



Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 38 - ISSUE 1 JAN-FEB 2010

NEWSLETTER

THORN CREEK AUDUBON AWARDS FIVE GRANTS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society has awarded five grants this year, amounting to a total of \$1,525. These grants are given to help preserve the environment and to educate others, especially young people, about the need to protect the natural world and its wildlife. TCAS gives out grants annually and also offers funds for scholarships for teachers and students in environmental studies.

The Park Forest Library was awarded a \$300 grant to help develop a butterfly garden. The garden will be just outside the Youth Services Department, convenient for learning programs for young people. Native plants that attract butterflies will be used. Butterflies will be raised indoors so children will see their growth stages, take part in their care, and can then release them into the garden.

The Forest Preserve District of Will County received a grant of \$375 to purchase a carrying case to transport a stuffed Barred Owl that is taken to a number of area schools for the district's educational program. The owl, found dead on a road, was mounted in 2008 with another TCAS grant. The custom-made carrying case is necessary to protect the owl and is also used as a display case.

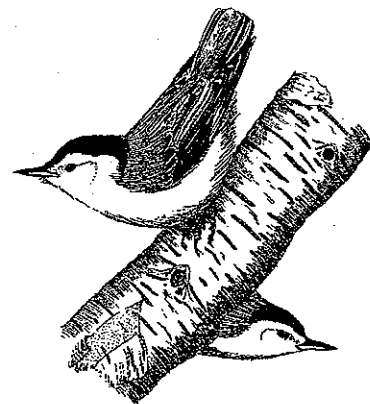
Indiana Elementary School in Park Forest received a grant of \$450 to purchase 25 pairs of boots for students to wear on field trips to the Central Park Wetlands. The boots will allow them to take an active part in the study of wetland restoration, such as planting native flora, collecting and testing water samples, and examining aquatic plants and invertebrates.

The Thorn Creek Nature Center on Monee Road received a grant of \$300 to replace an existing traveling display board that is in bad condition. This board is used when the Nature Center is participating in local events at forest preserves, libraries, and in the Nature Center itself.

The grants committee also awarded \$100 to the Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center in Olympia Fields for explorer backpacks containing tools and information so that individuals who visit the Center can explore it on their own, without having to wait for a guided activity.

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

This year's Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, is set for February 12, 13, 14, and 15. Birders of all ages may count birds at their feeders or anywhere else for at least 15 minutes one or all days, then tally the top number of birds of each species seen. This citizen-scientist effort provides valuable information. To report your count fill out the online checklist at Great Backyard Bird Count or contact Dick Riner at dickriner@gmail.com or 720-5683. One bird you may see is this White-breasted Nuthatch.



WINTER PROGRAMS

Don't forget that our programs this year are not held at the Park Forest Library but at the Matteson Elementary School on Main Street.

Wednesday, January 6, 2010, 7 p.m.

BOBOLINKING PROJECT

Kim Ramirez

Kim Meyer Ramirez, a graduate student from Governors State University in Environmental Biology, will present results from the Bobolinking Project. This project provided an opportunity for high school students to learn about one of the rarest of North America's major biomes, the tallgrass prairie. At one time, tallgrass prairies dominated over 60 percent of the landscape in Illinois. Today, less than one hundredth of one percent of tallgrass prairie remains. This habitat is an important breeding ground for many grassland bird species, which are among the fastest and most consistently declining birds in North America. The Bobolinking Project is part of Audubon's TogetherGreen initiative with funding provided by Toyota. Students participated in two half-day workshops, a field experiment, and a restoration workday at Bartel Grassland and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie to learn about this rare ecosystem, its bird life and the threats to its existence. Project activities took place from May through August, 2009.

Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 7 p.m.

THE CRANES OF RUSSIA

Bobbi Asher

This presentation describes efforts by the International Crane Foundation and other

international groups to help Russia's crane population survive. Bobbi Asher will talk about her trip to Russia with George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin. They traveled to a region of the Russian Far East that is rarely visited by westerners and saw four species of cranes in the wild, a crane breeding center and several nature reserves, including the first privately funded nature reserve in Russia. These reserves provide critical nesting habitat for the endangered Red Crowned Cranes and is a migration stopover used by five species of cranes, including the very endangered Siberian Cranes. Bobbi will talk about the efforts being made by international groups to help these species survive. A lifelong Chicago resident, she is on the board of the Chicago Audubon Society.

Wednesday, March 3, 2010, 7 p.m.

NATURE AROUND THE CHICAGO AREA

John Denk

Photographer John Denk will show photos of flora and fauna taken in some of the natural areas in the Chicago region. The program will include many plants and flowers along with mushrooms, insects, birds, and reptiles that can be seen here. John is a Bartel volunteer and a member of the Illinois Mycological Association.

Wednesday, April 6, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

ANNUAL DINNER AT FAITH UNITED PROTESTANT CHURCH

Program by the Illinois Raptor Center

More information in the next newsletter or call
Charles Habecker, 747-6061

ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE UNDERWAY

Native plants make gardening easier because they can thrive without extra watering or big doses of fertilizer. Thorn Creek Audubon's annual native plant sale is a convenient way to buy these hardy plants that will brighten your garden from April to October.



Plant sale chairman Dory Grosche will be mailing order forms the first week of January to everyone who bought native plants last year. Forms will also be available at the January 6 and the February 3 regular meetings of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society, and they may also be requested by calling Dory at 481-3166. Forms must be returned by Friday, Feb. 19. Pick-up date for the plants will be June 5 at Isaac Walton Preserve in Homewood.

As in past years, a variety of plants – trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials – will be available. Many will come from Possibility Place, the regular supplier, with others will come from Keith Nowakowski, a landscape designer and author of *Native Plants in the Home Landscape*. The plant sale is one of TCAS' major fundraisers and helps support the grants and scholarships given by TCAS as well as its education programs.

SHOP AT JEWEL TO RAISE FUNDS FOR AUDUBON

Thorn Creek Audubon Society members and friends can help raise funds for Audubon programs by shopping at any Jewel-Osco store on any or all of six dates in January. All you have to do is shop on January 11, 12 and 13 or January 18, 19 and 20 and bring along a Shop and Share Identification Slip each time. Jewel-Osco will contribute 5% of your total purchases to TCAS.

You must present the coupon to the cashier when you shop, and the cashier will fill in the amount you bought. You may duplicate the coupon and pass coupons out to friends and family. The more people who shop on these January days, the more funds TCAS will have to promote conservation and environmental education programs. Mark your calendar and don't forget to shop. If you have any questions, call Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166.

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|  | SHOP & SHARE IDENTIFICATION SLIP | | AMOUNT OF PURCHASE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| GROUP NUMBER | STORE NUMBER | | DOLLARS | | CENTS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>GROUP: Thorn Creek Audubon Society</p> <p>YOUR SHOP & SHARE DAYS: January 11-13 & 18-20, 2010</p> <p>SIGNATURE _____</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>PLEASE SIGN THIS SLIP AND TURN IT IN TO YOUR CHECKER WHEN YOU SHOP. PARTICIPANTS CAN MAKE PURCHASES AT ANY JEWEL-OSCO ON THE DATE ABOVE. IDENTIFICATION SLIPS ARE NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN FRONT OF ANY JEWEL-OSCO.</p> | | | | | |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

WINTER FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, January 23, 2010

STARVED ROCK FOR EAGLE VIEWING

Charlie Habecker – (708) 747-6061

The Starved Rock trip will proceed from the Park Forest Library at 9 a.m. or participants can meet at the Park from 10:30 - 11:00. Expect to see (in addition to Eagles) a variety of ducks including Mergansers, Golden-eye and Bufflehead. Always some good winter birds in the trees too, woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, and others.

Saturday, February 20, 2010, 9 a.m.

OWL WALK AT BARTEL GRASSLAND

Wannetta Elliott

Meet at the Bartel parking lot at the corner of Flossmoor Road and Central Avenue at 9 a.m. to see nesting Great Horned Owls, Long-eared Owls and perhaps more.

SAVE THE DATE - FEBRUARY 27

Hear the inspiring stories of the Habitat Project's 2010 Conservation Leadership Awards at the Brookfield Zoo Discovery Center. New U. S. Representative Mike Quigley will be featured speaker. For more information contact Dick Riner at dickriner@gmail.com or (708) 720-5683.

SCOUT PROJECT ADDS MORE BLUEBIRD NESTING BOXES

Sean Hosty and Boy Scout Troop 10 of Mokena have added 25 more bluebird nesting boxes to those in the South Suburban area. The boxes have been placed on property on the east side of Harlem Avenue owned by ITW of Frankfort and also on Village of Frankfort property behind the water tower on Route 30 at Pfeiffer Road. Additional houses will be placed in the spring.

Kay McNeil, a member of the Special Projects Committee of TCAS, has been working closely with Sean, giving advice and helping with the establishment of new bluebird trails. She is now seeking volunteers to help monitor the boxes during the bluebirds' nesting season.

The Eastern Bluebird is seldom seen today, due mostly to the loss of adequate nesting habitat. Luckily bluebirds are willing to nest in man-made boxes, so next summer people may see bluebirds in the Frankfort-Mokena area. Volunteers willing to help monitor boxes may contact Kay McNeil at (815) 469-2177.

Judy Pollock (left) of Audubon Chicago Region gives Bartel Prairie Scouts tips on grassland restoration in winter. Scouts (from left) are Bob Harrison, Judy Gleitsman, Joseph Furlong, Mary Anne McLean, Glenn Hopkins (behind Judi Murphy) and Joan O'Keefe. Story on page 5.
Photo by Dick Riner.



PRAIRIE SCOUTS STAY BUSY IN ALL SEASONS

The Prairie Scouts, those dedicated folks who patrol their sections of the Bartel Grassland during spring, summer and fall to identify the plants in the area, learned recently that there are also things they can do in winter to continue the renovation of the 640 acres.

Judy Pollock, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Chicago region, spent a day in early November walking sections of the grasslands with a dozen Prairie Scouts. Along the way she pointed out both desirable and undesirable plants in their fall attire. Plants that have gone to seed may appear very different from the way they looked when growing last spring.

For example, she pointed out the Sky Blue Aster, with its fluffy seed head, noting that it is the rarest aster at Bartel. Other asters include the Smooth Blue Aster and the Heath Aster.

"There are no bad asters," she assured the group as she directed them to begin collecting aster seeds. They were instructed to leave about one-fourth of the seeds on the plants so they would be scattered nearby. Later the Scouts will sow the seeds in another location, possibly a spot recently burned, to start a new section of desirable prairie and grassland plants.

Judy was happy to find a patch of Sky Blue Aster and Swamp Milkweed that was spreading. Both Swamp and Common Milkweeds are welcome plants in the grassland.

Goldenrod, however, is "a very bad actor," she said. "Tall Goldenrod will blanket the area and crowd out everything else. We try to mow the goldenrod before it sets its seeds."

Another bad actor is Reed Canary Grass, which, she pointed out, is still green when everything else looks dead. "Preventing Reed Canary Grass from taking over the whole place is our main goal," she said. This plant often has to be killed with herbicides.

Among the very desirable plants are the sedges. They propagate by rhizomes, underground runners that help beat the weeds. Memory aids, like the rhyme "sedges have edges" help identify the plants the Scouts want to encourage. Though sedges look like grasses, the lower edge of the leaf is triangular-shaped and can be felt easily with the fingers.

"We are hoping to restore a sedge meadow, which will also have wild irises," Judy said. Bartel Steward Dick Riner noted that volunteers planted 350 Blue Flags (wild irises) in 2009.

Judy pointed out an orange patch of Little Bluestem. "Little Bluestem is the workhorse of the Prairie, and sedges are the workhorse of the wetlands," she said. The Bartel acres include some wet prairie as well as grasslands. The restored area has provided nesting sites for many grassland birds whose numbers are dropping because of lack of habitat, such as Bobolinks, Henslow's Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks.

The Prairie Scouts, many of whom are members of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society, take specific sections of Bartel and report on the kinds of plants growing there. Later undesirable plants can be destroyed. The scouts will also spread seeds of desirable plants at the right time.

Riner has six teams of Prairie Scouts but would like to have six more. To become part of a team, call Riner at 720-5683 or email him at dickriner@gmail.com.

Joan Crabb

TCAS, PARK FOREST, PARTNERS FOR YOUTH EDUCATION

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society will be partnering with the Village of Park Forest and the Park Forest Recreation and Parks Department to provide even more environmental education for children in School Districts 162 and 163. The partnership is coming about because of the renovation of the Park Forest Aqua Center, which will include a science classroom that these students and others can use.

Students in districts 162 and 163 are already working on environmental education with ME4E (Multidisciplinary Education for the Environment), a private educational group that has previously worked with TCAS. Much of their study involves the Central Park Wetland. Now the ME4E staff will be able to bring students right from the wetlands into a classroom with a science laboratory, a projector, and a microscope. A woodworking area will also be provided.

"We will even have storage space for the 25 pairs of boots one of our schools bought with a TCAS grant so students can better study wetland renovation," said Michelle O'Connor, one of the ME4E staff and also a TCAS member.

She said this exciting new project really began when ME4E and TCAS helped District 163 fifth graders build the bat houses now installed at the wetland. TCAS member Sidney Duke drew up the plans for the bat houses for the students to assemble, and the Park Forest Recreation and Parks Department provided space in the Aqua Center for the youngsters to work. The project was very popular with the students, O'Connor said, and they are asking ME4E for more such programs.

The new classroom will allow a facility that has only been open about three months of the year to be used year-round. O'Connor said the unique idea of multiuse was a major part of Recreation Director John Joyce's renovation plan. It can provide space for both in-school and after school programs and can extend the school day for some students.

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

There are two ways to join the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. Choose your way and mail in your application.

Dual Membership: National Audubon and Thorn Creek Audubon

National Audubon membership supports environmental concerns and wildlife protection at state, national and international levels, with a small percentage shared with our local chapter. You receive *Audubon* magazine and our TCAS chapter newsletter. Introductory offer – 1 year \$20. Local Chapter code COZG5907.

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Make check payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, Membership Data Center, P. O. box 422246-2246, Palm Coast, Florida, 32142

Thorn Creek Audubon Society – Chapter Only Membership

Chapter only dues remain at home and support environmental efforts in our local community. Members receive our chapter newsletter. Annual Dues \$15. Sustaining Membership \$50.

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Make check payable to Thorn Creek Audubon and mail to P. O. Box 895, Park Forest, IL 60466

FIELD NOTES

TO REPORT SIGHTINGS CALL
MARY WHITE AT 708-396-0794

OCTOBER 09

10/23 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch at his Park Forest Feeder.

Tony Kurth

10/24 2 Juncos in her Crete yard.

Deb Marberg

10/30 1 female Ring-necked Pheasant flushed in Winnebago Park in Park Forest.

Karen Taylor

NOVEMBER 09

11/03 At least 250 Sandhill Cranes going over Park Forest in 2 separate flocks.

Joan Crabb

11/15 1 Tufted Titmouse in her rural Crete yard, the first in 4 years.

Kathy Bader

11/20 2 groups of Sandhill Cranes, 38 and 78, over Park Forest.

Elise Ziemann

11/27 5 Common Loons at Saganashkee Slough; 1 immature Red-headed Woodpecker and at least 20 Blue Jays, Little Red Schoolhouse; 37 Gadwalls, Crawdad Slough; a steady stream of Sandhill Cranes going over all morning at the Little Red Schoolhouse.

Mary White

11/27 Sandhill Cranes continuously flying over her Crete backyard all weekend.

Deb Marberg

11/28 1 Red-tailed Hawk in a tree in her Crete back yard.

Deb Marberg

11/28 250 Sandhill Cranes on the ground at Bartel North.

Dick Riner

DECEMBER 09

12/04 1 Cooper's Hawk regularly roosting in a pine tree in his Mokena back yard.

Bern O'Reilly

12/11 1 Great Blue Heron in a snowy ditch near the Dewey Helmick trail.

Elise Ziemann

12/14 Seven Northern Harriers at Bartel.

Michelle O'Connor

BIRDSEED SALE A SUCCESS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society's annual birdseed sale was very successful this year, according to chair Kathy Bader. On Saturday, October 17, 81 customers picked up approximately 8,422 pounds of birdseed and 43 cases of suet cakes at the former Marshall Field store in Park Forest. Profits from the sale will go to support Audubon projects, such as providing grants and scholarships for groups working to protect the environment and for educational materials for young people, including the *Audubon Adventures* newspapers for elementary students.

Many volunteers made the day a success. TCAS volunteers and members of Boy Scout Troop 315 of Peotone loaded the seed in customers' cars. John Joyce, Park Forest Parks and Recreation Director, and several other village employees helped by providing a dry and secure storage area for the birdseed, a tractor and driver to unload the delivery truck and manpower to separate the types of seed from the delivery pallets.

"We want to say a special "Thank You" to our customers for their continuing support of TCAS and for the generous time and effort of our good-natured volunteers. They made a weighty job enjoyable," Bader said, speaking for herself and committee members Al Thomas and Bob Vance.



Thorn Creek
AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 895 - Park Forest, IL 60466

STD RATE
U.S. Postage
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Permit #1
Park Forest, IL 60466

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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| Jim Murphy | 672-4823 | murphyjames823@aol.com |
| Dory Grosche | 481-3166 | dorygro@sbcglobal.net |

| | |
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| Education Chair | Mary Anne McLean |
| Conservation Chair | Judy Gleisman |
| Publications Chair | Jim Murphy |
| Grants and Scholarships | Bob Pierce |
| Special Projects | Aura Duke |
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| Social Chair | Judi Murphy |
| Ways and Means | Dory Grosche |

| NEWSLETTER STAFF |
|--|
| <i>Editor: Joan Crabb Database: Sue Putnam</i> |
| <i>The mission of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment and appreciation of birds, to educate adults and children concerning our natural environment, to preserve, protect, and restore wildlife habitat, and to create awareness of local conservation issues.</i> |
| This Newsletter is the official publication of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society, an Illinois not-for-profit organization dedicated to conservation and environmental education. The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily endorsed by the TCAS Board or the National Audubon Society. |
| We welcome editorial proposals and submissions. Please direct all correspondence to: Joan Crabb, Editor, 201 Krotiak Rd., Park Forest, IL 60466 708-481-4962. jbcraab7@att.net website - thorncreekaudubonsociety.org |