PITCH IN A PATCH FOR POLLINATORS

Spring is here and this idea would be so easy to adopt before the growing season begins in earnest. We know pollinators need habitat to thrive and if we can commit to a small spot in our yards this would be a great beginning to a wonderful community-wide pollinator patch from neighborhood to neighborhood. Each of us has a role we can play in stitching together this vibrant, healthy habitat for our butterflies, bees, birds, bats and other pollinators.

Find out more about this innovative idea by entering “pitch in a patch” in your search engine and clicking on “pitch in a patch/habitat network”. This site has all the information you need to start your own patch from area preparation to the plants the pollinators will visit. You can make a huge difference by creating a pollinator garden by sowing your part in a habitat quilt, one patch at a time. Please check this out and give it some thought for your own yard.

Photo by Terrie Spillers
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. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED PROGRAMS ARE HELD AT 7 P.M. AT THE PARK FOREST LIBRARY.

Wednesday, May 2nd, 7 p.m.
TOXIC TURF OR POLLINATOR PARADISE
Dave Ward - Superintendent
The program will start with a brief history of chemical use on golf courses and deal with the controversies associated with chemical use. The presentation will then delve into the environmental programs at Coyote Run Golf Course, including: using native plants, wildlife, habitat, prairie vegetation and play areas. In 1974 Dave received his degree in Agricultural Science from the University of Illinois. He has been a golf course superintendent for 45 years, 14 of those years at Coyote Run, a facility of the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, active in natural area stewardship for the past 30 years.

SPRING BIRD COUNT SET FOR SATURDAY, MAY 5

The Annual Spring Bird Count will take place May 5, when teams of birders will go out into the field to tally species and numbers of birds for the Illinois Audubon Center.

Other birders will be watching their feeders and sending their tallies to Al at www.woodduck_1999@yahoo.com or mailing them to him at 1460 Linden Road, Homewood, IL 60430.

Al Thomas

DON'T FORGET TO PICK UP YOUR NATIVE PLANTS ON MAY 19 AT THE HOMewood IZAAc WALTON PRESERVE AT 1100 RIDGE ROAD

TCAS TO ELECT NEW OFFICERS AT THE MAY 2 GENERAL MEETING

The Thorn Creek Audubon Society will elect new officers to serve for the 2018-19 year at the May 2nd general meeting at the Park Forest Library. The new slate for the coming year is Mary Bernat, President; Terrie Spillers, Vice President; Diana Hicks, Secretary; Judy Johnson, Treasurer; Bob Bryerton, Penny Kneislser, Mariys Oosting, and Greg Hejnar; Directors.

Coyote Run Golf Club Grounds
RAPTORS PRESENTATION AT FREEDOM HALL

At the April 4 Thorn Creek Audubon Society meeting at Freedom Hall in Park Forest, we were introduced to five raptors from the Stillman Nature Center (SNC) in South Barrington. Susan Allman, President of the SNC board, and three volunteers told us about the SNC, and how each of the birds have their own unique story and personality.

Interestingly, the birds are not given names. SNC staff feels that these are wild animals, not pets. However, it was very evident that the staff treated the birds with deep respect and affection. Only birds that are rehabbed elsewhere and can no longer survive in the wild are housed at SNC and used in educational programs. But not all rehabbed birds are suitable for educational programs; they must have temperaments that allow them to interact calmly with an audience. For example, "Cooper's Hawks are too highly strung and would be very stressed." We did meet two screech-owls, a peregrine falcon, a red tail hawk and a barred owl-as with all raptors, the birds were gorgeous and regal.

Although the two screech-owls are the same species and both female, these two are different colors, one brown and one gray. Each is only about eight inches long. And, just as we were informed, they have very different personalities. They gray one was very quiet, and the brown one very vocal with a soft "woo, woo, woo."

When peregrine falcons dive for prey, they can reach close to 200 mph, making them the fastest animals in the world. The SNC peregrine had lost part of a wing in an accident and can no longer hunt. Staff keeps the peregrine, and all its birds, stimulated by hiding food and simulating hunting as near as possible.

We also learned that although owls are nocturnal hunters and falcons and hawks are diurnal hunters, sometimes their hunting slightly overlaps in the dawn or dusk when the light is crepuscular or at twilight.

PEREGRINE FALCON

Photo by Judy Johnson
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 DISTANT TRIPS BUT NOT
FOR LOCAL ONES. IF RAIN IS FORCAST FOR
THE TRIP DATE, CALL THE TRIP LEADER THE
PRIOR EVENING FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

Wednesday, May 2nd, 8 a.m.
HAMMOND BIRD SANCTUARY
Pat Strange (219-923-5164)
The Hammond Lakefront and Bird
Sanctuary, is also known as “The Migrant
Trap”. It is comprised of 9.5 acres and true to
its name, the Bird Sanctuary produces great
concentrations of migrant birds beginning in
May. Hopefully, this will provide a long list
of sightings of wrens, warblers, thrushes,
vireos and sparrows. Not sure how well
maintained the paths are, so sturdy walking
shoes are recommended. Take Sauk trail to
Calumet Avenue, go north on Calumet to a
sign for the casino and the Hammond
Marina. Turn left and follow the curving
road to the Marina sign.

Saturday, May 5th, 8 a.m.
SPRING BIRD COUNT

Wednesday, May 9th, 8 a.m.
GOODENOW GROVE
Al Thomas (708-957-9847)
Goodenow Grove is located 2 miles east
of Route 394 on Goodenow Road. Take
Dutton Road 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, red headed
woodpeckers, even a yellow-breasted chat
have been seen here.

Saturday, May 12th 8 a.m.
INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK (WILSON
SHELTER)
Linda Hickey (708-363-6851)
This area is a migrant flyway. On the
trail around the marsh we should see
migrating songbirds, such as Towhees,
Thrushes and possibly Bald Eagles. Take I-94
to 49 north to Country Road 1000E to Wilson
Center.

Wednesday, May 16th, 8 a.m.
LAVASSEUR PRESERVE (KANKAKEE)
Mary Anne McLean (708-704-6611)
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
route 50 from the intersection with I-57, past
Armour Road and Mulligan Street, to North
Street and follow to the dead end at
Kennedy and go about two miles to Fifth
Street, just before the YMCA at 1075
Kennedy Drive, on the right. This is the
fourth light south of North Street. Go ¼ mile
to the parking lot.

Wednesday, May 23rd, 8 a.m.
OAK RIDGE PRAIRIE (INDIANA)
Pat Strange (219-923-5164)
There are prairie, marsh, woodland and
lakeside habitats to explore here. From U.S
41 in Indiana (Indianapolis Boulevard) take
Main Street east toward Griffith (Main Street
is several stoplights north of Highway 30).
Go about three miles to Colfax Road (Colfax
is the first stoplight after Broad Street, the
main intersection in Griffith). Turn south on
Colfax and go about one-half mile to the
preserve entrance, on the east side of Colfax.
FIELD TRIPS continued...

The parking lot is about a mile from the entrance. There may be an entrance fee per car, but not over $10. I did check the web site and they say no fees, but be prepared.

Saturday, May 26th, 8 a.m.  
BARTEL GRASSLANDS/OLD PLANK ROAD TRAIL  
Al Thomas (708-957-9847)  
Migrating birds will be coming through and stopping wherever there is water, either at Bartel or Tinley Creek Wetlands. The site is also a haven for Bobolinks and other grassland birds. Sandhill Cranes have also been seen here. We will meet in the parking lot at Flossmoor and Central on the south side of the road.

Wednesday, May 30th, 8 a.m.  
HOLLAND COMPANY PRESERVE (CRETE)  
Mary Anne McLean (708-704-6611)  
The Holland Co. who makes equipment for the railroad has contributed to the community by creating a user friendly area behind their building. There is a lake with a boardwalk and a path leading around most of the lake. Caspian Terns, Green Herons, Kingfishers, Egrets and Cedar Waxwings are among the birds that have been seen here. From Exchange Street in Crete, head north on Lumber Street, which dead ends in the company parking lot.

Saturday, June 2nd, 8 a.m.  
MIDEWIN TALLGRASS PRAIRIE  
Gene Rothgery (815-274-2994)  
Many songbirds, sparrows, waterfowl and other nesting birds, as well as the full selection of migrants can be seen here. Take I-57 to the Wilmington-Peotone Road and then west on Rt. 53, then north to the Midewin Offices (about 1 mile).

Wednesday, June 6th, 8 a.m.  
GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Mary Anne McLean (708-704-6611)  
We will meet in the far south parking lot of the University. This is an opportunity to see gigantic outdoor sculptures and some unusual birds at the same time. Osprey have been seen here and several different Thrushes, including the Wood Thrush.

Saturday, June 9th, 8 a.m.  
PLUM CREEK FOREST PRESERVE (BURNHAM AVENUE)  
Michelle O’Connor (708-957-9847)  
Plum Creek Forest Preserve, located in south-east Cook County, contains over 1000 acres of grassland, woodland and shrubland areas that provide habitat for Henslow’s Sparrows, Yellow-breasted Chats, Bobolinks, Acadian Flycatchers and White-eyed Vireos. It was designated by Audubon as an Important Bird Area (IBA) in 2010 and continues to be a fantastic birding destination to spot beautiful and rare migratory and breeding species. Enter the area at Burnham Avenue between 223rd Street and Steger Road.

Saturday, May 19th, 8 a.m.  
SAND DRIDGE NATURE CENTER  
Michelle O’Connor (708-910-4268)  
There are many trails that pass through a number of habitats including prairies, oak savannas, woodlands, sand dunes, marshes and ponds. A haven for birds and other wildlife. The parking lot is on the east side of Paxton, a short distance north of 159th Street, west of Torrence and east of the Bishop Ford.
FIELD NOTES
TO REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS CALL TERRIE SPILLERS AT 708-747-1999
If you leave a message please leave a number where you can be reached.

FEBRUARY
02/22 40 Sandhill Cranes west of Monee Reservoir. John Nells
02/26 A large flock of Sandhill Cranes flying over Homewood. Vicki Jones
02/27 Turkey Vultures, 30 or so Robins and flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds were seen in Homewood. Georgianna Dodd

MARCH
03/01 A Meadowlark was seen at Bartel Grasslands. Al Thomas
03/02 A Kingfisher, Buffleheads and Pied-billed Grebe were seen at Indiana Farm Pond and Northern Shovelers seen at Illinois Farm Pond. Al Thomas
03/03 Hundreds of Sandhill Cranes gathering over the Crete Library, same sight or same birds over the house and a Red-tailed Hawk in the oak tree in back yard of Park Forest home. Terrie Spillers
03/09 Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jays, White-breasted Nuthatches, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, many Robins, Chipping Sparrows, Turkey Vultures, Sandhill Cranes seen at Thorn Creek Woods. Terrie Spillers
03/18 A Horned Grebe was seen at Wolf Lake TCAS Member
A flock of Sandhill Cranes and Robins seen in Park Forest. Janine Mueller

A flock of Sandhill Cranes were seen at 194th and Governors. Michael Dodd

03/19 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Blue Jays, White-breasted Nuthatches, Robins, Small flock of Sandhill Cranes, Turkey Vultures and three Red-headed Woodpeckers seen at Goodenow Grove. Terrie Spillers

03/28 Cardinals, Chickadees, Red-bellied Woodpecker and a Northern Junco. Terrie Spillers

03/31 Gold-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Eastern Phoebe, Tufted Titmouse, Turkey Vultures, Meadowlarks and Wilsons Snipe seen south of Monee. Al Thomas

03/31 Redheads, Mergansers, Bufflehead, Northern Shovelers. Caspian Terns, Horned Grebe and Greater Scaup seen near the Indiana border. Al Thomas

04/08 2 Bluebirds sitting atop nesting boxes at Park Forest Wetlands. Terrie Spillers

04/13 Pair of Hermit Thrushes, Cardinals, Brown Creeper, Northern Flicker, Robins and Junco in back yard. Terrie Spillers

04/14 4 Woodcocks, 2 Snipe, 3 Savanna Sparrows and several Meadowlarks seen at Bartel. Al Thomas

04/16 A male Eastern Towhee scratching around in the leaf litter and a Red-breasted Nuthatch at the peanut feeder. Mary Anne McLean

04/17 A Loon was seen on a pond behind Cracker Barrel off Route 41 south of I-80. Also, a Pied-billed Grebe and a Cormorant were seen here. Pat Strange
**HERON ROOKERY FIELD TRIP TO HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

On a rather cool and windy day on April 7th, the first field trip for the spring season, we visited the Heron Rookery in Highland, Indiana. There were eleven birders in all braving the weather. Others who were not part of our group joined us for the viewing. A Great Horned Owl was spotted sitting on her nest with at least one Owlet. Also, many Great Blue Herons were busily nesting on the structure. There were Cormorants, Blue-winged Teals, Buffleheads, Northern Shovelers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Wood Ducks to be seen.

*Al Thomas*

**GARDEN CORNER**

It's April, it's still snowing and it's still cold. Having said that, spring bulbs have popped up all over the yard and even they look cold. Thank goodness they are able to survive where we would not, outside and exposed. There is a sense of busyness all around, what with plants popping up, squirrels gathering the left-over leaves from last fall for their nest up in the old oak tree, Robins everywhere looking like they are listening for worms. The Hermit Thrushes have arrived and are busy in the yard. I can never find out where they nest. Soon the Catbirds will arrive, then the Hummingbirds. The hummingbird feeders are out waiting for them. According to the on-line migration map they will be here soon. Hopefully it will have warmed up by their return... To see this map and find out when our Ruby Throated Hummers will be here go to www.hummingbirds.net/map. Enjoy your spring gardens everyone.

**AT THE PARK FOREST LIBRARY**

The Park Forest Library has been awarded a grant from Illinois Clean Energy K-12 Pollinator Schools Program. The grant will go towards creating an outdoor classroom space and native plant garden. The new garden will extend the native gardens that already surround the library. Once the area is complete, students from Park Forest School District 163 - 3rd and 4th graders will be visiting the gardens to learn about pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, birds and insects and their relationship to native plant species. Victoria Wittig, who helped prepare the grant application with me is sadly no longer with the library but none the less deserves a big thank you for her collaboration.

*Michelle O'Connor, Education Committee*

**BIRD WALKS FROM 4:30 TO 5:30 P.M.**

- **Tuesday, May 1** – Frankfort Main Park, meet at the restroom area of Breidert Green Park.
- **Thursday, May 3** – Olympia Fields Tolentine Park, meet at the gazebo.
- **Tuesday, May 8** – to be announced.
- **Thursday, May 10** – to be announced.

Check our website for the to be announced dates, www.thornreekaudubonsociety.org. There will be a few loaner binoculars available for adults. We will be there rain or shine. Please leave your dogs at home, thank you.

*Mary Bernat, Conservation Chair*
THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Terrie Spillers  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.

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.

We welcome editorial proposals and submissions. Please direct all correspondence to:

Terrie Spillers, Editor, P.O. Box 895, Park Forest, IL 60466
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