



# THE BLUEBIRD

Evansville Audubon Society Newsletter

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Volume 37 No. 3, June 2007  
Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve  
551 North Boeke Road, Evansville, IN 47711  
[www.evvaudubon.org](http://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:**

### **Great American Cleanup Date June 9; Volunteers Needed**

See Calendar of Events, beginning below.

### **John Blair, Valley Watch Spokesman, to Speak at June 19 Meeting**

See Calendar of Events, beginning below.

### **Final Field Trip for the Season Should Be a Winner**

See Calendar of Events, beginning below.

### **Annual EAS Planning Meeting Scheduled for August 12**

All members welcome. Details will be announced at the June meeting.

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## **Calendar of Events**

**Saturday, June 9, 9:00 AM. Great American Cleanup, sponsored by Keep Evansville Beautiful.** EAS volunteers will clean up at North Woods/Lloyd Pool/Highland ball fields. We'll meet at the playground in front of Lloyd Pool at 9:00 AM. For those who wish to have brunch afterwards, we'll dine at the Pie Pan in North Park. If you're able to help us, please contact Carol Pettys at 867-6231 or [pettys1234@aol.com](mailto:pettys1234@aol.com).

**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, 6:15 AM. 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. To carpool, meet at south end of Whirlpool parking lot, ready to depart by 6:15 AM. Or go directly to the Lake Gibson guard house at 7:00 AM. We will conclude by 11:00 AM and gather to enjoy lunch and camaraderie at a local restaurant immediately afterward.

## **EAS Minutes April 17, 2007**

Following Sharon and Charlie Sorenson's multi-media program about their travels in Kenya, president Steve Heeger called the meeting to order. Sue Vernier provided a small correction to the February minutes – "Crane Creek" should have been "Cane Ridge."

Richard Vernier gave the treasurer's report: income \$5.60 (interest); expenses \$509.40 (program \$50; WWNP environmental education scholarships [NAS collaborative grant] \$300; newsletter \$100; '06 web hosting fee \$59.40). Accounts balances are: checking \$3917.15, six month CD (due 5/13/07) \$4241.99 and bulk mail \$94.66. Net: \$8253.80.

Steve stated that National Audubon had approved \$900 in collaborative funding for two grants, a \$600 grant to fund a kiosk at Cane Ridge WMA and \$300 for educational grants for WWNP programs. He also stated that the field trip to the Bluffs of Beaver Bend originally scheduled for last Saturday had been rescheduled due to weather and was held Monday, April 16, instead; followed by a wildflower expedition to Camp Reveal.

Carol Pettys gave the report on education. So far three schools have applied for WWNP summer camp grants. She also noted that the grant request from the Bosse High School Environmental Club to build a section of boardwalk at WWNP [motion tabled at the February meeting] would be reapplied for in September.

Carol next reminded us of the upcoming spring bird count and noted that she still needs one captain. Carol also discussed the Great American Cleanup and proposed doing it June 9 at Northwoods. The general consensus was favorable and no motion was required.

Sue Vernier gave a report on conservation. The principal subject was the proposed ethanol and waste fuel power plant to be built on the boundary of Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge in Pike County. She noted that a concerned citizens group had been formed and gave some details on their concerns and the issues that might impact the refuge. Charlie Sorenson suggested that we connect them with John Blair.

Sue also talked about the selenium in Gibson Lake. Fishing had been shut down and impacts

to Cane Ridge WMA and the interior least tern colony is not yet known.

She also announced that Toyota is co-sponsoring a photo contest for 2008 for National Wildlife Refuge properties and that Patoka River NWR could get a boost if photos of the refuge won a prize.

She next asked if she could be reimbursed for \$14 in parking garage expenses for her January trip to the Statehouse to discuss legislative matters. Ted Hitch moved to reimburse her \$14 and Carolyn Bennett seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Steve Heeger asked the question "What do we need to do to increase participation in Evansville Audubon?" He noted that attendance at meetings seems to be falling and that we are having difficulty finding new people.

Charlie Sorenson suggested that we set up a phone tree to call and invite members to meetings. He and Sharon volunteered to look for people to help with a call center.

Steve suggested offering a \$10 gift certificate to Wild Birds Unlimited for new members at the Earth Day event. Sharon Sorenson moved that we fund up to ten \$10 gift certificates for new members. Sue Vernier seconded and the motion was approved.

Ted Hitch made the point that the participation drive should really begin in earnest next year because this year is winding down and we could lose momentum. There was general agreement on this and that it should be a focus issue for the summer planning session. Steve Heeger will talk to membership chair Lois Gorrell, who was unable to attend tonight's meeting, about putting together a committee to come up with a strategy.

Bird sightings: Sharon Sorenson had Hooded Mergansers on her property and Ted and Nancy Hitch had nesting Red-shouldered Hawks.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Vernier, Secretary pro tem

## **EAS Minutes May 15, 2007**

### **Notes on the program:**

Adam Phelps from the Department of Natural Resources presented a very informative summary of the present research and data on avian flu, its sources and effects, both international and domestic. He pointed out that there have only been two documented incidents of humans contracting the avian flu going back the 1960's.

Phelps also stated that there are strains which are present in wild game birds in the US, but the security which is now in place in poultry farms is such that the probability of spreading to domestic flocks is very low. He summarized by debunking the common myths involving avian flu.

### **Business meeting:**

Steve Heeger, president, called the meeting to order. Due to a power outage at Wesselman Nature Center, the meeting was held in the Evansville Central Library Browning Meeting Room. With there also being severe storm warnings in the area, attendance was understandably down for the meeting.

Dick Vernier, Treasurer, reported the 5/15/2007 balances totaling \$8,269.43: checking \$3,896.79; 6-month CD, \$4,277.98, bulk mail \$94.66. A \$900 collaborative funding grant was received from National Audubon after the bank statement reconciliation, and is not included in the checking balance.

Carol Pettys reported that eight student grant requests have been received from the local elementary schools for the summer nature camps at Wesselman Nature Center. She also discussed a birding education day which is being planned next year to coincide with the International Migratory Bird Day, and which is to be sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited in conjunction with the Wesselman Nature Center. We have been asked if we would be willing to help with this event. More details will be discussed at the June meeting. Carol also thanked those who had helped with the spring bird count, which she said was very successful. [See her report later in this newsletter.]

Sue Vernier reminded EAS members to respond to her email about winter snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park.

Steve Heeger stated the slate for the election of officers for 2007-2008 needed to be completed

for the June meeting, and asked that Lois Schmidt to coordinating the nominations. [See EAS slate of officers for 2007-2008 on page 5.]

He also discussed the proposal brought up at the April meeting to have a campaign to contact current members to encourage more active participation in meetings and field trips. A committee is to be formed at the June meeting to make proposals for implementing at the August planning meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephen Heeger



## **THANKS TO ALL WHO HELPED AT EARTH DAY CELEBRATION AT HOWELL WETLANDS**

Many thanks to all the EAS volunteers who helped make Earth Day a success at Howell Wetlands on April 21st. The weather was perfect and hundreds of families were able to enjoy a myriad of environmental activities.

Thanks to the following volunteers who helped: Tim Griffith, Ted and Nancy Hitch, Kenny and Jeanne Brown, Pat Goodaker, Kate Lynch, Jack and Lois Schmidt, Joyce Padfield, Carolyn Bennett, Virginia Simmons, Lois Gorrell, Connie Walts, Steve and Dolores Heeger, Debbie Goedde, and Cathie Cure.

Submitted by Carol Pettys

## **FIELD TRIP REPORTS**

### **Goose Pond/ Beehunter Marsh FWA April 28**

Though Dick and I were unable to attend the simulcast at Ivy Tech on Indiana's newest Fish and Wildlife Area, we were able to go to what was billed as the "Second Annual Birding Day" at Goose Pond and Beehunter Marsh south of Linton on Saturday, April 28.

Lee Sterrenburg, of Sassafras Audubon, and James Cole, Indiana IBA Coordinator, led about 30 birders. Weather was near perfect as we carpoled to our first stop in Beehunter Marsh. Even before we began our walk along the levee, birds such as Orchard Oriole, Yellow Warbler and Eastern Kingbird were putting on a show for the group.

Once out on the levee, everyone was able to see a variety of shorebirds through the many spotting scopes set up for the occasion. Species included Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs; Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers (identified from their calls when flushed by Lee); Semipalmated, Least, and Pectoral Sandpipers; American Pipit; Dunlin; and the rare find of the day—Western Sandpiper.

The second stop was at a grasslands area in Goose Pond to search for Henslow's Sparrows. James Cole immediately heard one and eventually a scope was pointed at a very elusive and difficult-to-see bird.

On the way to our final stop, Brad Feaster, Property Manager, explained that Hwy. 59 will be raised and wider shoulders added so that birders can stop and view the area on either side that will be flooded for waterfowl. The final stop at the bridge failed to turn up

the Black-necked Stilts that had been there earlier, so the group adjourned to the Triple H Gun Club's "Grill on the Hill" for lunch.

We highly recommend Goose Pond and Beehunter Marsh FWA for a future Evansville Audubon field trip.

Submitted by Sue Vernier

### **The Bluffs of Beaver Bend April 16**

Although the EAS field trip scheduled for April 14 to the Bluffs of Beaver Bend near Shoals, IN, was cancelled due to rain, five of us made the trip on April 16.

The weather, improved dramatically, gave us a beautiful morning. Tall bluffs along the road where we walked next to the White River were truly impressive; and this area, which is owned by the Nature Conservancy, is a real gem.

Still early for the migratory birds, the main objective was the flora—wildflowers and ferns—and we were not disappointed. We identified twenty species of wildflowers and four ferns, including the unusual Walking Fern, not often seen.

We were also treated to a fair sampling of early spring birds which provided a very pleasant background with their beginning spring calls. After an enjoyable lunch, we then made a stop back in the Evansville area at the Camp Reveal woods northeast of the Vanderburgh County 4-H Center. We were again rewarded with a nice show of wildflowers giving a blue and lavender tint to the woods floor from the Blue Phlox and the Dwarf Larkspur.

Submitted by Steve Heeger

**2007-2008  
EAS Slate of Officers**

**President:** Steve Heeger  
**Vice-President:** (to be filled)  
**Secretary:** Carolyn Bennett  
**Treasurer:** Dick Vernier

**Directors, term ending 2008**

Delores Heeger  
Nancy Hitch  
Sharon Sorenson  
Kate Lynch

**Directors, term ending 2009**

Jack Schmidt  
Charles Sorenson  
Vivian Ruff  
Lois Gorrell

**Directors, term ending 2010**

Joyce Padfield  
Sue Vernier  
Tim Griffith  
Evan Speck

**International Migratory Bird Day  
Counts Big Success**

**Vanderburgh County:**

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped Evansville Audubon Society with the annual spring bird count on Saturday, May 12. In the field, 29 people tallied while 19 counted in their yards. A total of 125 species were sighted, average for the May count.

Absent from the count this year were brown creepers and veery thrushes. There was a noticeable decrease in purple martins, chimney swifts, and barn swallows. But at the same time, there was a noticeable and welcome increase in Eastern wood pewees, white-eyed vireos, blue jays, Carolina chickadees, summer tanagers, Carolina wrens, blue-

gray gnatcatchers, ruby-throated hummingbirds and goldfinches.

One of the more exciting additions to this year's count came from Yvonne Lingo, former EAS member now residing in Florida, who saw a Sora.

Other unusual sightings were a black-billed cuckoo at Angel Mounds and 6 Muscovy ducks at Howell Wetlands and the Burdette Park area. It was a beautiful day to count and enjoy our feathered friends.

Submitted by Carol Pettys  
Vanderburgh Bird Count Chair

**Warrick County:**

Warrick County's count came back with a preliminary total of 142 species, a significant improvement over previous 124 record May counts, perhaps because of additional counters in the field or perhaps because of the unusual migratory patterns this spring.

Some interesting numbers also reflected a more thorough count, including 18 wild turkeys, 10 northern bob-white quail (currently endangered in Indiana), a least bittern (always difficult to find), 10 woodcocks, a Chuck-will's widow, 17 wood thrushes (a bird in serious decline), a lark sparrow (surprise!) and seven species of flycatchers.

Of course, spring warblers are always a highlight of the May count, and Warrick counters found 26 species of them.

In addition, Warrick counters totaled a whopping 327 individual indigo buntings—only one shy of the count for red-winged blackbirds. What a colorful report.

Statistics submitted by Tim Griffith



## Read Any Good Books Lately?

Continuing our book review feature, this issue reviews Mike O'Connor's ***Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches? (And Other Bird Questions You Know You Want to Ask)***. List price \$9.95.

*Publisher's Weekly* describes ***Why Don't Woodpeckers Get Headaches*** this way: "The avian equivalent in tone and expertise to NPR's *Car Talk* Magliozzi brothers, O'Connor should net a wider audience with this amusing collection."

O'Connor owns and operates the Bird Watcher's Store in Cape Cod. As such, in an endearing, witty, self-deprecating manner, he assumes the role of guru for backyard birdwatchers, writing a weekly column for the *Cape Codder* in which he answers Ask the Bird Folks questions.

Posting his review on Amazon.com, S. Woodworth of Marquette, Michigan, writes, "The book was a 'hoot' (excuse the pun). It had me chuckling out loud at the author's humorous answers to a variety of bird questions. While anyone would find this book entertaining, birders will especially enjoy it, for it is informative as well as funny."

J. Head of Littleton, NH, gives the book a further thumbs-up: "[This book is] perhaps the most entertaining book about birds ever written."

The questions O'Connor answers include common ones such as "How do you squirrel proof your bird feeder?" Or "If I keep the bird feeder full, will the birds still migrate?" Or more exotic ornithological questions like "Is Aflac a goose or a duck?"

Head goes on to say, "The author, Mike O'Connor, answers these questions along with some related facts usually couched in between some hilarious zingers thrown out at the questioner's expense. All in all, the book is a good balance of factual material with humor and a down-to-earth commonsense style. Kudos to the author. A very good book for short segmented reading opportunities."

Having just finished the book, I heartily agree with the reviewers. Short, quick reads in response to serious questions make for solid education rendered painless by quick wit.

Submitted by Sharon Sorenson

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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.

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## Did You Know?

from *National Audubon Society's Web site* ([www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)):

Did you know that birding is the number one sport in America? According to US Fish and Wildlife Service, there are currently 51.3 million birders in the United States alone, and this number continues to grow!

## CONSERVATION MATTERS

### Global Warming: How to Figure Your or Your Household's Carbon Footprint

*The following is a message from Bill Stanley,  
Director, Global Climate Change Initiative, The  
Nature Conservancy:*

"Inevitably, in going about our daily lives—commuting, sheltering our families, eating—each of us contributes to the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change. Yet, there are many things each of us—as individuals—can do to reduce emissions....

"Use The Nature Conservancy's carbon calculator to measure your—or your household's—climate impact. The calculator will estimate how many tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases your choices create each year...and learn ways to reduce that impact through simple and tangible suggestions for lowering your impact.

"Just answer a few simple questions and the calculator estimates how many tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases you create each year through the choices you make each and everyday—at home, while shopping, and behind the wheel. If you're concerned about how to make a difference for our planet, using the calculator is a great first step to help slow global climate change.

[To find the calculator, go online to [www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator/](http://www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator/).]

Sincerely,



### Yellowstone at the Crossroads: New Long-term Winter Use Plan

The National Park Service has announced its most recent proposal on snowmobile use in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. Seven former park service directors have criticized the NPS proposal. They joined congressional critics in demanding that snowmobiles be barred from Yellowstone National Park, beginning this winter. The former directors said that Yellowstone should only allow snowcoach access. They were joined by former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Nathaniel Reed (Nixon-Ford), two former deputy NPS directors and two former Yellowstone superintendents.

In a letter to Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne the twelve said, "In each of four separate studies since 1998, costing a cumulative \$10 million, the Park Service has verified conclusively that greater volumes of traffic required by an emphasis upon snowmobiling add dramatically to air and noise pollution and disturbance of Yellowstone's wildlife."

Submitted by Sue Vernier  
Conservation Chair