



# THE BLUEBIRD

Evansville Audubon Society Newsletter

---

Volume 38 No. 1, February – March 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 Count Results Available Online**

See brief summary and find Web address on page 4.

### **Expanded Calendar of Events**

Check out the new program and field trip information, beginning below.

### **Great Backyard Bird Count February 15-18: Please Help**

Read how easily you can help with world's largest citizen-science project on pages 4-5.

### **Birdseed Sale February 15-18 to Benefit Land Acquisition**

Plan to stock up. See story on page 6.

---

## **Calendar of Events**

**February 15-18. Great Backyard Bird Count.** Please participate in this national citizen-science project co-sponsored by National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. We need your eyes on the birds. It's fun and easy for the whole family, including school groups, scouts, and neighborhoods. See details on page 4.

**February 15-18. Birdseed Sale,** held during regular business hours at WildBirds Unlimited to benefit land acquisition for Patoka National Wildlife Refuge and Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area. (See article on page 6.)

**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.

**Tuesday, February 19, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Greenways and Bikeways,** by Ray R. Irvin, Indiana Dept of Transportation, Director of Greenways and Bikeways. Join us beforehand for dinner and

camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Tuesday, March 18, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve.** Paul Bousman, Botanical Curator, Mesker Park Zoo and Botanic Gardens, topic TBA. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Saturday, March 22, Field Trip to Wyandotte Woods** for spring wild flowers, putting winter blahs behind us. Lunch follows at the Overlook in Leavenworth. Meet at south end of Whirlpool parking lot at 7:30 AM for coffee, hot chocolate and donuts. In case of rain, call Steve Heeger, 867-3873, for possible cancellation.

**Tuesday, April 15, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Ribbit: Identifying Native Amphibians,** by Zack Walker, Herpetologist, Wildlife Diversity Section of INDNR. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Tuesday, May 20, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Caves: Life beneath the Forest,** by Dick and Sue Vernier, naturalists and EAS members. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Tuesday, June 17, 6:00 PM, Wesselman Park Shelter #1, Picnic.** Bring a covered dish per person, place setting, and drink. **Wesselman Woods Nature Center classroom, 7:00 PM, program TBA.** Annual meeting follows with election of officers.



## **EAS Minutes December 18, 2007**

The meeting was held at the Browning Events room at Central Library because the septic system had backed up at the Wesselman Woods Nature Center. This was a last minute change. An attempt was made to notify all likely attendees by telephone and a notice was left at Wesselman about the change of venue.

Following the potluck, member's digital pictures were displayed on a large screen. The Hitches also had several displays of prints.

Before the formal meeting, upcoming field trips were discussed. There are complications regarding the January Eagle trip. Notify Ted Hitch if you want join the Sloughs trip.

Steve Heeger, president, convened the board meeting. October and November meeting minutes were approved as printed.

Treasurer Dick Vernier reported as of 11/30/07. Income: education donations \$986.00, NAS incentive \$35.00, interest \$5.41. Expenses: conservation calls/copies, \$6.00; newsletter printing, \$40.00; mailing supplies, \$27.53. Balances: checking, \$5792.34; six-month CD, \$4386.92 (renewed to 5/29/08 at 4.85%), bulk mail, \$171.08. All accounts \$10,350.34. The donation letter has brought in a total of \$1,591.00, including \$100.00 employer match.

Education. Ted Hitch's interview shown on FOX 7 at 6:25 am about the Christmas Bird Count was noted. Carol Pettys reminded people to save *Audubon* magazines for the Birding Festival. She requested \$600 in education funds for summer camp scholarships to Wesselman to be awarded to fifth graders recommended by teachers because of their interest in

nature. A motion by Sue Vernier, seconded by Lois Schmidt to this effect was passed.

Conservation. The construction of the kiosk at Cane Ridge has been delayed again. It should be done in time for the Birding Festival in May. Sue Vernier makes periodic reports to National about this since they provided a grant toward funding the kiosk.

Bird Reports. Sharon Sorenson suggested people watch for Redpolls as they have been found as far south as Indianapolis.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30.

Carolyn Bennett, secretary

## **January 15, 2008**

Following a program presented by Tim Griffith on Birding Technology, Steve Heeger, president, brought the meeting to order.

Dick Vernier gave the treasurer's report. Income - education donations, \$505.00; National Audubon Collaborative Fund, \$1,000.00; div/Interest, \$6.72. Expenses - mailing expenses/supplies, \$70.43; bulk mail and annual fee, \$275.00; program speaker - Audubon membership, \$35.00; WWNP membership, \$250.00. Checking acct. balance, \$6,673.63; CD balance, \$4,404.99; bulk mail, \$171.00; education donations, \$1501.00 plus \$100 employee match.

Carol Pettys was not present at the meeting, but she wanted Steve to ask people to save plastic milk/juice jugs; CD's w/ a shiny side, bird pictures from magazines, photos, old calendars, old Audubon magazines, etc. They will be used at the Birding Festival.

Sue Vernier gave the conservation report. A motion was approved and seconded to contribute \$600.00 to a North American Wetlands Conservation Act, (NAWCA) partner grant proposal to acquire and restore bottom-land wetlands and wetland associated uplands; the \$600.00 will be designated specifically for Patoka River NWR. Motion passed.

Another motion passed to apply for an additional \$400.00 from National Audubon's Collaborative Grant program. If the application is approved, the \$400.00 to be applied to the NAWCA grant and designated for Patoka River NWR.

Sue and Dick Vernier attended the Indiana Conservation Alliance sponsored "Conservation Day 2008" at the Statehouse. Sue discussed issues of concern including supporting passage of the Great Lakes Water Resources Compact to prevent diversions of water from the Great Lakes and concern for a loss of up to 47% of dedicated funding for the state Division of Forestry.

Steve said that Ted Hitch thought some people didn't like his bird quiz. We all said that we enjoyed it and to continue.

Chuck Mills wants to know if EAS would be interested in sponsoring a birding trip to Cuba or Costa Rica. After discussion, we decided not to as the liability would be too high.

Discussion was held regarding the new ball stadiums proposed to go in at Wesselman Park and how they would affect nature and wildlife at Wesselman Woods. Tim Griffith suggested a strong letter from Audubon opposing it.

Tim Griffith suggested a seed sale at his store with the profit going to Audubon for land acquisition. He suggested in February to coincide with the Great

Backyard Bird Count on "President's Day" weekend February 15 - 18, 2008. Motion was made for the seed sale and seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned.

Joyce Padfield, secretary pro tem

## **Christmas Bird Counts**

Data for all Christmas Bird Counts results can be found online at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>. Click on "Current Year's Results." Highlights for three counts follow with the Posey Count not online at this printing:

### ***Vanderburgh County CBC***

Weather on Saturday, December 15 was a major factor in poor results. An all-day rain followed somewhat icy conditions early in the morning, resulting in poor visibility and reduced bird movement.

As a result, 18 field counters tallied only 64 species and 10,254 individuals, down considerably from the previous year.

### ***Western Gibson County CBC.***

Twelve counters faced cold and very windy conditions on Sunday, December 23. At times the wind was in excess of 35 mph. Still, the field counters tallied 85 species and 23,255 individuals for the day.

Highlights were a red-necked grebe, two long-tailed ducks, and 75 American pipits. A total of 16 duck species were seen. Only one owl species was detected, a single short-eared owl. Nearly 500 greater white-fronted geese and 6,700 snow geese were counted.

All four groups added species to the total list.

Submitted by Chuck Mills

## ***Oakland City CBC***

The Oakland City CBC was held on Sunday, December 30, 2007. Eight participant's tallied 72 species of birds including a single merlin and thirty-two sandhill cranes – a count first!! Other highlights included two adult bald eagles and ten species of waterfowl. red-breasted nuthatches and sparrows (savannah, white-crowned and American tree) seemed a bit more numerous than on previous CBC's, while northern bobwhite made a poor showing with only one bird observed.

Submitted by Dan Collins

## **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](http://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](http://www.birdcount.org).

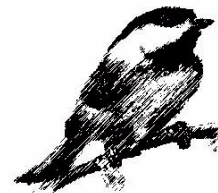
The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for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



### **Our Hearty Thanks for Education Dollars from Generous Donors**

The request for donations this year for help with our education mission has again met with great support, and the EAS extends a big thank-you to all our generous supporters. Anyone who still wants to make a tax-deductible donation can certainly do so. The donations so far total \$1501.00 and will enable us to continue our education activities with area students. Our thanks to the following supporters:

Larry Alexander  
John N. Ansbro  
Jack Barnes  
Viola Bauer  
Paul and Carolyn Bennett

Thelma Brown  
 Carol Christman  
 Janet C. Currier  
 Frank and Frankie Eads  
 John and Gail Euber  
 Jacob Forston  
 Jim and Emily Fowler  
 Nancy Gelhausen  
 Mr. and Mrs. Don Goodaker  
 Lois Gorrell  
 Lynn Hanganu  
 Steve and Delores Heeger  
 Jackson L. Higgins  
 Ted and Nancy Hitch  
 Phyllis Igleheart  
 Lawrence Judy  
 Sarah C. Karges  
 Mr. and Mrs. Allan Langen  
 Mr./Mrs. W.J. Linstromberg  
 Kate Ogilvy Lynch  
 Joyce Padfield  
 Darol Pettys  
 Susie W. Portteus  
 Lois Rini  
 Vivian M. Ruff  
 Chris and Rose Sartore  
 Jim and Deb Schade  
 Jack and Lois Schmidt  
 John F. Schroeder  
 Ashland and Margaret Shaw  
 Marietta Smith  
 Charles and Sharon Sorenson  
 Richard and Sue Vernier  
 Sara J. Whitfield



## **Birdseed Sale February 15-18 to Aid Land Acquisition at Patoka NWR, Goose Pond FWA**

Mark your calendar for February 15-18 for a big birdseed sale. Plan to stock up on black-oil sunflower seed and a premium birdseed mix, all at good prices. Here's why:

Audubon expects to be one of 20-plus contributing partners applying for a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) project grant to acquire and restore significant bottomland wetlands and wetland associated uplands.

The proposed targets for land acquisition are a 12,000-acre tract, which includes Minnehaha Fish and Wildlife Area currently under lease to IDNR, and lands within the purchase boundary of Patoka River NWR--an Important Bird Area and the designated recipient of Evansville Audubon's partner match if the grant is awarded.

At the January board meeting, EAS voted to partner by contributing \$600 toward this nationally important cause. To bolster the amount, however, WildBirds Unlimited will host a birdseed sale February 15-18. All profits will be added to the \$600 partnering contribution.

Please help with this worthy cause and at the same time help the birds.

Your grandchildren will thank you for preserving their land that we're borrowing from them for the present.



## CONSERVATION MATTERS

**First, some bad news.** For the third year in a row, Patoka River NWR has failed to receive any LWCF funding for land acquisition! Please contact your Congressman Brad Ellsworth (866-567-0227), and Senators Evan Bayh (202-224-5623) and Richard Lugar (202-224-4814) and express your disappointment that once again Indiana gets the shaft.

Millions of dollars are approved every year for refuges in other states, but not one dollar is coming to Indiana. The citizens of Indiana are the real losers when opportunities to maintain open space for outdoor recreation are not acted upon and the available funds are simply being spent elsewhere. Indiana ranks 46th in the nation in the amount of state and federal recreation land.

**Second, some good news.** Evansville Audubon expects to be one of 20-plus contributing partners applying for a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) project grant to acquire and restore significant bottomland wetlands and wetland associated uplands.

The proposed targets for land acquisition are a 12,000-acre tract, which includes Minnehaha Fish and Wildlife Area currently under lease to IDNR, and lands within the purchase boundary of Patoka River NWR--an Important Bird Area and the designated recipient of Evansville Audubon's partner match if the grant is awarded. Previously, Evansville Audubon contributed to a successful NAWCA grant for the purchase of Goose Pond and targeted acreage at Patoka River NWR.

### **Third, a Conservation Day update.**

Richard and Sue Vernier represented Evansville Audubon at the Indiana Conservation Alliance-sponsored "Conservation Day 2008" at the Indiana Statehouse. Issues of concern include supporting passage of the Great Lakes Water Resources Compact to prevent diversions of water from the Great Lakes and finding a new dedicated funding source for the Department of Forestry (DOF).

Current property tax relief proposals will eliminate DOF funding from property taxes, an assessed tax levy equivalent to \$0.75 per Hoosier per year, which will result in an estimated loss of \$5 million for DOF, or 47% of their budget. The DOF needs a long-term, committed funding source separate from the biennial budget process; otherwise, wildlife habitat, clean air and water, recreation, state tree nurseries, and local economies dependent on forest products will be impacted.

Call the Indiana House (800-382-9842), and Indiana Senate (800-382-9467), and talk with your representative and senator about these important issues!

Sue Vernier, Conservation Chair