

Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 39 - ISSUE 3 MAY - JUNE 2011

NEWSLETTER

SAVING STAMPS CAN SAVE WILDLIFE

Saving your cancelled commemorative stamps or digging out those old picture postcards can help provide much needed habitat for birds and animals in Illinois. TCAS members can donate these to Aura Duke, who will give them to Vernon Kleen and the Illinois Audubon Society. Kleen will sell them and use the proceeds to acquire land in Illinois for wildlife habitat.

Kleen, one of only three licensed hummingbird banders in Illinois, will be on the Thorn Creek Audubon Society program schedule in September. He will explain what happens at hummingbird festivals where the birds are banded and people have a chance to get acquainted with these tiny creatures. Aura Duke will present him with the donated stamps and cards at this program.

Either United States or foreign commemorative stamps are acceptable, but common definitive stamps are not. Commemorative (special issue) stamps are larger in size than the common definitive stamps, such as the flags, love, Christmas or other "forever" stamps.

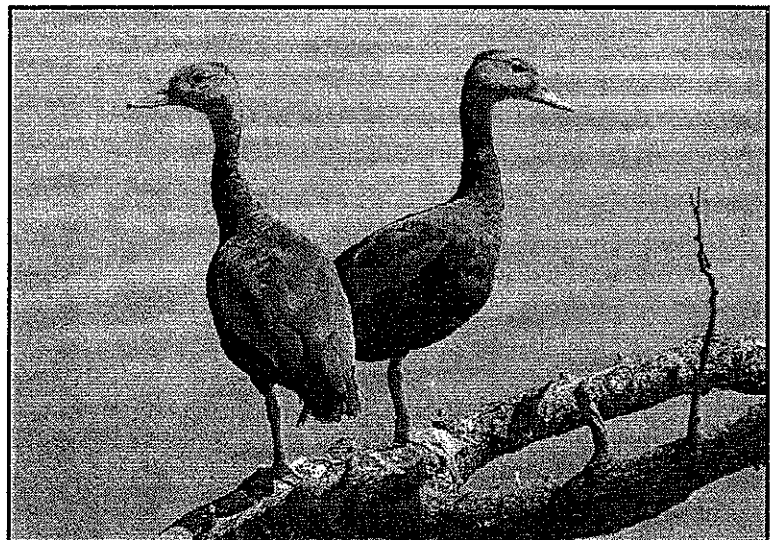
The commemorative stamps can be either cancelled or mint stamps. Used or new picture postcards are also accepted. Postcards do not even have to have a stamp on them. Partial or complete stamp collections are very welcome. Definitive stamps that show an original face value of \$1.00 or more, as well as Duck stamps and others such as those usually sold to hunters and conservationists, are also accepted.

Stamps should not be peeled or torn from their envelopes. They should be cut out carefully with a scissors, leaving a quarter or eighth inch margin around the stamps. They can be given to Aura Duke, 708-748-6407, or to any TCAS board member at any time during the summer.

Kleen, who before his retirement was the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Avian Program Manager, is also the author of the *Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas* and initiated the Spring Bird Count in Illinois.

TCAS ELECTS OFFICERS AT MAY 4 MEETING

TCAS will elect a slate of officers at its next meeting May 4. All officers who served last year have agreed to be on the slate for 2011-12. They are Dick Riner, president; Al Thomas, vice-president; Sidney Duke, treasurer; and Terrie Spillers, secretary. Directors are Michelle O'Connor, Kim Ramirez, and Bob Harrison. Nominations may be made from the floor with the consent of the nominee.



These black-bellied whistling ducks are among the South Texas birds Larry Layne will show at May's program. P 2.

PROGRAMS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society holds programs from September through May. The May program will be held at 7 p.m. at the Park Forest Library.

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.

NO NATIVE PLANT SALE THIS YEAR, BACK IN 2012

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society is not holding its Native Plant Sale this year. However, the opportunity to purchase plants that will thrive in our regional habitat will be offered again next year.

Next January, as in previous years, flyers listing the available types of trees, shrubs and perennials will be sent to all those on the mailing list. This includes all previous customers. Again, as in past years, plants will be available in late May or early June.

If you wish your name on the mailing list call Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166 or email her at dorygro@sbcglobal.net.

AURA DUKE NAMED TOP WILL COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE VOLUNTEER

Long-time Thorn Creek Audubon Society Member and bluebird trail coordinator Aura Duke has won the Will County Forest Preserve District's Volunteer of the Year Award.

"This is the district's most prestigious award given to a volunteer," said Bob Bryerton, facility coordinator for the Plum Creek Nature Center. "Aura Duke's name will be added to the plaque of past winners in the Forest Preserve District administration office in Joliet."

The award winner was announced on April 1, and at the May meeting Aura will be presented with her own personal plaque.

Winners are chosen based on the number of hours they work, the quality of the work they do, and their willingness to grow in the job. Bryerton said he and the Plum Creek Staff were pleased when they learned she had been nominated and very proud when she won.

"We have worked with her a great deal and know how committed she is to see that the bluebird trails are monitored. She is instrumental in getting volunteers for the bluebird trail and collecting data.

"She has staffed tables at Plum Creek events and she is providing a great deal of education to people about birds, letting them know how important it is that their habitats are preserved," Bryerton said.

"It is not just me who should get the credit," Aura said. "It is all the volunteers from the Will County Forest Preserve and the Thorn Creek Audubon Society who make it possible and who deserve the credit," she added. "The Will County Forest Preserve District really cares about conservation and its volunteers."

CONTRIBUTIONS SEND *AUDUBON ADVENTURES* TO AREA SCHOOL STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Thank you, dear friends of the earth, its creatures and *Audubon Adventures*, for the contributions you have been sending in response to our spring appeal, enabling us to provide lively and powerful educational materials to teachers and their students free of charge. Would you like to know more about *Audubon Adventures*? The following frequently asked questions are reported and answered on the National Audubon website:

Q. What is *Audubon Adventures*?

Audubon Adventures is an environmental education program for children in grades 3 to 5. Developed by professional environmental educators, *Audubon Adventures* presents basic, scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. It comes packaged as a classroom kit, serving 32 students. The program is used by classroom teachers, after-school program coordinators, special education instructors, language arts teachers, and home schoolers. Since its inception in 1984, over 7 million youngsters have participated in the program.

Q. What is the goal of *Audubon Adventures*?

Audubon envisions a future with a community of enlightened and informed citizens aware of the environmental outcomes of each of their activities. It is a community with the knowledge, skills and resources to make informed choices between alternative courses of action that result in minimizing the negative effects on our environment.

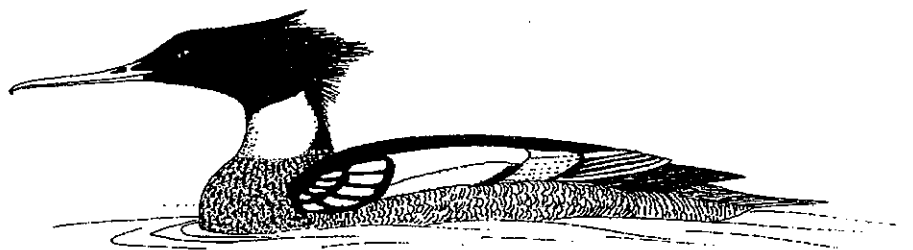
Audubon Adventures introduces young people, their families, and their teachers, to the fundamental principles by which the natural world functions. Our publications for students and teachers give readers compelling examples and activities that show these principles at work.

When we achieve our goals, our readers have the foundation necessary for recognizing our individual and collective responsibility for the health of our environment. And out of that recognition comes understanding that personal actions can have meaningful, positive and far-reaching effects.

Your contributions to our *Audubon Adventures* fund are furthering the achievement of these goals. Our spring appeal is in full swing. The cost per classroom is \$45.65, (not \$41.50 as was erroneously quoted in the March-April newsletter), but contributions are welcome in any amount. To contribute, please send a check, made out to Thorn Creek *Audubon Adventures* Fund, to Sue Putnam, 3704 West 213th St., Matteson, IL 60443. To read more FAQs pertaining to *Audubon Adventures*, log on to www.audubon.org; select "education" and "*Audubon Adventures*."

Mary Anne McLean

Red-breasted
Merganser



FIELD TRIPS

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 go east to Parrish Ave. Turn north, go to the end of Parrish to find the Nature Center. To car pool call Al Thomas, 708-957-9847.

Saturday, May 7

Spring Bird Count – see Story Page 7

Monday, May 9, 7 a.m.

BARTEL GRASSLAND/TINLEY CREEK

Charles Habecker – 708-747-6061

and Al Thomas – 708-957-9847 or

email woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

Tinley Creek is a new wetland in the restoration process, across Flossmoor Road from Bartel Grassland. The grassland is at Flossmoor and Central Ave. We hope for a conglomerate of shorebirds there as well as bobolinks, meadowlarks, bluebirds, Henslow and savanna sparrows at the Grasslands.

Wednesday, May 11

MESSENGER WOODS/LAKE

RENWICK/PILCHER PARK

Aura Duke 708-748-6407

**Meet at the Park Forest Library at 7 p.m. and
bring a sack lunch**

On our way to the heron rookery at Lake Renwick we will stop at Messenger Woods to check the spring wildflowers. We will enter Lake Renwick at 9 a.m. to see nesting herons including the great blue, great white, common egret and back-crowned night heron, and perhaps the great horned owl that nests in the

rookery. On the way back we will stop at Pilcher Park to eat lunch and see a variety of migrants and songbirds.

Saturday, May 14, 7 a.m.

PLUM CREEK/GOODNOW GROVE

Al Thomas – 708-957-9847

Goodnow Grove is located 2 miles east of route 394 on Goodnow Road. Watch for the sign on the south side of 394 as you approach the north turnoff, then go about one mile to the preserve. Meet in the first parking area, by the Nature Center building. We hope to see warblers and a variety of other songbirds.

Monday, May 16, 7 a.m.

OAK RIDGE PRAIRIE

Pat Strange – 219-923-5164

We have prairie, marsh, woodland and lakeside habitats to explore here. From U. S. 41 in Indiana (Indianapolis Blvd.,) take Main Street east toward Griffith (Main Street is several stoplights north of Highway 30). Go east on Main street, cross Broad Street (which is the main street in Griffith). Keep going east to Colfax, which is the next stoplight. Turn south on Colfax and go about one/half mile to the preserve entrance on the east side of Colfax. The parking lot is about a mile from the entrance.

Wednesday, May 18, 7 a.m.

HICKORY CREEK PRESERVE

Betty Smurawski – 708-532-0995

or email bsmurawski@hotmail.com

To reach the preserve go west on LaPorte Road from LaGrange Road (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.

Saturday, May 21, 7 a.m.

WOODED ISLAND

**Charles Habecker – 708-747-6061
and Glyn Dawson**

**Meet at 6 a.m. at the Park Forest Library to
car pool.**

Glyn will show us a collection of warblers who are migrating through in their bright spring plumage, along with other migrants and waterbirds. For those coming by train we will meet at the Clarence Darrow Bridge, south of the Museum of Science and Industry. We may stop for brunch at a nearby cafe.

Saturday, May 28

MIDEWIN

**Mary Anne McLean - 708-672-5494 or email
mclean908@comcast.net**

**Meet at 7 a.m. at the Park Forest Library
Parking Lot**

We will join the Illinois Audubon Society for a field trip beginning at 8 a.m. and lasting until 4 p.m. With 19,000 acres to see, birding trips are conducted by car pooling with walks that cover 200 feet or less. Good optics are a must and scopes are recommended. Advance registration is required and costs \$5, to be made out to Illinois Audubon. Box lunches are also available for \$10, but brown bagging is all right, too. To register go to Illinois Audubon on the internet and click on the Midewin trip, or call Mary Anne and she will print and send you a registration form. Potential prairie birds include dickcissels, meadowlarks, bobolinks, and wild turkeys, and also perhaps loggerhead shrikes, upland sandpipers and blue grosbeaks.

Saturday, June 4

**Meet at Park Forest Library Parking Lot at 7
a.m.**

**GOOSE LAKE PRAIRIE STATE PARK
Charles Habecker – 708-747-6061
Mary Anne McLean – 708-672-5494**

In late spring and early summer in this 1,500 acre nature preserve we may look for nesting species such as American bittern, least bittern, all 3 Rails, northern bob-white, loggerhead shrike, Bell's vireo and yellow-breasted chat.

Wednesday, June 8, 7 a.m.

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

Aura Duke – 708-748-6407

How many chances do we get to see outdoor sculptures and winged wonders on the same walk? Follow Route 50 (Cicero Avenue) south to Stuenkel Road, turn east to reach Governors State. Meet in the easternmost parking lot. There are always surprises here but in the last few years we have consistently seen the yellow-breasted chat, the orchard oriole and the black-crowned night heron.

Saturday, August 13, 8 a.m.

MARKHAM-GENSBURG PRAIRIE

Charles Habecker – 708-747-6061

Come and see the prairie in full bloom, with perhaps some butterflies and insects among the flowers. Meet at the parking lot at the north end of Whipple street. Whipple is one block east of Kedzie on 159th Street. Look for the McDonald's at the corner of Whipple and 159th and turn north there.

**BLUEBIRDS ARE HERE, BUT
LATE STARTING NESTING**

Bluebirds have been seen around our area for more than a month, but by mid-April no serious nesting activities have been reported along the four TCAS bluebird trails. Volunteers are diligently checking the boxes while evicting several aggressive house sparrows in an effort to encourage bluebirds to settle down and start incubating a brood.

Perhaps this year has been a long hard winter for all of us . . . Let's wait and see.

Aura Duke

FIELD NOTES

TO REPORT SIGHTINGS CALL
MARY WHITE AT 396-0794

FEBRUARY

2/08 At least 25 Robins in his pear tree in Matteson. *Dick Riner*

2/15 12-15 Cedar Waxwings in her Park Forest crabapple tree. *Delpha Williams*

02/16 At least 200 migrating Canada Geese flying northwest over Crete. A flock of Robins in her neighborhood all winter.

Kathy Bader

MARCH

3/01 2 Red-winged Blackbirds in Crete at Monee Road and Western Ave.

Paula Arnold

3/03 At least 500 Sandhill Cranes in several groups flying north, 6 Cedar Waxwings competing with a flock of Robins for some dried serviceberries, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker and several Red-winged Blackbirds. Lake Katherine.

Mary White

3/03 A yard full of Robins in Monee.

Paula Arnold

3/07 The first returning Robin in her Crete yard. *Deb Marberg*

3/08 Sandhill Cranes flying over Crete.

Kathy Bader

3/08 More than 300 Sandhill Cranes flying over Lake Katherine.

Dick Thomas

3/13 200-300 Sandhill Cranes flying overhead and a pair of Cooper's Hawks. Matteson.

Elise Ziemann

3/15 1 Purple Finch at her Monee feeder.

Paula Arnold

3/19 A Loon catching and losing a fish in Maple Lake. 2 turkey Vultures over Rt. 83 near Swallow Cliff. *Mary White*

3/19 A pair of Red-tailed Hawks nesting near 143rd and Harlem.

Nell Donnelly

3/21 A baby Great Horned Owl, Isaac Walton in Homewood. *Al Thomas*

3/21 A male Pheasant on Laraway Road in Frankfort. *Susan Weinrebe*

3/23 50 White Pelicans on Tampier Lake.

Rick Steffen

3/25 A Great Horned Owl calling at night. 2 Cooper's Hawks feeding on a bird in his neighbor's back yard. Worth.

Dick Thomas

3/26 1 Northern Harrier, 2 Short-eared Owls, Horned Larks, Tree Sparrows and Northern Shovelers at Tinley Creek Wetlands.

Al Thomas

3/27 6 Horned Grebes, Common, Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers, Goldeneyes, Ruddy Ducks, Red-headed Ducks, Mute Swans, Coots, Scaup, Tree Sparrows and Song Sparrows. Wolf Lake.

Al Thomas

3/29 A pair of Eastern Bluebirds checking out bluebird houses in her yard. Also 1 Kestrel. Crete. *Nancy Kay*

3/30 Pair of Cooper's Hawks and flock of Fox Sparrows in his Olympia Fields back yard.

Larry Lubertozzi

3/31 A Trumpeter Swan on a small pond on Old Monee Road near Western.

Paula Arnold

3/31 30 Ring-necked Ducks on retaining pond near 103rd and Kedzie. *Mary White*

APRIL

4/01 Large group of American Coots. Marsh at Western and Goodenow Road.

April LeClair

4/03 1 Bonaparte's Gull and 1 Kingfisher in a pond behind the K-mart on 175th and Halsted.

Al Thomas

SPRING BIRD COUNT PUTS 13 TEAMS IN THE FIELD

On Saturday, May 7, more than 30 Thorn Creek Audubon Society members in 13 teams will be doing their share to make the annual Spring Bird Count a success by counting the birds they see in specific areas of Eastern Will County.

Others will be adding to the data by reporting the birds they see in their yards and at their feeders

The field counters will be covering territories from Route 45 on the west, County Line Road on the south, the Indiana state line on the east and the border of Will County on the north and will be in the field from early morning until evening.

Feeder watchers will be reporting their sightings by Sunday afternoon, May 8, to Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166. At 6 p.m. on Monday, May 9, participants will hold a potluck dinner and then tally the results of the count at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena.

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

FIELD NOTES continued

4/04 1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Park Forest.

April LeClair

4/06 A wild hen Turkey at her feeders all winter.

Jeane Christiansen

4/11 Pair of Eastern Phoebes returning to former nest site under bridge in Krotiak Park in Park Forest.

Joan Crabb

4/11 2 Gold-crowned and 3 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 6 Brown Creepers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Sand Ridge. 2 Caspian Terns and 3 pair Northern Shovelers, Lake Katherine.

Mary White

BARTEL GRASSLAND'S WILD NEIGHBORS HAS ACTIVITIES FOR ALL

Saturday, May 21, the 7th Annual Wild Neighbors Festival, will be a big day at the Bartel Grassland. Activities for everybody, especially the youngsters, will keep visitors busy and entertained. Everyone is welcome to attend.

The day will start with plug planting at 9 a.m. Six thousand dollars worth of wetland plants will fill the area in front of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society berm. Funds to purchase the plants came from a TogetherGreen grant offered by the Toyota Company. Plants include the wild varieties of Blue Flag Iris and Cardinal Flower, which need "wet feet" and can drive out the invasive types of cattails.

Entertainment will include a puppet show given by members of the Cook County Forest Preserve and a story teller.

A falconer will bring a Peregrine Falcon for everyone to see. This bird was once quite rare but thanks to preservation efforts its numbers are growing again.

A hot dog lunch, with drinks and cookies by the Mad Baker of Bartel, will be on the agenda at noon. Guided tours of the 600-acre grassland will be conducted.

Master gardeners have been invited to give demonstrations and share their knowledge about using native plants in the landscape.

Scopes and binoculars will help visitors to see some of the birds which come to nest in the grassland, particularly the Bobolinks, another species that has been diminishing because of lack of habitat but which is rebounding successfully at Bartel. Those who don't know how to use binoculars should bring theirs along and will get instruction on the fine points of spotting birds.



Thorn Creek
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
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Editor: Joan Crabb Database: Sue Putnam

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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