



# THE BLUEBIRD

Evansville Audubon Society Newsletter

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A bird came down the walk:  
He did not know I saw;  
He bit an angle-worm in halves  
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew  
From a convenient grass,  
And then he hopped sidewise  
to the wall  
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes  
That hurried all abroad,--  
They looked like frightened beads,  
I thought;  
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,  
I offered him a crumb,  
And he unrolled his feathers  
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,  
Too silver for a seam,  
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,  
Leap, splashless, as they swim.

Emily Dickinson

## Christmas Bird Counts – 2008

The Christmas Bird Counts are always a lot of fun and this year was no exception. The weather was very cooperative both days. The Posey count was very windy but reached a record 73 degrees!

Record numbers of species set in Posey county were: 66 tundra swans; 500 greater white-fronted geese; 3165 snow geese; 21 canvasbacks; 11 common mergansers; 36 cedar wax-wings; and 7536 American crows. A total of 65 species were counted.

The Vanderburgh county CBC had record numbers of: 15 wild turkeys; 18 red-shouldered hawks; 11 ruby-crowned kinglets; 76 yellow-rumped warblers; and 2157 rock pigeons. One common loon was sighted which hadn't been recorded since 1982 and an Eastern phoebe that was last recorded in 1980. Tim Griffith and his team spotted a Lincoln's sparrow at Howell Wetlands. That is the first time a Lincoln's has been recorded here during the CBC! A total of 75 species were counted.

Some special memories of the count:

*"We found an area along Pigeon Creek that had been harvested by beavers. The beavers created quite a path dragging their harvest up a rise, across and down the bank to the water." Sue Seiler*

*"The most fun for me on the CBC in Posey county was seeing 4 brown creepers at close range all together. The number of crows on migration was astonishing, also. I believe we had well over 3,000!" Brian Taylor*

*"I went on the CBC for Posey county with Evan Speck and my dad, Brian Taylor. I did get one life list, a gadwall. Even though it is pretty common in the winter here, I felt like I had seen a rare bird. Over the one year I have been birding, I have seen a total of 167 birds now. I had a lot of fun that windy day. The best part was seeing two adult bald eagles and a juvenile bald eagle with them. It was amazing seeing them fly together. Another amazing sight was seeing four brown creepers in one area. I am proud to be a fourteen year old birder." Josie Taylor*

Many thanks to all the field (40) and feeder (19) counters who helped with the CBC this year! For more details of either count, log onto the Audubon website: [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc)

Carol Pettys, CBC compiler

Visit our Website at [www.evvaudubon.org](http://www.evvaudubon.org)  
Latest information regarding field trips, photos,  
recent bird counts, etc.

Contact the webmaster at:  
[therussells.golf@yahoo.com](mailto:therussells.golf@yahoo.com)



# EAS MINUTES

January 20, 2009

December 16, 2008

On an evening with scattered ice problems a few brave souls enjoyed a potluck, followed by a brief business meeting.

Dick Vernier, president, convened the board meeting at 8:17. Treasurer Ted Hitch reported \$1250 in Collaborative Grants was received from NAS. As of 11/30/08 total education donations are \$1835, and Grant Memorial donations are \$290. Balances: Checking \$6743.50.

After correction to November minutes, (Steve Heeger, not Sue Vernier to be contact with Keep Evansville Beautiful regarding NAS-Toyota Forever Green) October and November minutes were approved.

Education. Carol Pettys reported NAS grants applied for in November were not awarded.

Carol presented for a vote several applications for EAS grants. The following were approved: 1) Castle High School landscaping class was awarded \$250 to plant gardens on their grounds, The students will be analyzing the soil pH, our Hardiness Zone, and native plants that attract birds. 2) St. Joseph School will receive \$90.14 for soil, grow lights, and seeds to begin planting flowers and vegetables around their school on Earth Day 2009. 3) WWNP \$300 to defray costs of field trips for economically disadvantaged children. The field trips may be to WWNP, Howell Wetlands or a trip with Canoe Evansville.

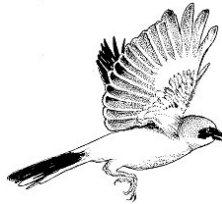
Items wanted for Birding Festival crafts : Milk jugs with lids, toilet paper cores and bird pictures.

Bird Counts. Carol is looking for a replacement chairman. She will work with someone else on spring count.

New Business. Susan Haslip is looking for volunteers to lead birding trips at WWNP. Leaders could choose their own dates.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25. Following adjournment several members shared pictures.

Carolyn Bennett, secretary



Our scheduled speaker, Alan Pursell, was delayed by a flat tire. Fortunately, Lauren Preske was available and she presented the Barred Owl Luna along with a talk about raptors. When Alan, from The Nature Conservancy, arrived he presented his 'The Secret Lives of Acorns'. We learned about acorns, changes in forest types, deer and more.

There was no business to transact, so no meeting, but Treasurer Ted Hitch gave me this report.

Donations received. December \$175, January \$100, from NAS \$30.

Expenses Castle education grant \$250, St. Joe education grant \$90.14, WWNP \$500.

Balance: Checking \$6017.69.

Carolyn Bennett, secretary

**Of winter's lifeless world each tree  
Now seems a perfect part;  
Yet each one holds summer's secret  
Deep down within its heart.**

- Charles G. Stater



## Save the Date: Ohio Valley Birding Festival, May 1-3

The Ohio Valley Birding Festival consists of a whole host of activities for birders (or potential birders) of all ages and skill levels. Guided hikes to area birding hotspots such as Howell Wetlands, Hovey Lake, Bluegrass Fish and Wildlife Area, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve, and the Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge will showcase a variety of native and migratory bird species. Various lectures and workshops are offered, including topics such as photographing birds, making gourd birdhouses, and providing backyard habitat for birds.

The festival also includes a special day for children and families at Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Experience a full day of family birding fun with hands-on learning activities related to birds and their environment. A bird banding demonstration, family hike, and a live raptor show will make this a day you won't want to miss!

Schedule of OVBF programs TBA.



### From the Editor

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome! If you have an idea for future issues please let me know. If there is something else you would like included or deleted, I'm interested in hearing from you. I wish we could include photographs in the printed version but that is cost prohibitive.

Your photos could be used in the online version if you are willing to share them.

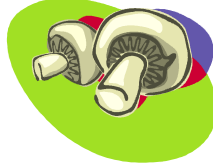
I can be reached online at [therussells.golf@yahoo.com](mailto:therussells.golf@yahoo.com) or phone at 812 491 7256

Judi Russell

## Calendar of Events

**Tuesday, February 17, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve.** Our program will feature a nature documentary from the WNIN series, "Indiana Heritage." Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

**Tuesday, March 17, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. Mutualistic (Friendly) Fungi** by Dr. Jim Brenneman. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.



**Tuesday, April 21, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. "The Wonderful World of Birds,"** by Bill Vieth. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.



**Tuesday, May 19, 7:00 PM, Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve. "Butterflies,"** by Debbie Goedde. Join us beforehand for dinner and camaraderie at 5:30 PM at the Eastland Mall Food Court.

## Upcoming Field Trips

**February, 2009, Field Trip to Blue Grass Fish and Wildlife Area**  
Join Evan Speck during one day of the Great Backyard Bird Count (February 13 thru February 16) to look for short-eared owls and migrating waterfowl. When and where to meet TBA. Contact trip leader, Evan Speck, 401-3094

**March, 2009, Visit to the New AMAZONIA at the Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden.** Join us for a tour through this impressive

Book Review submitted by Pam Locker.....

### "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv

My fondest memories of childhood include exploring the "wild" areas in my neighborhood. When I was in the third grade we moved into a new subdivision on the edge of some undeveloped areas. You wouldn't think that anyone could find nature in an industrial city like Hammond, Indiana -- but we did!

We found fields where the weeds were head high and pretended we were in the Wild West or on another planet. We searched for interesting insects. We tried to grow frogs from tadpoles. We built forts out of old cardboard from tv sets or refrigerators. We even nailed some planks on the trunk of an apple tree so we could "climb" it, then brought books home from the local library to read among its branches. (We got caught on that one and had to dismantle our creation).

Richard Louv makes the point that few children are growing up with nature these days. Population is centered in urban areas. Kids' lives are pretty structured -- even "play time" is organized into team sports. When they do have free time, they spend hours absorbed in television, video games, or the Internet. Due to concerns about safety, children aren't allowed to "run free" nor are most playgrounds designed to encourage any contact with nature. Kids are losing their sense of wonder.

Citing a wide range of research, Louv argues that this nature deficit is bad for children and may even contribute to behavioral problems.

He is the co-founder and chairman of the Children & Nature Network, was created to encourage and support the people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. Cities throughout the U.S. have embraced this concept.

## NOT ALL SEED IS CREATED EQUAL



The needs, and preferences, of birds vary during the winter months. It also did a very good job of explaining the nutritional differences between different seeds and seed blends.

What are the differences and why should you care?

Birds need high amounts of energy and protein to fuel their internal fires during the long, cold, winter nights. Here are the ratings for some common birdseeds and seed blends:

Seed	Fat Calories	Protein Calories
Sunflower Chips	72%	12%
No-Mess Blend	62%	12%
Shelled Peanuts	73%	16%
Choice Blend	69%	14%
Black Oil Sunflower	68%	14%
Supreme Blend	67%	14%
Safflower	62%	11%
Nyjer	71%	18%
Millet	9%	11%
Milo	8%	3%

Please consider your bird's nutritional needs the next time you purchase food for them. One of the benefits to watching the ingredients and their nutritional value is that the birds will not eat as much because they are getting a larger portion of their daily energy needs from the small amount of food they eat. In the long run you will save money and your birds will be healthier and happier all winter.

# December Big Day

David Ayer and I attempted an Indiana "Big Day" on December 28, 2008 based on our outstanding Oakland City CBC count the previous week. ABA records indicated the official Indiana December Big Day was 72 species. Our Oakland City CBC team had recorded 69 species the previous week with little travel.

On Christmas Eve, David and I decided the weather conditions would be perfectly suited for breaking the December Big Day – our adventure was set.

We started the day at 5:15 am in the Buckskin Bottoms and were promptly greeted by calling great horned owls soon accompanied by a nearby calling barred owl. We traveled from the Buckskin Bottoms to the Oakland City New Lake where we racked up some important species including a Hermit Thrush (we had missed the previous week).

After birding New Lake, we traveled to western Pike County where we picked up much needed species such as red-shouldered hawk, yellow-rumped warbler and, best of all, purple finch!! From there, we traveled to a borrow pit in eastern Gibson Co. where we found numerous waterfowl with the best being cackling goose and greater-white fronted goose – and an "uncountable" trumpeter swan. Sprinting quickly to the Patoka Wildlife Refuge, we found common goldeneye, bufflehead and an unexpected canvasback.

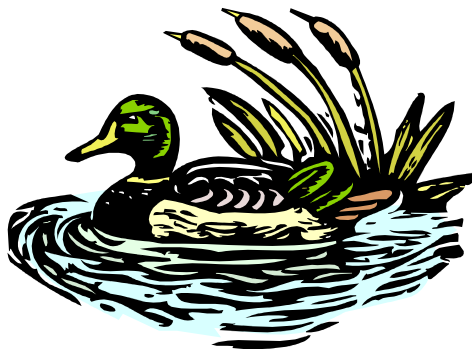
We then left the refuge and headed to western Gibson County where we really racked up the species including hard-to-find species such as red-headed woodpecker, Eurasian-collared dove and peregrine falcon. WHAT A DAY...our 73<sup>rd</sup> species of the day was a lesser scaup in western Gibson county!

The day was beginning to come to an end so we quickly traveled to the Bluegrass Wildlife/Ayrshire Mine area to find short-eared owls and we weren't disappointed – many greeted us with their moth-like flights. David and I were convinced we were done. Then, we noticed two small dark falcons roosting about 20 yards off the road...MERLINS!!! - Our last bird of the day with our species totaling 82.

I would like to thank Chuck Mills not only for helping us achieve our overall goal of beating the Indiana December Big Day, but for introducing me to the world of birding while I was a high school student.

Sincerely,

Dan Collins



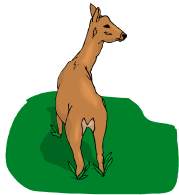
## Fun Facts About Woodpeckers

- Downy Woodpeckers have been recorded to eat at least 44 different kinds of insects, including beetles, ants, weevils, aphids and the eggs of grasshopper, katydids and crickets.
- During the winter, Downy Woodpeckers have to peck deeper into trees to find insects and favor trees with rough bark since they hold more over-wintering insects than smooth-barked trees.
- Downy Woodpeckers typically excavate new roosting cavities during the autumn months over a period of three to seven days.
- The average life-span of a Downy Woodpecker is two to five years, although some may live up to twelve years old.
- In order to increase their security and feeding efficiency, Downy Woodpeckers will often flock and forage together with chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and Hairy Woodpeckers. They rely on the other birds for early warning of predators by recognizing their alarm calls.
- When threatened by predators, Downy Woodpeckers will freeze motionless against the trunk of a tree and will not return to normal activities for up to ten minutes.
- Studies have shown that Downy Woodpeckers with access to bird feeders are in better nutritional condition than their peers. This probably results in higher rates of winter survival, especially in the submissive females.
- The Pileated Woodpecker is the second largest North American woodpecker at 19" in length; hopefully the Ivory-billed is still the largest at over 20."
- Sapsuckers can drill as many as fifty holes per hour into trees. These holes fill up with sap, when the sapsucker returns it soaks up the sap with its brushy-tipped tongue. They also feed on the many insects that are attracted to the sweet sap.
- Northern Flickers spend about 75% of their time foraging on the ground in search of ants.
- Northern Flickers will often roost at night on the side of a tree or structure instead of inside a nesting cavity.
- Red-bellied Woodpeckers will eat fruits, insects, an occasional frog or lizard and they have even been observed eating the eggs of chickens.
- If you want to provide good habitat for woodpeckers, consider leaving the dead tree snags in and around your yard. One study has shown that a Downy Woodpecker needs at least four to five snags per acre to meet its needs for nesting and foraging.
- Bird banding longevity records for woodpeckers: Downy = 11years - 11months; Hairy = 15years - 11months; Pileated = 12years - 11months; Red-headed = 9years - 11months; Red-bellied = 12years - 01months; Northern Flicker = 9years - 02months;

# Our Birding Adventure submitted by Judi Russell

On a past November day, Ron and I drove to Sauerheber Refuge over in the Geneva bottoms. We were searching for snow geese and perhaps white-fronted geese, since they were not yet on my "life" list. Upon spotting instead some very large white birds, I made a quick phone call to Steve Heeger (God bless cell phones!) He confirmed that we could indeed be seeing swans! Twenty-one of them!! (Another first for me)

This wasn't a very organized—or even planned—trip so I didn't have my camera and Ron didn't bring a scope. We did have our binoculars and guide books. It was late in the day, so we returned the next morning to try to find them again. I needed to get a good enough look that I could determine WHICH swans. Of course, since we were PREPARED this time, no swans were to be seen. We did see lots of snow geese and the white-fronted as well. And I spotted a few Northern Shovelers along with the many Mallards.



We journeyed onward, off the Refuge property, continuing on a gravel road parallel to the river. We sighted a few hunters along the way. As we stopped to get a closer look at a small flock of Horned Larks, I saw a hunter who was even with us raise his gun and point away from our direction. Why would he be shooting at Horned Larks? That was soon answered as a doe whitetail came tearing toward us, running for her very life. She was being chased by another "hunter" on a four-wheeler. I was screaming, "Run, baby, run!" The hunter didn't have a clear shot, since when she was even with him, he was aiming at US!!! She made a mad dash into the strip of woods and down the river bank, as he managed one shot. He missed!!!

I was so shaken, we called it quits for the day. I did phone my brother (who is a hunter) to ask if this could be legal. He told me, it is not supposed to be done, but that there are hunters who do it. Not my idea of hunting!!

One good thing that came of this is that it caused my brother to remember that Ron and I are birders. A week or so later, he called to tell of a spot we might enjoy. And he was right! His directions took us through the Bluegrass Refuge on Boonville-New Harmony Road to Wasson Road. We continued on Wasson to Seven Hills Road. On the few miles of Seven Hills Road, we spotted almost a dozen Northern Harriers, a Red-tailed Hawk, two Great Blue Herons, and dozens of "little brown birds" which I couldn't quite identify. All in all, a good day and we came full circle by driving back to Geneva bottoms. And saw HUNDREDS of geese decoys, all adjacent to Refuge property.



All I can say is "Fly, baby, fly!!"



## *Port Aransas Standardized Birding Skills Evaluation*

Performance Factor	Far Exceeds Norm	Exceeds Norm	Meets Norm	Needs Some Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimal Standards
Pursuit Ability	Leaps trees with a single bound	Needs running start to leap trees	Can leap large bushes	Crashes into bushes trying to leap over	Catches poison ivy
Locating Birds in Binoculars	Faster than a Peregrine Falcon	Fast as a Chimney Swift	Not quite as fast as a Chimney Swift	Would you believe a slow Chimney Swift	Has trouble locating chimneys
Field Work	Walks on water consistently	Walks on water in emergencies	Needs log to get over water	Drinks water	Spills water
Credibility	Talks with God	Talks with Roger Tory Peterson	Talks to himself	Argues with himself	Lose arguments
Sight Identification	Eyes of an Eagle	Eyes of a Blue Jay	Needs binoculars	Needs binoculars and good light	Can't find binoculars
Sound Identification	Can recognize birds from a single chirp	Can recognize birds by song	Can identify some birds by song	Can hear songs	Eh?

**Evansville Audubon Society**  
**Evansville, IN**  
**Permit No. 1666**  
**Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve**  
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**Evansville, IN 47711**

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Newsletter Editor: Judi Russell, (812) 491-7256, therussells.golf@yahoo.com

Moving? Send change of address to:  
Steve Heeger  
15340 Cemetery Road  
Evansville, IN 47725

**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.**

Not an EVANSVILLE AUDUBON SOCIETY member? Join now and become a member of the National Audubon Society as well.

\$20: 1 year introductory rate

\$15: 1 year Student/ Senior (62 and over) rate

\$30: 2 year Special Rate

Mail to: Ted Hitch, EAS Treasurer, 8713 Camellia Drive, Evansville, IN 47711

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