



# THE BLUEBIRD

Evansville Audubon Society Newsletter

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Volume 37 No. 2, April – May 2007  
Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve  
551 North Boeke Road, Evansville, IN 47711  
www.evvaudubon.org

*The mission of the Evansville Audubon Society is to promote the awareness of  
and appreciation for birds and other wildlife and their habitats  
through education and conservation.*

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## **Inside this Issue:**

### **Added and Altered Dates Included in New Calendar of Events**

See Calendar of Events, beginning below.

### **Plan to Attend “Step It Up 2007” Rally Set for April 14, 4:00 PM**

See Calendar of Events below.

### **Varied and Rewarding Field Trips Brightened Winter Calendars**

See reports for each, pages 4-5.

### **Ellsworth Joins Lugar and Bayh to Garner Funds for Patoka NWR**

See page 8 for details.

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## **Calendar of Events**

**Thursday, April 12, 6:00 PM, Ivy Tech State College, rm. 322, *Birds and Amphibians of Goose Pond and Beehunter Marsh FWA*, by Lee Sterrenburg, Ken Brock, and James Cole.** This simulcast will originate from Linton (Greene County), home of the Indiana’s newest Fish and Wildlife Area. Technology allows local folks to be part of the active audience, commenting and asking questions, without making the two-hour drive. Program provides suggested routes for best wildlife observation. Reservations requested in order to prepare handouts: 985-2903.

**NOTE NEW DATE: Saturday, April 14, 7:00 AM, *Field Trip to Bluffs of Beaver Bend*, near Shoals, Indiana, led by Harold Allison.** We’re headed back to a favorite area for birds and wildflowers, both near their peak at this time. Meet at the south end of Whirlpool parking lot at 7:00 AM. The easy hike in a rich natural area will be followed by lunch in the Shoals area. In case of heavy rain, call Steve Heeger, 867-3873, for possible cancellation.

**April 14, 4:00 PM, “Step It Up 2007” Rally, National Day of Climate Action.** Please join the rally at the Evansville Four Freedoms Monument. Events organized in communities across the

country will tell Congress to reduce global warming gasses by 80% by 2050. Hosted by John Blair and Valley Watch, Evansville's event will highlight Vectren's plans for two new coal plants in SW Indiana. Following the short program, rally attendees will march up Riverside Drive and around Vectren headquarters. More information is at [www.stepitup2007.org](http://www.stepitup2007.org) and [www.valleywatch.net](http://www.valleywatch.net).

**Tuesday, April 17, 6:30** (pre-show; see below) **7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. *African Safari*** by Charles and Sharon Sorenson, sharing photos of birds and mammals from their recent trip to Kenya, along with fellow EAS members Carol Pettys and Steve and Delores Heeger. Join us for dinner and camaraderie at 5:15 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court. An eleven-minute loop of captioned pre-show slides set to Maasai tribal music begins at 6:30 PM for folks who arrive early. Pre-show slides show villages and countryside and are not part of the birds-and-mammals safari program.

**April 21. Earth Day** (See article, p. 4.)

**Saturday, May 12, Spring Bird Count.** We need drivers, tabulators, field counters, and feeder counters. If you can help, contact Carol Pettys at [pettys1234@aol.com](mailto:pettys1234@aol.com) or 867-6231.

**Tuesday, May 15, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. *Truth vs. Myth Concerning Avian Flu***, by Adam Phelps from the Department of Natural Resources. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:15 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Saturday, May 19, *Field Trip to Scales Lake*** to observe Mississippi Kites in their northern-most nesting habitat. Trip leader: Midge Lechner. Meet at Scales Lake east of Boonville at 8 AM. Admission fee is \$2 each. To carpool,

meet at Lowe's on Boonville Hwy. at 7:15 AM. Lunch will be at the Boonville Cafe on the south side of the town square. Call Lois Gorrell at 491-7863 if you have questions or plan to eat with us.

**Tuesday, June 19, 6:00 PM. Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, Shelter House #1, *Annual Picnic and Meeting*.** Bring a covered dish per person, table setting, and drink.  
**7:00 PM, Nature Center Classroom, *Our Impact on Global Warming and What We Can Do About It***, by John Blair, award-winning photographer and head of Valley Watch.

**Saturday, June 23, *Field Trip to Lake Gibson*** (formerly PSI) to observe nesting interior least terns, the only breeding population east of the Mississippi, and Indiana's first black-necked stilt nesting sites. Other shorebirds are also likely. Led by Chuck Mills. Meet at south end of Whirlpool parking lot. Time to be announced later.

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## Additional CBC Details

Marietta Smith, count chair for the Oakland City area, reported seventy-nine species there on the Christmas Bird Count done on December 23. For unknown reasons, the numbers reflected many more species than usual. Nine count participants found ten species of sparrows, winter wren, hermit thrush, brown thrasher, the "resident" Eurasian collared-dove, and—the real prize find—a barn owl on Bill McCoy's place. According to Marietta, a barn owl pair nested there last summer.

## **EAS Minutes February 20, 2007**

Bob and Judy Peak presented a program about the work they do maintaining bluebird boxes at Kentucky's Land Between the Lakes and at Audubon State Park.

Following the program, president Steve Heeger called the meeting to order. The treasurer was not present but sent a report that there had been no significant expenditures from last month.

In Carol Pettys' absence Steve gave her report of the grant requests received. A grant request was heard from Sharon Elementary School in Warrick County that EAS donate \$308.00 for wren houses. Charles Sorenson moved to approve the request with the stipulation that Audubon receive a full report on how the project went, including the number of wren houses actually mounted. Jack Schmidt seconded. Motion carried.

Castle High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) requested \$250.00 for plants to use in a flower garden to attract birds. Sharon Sorenson moved to give Castle the money with the stipulation that EAS Master Gardener members oversee the list of the plants to be used. Seconded by Tim Griffith, the motion carried.

The Bosse High School Environmental Club requested \$350 to construct a fifty foot boardwalk at Wesselman Nature Center. Tim Griffith moved to table discussion on the boardwalk until next month. Jack Schmidt seconded, and the motion carried.

In Sue Vernier's absence, Steve reported that, based on her discussions with Bill McCoy, director of the Patoka NWR, McCoy suggested that the \$600.00 originally proposed for a sign at Crane Creek be used instead for a kiosk at the observation tower at the refuge. A collaborative funding request for \$600 was passed in the January meeting for submittal to National Audubon for the sign, and after Sue's discussions with McCoy and Steve, she submitted the request to Audubon for the kiosk. Steve reported that no decision had been yet received. Sue Vernier had stated that matching funds would be solicited from Duke Energy and/or the Gibson County Tourism Council. Charles Sorenson moved that EAS give \$600.00 for the kiosk. If the collaborative funding request is not received from National Audubon, this amount would be taken from the EAS treasury. Sharon Sorenson seconded. Motion carried.

Lois Schmidt discussed Earth Day at Howell Wetlands April 21. EAS will have a table there, and members will help with various activities.

Tim Griffith reported having met with Brad Ellsworth and that Ellsworth appears to be very positive toward the environment and open to meeting with constituents on this issue.

Domain name on the EAS website is due. Ted Hitch moved that we renew for five years; Jack Schmidt seconded. The motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joyce Padfield, secretary. pro tem

## **EAS Minutes March 20, 2007**

After Cathie Hutcheson's hummingbird banding program, the meeting was called to order by Steve Heeger, president. No quorum was present, so no actual business was transacted.

Treasurer's report: income \$140 (donations, \$100; Nat'l incentive, \$40); expenses \$693.45 (Education grants, \$558.45; Domain Name registration \$95; programs \$40). Checking, \$4420.95; 6-mo. CD, \$4223.52; bulk mail, \$145.38. Net: \$8789.85.

Sue Vernier gave the conservation report, noting the April 14 National Day of Climate Action, "SteplUp2007." (See Calendar of Events.) She also discussed material from John Blair, also referenced separately in this newsletter. She also reported that Rep. Brad Ellsworth has included a request in the Congressional budget for \$1.5 million for the Patoka NWR, and Sen. Lugar will include it in Senate budget request.

Checks for the two education grants that were approved at the February meeting have been sent to Carol Pettys for forwarding to the schools.

Lois Schmidt stated that planning for the Earth Day event on April 21 is complete and volunteers organized.

Carol Pettys had asked if the EAS would like to participate again in the Great American Clean Up in June at North Woods. A date will be established at the April meeting.

Submitted by Steve Heeger

## **FIELD TRIP REPORTS**

### ***Reelfoot Lake Eagle Tour, Jan. 26-28***

It was warm in January when eight EAS folks journeyed to Reelfoot Lake for the Eagle Tour. Ron and Norma Faust made it to half of the Friday evening talk, but the Bennetts, Heegers and Verniers were sampling the local cuisine. (The lodge no longer serves lunch or dinner.) Saturday morning when we gathered in the lobby to share the breakfast foods we had brought, we discovered that the lodge served a light continental breakfast.

At 10:00, we boarded one of the busses for the tour. One advantage of a tour is that the driver-guide knows where to find the eagle's favorite perch trees. Our guide told us that Reelfoot has both a resident population of eagles and a migratory one. The migratory population was small this winter because with the warm weather there was open water farther north. Since bald eagles are primarily fish eaters, open water matters.

Our guide had participated in the hacking project that was the source of the resident population of eagles. He had gone to Alaska to take eggs from nests that had more than one egg. We saw single eagles as well as a pair that clarified the difference between the larger female and the smaller male. We also saw a nest where the guide thought there would soon be eggs. It was very close to our tour route, part of which was up on a levee.

Among the other wildlife we saw were Green-heads, Susies, Spoonbills, Baldpates and Blue-bills as they are known by the local hunters (otherwise known as male mallard, female mallard, shoveler, wigeon, and scaup).

Our group tried a different restaurant Saturday evening. The portions again were ample and there was no problem getting a table for all of us.

In the evening we saw raptors up close. These were birds that had been injured in a way that meant that they could not survive in the wild. There were a number of very excited children in the audience. The highlight was a Bald Eagle that had apparently crashed into a tree and broken a bone or bones in his wing.

Sunday departures followed a wonderfully varied weekend.

Submitted by Carolyn Bennett

### ***Lake Gibson, February 24***

On Saturday, February 24, five people joined Chuck Mills for a field trip to Lake Gibson. It proved to be one great trip. The day started with a little sun but it soon turned cloudy. The rain did not start until the very end. The trip started at 8:30 and ended at 11:30.

Only 39 species were seen but we were only concentrating on waterfowl. The highlights were 5 species of gulls including laughing gull and greater black-backed gull. In addition, we had a least sandpiper, three very early blue-winged teal and two wood ducks. The last observation was of five tundra swans flying overhead.

Submitted by Chuck Mills

### ***Audubon State Park, March 24***

An unusually warm, sunny day made late March feel like mid-May and brought an abundance of early wildflowers for our field trip. Led by Steve Heeger, we found cutleaf toothwort covering hillsides and

camouflaging Dutchman's breeches. Bloodroot, salt-and-pepper (also called harbinger of spring), larkspur, trout lily, sweet William, and emerging May apples added to the day.

Although no one kept a bird list (probably because most of us had our eyes to the ground), we did spot a wood duck flying from her tree cavity, brown thrashers, and many towhees. Woodpeckers hammered throughout the forest. At 9:30 AM, a barred owl surprised us with his hoots.

At the lake we found 37 turtles on one log, 5 huge snapping turtles (including one pair mating), snakes and frogs. A pair of geese controlled one end of the lake.

The previous night's rain and the early morning heat joined to make plants grow so quickly that as we stood perfectly quietly, we could hear the leaves cracking as plants emerged on a south bank—a startling experience.

After our tour through the park, we stopped at the south end of the twin bridges to check the heron rookery. We counted 97 great blue herons and could see the eagle on her nest. The great-horned owl showed about half of her body above her nest. A kingfisher capped off the day.

Submitted by Sharon Sorenson



## EARTH DAY CELEBRATION AT HOWELL WETLANDS

The Evansville Audubon Society is once again helping sponsor Earth Day at Howell Wetlands on Saturday, April 21st, from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM.

Some members will be leading hikes throughout the wetlands. Others will be helping kids with crafts, playing Wetland Bingo, handling the animal encounters, or guiding a wetland scavenger hunt.

Bring your family and visit this very worthwhile, fun, free event!

Submitted by Carol Pettys

## Your Education Dollars at Work

This year two schools will benefit directly from EAS education dollars.

Sharon Elementary School fifth grade teacher Deborah Taylor's students will be studying birds this year, using the book *The Wonderful World of Birds* as their primary source. As a culminating project, each of her 31 students will receive a birdhouse to take home, mount, and monitor. EAS will provide \$310 to fund the project. In return, Taylor will report to EAS about project results.

Kimberly Hahn, Agriculture teacher at Castle High School, will be teaming her Natural Resources students, studying wildlife management and its benefit to the environment, with her Landscaping students to identify plants and shrubs that will attract wildlife and to create a garden planted with that flora. EAS, in cooperation with EAS members who are Master Gardeners, will support the project with advice and a \$250 grant.

It's exciting to know how students benefit from our education dollars.



## Read Any Good Books Lately?

Continuing our book review feature, this issue reviews two books:

***National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Fifth Edition*** by Jon L Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer (\$24.00) reviewed by Byron Butler

***The Nature Conservancy's Guide to Indiana Preserves*** (\$27.95) reviewed by Sue Vernier.

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### ***National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America***

The fifth edition of the ***National Geographic's Field Guide to the Birds of North America*** came out in Nov. 2006. With the recent proliferation of bird field guides and books on birds in general and their great variability in quality, one is wise to be selective in building an ornithological reference library. The publication of ***The Sibley Guide to Birds*** in 2000 relegated many earlier field guides to bookshelves, yet a few venerated guides remain in service, including Roger Tory Peterson's classic guides, the Golden Press's ***A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America***, and the National Geographic's first four editions. Today's question: Is this fifth edition really new and worth purchasing?

In a word, yes. At first inspection one notices cosmetic changes; a new cover, thumb tabs for quick reference to various taxa, one-fold end flaps containing quick indexes, a map of North America, and bird topography charts; all useful features. More

important, however, are the substantive changes between the flaps.

There have been numerous changes to the color plates. My quick count found changes to thirty-seven of the two-hundred twenty-two plates, but there may be more since comparing the plates is somewhat like the children's puzzle in which there are hidden changes between two pictures. New species have been added as now the guide includes every species seen in North America north of Mexico. Some figures have been completely redrawn, e.g., the widely criticized figures of the Black-and-White Warbler in previous editions have been replaced with much better images of the species. Some previous figures have been rearranged on the page, enlarged, reduced, or reversed to accommodate figures of new species added or other changes to the plate. Many new subspecies names have been added to the plates; other labels on them have been revised also.

Significantly, this new edition reflects the most current taxonomic changes published by the American Ornithologists' Union, i.e., the ***Seventh Edition of The A.O.U. Check-List of North American Birds*** and all subsequent supplements through and including the 47th Supplement (July 2006). Changes in both the official common names and the scientific binomens are therefore the most up-to-date of any field guide currently on the market, as are lumps and splits. Thus, Blue Grouse is no longer, now split into Sooty and Dusky grouse. Taxonomic changes have also resulted in a new linear arrangement of taxa and species within taxa. For example, waterfowl (Family Anatidae) are now first, and skuas and jaegers which heretofore have been placed before gulls are now

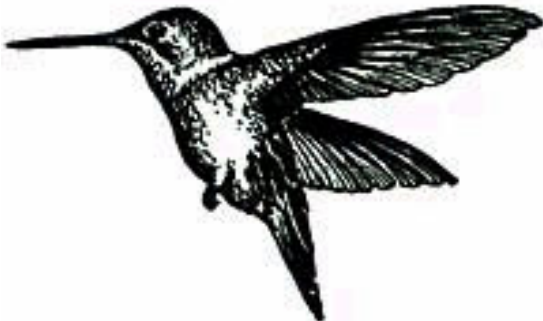
found behind the terns and before alcids.

Range maps have been enlarged and updated, making them much more useful; and the number of maps has been increased. This is significant since map revisions in the Sibley guides are incorporated in the two smaller eastern and western editions, rather than in the "big Sibley," requiring additional books. Although I have yet to make an extensive review of changes to the text, I have noticed several text revisions. This new edition also contains a section on accidental and extinct species, describing and depicting each, including Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, and Labrador Duck.

Thus, this is currently the most up-to-date and complete field guide on the market. I highly recommend the book to anyone. Clearly, the National Geographic guide intends to compete with the Sibley guide and is an able competitor. A word of caution is necessary: one should not fuss over which is better, the Sibley or the National Geographic guide. Both are essential for any serious birder and both should be carried in the automobile when birding. This fifth edition is a must-have addition to any serious bird library.

Byron Butler, Chesterton, Porter Co.

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## ***The Nature Conservancy's Guide to Indiana Preserves***

Think Indiana is boring, just corn fields and pavement? Then feast your eyes on an updated ***The Nature Conservancy's Guide to Indiana Preserves***.

The new guide bears no resemblance to the old 3-ring binder of loose-leaf sheets that would tear, get lost or soiled, and had only brief descriptions of TNC's preserves. This 7 x 9 guide boasts 311 bound pages of each preserve's richly detailed history with extensive property descriptions, including the flora and fauna, and superb color photographs by Christopher Jordan and Ron Leonetti.

Conservation Profiles beginning each preserve description are particularly useful, giving a thumbnail sketch of "What You Will See," the "Terrain," and "What the Conservancy Is Doing" or its "Conservation Targets." Preserve page borders are color coded to an eco-region: Central Tallgrass Prairie, Great Lakes, Interior Low Plateau, North Central Tillplain.

There is, however, an error in the first printing: The Key to the Indiana Preserve Map was omitted. Go to the TNC website and download the missing page before you begin your journey through the varied and very special landscapes of Hoosierland. Without it, you may have trouble negotiating your way through the guide.

Submitted by Sue Vernier

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BOOK REVIEWS: CAN YOU HELP?  
EAS members are urged to suggested titles that meet two criteria: that the book submitted addresses some part of the NAS or EAS mission and that the member has found the publication to be of some merit. We welcome complete or abbreviated member reviews, and we also have permission from Amazon.com to print customer reviews posted there.

## Conservation Matters

Great news! Our newly elected Congressman Brad Ellsworth has sent a request to the House Appropriations Committee for FY-08 LWCF land acquisition money for Patoka River NWR (a first such request in 12 years from the 8th District). Please take a moment to call and thank Rep. Ellsworth. Also Senators Lugar and Bayh have advised that they will be requesting land acquisition funding for Patoka in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

At the same time, please discuss President Bush's budget which, with few exceptions, shortchanges the environment. Consider this:

1. Land and Water Conservation Fund hit a 7-year low--despite being funded from offshore drilling royalties.
2. EPA 's budget cuts funding for clean air and climate change by \$22 million.
3. Interior's budget proposes selling off BLM public lands.
4. USFWS meager budget increase leaves National Wildlife Refuge System under funded.
5. US Forest Service proposes to sell land holdings, close campgrounds, boat launches, and picnic areas.
6. USDA farm proposals will create net loss in CRP acreage having an adverse effect on birds & wildlife.

Fortunately, the President's budget is only a request. It's up to Congress to ultimately decide how to fund these important agencies and programs. Do your part and contact your Congressman and Senators.

Submitted by Sue Vernier

## Conservation At Home

Even though winter is over, this item from "**Ask Audubon**," an online bulletin is worth remembering

Question: In the winter, is it safe to use salt to melt icy sidewalks and driveways? I have also heard of people using kitty litter; is that a greener solution?

This is a tough question—icy roads and sidewalks are clearly dangerous, but the salt used to keep them safe for walking and driving pose environmental dangers. The amount of salt poured into our ecosystem is staggering. According to the National Research Council (NRC), 8 to 12 million tons of road-salt are used in the United States per year.

Salt on roads, sidewalks and driveways can enter air, soil, groundwater, and surface water from snowmelt runoff, release from surface soils, and wind-spray. Trees and plants as far as 600 feet from the road are damaged by road salt. Studies have shown salt sensitivity in 50.8% of woody plant species in Canada; many of these have disappeared from Canadian roadsides. Salt can interfere with the flowering, seed germination, roots, and stems of roadside plant species. Birds can mistake salt particles for food, resulting in fatality. In 2000, Environment Canada had 12 reports of bird deaths due to roadside salt, two of them reporting the deaths of over 1,000 birds each.

Salt carries risks for human health as well. In rural areas, wells are easily contaminated by salty runoff or seepage into groundwater. Elevated sodium concentrations in drinking water can pose a health risk to those with high blood pressure. Some states monitor the salt levels in drinking water, but there is no federal legislation requiring universal monitoring. The chlorine in salt

has a corrosive effect on automobile parts, another safety consideration. Sand or kitty litter, sometimes also used as alternatives, creates other hazards in the environment, as they do not break down and can clog storm drains.

One good alternative is calcium magnesium acetate (CMA), which is less harmful to the environment. Unfortunately CMA is more costly than salt, but the initial outlay of money can prevent the later costs associated with repairing the environment. Some municipalities use a combination of salt and CMA in an effort to mitigate environmental damage as well as contain costs. A Department of Public Works study concluded that every additional dollar spent on the use of a 4 to 1 mixture of sodium chloride and a salt alternative will result in a savings of at least two dollars in environmental costs. In addition, simply reducing the amount of salt you add to the environment by using only as much salt as you really need to keep your driveway and walkway clear will also help.

## **Canadian Pipeline Threatens World's Premier Avian Breeding Grounds: The Boreal Forest**

### ***An Alert from National Audubon:***

If the summer breeding ground for over 300 of North America's bird species is not protected, we could lose some of these amazing birds forever. The Boreal Forest, known as North America's Bird Nursery, is one of the largest unspoiled ecosystems left on Earth—and it is under threat!

Several pipeline projects are planned for the Canadian Boreal region—and they are just the first step in opening up this

unspoiled area to unsustainable mining, clear-cutting, and runaway development.

But it doesn't stop there. These pipelines will fuel the Alberta Tar Sands, the dirtiest oil extraction process on Earth, which produces 3 times as much polluting greenhouse gas as conventional oil production—fouling air, land, and water and threatening our planet with global warming. This is bad for wildlife, our environment, and for our children and their children.

The Boreal is the breeding ground for sparrows, warblers, woodpeckers, the endangered Whooping Crane, and many others. Unless it is protected, runaway energy development will destroy habitat for millions of migratory birds forever.

[The only way we can conserve the Boreal is to protect critical habitat before any pipelines are built—and place a moratorium on Tar Sands expansion.](#)

Canadian officials have proposals in front of them to protect the Boreal. Send a letter today urging them to take action before any pipeline is built.

Follow this link to take action by sending a letter to your member of Congress: <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/tarsands/8ixs8qbzptjjbb?>

