



THE BLUEBIRD

Evansville Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 37 No. 6, December 2007 – January 2008
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.*

Inside this Issue:

Christmas Bird Counts Highlight Winter Activities

See dates in the Calendar of Events, beginning below.

EAS Email Contact System Implemented. Send Your Email Address Now

EAS has implemented an email notification system for members and friends about upcoming trips and meetings. If you're not yet receiving announcements and reminders, send your name and email address to Carolyn Bennett at paul-carolyn-bennett@insightbb.com. Addresses will, of course, remain confidential; only the address for each addressee will appear on emails sent out.

Calendar of Events

Saturday, December 15. Vanderburgh County Christmas Bird Count. Snow date: December 22. See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Tuesday, December 18, 6:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Christmas Sharing. Each person bring a favorite covered dish, table service and drink. Following the meal, we will have a show-and-tell of some of your favorite nature memories.

Sunday, December 23. Western Gibson County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Chuck Mills at 812-853-9090 if you can help.

Saturday, December 29. Posey County Christmas Bird Count. Snow

date: January 2. See details elsewhere in this newsletter.

February 1 and 2. Field trip to Pere Marquette State Park, Illinois. Bus trip to view bald eagles in Grafton, Illinois, north of St. Louis. Pere Marquette State Park is well known as one of the best spots to look for these magnificent birds in the winter and is listed on the NAS's Great River Birding Trail. See items on page 6 of this newsletter for further details. Or contact Tim Griffith at Wild Birds Unlimited. Overnight lodging and meals will be at the state park lodge.

Sunday, December 20, Oakland City Christmas Bird Count. Contact Dan Collins at collinspest@insightbb.com if you want to help.

Late February, Field Trip to Sloughs National Wildlife Management Area, Sauerheber Unit. Join us to view potentially thousands of migrating ducks and geese, including snow geese and white-fronted geese, as well as possibly a bald eagle or even trumpeter swans, in this area approximately half an hour south of Henderson. If interested in joining, contact Ted Hitch at 867-9249.

Join the 2007 Christmas Bird Count

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was begun in 1900. This year the Evansville Audubon Society will participate in the 108th count.

The data collected is used to assess the long-term trends in the early winter bird populations of North America.

The Vanderburgh county CBC is Dec. 15, and the Posey county CBC is Dec. 29. Please join us for either or both CBCs this year. Both yard and field counters are needed. Contact Carol Pettys at 812- 867-6231 or pettys1234@aol.com.

EAS Email Contact System implemented.

**Get updates, reminders,
and field trip details.**

**Send your email address
to [paul-carolyn-
bennett@insightbb.com](mailto:paul-carolyn-bennett@insightbb.com)**

EAS Minutes October 16, 2007

Steve Heeger, president, convened the board meeting at 8:50.

September meeting minutes were approved as printed.

Treasurer Dick Vernier reported as of 9/30/07. Income: Interest, \$3.99. Expenses: Newsletter, \$60.00. Balances: Checking, \$3867.65; 6-month CD, \$4350.52; bulk mail, \$205.29. All accounts, \$8423.46.

Field Trips. Oct. 27 to Rim Rock-Pounds Hollow Recreation Area in Shawnee National Forest. Nov. 10 to Hemlock Cliffs in Hoosier National Forest. For information on January 28 or 29 Bald Eagle Bus Trip to Grafton, IL contact Tim Griffith at Wild Birds Unlimited. [See corrected item on p. 6.]

Education. Carol Pettys shared 'thank you cards' from groups supported by collaborative funds. She is looking for project suggestions. *Save toilet paper, paper towel rolls and milk jugs of various sizes for craft projects.*

Conservation. An area group headed by Chuck Bauer on which the Verniers serve will be submitting a grant proposal to NAWMP (North American Waterfowl Management Plan) in support of Minnehaha Fish and Wildlife Area and Patoka NWR. Since the number of partners helps in getting the grant, Sue Vernier will find out if our support of the kiosk at Cane Ridge will qualify EAS as an in-kind partner.

Sue Vernier provided information on the following:
Federal Energy bill – it should be a strong bill with CAFE standards.

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Federal Farm Bill – oppose exemption of factory farms regarding hazardous substances.

Federal Farm Bill – should adequately fund CRP – Conservation Reserve Program.

IDEM – is planning to reduce the number of air monitoring stations. No monitoring means there is no evidence on which to base a denial of an air pollution permit.

Old Business. Plans for May 1-4 Birding Festival are underway. Lectures, programs for families and children, field trips and more. Sounds exciting.

Sightings. Sue Vernier reported a mini fallout of birds lined up to drink water: Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Goldfinches, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. A total of 7 households reported Red-breasted Nuthatches, the most seen in many years. This irruption is probably due to a scarcity of food (pine cones) further north.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50.

Carolyn Bennett, secretary

November 20, 2007

Steve Heeger, president, convened the board meeting at 8:55.

Approval of October meeting minutes was deferred until after next newsletter.

Treasurer Dick Vernier reported that as of 10/31/07. Income: NAS baseline support, \$995.00; interest, \$5.01. Expenses: Gift membership to program speaker, \$20.00; stamps for treasurer, \$8.20. Balances: Checking, \$4839.46;

6-month CD, \$4368.99; bulk mail, \$120.63. All accounts, \$9329.08. In addition the donation letter has brought in \$971.00 which includes \$100.00 from an employer match.

Field Trips. Oct. 27 to Rim Rock-Pounds Hollow Recreation Area in Shawnee National Forest had improving weather and 9 participants. Nov. 10 to Hemlock Cliffs in Hoosier National Forest had excellent weather, 11 participants and a good guide. Information on future trips will be in newsletter. [See also Field Trip Reports later in this newsletter.]

Education. The group thanked Carol Pettys for a display of ‘thank you’ pictures and notes from previous grants. No new information at this time.

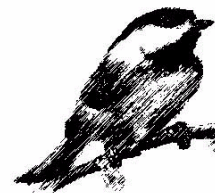
Conservation. Sue Vernier reported Congress in recess, so no action there. She and Dick attended meetings on the USFWS plan for Patoka NWR, the proposed waste fuel power plant, and I69. The proposed ethanol plant is on the ‘back burner’.

Old Business. Some of the ‘request for donation’ letters never reached their destinations. Information regarding this will be in the next newsletter.

Christmas bird counts. Carol needs captains and counters.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50.

Carolyn Bennett, secretary





A gift of **Evansville and National Audubon Society membership** would be a perfect surprise for that nature lover on your holiday list.

A one-year subscription includes six issues of the marvelous *Audubon* magazine as well as newsletters and emails concerning all activities of the Evansville Chapter. Does a coupon redeemable for \$5.00 in merchandise from WildBirds Unlimited sound too good to be true? It's yours for providing your friend with the Evansville and National Audubon Society membership.

What a deal! Just use the form on the back of the newsletter.

Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana Now Available from SAS

Our thanks to Bob Dodd, editor of the Sassafras Audubon Society Leaflet, for sharing the information with birders here, and our salute to SAS for their ongoing support of the Goose Pond FWA Important Birding Area.

The Sassafras Audubon Society in Bloomington, Indiana, recently published a ***Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana***. Proceeds from sale of the guide go for projects connected with their adopted Important Bird Area at Goose Pond. Birders who travel toward the Bloomington area might be interested in a copy, and it also makes a good gift for birder friends.

The 56-page guide includes descriptions of 27 birding hotspots in south-central Indiana, including detailed directions for finding the locations and suggestions of what you might expect to find during each season of the year. Maps in the guide will also help you find localities.

The guide also includes a checklist of birds found in the area, including their general habitat and relative abundance during various times of the year.

The ***Birding Guide to South-Central Indiana*** compiled by SAS is now available for purchase by sending a check for \$10 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling to Sassafras Audubon Society, P.O. Box 85, Bloomington, IN 47402. (See also the SAS Website at www.sassafrasaudubon.org.)

Great Backyard Bird Count Is Great Opportunity to Connect with Nature

In February, volunteers in the U.S. and Canada are invited to "Count for Fun; Count for the Future!"

The following news release comes from National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, co-sponsors of the GBBC.

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15-18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

"These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future," said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. "It's fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment."

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

How it's done. People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdcount.org.

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

Last year's count proved a record-breaker. In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

"Literally, there has never been a more detailed snapshot of a continental bird-distribution profile in history," said John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own!"

Already, the count results show how the numbers of some birds species have changed in recent years, such as a decline in Northern Pintails and an increase in Hooded Mergansers, consistent with trends from the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey.

Field Trip Reports

Rim Rock and Pounds Hollow

On Saturday, October 26, nine people from EAS made a field trip to Shawnee Forest in southern Illinois. Those participating were Steve and Delores Heeger, Dick and Sue Vernier, Carolyn Bennett, Lois Gorrell, Carol Pettys, and Ron and Judi Russell.

After a slow start in leaving Evansville, we left behind the cloudy overcast skies and had bright sunshine as we walked the trail at Rim Rock and then made our way to the lake at Pound's Hollow. It was a beautiful day for a hike, which made up for the scarcity of bird sightings. We heard more birds than we saw, but the usual fall species were present, including a pileated woodpecker, crows, blue jays, white-throated sparrows, and Carolina wrens. A red-tailed hawk was sighted just before we reached the Forest itself, flying right in front of our van.

Following the walk, we had lunch at Patton's and returned to Evansville, encountering once again overcast skies.

Submitted by Judi Russell

Field Trip Reports, continued Hemlock Cliffs

Trip members were Ted & Nancy Hitch, Carolyn Bennett, Dick & Sue Vernier, Ron & Norma Faust, Jim Brenneman, Judy Leahy, and Ron & Judi Russell on our recent field trip to Hemlock Cliffs on Saturday, November 10. Jim Brenneman was a great asset. He was able to point out and identify a number of fungi for the group, including Turkey tail (*Trametes versicolor*), False turkey tail (*Stereum ostreata*), Maze polypore (*Daedaleopsis confragosa*), Artist's fungus (*Ganoderma applanatum*), Pear-shaped puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*), Inky-cap (*Coprinus micaceus*), Jack-o-lantern mushroom (*Omphalotus olearius*). The colorful orange of the Jack-o-lantern made it obvious where the name originated.

With a Forest Service ranger as a guide, we walked the trail, scrambling down the rocks at one point. The towering rock cliffs were our reward. Birds were in short supply, with the fall foliage, fungi, and rock formations the focus on this trip. Sue Vernier was able to point out a number of puttyroot orchids, identifying the leaves, since this is a springtime bloomer. She also spotted one plant with a small stalk of seeds. Other plants spotted included wild ginger, beech drops, and maidenhair fern.

After the hike, we journeyed to the Overlook, hoping to have lunch. Unfortunately, we were not the only ones who thought that would be a good spot for lunch that day. Declining a 45 minute wait, we drove instead to the Dock restaurant and ate there, recalling what we had seen on the outing before returning home.

Submitted by Judi Russell

It's Not Too Late to Donate Tax-Deductible (and Matching) Education Dollars

EAS requests for education dollars sent out in early November have already resulted in solid support for ongoing EAS educational efforts.

But it's not too late. Any contributions made prior to January 1, 2008, are tax-deductible. And many employers will match any contribution employees make to 501(c)(3) organizations like EAS. So if your employer participates in such a program, be sure to seek a match.

In the January-February newsletter, we'll post all donors' names along with heartfelt gratitude from EAS.

February 1 Eagle Watch Field Trip

Departure for the Eagle Watch trip to Grafton, Illinois, will be 4:00 PM, Friday, Feb. 1, from WildBirds Unlimited parking lot, with dinner along the way. A block of rooms at Pere Marquette State Park Lodge, reserved in EAS's name, are priced at \$138.00 per night, single or double occupancy. Each person must book his/her own room(s) at the Lodge. Bus transportation will cost \$25.00 per person; cash or check can be dropped off at WildBirds Unlimited during Jan.

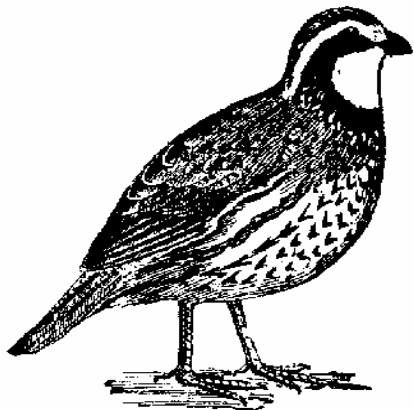
Saturday morning, park services will provide a naturalist to take participants by bus to eagle hot spots. The group will depart for the return trip home about 2:30pm Saturday afternoon.

Contact Tim Griffith at WildBirds Unlimited to answer any further questions and to make reservations.

Alcoa Environmental Open House

Carolyn Bennett and Lois Gorrell attended the 10th Annual Alcoa Environmental Open House on Sept.28. Detailed information was presented on the reportable releases comparing 2006 with 2005. Comparing against a baseline year of 2000, there was a 15% decrease of total suspended particulates, a 25% decrease on Volatile Organic Compounds, a 21% decrease of Sulfur Dioxide, a 43% decrease of Nitrogen Oxides, a 7% decrease of reportable releases to ash ponds/landfills/offsite treatments, a 22% decrease of reportable releases to air, but a 26% increase of reportable releases to water.

In the discussion period someone noted that Alcoa is the only industry in the area that provides this information to the public. We saw the construction underway on the new power plant scrubbers and the new lithographic line during a tour.



Congressman Brad Ellsworth Visits Patoka NWR

On August 21, 2007, Congressman Brad Ellsworth, (D) 8th District U.S. Representative, toured Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge, met with representatives from several conservation groups and pledged his support for a Refuge that he described as a "jewel of Indiana". All of this was a welcomed contrast to the previous congressman, John Hostettler, who refused to request funds during his 6-term incumbency, and whom Ellsworth defeated in last year's election.

Representatives from Waterfowl USA, the Evansville Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, the Izaak Walton League and other private individuals met with Congressman Ellsworth in the Refuge Office at Oakland City, IN, and discussed the importance of obtaining land acquisition funding for the Refuge.

Congressman Ellsworth recognizes that Patoka River NWR provides needed habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds and is home to endangered and threatened species. Please contact the Congressman and thank him for proactively working for the Refuge and ask him to continue his efforts. He can be reached by phone at 812-465-6484 or email: brad.ellsworth@mail.house.gov.

Sue Vernier, Conservation Chair