



# Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

The majestic **tundra swan** (*Cygnus columbianus*) can take off from the water with a running start and beat their wings until airborne. Their flapping wings produce a sound that earned them the name "whistling swan." Drawing by Carole Litus

February-March 2012 Newsletter  
[www.nwilaudubon.org](http://www.nwilaudubon.org)

## Do We Live Above An Underground Lake?

**NIAS Monthly Meeting**

**February 7, 2012**

**St. John United Church of Christ**

Larry Lyons, a "Master Ground Water Contractor" from Stockton, has been involved in well drilling, ground water extraction, protection, utilization, and restoration for over 40 years. He is past president of several ground water associations including the Illinois Association of Ground Water Professionals, The Illinois Ground Water Association and the National Ground Water Association. He is also a member of the Illinois Licensing Board under the Illinois Department of Public Health.

He will give a brief ground water 101 course on our ground water, where it comes from, where it is now, and how it moves here in NW Illinois. The water cycle map he will bring will show how water that falls as rain starts the cycle of which there is then transpiration, evaporation, or absorption. The water is able to move through our earth in many different ways, some natural, some manmade. "Mother earth is able to clean her environment if given a chance; if not, we would have run out of potable water millions of years ago...think dinosaur pee here" Larry tells us.



### NIAS MONTHLY MEETINGS

- Held on the 1st Tuesday of the month.
- Oct.-Mar., location is St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 S. Park Blvd., Freeport; 7 p.m. for announcements and reports. Program begins at 7:30 followed by refreshments.
- April, May & Sept. special mtg. time/place.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Calendar	2
Considerations	
Field Trips	3
Connections	4
Christmas Bird Count	5
Toward a Cooler Planet	6
Carol's Choices	7

## Spring Has Sprung...Well, Almost!

**NIAS Monthly Meeting**

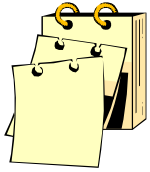
**March 6, 2012**

**St. John United Church of Christ**



The first species of the spring bird migration should be arriving now, and wildflowers will soon be popping up.

Keith and Mary Blackmore will present a preview of the avian and floral coming attractions for our area. From waterfowl and Hepatica to warblers and Shooting Stars, join us for a stroll through spring.



## Calendar Considerations

**February 7-NIAS Monthly meeting.** "Do We Live Above An Underground Lake?" Presented by Larry Lyons who operates, along with his wife and brother Todd, Lyons Well Drilling. See front page of the newsletter for more details.

**February 13-"Talking About the Issues"** monthly discussion session, 7-9 p.m. at the home of Dick Luthin, 1712 Parkview Dr., Freeport (815-232-8624). Everyone is welcome at these informal discussions of various environmental issues. Call Dick if you need directions.

**February 23-The NIAS Conservation Committee** and all other interested individuals will meet at Amigos Restaurant, 306 N. Galena Avenue, in downtown Freeport at 5:30 p.m. Join us for fine food and a stimulating discussion. We wrap it up before 7:30 p.m.

**March 6-NIAS Monthly meeting.** "Spring Has Sprung...Well, Almost". See front page of the newsletter for more details.

**March 10-Quarterly Audubon Council of Illinois (ACI) meeting,** 10 a.m.—3 p.m. in Springfield at the headquarters of the Illinois Audubon Society. Call Blackmores (815-938-3204) for agenda and carpooling information.

**March 11-Field Trip to view Skunk Cabbage at Franklin Creek Natural Area** in Lee county. See page 3 for more details.

**March 13-NIAS Board Meeting,** 7-9 p.m., St. John United Church of Christ in Freeport.

**March 17-Waffles and "Talking About the Issues."** Join us at the Blackmores, 9024 W. West Grove Rd., Forreston, for a yummy waffle breakfast at 8:00 a.m. (sorry, no green waffles). Our issues discussion will be from 9-11:00 a.m. Give Blackmores a call at 815-938-3204 to confirm your intended waffling! Directions to Blackmores: Drive 1½ miles south of Forreston on HWY 26. Turn left

(east) on West Grove Rd. and drive about 4½ miles. Turn left (north) onto the Blackmore's lane and follow the smell of waffles!

**March 22-The NIAS Conservation Committee** and all other interested individuals will meet at Amigos Restaurant, 306 N. Galena Avenue, in downtown Freeport at 5:30 p.m. Join us for fine food and a stimulating discussion. We wrap it up before 7:30 p.m.

**March 24-Field Trip-Ducks Along the Mississippi.** See page 3 for more details.

**March 30-Woodcock Walk at the Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve,** 7 p.m. We'll try again to see and hear the fascinating courtship dance of the "Timberdoodle." The Preserve is located on the southeast corner of Freeport Rd. and West Grove Rd., about 14 miles south of Freeport. Parking is off of West Grove Rd. Dress warmly as we'll be standing a lot at sunset. For those interested, we'll meet for pizza at Mimos in Forreston at 5:30 p.m. If weather is questionable, call Blackmores at 815-938-3204.

## BURN VOLUNTEERS WANTED



We invite you to get on our contact list for prairie burns this spring. Due to weather factors that can foil even the best-laid plans, we don't schedule burns far in advance. When conditions are right, we call you, and if you're available you join our crew. Usually you'll get the call 28-48 hrs. beforehand. The burn season for us typically runs from early March through mid-April. Don't worry if you lack experience. There are tasks on burn days that are fine for novices. Snacks and water are provided. To get on the list, sign up at the February or March monthly meetings or call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204.

The public is welcome at all chapter activities.

## **FIELD TRIPS:**

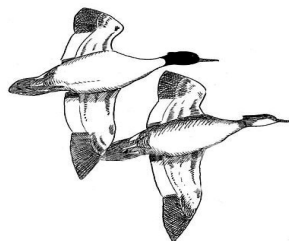
### **March 11: Trip to View Skunk Cabbage at Franklin Creek Natural Area**

Located in Lee county, this trip is lead by Keith Blackmore as we observe one of the earliest blooming plants of our area. Skunk Cabbage, sometimes referred to as Pole Cat Weed or Swamp Cabbage, often flowers before the snow is gone. This unique species can maintain its plant tissues as much as 85 degrees above ambient air temperature, even when air temperatures drop as low as 6 degrees. This causes the plant to melt the snow around it as it emerges. WOW! Meet at the Forreston Municipal Parking Lot (adjacent to the library) at 1:30 p.m. or at Franklin Creek Natural Area at 2:15 p.m. Call Keith at 815-938-3204 for more information or if the weather is questionable.



### **March 24: Ducks Along the Mississippi**

Join leader Anne Straight at 8:00 a.m. to carpool from the city parking lot by the library in Forreston, IL (intersection of Rts. 26 & 72). Duck viewing begins at 9:00 a.m. at Spring Lake, moving on to Thomson Causeway. Participants will find a place for lunch around noon. Those wishing to continue can end the day with a visit to Lock and Dam 13. Return time to Forreston for carpoolers will be around 3:00 p.m. Previous participants have seen Trumpeter Swans, Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, Dabblers, Teals, and divers such as Buffleheads, Goldeneyes, and Mergansers. The Mississippi Flyway route is followed by many North American waterfowl and this is a great way to see birds at their rest stops along the quiet backwaters of the Mississippi River. *Call Anne Straight to confirm your attendance: 815-938-3263.*



#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:**

Maureen Christen—Freeport

Randy Bogott—Chadwick

Gerald Eipers—Dakota

Joyce Antoine—Ridott

John Burden—Orangeville

Danielle Luniewicz—Freeport

Robert Sides—Freeport

Robert Dunn—Freeport

Richard Montgomery—Freeport

Michael Ortgiesen—Mt. Morris

John White—Davis

David Wright—Freeport

Kermit Barr—Orangeville



## **CONSERVATION COMMITTEE: Keystone XL Pipeline and LaSalle**

### **County Board**

The Keystone Pipeline System, which includes the expanded Keystone XL Pipeline permit decision, is a current issue of great importance. You can go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) for more information. You can enter the keywords "Keystone XL Pipeline" into the 'SEARCH the SITE' box and read a statement by the President about this issue. You can also click on "Contact Us" at the top of this site and make your statement in regard to this issue. You will receive a reply.

The LaSalle County Board voted on Jan. 12th to approve a special use permit that would allow sand mining on 350 acres of farmland just east of Starved Rock State Park near Utica. The company that was granted this permission, Mississippi Sand LLC, must still secure mining permits from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 supported the proposal for this sand mine because of the 39 jobs Mississippi Sand has promised. Mississippi Sand wants the high quality sandstone for use in fracking in such states as North Dakota and Pennsylvania. John McKee, president of the Starved Rock Audubon Society, has been leading efforts to block the project because of the extensive damage it would cause the park's ecosystem. You can view a video that states the opposition to the sand mine at [www.chicagotribune.com/sandmine](http://www.chicagotribune.com/sandmine). On this 3½ minute video, you can see the site of the proposed sand mine and hear John McKee's comments. The Department of Natural Resources owns and manages Starved Rock State Park and also administers the mining permit process—the next step for Mississippi Sand.



### **SAVE THE DATE!**

*Mark April 11th on your calendar* for our chapter's annual banquet and program. Join us for a delicious meal, fun silent auction and fascinating program about the amphibians and reptiles native to northern Illinois. Details will be in a flyer you'll receive in March.

### **CONNECTIONS: Eve Wilczewski**

Hiking, biking, canoeing---this is how Eve Wilczewski got to spend her childhood, thanks to parents who gave their daughter experiences of enjoying, exploring, tasting and reveling in the outdoors. Eve, who has one sister, was born in Oak Park but moved to Freeport in 7th grade.

Almost every weekend she, her mother and sister would "get out the map" and be off on a trip or adventure of some sort, sometimes whirlwind one-day trips but always a new adventure just ahead. They camped, hiked, biked, and canoed in Colorado, northern Wisconsin, and the Boundary Waters, from British Columbia to Mexico. No couch potatoes in that family!

Eve's parents were true role models and inspired Eve's interest in politics, in the environment, in art and in music. Eve received a BFA in painting and a BFA in art education from the University of Illinois at Champaign. Today she is an art teacher in the elementary schools in Freeport and also substitute teaches dance at Studio 121. Her focus is on addressing environmental issues through art. She has enjoyed the music of Buffy Sainte Marie and others whose art evolves from a passion for the environment.

— Carol Redmore





## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT NEWS

The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society again participated in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) which is an annual effort to track bird population and distribution trends using citizen science. It is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and this season was the 112th season the count has been done. Over two thousand local count areas from Alaska to Chile and from the Virgin Islands to Guam were held. There are roughly sixty count circles in Illinois alone. Our count area is a fifteen mile diameter circle centered in the middle of Freeport. On December 17th, fifteen field counters and two feeder counters tallied the birds within that circle that were observed either by sight or sound. This was the 36th time our chapter has participated in the CBC.

The morning of the count surprised all participants as we woke up early and saw the fresh two inches of snow on the ground. The snow made for a stunningly beautiful scene at pre-dawn with the soft white blanket covering everything and quiet muffled sounds heard close and afar. Unfortunately, none of the muffled sounds came from owls and our tally of these nocturnal denizens racked up a zero. This doesn't mean there are no owls around; rather, they were just not calling that morning within ear shot of our counters.

The birds started appearing after our counters ate breakfast at the Spring Grove Family Restaurant. A busy morning was followed by lunch break at the Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The count continued after lunch until we met for supper at Joe's Pizza. We tallied a total of 7687 birds representing 39 species. The Canada Goose had the highest number of individuals with 1204 seen. This was followed by European Starling (1106), House Sparrow (907), and Dark-eyed Junco (809). For the third year in a row, we saw a record number of Bald Eagles for our area with twenty-two of the large stately birds observed in three different locations. Mourning Dove also hit a record high number with 544 tallied. A Northern Shrike was seen northwest of Freeport, this being only the seventh time this species has been observed in our local count's history.

Prudence must be exercised when interpreting Christmas Bird Count results, which represent a "one day out of the year" look at observable birds. Many birds go unobserved and weather conditions determine their location and movement. The best interpretation of CBC data is to look at population and distribution trends over a number of years. The longevity of the program makes it a valuable pool of information. You can obtain current year, and past years, data at [www.christmasbirdcount.org](http://www.christmasbirdcount.org).

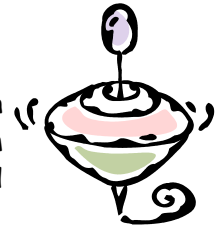
Thanks to the following individuals who participated in the Christmas Bird Count. Field counters were Richard Benning, Keith & Mary Blackmore, Jeremy Dixon, Melody Farringer, Kara Gallup, John & Anita Nienhuis, Dan & Diana Nye, Sharon Shaw, Rex Sides, Tim & Teresa Smith and Anne Straight. Feeder counters were Judy Kurr and Dick Luthin.

Thanks also to the Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau for allowing us the use of a room to eat lunch and regroup on count day. And finally, a **big thanks to Richard Benning and Keith Blackmore**, co-compilers of the Freeport IL circle Christmas Bird Count. We appreciate all of your hard work!



- Submitted by Richard Benning

## Toward a Cooler Planet—26th in a series Tipping Points



As climatologists and others struggle to find some way to get the public's attention on global warming, much will be said and written about tipping points. What does the term 'tipping point' mean? Why are they called that? Why are they important? I'll try to shed some light, not heat, on this subject.

The particular demographic represented by Auduboners makes a wobbling top an apropos metaphor for a tipping point. While we might have to think back to childhood, most can recall watching a toy top spinning in a perfectly vertical position begin to wobble ever so little as its angular momentum was reduced, i.e. it began to slow. Then, as friction with the air and the floor further reduced its momentum, the wobble increased. Finally, regardless of body language and spirited urging to the contrary, the wobble exceeded a point of no return and the top toppled over. The point in the wobble where falling is certain is the tipping point.

The concept of tipping points has become important environmentally because there are at least a dozen natural processes, each of which is absolutely critical to maintaining the planet as we and all civilized man have ever known. One can think of these processes as being interrelated such that each contributes stability to the others, i.e. keeps the other tops spinning. Or, alternatively, one might think of them as interlocking gears such that if any one of which stops, they all stop. With either metaphor, the relevant point is that failure of any one of the processes brings the whole system to a screeching halt, regardless of how much belated effort we might choose to apply.

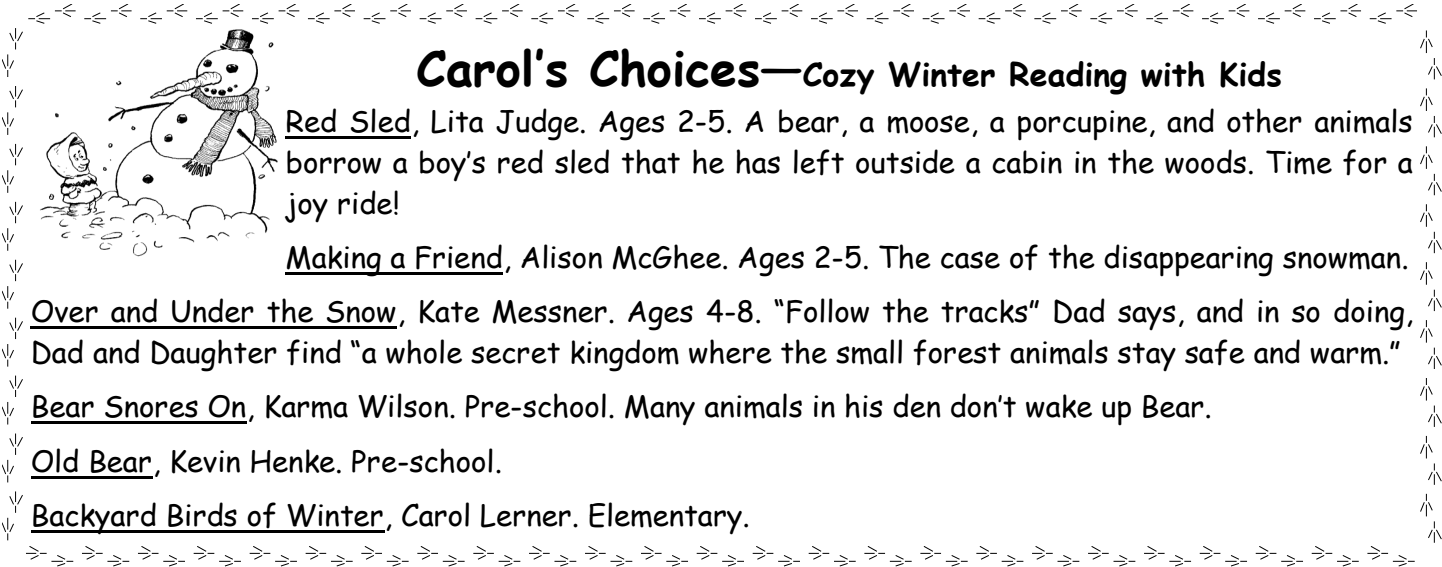
The twelve tipping points, as noted by Julia Whitty in Mother Jones 11-12-06, are as follows: Amazon Rainforest, North Atlantic Current, Greenland Ice Sheet, Ozone Hole, Antarctic Circumpolar Current, Sahara Desert, Tibetan Plateau, Asian Monsoon, Methane Clathrates, Salinity Valves, El Nino, and West Antarctic Ice Sheet.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of trying to grasp this issue is the role of negative feed-backs as they relate to keeping the processes stable. The best example of this, familiar to most of us, is a thermostat controlling the temperature of a room. As the room temperature drops, the thermostat turns on a heating source which causes an increase in temperature. When the appropriate temperature is reached, the thermostat signals the heat source to stop adding heat, at which time the room begins to cool. When the room temperature reaches the lower limit of the thermostat's setting the heat source will be engaged again and the cycle is repeated. A signal which changes the direction of a process such as cooling to heating or heating to cooling is said to be a negative feedback. Most natural processes are controlled in this manner. The slight differences in temperature between the high point and the low point allowed by a thermostat at a particular setting can be thought of as the slight wobble of a top.

However, at a time when the earth's atmosphere is 40+ parts per million (ppm) of CO<sub>2</sub> beyond the 350 ppm the scientific community agrees is the allowable maximum, feedback loops may become self-reinforcing positive loops. Such is now most easily seen in the case of methane clathrates, frozen methane underlying the ocean floor and the frozen tundra, i.e. permafrost. The methane clathrates, estimated at 1-2.5 trillion tons, release the greenhouse gas methane when thawed. Methane is 20 times more potent as CO<sub>2</sub> as a greenhouse gas.

Hence we have a positive feedback loop. As the climate continues to warm, more methane is released which will release more methane, which will warm the planet even more, which will hasten the release of even more methane.

I suppose that other species which were confronted with a dramatic shift in the climate—think Woolly Mammoths frozen solid— would like to have known how to prevent their demise. Effective legislation to address climate change needs to pass now. Contact your federal legislators today (addresses on back page). Help prove Linnaeus correct: he gave us the name Homo sapiens, man of wisdom. — Keith Blackmore



## Carol's Choices—Cozy Winter Reading with Kids

Red Sled, Lita Judge. Ages 2-5. A bear, a moose, a porcupine, and other animals borrow a boy's red sled that he has left outside a cabin in the woods. Time for a joy ride!

Making a Friend, Alison McGhee. Ages 2-5. The case of the disappearing snowman.

Over and Under the Snow, Kate Messner. Ages 4-8. "Follow the tracks" Dad says, and in so doing, Dad and Daughter find "a whole secret kingdom where the small forest animals stay safe and warm."

Bear Snores On, Karma Wilson. Pre-school. Many animals in his den don't wake up Bear.

Old Bear, Kevin Henke. Pre-school.

Backyard Birds of Winter, Carol Lerner. Elementary.

### THE 15TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual 4-day event that engages people of all ages in counting birds to create a snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. It's free, fun and easy, and anyone can participate. Count birds in your area for 15 minutes or longer during the 4-day period by tallying the highest number of any species of bird you see at any one time. Submit your findings using an online checklist at the GBBC website.

Anyone with internet access can watch the results unfold across North America and see how they compare to previous years' surveys. Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn much from the continued work of citizen scientists. Each year the data from the GBBC, Christmas Bird Counts, Project FeederWatch and eBird sightings are recorded giving us a better, more up to date picture of bird distribution across Canada and U.S.

The Great Backyard Bird count is a project of Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. This year's count runs from Friday, Feb. 17 through Sunday, Feb. 20, 2012. Last year, counters submitted over 92,000 checklists for a total of 594 species observed. Over 11 million individual birds were counted. You can learn more at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) or by obtaining a flier at the Feb. monthly meeting.

### JOIN US FOR CRANE COUNT!

Everyone is welcome to be part of this year's Crane Count on Saturday, April 14. Our count is included in the larger Midwest Crane Count organized by the International Crane Foundation (ICF).

Crane Counting is an early activity but very rewarding. Pairs of counters are assigned a specific area within Stephenson County. Counters are on the site from 5:30 to 7:30 a.m. on count day to listen and watch for Sandhill Cranes. Following the count, we'll gather at a local restaurant for breakfast and to turn in count forms. Prior to count day, new counters need to view a short video from ICF that will cover the crane census in greater detail and provide information on crane field marks and vocalizations. Additionally, new counters are always paired with experienced counters. Last year, 25 counters at 11 sites observed a total of 44 cranes, including 12 pairs.

If you would like to participate in this year's count, contact County Coordinator Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or sign up at the February or March monthly meetings.





**BOARD MEMBERS:**

**President**—Teresa Smith  
1975 Mound Hill Rd.  
Dixon, IL 61021  
815-835-5109

**Vice President**—Vacant  
**Secretary**—Judy Kurr  
**Treasurer**—Mary Blackmore  
**At large**—Steve Simpson,  
Tony Grahame, Tim Smith,  
Sharon Shaw, and Willem  
Dijstelbergen.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

**Conservation**—Carol Redmore  
**Programs**—Keith Blackmore  
**Education**—Eve Wilczewski  
**Publicity**—Dan Barron  
**Membership**—Chris Hartung  
**Field Trips**—Rick Weber  
**Sustainable Agriculture**—  
Richard Benning, Mary Black-  
more, Laura Dufford and  
Heidi Thorp

**Newsletter Editor:**

Kara Gallup  
752 SW 36th Ave.  
Boynton Beach, FL 33435  
(815) 871-8014  
karagallup@msn.com

**REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS:**

Keith Blackmore  
Carol Redmore

Yes, I would like to give a gift membership in the National Audubon Society/  
Northwest Illinois Audubon Society to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School (if student): \_\_\_\_\_

Gift card to: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Type:**

- Individual \_\_\_\_ (\$20)
- Student \_\_\_\_ (\$9)
- Senior Citizen \_\_\_\_ (\$15)
- Chapter only \_\_\_\_ (\$15)

Make check payable to NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY and mail to:  
Treasurer, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032

**X Sorry, this discount does not apply to renewals**

**ADDRESSES OF YOUR LEGISLATORS**

**Federal**

Senator Richard Durbin  
Kluczynski Building 38th Floor  
230 S. Dearborn  
Chicago, IL 60604

Senator Mark Kirk  
Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510

(16th District)  
Rep. Don Manzullo  
415 S. Mulford Rd.  
Rockford, IL 61108

(17th District)  
Rep. Bobby Schilling  
3000 41st St., Suite 2  
Moline, IL 61265

**State**

Sen. Tim Bivins  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706 (45th District)

Sen. Mike Jacobs  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706 (36th District)

Rep. Jim Sacia  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706 (89th District)

Rep. Jerry Mitchell  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706 (90th District)

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.)

THIS NEWSLETTER WAS PRINTED ON EXACT ECO 100 PAPER. IT IS MADE WITH 100% RECYCLED POST-CONSUMER USE FIBER AND IS  
PROCESSED CHLORINE-FREE.

sketch by  
Erick  
Sohlberg



NORTHWEST ILLINOIS  
AUDUBON SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 771  
FREEPORT, IL 61032-0771

Return Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
FREEPORT, IL  
PERMIT NO. 97