



# Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 46 - ISSUE 6 NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2018

NEWSLETTER

## ANNUAL WINTER BIRD SURVEY VOLUNTEERS WELCOME!

This winter's annual bird count, our 48<sup>th</sup>, will be held on Saturday, January 5, 2019. Participants will gather in teams of two or more at various locations within a 15-mile diameter circle centered at Governor's State University. Territories included in that circle are Homewood, Chicago Heights, Crete, Frankfort and as far south as Beecher-Peotone Road.

Teams count all birds by species seen from dawn til dusk (and sometimes owls before dawn) and report them to a Thorn Creek Audubon compiler for reporting to National Audubon Society (NAS). Totals from throughout the USA are then compiled by NAS and reported on their website and compared with previous year's results.

We also need a volunteer to receive calls from the backyard feeder watchers on the same day. If you are interested in being that person, please let Mary Bernat, our President know. Mary can be reached at [www.mbernat@fastmail.com](mailto:www.mbernat@fastmail.com). Thank you.

If you would prefer to be in the field and join a team, write to Al Thomas at [www.al.thomas.al@gmail.com](mailto:www.al.thomas.al@gmail.com) or call 708-957-9847. No experience is necessary, no money changes hands, and you are not graded on performance ... you just have fun!

*Al Thomas, Special Projects Chair*

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## ANNUAL THORN CREEK AUDUBON SEED SALE RESULTS

Fifty Thorn Creek Audubon Society (TCAS) friends and neighbors ordered over 6500lbs (3 tons) of bird seed products during our annual sale this year. Seed prices this year were sharply down from last year, making these purchasers look really smart and enabling them to stock up for winter and perhaps Spring as well.

Vendor DeLong Company's 50lb Premium Sunflower Blend and their Premium "No Waste" mixture were the preferred products by sales, but Nyjer (thistle) products and Suet Cakes were also popular.

TCAS has advertised an autumn bird seed sale for over 20 years and has always dealt with only the best local purveyors to be sure our buyers get a great product at a very competitive price ... because we love our birds!

Please be sure to clean your feeders regularly to protect our friends and thank you for supporting the seed sale.

*Al Thomas, Special Projects Chair*

## 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, November 7, 2018**  
**RICH AND MARION MILLER**  
**Chimney Swift Awareness**

Rich and Marion Miller of the Kane County Audubon discuss the mysterious life of the Chimney Swift. The dark unseen world of Chimney Swifts is brought to light through photos and descriptions. Learn interesting facts about the Chimney Swift and why its population is decreasing dramatically. Discover how Audubon members are helping the Chimney Swift by creating new habitats for this beneficial flying wonder. Learn how to increase interest and awareness of the Chimney Swift within the community and what as individuals you can do to help.

Rich and Marion Miller are the coordinators for the Kane County Audubon Chimney Swift Tower Project. They are active members of Kane County Audubon, avid bird watchers and involved in various bird monitoring programs. They participate in the Christmas and Spring Bird Counts, BCN Grassland Bird Surveys, ICF Crane Count and Kestrel Nest Box Program. In their "spare time" they both are working Registered Nurses.

**Wednesday, December 5, 2018**  
**LINDA HICKEY, TCAS PROGRAM CHAIR**  
**Galapagos Islands**

Linda will present a program on the wildlife she viewed during her tour of the Southern Galapagos Islands. The program will include information about sites visited and the birds, mammals and reptiles seen at each stop along the way, including all three types of Boobies, Frigate Birds, Waved Albatross, Iguanas and more.

## URBAN NATURE

Here is something that I recently discovered that you may also enjoy checking out. There is a wonderful article on this site regarding monarch survival and a possible new way to acquire habitat for the butterfly. The project is called "A Monarch's View of the City."

The project partners with local organizations in Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Kansas City, and Austin to monitor urban monarch conservation efforts in each area. As part of the project, geospatial maps were created from land-use and land-cover data for all four cities. The maps illustrate where milkweed is growing and the potential locations where milkweed can be planted in urban areas between the United States and Mexico.

The Field Museum and its partners are enlisting the help of home gardeners to add monarch habitat in the Chicago area. Here's where the "Pitch in a Patch" in your garden would also help.

For further information on this project and other great projects go to <https://interactive.wttw.com/urbannature#!/>.

Also, check out [www.4Ocean.com](http://www.4Ocean.com) for an inexpensive way to help clean our oceans and beaches and give a great gift that is totally recycled! It will surprise you.

**Terrie Spillers**

## A PASSION FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES AND NATIVE PLANTS EQUAL FRIENDSHIP AND SUCCESS

We, Marlys and Penney, would like to share with you the incredible summer we had this year raising monarch butterflies. We have been raising the butterflies for the past five years. Last year we released 129 which was an increase from the year before. This year we raised and released 522 butterflies and we estimated that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them started as eggs from the milkweed growing in Penney's yard.

Penney has gradually been increasing native plants every year in her yard by exchanging plants with others, purchasing them from nurseries or buying them from the annual Thorn Creek Native Plant Sale, which is held each spring. The milkweed is interspersed with the other native plants throughout the yard to provide food for all the other pollinators who visit. Native plants need little watering after they are established. Over the years, we have come to realize the importance of milkweed and other native plants to the monarch. The monarchs only lay their eggs on the underside of the milk weed leaves, their caterpillars only eat milkweed leaves and when they hatch and become butterflies they need the nectar from other native plants to feed on.

There are also many birds and other bugs, such as bees and other butterflies, that enjoy the native plantings and help with pollination too. We have seen Mourning Cloak, Black Swallowtails (they use parsley and dill), Viceroy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Cabbage White, Spice Bush Swallowtail, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Banded Hairstreak, Orange Sulphur, Clouded Sulphur, and Spring Azure. And, of course, our favorite, the Monarch butterfly.

We also go walking each day to exercise our dogs and ourselves. We visit areas of the forest preserves and examine all the milkweed near the path along the way. If we see eggs or caterpillars we re-home them in the monarch nursery improving their chance for survival as ants and other bugs like to eat their eggs. After all, statistically only 10% of caterpillars in the wild reach maturity and we know our maturity rate is much higher, greater than 95%. We need all the pollinators we can get. They have been in serious decline due to loss of habitat or the spraying of insecticides.

We keep the eggs in a box (Like an old gelato box) with a wet paper towel on the bottom. The eggs are still on the milkweed leaf exactly where the female monarch butterfly laid it. She lays it there so her baby has food and everything it needs right away. When they hatch we move them to a similar box we call a nursery. This box has pin holes in the top. We try to keep like sized caterpillars together. At this stage there is a lot of work to keep up with appetites—the bigger they are, the more they eat; the more they eat, the more they poop. They need more tender food and clean compartments.

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When the caterpillars get bigger we put them in our cages. Almost like aquariums but with a lid and screening on all sides. Then we feed them more milkweed but not individual leaves. We cut the top leaves off a plant and put several on a florist frog in a shallow dish with water in it. We cover the dish with press n seal and poke holes in it to stick the stems of milkweed through it. (The caterpillars will drown in water as they can't swim but you need the water to keep the leaves tender and healthy for the to eat.)

Caterpillars actually shed their skin several times before they become cocoons. When they have finally eaten enough they go to the top of the cage and hang there until they spin their cocoon. The butterfly hatches out of that cocoon a couple of weeks later.

It is truly amazing to see them grow from an egg through the various stages of caterpillar to cocoons and then to butterflies. This never ceases to amaze us. They are so beautiful when they are freshly hatched. It is incredible and a privilege to be a part of their process.

*Marlys Oosting and Penney Kneisler*



*Photo taken by Marlys Oosting*

# FIELD TRIPS

TO TELL US YOU WILL ATTEND AND FOR DETAILS, PLEASE CONTACT THE TRIP COORDINATOR. IF RAIN IS FORCAST, CALL THE TRIP LEADER THE PRIOR EVENING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

**Saturday, November 17, 1P.M. – 7 P.M.**  
**THE SANDHILL CRANE EXPERIENCE**  
**\$15/person**

The trip coordinator is Plum Creek Nature Center at Goodenow Grove, Beecher, Il  
Contact Phone: (708)946-2219

For this bus trip you will meet at Plum Creek Nature Center at Goodenow Grove, Beecher. Will County Forest Preserve staff will host this event. The deadline for registration is November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Must be 18 or older.

**Saturday, November 25, 1 P.M.**  
**Sandhill Cranes at Jasper-Pulaski Preserve**  
**Mary Bernat**

For instructions as to where you might meet for this trip please check [www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org](http://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org) or contact Mary Bernat directly at [mbernat@fastmail.com](mailto:mbernat@fastmail.com).

For information regarding trips in January 2019 to Starved Rock to see Bald Eagles and February 2019 to see Short-eared Owls, please contact Mary Bernat at [mbernat@fastmail.com](mailto:mbernat@fastmail.com) or on our website [www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org](http://www.thorncreekaudubonsociety.org).

## THORN CREEK WOODS FALL EVENTS SPONSORED BY THORN CREEK AUDUBON SOCIETY

### ANIMALS IN AUTUMN – FOR KIDS

**Sunday, November 11, 1-3 p.m. FREE**

Come and explore how plants and animals prepare for cold weather and darker days. Participants will create a bird feeder, conduct an experiment and look for clues of winter preparation on a hike in the preserve. This program is for 9 through 12 year of age. Registration is required by November 9<sup>th</sup>.

### WILD ANIMAL TRACKS

**Saturday, December 8, 1-3 p.m. FREE**

Tracks can be clues to wild animals' identities and behaviors. Discover how animals survive through the different seasons. We will walk the trails searching for signs of animals preparing for winter. Bring home your own track replica. This program is for ages 4 – 10. Children under 6 must be accompanied by an adult. Registration required by December 6.

### STORY OF THE LANDSCAPE HIKE

**On Sunday, December 2, 1 – 3 p.m. FREE.**

Join the hike to "read" the landscape of Thorn Creek Woods. Find out what the slopes, depressions, stream channels and tree communities can tell us. All ages are welcome. Registration is required by Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup>.

## FALL FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS THROUGH OCTOBER 6

None of our fall field trips to date has been without highlights, and these include butterflies, dragonflies, flowers and fungi as well as birds, but there are a number that stand out:

On September 15, a beautiful day at Kankakee Sands, birding by car, we had just turned our first corner, when we were awestruck to find the resident bison, normally faint black blobs in the distance, wandering along a fence, right by the road! Adults and calves obliged by posing for our several skilled photographers. After that great start, a Northern Harrier sailed over a nearby field, and then, thanks to the guidance of Dave Gruver, a frequent visitor to the area over a period of years, we found our way to Red-headed Woodpeckers and numerous Bluebirds. Butterflies were everywhere, with the highlight a Great-spangled Fritillary perched on a thistle, another rare photo-op.



*Photo South Shore Convention and Visitor Authority*

On September 22<sup>nd</sup> we visited Cowles Bog, and as we wended our way along the woodland trail, we could hear the unmistakable calls of Sandhill Cranes floating over the adjacent marsh. Perched on the few dead trees that punctuated the marsh were several Red-shouldered hawks, and in the woods, a large and handsome Cooper's. In a rare occurrence, we saw six species of woodpecker: Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Also seen were Great Blue Herons, Wood ducks, male and female Grosbeaks, a Black-throated Green Warbler, a Brown Thrasher and a Kingfisher which all added to the pleasures of the trip, which concluded at the inland marsh in Beverly Shores.

A day long to be remembered was September 26<sup>th</sup> at Gibson Woods. Responding to our request that warblers be in place, and at eye level, naturalists Loyce and Joy assured us they would be "dripping off the trees". Sure enough, after the first few minutes of our walk, when there were none in sight and we were beginning to feel a bit discouraged, suddenly there they were - Redstarts, male and female, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Green Warblers, Palm Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and more. Some were not only at eye

*Cont/...*

level, but below, foraging in the streambed. Loyce, with her giant zoom lens and trained eye, was able to capture close up views to help with ID of the confusing fall types! Something of a distraction were the Red-headed Woodpeckers flying about and landing on dead trees in plain sight. By the next Wednesday, when we had a return trip to Gibson Woods, that group had apparently taken wing to continue their journey south, but more Yellow-rumps had taken their place, as well as a Tennessee in lovely greenish plumage, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and a Hermit Thrush.

At the Old Plank Road Trail, we encountered an extraordinary conglomeration of geese, flying in from all directions, spreading across the lagoon, and all honking at the top of their voices. Herons and Egrets joined the throng, as well as a number of cormorants, and one lone White Pelican. In the wetland on the other side of the path, sharp eyed observers spotted both a Black-Crowned Night Heron and a Green Heron.

Assorted sparrows were among the birds we encountered at Plum Creek Preserve on October 6: Field, Chipping and Song, and one Tree Sparrow, come south to keep us company through the winter, No Juncos yet. Among a flurry of warblers, mostly Yellow-rumps, were a Nashville and a Blue-headed Vireo. Towhees could be heard, chipping all around us, apparently getting together to migrate. A miniature orchid, identified as Ladies'-Tresses, was blooming by the side of the path.

*Mary Anne McLean*

## Audubon Member Mary White Dies

We are sorry to learn of the recent death of long-time Thorn Creek Audubon Society member Mary White.

Mary served for many years as compiler of our column "Field Notes," a record of the bird sightings of area members.

A dedicated and knowledgeable birder, Mary spent many hours every week on the birding trails and was able to add many unusual sightings to the column.

We will miss her contributions and her commitment to birding.

*Joan Crabb*

## FIELD NOTES

TO REPORT AREA SIGHTINGS EMAIL TERRIE SPILLERS AT [www.hillbrit@comcast.net](mailto:www.hillbrit@comcast.net) OR CALL 708-747-1999 AND LEAVE A MESSAGE AND A NUMBER WHERE YOU CAN BE REACHED.

### OCTOBER

**10/09** Her first Junco arrived today in her backyard.

*Mary Anne McLean*

**10/15** 31 Sandhill Cranes over Chicago Heights, 2 Redtail Hawks in Park Forest.

*Elise-TCAS member*

**10/16** Huge flock of Robins at the bird bath drinking and bathing, 4 Blue Jays and a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

*Terrie Spillers*

**10/23** We have an Eastern Screech Owl occupying our "wood duck" nesting box in Crete. This one is rusty in color versus previous tenants who were dark gray.

*Richard Schultz*



Thorn Creek  
AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 895 - Park Forest, IL 60466

**STD RATE**

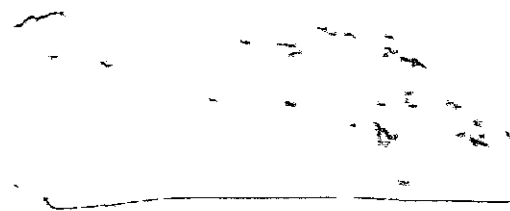
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*The mission of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society is to promote the enjoyment and appreciation of birds, to educate adults and children concerning our natural environment, to preserve, protect, and restore wildlife habitat, and to create awareness of 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:  
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