

Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 37 – ISSUE 5 SEPT-OCT 2009

NEWSLETTER

APPLY NOW FOR GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS

Organizations and individuals have until October 15 to apply for Thorn Creek Audubon Society grants and scholarships. These awards go to groups or individuals working in environmental programs which promote the protection and enhancement of wildlife and the environment. Projects must focus on one or more of the following areas: environmental education, habitat preservation and wildlife protection.

Grants are often awarded to schools or nature centers that can reach a number of people, but are also sometimes given to individuals working in the environmental field. Scholarships may be used for tuition or other expenses associated with a college credit class, workshop, continuing education course or the equivalent that will enhance skills and knowledge in environmental studies. TCAS will award grants and scholarships only during the fall of the 2009-2010 year.

Grants are not to exceed \$500 per project, and recipients are expected to contribute additional funds or labor toward the completion of the proposed program. Application forms are available on the Thorn Creek Audubon Society web site, www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org. Grant applications may also be requested from and should be sent by Oct. 15 to Grants Committee Chairman Robert Pierce at 20623 Corinth Road, Olympia Fields, IL 60461, telephone 747-2047. Scholarship applications may be requested from and should be mailed to committee member Joan Crabb, 201 Krotiak Road, Park Forest, IL 60466, telephone 481-4962.

Recipients will be announced at the TCAS November 4 general meeting.

More than a dozen TCAS members turned out on August 15 to hike the Markham-Gensberg Prairie where John Denk pointed out native prairie plants such as Big Bluestem, Wild Bergamot, Rattlesnake Master, Compass Plant, Prairie Coneflowers, Purple and White Prairie Clover, and Nodding Onion. Henslow's Sparrows, grassland birds once threatened, were also heard and seen.

Photo by Dick Riner



FALL PROGRAMS

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF PLACE

Our fall programs will NOT be held at the Park Forest Library but at the Matteson Elementary School on Main Street. See story on next page about the new location.

Wednesday, Sept. 2, 7 p.m.

IDENTIFYING LBJs (THOSE LITTLE BROWN JOBS)

Geoffrey A. Williamson

Illinois Ornithological Society

OK, so here's this little brown job, skulking in the grass. What is it? These birds seem determined to give you only a glimpse here or a peek there, and even when they're in the open they often all look the same. This presentation will consider how to identify sparrows, wrens, pipits, some warblers, and some female blackbirds that have in common an affinity for hanging out close to the ground in fields, hedgerows, and brushy areas.

Williamson is co-editor of the Illinois-Indiana Region for North American birds, the journal of ornithological record published by the American Birding Association. He is a past president of both the Chicago Ornithological Society (COS) and the Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS) and is currently the membership secretary for IOS.

He has led more than 325 bird walks in the Chicago area as well as several birding trips out of state, he compiles the Lisle Arboretum Christmas Bird Count, and he has given a variety of presentations on birds and birding to numerous bird-watching and nature groups in Illinois. In 2000, he received a Service to Chicago Area Birders (avocation) award from the Chicago Audubon Society. Much of his birding time is spent in Chicago's Lincoln Park.

Wednesday, Oct. 7, 7 p.m.

BIRDING IN PANAMA

Glyn and Sylvia Dawson

The Dawsons have been TCAS members since 1987 and regularly lead TCAS field trips at Wooded Island. The program comprises photos taken on a March 2009 birding trip to Panama.

Panama is a small country (three-quarters the size of Illinois) which connects North and South America and therefore has a rich avifauna of more than 1,000 bird species. Our three week spring trip with ANCON, a conservation group which organizes tours, covered four ecological regions and yielded about 500 species of birds plus reptiles, mammals and insects.

First is an adventure to the Pacific coast near the Columbian border to look for Harpy Eagles and endemic birds in the lowland rain forest. Then, returning to Panama City, we visit the trails around the famed Canopy Lodge in Soberania National Park and visit the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal (Colon). A flight to David, a regional capital, brings us to LaAmistad Park and the mountain border with Costa Rica where the Resplendent Quetzal and many other unique species are found.

Finally, a new adventure as we land on a grass airstrip in the remote Darien region to stay in an old gold mining camp (complete with abandoned steam locomotives). From here a seven-hour uphill hike in 90 degree heat brought us to Pirre Cloud Forest Camp and birds like the Toothed Hummingbird, Choco Screech Owl and the Green-naped Tanager. Good views of stunning birds such as Ocellated Antbird, four species of Macaws, Toucans, Aracaris and Tanagers also make the trek worth the effort.

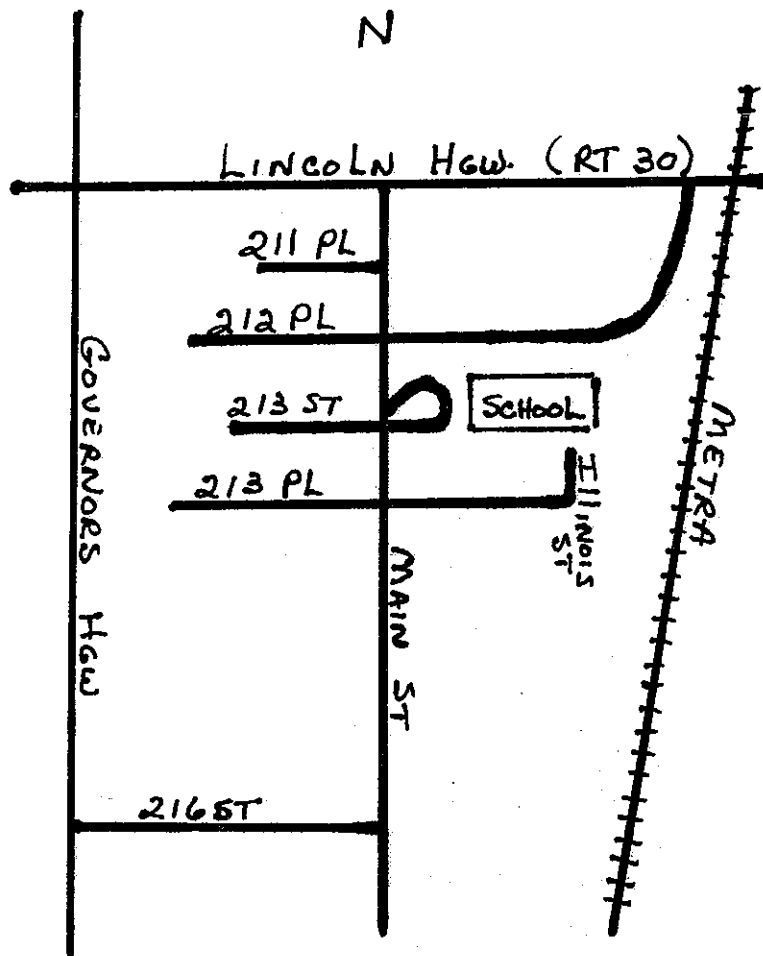
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NEW MEETING PLACE FOR TCAS PROGRAMS

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society will have a new location for meetings next year. The regular monthly meetings and programs will be held at the Matteson Elementary School at 21245 Main Street, Matteson. There is no parking in front of the school but there is a large parking lot to the rear that is accessible from 213th Place.

To reach the school, take Lincoln Highway (Route 30) to Main Street in Matteson. This is the stoplight at the Speedway Gas Station. Take Main Street south four blocks to 213th Place. Turn left (east) on 213th Place, proceed one block east, then turn left on Illinois Street into the school parking lot. Do NOT turn east on 213th Street, as that does not lead to the parking lot. We will enter the building through the rear door visible from the parking lot.

Although TCAS meetings have traditionally been held at the Park Forest Library, the library is doing some renovation and will not have the meeting room available in the fall.



FALL PROGRAMS continued

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 7 p.m.

PROJECT SQUIRREL

Steven M. Sullivan

Chicago Academy of Science

Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

Steven Sullivan is a Curator of Urban Ecology at the Chicago Academy of Science, Peggy Notebaert nature Museum. He helps create exhibits for the museum, and some of his latest work with birds is in the current Chicago exhibit. He has participated in bird banding with the U. S. fish and wildlife Service.

Tree squirrels can be found throughout our region in many habitats. Project Squirrel, a partnership of the Notebaert Nature Museum and the University of Illinois at Chicago, is

working with citizen scientists of all ages to determine the population size and species distribution of tree squirrels throughout the Chicago Wilderness region as a way to learn more about our urban wilderness.

Citizen scientists can easily monitor squirrel behavior because squirrels stay within a relatively small home range and are active during daylight hours. Project Squirrel welcomes the participation of more citizen scientists in the program.

Wednesday, December 2, 7 pm.

RAFTING DOWN THE NAHANNI RIVER IN CANADA'S NORTHWEST TERRITORY

Bob Moffitt

FALL FIELD TRIPS

Our fall field trips include bird, butterfly and leaf color viewing opportunities. Please let the trip leader know you plan to attend, so that you can be notified in the event of a change in plans. If you are not on the list for email reminders and updates regarding the trips and would like to be, please contact Mary Anne McLean at mclean908@comcast.net or (708) 672-5494.

Wednesday, September 9, 8 a.m.

KANKAKEE SANDS, INDIANA

**Al Thomas wooduck_1999@yahoo.com;
(708) 957-9847**

Native plants galore! Dicksissels! Northern Harriers! Great Spangled Fritillaries!

We'll be looking for these and much more at this 7,209 acre complex of fields, marsh wetlands, and prairie, undergoing restoration by the Nature Conservancy. We'll be driving through the area, with very little walking involved. Meet at the headquarters, 3294 North U.S. 41, Morocco, IN. Look for a small white building with a big green oak leaf on the west side of 41, (about half an hour south of Cedar Lake).

Saturday, September 12, 7 a.m.

WOODED ISLAND

Charlie Habecker – (708) 747-6061

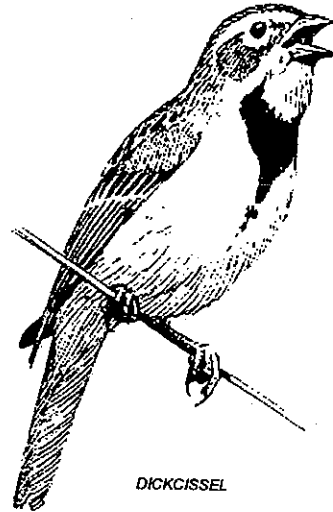
Glyn Dawson will lead a trip to help us sort out those confusing fall warblers on their way south. After a productive meander through the park, we'll head for Café Florian and a delectable brunch to celebrate our sightings. We will meet at the Clarence Darrow Bridge, located south of the Museum of Science and Industry.

Wednesday, September 16, 8 a.m.

LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE NATURE CENTER

Charlie Habecker – (708) 747-6061

The nature center overlooks Long John Slough, where we will watch for Osprey and



waterfowl, while, in the woods and adjacent meadows we can search for migrants, and possibly lingering Bluebirds and Orchard Orioles. Meet at the parking lot, on the west side of 104th Avenue, just south of 95th St.

Saturday, September 26, 8 a.m.

SAND RIDGE NATURE CENTER

**Bob Harrison – nosira@sbcglobal.net
(708) 889-8693**

Trails with boardwalks make the walking easy and the birding rewarding among the pine plantations, woods, restored prairie, wetlands and sand ridges that surround the Nature Center. Meet at the parking lot on the east side of Paxton Avenue, just a short distance north from 159th Street, (about a mile east of the Bishop Ford, but west of Torrence).

**Wednesday October 14, 8 a.m. at Park Forest
Library**

MORTON ARBORETUM

**Mary Anne McLean mclean908@comcast.net
(708) 672-5494**

This is another driving trip that should appeal to those of you who find it more comfortable to bird by car. Although the birds may be tricky to spot, the beauty of the turning leaves should compensate. We will meet at 8 a.m. at the Park Forest Library and carpool from there.

(CONTNUED NEXT PAGE)

ALONG THE BLUEBIRD TRAILS – NESTING SUCCESS

The 2009 nesting season at the four TCAS bluebird trails started with a flurry of activity in April and May. Bluebirds and Tree Swallows produced more eggs than they had done during the previous three years. The fierce competition among nesting species combined with the high incidence of predation caused a loss of several eggs and young. In addition, for no apparent cause, an unusual number of young and adult birds were found dead in their nests. In spite of the disruptions and other problems, Bluebirds as well as Tree Swallows outdid themselves, thus succeeding in their nesting efforts as shown in the following summary of this year's nesting records: (The numbers in parentheses are for the year 2008.)

SPECIES	NESTS	EGGS LAID	YOUNG FLEDGED BY MID-AUGUST
Eastern Bluebird	40 (23)	154 (125)	90 (58)
Tree Swallow	61 (43)	266 (203)	162 (118)
House Wren	44 (40)	210 (163)	84 (110)

The Tree Swallow's nesting season is over by early August, since they nest only once per year. However, a few Bluebirds and several House Wrens are still incubating eggs and feeding young, so 2 additional Bluebirds and 23 Wren fledglings may be ready to leave their nests by the end of September when the southern migration will be underway.

A big THANK YOU to the 23 dedicated volunteers who monitored the 106 nesting boxes on a weekly schedule! Diane Aigner, Kathy Bader, Jeanne Christensen, Joan Crabb, Kathy Dehn, Marilyn Dessecker, Judy Gleitsman, Dory Grosche, Susan Grove, Jin Henkel, Mary Anne McLean and her grandson Brendan Haviland, Sue Putnam, Michelle O'Connor, Joan O'Keeffe, Jan Rose, Pat Strange, Karen Taylor, Al Thomas, Edie Turkington, Judith Wallace, Aura and Sidney Duke. The annual picnic for Bluebird volunteers will be held at 1 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, at the Duke's residence.

Aura Duke

Sunday, November 1, 2 p.m.

JASPER-PULASKI

Charlie and Al – see above

We are fortunate to have this amazing birding phenomenon so close at hand. No need to make a pilgrimage as far as the Platte River to see thousands of Sandhill Cranes as they head south for the winter. The amazing spectacle of hundreds upon hundreds of the cranes staging a fly-in at sunset is just a little over an hour from Park Forest. To carpool, meet at the Park Forest Library.

Wednesday, November 11

OLD PLANK ROAD TRAIL

Al Thomas- see above

Al says this is a trail for all seasons - that even in November there's sure to be something exciting there. Come and see! Meet at the parking lot of the University of Illinois Extension building on Miller Drive, (runs east from Central, just north of the trail).

NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS WORKDAY AT BARTEL

National Public Lands Day on September 26 will be a day of service when Chicago Wilderness and other friends of Bartel Grassland will meet to help with the ongoing restoration.

Volunteers from Bartel, the Thorn Creek Audubon Society, Chicago Wilderness and Chicago Wilderness Corporate Council, school groups and anyone else who wants to help will be gathering fall seeds and sowing them and picking up wood debris from the tree cutting. A bonfire, hot dogs, baked treats from Peggy Riner and plenty of good company will be on hand.

Time is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and parking is available in the Bartel Parking lot, Flossmoor Road at Central Ave., or at the Model Airplane Flying Field lot east of Central on Flossmoor Road. Bartel Steward Dick Riner says bring gloves and dress for the weather-of-the-day.

TIME TO ORDER TCAS FALL BIRDSEED

The days are growing shorter, and it's time to think of watching birds from our winter windows instead of in the field. That means buying birdseed, and the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is accepting orders for its annual birdseed sale from now through October 1.

Seed for winter feeding will include a premium blend, a special blend and a no waste blend, along with black oil sunflower seed, safflower seed, sunflower chips, nyjer (thistle) seed, and suet cakes. Also for sale are pine bluebird boxes with predator guards and wren boxes.

Regular customers should receive an order form in the mail, but if you do not receive one, or are a first-time customer, please call one of the following for an order form and price list: Al Thomas, (708) 957-9847 (or email at wooduck_1999@yahoo.com) Kathy Bader at (708) 672-6574, or Bob Vance at 708-747-8494. Orders must be in by October 1 for pickup Saturday, October 17.

Pickup will be at the former Marshall Field store in downtown Park Forest from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. The Birdseed Sale Committee would welcome volunteers on pick-up day to help load seed into purchasers' cars. If you would like to help out please call Kathy Bader. The birdseed sale is one of TCAS' primary funding projects. Proceeds go to help fund the grants program, which helps promote conservation and environmental education, especially education for school children in the South Suburban area.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES IN 53 AREA CLASSROOMS

The beginning of the school year is at hand, which means that, thanks to your contributions to our *Audubon Adventures* Fund, 53 classes in our area soon will be receiving their *Audubon Adventures* kits, free of charge. *Action for the Planet* is this year's theme. The four editions of the student newspapers will focus on Water, Energy, Habitats, and Pennies for the Planet. According to an advance bulletin from National Audubon, each kit will include:

- *Pennies for the Planet* featuring a large classroom poster, teacher's guide and student handouts
- *Nature Journaling for Everyone*. This guide provides helpful information, advice, and techniques for starting and keeping a Naturalist's journal.
- Online student assessment questions and answers that evaluate students' language arts and science skills
- Detailed charts showing how content meets national and state standards
- How to use *Audubon Adventures* in After-school and Youth Club Setting
- Access to *Audubon Adventures* online store, stocked with amazing educational products
- Opportunity to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count in February 2010
- Gift of Audubon Membership in the teacher's name

It is not too late to enroll. If you are, or know of, a teacher or group leader who would like to receive *Audubon Adventures* this year, please contact Sue Putnam (708) 747-1986 or sputter1986@sbcglobal.net. And of course it's never too late to contribute. 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

FIELD NOTES

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

June 09

6/28 A Least Bittern, Caspian terns, Double-crested Cormorants, Marsh, Sedge, and House Wrens. Old Plank Trail Wetlands.

Al Thomas

July 09

7/15 Pair of Red Golden Pheasants observed on 3 different occasions in rural Country Club Hills.

Darryl Erickson

August 09

8/02 Pair of Northern Harriers feeding a fledgling on a telephone pole at Pfeiffer and Steger Road.

Mary White

8/02 Pair of Green Herons feeding a fledgling in a pond on Old Plank Trail at Schoolhouse Road.

Mary White

Can anyone identify this bird?

On July 6 George Smith in Tinley Park reported a sparrow-sized bird with a 12" to 14" long black scissor tail, black back and wings, rust-colored head and upper chest, black cap, white bottom. Mary Anne McLean believes it could be a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a bird usually found farther south and west but seen in the Grant Park area several years ago. Any other ideas?



NORTHERN HARRIER

PRAIRIE SCOUTS CONTINUE RESTORATION DURING FALL

The Bartel Grassland Prairie Scouts who have been traversing the area this summer to identify plants will continue their work into the fall with the help of two more training sessions, says Bartel Steward Dick Riner.

Dates for the workshop, conducted by Judy Pollock, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon Chicago Region, will be set soon, Riner says, and the present 13 Prairie Scouts will be notified. However, 13 is just half the number Riner would like to have walking the grassland, and he urges anyone who would like to volunteer to contact him at (708) 720-5683 or at dickriner@sbcglobal.net.

In order to restore the native flora and fauna of the 380 acres of former farmland, invasive plants must be removed and plants originally native to the grassland restored. Volunteers survey a designated area at least several times a month after being trained to spot both types of plants. Using a Global Positioning System, these plants are plotted on a large map that is available to the Cook County Forest Preserve staff as well as contractors who are helping with the restoration.

Invasive plants are disposed of in several ways, depending on the way they propagate. Mowing, picking off seedheads, and even spraying with herbicides are some ways of controlling them. Some must even be removed from the site.

The beneficial plants which are being encouraged to grow, such as Little Bluestem, Blazing Star, Blue Flag Iris, Butterfly Weed, Monarda, Swamp and Whorled Milkweed and Nodding Onion, are given more room and will be helped along when volunteers collect seed this fall and scatter it in places where it has the best chance to germinate and grow.

Restoring the native grassland has provided nesting sites for many birds whose future has been threatened by loss of habitat, such as Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows and Meadowlarks.



Thorn Creek
AUDUBON SOCIETY

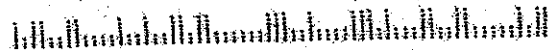
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Editor: Joan Crabb Database: Sue Putnam

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.

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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