



# Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 38 - ISSUE 2 MARCH - APRIL 2010

NEWSLETTER

## TIME TO SIGN UP FOR SPRING BIRD COUNT

Volunteers who want to participate in the annual Spring Bird Count on Saturday, May 8, should sign up soon. This is a challenging event for birders, as the spring migration in the Midwest should be at or near its peak during May. The count is an important source of data in the study of bird population, migration patterns and trends in North America.

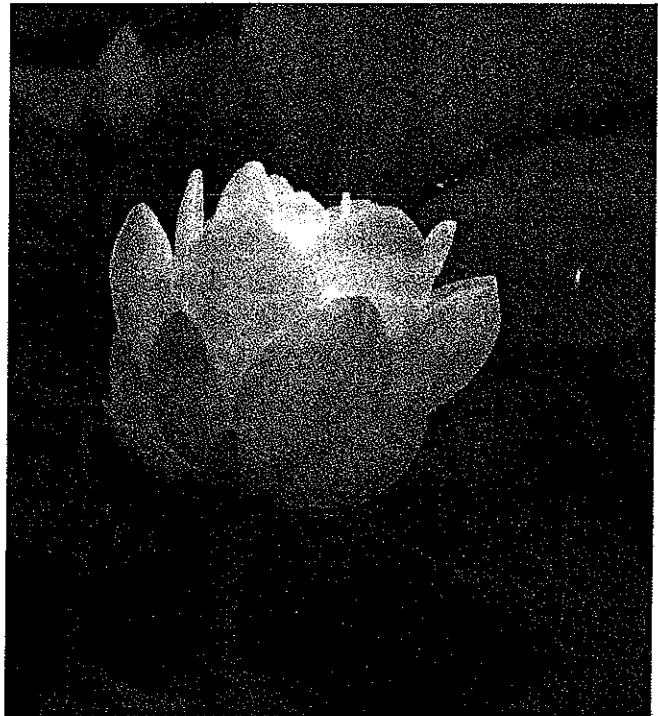
The area to be covered by Thorn Creek Audubon members will be the eastern half of Will County from the Indiana state line to Wolf Road. Many volunteers will be needed for this important survey, some willing to hike while identifying and counting birds outdoors and others watching yard feeders and tallying species seen there. A potluck supper for all participants will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 10, at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena. The bird tally will be compiled after the dinner.

To join in this statewide event, co-sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Audubon Society, call Bob Harrison, (708) 889-9693 or Aura Duke, (708) 747-6407. Birders can also sign up at the March TCAS meeting or at the annual dinner, which is also the April TCAS meeting.

## MONITORS NEEDED FOR BLUEBIRD TRAILS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society is actively promoting the nesting of Eastern Bluebirds in the area. Four trails with a total of 108 boxes have been established for some time. These are Goodenow Grove (50 boxes), Monee Reservoir (20 boxes), Park Forest Central Park Wetland (24 boxes), and Glenwood School campus (14 boxes). Additional boxes are at Governors State University campus, Raccoon Grove, Bartel Grassland, Old Plank Trail, Peotone Park and rural Frankfort.

All boxes must be monitored during the Bluebird's nesting season, which includes keeping track of the numbers of active nests, eggs, and fledglings and maintaining the boxes. To help with this crucial project please call Aura Duke at (708) 748-6407.



*This American Lotus, an aquatic plant, is one of the many photographs by John Denk that will be shown on the March 3 program. See page 2.*

**DON'T FORGET ANNUAL DINNER APRIL 6 - See Page 3**

## SPRING PROGRAMS

Don't forget that our programs this year are now held at the Matteson Elementary School on Main Street.

**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 started doing nature photography in the 1970s. As a child he was interested in nature, and a neighbor once gave him copies of *National Geographic* magazine. That combination established his interest in nature photography. As an adult, he became interested in wild foods. One winter he saw mushrooms growing on a nearby tree, then learned they were actually edible. That got him interested in photographing mushrooms and other fungi.

He has had photographs published in various area magazines, including *Chicago Wilderness*, *Chicagoland Gardening*, *The Journal of Wild Mushrooming*, and *City Talk*, published by Chicago Public Television Station WTTW.

John is a volunteer at the Bartel Grasslands and a member of the Illinois Mycological Association. He started by volunteering with Karl Bartel when Bartel was caretaker of the Markham Prairies. He said Bartel, after whom the grasslands is named, was one of the first persons to recognize that area's importance for birds.

**Tuesday, April 6, 6 p.m.**

**ANNUAL DINNER AT FAITH UNITED  
PROTESTANT CHURCH  
SEE STORY ON NEXT PAGE**

**Wednesday, May 5, 7 p.m.**

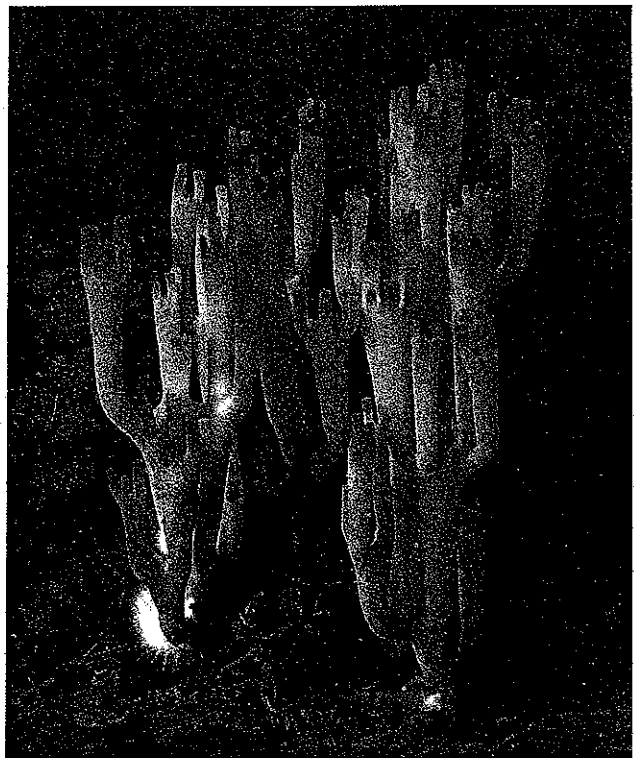
### **MIGRATING BIRDS COLLIDING WITH CITY BUILDINGS**

**David Willard**

David Willard, collection manager of the bird division of the Field Museum of Chicago, will discuss the work the Museum is doing to decrease the hazards that migrating birds face in traversing larger cities. These small birds, that often travel at night, die by the thousands because of hitting tall buildings.

### **NEBRASKA AUDUBON CELEBRATES SANDHILL CRANE MIGRATION**

Audubon Nebraska and Nebraska Bird Partnership are sponsoring a conference to see the migration of over half a million Sandhill Cranes and other waterfowl March 18-21. For information go to [www.nebraska.audubon.org](http://www.nebraska.audubon.org) or [Nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:Nebraska@audubon.org), or (402) 797-2301.



*A Crown Coral Mushroom, photographed by  
TCAS March 3 speaker John Denk.*

# LIVE RAPTORS FLYING IN FOR THORN CREEK AUDUBON ANNUAL DINNER

Hawks and owls, raptors that are usually seen on the wing or in the trees, can instead be viewed "up close and personal" on Tuesday, April 6.

That's the date for the Thorn Creek Audubon Society's annual dinner, to be held at 6 p.m. at the Faith United Protestant Church of Park Forest. Once again the program will be presented by members of the Illinois Raptor Center in Decatur, Executive Director Jane Seitz and Program Director Jacque Muzzo. The Center keeps birds that are injured and cannot be returned to the wild to be used in educational programs throughout Illinois.

Birds usually seen from a distance, a Red-tailed hawk, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Cooper's hawk, a Northern Saw-whet Owl, an Eastern Screech Owl, a Long-eared Owl and a Barn Owl, will be on the program. Muzzo, an accomplished speaker and story-teller, will explain their eating habits, nesting places, and his personal experiences with these birds.

The dinner is open to everyone. Order tickets, at \$15 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under, using the coupon below or from program chair Charles Habecker, (708) 747-6061 or co-chair Dory Grosche, (708) 481-3166. Deadline for ordering tickets is April 2.



*Northern Saw-whet Owl*

## THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

Tuesday, April 6, 2010, 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 2. Make your checks payable to Thorn Creek Audubon Society and mail to Charles Habecker at 2811 Western Ave., Park Forest, IL 60466, or to Dory Grosche, 3703 212<sup>th</sup> Place, Matteson, IL, 60443. You may also call Habecker at 747-6061, or Grosche at 481-3166, or email her at dorygro@aol.com. 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 3 Audubon meeting.

## SPRING FIELD TRIPS

**Wednesday, March 24, 8 a.m.**

### **MCGINNIS SLOUGH**

**Mary Anne McLean – 708-672-5494**

**Al Thomas – 708-957-9847 or**

**Email woodduck1999\_@yahoo.com**

On this first spring field trip we will be looking for Loons or perhaps a Horned Grebe.

Other interesting species might be migrating by. Meet at the McGinnis Slough parking lot, about 137<sup>th</sup> St. on the west side of LaGrange Rd (Rt. 45). Although the McGinnis sign may not be visible, there is a turn lane into the preserve.

**Saturday, April 10, 8 a.m.**

### **TINLEY CREEK PRESERVE**

**Al Thomas – 708-957-9847**

**Email woodduck1999\_@yahoo.com**

Tinley Creek is a new wetland in the restoration process, across Flossmoor Road from Bartel Grassland. Hope for a conglomerate of shorebirds as well as Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Bluebirds, Henslow and Savanna Sparrows.

**Wednesday, April 21, 8 a.m.**

### **CENTRAL PARK WETLANDS**

**Al Thomas – 708-957-9847**

**Email woodduck1999\_@yahoo.com**

Meet at the Park Forest Aqua Center on Orchard Drive for a chance to see the elusive Common Snipe, perhaps an American Bittern, Sora Rail, Bluebirds and many migrants. Easy short walks make this trip a favorite.

**Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

### **EARTH DAY AT GOODENOW GROVE**

Join Earth Day at Goodenow Grove and learn about native plants of Illinois by participating in special hikes which feature the wild flowers found in Forest Preserves of Will County. See demonstrations of edible landscaping, lasagna gardening, and recycling.

Bring your dog to join in a dog walk. There will be arts and games for children.

Thorn Creek Audubon Society will present a special exhibit on the wildflowers of Raccoon Grove featuring photos taken by Warren Buck. A fun day for families to come together to celebrate the beauty of wildlife and the outdoors.

To reach Goodenow Grove go South on Dixie Highway (Rt. 1) to Goodenow Rd., go one mile East (left) to Dutton Rd. Turn left to reach the Goodenow Grove entrance.

**Saturday, May 1, 7 a.m.**

### **HICKORY CREEK PRESERVE**

**Betty Smurawski – (708) 532-0995 or email**

**bsmurawski@hotmail.com**

To reach the preserve, go west on LaPorte Rd. from LaGrange Rd. (Rt. 45); entrance to the preserve will be on the left (south) side; follow the preserve road to the third and last parking lot. Hickory Creek has a nice variety of habitats so we will see a variety of birds from woodland Vireos, Tanagers and Orioles to many Warbler species, both woodland and prairie.

**Wednesday, May 5, 7 a.m.**

### **MONEE RESERVOIR/RACCOON GROVE**

**Charlie Habecker – 708-747-6061**

Raccoon Grove is at Rt. 50 (Governor's Highway) at Pauling Rd., one mile south of Monee. Monee Reservoir is one mile west of Raccoon Grove over the I-57 overpass and south a quarter mile. Meet first at the parking lot at the Monee Reservoir to see possible Eastern Bluebirds, Green Herons, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Teal and other migrating ducks as well as numerous songbirds. Later we will go to Raccoon Grove to see a variety of spring wildflowers and perhaps some woodpeckers as well.

**Saturday, May 8**

### **SPRING BIRD COUNT**

**See Story on Page 1**

## ***ANNUAL CHRISTMAS COUNT***

# **BIRD NUMBERS STILL GOING DOWN**

Once again numbers were down, though only slightly, for Thorn Creek Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count. All told, the field and feeder observers counted 7,218 individual birds of 53 different species. Last year's count totaled 7,330 birds of 58 species, and the count the year before was 7,808 birds of 59 species. Records show that numbers have been dropping for the past 20 years.

The count day, January 2, 2010, was very cold, temperatures ranging from a high of 15 to a low of -2, with about four inches of snow on the ground but clear skies. Thirty-six TCAS members and friends braved the weather to make the field count, while another 21 called in their feeder observations. Last year's count day was also very cold, and TCAS had even fewer spotters, 33 field observers and 17 feeder watchers.

Bob Harrison, Christmas Count chair, speculated that again this year weather might have brought about a drop in sightings; birds were "hunkered down" somewhere and field observers were not out as long as they might have been in better weather. He said while there has not been significant habitat loss in the TCAS area recently, habitat loss in breeding grounds further north could account for some of the recent drop in numbers. "It will be interesting when we can get a count on a good weather day to see if it goes up," he said.

Dick Riner, Bartel Grassland steward, pointed out that not only is there habitat loss in the north, but many birds that go south for the winter are also losing ground. For example, though in the United States we are trying to protect Bobolinks, in Argentina they are considered pests and killed because they eat the rice crop.

In spite of freezing weather, a few intrepid field spotters reported exciting finds. Richard Fifer saw a Peregrine Falcon at the Evergreen Cemetery in Steger. Kathy Dean saw a Wild Turkey along Old Plank Trail, a first for the TCAS Christmas Bird Count. Joan O'Keeffe reported several large flocks of Horned Larks along roadsides. This was the first time in several years she had seen them in the area.

The greatest number of birds of any one species was 1,289 European Starlings. Next was 771 Canada Geese. Charles Habecker reported about 400 geese at Monee Reservoir, huddled in the only spot of open water, along with about 50 Mallard Ducks.

House Sparrows, American Goldfinches, House Finches, Northern Cardinals, Dark-eyed Juncos, American Tree Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, American Crows, Downy Woodpeckers, Mourning Doves and Rock Pigeons were seen in substantial numbers.

Hawks and owls were also evident. Along with the Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrels, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks and one Rough-legged Hawk were seen. One Eastern Screech Owl, six Great Horned Owls, one Barred Owl, three Long-eared Owls, and one Northern Saw-whet Owl were spotted.

Only a few of some species were seen, such as one Ring-necked Pheasant, three Ring-necked Ducks, four Brown Creepers, three Carolina Wrens, three Fox Sparrows, one Swamp Sparrow, two White-crowned Sparrows and three Pine Siskins. Ten American Robins chose to stay here for the winter.

*Joan Crabb*

## **STEWARDS AND MONITORS SHARE KNOWLEDGE AT HABITAT PROJECT WORKSHOP**

A new program for stewards and monitors of natural areas in the Chicago region, the Habitat Project Workshop, got off to a good start this year, according to Dick Riner, TCAS member and steward of the Bartel Grassland.

A group of more than 115 environmentalists, naturalists, scientists and other like-minded folks, mostly volunteers, got together Feb. 7 at the Danada Atrium in Wheaton to share their knowledge about restoring and maintaining natural habitats.

Work sessions in five areas – prairies and savannas, woodlands, wetlands, herbiciding and invasives, and monitoring – were on the agenda. Experts and resource people in each area were available to answer questions in an informal round table discussion. Riner served as a resource person for the wetlands, group.

"It was a really, really productive session. Things came up that you would never expect. People felt free to ask any questions they had," Riner said. For example, a major question is how to use herbicides in prime natural areas without injuring desirable plants. One suggestion was to use a paint roller to apply the herbicide to the stem of an individual unwanted plant. Another discussion was about the best time to mow tall goldenrod, a species that will quickly take over a grassland if not controlled.

The Habitat Project Workshop was organized as an alternative to the Wild Things Workshops which are held every two years, in the odd-numbered years. The Wild Things Workshop is organized in a presentation form, Riner said; the Habitat Project was organized to find out if a less formal plan would also be beneficial.

Along with Riner, representatives of other south and southwest suburban natural areas, including the Orland Grassland, Irons Oaks in Olympia Fields, and Palos natural areas attended. Karen Glennemeier, scientist for Audubon Chicago Region, was in charge of organizing the program.

The Wild Things Workshops are sponsored by Chicago Wilderness, Audubon Chicago Region, the Field Museum, Chicago Botanical Gardens, the Morton Arboretum, and many more conservation groups, including the Thorn Creek Audubon Society.

### **CORRECTION**

#### **CALL KAY MACNEIL TO HELP MONITOR NEW BLUEBIRD BOXES**

The January-February newsletter carried a story about new Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes in Mokena that will need volunteers to help monitor them.

An incorrect phone number was listed for Kay MacNeil, who is seeking volunteers. The correct number for those who want to help monitor the Bluebirds' nests is (815) 469-1294. Kay is a member of the Special Projects Committee of TCAS and has been working with Sean Hosty and Boy Scout Troop 10 of Mokena, who have added the 25 boxes. The editor regrets the error.

### **NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME**

New Thorn Creek Audubon members are always welcome. You can join in two ways; you can become a member of the National Audubon Society and the local chapter, or you can join the local chapter only. For more information or to join call membership chair Sue Putnam at (708) 747-1986, or email her at [sputter1986@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sputter1986@sbcglobal.net).

# FIELD NOTES

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

## DECEMBER

**12/19/09** Eye to eye with a Cooper's Hawk for 5 minutes when it landed in a tree 10 feet from him in Matteson.

*Dick Riner*

## JANUARY

**1/01/10** 1 Yellow-shafted Flicker digging a hole and eating ants for about a half hour in her rural Monee pasture.

*Emily Thaiel*

**1/07/10** A cock Pheasant coming from beneath a tree in rural Monee.

*Emily Thaiel*

**1/09/10** A Chipping Sparrow in her Crete back yard with Goldfinches at feeder.

*Judi Murphy*

**1/10/10** Regulars in her rural Steger back yard: 25 Juncos, 2 Tufted Titmice, 2 Nuthatches, pair of Northern Flickers, pair of Cardinals, 1 Cooper's Hawk, pair of Barred Owls, 4 Goldfinches, pair of Blue Jays, 4 Chickadees, 4 Mourning Doves, 1 Hairy Woodpecker.

*Pauline Small*

**1/10/10** 2 Horned Larks on the ground under a feeder in Grant Park.

*Nancy Kaz*

**1/15/10** 1 Bewick's Wren on her feeder on Richton Road near Lincolnshire Country Club.

*Nancy Morse*

**1/21/10** 1 Pileated Woodpecker in a tree in her Crete back yard 2 days in a row. Also 20 House Finches regularly at her feeder.

*Nancy Kaz*

## FEBRUARY

**2/07/10** 5 Common Mergansers, small flocks (10-12) Robins and Cedar Waxwings eating serviceberries. 1 Cardinal practicing his spring song in a tree top. Cal-Sag Canal near Lake Katherine.

*Mary White*

## AUDUBON ADVENTURES HELP CHILDREN LEARN TO BE GOOD STEWARDS

Spring is on the way. Under the snow, flowers are getting ready to burst into bloom and birds will soon be winging their way back to begin nest building. Our children desperately need to acquire an appreciation for all the beauty and diversity of the earth, as caring for and protecting it will be in their hands before we know it.

*Audubon Adventures*, prepared by National Audubon Society scientists and educators, is a colorful, entertaining publication designed to foster a love of nature and a sense of stewardship in children. It is designed for, though not limited to, third to sixth grade readers. Our Thorn Creek Audubon chapter acts as a local coordinator to get this publication into the hands of teachers and youth leaders.

We raise funds so they may receive these stimulating and educational materials free of charge. This year at least 63 classroom teachers in the South Suburban area will be receiving and using *Audubon Adventures*.

The kit includes four editions of the student newspaper (32 copies each), a classroom resource manual and other extras. Cost of each kit is \$45.65, but contributions are welcome in any amount. You may designate your gift for a particular class, youth group or community. Otherwise it will be used where most needed. Commemorative contributions will be acknowledged with a special certificate.

To contribute please send a check made out to Thorn Creek Audubon Adventures fund to Sue Putnam, 3704 W. 213<sup>th</sup> Street, Matteson, IL., 60443.



Thorn Creek  
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

**STD RATE**  
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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.*

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:

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