



# Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

## BARTEL-TINLEY CREEK EXPANSION WETLAND BRINGS WETLAND BIRDS

“The wetland birds have discovered the wetland,” says Dick Riner, of the approximately 186 acres of new wetland in the Bartel Grassland-Tinley Creek Preserve north of Flossmoor Road.

It didn't take them long. Early this year the drain tiles that former landowners put in were closed and the area began to fill up with water and become the wetland it originally was before it was drained so crops could be planted.

As of early April, a surprising number of birds have taken advantage of the new habitat, Riner said. One day there were 23 Sandhill Cranes on the ground, with one very rare Whooping Crane among them. Buffleheads, Pintails, and Shovelers, along with a group of Blue-winged Teal so large it looked like “a wall of blue” have also stopped by, he said. He's hoping that Sandhill cranes will nest here in future years.

“I saw 24 Snipe in one day, and multiple Great Blue Herons,” Riner added. “There's a lot of water out there.”

The new wetland is part of a “mitigation project” in which wetlands lost during the O'Hare expansion are being replaced. It will bring the Bartel Grassland-Tinley Creek Preserve from 635 acres to a 1400-acre total. The Grassland, south of Flossmoor Road, will remain a home for birds such as Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Henslow and Savannah Sparrows, who need large areas of grass for nesting and who have become threatened because of serious habitat loss. These birds are coming back as well. Riner saw Meadowlarks and Swamp Sparrows early in April and expects the Bobolinks back between May 1 and Mother's Day.

Just because the birds are back doesn't mean work on the preserves is done. TogetherGreen Volunteers have been getting “down and dirty” for the past month planting about 1,000 plugs of Water Sedge, Hairy-leaf Lake Sedge and Common Lake Sedge in a quarter-mile stretch south of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society viewing berm. Southwest Airlines volunteers also returned to burn a brush pile they started on in March and eat hot dogs and cookies.

Future events include the Wild Neighbors Festival at Bartel on May 17, with walking tours, scope setups, and a session on grassland history, along with the coloring contest from the 2nd grade classroom at Seton Prairie Grammar School. Riner is also planning a training day for “Prairie Detectives” on April 28 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. They will learn to look for specific plants, either invasives which need to be removed or native plants which need to be encouraged.



Although the Common Loon was not seen at Bartel, one was spotted at Dolphin Lake in Homewood and three at Saganashkee Slough.

**SPRING BIRD COUNT SET FOR MAY 9 - PAGE 3**

## **SPRING PROGRAMS**

### **PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF PLACE**

Please note that the May program will NOT be held at the Park Forest Library. The library is doing remodeling and the room we use will not be available this spring or next fall. Location for next fall's meetings will be announced in the July-August newsletter and on the website.

**Wednesday, May 6, 7 p.m.**

**Freedom Hall, Johnson Room, upstairs  
NATIVE TREES OF THE CALUMET REGION AND  
THEIR BENEFITS TO WILDLIFE  
Jennifer and Bill Tobin, Master Gardeners**

This will be a PowerPoint presentation about trees native specifically to the four counties of Cook and Lake in Illinois and Porter and LaPorte in Indiana, along with the insects, birds and mammals that they feed and shelter. The 70 or so trees will include conifers, maples, oaks, birches, cherries, elms and many others.

Bill became a Master Gardener in 2001 under the aegis of Purdue University Extension Service in 2001, and Jennifer took University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener classes and was certified in 2002. Together they have worked on Habitat for Humanity landscaping projects and assisted with plantings at the Federal Court House in Hammond, Indiana. They are tour guides at the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park and appeared in a how-to video produced by the *Daily Southtown* on vermicomposting accessible on the web.

Bill is a Chicagoland native and Jennifer is a transplant from Kent, "the Garden of England." Vicki Crosley will be the liaison with Cook County (South) Master Gardeners.

"The bluebird carries the sky on his back."

*Henry David Thoreau*

## **EAT AT FUDDRUCKERS AND BENEFIT TCAS**

On Tuesday, May 12, there's a way you can do yourself a favor and, with almost no extra trouble, benefit the Thorn Creek Audubon Society at the same time, says Dory Grosche, Ways and Means Chair.

How? Go out to eat at Fuddruckers in Matteson (across Cicero Avenue from Lincoln Mall) and mention Thorn Creek Audubon Society as they ring up your meal. Fuddruckers will donate 20% of your total bill to our organization on that date, at any time from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m.

There are no restrictions. Simply order anything from their menu and tell them you want to help TCAS. They will print a duplicate receipt and drop it into the fishbowl, and TCAS will reap the benefits for programs, education, and other projects. Save the date and spread the word, maybe even take a friend to lunch.

## **PLANT SALE PICKUP SATURDAY, JUNE 6**

Saturday, June 6, is the date set for those who ordered from Thorn Creek Audubon Society's annual native plant sale to pick up their flowers, shrubs and trees. The plants will be waiting at the Isaak Walton Preserve at 1100 Ridge Road in Homewood and can be picked up from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information call Dory Grosche at 481-3166.

## **BARTEL-TINLEY CREEK IN HABITAT HERALD MAGAZINE**

The lead story in the April issue of *The Habitat Herald*, a magazine of Audubon-Chicago Region, features the Bartel Grassland and Tinley Creek Preserve. Another article mentions Peggy Riner as one of those who bakes for conservationists. Read it at [www.habitatproject.org](http://www.habitatproject.org).

## ANNUAL SPRING BIRD COUNT ON MAY 9

Thirty-two Thorn Creek Audubon Society volunteers will be hiking through woods and fields identifying and counting birds during the statewide Spring Bird count co-sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Audubon Society. Other observers in Will County may participate by recording and estimating the numbers of birds that visit their feeders and yards on count day.

The TCAS territory for this annual event includes all areas in Will County east of Highway 45. At 6 p.m. on the Monday following the count the participants will join other birders from Will County Audubon for a potluck dinner at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena, after which they will compile count results. Each year a few unusual and unexpected sightings occur, and hearing about them provides extra excitement at the compilation.

Feeder watchers are welcome to attend the dinner and bring a dish to share with others. Their sightings must be reported by Sunday afternoon to Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166. For additional information and to share rides to the dinner call Al Thomas (708-957-9847) or Aura Duke (708-748-6407).



These warblers, the Black-throated Green, the Common Yellowthroat, and the Nashville, are among the birds TCAS members hope to spot during the spring bird count on May 9.

## TCAS AWARDS FOUR GRANTS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society has awarded four grants this spring. These grants are given to help preserve the environment and to educate others, especially young people, about the need to protect the environment and its wildlife. The grants are usually awarded to groups such as schools or nature centers that can reach a number of people, but are also sometimes given to individuals working in the environmental field.

This year TCAS gave \$210 to the Forest Preserve District of Will County to buy three pairs of binoculars for the Plum Creek Nature Center at Goodenow Grove. The Center has an indoor bird viewing area, and visitors of all ages have been requesting binoculars to better see the birds that come to the feeder area.

TCAS also awarded \$250 to Multidisciplinary Education for the Environment (ME4E) to defray part of the cost of an LCD Projector. ME4E works with School Districts 162, 163 and others in the South Suburban area educating students about the environment. The projector will be used with the digital microscope which was also purchased with help from a TCAS grant. The projector will allow images seen through the microscope to be viewed on a large screen by an entire classroom.

A grant of \$300 was awarded to the Thorn Creek Nature Center, 247 Monee Road, to help develop a butterfly garden. The garden will consist of native plants that provide food for both butterflies and caterpillars, as well as hummingbirds and other insects.

A grant of \$100 was given to Kimberly Meyer Ramirez, who is researching nest predation among grassland birds at Bartel Grasslands and Midewin Preserve. She has a National Audubon Society Fellowship for the work but needed funds to buy motion-activated cameras to film the nest predators.

## FIELD TRIPS

In May and June we offer a full schedule of bird and bloom viewing opportunities and hope many of you will join us. If you are not on the list for e-mail reminders and updates regarding the trips and would like to be, please contact Mary Anne McLean at [mclean908@comcast.net](mailto:mclean908@comcast.net) or (708) 672-5494. To catch the birds at their early morning peak of activity, May and June trips begin at 7 a.m., unless otherwise specified. Please notify the trip coordinator that you plan to attend.

**Wednesday, May 6, 7 a.m.**

**LEVASSEUR PARK, KANKAKEE**

**Mary Anne McLean,**

**[mclean908@comcast.com](mailto:mclean908@comcast.com) (708) 672-5494**

This trip will start with a stroll along the Kankakee River to look and listen for warblers and other spring migrants, with possible forays to a nearby prairie and a stream-fed pond. To reach the meeting place at LeVasseur parking lot, drive south on Route 50 from the intersection with I-57, past Armour Rd and Mulligan St., to North St. and follow to dead end at Kennedy; turn left (south) on Kennedy and proceed about two miles to Fifth St., just before the YMCA (1075 Kennedy Dr), on the right. This is the fourth light south of North St. Go  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to parking lot. OR, call Mary Anne to arrange to carpool.

**Wednesday, May 13, 7 a.m.**

**MESSENGER WOODS/LAKE RENWICK**

**Aura Duke, [auraduke@aol.com](mailto:auraduke@aol.com)**

**(708) 748-6407**

Trusting that we will find Blue-eyed Marys and other woodland flowers in spectacular bloom, we will make a stop at Messenger Woods, on the way to Lake Renwick, where we will view a likewise spectacular display of nesting Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons and Great Egrets, and assist with the scheduled public viewing between 10 and 11 a.m. There will be ample time for woodland birding as well; and, on the way home, we'll stop at Pilcher Park for a picnic. BRING LUNCH. Meet at the Park Forest Library at 7 a.m.

**Saturday, May 16, 7 a.m.**

**WOODED ISLAND**

**Charlie Habecker (708) 747-6061**

This annual trip to Jackson Park has produced many marvels, such as Hooded, Prothonotary and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Our guide will be Glyn Dawson, whose eagle eye rarely overlooks a bird of note. We'll trade information on our sightings and much else over lunch at a Hyde Park neighborhood restaurant. For carpool arrangements, please contact Charlie.

**Wednesday, May 20**

**HICKORY CREEK WOODS**

**Mary Anne McLean (708) 672-5494**

**[mclean908@comcast.net](mailto:mclean908@comcast.net)**

Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Common Yellow-throats, Bluebirds, Hooded Warblers – just a few of the species we've seen and heard here. To reach the preserve, go west on LaPorte Rd. from LaGrange Rd. (Route 45); entrance to the preserve will be on the left (south) side; follow the preserve road to the third and last parking lot.

**Wednesday, May 27**

**GIBSON WOODS**

**Pat Strange (219) 923-5164**

Plans for the Gibson Woods trip are still in the works and will be finalized by the May TCA meeting. If you miss the meeting, phone Pat or Mary Anne for details.

**Wednesday, June 3, 7 a.m.**

**GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Mary Anne McLean (708) 672-5494**

**[mclean908@comcast.net](mailto:mclean908@comcast.net)**

As we follow the trail of outdoor sculptures, we'll be looking and listening for shrubland birds such as Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Bell's Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chat, all of whom have set up housekeeping here in previous years. Meet in the easternmost parking lot.

**FIELD TRIPS CONTINUED****MIDWIN NATIONAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE**

Date and time to be announced

Al Thomas, wooduck\_1999@yahoo.com

As with Gibson Woods, plans for the trip to this remarkable habitat, undergoing restoration to literally become a home where the buffalo roam, should be finalized by the May meeting. If you miss the meeting, contact Al.

Saturday, August 15, 9 a.m.

**MARKHAM/GENSBURG PRAIRIE**

Charlie Habecker (708) 747-6061

More information will be available in the July/August newsletter, but save the date. The native plants should be in full bloom.

**BLUEBIRD TRAIL VOLUNTEERS  
MONITORING 106 BOXES**

Every spring 27 Thorn Creek Audubon volunteers eagerly await the arrival of bluebirds along our four trails, located at Goodenow Grove Preserve, Monee Reservoir, the Park Forest Wetland and Glenwood School Campus. With the variable, unpredictable weather we have been having this year, bluebirds were very early, being sighted on Feb. 9 in rural Crete by Kathy Dehn. During March other sightings were reported, but no serious nesting activities were observed. The official monitoring of the 106 nesting boxes along the trails began on the week of April 5, at which time four pairs of bluebirds were finally setting up housekeeping in our boxes.

Aura Duke

**AUDUBON ADVENTURES BEGINS  
ITS ANNUAL SPRING APPEAL**

*Audubon Adventures*, a series of colorful and informative newspapers provided free of charge to teachers in the South Suburban area, is one important way that the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is helping to educate our young people about the environment and the need to help preserve it for future generations. The TCAS education committee, headed by Mary Anne McLean and Sue Putnam, will soon be enrolling teachers in the Audubon Adventure program for the 2009-2010 school year.

"Our spring appeal is underway, with many thanks to those of you who have contributed in the past and a warm welcome to new contributors," said Mary Anne. "We ask for your help so that we may continue to encourage and empower these teachers to introduce children in grades 3 through 6 to the wonders of nature and to an ethic of stewardship for the environment."

The overall theme for the year will be "Earth's Natural Resources," with sub-topics focusing on the water cycle, energy flow, climate seasons, and the carbon cycle. In each segment there will be emphasis on community action and on helping birds. "We invite everyone to join with us in getting these stimulating materials, which seem to get better, brighter and more interactive each year, into the hands of the dedicated teachers who request them," she said.

The cost of each classroom kit will continue at \$45.65, but contributions are welcome in any amount. The kit includes 32 copies of each issue of the student newspaper and a resource manual for the teacher, plus extras such as the "Guide to a Healthy Schoolyard" and "Nature Journaling for Everyone." You may designate your gift for a particular class, youth group or community. Commemorative contributions will be acknowledged with a special certificate. E-mails are being sent to former donors to cut down on the use of paper and the expense of postage.

To contribute, please send a check made out to Thorn Creek *Audubon Adventures* fund to Sue Putnam, 3704 213<sup>th</sup> Street, Matteson, IL, 60433.

# FIELD NOTES

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

## FEBRUARY 09

02/15 1 Red-winged Blackbird, 143<sup>rd</sup> St. near Harlem. 2 Mute Swans, about 20 Common Mergansers and about 30 Common Goldeneyes, Des Plaines River, Romeoville.

*Mary White*

02/13 6 Bald Eagles, 1 Great Blue Heron, flock of Grackles, flock of Red-winged Blackbirds. At his Oak Forest feeder, Goldfinches, Chickadees and a Downy Woodpecker.

*Keith Jorgensen*

## MARCH 09

03/03 1 Barred Owl perched on a tree on Bemis Road, Crete.

*Nancy Kaz*

03/04 1 Red-winged Blackbird, Crete.

*Nancy Kaz*

03/06 First Eastern Meadowlark sighted at Bartel Grassland.

*Dick Riner*

03/06 About 14 Sandhill Cranes over Oak Forest.

*Keith Jorgensen*

03/07 1 Robin. Crete.

*Debra Marberg*

03/08 22 Sandhill Cranes and 1 Whooping Crane on the ground. Bartel Grassland North.

*Amar Ayirsh*

03/08 1 Great Horned Owl at Central Park Wetlands.

*Elise Zimmer*

03/09 50 Sandhill Cranes over Park Forest.

*Elise Zimmer*

03/09 Sandhill Cranes over Frankfort.

*Christine Dytriych*

03/09 29 Sandhill Cranes over Western and Route 30.

*Dick Riner*

03/09 A flock of 100 Sandhill Cranes followed by many smaller groups over Lake Katherine.

*Mary White*

03/11 1 Turkey Vulture over Oak Forest.

*Keith Jorgensen*

03/11 1 Horned Grebe. McGinnis Slough.

*Mary White*

03/12 Many Hooded & Common Mergansers and 4 Common Loons. Saganashkee Slough.

*Mary White*

03/13 1 Killdeer Flying over 159<sup>th</sup> and Central.

*Mary White*

03/15 24 Snipe at Bartel Grassland.

*Dick Riner and Kim Rameriz*

03/16 4 Buffleheads at Bartel Grassland.

*Dick Riner*

03/18 1 Tufted Titmouse at his Park Forest feeder.

*Tony Kurth*

03/18 A pair of American Wigeons and Wood Ducks in her Frankfort pond.

*Christine Dytriych*

03/19 Bluebirds checking out the nest box in her Park Forest yard.

*Aura Duke*

03/20 2 Killdeer in a field and 1 Rough-legged Hawk in a tree along Cottage Grove Ave.

*Anne Rosen*

03/21 4 Pintails. Bartel Grasslands.

*John Elliott*

03/21 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch and 1 Tufted Titmouse at rural Crete feeder.

*Anne Rosen*

03/24 4 Turkey Vultures flying over rural Crete.

*Anne Rosen*

03/26 1 Ring-necked Duck in her Frankfort pond. A "lifer" for

*Christine Dytriych*

03/28 Pair of Eastern Phoebe's returning to Krotiak Park across from Park Forest Wetlands.

*Joan Crabb*

**FIELD NOTES CONTINUED**

APRIL 09

**04/01** Approximately 20 Turkey Vultures regularly roosting in a tree at the old "Steger Mansion" in Steger.

*Kay Opilka*

**04/04** 1 Palm Warbler, 1 Golden-crowned Kinglet, 3 Eastern Phoebes, 3 Brown Creepers. Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Trail.

*Mary White*

**04/07** Brown Creeper at 183<sup>rd</sup> and Governor's Highway, Homewood.

*Joan Crabb*

**04/07** Pair of Chickadees, Purple Finch, pair of Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpecker at her Crete feeder. Flock of Cedar Waxwings drinking out of a puddle.

*Kathy Bader*

**04/11** 3 Blue-winged Teal in pond in farm field in rural Crete.

*Anne Rosen*

**04/14** Injured Cooper's Hawk at edge of Park Forest Wetlands. Bird could still fly but not well, was able to perch in tree.

*Karen Taylor***NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME TO TCAS**

You don't need to be an expert on birds to join the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. All you have to do is care about the environment and enjoy meeting other people who do, too.

There are two ways to join. You may join with a dual membership in the National Audubon Society and TCAS. You receive the Audubon magazine and our TCAS newsletter. Dues are \$20 for one year, and support environmental concerns and wildlife protection at state, national and international levels, with a small percent shared with our local chapter. Or you may have a TCAS chapter only membership. Your \$15 dues remain at home and support projects here.

For more information or to join, contact membership chair Sue Putnam at 747-1986 or [sputter1986@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sputter1986@sbcglobal.net).

**BREEDING BIRD BLITZ SET FOR JUNE 13**

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual Breeding Bird Blitz of the Chicago region will be held between June 12 and 22, with June 13 as the official blitz day when teams will canvass specific wildlife preserves for breeding evidence. The main purpose of the count is to obtain meaningful data on the current status and distribution of bird species by enlisting volunteer "citizen scientists" to help. Several unique wildlife preserves containing important birding habitat in the Chicago wilderness area have been selected for this project.

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society has been assigned the extensive and diverse area of Goodenow Grove Forest Preserve in eastern Will County. Al Thomas is coordinating the local event, which is to begin at 7 a.m. on Saturday, June 13. During a four-hour period, teams of birders will spread out along specific routes within the preserve recording breeding evidence. They will meet again at 11 a.m. for a picnic lunch after which the results will be tabulated. On succeeding days additional birding may occur to upgrade the breeding evidence from "possible breeding" or "probably" to "confirmed breeding."

All birders are welcome to join the blitz, enjoy birding, and contribute to the overall list of breeding birds of northeastern Illinois. Interested birders are urged to sign up as soon as possible. A briefing session of instructions will be held prior to the count at the home of Sidney and Aura Duke, 35 Braeburn Road, Park Forest. To join a team call Al Thomas a 708-957-9847.

*Aura Duke***RESULTS IN FOR BACKYARD BIRD COUNT OF 2009**

An interesting report on the results of the Great Backyard Bird Count of 2009 can be seen online by googling the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.