



Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 38 - ISSUE 3 MAY - JUNE 2010

NEWSLETTER

TCAS RANKS NEAR TOP IN SPONSORING AUDUBON ADVENTURES FOR SCHOOLS

Congratulations, *Audubon Adventures* supporters! With 62 *Audubon Adventures* kits ordered in 2009, our chapter ranked 14th on the National Audubon list of chapters sponsoring 50 or more classes. That's out of more than 500 chapters throughout the country.

But of course we don't want to rest on our laurels. So please keep those checks coming in response to our spring appeal, now in progress, so that we can continue to offer the *Audubon Adventures* materials to teachers free of charge.

The theme for the 2010-2011 year will be **MIGRATION! WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE!** The cost for a complete kit, including colorful, tabloid-style newspapers for the students and a resource manual for the teacher, remains at \$45.65. Contributions are welcome in any amount. Honorary and memorial contributions will be acknowledged with a special certificate.

To contribute, please send a check, made out to Thorn Creek Audubon Adventures Fund, in care of Sue Putnam, 3704 West 13th St., Matteson, IL 60443.

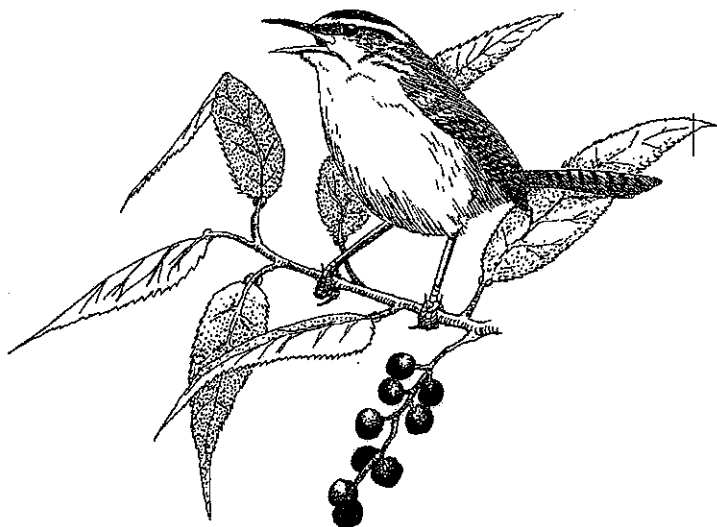
Mary Anne McLean

TCAS Fields 13 Teams For Spring Bird Count May 8

On Saturday, May 8, 36 Thorn Creek Audubon members in 13 teams will take part in the annual Spring Bird Count, co-sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Audubon Society. Others will record the numbers of birds that visit their feeding stations and yards on count day. Feeder watchers must report their sightings by Sunday afternoon, May 9, to Dory Grosche at 708-481-3166.

At 6 p.m. on the Monday following count day, the participants will join birders from the Will County Audubon Society for a potluck dinner at the Will County Environmental Learning Center in Mokena and compile the count results. Feeder watchers are also welcome to attend.

For additional information or to sign up to share rides to the dinner call Bob Harrison, 708-889-9693, or Aura duke, 708-748-6407.



*Carolina Wrens like this are sometimes
seen on the spring Bird Count*

PLANT SALE PICK-UP DATE IS JUNE 5 – SEE PAGE 6

SPRING PROGRAMS

Don't forget that our programs this year are now held at the Matteson Elementary School on Main Street.

Wednesday, May 5, 7 p.m.

MIGRATING BIRDS COLLIDING WITH CITY BUILDINGS

David Willard

David Willard, collection manager of the bird division of the Field Museum of Chicago, will discuss the work the Museum is doing to decrease the hazards that migrating birds face in traversing larger cities. These small birds, which often travel at night, die by the thousands because of hitting tall buildings.

"With spring migration upon us, we will look at the hazards the city imposes on these birds," Willard said. The Field Museum has done a 30 year study of birds colliding with McCormick place and is now expanding that study to include the city's downtown region.

"In the course of a year, we get 4,000 to 5,000 dead birds that have run into windows," he said. These come from the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, volunteers who rescue birds lying on the ground before predators get them or vehicles run over them. The living birds are sent to rehabilitation centers and the dead ones go to the museum for its permanent collection. Willard estimates that about one billion birds run into glass each year in the United States. "We are studying ways to mitigate this problem. Architects and other planners are trying to come up with solutions."

Bills, Budgets Due in June

TCAS board members are asked to submit all outstanding bills to the treasurer, Sidney Duke, by the end of the fiscal year June 30. Committee budget recommendations should also be presented to Duke and the budget committee at the June board meeting.

BLUEBIRD NESTING TIME BEGINS IN EARLY APRIL

The bluebird nesting season has begun. During March both males and females were seen along the four Thorn Creek Audubon Society trails and other locations nearby, including Aura and Sidney Duke's yard. By early April bluebirds started to build their cozy, grassy nests in eight of the trail boxes, mostly at Goodenow Grove preserve. While 24 TCAS volunteers were eagerly waiting for their week to check the boxes, some intrepid house sparrows were building their messy nests in the boxes. With our volunteer help, the boxes were cleaned out so bluebirds could succeed in their nesting activities.

Aura Duke

Lincoln Way Gets Grant to Start Prairie Garden

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society has awarded an initial \$250 grant to begin work on a prairie garden at Lincoln Way North High School. This is a new school in its second year of operation. The prairie and garden will be located on the back (west) side of the school in a "U" of the building. Two sides of the U have classroom windows.

Scott McCreary, a biology teacher at the school, will oversee the project, and David Kropp, a landscape architect and prairie expert, has done the initial design. Kropp has worked with prairie expert Ray Schulenburg. McCreary was formerly at Lincoln Way East where he put in a prairie and native plant display garden, and is in charge of Lincoln Way's Environmental Action Club.

The TCAS Grants Committee chose to award the grant this spring to give the school "seed money" to get the garden started before the summer growing season.

Wetlands Discovery Center

SCIENCE CLASSROOM ADDS LEARNING OPTIONS

Youngsters in the South Suburbs will have even more opportunities for environmental education thanks to the Wetlands Discovery Center, a new classroom provided by the Park Forest Recreation and Parks Department. Part of the Park Forest Aqua Center, the classroom is right next door to the Central Park Wetlands, which has already become a frequently used site for nature study for area school children.

The new classroom came about because of good partnerships between a number of community groups, according to John Joyce, Director of the Park Forest Recreation and Parks Department. Joyce, who was applying for a grant to renovate the Aqua Center's bath house (built in 1968), came up with the idea of adding the science classroom after working with a private educational group, ME4E (Multidisciplinary Education for the Environment), who were taking school children on tours of the Wetlands.

ME4E has partnered with the Thorn Creek Audubon Society in some of its education projects and has received grants from TCAS to buy equipment such as projectors, microscopes, binoculars, and even boots for children to wear in the wetlands. Recently they partnered in building houses for Little Brown Bats to be put up in the Wetlands. The school children ME4E was working with on this project needed a place to put the bat houses together, so Joyce allowed them to use space in the Aqua Center. ME4E had been bringing school groups to the Wetland for some time, and he said that was the spark that gave him the idea.

**“We have all this extra space. Why not design it for
an education classroom?”**

“I just saw a way to accommodate them and also help the village make greater use of the wetlands than we could do with our own staff,” he said. “We have all this extra space. Why not design it for an education classroom?”

The science classroom will make the building useful throughout the year instead of just three months in the summer, Joyce said. He believes adding the classroom is a major reason the Illinois Department of Natural Resources approved a \$400,000 grant to help rehab the bath house.

The new room, about 23 by 32 square feet, is light and airy, looking out on the wetlands the youngsters will be studying. It has tables and chairs and plenty of storage space where educators can leave materials they are currently using. Benches along the wall have lids that lift up to hold the boots youngsters wear while in the wetlands.

Area groups are already using the room for community projects, Joyce said, including TCAS, which is currently holding board meetings there. ME4E has already booked the classroom to use with school children in Park Forest, Olympia Fields, Matteson, and Ford Heights.

“John Joyce has given kids and the community so many opportunities. We are very lucky to have him in Park Forest,” said Michelle O'Connor, one of the ME4E staff and also a TCAS member.

SPRING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, May 1, 7 a.m.

HICKORY CREEK PRESERVE

**Betty Smurawski – (708) 532-0995 or email
bsmurawski@hotmail.com**

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

Wednesday, May 5, 7 a.m.

MONEE RESERVOIR/RACCOON GROVE

Charlie Habecker – 708-747-6061

Raccoon Grove is at Rt. 50 (Governor's Highway) at Pauling Rd., one mile south of Monee. Monee Reservoir is one mile west of Raccoon Grove over the I-57 overpass and south a quarter mile. Meet first at the parking lot at the Monee Reservoir to see possible Eastern Bluebirds, Green Herons, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Teal and other migrating ducks as well as numerous songbirds. Later we will go to Raccoon Grove to see a variety of spring wildflowers and perhaps some woodpeckers as well.

Wednesday, May 12, 7 a.m.

LAKE RENWICK

**Aura Duke, auraduke@aol.com
708-748-6407**

We will view the spectacular display of nesting Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons and Great Egrets at Lake Renwick at the scheduled viewing time from 10 to 11 a.m. Previously we may stop at Messenger Woods to see wildflowers. On the way home we will stop at Pilcher Park to see spring birds and have a picnic lunch. Meet at the Park Forest Library at 7 a.m. and **BRING YOUR LUNCH.**

Saturday, May 15, 7 a.m.

WOODED ISLAND

Charlie Habecker, 708-747-6061

The annual trip to Jackson Park has produced many exciting birds, such as Hooded and Black-throated Blue Warblers. Our guides will be Glyn and Sylvia Dawson. As usual we will convene for lunch at a Hyde Park neighborhood restaurant. For carpool arrangements, contact Charlie.

Wednesday, May 1, 7 a.m.

GIBSON WOODS

Pat Strange, 219-923-5164

Gibson Woods usually harbors Swainson's Thrushes and Scarlet Tanagers, along with Yellow-rumped, Parula and Black-and-White Warblers. From Illinois come to Indianapolis Boulevard (Route 41 in Indiana), and go north to 165th Street (in Hammond). Turn east (right) and go to Parrish Avenue. Turn north (left) on Parrish and go to end of street.

Wednesday, May 26, 7 a.m.

Midewin Tallgrass prairie

**Al Thomas, 708-957-9847
woodduck_@yahoo.com**

Midewin is the converted Joliet Arsenal, 30 square miles of prairie, where we may see Upland Sandpipers, Shrikes, Wild Turkeys and many migrants and nesters. We will carpool from the Park Forest Library at 7 a.m. or meet at Midewin at 8 a.m. Midewin Center is on the east side of Rte. 53 one mile north of the Wilmington-Peotone Road. We will be done about 11 a.m. Please RSVP Al if you are going either by carpool or on your own.

Wednesday, June 2, 7 a.m.

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

**Aura Duke, auraduke@aol.com
708-748-6407**

We will combine art and birding here, following a trail of outdoor sculptures. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Yellow-breasted Chats, Bell's Vireos Green Herons, and Orchard Orioles have all been seen here in past years. Meet in the easternmost parking lot.

GRANT BUYS BINOCULARS FOR STUDENTS

Area school children will get even more encouragement to become nature lovers, or perhaps even scientists, because of collaborative funding from National Audubon and the Thorn Creek Audubon Society.

For the past ten years children in School Districts 162 and 163 in Park Forest have been getting better acquainted with the world outdoors through programs sponsored by their schools and developed by members of TCAS and ME4E (Multidisciplinary Education for the Environment, a private educational firm). Now they will get an even better view through the binoculars and other equipment that will be purchased with the collaborative funding grants of \$300 from National Audubon and \$156.59 from Thorn Creek Audubon.

The ten pairs of 8 by 21 binoculars, a 75 mm spotting scope, and 10 x 25 digital camera binoculars will be used by students in grades 3 through 8 in field trips led by ME4E members, many in the Central Park Wetlands in Park Forest.

"Good binoculars will allow students to better see birds close up, provide students with a sense of what a real scientist feels like, and improve observation skills as well as verbal and writing skills used in defining their observations," said Michelle O'Connor, TCAS member and ME4E project leader.

ME4E has done a number of projects with District 163 and 162 students in conjunction with the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. Assembling bat houses to be set up in the Central Park Wetlands was one that was enthusiastically received. The new science classroom created by the Village of Park Forest and its Recreation and Parks Department is also a step forward in environmental education, O'Connor said. Students who have been exploring the wetland will be able to come into a classroom that has equipment such as a science laboratory, a projector, and a microscope, as well as storage space for boots and equipment.

FUNDRAISERS BRING IN \$600 TO TCAS TREASURY

Recent fundraisers have brought in almost \$600 to fund Audubon projects, according to Dory Grosche, Ways and Means Chair.

The Carson's Community Day Event, held February 27, brought \$395 to the treasury. Board member sold 70 coupon booklets at \$5 each. The Jewel Shop and Share event, held January 11-13 and 18-20, brought in \$201.67. Fifty-four shoppers spent \$4,033.33 at Jewel during those days and Thorn Creek Audubon got \$201.67 to help fund environmental grants and education programs for young people.

"Our thanks to everyone who participated," Dory said. "These small events brought us \$600 we didn't have before."



This Black-and-white Warbler may be seen on one of the TCAS field trips.

PLANT SALE PICK-UP JUNE 5 AT IZAAK WALTON

The pick-up date for those who purchased native plants from the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is set for June 5 at the Izaak Walton Preserve at 1100 Ridge Road in Homewood. Orders were received for the trees, shrubs and perennials from 50 people this year.

Pick-up time is from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. There are no other pick-up times, said Dory Grosche, chair of the plant sale. Those who have questions may call Dory at 481-3166.

OFFICERS TO BE ELECTED AT MAY 5 MEETING

The election of Thorn Creek Audubon Society officers and directors for the 2010-2011 year will be held at the May 5 meeting, when the following slate will be presented:

President, Dick Riner; Vice President, Al Thomas; Secretary, Terrie Spillers; Treasurer, Sidney Duke; and Directors Bob Harrison, Michelle O'Connor, and Kim Ramirez.

Nominations may also be made from the floor with the permission of the nominee.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT BREAKS RECORD

The 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count held in early February has broken the record for the most checklists submitted. Tallies came from all 50 states and all 10 provinces and three territories in Canada.

This year more Americans Robins were seen than any other species, 1,850,082 birds, in part because of a massive roost in St. Petersburg, Florida. However, winter finches such as Pine Siskins and Redpolls were notably low or absent, in contrast to the massive invasion of Siskins last year. Possibly the birds did not have to travel so far south to find enough winter food this year.

Rare sightings included a Black Kittywake in Arizona, a Crimson-collared Grosbeak in Texas and a Red-billed Tropicbird in San Diego.

The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. It provides significant data about numbers and distributions of birds.

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 C0ZG5907.

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Make check payable to NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, Membership Data Center, P. O. box 422246-2246, Palm Coast, Florida, 32142

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

FEBRUARY

02/10 1 Cooper's Hawk catching and eating a bird in Matteson.

Elise Ziemann

02/17 7 Sandhill Cranes flying over Kedzie at 167th Street.

April LeClaire

MARCH

03/03 1 Pair Trumpeter Swans with an immature, along with 2 Mute Swans. Lake Katherine.

Dick Thomas

03/03 White- and Red-breasted Nuthatches, 4 Chickadees and 2 Downy Woodpeckers. Matteson.

Elise Ziemann

03/05 Sandhill Cranes on the move: seen on the ground and in the air in Crete Township by *Judy Petzinger*; flying low over Old Plank Road Wetland, *Elise Ziemann* and *John Morris*; over Crete by *Kathy Bader*; over Frankfort by *Christine Dietrich*; over Palos by *Mary White* and *Delpha Williams*.

03/05 Cooper's Hawk, Robins, Wild Turkeys and White- and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Crete Township.

Judy Petzinger

03/05 1 Downy Woodpecker, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1 Flicker and Nuthatches on her suet feeder. Crete.

Kathy Bader

03/05 Cooper's Hawk hanging around her feeder in Park Forest.

Delpha Williams

03/07 The first reported Red-winged Blackbird, Crete.

Nancy Kaz

03/07 500-1,000 Sandhill Cranes on the ground at Bartel North.

Wanneta Elliott

03/12 Pair of Tufted Titmice, 1 Red-headed Woodpecker, 6 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 3 Bluebirds at Little Red School House. Also 8 Mergansers at McGinnis Slough.

Mary White

03/16 Sandhill Cranes with one Whooping Crane over Crete. Sandhill Cranes "hanging out" at Bemis and Kleme Road.

Judy Duffy

03/16 30 Sandhill Cranes over rural Monee.

Paula Arnold

03/21 2 Oregon Juncos. South Chicago Heights.

Sarah Hendrickson

03/31 Three Golden-crowned Kinglets. Harlem and 171st Street.

Sarah Hendrickson

APRIL

04/01 Herons nesting and 1 Bald Eagle. Heron Rookery, Highland, Indiana.

Pat Strange

04/05 2 male Eastern Bluebirds at Park Forest Wetlands, 1 Golden-crowned Kinglet, 1 Brown Thrasher, pair of Brown-headed Cowbirds, pair of Crows at creek in Krotiak Park across from wetlands.

Joan Crabb

04/07 5 Northern Shovelers, 2 Pied-billed Grebes, pair of Common Mergansers, many American Coots. McGinnis Slough.

Mary White

04/09 Pair of Phoebes, several Song Sparrows in Krotiak Park.

Joan Crabb

04/08 Pheasant running across Cottage Grove Avenue in Crete. Also Kestrels on telephone lines.

Anne Rosen