all of the sparrows, meadowlarks, warblers, and so forth, that would appreciate a natural grassland much more. Bernie Sloan can tell you how much the bird population on the IU cross-country course has benefited from a return to a more natural setting by not being mowed.

So why not make an additional New Year's resolution to stop mowing some of your large lawn this spring? Oh, it's certainly fine to mow a small lawn around the house and spaces that are used for outdoor recreation. But wouldn't it be great if we saw a return to more natural grasslands around the area? If you have any influence over decisions around public buildings and churches, why not use it to set a no — or reduced — mow policy? And by the way, have you noticed large mowed areas in our state parks? Maybe we should write letters to DNR asking them to be more aware of preserving nature rather than taming it with a lawn mower. 

McCormick's Creek continued from page 6

Here is the complete list: Great Blue Heron (three), Snow Goose (one), Canada Goose (433), Cackling Goose (one), American Black Duck (seven), Mallard (44), Green-winged Teal (three), Hooded Merganser (two), Turkey Vulture (10), Bald Eagle (four), Northern Harrier (15), Cooper's Hawk (four), Red-shouldered Hawk (22), Red-tailed Hawk (84), Rough-legged Hawk (four), American Kestrel (12), Wild Turkey (106), Rock Pigeon (107), Mourning Dove (610), Eastern Screech Owl (16), Great Horned Owl (seven), Barred Owl (six), Northern Saw-whet Owl (one), Short-eared Owl (three), Belted Kingfisher (three), Red-bellied Woodpecker (56), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (three), Downy Woodpecker (71), Hairy Woodpecker (16), Northern Flicker (16), Pileated Woodpecker (15), Horned Lark (55), Blue Jay (60), American Crow (1,178), Carolina Chickadee (192), Tufted Titmouse (198), Red-breasted Nuthatch (two), White-breasted Nuthatch (99), Brown Creeper (11), Carolina Wren (28), Winter Wren (one), Golden-crowned Kinglet (19), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (one), Eastern Bluebird (111), Hermit Thrush (one), American Robin (eight), Northern Mockingbird (nine), American Pipit (two), Cedar Waxwing (six), European Starling (959), Pine Warbler (one), Northern Cardinal (317), Eastern Towhee (14), American Tree Sparrow (290), Field Sparrow (18), Savannah Sparrow (one), Fox Sparrow (six), Song Sparrow (120), Swamp Sparrow (seven), White-throated Sparrow (19), White-crowned Sparrow (23), Dark-eyed Junco (353), Eastern Meadowlark (one), Common Grackle (39), Brown-headed Cowbird (14), Purple Finch (two), House Finch (85), American Goldfinch (191), and House Sparrow (70). 

The Sycamore Land Trust Turns 20 by John Eakin

The Sycamore Land Trust celebrated its 20th anniversary last month, and the most recent issue of its newsletter *The Twig* describes its founding as “an offshoot of the Sassafras Audubon Society.” SLT has proved to be one of the most significant and successful initiatives ever undertaken by SAS: SLT now protects 5,559 acres in 12 counties in southern Indiana. Here, in brief, is the story of that beginning.

In the early '80s SAS was offered a small farm with pasture land, a lake, and a concrete ford leading to a farmhouse. Mary Kay Rothert was president of SAS at the time. Wary of the stewardship task involved, SAS proposed a one-year trial. Dave Walker, a SPEA major and member of the student SAS (no longer in existence), lived in the farmhouse and evaluated what would be involved to properly maintain the property. It became clear that it would require more effort than appropriate, given SAS’s mission. Then in 1985 Larry and Theresa Bowling donated a wooded 38-acre property at the end of Heritage Woods Road. Because it didn’t require as much stewardship, this time SAS decided to take the property and hold it until another entity better suited for the role came along.

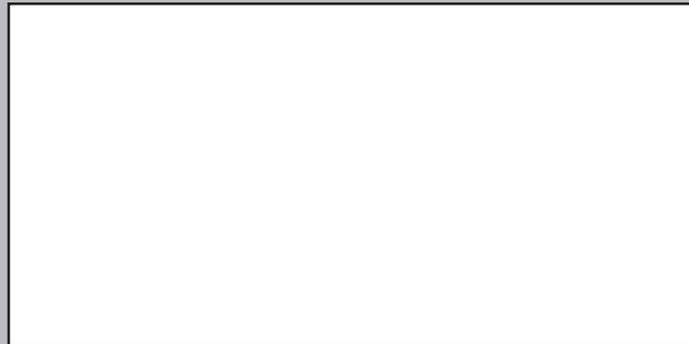
Around this time urban growth and planning became a lively issue in the Bloomington community. An informal group calling itself Quality Growth sprang up to educate the public about the impact of growth (traffic, alternative transportation, greenspace, etc.), and it aspired to affect city/county zoning policy. Some of the members

included former SAS presidents Mary Kay Rothert and Tom Zeller, former SAS board member David Parkhurst, Richard Martin, Susan Fernandez, Russ Skiba, and several others. When meetings with the county parks department revealed that the department had no interest in greenspace at that time, Quality Growth formed a greenspace committee consisting of Lucille Bertuccio, Moira Wedekind, and Tom Zeller. The committee produced a white paper suggesting a three-pronged approach to secure greenspace: (1) work to interest the city and county parks departments in greenspace, (2) use master-plan language and zoning to encourage preservation of greenspace, and (3) create a non-governmental, nonprofit land trust to own land in order to preserve it.

In response to the Quality Growth greenspace initiative, several SAS members, including Lynton Keith Caldwell, George Heise, Mary Kay Rothert, Ed Schools, and Tom Zeller, called a meeting to form a land trust. SLT was officially incorporated in November 1990, and it received its first land donation in 1992, a small lot on Bloomington’s west side given by Tim Henke. The Bowling Heritage Woods parcel was transferred to SLT in 1993 and is now called the Heritage Woods Preserve. From these small beginnings SLT has grown to be a major force for land preservation and environmental education in southern Indiana. Gov. Mitch Daniels recognized this achievement by declaring Feb. 22–28, 2010, as Sycamore Land Trust Week across the state. SAS wishes SLT a glorious Happy Anniversary! 

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