



TIPPE-TOPICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE TIPPECANOE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Volume XXXVI, Number 2

April & May, 2010

COMING EVENTS

April Field Trip

Wildflowers & Spring Migrants at Bock Preserve

This ACRES-owned preserve is an island of forest in an agricultural landscape. One corner of the area has a number of large trees, and interesting wildflowers such as Blue-eyed Mary and Green Dragon occur throughout. This should also be a good time and place to see some of the earlier spring migrants. Also, there are shallow ponds which may have amphibian egg masses.

When: Sunday,
April 18, 1:30 pm

Where: Bock Preserve
near Akron, IN - see
directions below

The Bock preserve is located on the east side of SR14, about 1 ½ miles north of Akron and 7 miles east of Silver Lake (coming from Silver Lake, look for the preserve ½ mile after the right-angle bend in SR14).

For more information, contact Dave Hicks at djhicks@manchester.edu or (260) 982-2471.

Bonus April Field Trip

36th Annual Visit to Warsaw Great Blue Heron Rookery

That's right, we'll have two field trips in April. This is our special annual trip to the Great Blue Heron rookery on the Tippecanoe River. This is our 36th year to visit this rookery, and we've seen it change from year to year. Last year there were 140 active nests. We will also see early spring wildflowers: Spring Beauty, Hepatica, Spicebush IN bloom and more. There will be a tripod mounted telescope for close-up viewing (20 X to 40X). You'll be able to actually see the iris in the heron's eye. We will have a 1/2 mile walk to the rookery and boots may be needed for shallow water.

When: Sunday,
April 25, 1:30 pm

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

We will meet on the north end 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. For additional information contact the field trip leader, Paul Steffen, at 574-658 4504 or at ecoexpo@mchsi.com.

Regular Tippecanoe Audubon Society Events:

BI-MONTHLY PROGRAM -

Held on the 4th Tuesday of February, April, June, August, and October and at the annual dinner in early December. Begins at 7:30 p.m., usually at the Student Union on the Manchester College Campus, North Manchester, IN. ALL ARE WELCOME.

MONTHLY FIELD TRIPS -

Time and place announced in the bi-monthly newsletter. ALL ARE WELCOME.

TAS BOARD MEETINGS -

Monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m., except in December. Held at KenapocoMocha Coffee Shop, 101 E. 2nd St., North Manchester, IN. All TAS members are welcome.

Contact Info.

Steve Hammer, President

steven.hammer@bankatfirst.com

260-982-2713

Tippecanoe Audubon
Website:

www.tippeaudubon.org

COMING EVENTS - continued on page 2

April Program

Migration Patterns of Saw-whet Owls in Northern Indiana

This past fall, Manchester College Biology and Environmental Studies major, Sarah Curry, performed her senior research on the fall migration patterns of the Northern Saw-whet Owl. This owl is of particular interest because its migration through northern Indiana has not yet been documented. She will discuss data obtained from capturing and banding this species migrating near Koinonia Environmental and Retreat Center.

When: Tuesday,
April 27, 7:30 pm.

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

For some excellent background information on Saw-whet Owls, see Casey Jones "Bird of the Month" in the Feb - March 2010 issue of Tippe Topics. If you didn't save the issue, you can access it at our web site, www.tippeaudubon.org.

Spring Birdcount

"Big Day in May" Bird Count On the Way

This will be TAS's 34th year 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 8

Where: Kosciusko
County

New Slate of TAS Officers and Board Members

Our bi-monthly Program Meetings also serve as General Membership meetings. In this capacity we annually vote to approve the nominated slate of TAS officers and members of the board of directors. The nominees to be voted for approval at April's program, meeting at 7:30 pm, April 27 at the Manchester College Student Union are:

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>TERM OF OFFICE</u>	<u>NOMINEE</u>
President	2 Years	Beth Deimling, Silver Lake
Vice-President	1 Year	Glenn Pfleiderer, Warsaw
Secretary	1 Year	Steve Hammer, North Manchester
Treasurer	2 Years	Deb Hustin, North Manchester
Board Member	1 Year	Margit Codispoti, Fort Wayne
Board Member	1 Year	Bruce Ruisard, Warsaw
Board Member	1 Year	Stan Moore, North Manchester
Board Member	1 Year	Al Crist, Silver Lake

Volunteers Needed for Breeding Bird Survey

As discussed in our last newsletter, TAS has agreed to partner with the Middle Eel River Watershed Initiative to undertake a Breeding Bird Survey of the watershed. Our survey will concentrate on the 6 main Eel River tributaries between North Manchester and Mexico, IN. They are Silver Creek, which enters the Eel near Laketon; Beargrass Creek, entering between Laketon & Roann; Paw Paw Creek, entering between Roann & Chili; Squirrel Creek, entering near Roann; Flowers Creek, entering near

Chili; and Weesau Creek, entering near Denver.

Each team of observers will be asked to spend several mornings during the month of June documenting the bird species seen or heard along each of the tributaries. Most of the birding can be done roadside as you travel the area by car, but you may venture out on foot if landowner permission is obtained. The list of species for each tributary will serve as one of several biological indicators for the health of the tributary.

Birders of all skill levels can be used. Do not hesitate to participate even if you think you are not a skilled birder. At least one experienced birder will be assigned to each team. This should be both a lot of fun for the participants and will provide valuable information to the Initiative to help document the health of the middle Eel River watershed.

Those interested should contact Beth Deimling at 260-839-4315 or beth@lakelandnursery.com.

President's Corner - Steve Hammer

Philosophers describe our sense of time as a purely human construct – we recall past experiences, we relate them to our present, and we use them to anticipate the future. During this two-steps-forward-one-step-back transition into spring, time is one way we experience and make sense of the natural world. Who hasn't noticed the lengthening of days and the appearance of creatures, such as singing frogs and gliding vultures, that were not evident just weeks ago? The snow melts, the tree buds open, and we exclaim – "It's about time!"

Time is also one way we understand changes in the natural world around us. I gained a new appreciation of spring wildflowers after reading about evolutionary change, of both the struc-

ture of flowers and the insects that pollinate them, in Richard Dawkins's 2009 book *The Greatest Show on Earth*. As their genetic deck is repeatedly shuffled over many thousands of years, adaptive plant species have survived by providing just a little nectar in return for distributing their genetic material. Beneficial variations in structure and ability were passed on, and marvelously intricate systems of pollination evolved. I experience these thrilling displays of spring color in a deeper way as I understand how they reflect adaptation over vast periods of time.

Our Tippecanoe chapter membership walks about in a part of Indiana where geologic time is evident as well. Relatively recent glacial topography offers fascinating variety, from fens,

wetlands and till plains to sand dunes, kames and kettle lakes. And before the glaciers, this was a place of vast tropical seas, uplifted strata and other nearly unimaginable eras. I try to imagine glacial ice a mile thick melting away into gritty streams, as pioneer plants return to hilltops of sand and gravel.

Time adds to our perspective. If scientists are correct in their understanding of human impact on this planet, we will witness the unraveling of time at a faster pace, as plants and creatures (and ice caps) respond to changing climate. Whether lengthening days or shifting migrations, this spring or this century, we will experience it through a lens of time.

Bird of the Month •• (from page 4)

maybe we should just wait to see if it was going to recover on its own? Since we didn't feel like we were capable of judging the extent of its injuries, we decided we needed more experienced help.

We finally thought of Soarin' Hawk, in Fort Wayne, a raptor rehabilitator organization that Beth had belonged to in the past. Bob Walton answered the phone when we called and we arranged to meet him halfway, in Columbia City, to pass the hawk to him. We loaded the cage, now nicely outfitted with an old broken shovel handle for a perch and covered in blankets, into Beth's pick-up and within 30 minutes had arrived at the courthouse square in Columbia City where Bob was waiting to meet us. Bob gave it a quick check-up and told us he thought she (he guessed female based upon size) had no serious injuries. He found no broken bones and in fact she seemed pretty darn mad about her whole situation. She clamped down hard on one of Bob's long leather gloves and would not let go. The glove went into Bob's carrying case along with the bird since she refused to let it go. Bob said he would take the hawk to the vet that evening for a complete check-up, and then if she passed that, he would bring her back to our place within the next few days to release her in her home territory.

Bob e-mailed later that night: "Took RTHA to vet. Looks like she has blood in right eye and some in her mouth. Looks like she collided with a car. Everything else looks good. Had a full crop so she was probably feeding by the side of the road or on some roadkill. It may take a little while for blood to be absorbed and get her vision back. She did relinquish the glove but still wanted a chunk of me. That's good, at least she is not shocky! We will keep you apprised of her rehabilitation."

Early the next morning, Dr. Pat Funnell, the veterinarian used by Soarin' Hawk sent an e-mail: "I examined the bird last evening and found blood in her mouth that appeared to be from her and not her food. She also had blood inside her right eye and has no vision in her right eye. We will give her plenty of time to see if she regains vision in that eye. Thanks for rescuing her."

Later that week, before leaving for a week of camping and birding on Padre Island, Texas, I hurriedly put together our list of sightings for the four days of the GBBC to e-mail to birdcount.org. Yes, I did add one Red-tailed Hawk to our list for Monday.

While in Texas I thought often of "my hawk". We saw only a few Red-tails in south Texas as the more common *Buteo* on the south Texas coast is the White-tailed Hawk. When we visited the

Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi we saw a captive White-tail that had lost the sight in one eye after being struck by a car. It could not be released because it would not be able to properly hunt with vision in only one eye. Although we were having a great trip, I was really anxious to get home and find out how my hawk was doing. Would it be possible to release her, and when?

The morning after returning I sent an e-mail to Dr. Funnell and soon received her heartbreaking reply. "Al - Unfortunately your Red-tail died.... I did an autopsy and found extensive bruising of the breast muscles, but no obvious internal injuries. The only thing I didn't check was her brain, so I would have to assume she died from head trauma." I was stunned and saddened.

Only rarely does one have the opportunity to experience a connection with an individual wild animal. Our connection was brief, fleeting, and ended poorly. I really felt I'd done something good that Monday afternoon. Sadly, in the end, it made no difference for "my hawk". However the effect upon me endures. I always think of her and still grieve a little whenever I see a Red-tail soaring high or perched along a road

For more information about Soarin' Hawk, how to join, and some great information on various species of raptors visit their web-site at www.soarinhawk.org.

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TIPPE-TOPICS April & May, 2010
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Non-Profit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
North Manchester, IN 46962
Permit No. 174

Bird of the Month– A Red-tailed Hawk

by Al Crist

The last day of this year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a day I will not soon forget. On that Monday afternoon, I was returning home with the groceries I'd bought in North Manchester, which is a few miles south of my home and business. As I approached my property, which is located on Indiana Hwy. 14, I was coming up the last hill before my drive and saw what looked like maybe a cat sitting in the middle of the highway or maybe it was just a chunk of ice that had fallen off a passing car. When I got closer I realized it was actually a Red-tailed Hawk standing in the road! It must have just had a collision with a car or truck on the highway. It looked very stunned but was seemingly still in one piece and I could see no blood evident.

My first thoughts were to get traffic stopped and to get the hawk off the road before it was hit again. I decided to stop my car in the middle of my lane, not more than 5 ft. from the hawk, in order

to block traffic coming from behind me. I put on my 4-way flashers and quickly hopped out of my car and went to pick the hawk up to get it off the road. WHOA!! What was I thinking? Picking up a Red-tail in my bare hands? I tried to calm down and get my brain working. I thought to take off my jacket to wrap it in and then saw that the car coming from the other direction was getting much too close. I frantically waved at it to stop and it did at least slow down and veer off to the shoulder as it passed by. The next few minutes were, for me and probably the hawk as well, beyond believable. It showed absolutely no fear or surprise as I approached and calmly wrapped it in my down coat. Now I'm standing in the middle of the road holding a Red-tail Hawk wrapped up in my down coat and I have a car sitting in the middle of a fairly busy state highway. What now? There was really only one solution to this conundrum, so it was back into the car where I set the hawk on my lap and held it tight with one hand. With the other hand I steered and shifted the manual

transmission for the several hundred yards up the road to my drive and then up the drive into the wholesale plant nursery my wife and I own. All the way it was "Please God, do not let this bird start to freak out". It remained calm and I am still in awe that I actually drove while a Red-tail sat perched in my lap. I could even feel the body heat of the bird through the coat it was wrapped in.

I knew my wife Beth was in one of the nursery greenhouses working, but had no idea which one. I got out of the car carrying the hawk still wrapped in my coat. I didn't want to start yelling loudly for Beth to come to help, fearing the bird might start to struggle, so I walked out into the nursery and piteously called "Beth - Help!" in the quietest yell I could conjure up. The bird did struggle slightly when it heard my voice. Amazingly, Beth heard me right away and then went to find an old dog cage to put the hawk into. After corralling the bird in the cage, we tried to think of who to call, or

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