



Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 38 - ISSUE 6 NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2010

NEWSLETTER

40TH CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT JAN. 2

This year marks Thorn Creek Audubon's 40th year of participation in the Christmas Bird Count. During a 24-hour period on Sunday, January 2, count participants will be identifying and counting all birds observed within a circle 15 miles in diameter. The center of our circle is located at the GSU campus and includes parts of Homewood, Chicago Heights, Crete and eastern Frankfort, extending to the south as far as the Beecher-Peotone Road.

The Bird Count, now in its 111th year, is a census of winter birds performed annually by volunteers in over 2000 locations across Canada, the United States, regions in Latin America and the Caribbean, Hawaii and other Pacific Islands. The bird observations collected within defined circular areas have been amassed into a huge useful database that reflects the distribution and numbers of winter birds.

Two distinct groups of volunteers conduct the count: field observers and feeder watchers. Parties of field observers will be organized to cover specific territories, a leader being assigned to each group. Feeder watchers report the numbers of each species seen in their yards and feeders on count day. They should report their observations no later than 8 P.M. on count day to Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166. In addition to the count day tabulation, any unusual birds sighted during count week (Dec. 30 through Jan. 5) should be reported to the compiler, Bob Harrison. All participants must sign up in advance for this important event. A planning session will be held at the November 3 TCA general meeting at the Park Forest Aqua Center Discovery Room.

For further information or to sign up please call Bob Harrison (708-889-9693) -- nosira@sbcglobal.net or Aura Duke (708-748-6407) auraduke@aol.com.

Aura Duke

The Central Park Wetlands in Park Forest have become a favorite place for school children to study nature. The boardwalks allow them to get a close-up view of aquatic life. The development of these wetlands from 2000 to today is the topic of the TCAS program on Nov. 3. See 'Programs' on Page 2 for details.



Photo by Rob Gunther

FALL PROGRAMS

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF PLACE

~~Our 2010-2011 programs are being held in~~
the new Wetlands Discovery Center, a science classroom that is a new addition to the Park Forest Aqua Center. The Discovery Center is at the northwest corner of the building, identified by a large sign. The Aqua Center is at 30 North Orchard Drive, just north of the Park Forest Library.

Wednesday, November 3, 7 p.m.

CENTRAL PARK WETLAND RESTORATION

**Rob Gunther, Parks Superintendent,
Village of Park Forest**

The restoration of the 45 acres of peat bog now called the Central Park Wetlands began in 2000. In its first ten years it has become a well-known natural area and has won widespread recognition and a number of awards, the most recent being the Flaherty Award given by the Great Lakes Park Training Institute for excellence in parks and recreations facilities and programs.

Rob Gunther, Parks Superintendent for the Village of Park Forest, has been with the wetlands since the beginning. He will explain the history of the region and why the wetlands are there, why the village restored it, and the benefits and programs that have been developed because we have it. The school children in the South Suburban area have been especially benefitted because the wetlands, in conjunction with the new Wetlands Discovery center, is a good site for the study of natural science.

Gunther will place special emphasis on the important plants that make up these wetlands.

Wednesday, December 1, 7 p.m.

A BACK-PACK TRIP IN THE TATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK IN ALASKA

Bob Moffitt

This trip took Moffitt to a place so far north that spring, summer and fall all put together are no longer than 4 ½ months. It is so remote that they didn't see a living soul and very little wildlife – only one grizzly bear and one lone caribou.

The six travelers flew in from Fairbanks, were set down in a lake on a seaplane and 10 days later picked up from another lake by another seaplane. Because there are no roads or trails, they hiked and camped along streams, carrying the food they needed and filtering the water they drank.

They were above the Arctic Circle in mid-July, and it never really got dark, Moffitt said. "The sun went down after we went to bed and rose at three a.m., before we got up.

"We hiked two or three days on the tundra with no shrubs and no trees, though there were plenty of wildflowers. We saw some of the same plants you would see in the West, but what might there be waist high were only three or four inches high here. There were big flowers with hardly any stem or leaves; all the energy of the plant was going into the flowers."

They also hiked in scrub and mixed forest, and saw beautiful mountains, lakes and waterfalls, but few birds, he said.

Moffitt has been a math teacher for 35 years and now that he is retired enjoys hiking, rafting, photography, woodworking and taking wilderness trips. He especially enjoys going to remote areas still in pristine condition.

Wednesday, January 5, 2011, 7 p.m.

IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO FEED BIRDS?

Marianne Hahn

In this PowerPoint presentation, Marianne Hahn will discuss plants, both native and non-native, that will attract birds to your yard year around. She will also provide food for thought about feeding birds with purchased seed, and

(Continued bottom of next page)

RECYCLE, THEN BIRD AT MONEE RESERVOIR

Sometimes recycling is a bit of a chore, but it can be fun if you combine it with a little birding.

That's possible at Will County's recently opened electronics recycling site at the Monee Reservoir. It's simple to use – just drive up to the big white shipping container (itself re-used and re-painted), and place your discarded televisions, computers, VCRs, microwaves and smaller items inside. Then put on the binoculars and go looking for herons, geese, ducks, kingfishers, maybe even a sora or a bittern.

This permanent residential-only recycling site is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Although it does take microwave ovens, it does not accept other household appliances such as stoves or refrigerators. There is no charge for any item.

Will County recycling specialist Marta Keane says the site also accepts a lot of small items. "Don't forget the little things, like cameras, X-boxes, cell phones, calculators, and even strings of decorative lights that have seen better days. Everything with a computer chip will fit, also anything that would go with an electronic item, such as a keyboard."

She recommends that items like computers that contain memory have the memory erased, although the contractors who work with Will County are required by law to erase any information on computers, phones or other items.

Will County provides many other recycling services, including similar sites at Beecher and Mokena, although their hours are different. A new website, WILL COUNTY GREEN.COM, is going online November 1 and will give detailed information about all types of recycling, Keane said.

The new site will include all the information in the present recycling publication, the *Will County Residential Waste and Recycling Guide*, along with information about what individuals, businesses and schools can do to green their operations. It also has interactive games where youngsters can learn about composting and recycling.

For those who do not have computers, the Will County Land Use Division will mail its publication. To request the publication or information on specific recycling questions, call Keane at 815-727-8834.

Joan Crabb

Programs, continued

recommend procedures to maintain the health of birds that visit your yard.

Marianne, an active conservationist and an avid birder, is a current member and past president of Thorn Creek Audubon Society.

Wednesday, February 2, 2011, 7 p.m.

THE HUMMINGBIRD PROJECT

Vernon Kleen

Kleen is one of the few hummingbird banders in Illinois, and banding allows us to learn where these birds go on migration.

SEED SCATTERERS NEEDED TO BREAK BARTEL RECORD

Steward Dick Riner is hoping to see more than 98 volunteers turn out to scatter seeds of native grasses over the Bartel Grassland on November 20. He wants to break the 2005 record of participants who dispersed seeds over about 100 acres.

Anyone from 8 to 80 can do the job, help the environment and share a lunch of hot dogs and homemade cookies. Starting time is 9 a.m., and the more people, the faster it goes.

FIELD TRIPS

Please let trip leaders know if you plan to attend or if you want a ride or to car pool. Changes in plans will also be posted on the website, thorncreekaudubonsociety.org. The next trip is scheduled January 22, 2011, to Starved Rock State Park to see eagles. A full schedule begins in April

Sunday, Nov. 7, 2 p.m. at the Park Forest Library

JASPER-PULASKI for CRANES

Al Thomas, Charles Habecker

Al Thomas, woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

(708) 957-9847,

Charles Habecker, (708) 747-6061.

TCAS members don't need to go as far as the Platte River in Nebraska to see 10,000 to 15,000 Sandhill Cranes as they head south for the winter. There is a good viewing stand where we can see the cranes flying in at sunset just a little over an hour from Park Forest. Occasionally a Whooping Crane may join them. Dinner on the way home.

SHOP AT CARSON'S NOV. 13 FOR A TCAS FUNDRAISER

Thorn Creek Audubon Society members can help raise funds by shopping at a Carson Pirie Scott Store on its annual Community Day November 13. Board members are selling coupon books with a \$10 coupon good on any item of \$10 or more, along with many other coupons, for just \$5.

All the money collected by coupon sales stays right with TCAS, says Dory Grosche, ways and means chairman. Coupon books will be available at the November 3 general meeting or by calling Dory at (708) 481-3166.

The fundraiser supports Audubon activities in conservation and environmental education, as well and its grants to area organizations. Last year the fundraiser brought TCAS \$400.

A TCAS GRANT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

It's good to find out that something you supported when it was just in the thinking stages has turned out to be as successful as its originators hoped.

That's what happened to several members of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society grants committee on a recent visit to Homewood's Willow School. In 2008 TCAS gave Willow School a grant to help build an interactive educational garden in an inner courtyard.

It would include a butterfly garden, food garden, prairie plants, a water feature, and a viewing root box as well a little court with benches. It was to be a hands-on teaching area for the pre-Kindergarden through second graders who go there.

The staff members in charge of the project, Regina Zohfeld and Kim Genduso, with the help of many others, including the Village of Homewood and the University of Illinois Extension Service Master Gardeners, got the garden in and growing.

At the school's recent open house, it was hard even to get through the double doors into the garden, so many children were bringing their parents and siblings to show them where they had planted and harvested crops (potatoes, pumpkins, beans and squash), watched birds and butterflies, smelled flowers, and sometimes had lessons in music or reading. Outside in the hall were pictures of the birds the children had seen in the garden.

"The kids love it," Zohfeld said, "and last year many teachers came out here with their classes. It is rewarding to see these children showing off their garden to their parents."

Now Zohfeld is thinking about another garden, perhaps a food garden where produce may be grown and given to a local food pantry. Doesn't that seem like a good idea?

AURA DUKE RECEIVES ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Photo by Terrie Spillers

Aura Duke, a charter member of Thorn Creek Audubon Society and active throughout TCAS' history, was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at a recent TCA meeting.

The plaque, which features a carved wooden Eastern Bluebird, reads: "In grateful appreciation for over 30 years of leadership and service and inspired devotion to the Bluebird Nesting Box Program for South Cook County and East Will County." It was presented by TCAS President Dick Riner.

Aura was a charter member of TCAS when it was first organized in 1972, along with Kit Struthers, Hugh and Marian Celander, Bernice and Warren Buck and Elizabeth Wodke. Since then, TCAS has grown from approximately 35 initial members to about 85 local members; more than 600 people receive its newsletter.

Aura has served in many offices, including president, and on many committees. She has been newsletter editor and field trips chairman and is presently special projects chairman and on the grants and scholarship committee.

She is perhaps best known for her untiring work in helping to preserve Eastern Bluebirds,

a native species that has been threatened by the introduced English sparrow. The sparrows take the nesting sites bluebirds prefer. To help the less aggressive bluebirds, boxes are put in likely sites and monitored by volunteers who remove sparrow nests.

Back in the 1800s, she said, bluebirds were as common in their habitats as robins are now. But the numbers began dropping until they reached threatened status, becoming very low by the 1980s. Now, thanks to the efforts of many people in providing boxes, we are seeing bluebirds again.

Under Aura's leadership, TCAS has set up and monitors 106 boxes in four locations. She also advises others about establishing bluebird trails in their areas, and works with Boy Scouts who are building bluebird houses to earn Eagle Scout badges.

She intends to remain an active TCAS member and to keep right on working with the bluebird project.

TCAS OFFERS 'NATURAL' CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

For Christmas ideas that give back to nature, Thorn Creek Audubon offers a variety of cards that can be sent for the holidays or may also be used for small gifts.

Holiday cards featuring birds such as geese and cardinals in holiday colors are available at \$4 for a packet of six, including envelopes. Other cards feature six different flowers of nearby Raccoon Grove, taken by former TCAS member Warren Buck.

New this year is a set of cards with pictures of Japanese flower arrangements, Ikebana, done by TCAS member Charles Habecker. Birdhouses for Eastern Bluebirds and one for House Wrens at \$15 each are also available. All can be purchased at the TCAS meetings on Nov. 3 and Dec. 1 at the Wetlands discovery Center at the Park Forest Aqua Center or from Aura Duke at 748-6407.

Studying *Wildlife on the Move*

TEACHERS GET NEW AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Attention Audubon Adventures Friends and Supporters!

~~By the time you receive this newsletter, the 2010-11 Audubon Adventures kit of materials, *Wildlife on the Move*, should be in the hands of the teachers and other educators whom we sponsor. Details of the content have been received from National Audubon, as follows:~~

Wildlife on the Move, an exploration of migrating animals, includes four editions:

1. Amazing journeys and life cycles of migrating birds of the Americas
2. Monarch butterfly and dragonfly migration
3. Whales and turtles and their migratory seasons
4. Action for Planet earth focusing on ways that young people can make valuable contributions to conservation in their communities.

The kit contains 32 copies of each issue of the student newspaper plus a 48-page teacher's manual with background information and hands-on activities for inside and outside the classroom. In addition, everyone will receive *Pennies for the Planet*, an educational fundraising project that focuses on protecting habitats for migrating birds and other creatures.

It is not too late for teachers to apply to receive Audubon Adventures. If you are or know of a teacher who would like to be enrolled, contact Sue Putnam, (708) 747-1986 or sputter1986@sbcglobal.net.

And of course it's never too late to contribute, so that we can continue to provide this stimulating program to the teachers free of charge. To do so, send a check made out to Thorn Creek Audubon Adventures Fund in care of Sue at 3704 W 213th St., Matteson, IL 60443.

Mary Anne McLean

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 COZG590Z.

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Make check payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, Membership Data Center, P. O. box 422250 Palm Coast, Florida, 32142-2250

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

AUGUST

08/17 4 to 6 White Pelicans, at the wetlands on Old Plank Trail.

Joan Dietrich

SEPTEMBER

09/02 Unidentified birds near the parking lot in Bartel Grassland. 2 birds the size of chickens, with the coloration of Rhode Island Red hens. (Possibly pheasants?)

Michael Neil

09/02 2 Nighthawks flying over Apollo Park in Homewood.

Sally Long

09/10 Purple Martins, pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Indigo Buntings, 2 immature Downy Woodpeckers, 10-12 Goldfinches and a couple of House Finches, 3 female Hummingbirds, pair of Cardinals and 2 fledglings, pair of Goldfinches with 4 nestlings. Steger.

Pauline Small

09/16 Cedar Waxwings eating juniper berries, Old Plank Trail. 5 young Wild Turkeys, 2 toms and 3 hens, feeding on seeds along Old Plank Trail. So friendly they inspected and pecked at her bike tires.

Mary White

09/21 Great Blue Heron on Ridgeland near Odyssey Club.

Rich Fifer

09/22 Yellow-rumped Warblers and Northern Flickers on Tinley Park bike trail

Mary White

09/27 3 Sandhill Cranes flying over Lake Katherine.

Dick Thomas

09/27 Cooper's Hawk hitting her Matteson window early in the morning, possibly attacking statues of a Cardinal and a Robin.

Jeannie Christiansen

09/28 Belted Kingfisher eating small fish near Bartel Grassland.

Richard Fifer

09/28 Downy Woodpecker in his Chicago Heights back yard.

Richard Fifer

09/29 Kestrel on Stony Island Avenue near Route 30.

Richard Fifer

09/29 Turkey Vultures flying over Governors State University and Hickory Creek Barrens.

Richard Fifer

09/30 2 Great White Egrets at Odyssey Pond near Matteson Auto Mall.

Richard Fifer

OCTOBER

10/03 3 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 1 Oven Bird, and Yellow-rumped Warblers at the Little Red School House.

Mary White

10/03 Cooper's hawk flying with prey in its talons, Matteson.

Jeannie Christiansen

10/06 1 Eastern Bluebird, Commissioners Park in Frankfort.

Susan Weinrebe

10/10 5 Marsh Wrens, many Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers and a Cooper's Hawk chasing a Northern Harrier. Park Forest Central Park Wetlands.

Al Thomas

10/10 Approximately 50 Purple Martins flying over Lake Katherine.

Mary White

10/10 8 or 9 Killdeer in a flock in the parking lot at New Hope Workshop on Cottage Grove Avenue in Crete at dusk.

Anne Rosen

10/11 2 Juncos in her Park Forest yard.

Delpha Williams

10/13 35 Sandhill Cranes over his Matteson home.

Dick Riner



Thorn Creek
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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<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>
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 necessary endorsed by the TCAS board or the National Audubon Society.
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