Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*

The Rusty Blackbird has undergone one of the sharpest and most mystifying recent declines of any North American songbird. The North American Breeding Bird Survey estimates that populations declined by 6.2 percent every year between 1966 and 2010—a cumulative decline of 94 percent. Partners in Flight estimates the global breeding population at 5 million, with 86 percent breeding in Canada and 100 percent wintering in the U.S. The 2014 State of the Birds Report listed Rusty Blackbird as a Common Bird in Steep Decline, and this species rates a 12 out of 20 on the Partners in Flight Continental Concern Score.

...It’s not clear what has caused the population decline, but loss of wet woodland habitat through drainage, clearcutting, and conversion to agriculture is a possibility—particularly in the southeastern U.S. where some 80 percent of the population winters. The historically severe hunting of beavers across North America may also have reduced habitat for Rusty Blackbirds by reducing the number of beaver ponds; the resurgence of beaver populations may be restoring some of this habitat. Rusty Blackbirds from northeastern North America have been recorded with unusually high mercury contamination which could be contributing to their decline in this region.

**THE NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SPRING BANQUET**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 12TH**

at Highland Community College with Silent Auction starting at 5:30 PM, Dinner at 6:00 and Program at 7:30 PM

The program will be about the insect order Odonata which includes dragonflies and damselflies. The presenter, Marla Garrison, is a biology faculty member at McHenry County College. She sits on the Executive Council of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas and is the author of “Damselflies of Chicagoland.” Experience an image intensive, up close and personal presentation of this intriguing, and visually splendid group of insects. Through macro photography, come explore the Lilliputian world of local dragonfly and damselfly fauna including their basic anatomy, life history, behaviors and diversity.

Reservations are needed for the dinner and people should contact Tim Smith by April 1 to make reservations (815-835-5109) Walk-ins are welcome for the program. Join us at the banquet to learn more about dragonflies and damselflies.

**POLLINATORS OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS**

**TUESDAY, MAY 3RD**

Potluck 6:00 PM | NIAS Monthly Meeting 7:00 PM | St John United Church of Christ

The program for the evening will be presented by Barbara Williams concerning the topic of pollinators and concentrating on bumble bees. Barbara managed the biology department at the Burpee Museum of Natural History in Rockford for about a decade. She has been studying and photographing our local bumble bees for several years in addition to pursuing her many other natural history interests. Our native pollinators are a fascinating and important part of our lives and our ecosystem. Northern Illinois has a lot of different species of native pollinators but many of their populations are declining. This program will acquaint you with some of our bees and show you why and how to lend them a hand and give them a place in your garden.

Please note that this meeting starts an hour earlier than most because it begins with a delicious potluck dinner. Bring a dish to share and your own table service. Our chapter will provide beverages. The meeting and program will follow immediately after the dinner. If you just want to attend the meeting and program, plan to arrive around 7:00.
CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS

March 31 - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watch, ECBP 7:00 pm

April 2 - Spring Mississippi River Waterfowl Field Trip. See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information.

April 2 - Draw a Bird Day, Freeport Art Museum 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. (for kids 7 and up) See page 4 for details.

April 5 - Earth Month Film Festival event ‘FIERCE GREEN FIRE’. See page 6 for details.

April 6 - Wildlife Wednesdays “Bee” 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. See page 4 for details.

April 7 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

April 7 - Earth Month Film Festival event ‘ARCTIC TALE’. See page 6 for details.

April 8 - Blooming Pasque Flowers Field Trip. See page 3 for details.

April 11 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

April 12 - Spring Banquet - See cover page for details.

April 14 - Earth Month Film Festival event ‘THE MESSENGER’. See page 6 for details.

April 15 - EARTH day program for kids; Freeport Public Library, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. See page 4 for details.

April 16 - Annual Midwest Crane Count, 5:30-7:30 a.m. Each year our chapter volunteers census cranes in Stephenson county. County coordinator: Mary Blackmore (815) 938-3204. See page 9 for details.

April 16 - Day of Action/SUPERhero Community Cleanup with “Be the Change”, Kickoff at 10:00 a.m. at Read Park. See page 6 for details.

April 19 - “Talking About the Issues” monthly discussion session, 7-9 p.m., at the home of Richard Benning; 704 N Davis St in Davis (815-865-5279)

The first hour will focus on the reintroduction of an eastern population of Whooping Cranes and the recent decision to discontinue the use of ultralight aircraft to teach young cranes a migration route. The second hour will be the customary discussion of whatever issues are brought forth by participants. All are welcome to attend this issues discussion. Carpool from the Staples parking lot in Freeport at 6:30 PM or call Richard for directions.

April 21 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

April 21 - Earth Month Film Festival event ‘WALL-E’. See page 6 for details.

April 22 - Earth Day

April 23 - Horicon Marsh Field Trip. See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information.

April 26-28 - Highland Community College E.A.R.T.H. Club will be having their annual plant sale on the Highland campus, building M lobby on April 26 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., April 27 from 2-4 p.m., and April 28 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

April 26 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

April 28 - Our monthly Conservation Conversation. Join us at Amigo's in downtown Freeport for supper and a casual conversation before the film at Highland. Order from the menu at 5:30.

April 28 - Earth Month Film Festival event ‘DISRUPTION’. See page 6 for details.

April 29 - Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve honeysuckle cut, 2-4 p.m. Tools, gloves, snacks and water provided. Carpool from the Staples east lot in Freeport at 1:15. The preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.), with parking just off of Leaf River Rd. If weather questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.

May 1 - Annual Birdathon Fundraiser! Your pledge is MOST welcome! See page 10 for how you can make a contribution that will help birds on their wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting habitats.

May 3 - General Membership Meeting, Program and Potluck Dinner. Potluck starts at 6:00 PM, NIAS monthly meeting begins at 7:00 PM. St John United Church of Christ. See cover page for details.

May 4 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

May 4 - Wildlife Wednesdays “Frogs & Toads” 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. See page 4 for details.

May 5 - Freeport Prairie Stewardship, 2-4 p.m. on south edge of Freeport off of Walnut Rd. Tools, gloves, snacks and water provided. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.

May 7 - Wildflowers and Birds of the Palisades. See page 3 for details.

May 10 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

May 10 - NIAS Board meeting at St John UCC, 7:00 to 9:00 PM

May 12 - Coleman Dells & Severson Dells Hike. See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information.

May 14 - Annual NIAS Bird Festival, 8-11 a.m. at the Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. See page 7 for complete information.

May 16 - “Talking About the Issues” monthly discussion session, 7-9 p.m., at the home of John and Anita Nienhuis, 3350 S. Mill Grove Rd., Pearl City (815-443-2401).

The first hour topic will be about the relationship between Clark’s Nutcracker and the whitebark pine forests of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. To get a copy of the topic article, call Mary at 815-938-3204. The second hour will be discussion of whatever issues are brought forth. All are welcome to attend. Carpool at 6:30 p.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport or call John and Anita for directions.

May 17 - Elkhorn Creek parsnip and mustard stewardship, 10 a.m. - noon. Tools, gloves, snacks and water provided. Wear long sleeves and long pants! Carpool from the Staples east lot in Freeport at 9:30 a.m. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.

May 19 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

May 21 - Kid's Nature Walk, 9-10:30 a.m. See page 4 for details.

May 23 - Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. See page 8 for details.

May 25 - First campfire of the year at the Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. At 7 p.m. we’ll take a leisurely stroll to observe blooming plants and nesting birds. The campfire will start at 8 p.m. S'mores and water will be provided. Bring a lawn chair and flashlight. Carpool from the Staples east lot in Freeport at 6:15. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.

May 26 - Our monthly Conservation Conversation. Join us at Amigo’s in downtown Freeport for supper and a casual conversation about current environmental issues. Open agenda! Order from the menu at 5:30. Please join us.

May 27 - An Evening of Birding at Lost Mound Field Trip, 5:30 p.m. See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information.

May 31 - Elkhorn Creek parsnip and mustard stewardship, 8-10 a.m. Carpool from the Staples east lot in Freeport at 7:30 a.m. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.
**SPRING MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERFOWL**

Saturday, April 2, 2016 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., carpool 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Anne Straight (815-938-3263)

We invite you to join our group as we look for migrating waterfowl on the Mississippi River. Usually a wide variety of both diving and dabbling ducks are seen, along with grebes, Bald Eagles and some early songbirds. If luck is with us we’ll see Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes as well.

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 8:00 a.m. or meet at Spring Lake at 9:00. We’ll have lunch in Thomson around noon and then head to Lock and Dam #13. Return to Freeport will be around 4:00 p.m. Call Ann (815-938-3263) to confirm your attendance.

**WILDFLOWERS AND BIRDS OF THE PALISADES**

Saturday, May 7th | 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Leaders - Anne Straight, Juliet D’Souza, Chris Kruger (815-238-9259)

Each spring, the Mississippi Palisades State Park, just north of Savanna, is a destination of choice for birders and botanists alike. Due to its unique topography, unusual birds such as the Yellow-throated Warbler and Northern Parula Warbler, and uncommon plants, like Large-Flowered Trillium and Amethyst Shooting Star, are found.

Carpool from the Staples lot in Freeport at 8am or meet our group at the first parking lot inside the south entrance to the Palisades. We’ll eat lunch at a restaurant in Savanna and return to Freeport around 2pm. Call Chris Kruger (815)238-9259 to confirm your attendance.

**BLOOMING PASQUE FLOWERS FIELD TRIP AT FREEPORT PRAIRIE NATURE PRESERVE**

Friday April 8 | 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

Join us as we admire one the prairie’s harbingers of spring, the Pasque Flower. Unlike the crocus it resembles, a Pasque Flower, Anemone patens, is a member of the buttercup family. In early spring the plant sends up a flower stalk in advance of leaves so what you see are delicate pale violet blooms nestled in the muted tan tangle of last year’s prairie grasses.

Come and see how Pasque Flower blooms actually move to track the sun. We’ll meet in the prairie’s parking lot just off of Walnut Rd. at 3 pm. After our prairie stroll those who wish to can enjoy an early supper at a nearby restaurant.

**HORICON MARSH FIELD TRIP**

Saturday, April 23 | carpool 7:00 a.m. - return approx. 5:30 p.m.
Leaders: Chris Kruger (815-238-9259) and Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Horicon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge and our chapter will help celebrate with a trip to this important bird breeding and migratory habitat. Many species of waterfowl and shorebirds use the marsh as a stopover this time of year on their way north to breeding grounds. The plan is to stop at several areas with some time spent walking to observation locations. Bring your binoculars and dress for being outside.

Pack a sack lunch as we will stop at the refuge visitor center for a mid-day break. Meet at the Staples parking lot in Freeport to car pool. Please call one of the leaders by April 18 to sign up for this trip.

**AN EVENING OF BIRDING AT LOST MOUND**

Thursday, May 27 | 5:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.
Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

Join us as we travel alongside sand prairies, sand savannas and the mighty Mississippi in search of birds at the Lost Mound Unit of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge just north of Savanna. Of primary interest will be the awesome courtship display of the Common Nighthawk, as well as vocalizations of both Whip-poor-wills and American Woodcocks. There will be enough time to observe many of the grassland species of Lost Mound as well.

Meet at the Fish and Wildlife Office Building at Lost Mound at 6:30 or carpool from the Staples east lot in Freeport at 5:30 p.m. Return time to Freeport around 10:30 p.m.
KIDS & FAMILIES

DRAW A BIRD DAY
AT THE FREEPORT ART MUSEUM

Draw a Bird Day with the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and the Freeport Art Museum. For ages 7 and older.

Saturday, April 2nd, from 2:00 to 4:30 pm

Celebrate Draw a Bird Day at the Freeport Art Museum. Director of Education, Barry Treu will guide you through the steps to create a wonderfully unique drawing of a bird to take home, and another to contribute to a bird mural for display at the library. Bird specimens will be on hand to help with the creative process and, while at the museum, go on a scavenger hunt for all the birds in the art on display. Event is free, but registration is required and space is limited to 25 children. Register with the art museum at (815) 235-9755 or online at freeportartmuseum.org.

For more information, contact education@freeportartmuseum.org

WILDLIFE WEDNESDAYS

10:30 to 11:00 am on first Wednesday of the month at the Freeport Public Library

Audubon members host a monthly series called Wildlife Wednesdays at the Freeport Public Library. During the program, there is a first a special story time followed by an activity related to the theme. Appropriate audience is two to seven-year olds.

April 2 - Bees  |  May 4 - Frogs and Toads

KID’S EARTH DAY PROGRAM

What is EARTH day and what can I do?
Friday, April 15, 4-5pm at the Freeport Public Library

Juliet D’Souza will discuss the origin of Earth day, show the kids the impact that humans have on the planet, and provide ideas on what they can do to be good stewards of planet Earth to celebrate Earth day every day! For six to ten-year-olds.

Visit our Kids and Families section on our webpage at: nwilaudubon.org/kids-families.asp

2ND ANNUAL SUPERHERO CLEANUP WITH “BE THE CHANGE”

April 16, with kickoff at 10:00 a.m. (Rainout Date - April 30th)
at Read Park, 200 Park Ln Dr, Freeport, IL 61032

NIAS is supporting this community cleanup led “Be the Change” founded by Stephanie Feld of Freeport.

CALLING ALL SUPER HEROES! JOIN US in our FIGHT AGAINST GRIME as we team up local businesses and organizations for the Second Annual Super Cleanup Saturday hosted by ‘Be The Change.’ Join us for the kickoff at Read Park beginning on April 16th, 2016 at 10am.

At the SUPER CLEANUP kickoff we will go over the day’s missions and prepare to hit the streets and trails of Freeport and Stephenson County to FIGHT GRIME & clean up litter.

Businesses, organizations and citizens can take part in a DAY OF ACTION where we join together as a community for one common purpose – to show a positive presence on our streets and neighborhoods by spending the day picking up litter and fighting grime.

Form your own cleanup team to set out on April 16th to pick up litter in any area of your choice or join us at the kickoff and choose one of our selected mission areas. As with last year, WE ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO WEAR THEIR FAVORITE SUPER HERO GEAR (costumes, capes, t-shirts, hats, etc.), though dressing in hero gear is not required. ALL AGES ARE WELCOME at this fun event for the whole family.

If you have any questions or would like to involved contact FightGrimeWithBTC@yahoo.com or call 815.990.2376 with any questions. There are many different ways to get involved with this DAY OF ACTION. Consider helping us make this day of giving back to our community a success!

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
E.A.R.T.H. CLUB PLANT SALE

(E.A.R.T.H: Environmental Awareness Represented Through Highland)

The students will be having their annual plant sale on the Highland campus, building M lobby on April 26 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., April 27 from 2-4 p.m., and April 28 from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Any leftover plants will be sold at the May meeting. Plants include: cilantro, sweet basil, Brandywine red tomatoes, Brandywine pink heirloom tomatoes, Delicious tomatoes, chives, parsley, sweet pepper, impatiens, petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, and pansies. The plants were all started in the Highland campus greenhouse and many were established from organic seed.

Visit their Facebook page at facebook.com/EARTH.Highland/
KIDS & FAMILIES

or contact Juliet D’Souza at 815.599-3578 for more information.

FAMILY BIRD WALK AT OAKDALE

Saturday, May 21, Oakdale Nature Preserve 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.
Leader: Juliet D’Souza (201-233-0946)

We will lead a hike around Oakdale to look for birds and other spring wildlife. We will also have binoculars for the kids to use.

Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract, the part of Oakdale on the west side of Crane’s Grove Road.

NATURESPEAK

Try to use words about nature around the children in your lives. Give your child opportunities to learn more words concerning nature and less about technology.

This month, try to use the following words and show them examples as you enjoy nature with them:

Amphibian (An ectothermic, vertebrate that is typically characterized with a fully aquatic larva which metamorphose into an adult terrestrial tetrapod; includes caecilians, salamanders, newts, mudpuppies, frogs, and toads)

Biodegradable (a substance capable of being decomposed by bacteria and/or fungi)

Cygnet (a young swan)

Hymenoptera (the Order of insects that includes bees, wasps, ants, and sawflies)

Nectar (sugar-rich liquid produced by plants in glands called nectarines)

Fledgling (a young bird that has developed wing feathers that are large enough for flight)

Lilliputian (small, tiny)

Metamorphosis (a biological process in which an animal undergoes a transformation that changes a particular structure of a body tissue during its life cycle)

Odonata (the Order of “toothed” carnivorous insects that includes the dragonflies (Anisoptera) and damselflies (Zygoptera)

Naiads (the aquatic insect larvae of mayflies, dragonflies, damselflies and related)

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

by Conservation Chair, Candy Colby

Check out the many events planned for "Earth Month" in April, including a film series, community clean-up, nature walks and field trip to Horicon Marsh.

This May (7-15) the organization 350.org will be planning worldwide events centered on keeping coal, oil and gas in the ground and supporting climate solutions. As we get more information, we will keep everyone updated as this may be something NIAS would like to participate in.

Everyone is welcome to attend the Conservation Conversations at Amigo’s held the fourth Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Please join us.

The Illinois Environmental Council is hosting an environmental rally day at the Capitol building in Springfield on April 21, the day before Earth Day.

This is an especially important event this year because of the clean energy and climate change issues being considered. For further details and to register, visit the Illinois Environmental Council website at www.ilenviro.org.

Earth Friendly Recipe

MOROCCAN RED LENTIL SOUP

This is a very flavorful recipe to make while the weather is still chilly.

1 onion chopped
6 cups vegetable broth
1-1/2 cups chopped tomatoes
1 cup dried red lentils
1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 bay leaf
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp ginger
1/2 tsp turmeric
1/4 tsp pepper
1/3 cup orzo
2 T. lemon juice
4 ribs celery

Put 1/2 cup of water in a large soup pot along with onion and celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes.

Add broth, lentils, chickpeas, tomatoes and spices. Simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in orzo and lemon juice.

Cook 10 minutes. Serves 6-8.

(from Dr. John McDougall’s Health Center web site)
All across Northwest Illinois, people who care about our planet and our community are celebrating ‘Earth Month 2016.

Join us!
There’s something for everyone!

• A special nature film festival
• Five films in April with great discussions to follow
• Two special films just for kids
• A community-wide superhero cleanup day
• Numerous guided hikes, field trips, programs and bird walks
• Organized work days at local parks and preserves

FILM FESTIVAL
Free admission to all

‘A FIERCE GREEN FIRE’ – The Battle for a Living Planet is an exploration of the environmental movement – grassroots and global activism spanning fifty years from conservation to climate change. The film tells vivid stories about people fighting – and succeeding – against enormous odds. Tuesday, April 5 - 7-9 PM, Highland Community College, Bldg. H, Rm. 201.

‘ARCTIC TALE’ – A documentary for kids and families about the life of a mother walrus and her calf and the life of a polar bear and her cubs. The film documents the harsh realities of the existence in the Arctic and the effects of climate change. Thursday, April 7, 5:30 PM, Freeport Public Library, Rm. B. Rated G, 96 minutes.

‘THE MESSENGER’ – A visually stunning and wide-ranging documentary looking at the challenges facing songbirds and efforts to turn the tide. Thursday, April 14 - 7-9 PM, Highland Community College, Bldg. H, Rm. 201.

‘WALL-E’ – An animated film that takes place in the distant future when mankind has abandoned planet Earth because it is covered with trash. Wall-E is a robot that embarks on a journey that could affect the fate of mankind. The film demonstrates the effects of overconsumption on the planet. Thursday April 21, at 5:30 PM in the Freeport Public Library, Rm. B. Rated G, 98 minutes.

‘DISRUPTION’ – A documentary about the consequences of our inaction towards climate change. We are the first generation to experience the impacts of climate disruption and the last generation that can do something about it. Thursday, April 28, 7-9 PM, Highland Community College, Bldg. H, Rm. 201.

HIKES, FIELD TRIPS
AND PROGRAMS

Draw a Bird Day at the Freeport Art Museum. Saturday, April 2, 2:00-4:30. For ages 7 and older. See “Kids and Families” on page 4 for more information.

Mississippi Waterfowl Field Trip. Join Audubon members on a bird watching field trip along the shores and backwaters of the Mississippi River. Saturday April 2, from 8 AM to 3 PM. Diving and dabbling ducks, grebes, bald eagles, tundra swans and sandhill cranes are likely sightings. Carpool from Staples in Freeport. Call Anne Straight 815-938-3263, for details.

Pasque Flowers at Freeport Prairie. Join us at the prairie on the south edge of Freeport just off Walnut Rd. to admire the blooms of one of the prairies’ harbingers of spring. Friday, April 8 at 3PM.

Odonata – Dragonflies and Damselflies. This special program will follow the annual Audubon Spring Banquet at Highland College on April 12 from 7:30 – 8:30 PM. This will be an exquisitely illustrated program presented by Marla Garrison. Banquet reservations ($6; $20) are due April 1. Walk-ins are welcome for the program portion of the evening. $3 for adults; children free.

‘What is EARTH DAY and what can I do?’ Freeport Public Library. See “Kids and Families” on page 4 for more information. Friday, April 15, 4-5 p.m.

Horicon Marsh Field Trip See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information. Saturday, April 23 | carpool 7:00 a.m return approx. 5:30 p.m.

Mississippi Palisades Field Trip See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information. Saturday, May 7th | 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Coleman Dells Field Trip See “Field Trips” on page 3 for more information. Thursday, May 12 | 9:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

BIRD WALKS AND BIRD COUNT
See “Enjoy the Spring Migration” on page 8, or visit the Northwest Illinois Audubon website nwilaudubon.org for specific details.

Wetlands in Eastern Stephenson County Thursday April 7, 8:00-11:00 AM

Duck’s Misery and the southern Jane Addams Trail Monday, 8:00-11:00 AM

Annual Sandhill Crane Count. Conducted for the International Crane Foundation at various Stephenson County sites. Saturday, April 16, 5:30 – 7:30 AM

Orangeville Wetlands and the northern Jane Addams Trail Thursday, April 21, 8:00-11:00 AM

Lake Le-Aqua-Na Tuesday, April 26, 8:00 - 11:00 AM

Oakdale Nature Preserve, Newell Tract Wednesday, May 4, 8:00-11:00 AM

Krape Park Tuesday, May 10, 8:00-11:00 AM

Oakdale Nature Preserve, Newell Tract Walk designated for kids and families. Saturday, May 21, 9:00-10:30 a.m.

Espenscheid Forest Preserve Monday, May 23, 8:00 - 11:00 AM
Join us on May 14 for an informative, fun, family-friendly morning as we explore the Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve for the many migrating and resident birds found there.

The preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River. The new parking area is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.) We hope to see you there!

In 2012, Joanne Styles donated 50 acres of her farm to the Northern Illinois Audubon Society, which is now known as the Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

We are saddened to report that Joanne Styles passed away on March 5th. Joanne led a full and happy life for 98 years. We always will be grateful for her generous donation to NIAS, of land that became the Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Her generosity toward our chapter continues with the designation of NIAS for memorial fund. Cards may be sent to Joanne’s daughter, Melinda Reitman, 501 Bruce Ln, Mt. Morris IL, 61054.

A tribute to Joanne will appear in the next newsletter.

Earth Month Sponsors

‘EARTH MONTH 2016’ IS BEING SPONSORED IN-PART BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:

Be the Change
EARTH Club, HCC
Freeport Art Museum
Freeport Public Library
Freeport Park District
Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation
Jane Addamsland Park Foundation
Northwest Illinois Audubon Society
Precision Landscaping
Stephenson Soil and Water Conservation District

SILVER CREEK BIRD FESTIVAL
Saturday, May 14

Come on out and get acquainted with this beautiful area! From 8-11 a.m. participants may join guided bird tours or look on their own for our feathered friends.

Tours will begin at 8:00, 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. Free “Illinois Birds” pocket guides will be distributed while supplies last. We’ll have a shady rest area with chairs, as well as a restroom, beverages and snacks.

Ninety-five species of birds have been documented in the grasslands, woodlands and stream sides of Silver Creek. At last year’s festival over 50 species were observed, with 9 of those new to the site including Black-billed Cuckoo and Orchard Oriole.

IF WEATHER IS QUESTIONABLE CALL MARY AT 815-938-3204.
ENJOY THE SPRING MIGRATION!

From the first Killdeer in February to the last Bobolink in May, the spring migration is a phenomenon of wonder. Truly, as many have said, this never gets old! Every year our chapter schedules spring birdwalks to leisurely observe, enjoy and learn about these migratory species. Last year’s walks included some uncommon sightings like Scarlet Tanager and Magnolia Warbler, as well as more common species exhibiting interesting behaviors such as a nesting Baltimore Oriole and unison-calling Sandhill Cranes.

All of the walks below EXCEPT MAY 21 will begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 11 a.m. Feel free to join or depart the group at any time during those three hours.

Following the walks, those who would like to will gather at a local restaurant for an early lunch. Contact the respective walk leader if the weather is questionable or if you need further directions to the site. And don’t forget our ANNUAL BIRD FESTIVAL at Silver Creek on May 14 (see page 7 for details). Happy Birding!

April 7 - Wetland areas of eastern Stephenson county. Carpool at 8 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport. Leader: Anne Straight (815-938-3263)

April 11 - Duck’s Misery and the southern Jane Addams Trail. Carpool at 7:40 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport. Leader: Laura Dufford (815-947-2720)

April 21 - Northern Jane Addams Trail and the Orangeville Wetlands. Meet at the trailhead in Orangeville, just east of the BP gas station. Carpool at 7:30 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport. Leader: Somer Bozovsky (815-275-0719)

April 26 - Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park north of Lena. Meet in the lower parking lot adjacent to the dam on the park’s east end. Carpool at 7:30 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport. Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

May 4 - Newell Tract, Oakdale Nature Preserve, rural Freeport. Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract (the part of Oakdale on the west side of Crane’s Grove Rd.). Leader: Anne Straight (815-938-3263)

May 10 - Krape Park, Freeport. Meet in the parking lot by the dam. Leader: Laura Dufford (815-947-2720)

May 17 - Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking area is off of West Grove Rd. Carpool at 7:30 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport. Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

May 21 - SPECIAL CHILDREN’S BIRD WALK, Newell Tract, Oakdale Nature Preserve, rural Freeport. Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract (the part of Oakdale on the west side of Crane’s Grove Rd.) 9:00-10:30 a.m. Leader: Juliet D’Souza (201-233-0946)

May 23 - Harry and Dorothy Espenscheid Forest Preserve, northeast of Freeport. Carpool at 7:30 a.m. from the Staples east lot in Freeport or follow these directions: from the junction of HWY 20 bypass and HWY 75, take HWY 75 about 5 miles to Cedarville Rd., turn right (east) on Cedarville Rd. and drive 4.2 miles to Eggert Rd., turn left (north) on Eggert and go 1.8 miles to Farm School Rd., turn right (east) and go 0.3 miles to the preserve (on north side of the road). Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

CALLING ALL BAKERS!

We are looking for homemade cakes and pies for the annual NIAS banquet.

If you would like to donate a Homemade Dessert for the meal: a pie, cake or something else delicious, please contact Anita Nienhuis at 815.443.2401 before April 1.

Thanks for your donation!
**JOIN US FOR THE MIDWEST CRANE COUNT**

Mark your calendar now for Saturday, April 16 when we'll once again be counting Sandhill Cranes in Stephenson County. Our count is part of the larger Midwest Crane Count organized by the International Crane Foundation. Following the count we'll gather at a local restaurant for breakfast and to turn in count forms. No experience is necessary! If you are new to the Crane Count you will have a veteran counting partner. Last year 27 counters at 12 sites observed a total of 65 cranes, including 18 pairs.

**Volunteers make this count happen so we hope you can join us!** To participate, call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 before April 8.

*The count is early, brief and rewarding. Counters are on site from 5:30-7:30 a.m. on count day to listen and watch for cranes.*

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**North American Prairie Conference**

July 17-20 at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois.

*For more information visit nap2016.illinoisstate.edu*


*There will be more than 70 oral papers on many aspects of prairie ecology, restoration, management and some innovative ideas on working lands.*

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**CRANES LINGER INTO WINTER**

Many chapter members remarked late last year that they continued to observe Sandhill Cranes in our area much later than usual. An article in the recent International Crane Foundation Bugle by Anne Lacy, ICF Crane Research Coordinator, shed some light on that situation.

The article attributed the migration delay to the effects of the strong El Nino which produced unseasonably warm temperatures and strong southerly winds in the upper Midwest. Lacy indicated that as long as there was plentiful food (mostly waste corn in harvested fields), and that the cranes had adequate roosting areas (flooded fields or river sandbars), they were in no hurry to leave the warm temperatures. Those positives outweighed the huge negative of flying into a strong headwind.

The cranes along the Wisconsin River near Baraboo finally left during the third week in December following flooding that eliminated their river roost sites.

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**Volunteers finished a controlled burn at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve on a pleasant Friday in mid-March.**

*Photos by John Day*
This year our chapter marks its 37th year of sponsoring a BIRDATHON fundraising event! In that time thousands of dollars have been raised for bird conservation. Please join us in making this year’s effort our best yet!

We invite you to make a pledge to any of the birders listed below who will be participating in our chapter’s annual BIRDATHON on May 1. Your pledge, for instance 15¢, will be per SPECIES of bird that your selected birder(s) identifies on that day. Your birder will contact you after the count with his or her species total and collect your contribution.

Your money indeed goes where the birds go! All BIRDATHON proceeds are shared by organizations that do a tremendous job of:
- protecting and improving bird habitat on wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting sites,
- connecting people with nature,
- providing education opportunities for the public, and
- collecting scientific data through bird counts and birdbanding.

Those organizations are:
Northwest Illinois Audubon Society
National Audubon’s Mississippi River Initiative
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin
Stewards of the Upper Mississippi
Sand Bluff Bird Observatory
Belize Audubon Society

Please complete the pledge form below and mail as indicated.
THANK YOU so much for your support of birds and our BIRDATHON!

2016 BIRDATHON PLEDGE FORM

Name
Phone
Address

I am pledging _____¢ per species by that (those) birder(s) marked below:

Jesse Akins
Richard Benning
Mary Blackmore
Harlan Corrie
Judy Corrie
Jeremy Dixon
Juliet D’Souza
Laura Dufford
Gary Gordon
Mark Keister
Dylan Lewis
Kent Lewis
Teresa Smith
Anne Straight

Clip and mail to Mary Blackmore, 9024 W. West Grove Rd., Forreston IL 61030 or include your pledge form with your chapter ballot (to the right) mailed to NIAS, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032. Questions? Call Mary at 815-938-3204

BALLOT FOR NIAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

2016 - 2017

The individuals listed below have been nominated to serve on next year’s NIAS Chapter Board of Directors in the positions indicated. Please vote in the spaces provided if you support the nominated candidates, or insert and vote for write-in candidates if that is your wish.

All Board terms, except for President, are for one year.

President
_______, Rex Sides
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)

Vice President (President Elect)
_______, Chris Kruger
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)

Secretary
_______, Nancy Ocken
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)

Treasurer
_______, Tim Smith
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)

Members At Large (vote for six)
1. ______, Hannah Badgett
2. ______, Gay Broocks
3. ______, Fred Redmore
4. ______, Kayse Rushford
5. ______, Henry Simpson
6. ______, Steve Simpson
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)
_______, ______________________________(Write-in)

Send your ballot to NIAS, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032 before April 15. Results will be announced in the next newsletter and the new Board will assume its duties in mid-May.
Would you like to join Audubon as a NEW Member or give a GIFT membership?

Two types of membership are available:

1. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and National Membership
   includes this local newsletter, local mailings and the national “Audubon” magazine.
   ____ National Membership $20

   All renewals for national memberships need to use the national membership form.

2. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society Local only Membership
   includes this newsletter and other mailings from our local chapter. ____ Local Only $15

Name of new member or gift recipient ________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City __________________________ State ______ Zip Code _____________

If this is a gift membership, please indicate the name of the person providing the gift membership:

Name __________________________________________________________________

Make check payable to NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail to:

Treasurer, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032

THANK YOU!

Recent field trip leaders:
Chris Kruger, Laura Dufford, Mary Blackmore.

Harlan and Judy Corrie and Mary Blackmore
for over-seeding areas at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve on January 30.

Anne Straight and Mary Blackmore
for leading Woodcock Watches.

Shey Lowman
for updating the species documents for each preserve.

EDITORS NOTE: Every two months, and sometimes more frequently, my email is flooded by dedicated NIAS members. Committee chairs, board members, field trip leaders, organizers, event coordinators, copywriters and volunteers make this organization a success. The extensive calendar of preserve activities, hikes, volunteer opportunities, meetings and family events far exceeds the bimonthly schedule of many larger organizations.

Where I live, in La Crosse, Wisconsin, there are four groups (Coulee Region Audubon, Mississippi Valley Conservancy, The Prairie Enthusiasts and Sierra Club) that overlap with the education, conservation and outreach goals of NIAS.

These groups work hard and also have very skilled and dedicated members, but over my 2+ years of living in the La Crosse area NIAS activity frequently (almost always) exceeds the events and outreach of all four local organizations combined. This is quite an accomplishment and a fact that every NIAS member should have pride in.
ADDRESSES/EMAILS OF YOUR LEGISLATORS

Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 • State House Switchboard (217) 782-2000
When using either switchboard, simply ask to be connected to the legislator’s office.

FEDERAL

Senator Richard Durbin
Kluczynski Building 38th Floor
230 S. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60604
www.durbin.senate.gov/contact.cfm

Senator Mark Kirk
230 S. Dearborn, Suite 3900, Chicago, IL 60604
www.kirk.senate.gov/?p=comment_on_legislation

16th District Rep. Adam Kinzinger
628 Columbus Street, Suite 507, Ottawa, IL 61350
https://kinzingerforms.house.gov/email-adam/

17th District Rep. Cheri Bustos
100 19th Street, Suite 101, Rock Island, IL 61201
http://bustos.house.gov/contact

STATE

45th District Sen. Tim Bivins
50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001, Freeport, IL 61032
senatorbivins@grics.net

36th District Sen. Mike Jacobs
1114 4th Avenue, Silvis, IL 61282
jacobs@senatedem.state.il.us

89th District Rep. Brian Stewart
50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001, Freeport, IL 61032
repstewart@gmail.com

90th District Rep. Tom Demmer
1221 Currency Street, Suite B, Rochelle, IL 61068
rep@tomdemmer.com