



# NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

*A chapter of the National Audubon Society*

*February – March 2010 Newsletter*

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## Calendar Considerations

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[www.nwilaudubon.org](http://www.nwilaudubon.org)

**No Food For Thought workshop in February! 2010 workshop will be Saturday, November 6. Details in future newsletters.**

**FEBRUARY 2 – Monthly meeting at St. John United Church of Christ** at 1010 S. Park Blvd. in Freeport, 7 p.m. for announcements and reports. At 7:30 p.m. Richard Benning will present the program **“Wolves of the Midwest: Fact vs. Fiction.”** Mention the word wolves and you are bound to get a variety of reactions ranging from fear and loathing to wonder and respect. This animal has made a remarkable comeback in the states of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin since passage of the Endangered Species Act. The program is aimed at providing a glimpse of basic wolf ecology and behavior, and examining the current status of wolves in the Midwest. NIAS president Richard Benning is Youth Education Coordinator for Severson Dells Nature Center and has given several programs on wolves for that organization. Sorry, no live wolves.

**FEBRUARY 4—Great Backyard Bird Count**  
**Program** sponsored by Northwest Illinois Audubon Society. Learn to become a citizen scientist. If you enjoy watching birds, this program which is sponsored by the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society will encourage you to take part in a nationwide effort to get a picture of bird numbers and distribution. The program will be held at the Freeport Public Library on **Thursday, February 4 from 7:00-8:00 p.m.** It will include a slide presentation designed to help you identify common backyard winter birds. There will also be information on how you can participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This is a

great opportunity to learn about the birds that visit your feeder. A poster showing common feeder birds will be available to each family group that attends. The program is open to the public and there is no fee.

**FEBRUARY 10—“Talking About the Issues”** monthly discussion session at Richard Luthin’s home, 1712 W. Parkview Dr., Freeport, (815-232-8624), 7-9 p.m. Everyone is welcome at these informal discussions of various environmental issues. Directions: enter Parkview complex off of Pearl City Rd., circle the parking lot and drive west. Dick’s home is on the right (north) side of the street.

**FEBRUARY 25—The Conservation Committee** (any and all interested individuals) will meet at Amigos Restaurant, 306 N. Galena Ave. in downtown Freeport at 5:30 p.m. Amidst the general discussion and a fine meal, we’ll choose an Action Alert item for the next monthly meeting. We wrap it up before 7:30 p.m.

**FEBRUARY 27—National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque, Iowa Field Trip.** Leader: Steve Simpson. If you haven’t been to this place, you’re missing a world-class museum just across the Mississippi. In addition to exhibits and films on the history, culture, and ecology of the “Mighty Miss,” the museum also features several large aquaria and displays that house all sorts of Mississippi denizens, including alligators, turtles, water birds, and freshwater invertebrates. Children will especially enjoy the “touch tank” with river mussels and crayfish. If sufficient interest, we could even rent a 15-passenger van so we can enjoy the delightful company of our fellow Auduboners on the 90-minute drive down scenic US 20! Please contact Steve at 815-443-9102 if you are interested

so we can see if we can fill a van. This trip is a great way to get back in touch with the wonders of river life during these last few months of winter!

**MARCH 2—Monthly meeting at St. John United Church of Christ** at 1010 S. Park Blvd. in Freeport, 7 p.m. for announcements and reports. At 7:30 Keith Blackmore will present the program **“The Freeport Prairie—A Jewel in Our Backyard.”** The Freeport Prairie Nature Preserve is a 5 1/2-acre native prairie remnant located on the south edge of Freeport next to the Freeport Raceway. It represents the last of the original upland prairie known as Shannon Prairie. Though small in size, the diversity of plant species found there is quite large, including rare species such as Downy Yellow Painted cup, Pasque Flower, Prairie Smoke, Prairie Dandelion and Prairie Brome. NIAS members have spent hundreds of hours over the years managing this wonderful prairie. Using slides, Keith will discuss the history, geology and plant life of this Illinois dedicated nature preserve. Keith is a retired biology/ecology instructor who has worked in the areas of prairie management and restoration for decades. *See April 2 calendar item for Pasque Flower field trip to the Freeport Prairie.*

**March 9 – NIAS board meeting,** 7-9 p.m., at St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport.

**MARCH 12 – “Talking About the Issues”** monthly discussion session at Richard Benning’s home, 704 N. Davis St., Davis (815-865-5279), 7-9 p.m. Everyone is welcome at these informal discussions of various environmental issues. Carpool from the Staples lot off of HWY 26 in Freeport at 6:30 or call Richard for directions.

**MARCH 17 – Ducks Along the Mississippi.** Leader: Anne Straight. The Mississippi Flyway route is followed by a very large percentage of the waterfowl in North America, and a great way to see some of these birds is at their rest stops on quiet backwaters along the quiet backwaters along the river. Anne has a busy schedule for March, so we thought we’d try a weekday excursion this year to several great viewing areas along the river and sloughs near Thomson and Savanna. **Meet at the parking lot in Forreston, IL, at the intersection of Rts 26 and 72 (by the library) at 8 a.m.** The trip will take you to several backwater areas including Spring Lake

and the Thomson Causeway. She plans to end up around Buck’s Barn at lunchtime, where participants can have lunch and rest up for an optional afternoon birding session. *Please call Anne (815-938-3263) if you plan on attending so she can plan logistics and crowd control measures.*

**MARCH 20 – First Woodcock Walk, Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 7 p.m.** See page 3 for details.

**MARCH 24 – Second Woodcock Walk,** details same as above.

**MARCH 25 – The Conservation Committee** (any and all interested individuals) will meet at Amigos Restaurant, 306 N. Galena Ave. in downtown Freeport at 5:30 p.m. Amidst the general discussion and a fine meal, we’ll choose an Action Alert for the next monthly meeting. We wrap it up before 7:30.

**MARCH 26 – Third Woodcock Walk,** details same as March 20.

**APRIL 2 – Field Trip – Pasque Flower Walk at the Freeport Prairie Nature Preserve, 4 p.m.** Meet in the preserve parking area, just off of Walnut Rd. next to the Freeport Raceway. The unique Pasque Flower, Anemone patens, should be in full bloom and perhaps Rock Cress, Arabis laevigata, will be flowering as well. Following our time on the prairie, we’ll go out for pizza. If weather is questionable, call Blackmores at 815-938-3204. See March 2 for program on Freeport Prairie.

### THANK YOU TO...

👉 **Seed cleaning volunteers** who prepared 30 species of forbs and 6 species of grasses for spring planting: Judy and Harlan Corrie, John and Anita Nienhuis, Pat Knight, John Walt, Mary and Keith Blackmore, Lucas Bradley, Anne Straight, Melody Farringer, Kayse Rushford, and Laura Dufford. Special thanks go to John and Anita for the perfect site and their superb hospitality.

👉 **Terri Clark** for preparing our newsletters for mailing for each issue. We appreciate your work!

👉 **Anne Straight** for coordinating the Christmas Bird Count again this year. We are grateful for Anne’s organization and volunteer recruitment efforts!

## NIAS Banquet to Feature Photography of David Olson

We're very pleased to have David Olson, outstanding nature photographer from Rockford, as our 2010 banquet speaker. David's program on the people, wildlife and landscape of the Canadian Arctic is one you are sure to enjoy!

The banquet will be held at Embury Church in Freeport on **Wednesday, April 14 at 6 p.m.** In addition to the program, the evening will include a delicious meal, featuring locally raised sweet corn and turkey, and a silent auction.

Banquet details will be found in a separate mailing sent to members in March. Our banquet is open to the public so be sure to tell your friends and family about this terrific evening event.

### AUCTION ITEMS WANTED!

Our chapter is in need of items for our Silent Auction Fundraiser at our annual banquet on April 14. Items that often attract a lot of bidding are nature-related books and artwork such as prints, photos or jewelry, bird feeders, baked goods, gift baskets and gardening items, as well as nature services such as a guided canoe trip, wildflower walk or bird outing. Auction income helps to support our many conservation activities and projects.

You may bring your item to the February or March monthly meetings, call Chris Kruger (815-449-2019) to arrange for pickup, or come a bit early to the banquet with your donation. The estimated value of your item(s) may be taken by you as a charitable tax deduction. Thank you for your generosity!

### CAN YOU BAKE A CHERRY PIE?

Actually, any home-baked dessert would be most welcome and appreciated for our April 14 banquet. Anita Nienhuis has graciously agreed to again coordinate the desserts for our banquet meal. If you would be willing to donate a dessert, call Anita at 815-443-2401 or sign up at monthly meetings.

## 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 burn plans, we don't schedule burns weeks in advance. When conditions are right, we call you, and if you're available, you join our crew. Usually you'll get the call 24-48 hrs before hand. The burn season for us typically runs from early March through mid-April. Don't worry if you lack experience. There are some 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.

## WOODCOCK WALKS

With the discovery last spring of displaying American Woodcocks at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, we're scheduling several evening outings to the preserve in March with the hopes of repeat performances. The Woodcock display is a sight (and sound!) to behold, truly one of the wonders of the bird world. This "sky dance" is described in detail by Aldo Leopold in his *Sand County Almanac*.

We hope you can join us for at least one of our three scheduled walks. Carpool at 6:30 p.m. from the Staples lot off of HWY 26 in Freeport and meet at the preserve parking lot at 7:00. The preserve is in the southeast corner of the intersection of West Grove and Freeport Rds., just southwest of Forreston. Below are dates, leaders and contact numbers (in case the weather is questionable). Call before 6 p.m. on the days of the walks. Dress warmly!

**Saturday, March 20 – Anne Straight (815-938-3263)**

**Wednesday, March 24 – Blackmores (815-938-3204)**

**Friday, March 26 – Blackmores (815-938-3204)**

## JOIN US FOR CRANE COUNT!

Everyone is welcome to be a part of this year's Crane Count on **Saturday, April 17**. 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 days 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 census in greater detail and provide information on crane field marks and vocalizations. Additionally, new counters are always paired with experienced counters. Last year, 28 participants at 12 sites observed a total of 31 cranes, including 7 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 either the February or March monthly meetings.**

## **TOWARD A COOLER PLANET**

This is the 16<sup>th</sup> in a series of articles looking at the many things that each of us can do to help with global warming.

### **Personal Actions DO Make a Difference**

Shortly before Christmas there was a letter to the editor of the Freeport Journal-Standard in which the author said, "Are the polar ice caps disappearing? Most definitely. But not because of anything we did or our parents did. Will they continue to disappear at an increasingly faster rate? Yes. And it will do so regardless of anything we mere humans do or try to do to stop it." This seemed to me to be a rather imaginative twist on the usual climate change denial statement: yes, it's happening but we can't do anything about it. How silly. The late U.S. Senator Pat Moynihan once said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinions, but not to his own facts." Sadly, the facts are not in question; opinions, however, vary widely.

Beginning with the fall of 2007, I have shared with readers of this column various things which individuals could do to both save money and reduce our personal contributions to global warming. By summing up the potential carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) savings if one had implemented all of the suggestions, it can be seen that an average household would have reduced its CO<sub>2</sub>

output by 9,438 lbs./year. That is no small amount! On a personal level, vehicle travel continues to be a huge issue for Mary and me. Last year we logged 28,243 miles while consuming 568.71 gallons of gasoline and releasing 11,146 lbs. of CO<sub>2</sub>. Ouch! However, had we driven the same number of miles in an average vehicle, we could have contributed 14,035 lbs. more. These are facts.

Opinions on how we, as a society, might best go about reducing our impact differ widely. Unfortunately, much of our current economy is based on using carbon-based fuels and this fact colors our judgment.

More than 150 years ago, H. D. Thoreau asked, "What good is it to have a house if we don't have a healthy planet to put it on?" We must quickly address that question and answer it with both personal changes and societal changes to promote a healthy planet. Refusal to accept responsibility isn't a viable option.

-- Keith Blackmore

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS**

Our chapter took part in the 110<sup>th</sup> National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. We did our count on December 19, 2009. This marked the 34<sup>th</sup> time we have participated. You can access this data at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc). Past years are also accessible by entering the code ILFR or Freeport. We had 7 people turn out for the owling at 5 a.m. and split into three groups. Keith and Mary Blackmore, Richard Benning, Harlan and Judy Corrie, Gary Gordon and I braved the cold and were rewarded by one Eastern Screech Owl and one Barred Owl. We had 18 participants for the day count, which allowed us to do our Freeport Circle in five sections. We also had six Feeder Counts. We had 47 species with a total of 7,288 birds. This tied last year's species total and was our 2<sup>nd</sup> highest species count. The highest was 48 in 1988. Our Field Counters totaled 44 species and our Feeder Counters picked up three additional species. Gary and Sandy Monigold reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch and one Pine Siskin. This is why our Feeder Counts are so important.

Our most exciting report came from Mary Blackmore's group which saw a Merlin. This falcon was also viewed by Keith Blackmore's group. This is only our second report of a Merlin, one having been reported on the

1988 Christmas Bird Count. It was well documented by Mary, and our total species will have to be approved by National Audubon to include the Merlin.

We had the highest count this year of seven Bald Eagles (five adults and two immatures). We had five in 2005. We had the highest count of White-breasted Nuthatches with 50. We had 44 in 1991. We also had the highest count of Snow Buntings with 830. We had 450 last year. We had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest counts of Mourning Doves (302), Downy Woodpeckers (59), Horned Larks (592) and Cedar Waxwings (71).

We saw one Meadowlark species, five Red-winged Blackbirds (first since we saw nine in 2004). We had one Swamp Sparrow for only the 3<sup>rd</sup> time (one in 1993 and one in 1974). There were no reports of White-throated sparrows, which was the first time this happened since 1998.

Thank you to the following individuals who helped with this year's Christmas Bird Count:

**Field Counters:** Richard Benning, Keith Blackmore, Mary Blackmore, Lucas Bradley, Harlan Corrie, Judy Corrie, Jeremy Dixon, Melody Farringer, Gary Gordon, Pat Knight, Don Koesler, Anita Nienhuis, John Nienhuis, Larry Seffrood, Teresa Smith, Tim Smith, John Walt and Anne Straight.

**Feeder Counters:** Bonnie Bade, Somer Bozovsky, Judy Kurr, Dick Luthin, Gary and Sandy Monigold and Sandra Toerber.

**We wish to thank the *Stephenson County Convention and Visitor's Bureau* for letting us use a meeting room for lunch and *Staples* for letting us use their lot for carpooling.**

--Anne Straight

## CONNECTIONS

Teresa and Tim Smith's romance began when she offered to carry his backpack. Such a deal for Tim! But he had paid the price of a dislocated shoulder; if he knew what the reward would be, who knows, perhaps he would have planned it that way all along. Teresa was living in St. Paul when some friends, including a guy she had never met – Tim Smith – came up for a weekend. Their plans

were to go to Yellowstone, but before that could take place, Tim fell and dislocated his shoulder. Though he had healed to some degree by the time of the skiing trip, he could not carry his backpack. Teresa offered to carry it for him. And thus was the beginning of a romance that is still thriving.

Skiing is just one of the outdoor activities that Teresa and Tim share. After they were married 19 years ago, they moved to Mt. Morris, where Tim had grown up, and have been there ever since. Their entertainment is biking, hiking, gardening, and learning more about the area plants, birds, and geology. They live conservatively, protecting the earth and their own health, spending a great deal of their time gardening, including the attendant canning and freezing, eating locally as much as possible, and in general enjoying a simple life, living gently on the earth.

Gardening, in fact, was Teresa's heritage, as she grew up on a farm, and her fondest memories are of the big garden there, working on it, enjoying it, and playing outside. TV was never a temptation for her; except for one Saturday morning cartoon, she spurned the TV that most kids found addictive and was out the door to enjoy the outdoors. The family had a wooded acreage, so there was plenty for her and her brothers and sisters to explore; in the summer they picked wild strawberries and in the fall they gathered nuts. Who could ask for more?

After Tim and Teresa were married, she grew interested in Audubon as Tim was already active in it. Tim works for IDOT; Teresa manages the Risk and Quality Department and the Diabetes Department at Sterling Hospital. Then when work is done, they are off to gardening, biking, and hiking. Abundant living.

--Carol Redmore

**The public is welcome at all chapter activities.**

**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: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Membership type:**  
 Individual \_\_\_\_\_ (\$ 20)  
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 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      *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 Roland Burris  
 523 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC, 50210

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

(17th District)  
 Rep. Phil Hare  
 1535-47th Ave. Suite 5  
 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)

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**Board members:**

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 704 N. Davis. St.  
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**Committee chairs:**

Conservation - Keith Blackmore  
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 Education - Lucas Bradley  
 Publicity - Lynn Feaver  
 Membership - Teresa Smith  
 Field Trips - Steve Simpson

Sustainable Agriculture - Mary  
 Blackmore, Richard Benning,  
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