



# Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 36- ISSUE 3 MAY-JUNE, 2008

NEWSLETTER

## Owl Program at Freedom Hall on May 8

The very popular and informative "Owl Show" will be held on Thursday, May 8, at the Freedom Hall Auditorium in Park Forest. Jacque Muzzo program director and Jane Seitz executive director of The Illinois Raptor Center ([www.illinoisraptorcenter.org](http://www.illinoisraptorcenter.org)) will provide the exciting, live presentation.

A Barred Owl, a Barn Owl, an Eastern Screech Owl, a Great Horned Owl, a Long-eared Owl, a Short-eared Owl and a Snowy Owl, will be featured. The natural history of these predators will be explored such as their eating habits, nesting places, time of day or night they hunt, and their calls.

The show will be part of TCAS's regular meeting and is open to everyone. There is no admission fee. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. (doors will open at 6 p.m.). A brief business session to elect officers for the 2008-2009 year will be held before the owls wing in.



## TCAS Awards Grants and Scholarship

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society has awarded \$2,500 in grants and scholarships this year. The grants went to groups and schools working to protect the environment and wildlife, and the scholarship, the first awarded in eight years, to an environmentalist for further study.

**Bartel Grassland Volunteers** received \$290 to construct and install a permanent sign at the TCAS Viewing Berm. **ME4E** (Multidisciplinary Education for the Environment), a program serving schools in the area, was awarded \$250 to purchase a QX5 digital microscope. The **Thorn Creek Nature Center** received \$200 to expand an indoor bird viewing station, add bookshelves, books and new bird displays and repairing and improving display cases. The **Plum Creek Nature Center**, Forest Preserve District of Will County, was awarded \$460 to mount two owl specimens, a Barred Owl and a Long-eared Owl, to be used for educational programs offered to Will County schools.

**School District 163** was awarded \$250 to create a rain garden at Blackhawk School, with plants, bird feeders, binoculars and bird field guides and to help maintain three other school gardens. Matteson Elementary School, **District 162**, was awarded \$125 to develop a bird habitat at the school including birdhouses, birdbaths, feeders and native plants. Richton Square School, District 162, also received \$125 for maintenance of its wildlife bird habitat, including purchasing birdseed, birdhouses, binoculars and books. Willow School, **District 153**, Homewood, received \$400 to help build an interactive butterfly garden featuring native plants and teaching the concepts of solar power and natural energy. The garden will be handicapped accessible.

The \$400 scholarship was awarded to environmentalist **Judith Wallace** with the Will County Forest Preserve District, to take a four-credit-hour class in Earth Sciences at Prairie State College. The class will enhance her knowledge in geology, biology, conservation and related subjects.



## TCA May and June Field Trip Dates

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### May

**Saturday, May 3, 7 a.m.**

**Orland Grassland Bird Count**

**Coordinator: Dick Riner (708) 720-5683**

**dickriner@gmail.com**

Come explore this rolling grassland as we contribute to science by counting the birds that reside or stop over there.

**Wednesday, May, 8 a.m.**

**LeVasseur Park, Kankakee**

**Coordinator: Mary Anne McLean**

**(708) 672-5495 Mclean908@comcast.net**

We'll be watching for warblers and many other migrating and breeding species as we stroll along the Kankakee River. 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; turn right on North St. and follow to dead end at Kennedy; turn left (south) on Kennedy and go about two miles to Fifth St., just before the YMCA (1075 Kennedy Dr.) This is the fourth light after North. Go ¼ mile to parking lot. OR, call Mary Anne to arrange to carpool.

**Saturday, May 10**

**Spring Bird Count**

**Coordinators: Aura Duke**

**(708) 748-6407 auraduke@aol.com**

**Al Thomas (708) 957-9847**

**Wooduck 1999@yahoo.com Contact either Aura or Al to volunteer.**

**Wednesday, May 14, 7:30 a.m.**

**Lake Renwick**

**Coordinator: Aura Duke (708) 748-6407**

Meet at the Park Forest library to carpool to Lake Renwick, where we will assist with the public viewing of herons and egrets on their nesting sites, with time off for a bird walk through the woods, and further birding en route. Please be sure to phone Aura to tell her you will join the group.

**Saturday, May 17, 8 a.m.**

**Bartel Wild Neighbors Festival**

**Coordinator: Dick Riner (708) 720-5683**

**dickriner@gmail.com**

Parking at Bartel- New parking lot located at Flossmoor Rd and Central- southwest corner. Bird watching, hot dog lunch and bonfire!!

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

**Hickory Creek Preserve**

**Coordinator: Mary Anne McLean**

**Mclean908@comcast.net (708) 672-5495**

Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Grosbeaks, Indigo buntings, Common Yellowthroats, Bluebirds, Hooded Warblers are just a few of the species we've seen and heard there. 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.

**Saturday May 24, 7 a.m.**

**Wooded Island**

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

**Wednesday, May 28, 8 a.m.**

**Sweetfern**

**Coordinator: Al Thomas (708) 957-9847**

**Wooduck 1999@yahoo.com**

Meet at Conrad Park in Mokenca to carpool to this richly diverse habitat, in the process of restoration by Marianne Hahn. Be sure to contact Al to tell him if you will attend; carpooling from Park Forest or Crete may also be arranged. Wear sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots, long pants that can be tucked into socks (to keep ticks out), a long-sleeved shirt and a hat. Bring lunch.

### June

**Wednesday, June 4, 7:00 a.m.**

**Governors State University**

**Coordinator: Aura Duke**

**(708) 748-6407 auraduke@aol.com**

How many chances do we get to see outdoor sculptures and winged wonders on the same walk? Last year a Bell's Vireo and several Yellow-billed cuckoos were among the sightings in this area. Meet in the eastern most parking lots at Governor's State.

**Saturday, June 7**

**Midewin**

**Coordinator: Al Thomas (708) 957- 9847**

Meet at the Park Forest Library to carpool, or take I-57 to the Wilmington-Peotone road and then west to Rte 53; then north to the Midewin Offices (about 1 mile). Our second trip to the Tallgrass Prairie should be an exciting one. Many songbirds, sparrows, waterfowl and other nesting birds, as well as migrants, will be returning to Midewin to reacquaint themselves with the resident Turkey and Upland Sandpiper populations.

**Check out TCAS new website calendar**



## TCAS President's Message and Bartel News Page 3

### President's Message

As the May election of officers approaches, I am struck with a feeling of how great this job as president of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society has been. I have had a wonderful board of Directors and Committee Chairmen (and Women)! Without these people, the job would have been impossible. I will miss the job of president and will try not to act presidential in my next job with TCAS. Thank you all for your support and tolerance.

*Dick Riner*

### Bartel Grassland to be Expanded

As many of you have noticed, the area north, northeast, and east of the Bartel Grassland Restoration Project sprouted lots of red flags in June of 2007. The public also noticed this, and I received a call from Phil Kadner of the Southtown Newspaper shortly after the drain tile contractor did his search for tiles and marked them with the red flags. Several people were afraid that these areas were going to be developed.

I am happy to report that these areas are not going to be developed but instead are going to be restored, in much the same fashion that Bartel Grassland is being restored. O'Hare mitigation money has been awarded and the areas will be restored to their original wetland habitat. This will be approximately a five-year project, with outside contractors doing the work before the volunteers are expanded and start work with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to continue the restoration.

The partners in the project are the Corps of Engineers, Corlands, Audubon Chicago Region, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. There will be regional public information meetings in the near future.

Bartel Grassland presently consists of 635 acres, with 365 acres of grassland that is being restored. The Bartel Expansion will include 800 more acres or areas to be restored. If you are interested in joining the Bartel Volunteers in this exciting project, please contact Dick Riner, Bartel Grassland Volunteer Steward 708-720-5683 [dickriner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dickriner@sbcglobal.net)

*Dick Riner*

### Shrubland Bird Blitz in May

The third and last year of the Breeding Bird Blitz that will focus on shrubland birds will be held sometime in May. This count of breeding birds is sponsored by the Habitat Project, a combination of birding organizations in the Chicago region; next year the group will focus on a different group of birds. To participate in this survey of unusual birds, such as the Cerulean Warbler, call Dick Riner at 708-720-5683 or email at [dickriner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dickriner@sbcglobal.net).

**Bartel Grassland is home to many grassland bird species such as Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows and Meadowlarks**

**Bartel Wild Neighbors Festival -May 17**



## TCAS Conservation Activities

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### Plant Sale Pick-up June 7

June 7 is the date set for those who ordered plants through the TCAS Annual Native Plant Sale to pick up their flowers, shrubs, and trees. The plants will be waiting at the Izaak Walton Preserve in Homewood and can be picked up between 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Plant Sale Chairman Dory Grosche said there would be a few extra plants for sale. For more information, call Dory at 481-3166.

### TCAS Earth Day Display Shows Biodegradation Times

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society's booth on Earth Day, April 19, at Goodenow Grove included a special display on biodegradation time.

Visitors were asked to guess how long it takes

to get rid of the trash we throw away. Most were surprised to learn the answers.

For example, it takes only six weeks for newspapers to biodegrade, and only two months for the cardboard rolls that held paper towels. A Styrofoam cup, on the other hand, will be around for 50 years, while that aluminum pop can will be here for 200. The plastic holder for the six-pack of pop cans will outlast the cans by another 200 years, taking 400 years to biodegrade, and a plastic water bottle will be with us for 450 years. Worst is the filament fishing line, which can clog up the ocean for about 600 years.

Visitors were given a simple solution to the problems - RECYCLE. The TCAS display included a quiz on biodegradation and an opportunity for young people to sign a pledge to get actively involved in recycling.

*Aura Duke*

### TCAS Tote Bags for Sale

Plastic bags are bad for our planet in many ways. Their production requires petroleum, a non-renewable resource, manufacturing them creates pollution, and distributing them requires energy. They clog our landfills and take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade.

Perhaps even worse, they cause the death of many animals, both marine and land creatures. In the mid-Pacific Ocean there is a "dead zone" the size of Texas filled with discarded plastic, much of it plastic bags. Hundreds of thousands of sea turtles, whales and other marine mammals die every year from eating these plastic bags, thinking they are food. Once swallowed, the bags choke the animals or block their intestines, leading to an agonizing death. On land, cows, goats and other animals suffer a similar fate when they accidentally ingest the bags while foraging.

In an effort to discourage the proliferation of plastic, the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is selling attractive high-quality canvas tote bags embroidered with the TCAS logo for \$12, the actual cost of the bag. People are encouraged to carry these bags to the stores they patronize and use them instead of the bags the stores provide. To order bags, call Judy Gleitsman, 748-1745.

### Plant Sale Pick-Up Date – June 7



## **Spring Bird Count and Bluebird Monitoring**

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### **Spring Bird Count Set Saturday, May 10**

Plans are underway for TCAS to participate in the statewide Spring Bird Count, co-sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Audubon Society. Eleven teams of field observers have been organized to canvas specific areas in eastern Will County. Feeder watchers are also very important, as some unusual birds are sighted at feeders each year. Feeder watchers should report their observations by calling Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166 no later than Sunday, May 11.

A potluck supper for participants in the count will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 12, at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena. The compilation of count results will take place after the dinner. All birders are welcome and should bring a dish to share. To sign up for this exciting event, contact Al Thomas at 708-957-9847 or Aura Duke at 708-748-6407.

### **Volunteers Begin Bluebird Monitoring**

Every spring bluebird volunteers await with great anticipation the arrival of the first bluebirds in our area. Much to our surprise this year, a pair was sighted rather early, March 11, at Goodenow Grove. The 114 nesting boxes along the four Thorn Creek Audubon trails at Goodenow Grove, Monee Reservoir, Glenwood School Campus and the Central Park Wetland in Park Forest have been checked and cleaned and are ready for occupancy.

Starting the week of April 13 the following volunteers will be monitoring nesting activities on a weekly schedule the during nesting season: Diane Aigner, Marilyn Dessecker, Jim Henkel, Karen Taylor, Judy Gleitsman, Kathy Bader, Mary Anne McLean, Judith Wallace, Edith Turkington, Patricia Hagensen, Jeanne Christiansen, Dory Grosche, Sue Putnam, Kathy Dehn, Pat Braker, Joan Crabb, Dewey Helmick, Joan O'Keefe, Daniela Herman, Al Thomas, Michelle O'Connor, and Aura and Sidney Duke.

Bluebird numbers were once decreasing rapidly in Illinois. Today, however, there are bluebirds throughout the United States and Canada, and bluebird trails stretch for miles across prime habitat. The nesting success of beneficial birds such as bluebirds and tree swallows depends largely on the careful weekly monitoring of the nesting boxes by our faithful volunteers.

Thank You Bluebird Volunteers!

*Aura Duke*

### **Bluebirds are Early Birds This Year**

TCAS birders have noticed bluebirds as early as March 11. They have been spotted during the month of March at Thorn Creek Woods, Central Park Wetlands and Goodenow Grove.

### **Orland Grassland Bird Count- May 3**



## Audubon Adventures and TCAS Officers Slated Page 6

### Seeking Teachers for Audubon Adventures

May is a busy month for the education committee. Thanks to all of you who have been responding to our appeal for funds to support *Audubon Adventures* (\$45.65 per all-inclusive kit), we are happy to be able to offer this stimulating program of nature and environmental studies to classes and groups free of charge. Now we are recruiting teachers and leaders for next year and welcoming suggestions. If you are, or know of, a teacher eager to incorporate such a program into his or her curriculum, please contact Sue Putnam by phone (708) 747-1986, or by email, [sputter1986@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sputter1986@sbcglobal.net).

Theme for the year will be Feats of Nature, with units focusing on animal defenses (adaptations that help animals protect themselves), migration (birds and other animals), animal builders (birds, beavers, prairie dogs, spiders, wasps, bees, termites, coral polyps, tent caterpillars), and trees and plants, (interactions with animals and their place in the web of life).

To support *Audubon Adventures* (contributions are welcome in any amount), please send a check made out to Thorn Creek Audubon Adventures funds, care of Mary Anne McLean, 908 E. Richton Road, Crete, IL 60417-1541.  
Mary Anne McLean

### Officers Slated for Coming Year

At the April 2 general meeting, the nominating committee of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society presented a slate of officers for the coming year to the membership. They are Al Thomas, President; Dick Riner, Vice President; Sidney Duke, Treasurer; Terrie Spillers, Secretary; and Jim Murphy, Dory Grosche and Michelle O'Connor, Directors at Large. Members will vote on these officers at the May meeting. This meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 8, at the Auditorium at Freedom Hall, and will include the owl show that was previously scheduled in March.

### TCAS Bills Due by June 30

All outstanding bills must be submitted to the Thorn Creek Audubon Society's Treasurer, Sidney Duke, prior to the end of the chapter's fiscal year on June 30, 2008. At that time, committee budget requests for the 2008-2009 must be submitted to Treasurer Duke.

#### **Thorn Creek Audubon Society – Chapter Only Membership**

**“Chapter Only” dues remain at home and support environmental efforts in our community.  
 Members receive the chapter newsletter**

**CHAPTER ONLY DUES: ANNUAL DUES- \$15.00 SUSTAINING- \$50.00**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make check payable to: Thorn Creek Audubon Society P.O. Box 895 Park Forest IL 60466**

**New website- [www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org](http://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org)**



# TCA Field Notes and Field Trip Sightings

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TCA members and friends are fantastic bird count reporters! We have two different opportunities for bird reporting. Please call Mary White (708-396-0794) and/or enter your reported sightings at our TCA Blog <http://tcasorg.livejournal.com/>

Date	Bird Species/Number	Location	Reporter
2/17/08	Greater Scaup- 1m and 1f	Cal-Sag Canal, Lake Catherine	Mary White
2/25 2/26/08	Greater white fronted Geese 20-30, gray phase Snow Goose-1 Merganser-1, Coots-2	Monee Reservoir	Susan Zelek
2/25/08	Tufted Titmouse-20	Vollmer/Flossmoor Rd Trail	Al Thomas -Blog
3/2/08	Sandhill Cranes-17, Red-tailed Hawks-2, Crow-1	Bartel Grassland (in & over)	Dick Riner
3/2/08	Robins-2, Red-winged Blackbird-1	Crete (backyard)	Deb Marberg
3/6/08	Trumpeter Swans-2 (in flight), Wood Ducks-4, Cedar Waxwings-50-70	Lake Catherine	Mary White
3/9/08	Sandhill Cranes (2 flocks)	Palos area	Keith Jorgenson
3/16/08	Killdeer-1	Palos area	Keith Jorgenson
3/30/08	American Woodcock-1 Meadowlarks-2	Bartel Grassland	Al Thomas
4/2/08	Kestrels- 2, Red-bellied Woodpecker-1, Blue Jays- 2	Rural Crete, kestrels on wires, woodpecker, jays-backyard feeder	Anne Rosen
4/4/08	Phoebes- 3	Bridge across from Central Park Wetland phoebes are very agitated! Flying about! Vocalizing!	Joan Crabbe
4/5/08	Phoebes- 2	Bridge across from CPW. All is now calm!	Joan Crabbe

## April 2 Goodenow Grove Field Trip Sighting Report

Seven field trip participants on a beautiful sunny day-

Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Nuthatches, Red-Bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Wood Ducks, Song Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, Chickadees, Robins, Cardinals, Cowbirds, Redtail Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Goldfinch, Red-Winged Blackbird, Starlings, Eastern Meadowlark (call only).

**Please call Mary White (708) 396-0794 to report bird sightings**