

Newsletter

June 2026

Friends of Goose Pond



Black-necked Stilt

Friends of Goose Pond (FoGP) was established to support the goals of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area through environmental education, scientific research, and recreational activities.

We encourage you to browse our site, learn about our activities, and plan a visit.

Friends Of Goose Pond (FoGP)

Critter Corner No. 34

The Short-tailed Shrew

George Sly



Goose Pond FWA often hosts creatures that attract special attention. There are the annual visits of sandhill and whooping cranes, for example. Deer and upland game seasons draw hundreds of hunters to the area. The arrival of long-distance migrants such as the shorebirds and the biannual influx of waterfowl attract scores of wildlife watchers.

But other animals live here year-round and, though they lack the star power of some species, they play an essential role in the day-to-day ecology of the property. The short-tailed shrew is one of them.

Indiana is home to six species of shrews, all of which are tiny, secretive, mouse-sized mammals that are easy to overlook. They are related to moles and, in fact, shrews are sometimes mistaken for baby moles.

The short-tailed shrew is one of our larger shrew species. They average about four inches in total length. Their fur is velvety and silvery gray to black in color. Like other shrews in North America, they have chestnut-colored enamel on their teeth. This trait is due to iron in the tooth enamel which gives additional strength, quite useful for a voracious eater such as the short-tailed shrew.



The Short-tailed Shrew (con't)

It has a very high metabolic rate and may eat nearly its own body weight in food each day. Much of its activity is spent darting helter-skelter in a never-ending search for prey.

Short-tailed shrews occur in a variety of habitats. At GPFWA, they may be found in areas as diverse as grasslands, oldfields, brushy fields, or the wooded, reclaimed strip-mined land on the northern edge of the property. This ability to use varied habitats helps to make them plentiful. J.O. Whitaker, Jr., in his *Mammals of Indiana – A Field Guide*, states that this shrew and the white-footed mouse are likely the two most abundant mammals in the state.

The major foods of the short-tailed shrew are centipedes, crickets, earthworms, caterpillars, snails, and slugs. This species can be active at any time of the day, but based on the abundance of their skulls in owl pellets, they are primarily nocturnal.

Short-tailed shrews are often taken by cats that roam free but are seldom eaten. They have small musk glands on their sides, which make them unpalatable to the felines. Dogs and foxes may also catch them, but likewise find their taste disagreeable.

These fascinating little mammals possess two traits of particular interest. Since their eyes are quite small and somewhat degenerate, they are left with poor vision. Their highly sensitive snout and whiskers help compensate for this. But, even more unusually, they use echolocation. By sending out high-pitched ultrasonic clicks—much like bats—they can navigate through the obstacles within their home ranges.

The Short-tailed Shrew (con't)

They also possess another adaptation, which is quite rare among mammals; they are venomous. The toxin is a modified salivary enzyme produced in their submaxillary glands. The venom is introduced as the shrew chews its prey and is highly effective in immobilizing the small invertebrates it consumes. A 2009 article in the journal *Current Biology* describes the venom as similar to that of the Mexican beaded lizard (a relative of the Gila monster).

Some have wondered whether their bite might affect a human. A 1973 paper by biologist Howard Krosch (*Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Sciences*) sheds light on this question by describing the rather startling effects of a short-tailed shrew bite he suffered.

<https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1453&context=jmas>

So, once again, we've met a common GPFWA resident that is easily overlooked—or even unknown—to many visitors. With its unusual adaptations and hectic life, the short-tailed shrew deserves more attention than it gets. Beyond its peculiarities, it plays a meaningful ecological role in controlling insect and other invertebrate populations.

The shrew also forms an important food web component. They are preyed upon by birds of prey such as barred owls as well as diurnal raptors like the red-shouldered hawk. The short-tailed shrew is one more small but vital thread in the intricate web of life that defines the Goose Pond ecosystem.



Greene County Foundation



Becky and I attended the annual Greene County Foundation luncheon on April 16, 2026 and received their donation to Friends of Goose Pond.

Eddie McKim, Board Secretary

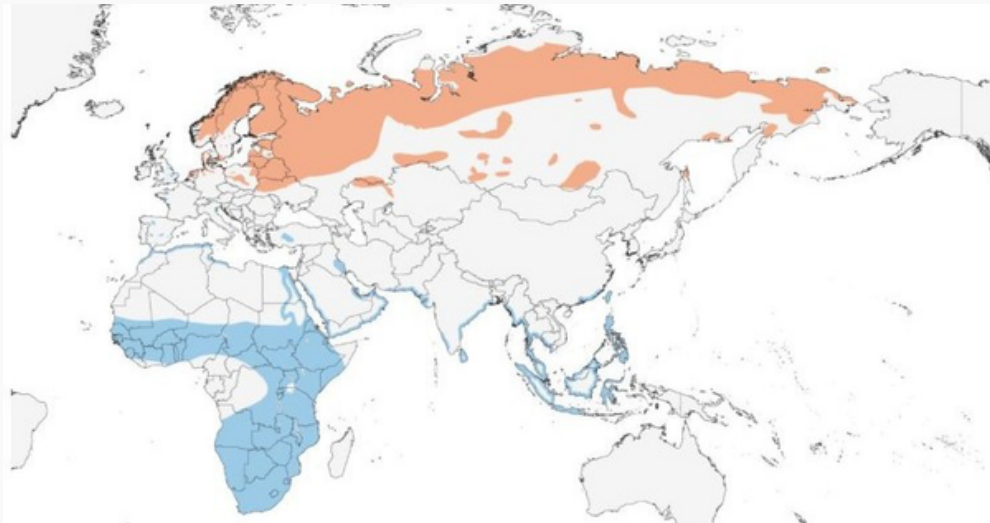


Ruff at Goose Pond

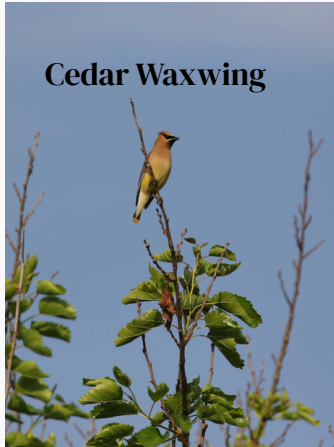
Jim Brown



This month the Goose Pond FWA (BH5S) has been hosting a Ruff which is a shorebird that normally nests in northern Europe/Asia and winters in Africa (see range map borrowed from allaboutbirds.org). Occasionally, strays show up in the US. This is the sixth record at Goose Pond and is the first time I have seen a male in breeding plumage!



Other Recent Sightings At Goose Pond



Gov Braun Visits Goose Pond



From left to right: Mayor John Preble (Linton, IN), Mitch Greenberg, Michelle Parker, Daniel Suarez, Governor Mike Braun, Wyatt Downey (Sassafras Audubon Society), Neil Brookhouse (Amos Butler Audubon Society), Kalli Dunn (Indiana DNR), Brian Vigue. Photo: Audubon Great Lakes.



Gov Braun visited Goose Pond on May 4th to celebrate the return of birds back to Indiana and the importance of protecting the places they depend on.

DNR Spraying Operations



Kalli Dunn



A big reason the habitats at Goose Pond are so important is that they are what we call early successional habitats. This means early emergent wetlands with open water and young grasslands and prairies. To maintain these habitat features, we continually reset them to hold them in time. We do this through a variety of methods, including prescribed fire, disking, and herbicide application.

Late summer is when we spend a lot of time spraying in the wetlands and grasslands to control invasive species, trees, and even some native species. Spraying herbicides can seem contrary to habitat management, but it is an essential tool. Our staff are all Certified Pesticide Applicators to ensure we use this tool safely. We also do some contracting to get these applications done, and usually, it is an aerial spraying contract. In late August or mid-September, you may see a helicopter flying over the marsh spraying invasive species like Phragmites and Reed Canary Grass, as well as aggressive native species like American Lotus and Smartweed. The goal is to control the invasive species and reduce the density of the native species, creating more openwater and maintaining the balance and quality of our early emergent wetlands.

Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area Visitor's Center Camera



Live camera view from the Visitor's Center at Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area. The property in Greene County provides quality outdoor recreational opportunities on 9,098 acres of prairie and marsh habitat. About 12,000 wildlife watchers visit each year, and the property records about 3,500 annual hunting efforts, with one hunter visiting for one day. The Visitor's Center features a panoramic observation deck, large windows to view wildlife, interpretive displays and staff, and restrooms.

This camera was made possible by the Friends of Goose Pond, <https://friendsofgoosepond.org/>.

To learn more about the property, visit <https://on.IN.gov/goosepondfwa>. Check back often for changing views

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View live at the link below:

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/fish-and-wildlife/properties/goose-pond-fwa/goose-pond-fish-and-wildlife-cameras>

Barn Owls

DNR



A Barn owl staying in the Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area's nest box has produced eggs.

The laying season for barn owls can begin as early as March, and their clutch usually contains four to seven eggs, according to state ornithologist Allisyn Gillet. Barn owls usually lay once every two to three days and start incubating their eggs right away. Once the barn owl chick is fully developed, after 29-34 days, the chick will use an egg tooth to break through the shell in a process called pipping. It can take more than 12 hours for the chick to hatch completely from the egg after pipping.

Barn owls are an endangered species in Indiana due to grassland habitat loss. Fewer than 50 nests are found annually in Indiana. To provide barn owls with secure nesting sites that are protected from predators, the DNR has built more than 400 nest boxes and erected them in barns and other structures with suitable habitat over the last 30 years.

View this video with audio on [Indiana DNR's YouTube channel](#).

Above picture from 6.1.26

Note: We have never seen a male owl at the site. The female has been incubating the eggs for much more than 34 days now. We assume that the 11 eggs are infertile, and she'll eventually abandon the nest.



Membership

Friends of Goose Pond have initiated a membership program. Members will receive a quarterly electronic newsletter as well as timely electronic notification of happenings at Goose Pond. To join via PayPal or Credit Card, please see the link below.

We support wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene County, Indiana, through environmental education, scientific research, and recreational activities and programs.

Membership Annual Dues

Individual.....	\$20.00
Family.....	\$30.00
Senior (65)	\$15.00
Youth.....	\$10.00

Membership Type: Please Circle One

Individual Family Senior Youth

Make checks payable to Friends of Goose Pond

Mail to:

Friends of Goose Pond

PO Box 56

Linton IN 47441

[Membership Link](#)

Friends of Goose Pond Shop



**Least Tern Print: 17X11 signed,
numbered and embossed: Artist
Bruce Neckar**



Shop Here For Gear



Informative Links

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[Indiana Department of Natural Resources](#)

[Indiana Department of Natural Resources Goose Pond](#)

[Aldo Leopold Foundation](#)

[State of Indiana Cooperative Invasives Management \(SICIM\)](#)

[Indiana Audubon Society](#)

About Us
Friends of Goose Pond (FoGP)
supports wildlife conservation and
habitat restoration at Goose Pond Fish
and Wildlife Area in Greene County
Indiana through environmental
education, scientific research and
recreational activities and programs.

Contact us
Friends of Goose Pond
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Linton, Indiana 47441

