



TIPPE-TOPICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE TIPPECANOE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Cass, Fulton, Kosciusko, Marshall, Miami, Noble, Wabash, Whitley Counties, Indiana

Volume XXXV, Number 3

APRIL, 2009

COMING EVENTS

April Field Trip

35th Annual Visit to Warsaw Great Blue Heron Rookery

This is always one of our most interesting field trips of the year. At last count there were still about 125 nests in this rookery. One sycamore tree has been hosting 40 nests for several years now. As development draws nearer, each year brings increasing risk of disturbance to the rookery. We'll hope that the Tippecanoe River water level is low enough for us to get close for a really good view. It is possible that the river could be too high for us to get within sight of the nests. That has happened twice in 35 years. There will be some spring wildflowers in bloom too!

When: Sunday,
April 19, 2:00 pm.

Where: Meet at Kohl's
Dept. Store parking lot
just north of Warsaw.

There will be wet ground and shallow water so be sure to bring suitable boots. Mosquito repellent is always a good idea for this field trip.

We will meet at the far northwest corner of the Kohl's Department Store parking lot, located 1/2 mi. north of the US 30 & SR 15 intersection on the north side of Warsaw.

April Program

Natural History of North-Central Indiana

Tim Eizinger is the Indiana DNR District Forester for Cass, Fulton, Miami, Kosciusko, and Whitley counties. Besides being an excellent field biologist, Tim has a keen interest in both natural history and local history. His talk will include some descriptions of our glacial history and the existing land forms that are the product of glaciation. Tim will discuss the original plant species and ecosystems both before and at the time of settlement and offer some general discussions on wildlife and fish populations. A fascinating portion of his presentation will concern the general observations made by the earliest settlers to our area and especially the in-depth comments made by the Federal Surveyors and their parties who came into the area in 1833 and 1834 to set the survey coordinates in preparation to sell the land.

When: Tuesday, April 28,
7:30 pm.

Where: Manchester
College Student Union, Hoff
Room, North Manchester,
IN

Regular Tippecanoe Audubon Society Events:

- **MONTHLY PROGRAM**
held on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. except in December. *Program meetings are at the Student Union on the Manchester College Campus, N. Manchester, Indiana.*
- **MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS**
Time and place is announced in the monthly newsletter. Everyone is welcome.
- **TIPPECANOE AUDUBON BOARD MEETINGS**
Monthly on the 2nd Tuesday at 7:15 p.m., except in December. All TAS members are welcome. *Board meetings are held at KenapocoMocha Coffee Shop, 101 E. 2nd St., North Manchester, IN*

Contact Information

Steve Hammer, President

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260-982-2713

Tippecanoe Audubon

Website:

www.tippeaudubon.org

COMING EVENTS - continued on page 2

Wildflower Trip

Spring Wildflowers at the Kokiwanee Nature Preserve

This joint field trip with ACRES Land Trust will visit one of the region's finest nature preserves as well as one of the best wildflower sites. If you haven't visited Kokiwanee Nature Preserve in Wabash County, be sure not to miss this opportunity. Located along the Salamonie River, it's a fantastic preserve with upland woods, dramatic wooded ravines, and high bluffs overlooking the river. Numerous waterfalls cascade over the bluffs. Typically, 20 or more species of wildflowers can be seen in bloom in the rich soil below the Salamonie River bluffs. Kokiwanee is near the range limit for several wildflower species and is also a very scenic spot.

When: Saturday, May 2,
10:00am.

Where: Kokiwanee Nature
Preserve near Lagro, IN.
See directions below.

From Lagro, travel south on SR 524. Cross the Salamonie River, go through a right-angle turn and then bear left onto Hanging Rock Road rather than continuing on 524. Follow Hanging Rock Rd. past a right-angle bend and past Division Rd. Bear right onto CR 50S and look for the ACRES parking lot on the right. For further information contact Dave Hicks at 260-982-2471 or 982-5309.

Spring Birdcount

"Big Day in May" Bird Count On the Way

This is TAS's 33rd year for participating in Indiana Audubon Society's Big Day in May bird count. We will cover all of Kosciusko County to document the spring migration. This should be a great time to get your annual look at warblers, thrushes, and shorebirds as they pass through our area. Typically, the group observes over 125 species in this count. Both experienced and novice birders are needed, and you may participate for a whole day or part of a day. To get involved, contact Greg Clark at 260-982-7588.

When: Saturday,
May 9

Where: Kosciusko
County

Keep Track of the Birds in Your Yard Year Around

Do you enjoy watching birds and contributing to our growing understanding of birds and their conservation? If so, you can help by keeping track of the birds in your yard with a new My Yard eBird online at <http://ebird.org/content/myyard>. My Yard eBird takes the power of regular eBird, but makes it friendlier and easier to use for backyard birdwatchers. By contributing bird sightings to My Yard eBird, your yard becomes a biological research station, joining a network of thousands of other yards contributing bird sightings across the country.

Unlike some citizen science programs where your data goes in but you get nothing out, My Yard eBird allows you to see all your bird sightings, graph them, and map them along with all the other data being submitted. You can use this tool to keep track of your yard list or follow changes in your yard birds from day to day, month to month, year to year, or even decade to decade. You can also track how many times you've seen any given bird, the highest number of birds seen at any time, and dozens of other reports. Of course, to have access to such useful data, you need to first enter it online. But once you

get the hang of it, My Yard eBird does all the work of preserving your data and graphing it for you.

eBird is a joint Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology project, and My Yard eBird was developed through an Audubon At Home agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information contact Rob Fergus, Senior Scientist, Urban Bird Conservation at audubonathome@audubon.org or visit Audubon Birdscapes at <http://birdscapes.audubon.org>.

President's Corner - Steve Hammer

With the arrival of spring, birding and most aspects of nature observation gear up for increased activity. Ticking off the spring arrivals, boning up on bird song recordings, scoping the ponds and lakes for migrating waterfowl – there's a renewed appreciation for the fresh variety and urgent activity of warmer weather.

Your local Audubon chapter invites you to consider joining in its activities, as well. Mark your calendar for the May 9 spring bird count in

Kosciusko County. Volunteers are needed to drive, listen, watch, walk and note each member of each species observed and identified. If you are new to birding, this will be an ideal opportunity to get acquainted with birding techniques and expand your knowledge.

Spring is an excellent time to consider ways to strengthen your local chapter. We have many opportunities for volunteers to contribute. If your talent runs to writing, the newsletter is always looking for new content and

contributors. We can also use your assistance with the maintenance of our sanctuaries near Liberty Mills. The chapter's board has openings for volunteers with publicity and program interests.

If you have an interest in sharing your talents, promoting the appreciation of nature on a local level and getting acquainted with folks with similar interests, we'd love to hear from you.

Happy trails, Steve

What are the Birds Telling Us About Global Warming?

Like canaries in a coal mine, birds are telling us that global warming is happening here and now. A recent report released by Audubon, *Birds and Climate Change: Ecological Disruption in Motion*, analyzes the past forty years of Christmas Bird Count data to see how the ranges of birds have shifted during that time. Audubon's scientists found that a majority of bird species in the United States have shifted their ranges north, and that this shift northward was strongly correlated with rising winter temperatures.

While polar bears have grabbed the spotlight on global warming, and predictions of impacts may seem decades in the

future, the Birds and Climate report sounds a warning that the effects of global warming are being felt now. It is once again the birds in our backyards that are signally a clarion call to take action. If you would like to hear Dr. Greg Butcher, Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation and the co-author of the report, describe his findings, you can watch and listen to his Webcast at www.birdsandclimate.org.

It took citizen science to gather the information that gives us this wake up call. It will take citizen action to solve the problem of global warming. Scientists tell us that we need to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gas pollutants

by at least 80% from 1990 levels by 2050 in order to avoid the worst effects of global warming. In order to achieve these reductions, we need our government to put in place strong policies to address global warming, including a mandatory cap on greenhouse gas pollutants. Our state and federal agencies also need to incorporate planning that will help birds and wildlife adapt to global warming. To send a message to Congress urging them to pass strong climate legislation and put in place policies that will help birds and wildlife adapt, please sign Audubon's petition at www.birdsandclimate.org.

Bird of the Month •• (from page 4)

parasitic Brown-headed Cowbirds, which lay their eggs in phoebe nests. A phoebe might unwittingly incubate and feed the larger cowbird chick, to the detriment of the rest of its brood. Occasionally, the phoebe will abandon the nest with a cowbird egg, or construct a new nest layer over it and begin laying eggs again.

The Eastern Phoebe's nesting range is widespread, from the east coast

up to Nova Scotia, west through the Great Plains and northwest to the Northwest Territories of Canada.

The Eastern Phoebe was the first bird to be banded in North America. John James Audubon attached silvered thread to the leg of several nestling Eastern Phoebes in 1803 to track their return in successive years. Two of the nestlings returned the next spring. The technique of bird banding has since become a valuable research tool for studying birds.

The phoebe is a member of the Tyrant Flycatcher family, in the passerine or perching order of birds, due to their foot structure which allows them to perch atop a branch. Most passerines are classified as songbirds, or *oscines*. Flycatchers, however, possess fewer voice muscles than true songbirds and are therefore classified as *suboscines*. Songbird or not, the phoebe's raspy spring "FEE-bee" is a welcome harbinger of spring.

New members of TAS received from National Audubon. Welcome!!

Genevieve Baker	Peru	David Munk	Columbia City	Steve Sherer	Milford
Francis Bundy	Columbia City	Jolynn Mylin	Warsaw	Carol Werstler	Leesburg
Mary Michael	Warsaw	Verginia Reahard	N. Manchester		

Tippecanoe Audubon Society, Inc.
c/o Wilson Lutz, Membership Chair
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Bird of the Month - Eastern Phoebe

by *Steve Hammer*

On the evening of March 13, 2009, I looked out my kitchen window and observed a new arrival, a migrating Eastern Phoebe. Sadly, I observed it flitting from branch to branch, peering about for an air-borne insect to eat. The temperature was 34°F and falling, and I doubted the phoebe would find anything to eat. A little research revealed that phoebes do eat seeds and fruit, such as sumac and poison ivy, in the winter months to supplement their diet. Two days later, I heard a phoebe singing in my yard; perhaps the bird I had observed managed to find food and survive.

Eastern Phoebes are one of the first migratory species to arrive in the spring in northern Indiana, and one of the last to leave in the fall. I typically hear one sometime in late March. Their early arrival and late departure allows them to nest twice each season; most migratory species only get one chance to nest. In

winter, they migrate back to the southernmost United States and Central America. Like many migratory birds, phoebes have been expanding their winter range northward.

The phoebe typically sings its name "FEE-bee" with a raspy quality, especially early in the morning, in spring and summer. Researchers have shown that this song is innately programmed, for birds raised in captivity sing a perfect "FEE-bee" even though they have never heard another phoebe sing. Most songbirds need to hear another of their species sing in order to develop their characteristic vocalizations. The phoebe's call note is a clear, sharp "chip."

The Eastern Phoebe is 6 to 7 inches long, and is colored dull gray-brown above, with a white throat, dirty gray breast and buffish underparts. It has two indistinct buff bars on each wing. Its darker head appears oversized, especially if it puffs up its small crest. Another small member of the flycatcher

family, the Eastern Wood Peewee, is similar in appearance and behavior, but has more distinct wing bars. The smaller peewee has an eye-ring and does not wag or bob its tail habitually like the phoebe.

Phoebes typically nest in the edges of forest clearings rather than in the forest interior, and prefer areas with access to water. They do not nest in trees but instead build their mud, moss and grass nests on rocks, under bridges, in culverts and on the eaves of buildings. I have seen nests in the crooks of downspouts and on top of porch light fixtures. They will return to and re-use an existing nest, unlike most songbirds, which build new each year. This species has benefited from its ability to make use of human-made structures as nest sites. Conservation monitoring indicates the phoebe population is steady to slightly increasing.

Phoebes are often targeted by nest-

continued on Page 3