

Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 39 - ISSUE 2 MARCH - APRIL 2011

NEWSLETTER

SPRING BIRD COUNT SET FOR MAY 7

Again this year the Thorn Creek Audubon Society will participate in the annual state-wide Spring Bird Count. Volunteers will be needed for this important event. Some participants will be hiking while identifying and tabulating birds seen in the fields and forests, while others will be tallying birds at feeders.

Compared to the Christmas Bird Count, which covers a territory within a circle 15 miles in diameter, the spring count encompasses a much larger area. TCAS will be canvassing the eastern half of Will County from the Indiana State Line to Highway 45 on the west. The rest of the county will be covered by members of Will County Audubon in the Joliet area. The count period coincides with the peak time for the spring migration of birds in the Midwest, making this count a most challenging and exciting event. Birders will be in the field from early morning until evening.

A potluck dinner for all participants will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, May 9, at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena, after which the results of the count will be compiled. During March and April teams of birders will be organized and assigned to the specific territories within Will County to be canvassed.

To participate either as a field observer or a feeder watcher, call Bob Harrison (708-889-9693) or Aura Duke (708-748-6407).

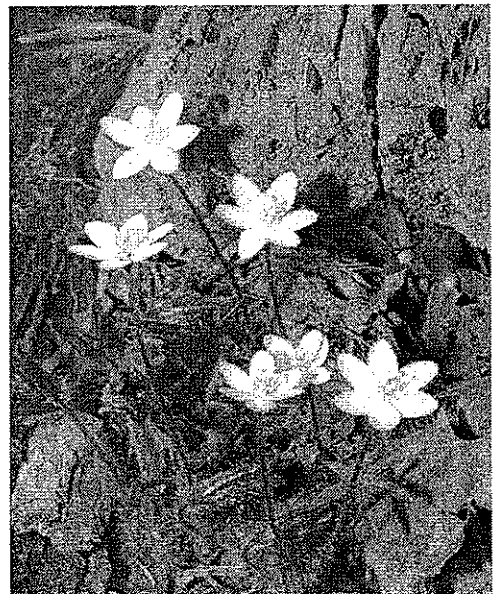
Aura Duke

BLUEBIRDS ARRIVING HERE BY MID-MARCH

Every year, just before the first day of spring, several intrepid bluebirds will be spotted checking out the nesting boxes along the four bluebird trails located at Goodenow Grove Preserve, Monee reservoir, the Park Forest Wetland, and the Glenwood School Campus.

The official monitoring of the 106 boxes will begin on the first week in April. Twenty-five Thorn Creek Audubon Society volunteers will be checking the boxes on a weekly during the nesting season.

During March the boxes will have to be inspected and cleaned out, wintering mice will be evicted, some minor repairs may be needed, while some boxes may need to be relocated. To assist with these chores, please call Aura Duke at 708-748-6407.



The hepatika blooms in mid-March and comes in a variety of colors, from white to blue-violet or pink. It can have from 5 to 11 petals.

Photo by John Denk

SPRING PROGRAMS

Our March 2 program will be held at the Park Forest Library.

Wednesday, March 2

HELPING LOCAL MIGRATORY BIRDS

Judy Pollock

Judy Pollock is Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Chicago Region and a coordinator of the Illinois Important Bird Areas program. She will show slides of some of the migrants that pass through our community and discuss their natural history. She will also explain local efforts to conserve them and suggest ways that we can help them survive their difficult journey as they pass through our yards. Outdoor cats and problem windows are some of the obstacles they face; landscaping for migrant birds will also be discussed.

Tuesday, April 5, 6 p.m.

ANNUAL DINNER

MEET JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

See story on Page 3

Wednesday, May 4, 7 p.m.

Birds of the Rio Grande Valley

Larry Layne

TCAS member Larry Layne will give a pictorial presentation on Birds of the Rio Grande Valley. For the last 5 years he has lived as a Winter Texan in his home in Pharr, a small town about 7 miles north of Mexico. He birds 3-4 days a week throughout the valley. His favorite places include the Santa Ana and Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Reserves and Estero Llano Grande and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Parks. His observations include such ABA rarities as the Crimson-collard Grosbeak, Black-vented Oriole and White-throated Thrush.

The Feb. 2 hummingbird program by Vernon Kleen was cancelled due to weather but has been rescheduled for September.

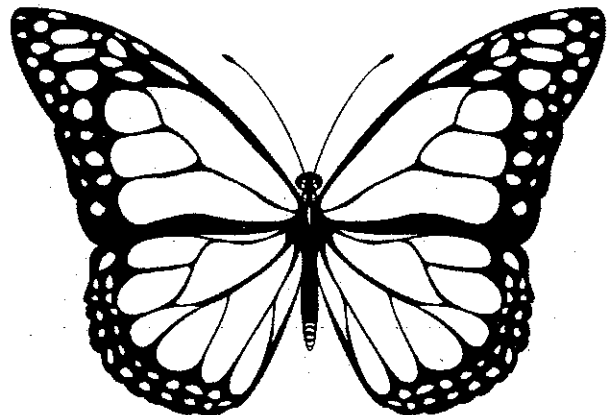
BUTTERFLY EXPERT TO TALK AT IRONS OAKS

A well-known conservation biologist and butterfly expert will give a program on butterflies on April 14 at 7 p.m. at the Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center on Western Avenue in Olympia Fields. The program is co-sponsored by the Thorn Creek Audubon Society and the Friends of the Indian Boundary Prairies. It is open to the public and free of charge.

Doug Taron, Curator of Biology and Vice-President of Conservation and Research at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum of Chicago, will talk on "Butterflies of the American Prairies: the Ecology of Butterflies in the Chicago Region." Taron has been Curator of Biology since the museum's opening in 1999 and also manages the 2,700 square-foot Judy Istock Butterfly Haven, the only permanent year-round exhibit of live butterflies in Illinois, with 1,000 butterflies.

Among other duties, he also restores endangered and threatened butterfly species to their native habitats and recently received the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Conservation Award for this work.

The Indian Boundaries Prairies in Markham, the largest original high-quality grassland remnants in Illinois, have many butterflies and much plant diversity.



Regional storyteller to perform

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON COMES TO TCAS DINNER

Through the artistry of Brian "Fox" Ellis, storyteller and actor, John James Audubon will come to visit at the Thorn Creek Audubon Society's annual dinner on April 5. Ellis portrays Audubon in meticulously researched monologues drawn from his journals, essays and letters. He has performed as Audubon in museums, nature centers, schools and libraries across the United States, including at Audubon's home in Henderson, Kentucky. Ellis is also producing a documentary film about the great naturalist and artist.

The audience may find itself spending time in the studio of the great wildlife artist or listening to tales of his adventures as he traveled across North America to draw detailed pictures of 435 birds. Or Audubon may be bringing to life the bird behavior he saw in the 1820s and 1830s, perhaps discussing the great migrations or the habits and habitats of the birds of this new land.

Ellis, a native of Peoria, became a storyteller when he was a schoolteacher, to help his students grasp the concepts he was teaching. Since then he has developed a repertoire of more than 300 stories he tells to both young people and adults.

These include tales of Abraham Lincoln, poet Walt Whitman, Charles Darwin and the voyage of the Beagle, explorers Lewis and Clark, Edgar Allen Poe, Indian Chief Black Hawk, and a view of American history while steamboating down the Illinois River with Mark Twain.

The TCAS dinner, held at Faith United Protestant Church in Park Forest, is open to everyone, and tickets can be secured by mailing in the coupon below. A copy of the coupon is also acceptable.

THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

Tuesday, April 5, 2011, 6:00 p.m.

Faith United Protestant Church, Park Forest, Illinois

Number of adults attending at \$15 per person _____

Number of students and children attending at \$10 each _____

Total amount enclosed _____

Your name _____

Address _____

City-State/Zip _____

Phone _____

The deadline for receiving ticket orders is April 1. Make your checks payable to Thorn Creek Audubon Society and mail to Charles Habecker at 2811 Western Ave., Park Forest, IL 60466. You may also call Habecker at 747-6061. If you want tickets mailed to you please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Otherwise you can pick them up at the door on the night of the dinner. Tickets will also be sold at the March 2 Audubon meeting.

FIELD TRIPS

BARTEL OWL WALK RESCHEDULED

The Bartel Owl Walk scheduled on Feb. 12 was cancelled due to snow. It will be rescheduled in March and announced on the TCAS website.

Saturday, April 2, 8 a.m.

MCGINNIS SLOUGH

Mary Anne McLean – 708-672-5459

Al Thomas 708-957-9847 or

email woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

We will be looking for grebes, waders such as egrets and herons, and other early migrant waterfowl. Meet at the McGinnis Slough parking lot, about 137th St. on the west side of LaGrange Rd. (Rt. 45).

Wednesday, April 6, meet at the Park Forest

Library parking lot at 7 p.m.

MOMENCE SOD FARMS

AL THOMAS – 708-957-9847 or

email woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

This is a new site so check with Al beforehand to be sure of the date. It should give us migrating shorebirds and sandpipers, such as killdeer, yellowlegs and peeps of all kinds.

Saturday, April 9, 8 a.m.

MONEE RESERVOIR & RACCOON GROVE

Charles Habecker – 708-747-6061

Raccoon Grove is at Rt. 50 (Governor's Highway) at Pauling Rd., a mile south of Monee. Monee Reservoir is a mile west of Raccoon Grove over I-57 and south a quarter mile. Meet at Monee Reservoir to see possible bluebirds, green herons, red-headed woodpeckers, teal and other migrating ducks as well as songbirds. Then we will go to Raccoon Grove to see spring wildflowers.

Saturday, April 9, 1 to 4 p.m.

EARTH DAY AT FRANKFORT SQUARE

TCAS will have an exhibit on bluebirds. Go North on Harlem Ave. to Benton Dr. (a stop light), turn Left and go three blocks through a residential area to the Nature Center.

Wednesday, April 13, 8 a.m.

WOLF LAKE/CALUMET/EGGERS WOODS

Pat Strange - 219-923-5164 or

Al Thomas – 708-957-9847

At Wolf Lake we should see migrating waterfowl such as swans, a variety of diving and tipping ducks, and perhaps some early warblers. At Eggers Wood we may see yellow-headed blackbirds and early songbird migrants. Wolf Lake is at 127th St. and Burnham Ave. Go to the north parking lot. To car pool call Al Thomas.

Saturday, April 16, 8 a.m.

INDIANA DUNES, WILSON SHELTER

Mary Anne McLean - 708-672-5459

This area is a migrant flyway. On the trail around the marsh we should see migrating songbirds, such as towhees and thrushes, and possibly Bald Eagles. To car pool or for directions call Mary Anne or Al.

Wednesday, April 20, 8 a.m.

Car pool from Park Forest Library, 7 a.m.

MILLER BEACH

Al Thomas – 708-957-9847

At Miller Beach and adjacent Paul Douglas Preserve, we may see woodpeckers, songbird migrants and diving ducks. To car pool or get directions call Al.

Wednesday, April 27

Car Pool 7 a.m. from Park Forest Library

Le Vasseur Park

Mary Anne McLean – 708-672-5459

We will be watching for warblers and many other migrating birds along the Kankakee River. To reach the parking lot, drive south on Rt. 50 from the intersection with I-57,

Spring Appeal Begins

MIGRATIONS THEME OF *AUDUBON ADVENTURES*

Did you know that it takes three generations of Monarch butterflies to complete the round trip migration from northern breeding grounds (e.g. Park Forest area) to their winter hideout in Mexico and back? The third, fourth, fifth or sixth grader who benefits from your donation to the *Audubon Adventures* Fund will be able to tell you all about it!

This year's *Audubon Adventures* series delves into this "Incredible Insect Journey" in detail, as part of a study of migration, which also includes a unit on birds and one on sea turtles and grey whales. Each issue boasts copious information and many beautiful illustrations in a four page format that unfolds into a 15" x22" poster, featuring explanatory maps, diagrams, quizzes, and tips on how young people can become citizen scientists by, for example, observing Monarchs and relaying their observations to organizations that track and seek to protect them.

To *Audubon Adventures* friends, old and new, our spring appeal, which will fund purchase of materials for the 2011-2012 school year, is now getting underway. We hope that you will join us in this effort to stimulate appreciation for nature and the environment in our young people encouraging them to blossom into conservationists!

The cost of one *Audubon Adventures* classroom kit is \$41.50. Each set of materials includes four editions of the student mini-magazine (32 copies of each) and a classroom manual for the teacher, packed with a wealth of supplementary information and activity suggestions. Contributions, which are of course welcome in any amount, may be designated to support a particular classroom, group or community.

To contribute, please write your check to *Thorn Creek Audubon Adventures Fund*, and address *c/o Sue Putnam, 3704 West 213th St., Matteson, IL 60443*. Also, if you are, or know of a teacher or group leader of children in grades 3 to 6 who would like to receive *Audubon Adventures*, please let Sue know, (708) 747-1986, or sputter1986@sbcglobal.net.

Mary Anne McLean

SPRING FIELD TRIPS continued

past Armour Rd. and Mulligan St. to North St., turn right on North St. and follow to dead end at Kennedy. Turn left on Kennedy and go two miles to Fifth St., just before the YMCA (1075 Kennedy Dr). Go ¼ mile to parking lot.

Saturday, April 30

7 a.m. at Park Forest Library to car pool

Sagawau Nature Preserve

Al Thomas – 708-957-9847

We should see colorful warblers such as Redstarts and Black and Whites and many other migrating birds. This Cook County Nature Preserve borders the I & M Canal.

Saturday, April 30, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

EARTH DAY AT PLUM CREEK NATURE

PRESERVE AT GOODENOW GROVE

TCAS will have an exhibit on wildflowers of Raccoon Grove. Goodenow Grove is 2 miles east of Rt. 394 on Goodenow Rd.

Wednesday, May 4, 9 a.m.

GIBSON WOODS

Pat Strange – 219-923-5164

We should see white-throated sparrows, scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings, hermit thrushes and more. Take Rt. 30 to Indianapolis Blvd., go North to 165th St., then East to Parrish Ave. Turn north, go to the end of Parrish to the Nature Center. To car pool call Al Thomas.

Good News in 2011

CHRISTMAS COUNT REVERSES DOWNHILL TREND

The following report by Christmas Bird Count Chair Bob Harrison brings the good news that the number of birds spotted this year is reversing the 20-year trend of dropping numbers of birds and species spotted:

"I am pleased to report that the downward trend seen in results for the Christmas Bird Count in recent years has been reversed this year. There was a significant increase in the number of species spotted, as well as the total number of birds seen. Our volunteers recorded 62 different species, as compared to 53 last year, and 8,103 total birds, up from 7,218 last year.

"The number of volunteers was up slightly, to 50 from 48, but the areas were nearly identical to last year, and volunteer numbers should not have been the reason for the increase. The weather was warmer than the extremely cold temperatures we had last year, but with a high of 26 and a low of 15 and a 10-20 MPH wind, the day was still pretty cold. One possible factor could be that, just two days earlier, we had temperatures of over 50 degrees. Most rivers and many ponds had open water, which should help to attract birds.

"There were six species from last year's count that were not seen this year, which means we saw 15 species not reported last year. We had two sightings that had never been recorded for our area. Jim Kelly and Judith Wallace spotted ten Eurasian Tree Sparrows, and Kathy Dehn and Sue Zeleg saw two Gadwall. Kathy and Sue also had the highest total of species seen by any group, 34. Other unusual sightings included a Chipping Sparrow and a Bald Eagle.

"Five other species were seen in record numbers for our count. The most significant jump was in the number of American Robins. Only 10 were seen last year:

This Year	Previous Record
183 American Robins	73 in 2005
127 Downy Woodpeckers	117 in 2010
68 Red-bellied Woodpeckers	59 in 1994
2 Northern Pintail	1 in 1983
331 House Finches	327 in 2006

"The contribution of our 16 feeder watchers should also be mentioned. Combined, they spotted 895 birds of 34 different species, including 5 Common Redpoll, which were not reported by any other group.

"Dory Grosche does a great job every year of contacting all the volunteer feeder watchers, compiling their results and getting the information to me for the count totals. This year she had the results to me two days after the count.

Also Aura Duke and Al Thomas put in a lot of work organizing the paperwork and contacting the field participants for the count. Thanks to all who made the 2011 Christmas count a success."



BALD EAGLE

Bob Harrison

FIELD NOTES

TO REPORT SIGHTINGS CALL
MARY WHITE AT 396-0794

NOVEMBER 2010

11/23 1 Bald Eagle feeding on a squirrel near Holly Lane and Vollmer Road, Flossmoor.
Sally Kruger

DECEMBER 2010

12/25 1 Bald Eagle feeding on a bird in her front yard spruce tree, Homewood.
Sally Kruger

12/28 5 Bobwhite Quail at Pauling and Ridgeland.

Jon Panozzo

JANUARY 2011

01/04 3 Northern Harriers at Offner and Egyptian Trail.

Jon Panozzo

01/06 1 Northern Shrike, Tinley Creek Bike Trail, near 135th and Harlem.

Mary White

01/21 Nuthatches, Downey Woodpeckers, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1 White-throated Sparrow, flocks of Juncos with a possible Oregon Junco mixed in, Cardinals, Pine Siskins, House Finches, 1 Fox Sparrow and 1 Cooper's Hawk at her Park Forest feeder.

Elise Ziemann

01/25 About 30 Scaup, 3 pairs American Black Ducks, about 13 coots. Kankakee Dam.

Mary White

01/27 Large flocks of Juncos, pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Northern Flickers, 5 House Finches, 5 Cardinals, 1 Hawk, and 3 Doves all observed regularly at her Steger feeders.

Pauline Small

FEBRUARY 2011

02/01 75 to 100 American Robins in a tree in her Matteson front yard flocking like Starlings.
Dory Grosche

02/03 Just after the blizzard hit, 10 to 12 Wild Turkeys under her birdfeeder in rural Crete.

Anne Rosen

02/04 1 Bald Eagle seen from the Pulaski Bridge flying down the Cal Sag Canal.

April LeClaire

02/06 More snow brought 12 to 14 Wild Turkeys to forage under her birdfeeder in rural Crete.

Anne Rosen

PLANT SALE FUNDRAISER TO BE OFFERED IN MAY

Thorn Creek Audubon Society is not holding its regular native plant sale this year but instead is sponsoring a fundraiser with the Smits Farms nursery.

A sheet of coupons will be enclosed in the May-June newsletter which when used with a purchase at Smits Farms will benefit TCAS. For each \$10 spent, Smits Farms will donate \$3 to TCAS.

Located at 3437 East Sauk Trail, Chicago Heights, Smits Farms offers perennials, garden vegetables and a large selection of annuals. TCAS will hold the native plant sale again in 2012.



These Spring Beauties are found in Illinois woodlands, usually blooming in mid-March.

Photo by John Denk



Thorn Creek
AUDUBON SOCIETY

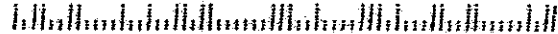
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The mission of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment and appreciation of birds, to educate adults and children concerning our natural environment, to preserve, protect, and restore wildlife habitat, and to create awareness of local conservation issues.

The 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:
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