



# Thorn Creek AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 36—ISSUE 6 NOV.-DEC. 2009

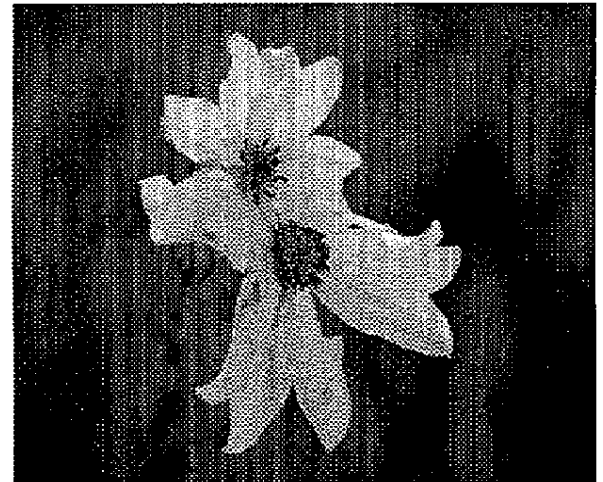
NEWSLETTER

## TCAS GETS GRANT REQUESTS

The grants committee of the Thorn Creek Audubon Society has received three applications for financial assistance this fall. This is the first year TCAS has accepted applications in the fall. Grants will also be accepted in the spring.

One school, Infant Jesus of Prague in Flossmoor, applied for funds to help purchase equipment for students to study water quality. The Thorn Creek Nature Center at 247 Monee Road, Park Forest, asked for a grant to purchase exhibits for children. The Friends of the Kankakee asked for funds to help purchase land that will connect two parcels of already protected land in the Kankakee Sands ecosystem.

The grants committee will present its decision on the requests to the full TCAS board, after which the grants must be approved by the membership at the Nov. 3 meeting.



A tickseed displays its yellow bloom at Bartel Grasslands. *Photo by Dick Riner.*

## 2009 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT IS JANUARY 3

The traditional Christmas Bird Count began in the year 1900. Instead of shooting birds, a popular holiday sport at that time, a group of conservationists spent the day identifying and counting all the bird species they encountered within a 24-hour period. Today over 2000 official counts are conducted all over the Americas, the Caribbean, Hawaii and other Pacific islands. Each count is vitally important to the overall data base used by scientists.

The count of January 3, 2009, will mark Thorn Creek Audubon Society's 38<sup>th</sup> year of participation. Our official territory lies within a 15-mile diameter circle centered at Governors State University. It includes parts of Homewood, Chicago Heights, Crete and Frankfort, extending south to the Beecher-Peotone Road.

Two groups of birders participate in the count: field observers and feeder watchers. Parties of observers are organized to canvass specific territories, a leader being assigned to each group. Feeder watchers work in their own yards and record the number of each species seen there. Feeder observations should be reported to Dory Grosche at (708) 481-3166 on count day no later than 6 p.m.

In addition to count day observations, any unusual sightings during the week of Dec. 31 through Jan. 7 should be reported to our official compiler, Al Thomas, at (708) 957-9847 or [wooduck\\_1999@yahoo.com](mailto:wooduck_1999@yahoo.com). Parties of participants will be organized during the November and December TCAS general meetings. All participants must sign up in advance for this important census. Please call Al Thomas or Aura Duke (708) 748-6407 to join this year's Christmas Bird count.

*Aura Duke*

## **FALL AND WINTER PROGRAMS**

**Wednesday, Nov. 5, 7 p.m.**

Park Forest Library

### **WOODPECKERS AND THEIR UNIQUE ADAPTATIONS**

*Marilyn Campbell*

Marilyn Campbell will introduce Audubon members to some special physical and behavioral adaptations which the Woodpeckers have to carry out their interesting lifestyles. Campbell will show slides of all the species of North American Woodpeckers and also a few of their tropical cousins.

Campbell served as Executive Director of the Illinois Audubon Society and contributing writer of Illinois Audubon Magazine, to mention only some of her birding qualifications.

**Wednesday, December 3, 7 p.m.**

Park Forest Library

### **POTPOURI**

*Three TCAS Members*

A trio of Thorn Creek Audubon Society Members will share their unique talents and experiences. Michelle O'Connor is an educational consultant in her own company. She provides workshops for third to seventh grade students in Districts 162 and 163 in Chicago Heights and Park Forest. O'Connor will demonstrate the use of the digital microscope which was purchased with funds from an Audubon grant.

The group will join Dick Riner in a Bird Identification Program, where participants will be able to use their birding skills to amaze the audience. Prizes will be awarded to birders who "have their act together."

Aura Duke will show slides of North American birds. First she will show birds of

Bona Venture on the Gaspé Peninsula of Canada; second, birds of St. Paul Island off Alaska; and finally, birds of Florida.

**Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009, 7 p.m.**

Park Forest Library

### **LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

*Keith Nowakowski*

January is the kickoff of Audubon's native Plant Sale. Our speaker, Keith Nowakowski, will present ideas on how to use native plants in our home landscape and how to attract birds. Nowakowski has a Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois. He is a landscape designer for Clarence Davids and Co., Matteson, Illinois, and in that capacity has designed a large-scale prairie garden located at 58th and Woodland Avenue on The University of Chicago Campus. He also did native plant and restoration work at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights.

Nowakowski is the author of *Native Plants in the Home Landscape*, University of Illinois Press. Plants purchased in the Audubon sale will be cultivated this winter by our speaker.

*Charles Habecker*

### **BIRDERS CAN SIGN UP FOR CORNELL LAB PROJECT FEEDERWATCH**

The 2008-2009 season of Project Feeder Watch gets underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The project generates the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations and helps monitor the health of birds and the environment.

To learn more and sign up, visit [www.feederwatch.org](http://www.feederwatch.org) or call the lab at 800-843-2473. For the \$15 fee participants receive a handbook to identify birds in their area, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report.

## TWO MORE TOGETHERGREEN EVENTS PLANNED

A noon bonfire and lunch will kick off the second TogetherGreen event at the Bartel Grassland site on Saturday, November 22. Volunteers who turn up for this event will learn how to plant wetland seeds and actually do the planting on the same day, according to Dick Riner, Bartel Grassland Steward. TogetherGreen is a cooperative project from the national Audubon Society and Toyota Corporation to promote volunteerism in ecological programs. Thorn Creek Audubon Society was one of the recipients of a TogetherGreen grant earlier this year.

Riner said the Bartel Grassland has received a donation of \$600 worth of seeds of wetland plants from an anonymous source, which will be matched with another \$600 worth of seeds from the TogetherGreen grant. The November program will be a learning opportunity for volunteers on how to do seeding when restoring natural areas. Rain date for the seed scattering will be Sunday, November 23.

The third event of the year will be a Winter Solstice Bonfire on Saturday, December 20. Volunteers will learn how to construct and burn brush piles at this event, to be conducted by Rodney Dabe, a Bartel volunteer. For exact time and other details, check the TCAS website.

Riner pointed out that volunteers of all kinds can help with the restoration and care of natural areas. "You don't have to be big and strong and muscular. Some things don't require chain saws and shovels," he said.

The first TogetherGreen event, held September 27, brought forty people to Bartel for tours and information about the grassland site. It was held on National Public Lands Day, a date on which people are urged to locate and use the public lands in their areas.

## NEED IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS? TCAS CAN HELP

For Christmas gifts that not only give to the recipient but also give back to nature, the Thorn Creek Audubon Society has a variety of ideas. You can give your bird-loving friend a bluebird or wren nesting box for \$15, a hummingbird feeder for \$7, or packets of six cards and envelopes with pictures of Bluebirds, spring birds, wildflowers of Raccoon Grove, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, or birds of Illinois, for \$4.

You can also send Christmas cards with a nature message, such as winter Cardinals, a wreath with six birds, and a Canada Goose with a wreath. Packets of 12 cards and envelopes are \$7. All cards are designed and made by Aura Duke. Call Aura at 748-6407 or purchase these items at the next TCAS meeting.

Still another great gift idea is a tote bag with the Thorn Creek Audubon Society logo. The bag is exceptionally sturdy and roomy, and the logo is embroidered and will not wash or wear off. These are especially good gifts for environmentally conscious friends: they are organic, all cotton, and made locally by a South Side Chicago company. The stitching is even more local, done by BeStitched in Chicago Heights. The bags, priced at cost at \$12, can be purchased at TCAS meetings or from Judy Gleitzman, 748-1745.

One more gift idea—send *Audubon Adventures* to a local classroom as a gift from a friend or relative. In that way you will be giving a gift to an entire group of youngsters, and to the future of the environment as well. (See story page 4.)

## ***FIELD TRIPS***

Please notify the trip  
coordinator that you will attend.

Charlie Habecker – (708) 747-6061

Al Thomas – (708) 957-9847;

[wooduck\\_1999@yahoo.com](mailto:wooduck_1999@yahoo.com)

Sunday, November 2, 1:30 pm

### **Jasper-Pulaski Wildlife Preserve.**

Meet at the Park Forest Library to carpool to Jasper-Pulaski for the Sandhill Crane viewing event of the year. Thousands of Sandhill Cranes flying in at dusk to gather and then fly off together to roost in nearby wetlands. Awesome, the kids say!

Trip Coordinator: Al

Wednesday, November 12, 8 am

### **Miller Beach/Marquette Park.**

Meet at the Home Depot parking lot at Ridge Road and Halsted Street in Homewood to carpool to the Marquette Park Pavilion at Miller Beach, Indiana, to search for rare visitors such as Loons, Avocets, and Jaegers. Bring your scope if you have one. Luncheon will be a treat at the famous **Miller Beach Bakery Café**. So bring your appetite, too.

Trip Coordinator: Al

Saturday, January 3, 2009

### **Christmas Bird Count**

(See story front page)

Saturday, January 17, 2009

### **Starved Rock Eagle Encounter**

Charlie

A trip to Bartel Grassland and adjacent sites to see Short-eared and other owls, led by Wannetta Elliott, will be held sometime in February. Regular field trips will resume in April of 2009.

## ***AUDUBON ADVENTURES DONORS NEEDED***

*Audubon Adventures*, prepared by the National Audubon Society, provides colorful, entertaining student newspapers for children in grades 3 to 6 to foster a love of nature and a sense of stewardship for the environment. TCAS acts as local coordinator, recruiting teachers and youth group leaders who wish to use this material in their classrooms. TCAS raises funds so teachers can receive *Audubon Adventures* free of charge.

In the past, contributions to the *Audubon Adventures* fund have covered the cost, but with the addition of many more teachers the special fund has not been sufficient. This year 76 classrooms in the TCAS area have enrolled, which represents a cost of \$1,120.00 more than has been raised from special contributions. TCAS is extending a special appeal to members and businesses for funds to help defray the cost.

The cost for each *Audubon Adventures* classroom kit is \$45.65. It includes four editions of the student newspaper (32 copies each), a classroom resource manual, a certificate of participation, an Audubon membership for the teacher, and three special inserts: "Nature Journaling for Everyone," "A Family Guide to the Great Outdoors," and "An Invitation to a Healthy Schoolyard." The focus for the 2008-2009 school year is *Feats of Nature*, featuring animal builders, animal defenses, migration and plant power.

To help save birds and other wildlife by reaching the young people who will soon be entrusted with their fate, please make a donation to the Thorn Creek *Audubon Adventures* Fund in care of Sue Putnam, 3704 213<sup>th</sup> Street, Matteson, IL 60443. Donors may designate the gift to a particular classroom; otherwise the contribution will be used where most needed. Contributions are welcome in any amount. Commemorative donations, holiday and birthday gifts will be acknowledged with a special certificate. Samples of *Audubon Adventures* are available on request.



Release! That word was the directive, and eighty little hands gently released *Liatris* seeds into the wind. Second grade students from District 163, Chicago Heights/Park Forest, learned about the Blazing Star and helped disperse the seeds. They learned about ecological restoration by becoming restoration volunteers. It was a challenging task, for the mosquitoes were fierce! The youngsters braved the numerous, pesky mosquitoes and marveled at the other insects residing at Bartel Grasslands. They found butterflies, praying mantids, woolly-bear caterpillars and moths, along with garter snakes and deer. Migratory warblers were numerous. Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks were a good show as well. The young restorationists hoped for many *Liatris* to bloom next year as they released the tiny tufts of seeds.

*By Michelle O'Connor Photo by Dick Riner*

## THANKS TO CURRENT *AUDUBON ADVENTURES* DONORS

In the spirit of the thanksgiving season, we're seizing the day to thank all you contributors who are making it possible for youngsters to explore nature through *Audubon Adventures* this year. From the next generation of environmentalists and their mentors we extend thanks to the following individuals and organizations:

Jane Bohlin, Bill and Pat Braker, Frank and Helen Brunner, Marcella Ciucki, Crete Woman's Club, Aura and Sidney Duke, Wannetta Elliott, Marie Francis, Eleanor Frew, Judy Gleitsman, Great Lakes 50, Amy Hensold, Daniela Herman, the Homewood Rotary Foundation, the Kankakee Kultivators, Misty Long, Kay MacNeil, Keith and Mary Anne McLean, Mr. and Mrs. Sam H. Mann Jr., Janell O'Barski, Park Forest Garden Club, Bob and Doris Pierce, Barbara Ruggles, St Alphonsus/St Patrick Family School Association, Lester Skaggs, Marilyn Skromme, Pat Strange, Taxperts, Ltd., Lisbet Temple, Al and Ruth Thomas, Dick Thomas, Ed and Edie Turkington, Bob and Delpha Williams, Ann Wood and Betty Ziegler.

As we thank these faithful supporters, we are also looking for new recruits to help in funding so that we can emerge from deficit spending and keep up with our expanded outreach.

*Mary Anne McLean*

## “GIVE BACK TO BIRDS” IS WORKDAY PLUS BIRDING

The Bird Conservation Network is sponsoring its second “Give Back To Birds” Field Trip and Workday at the Lost Mound Unit of Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge in Savanna, IL. The preserve contains the largest remnant sand prairie in the state and hosts impressive numbers of grassland birds. Workers will harvest prairie wildflower seeds and cut invasive brush from a field that is rapidly being degraded as grassland bird habitat.

Date for the trip is November 15. A workday from 9:45 A.M. to 12:15 will be followed by a lunch cooked by the refuge staff and then a birding tour from 1 to 3 p.m. Workers should see eagles, migrant and wintering waterfowl, and wintering grassland birds including short- and long-eared owls, harriers and northern shrikes. Dick Riner, who went last year, said he heartily recommends this trip as a way to see birds at a closed site unavailable to the public otherwise.

Please contact Joan Bruchman at [pgbruchman@yahoo.com](mailto:pgbruchman@yahoo.com) or call 847-687-3108 to RSVP for lunch and to arrange to be part of a car pool. To arrive on Friday night and bird the Mississippi River bluffs early Saturday, contact Dick Riner at 708-601-5683 (cell) or [dickriner@gmail.com](mailto:dickriner@gmail.com). For directions: <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cwpe/research/fieldstations/lostmound.htm>.

### NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

There are two ways to join the Thorn Creek Audubon Society. Choose your way and mail in your application today.

**Dual membership: National Audubon and Thorn Creek Audubon**

Membership in the National Audubon supports efforts to address environmental concerns and foster wildlife protection at state, national and international levels, with a small percentage shared with our local chapter. You receive Audubon Magazine and our TCAS newsletter.

Introductory offer – 1 year, \$20. Local Chapter code G59.

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

### SAVE THE DATE FOR WILD THINGS 2009

Save the date of Feb. 7, 2009, for the third biennial Wild Things conference, a gathering of this region’s nature conservation community at the University of Chicago. The one-day program will feature more than 70 large and small-group sessions in 12 different areas.

The program, sponsored by Chicago Wilderness, will include talks on stewardship; sustainability, wetlands, woodlands and forest; prairies, grasslands, shrublands and savannas; and birds and bird conservation.

Rich Treptow and Dick Riner, both TCAS members, will be helping to organize events and line up presenters.

**WINTER WORLD****WHAT A GOOD READ!**

Usher in the winter months by enjoying the wonderful book *Winter World*, written by Bernd Heinrich and published by HarperCollins. This book describes the physiological winter survival techniques used by many species of animals, insects and birds.

First, it must be noted that Heinrich is a gifted biologist, author and illustrator. He wrote brilliant books such as *Why We Run: A Natural History*, and *Mind of the Raven*. He has a knack for explaining difficult biological occurrences in an intelligent, entertaining yet easy-to-grasp way.

*Winter World* covers the mysterious winter life of many animals such as turtles, bees, and the Golden-crowned Kinglet. The adaptations of the Kinglet, a fragile little bird that survives harsh northern winters, is a theme that runs throughout the book. Heinrich writes, "Snapping turtles are air-breathing reptiles that lay buried in the mud at the bottom of a frozen pond for six months of the year, without ever once coming up for air." He explains in detail this reptilian winter survival phenomenon. He also describes how various animals construct lodges, nests and other shelters. For example, he points out that a messy-looking squirrel nest is actually intricately designed in waterproofing layers.

Heinrich's illustrations are peppered throughout the book. His drawings compliment his writing style and breathe life into his fascinating subject. The winter months are much more interesting now that Bernd Heinrich has explained survival techniques of animals with such vigor.

*Michelle O'Connor*

**FIELD NOTES**

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

**AUGUST**

**8/23** 2 adult and 2 juvenile Coopers Hawks, 2 Black-capped Chickadees, 1 Caroline Wren, 1 female Baltimore Oriole and 1 juvenile, 1 Rose-breasted Grosbeak, 1 Hummingbird and several Indigo Buntings in her Homewood back yard.

Jan Newman

**SEPTEMBER**

**9/16** 2 Chickadees, 9 white-Breasted Nuthatches, 1 Towhee calling (seen) and 2 Towhees heard, Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Trail.

Mary White

**9/21** American Bittern and Peregrin Falcon (hunting) at Bartel Grassland.

Dick Riner

**OCTOBER**

**10/1** Northern Harrier dive-bombing a Red-tailed Hawk.

Mary White

**10/4** Pair of Turkey Vultures circling the Matteson Metra station.

Joan Crabb

**10/4** 2 Hummingbirds feeding on Phlox at rural Crete home.

Anne Rosen

**10/5** First sighting of Sandhill Cranes over Matteson.

Dick Riner

**10/5** Dick and Peggy's Cooper's Hawk came back to terrorize birds at their feeder.

Dick Riner

**10/10** Flock of White-throated Sparrows foraging at the edge of the wetland behind her rural Crete home.

Mary Anne McLean



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

**STD RATE**

U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit #1

Park Forest, IL 60466

Nov-08



**THORN CREEK AUDUBON OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE  
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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.*

This 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 necessarily 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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