



Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 43 - ISSUE 3 MAY - JUNE 2015

NEWSLETTER

HUMMINGBIRD EVENT MOVING TO PLUM CREEK

Hummingbirds and their fans will be moving to a new location this year. The Thorn Creek Audubon Society will relocate its annual Hummingbird Festival, to be called the Hummingbird Banding Event, to a new location at Plum Creek Nature Center a. Will County's Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve. Date is August 15; time is from 3 to 5 p.m.

As in former years, Illinois licensed hummingbird bander and avian ecologist Vernon Kleen will be on hand to band the tiny birds and record their weight, sex and other information.

Also as in past years, visitors will have the opportunity to "adopt" a tiny bird for a \$5 donation to the Lincolnland Association of Birdbanders. Donors will receive a special adoption certificate with information about "their" bird and will be notified if it is captured at another location.

Plum Creek has a large population of hummingbirds in the summer and is also an attractive stop for migrating hummers; the preserve keeps hummingbird feeders out all season. The event is held in August after the nesting season is over so young birds and parents are not disturbed. Goodenow Grove is at 27064 Dutton Road, which can be reached from West Goodenow Road. The event will be sponsored by the Forest Preserve District of Will County and the Thorn Creek Audubon Society.

SPRING BIRD COUNT TO SEND OUT 14 TEAMS

Once again Thorn Creek Audubon Society will take part in the statewide spring bird count, sending out 14 teams and 36 participants to areas in Eastern Will County on Saturday, May 9. The count is co-sponsored by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Audubon Society.

The official TCAS territory includes all of Will County east of Highway 45. Anyone who lives in this area may contribute to the count by reporting the numbers and kinds of birds they see at their feeders on count day.

Feeder watchers must call in their results to Joan Crabb at 708-481-4962 no later than Sunday evening, May 10, so the numbers can be included in the total for the final count.

The count numbers will be compiled on Monday, May 11. TCAS participants will join at least six teams and eighteen participants from Will County Audubon for a potluck dinner at Plum Creek Nature Center at the Goodenow Grove Preserve.

All participants, including feeder watchers, are welcome to attend and bring a dish to share. For more information, call count chair Jan Heideman (708-672-5083) or Aura duke (708-748-6407).



*Henslow's Sparrows may be
found at Bartel Grassland*

PROGRAMS

THE THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY HOLDS PROGRAMS THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM SEPTEMBER THROUGH MAY. PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Wednesday, May 6, 7 p.m.
BIRDS OF THE SOUTHWEST
Larry and Linda Layne
PARK FOREST LIBRARY

This husband-and-wife team, who are also members of Thorn Creek Audubon Society, go birding during the winters they spend in their South Texas home. However, they don't confine their birding to Texas.

This year they went on a birding festival at Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, a resort area on the Pacific coast, where they saw unusual birds like the ivory-billed creeper and the San Blas jay. They attended a birding fest in San Diego, California, where they saw, among other birds, Brant's goose and the western scrub jay. In Red Rock Canyon near Las Vegas they saw the spotted towhee.

They will show pictures photographer Larry has taken of these birds and many others.



Altamira Oriole. Photo by Larry Layne

PLANT PICKUP DATE EARLIER THIS YEAR: SET FOR MAY 16

Gardeners who ordered native plants from the Thorn Creek Audubon Society's annual plant sale will be picking them up several weeks earlier this year.

Date this year is Saturday, May 16; place is the Izaak Walton Preserve at 1100 Ridge Road, Homewood; and time is from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

In former years plant pickup date was early in June; the change was recommended by supplier Possibility Place. Setting out plants in mid-May will give them more time to grow in their new location.

Possibility Place also announced that three plant species customers ordered will not be available this year: Calico Aster, Arrow-leaved-Aster and Missouri Evening Primrose. Replacement plants will be offered at pickup time; however, anyone not satisfied with the replacement plants will get a refund, according to plant sale chair Jan Heideman.

Heideman also wants to remind buyers that all plants MUST be picked up on May 16. Anyone who cannot be available that day should ask a friend or neighbor to pick up the plants, as TCAS has no place to store them.

Kathy Dehn ---- 1955-2015

Kathleen "Kathy" Dehn, Crete, formerly an active Thorn Creek Audubon Society member, died on April 4. Kathy was an ardent supporter of TCAS' project to provide bluebird nest boxes and even had her own private "bluebird trail." She also served as treasurer for TCAS. Her mother, Shirley Roach, and her sister, Ann Roach, can be reached at 2754 North 2200 East Road, Martinton, IL 60951.

Red-tails at Central Park

THE NEST IS GONE BUT BIRDS ARE BACK

The old nest is gone, but somewhere in or near the Park Forest Central Park Wetland, a pair of Red-tailed Hawks is almost certainly nesting. That's the considered opinion of Michelle O'Connor, TCAS member and environmental educator, who has been watching nesting Red-tails in that area for several years.

Watching was easy and convenient the past couple of years, when the birds used a nest in a sycamore tree near the playing field in Central Park. Two years ago, youngsters who came for Michelle's classes at the Wetland Discovery Center at the Park Forest Aqua Center could sit on the grass in Central Park and watch both hawk parents feed and care for their young.

Last year, a pair of hawks again used the nest and began raising three chicks, but this story had an unusual ending. One day the mother hawk simply disappeared, and the male was left to provide food for all three demanding chicks. He couldn't have done it alone, but suddenly another female turned up and began helping him by catching prey for his nestlings. She was what Cornell University ornithologists call a "floater" female. She came because she heard the male call for help.

She didn't act like the young birds' mother and she didn't tend the nest, which got small and scraggly, but she did provide enough mice, voles, and other prey to keep the three chicks healthy enough to grow up and fly away.

Though the chicks made it, the old nest didn't. Weather, time, and lack of a mother's touch left nothing but a pile of sticks on the grass beneath the tree when spring came.

Nevertheless, early in March Michelle saw a male and a female Red-tail in a tree near the old nesting site. The female (easy to identify as she is larger than the male) was being courted. Whether it was last year's male (with a prospective new mate to win) no one can tell, but Michelle says he was a mature bird, one who had learned a few tricks to catch a female's interest.

The male flew up to the female, carrying a squirrel. Instead of giving her the prey, he flew a couple of circles around her, exhibiting his fine catch but not letting her get her talons into it. After buzzing by her a few more times to show her what a good provider he was going to be for their future family, he took off, with the squirrel, across the baseball field.

She followed.

Michelle says they should be sitting on eggs by now. She will be looking for the new nest as she works with students at the Discovery Center, and she will let us know what she finds.

TCAS TO ELECT OFFICERS AT MAY 6 MEETING

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society will elect officers to serve for the 2015-16 year at the May 6 general meeting at the Park Forest Library.

Officers who served last year have agreed to be on the slate for the coming year. They are Al Thomas, president; Terrie Spillers, vice president; Alice McBride, secretary; Sidney Duke, treasurer; and Linda Hickey, Judi Murphy, and Michelle O'Connor, directors. Nominations may be made from the floor with the consent of the nominee.

FIELD TRIPS

TO TELL US YOU WILL ATTEND AND FOR DETAILS, PLEASE CONTACT THE TRIP COORDINATOR. FOR TRIPS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK, MEET AT THE PARK FOREST LIBRARY ONE HOUR EARLIER. WE WILL CAR POOL FOR SOME DISTANT TRIPS BUT NOT FOR LOCAL ONES. IF RAIN IS FORCAST FOR THE TRIP DATE, CALL THE TRIP LEADER THE PRIOR EVENING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

Saturday, May 2, 8 a.m.*

LAVASSEUR PARK

Mary Anne McLean (708-672-5494)

mclean908@comcast.com

We will stroll along the Kankakee River and look and listen for warblers and other spring migrants. To reach the meeting place at LaVasseur parking lot, drive south on Rt. 50 from the intersection with I-57, past Armour Road and Mulligan Street, to North Street and follow to the dead end at Kennedy; turn left (south) on Kennedy and go about two miles to Fifth Street, just before the YMCA (1075 Kennedy Drive, on the right. This is the fourth light south of North Street. Go ¼ mile to the parking lot. Or call Mary Anne to arrange to carpool.

Wednesday, May 13, 9 a.m.

GIBSON WOODS – OXBOW

Pat Strange, 219-923-5164

We may see various woodpeckers and warblers coming through, and we have a good chance of seeing indigo buntings. We might see a hermit thrush but will more likely see a Swainson's coming north. Last year a red-shouldered hawk was seen here. Take Rt. 30 to Indianapolis Blvd., go north to 165th St., then east to Parrish Ave. Turn north, go to the end of Parrish to the Nature Center.

Saturday, May 16, 7 a.m.*

WOODED ISLAND

Charles Habecker, Glyn Dawson

Habecker (708) 747-6061

This is a migrant bird paradise. We often have a list of 30 to 40 species, including many migrating warblers, in a morning. Then we will go to brunch at a place chosen by Glyn and Sylvia. It is really worth the early start. Meet at the Clarence Darrow Bridge at 7 a.m. or the Park Forest Library parking lot at 6 a.m. for carpooling.

Saturday, May 16, 9 a.m. to 12 noon

PLANT SALE PICKUP

**Izaak Walton Preserve, 1100 Ridge Road,
Homewood**

Time for the Plant Sale Pickup has been changed from early June to this date so plants can be set out sooner.

Wednesday, May 20, 7 a.m.

LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

Mary Anne McLean (708-672-5494)

mclean908@comcast.com

Take Rt. 45 (LaGrange Rd.) north to 107th St., then turn west and go to Flavin Rd. (104th Ave.) Turn north on Flavin and go to the nature center on the west side of the road. Bluebirds, warblers and vireos should be on view, possibly an osprey at the lake. We will take time to visit the recently expanded nature center.

Saturday, May 23, 7 a.m.

HICKORY CREEK PRESERVE

Al Thomas (708) 957-9847

Woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

To reach the preserve, go west on LaPorte Road from LaGrange Road (Rte. 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 warblers, both woodland and prairie. There are

Field Trips Continued

always bluebirds and grosbeaks, and we just may see a pileated woodpecker.

Saturday, May 30 8 a.m.

GOODENOW GROVE/PLUM CREEK

Al Thomas (708) 957-9847

Woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

Goodenow Grove is located 2 miles east of Route 394 on Goodenow Rd. Take Dutton Rd. north one mile to the entrance and follow the winding road to Plum Creek Nature Center parking lot. Meet in the first parking area by the Nature Center building. The area has a big woodland and some open prairie. Bluebirds, gnatcatchers, and even a yellow-breasted chat has been seen here.

Wednesday, June 3, 7 a.m.

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

Al Thomas (708) 957-9847

Woodduck_1999@yahoo.com

Meet in the far south parking lot at the University. This is an opportunity to see gigantic outdoor sculpture and some unusual birds at the same time. Osprey have been seen here and several different thrushes, including the wood thrush.

BLUEBIRDS SIGHTED

BUT NOT YET NESTING

Every spring TCAS volunteers await the arrival of bluebirds along our four trails at Goodenow Grove Preserve, Monee Reservoir, Park Forest Central Park Wetland and the Glenwood School Campus.

In spite of the variable, unpredictable weather we have been having, several bluebirds were sighted during March. Although the 106 nest boxes are ready, as yet no serious nesting activities by bluebirds have been observed. Instead, just one pair of tree swallows has started to build a nest at the Glenwood bluebird trail.

Aura Duke

LIFE IN THE BIRD LANE

**A REPORT ON THE HIGHLIGHTS
OF RECENT TCAS FIELD TRIPS**

By Pat Strange

Eight birders braved a chilly, dreary day on April 8, because we were doing what we enjoy, looking at birds.

The herons at the Highland Rookery are nesting, and young are in the nests. However, one heron's nest now houses a great horned owl and two owlets; we saw an adult owl's head peeking over the nest rim.

We also saw the herons gathering sticks and tending the young on the nest. They are still working on the nests even though there are young.

Some of the other pond inhabitants were both male and female hooded mergansers, ring-necked ducks, northern shovelers, coots, mallards, flickers, and tree swallows.

Last week at the Rookery I saw blue-winged teal, gadwalls and bufflehead.

Later we stopped at Cracker Barrel for coffee and pie and to say Happy Birthday to Charles Habecker, our program chair, whose birthday is on April 8.

HIGHLIGHTS ON A DIFFERENT DAY

What is the best thing anyone can do on a mild spring day?

Bird watching, of course.

On April 11, a mild spring day, we went to McGinnis Slough and McClaughry Springs.

We saw some of the first yellow-rumped warblers of the year at McClaughry Springs and a variety of ducks at McGinnis Slough, including ring-necked ducks, blue-winged teal, and horned and pied-billed grebes.

Another group of birders had the same idea so we watched birds together there.

WHAT MAKES A BIRDER? ASK MARY ANNE MCLEAN

Mary Anne McLean, long-time active Thorn Creek Audubon member, became a birder at the age of ten, when she went for a nature walk in New York's Central Park. A New Yorker growing up across from Central Park, she attended a small girls' school. In fifth grade teachers took the girls to a relatively wild section of the park, known as The Ramble, for weekly field trips to study birds and trees.

"I had been only mildly interested in birds until the day I saw a scarlet tanager," she remembers. "Wow! That lit a spark."

She was soon equipped with binoculars and a bird book, and the light from that spark has never stopped burning. After that, she always wanted to be in the country. An old friend noted in the school newsletter that whenever Mary Anne visited at her summer place in Connecticut, she was always looking for birds. "You could hardly get her out of the shrubbery," the friend wrote.

Her first home with her husband, Keith, was in Rome, Georgia. There, eastern towhees were so common they were "yard birds." Keith later got a job in Chicago Heights and they moved to rural Crete. There she recalls seeing flickers nesting in old wooden fence posts. At their first home, on Old Monee Road adjoining farmland south of town, she saw many birds, but she missed the rarest one. She didn't know until after they had moved that birders sometimes saw upland sandpipers there.

In 1989 she joined the National Audubon Society, which also made her a member of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. She has been an active member ever since, serving as president, newsletter editor, education committee chair, and field trip leader. She is still leading field trips in spring and summer.

Today she spends the winter in Florida near a daughter and goes birding with the Clearwater Audubon Society. She enjoys seeing the many shorebirds on the mudflats as the tide goes out and watching the variety of herons and egrets. She now knows how the palm warbler got its name; she sees it spending the winter in Florida's palm trees.

Here in the Midwest she particularly recalls favorite sightings of a pair of cedar waxwings on a bough passing berries back and forth, barred owls at Plum Creek Nature Center, and spring warblers at eye level at Oak Ridge Prairie.

Other birding highlights on trips here and abroad included joining an annual loon count at a lake in Quebec; encountering a gray-necked wood rail on a deserted boardwalk in the Yucatan; getting a close-up view of a pair of elegant trogons on a solitary hike in Tobago; and being introduced to a burrowing owl by fellow birders Aura and Sidney Duke.

She has passed on her enthusiasm for birds: A daughter and a grandson in Florida are already accomplished bird photographers: a son here in Illinois, who announced at age three he was bored with looking at birds, now has multiple bird feeders and a birdbath in his yard.

Mary Anne birding at Wooded Island. Photo by Dick Riner



FIELD NOTES

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

If you leave a message please leave a phone
number where we can reach you.

FEBRUARY

02/26 25 Mallards foraging for corn buried
under the snow in her Steger back yard.

Carolyn Gann

02/28 A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a Pine
Siskin, a Carolina Wren, a Hairy Woodpecker, a
White-crowned Sparrow, a Red-bellied
Woodpecker and a Song Sparrow. Monee.

Jon Panoza

MARCH

03/10 A lone Common Merganser and 2 pair
of Scaup on Cal-Sag Canal near Lake Katherine.

Mary White

03/12 A Red-winged Blackbird at 135th Street
between Ridgeland and Harlem.

Maureen McMaster

03/12 About 24 low-flying Sandhill Cranes at
194th Street just east of Central Avenue.

Caller did not leave her name

03/12 About 150 Sandhill Cranes flying over
Matteson.

Dick Riner

03/14 3 Crows mobbing a Great Horned Owl
who was not impressed. Tinley Creek bike trail
near Arrowhead Lake.

Mary White

03/15 4 flocks (140 or more) Sandhill Cranes
over Worth.

Dick Thomas

03/16 A woodcock doing his dance. Crete.

Jan Heideman

03/17 2 Eastern Bluebirds and a large flock of
Robins. Midlothian Forest Preserve off Pulaski.

Jeanne Christianson

03/18 14 Turkey Vultures circling downtown
Crete.

Jan Heideman

03/25 Common Merganser and Pied-billed
Grebe at Old Plank Trail.

Al Thomas

03/25 Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting on top of
bird feeder in her Park Forest yard for about
10 minutes.

Joan Crabb

03/26 At Orchard Drive in Park Forest, near
Blackhawk, in a flooded area, at least 500

Robins.

Michelle O'Connor

03/30 At Bartel Grassland, Snipe,
Meadowlarks, Killdeer, Red-winged Blackbirds,
Grackles and Cowbirds, and a Loon on the lake
at Vollmer.

Al Thomas

APRIL

04/03 At the corner of Route 1, Eagle Lake:
Ruddy Ducks, Pintails, Redheads, Ring-necks,
Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Lesser
Scaup, and Snipe.

Michelle O'Connor

04/06 A Purple Finch (not a House Finch) on
the ground under her rural Crete feeder.

Anne Rosen

04/10 Cooper's Hawk checking feeders in her
rural Crete yard.

Judi Murphy

04/12 A pair of Canada Geese and a pair of
Mallards investigating possible nesting sites
along the creek in Krotiak park, Park Forest.

Bernadette Maune

04/14 A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak,
several Red-winged Blackbirds, a Downy
Woodpecker, Juncos, and Goldfinches galore
at and under her Park Forest feeders.

Bernadette Maune

04/14 2 pair of Purple Finches (females with
definitive white eyebrows and males with red
spots under the tail feathers) at her rural Crete
feeders.

Judi Murphy