



Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

www.nwilaudubon.org

NIAS MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Join us the first Tuesday of every month, September through May. All of our programs are open to the public.

Most programs are held at the St John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd., in Freeport.

Most programs begin at 7 PM with announcements, followed by the program at 7:30 and then refreshments.

Check the current newsletter or our website (nwilaudubon.org) for specific monthly details, special events or any changes to the usual time and place.

Please join us!

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Top text: allaboutbirds.org/
Top photo: Kelly Colgan Azar
Lower photo: NIAS Flickr Archive
Pg. 6 *Gentiana puberulenta*:
courtesy Prairie Moon Nursery



AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2019

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

The House Wren has one of the largest ranges of any songbird in the New World. It breeds from Canada through the West Indies and Central America, southward to the southernmost point of South America.

House Wrens nest inside tree holes and nest boxes. As the season progresses their nests can become infested with mites and other parasites that feed on the wren nestlings.

Perhaps to fight this problem, wrens often add spider egg sacs into the materials they build their nests from. In lab studies, once the spiders hatched, they helped the wrens by devouring the nest parasites.

Wrens love brush piles for cover, protection, and a source of insects. If you need to prune trees or cut brush in your yard, consider heaping the cuttings into a pile as a safe place for birds to gather.

As with many birds, your ears can help lead you to House Wren sightings. Start in the right habitat: backyards, parks, or open woods, then listen. The song can be hard to learn at first, because the notes are nondescript and variable, and because there's simply so much of it – so loud and insistent – that it's hard to believe such a small bird is making it.



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM AND POTLUCK

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS AT ELKHORN CREEK BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE

September 3rd at 6:00 PM
St. John United Church of Christ
1010 Park Blvd. Freeport

Start the evening with a delicious potluck meal. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. NIAS will provide beverages. After the meal, there will be a short business meeting with announcements. The program will follow at approximately 7:15 pm. Our program for the

evening will be a celebration of the 20th anniversary of our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve located in Northwest Ogle County. Though small in size, the preserve contains a diversity of habitats- wetlands, prairies, and woodlands – that provide food and shelter for a diversity of resident and migrant species. Over 500 species of plants and animals have been documented there, including over 135 species of birds. The program will include a photo journey set to music, as well as shared stories and reflections from preserve volunteers.

Contact Teresa at 815-238-3963 if you have questions about this program.

CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS

August 5 – Stewardship session at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 8-10 a.m. Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204. Tools, gloves, water and snacks provided.

Carpool from the east portion of the Harbor Freight parking lot in Freeport at 7:15 a.m. The preserve is about 2 miles south of Leaf River in the southwest corner of the intersection of Leaf River Rd. and West Grove Rd. Parking is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. crosses HWY 72 in Leaf River and becomes Leaf River Rd.).

August 6 – Madison Foodie Trip, 7:45 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (see details on page 3)

August 9 – 2019 Board Retreat, a.m.

August 11 – Perseids Campfire at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. We hope to catch the peak of this annual meteor shower. Prairie walk at 7 p.m.; campfire at 8:00. S'mores and water will be provided. Bring a lawn chair and flashlight.

Carpool from the east portion of the Harbor Freight parking lot at 6:30 p.m. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreton in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. If weather is questionable, call Kara at 815-871-8014.

August 17 – Stewardship session at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 8-10 a.m. Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204. Tools, gloves, water and snacks provided.

Carpool from the east portion of the Harbor Freight parking lot in Freeport at 7:15 a.m. The preserve is about 2 miles south of Leaf River in the southwest corner of the intersection of Leaf River Rd. and West Grove Rd. Parking is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. crosses HWY 72 in Leaf River and becomes Leaf River Rd.).

August 24 – “Sanctuary,” a free public concert featuring Carrie Newcomer, with pianist Gary Walters. Join us for this wonderful concert in celebration of the 20th anniversary of our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Doors open at 6 p.m., with concert starting at 7 p.m. at the Student Conference Center (H-201) at Highland Community College in Freeport. (see details on page 4)

September 3 – Join us for the potluck at 6:00 p.m. and the first membership program for the season at 7:15 pm. (see details on page 1)

September 7 – Map Reading 101, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Oakdale Nature Preserve (see details on page 3)

September 10 – Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at St. John United Church of Christ

September 19 – “Talking About the Issues” monthly discussion session, 7-9 p.m. at the home of Fred and Carol Redmore, 1809 Parkview Circle, Freeport, 815-721-3375.

For a copy of the first hour topic article contact Redmores or pick one up at the September potluck. The second hour will be a discussion of whatever issues are brought forth by participants. All are welcome to attend.

September 21 – Autumn on the Prairie, Nachusa Grasslands (see details on page 3)

September 22 – Prairie seed collecting at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 2-4 p.m. Tools, water, snacks and guidance provided.

Carpool from the east portion of the Harbor Freight parking lot in Freeport at 1:30 p.m. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreton 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.

September 27 – Almost-a-New-Moon Campfire at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Stroll the trails at 6 p.m.; campfire at 7:00. S'mores and water will be provided. Bring a lawn chair and flashlight.

Carpool from the east portion of the Harbor Freight lot in Freeport at 5:15 p.m. The preserve is about 2 miles south of Leaf River in the southwest corner of the intersection of Leaf River Rd. and West Grove Rd. Parking is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. crosses HWY 72 in Leaf River and becomes Leaf River Rd.). If weather is questionable, call Mary at 815-938-3204.

Birdwalk Fun!

With only one rainout, this year's series of local spring birdwalks provided scores of species for dozens of participants to enjoy. From the 11 species of ducks on our first outing, to the displaying Bobolinks and Henslow's Sparrows on our last walk, interesting species and behaviors were in abundance. Owls were a favorite, with both Barred Owl and Great Horned Owl (with an owlet!) being sighted. Other favorites included a Veery hopping on the ground, many displaying Indigo Buntings, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Towhee and a Bobolink at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Many thanks to the NIAS members who led the walks: Richard Benning, Somer Bozovsky, Laura Dufford, Juliet Moderow and Anne Straight. We hope you can join us next year when we'll once again enjoy the beauty and wonder of the spring migration.

Mary Blackmore

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Sue Altenburg – Rochelle
John Stender – Davis
Elizabeth Gridley – Freeport
James Koestner – Freeport
Carol Drummet – Freeport
Elizabeth Boettner – Freeport
Betty Rabe – Orangeville

Questions About Your Membership?

Contact Teresa Smith at 815-238-3963 or timtreetsmith@gmail.com



FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER

Madison Foodie Trip

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6
7:45 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Richard Benning
815-865-5279 or r.benning52@gmail.com

Please call or email Richard to confirm your attendance. We will carpool from the east end of the Harbor Freight parking lot.

Join a tour of two Madison establishments that feature local and sustainable food. The first stop will be Madison Sourdough Company which specializes in naturally leavened sourdough bread and Viennoiserie pastries. Then we will go three blocks down the street to the Willy Street Coop. This is a full service grocery store that features many local and organic items, and is owned by its members. Come prepared to shop at both places and eat lunch after the two tours.

Map Reading 101

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
9:30-11:30 a.m.,
Oakdale Nature Preserve

Leave your GPS device at home. This fast-paced activity will focus on finding your way around the Oakdale Nature Preserve trails using a paper map. Making that important connection between the map in your hand and the real terrain around you is the basis for map reading. This develops certain spatial thinking skills.

Come prepared to do a fair amount of walking. We will meet at the main parking lot at Oakdale. Please call Richard Benning at 815-865-5279 to sign-up for this event.

Autumn on the Prairie, Nachusa Grasslands

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Chris Kruger
815-238-9259

Join us for Nachusa's annual festival on Saturday, Sept. 21st. Participants can choose from bison tours, guided hikes, nature demonstrations, birds of prey display and program, live music, children's activities, native American skills demonstrations, prairie books, art, photography and other vendors, local produce sales, and more. There will be food available to purchase for lunch.

Sturdy shoes and long pants are recommended for the hiking tours, as most are off trail with hills. Carpool from Harbor Freight in Freeport in Freeport at 9am or meet us at Nachusa at 10am. Planned return to Freeport by 3pm.

Call Chris Kruger at 815-238-9259 by Monday, September 16th to confirm space in the carpool. You can find more information on Nachusa's 3600 acre preserve at nachusagrasslands.org.

FIELD TRIPS RECAP photos by Laura Dufford



June 22nd Exploring Odonata at ECBP (below)

Cindy and John McKee, Odonata enthusiasts shared their knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies with us at Elkhorn Creek Preserve.



June 29th field trip to Chestnut Cliff Farm (above)

"Margaret Bardell, one of the farm managers was our host. We saw many parts of their operations; cattle, chickens, hogs, bees, and their garden production beds, greenhouse and hoop house."

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

GOOD NEWS! The Illinois General Assembly wrapped up its spring legislative session with some big wins for the environment, hopefully signaling new support in Illinois for action on climate change, preventing toxic chemical exposure, and creating good jobs in clean water infrastructure.

Among the big wins this spring were the passage of legislation to:

- *Ban toxic BPA-containing receipts in Illinois*
- *Force the cleanup of hazardous coal ash dumps that are polluting groundwater*
- *Create new job training programs for disadvantaged communities to prepare for jobs in clean water infrastructure*
- *Repeal a decades-old prohibition on regulating greenhouse gases*
- *Invest in open space, clean energy, and clean water infrastructure*
- *(taken from IL Sierra Club news)*

Although this legislation was not all perfect, IL did take big steps forward. Please remember to stay in touch with YOUR legislators and tell them to stay on top of good environmental and conservation measures. Northwest IL legislators are not necessarily on board with green issues.

Here are some *do's* for the remaining summer months.

DO:

- *Remember to take your reusable water bottles on outings. Keep those plastic drink bottles out of our waste stream! Prompt your friends to do the same.*
- *Take reusable containers when eating out to take home leftovers (don't forget a cooler!)*
- *Head to the farmer's market for fresh, local produce*
- *Consider how much water you need to use to maintain your yard/garden. Mother Nature has been plentiful with providing rain for early summer. Let's be mindful of water waste during the remaining summer months.*
- *Stay on paths at state and national parks. Parks are concerned with people getting off trail to get that 'perfect' photo. This practice has potential to harm ecologically fragile ecosystems.*
- *Run your air-conditioner only when necessary. Perhaps using a fan to get the air moving is enough to cool your room. Let's do our part to lower carbon emissions!*
- *Contact your local, state and federal legislators and remind them that green initiatives are a win-win for jobs and the environment.*



“Sanctuary”
A FREE PUBLIC CONCERT FEATURING
CARRIE NEWCOMER
with pianist
Gary Walters

Saturday, August 24, 2019
at 7:00 p.m.
DOORS OPEN AT 6 P.M.

Highland Community College

Student Conference Center, H-201
2998 West Pearl City Road, Freeport, IL

Admission is FREE with no tickets or reserved seating.

As part of our chapter's 20th anniversary celebration of our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, we are pleased to once again sponsor a free concert featuring the fabulous folksinger Carrie Newcomer with pianist Gary Walters.

Carrie is a songwriter, recording artist, performer and educator. She has been described as a “soaring songstress” by Billboard and a “prairie mystic” by the Boston Globe. The Austin Statesman described her as having “a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate” and Rolling Stone once said, she “asks all the right questions.” Most simply put, the Dallas Morning News said, “she’s the kind of artist whose music makes you stop, think and then say, ‘that is so true.’”

The Student Conference Center, Building H, is on the northwest corner of the Freeport campus. Parking is directly north of the building entrance; the building is fully accessible. For directions to the college, check the website: www.highland.edu or call 815.235.6121

**Questions, please contact us at
nwilaudubon@gmail.com**

For more information about Carrie Newcomer, visit her website at www.carrienewcomer.com or you can visit the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society website at www.nwilaudubon.org.

FALL PRAIRIE SEED COLLECTING

Every September and October we collect prairie seeds at our preserves for planting in less diverse areas of those same sites. Our only long-range scheduled collecting outing at our Elkhorn Creek Preserve is September 22, 2-4 p.m. (see calendar on page 2).



Harlan and Judy Corrie (with other volunteers) collect the fluffy seeds of Little bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium* on a fall seed collection day. | photo by Dan Barron

An October date for Silver Creek will be in your next newsletter. However, we will be seed collecting on many more days on shorter notice as weather permits. To get on the contact list for the spontaneous seed collecting outings, sign up at the September meeting, call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or e-mail Nancy Ocken at rnocken@gmail.com. When contacted you may join us if you are available, or it not, we will catch you another time. We typically gather seeds at a time during late-morning or afternoon. This is a wonderful way for you to volunteer to help our restoration efforts!

Seed collecting is an easy, leisurely task. Novices always are welcome. There will be a leader to point out which plants to pick seed from. Water, snacks and equipment will be provided. Wear long pants and long sleeves. It's a fun way to spend a couple of hours on nice fall days. We hope you can join us!

Harlan's Harem Wins Birdathon!

Harlan's Harem just edged out Team Keith for the Birdathon team title this year. A delayed migration resulted in fewer birds observed, with each team total near 100.

Many thanks go to each Birdathon birder: Jesse Akins, Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore, Harlan and Judy Corrie, Jeremy and Mason Dixon, Laura Dufford, Kara Gallup, Gary Gordon, Dylan and Kent Lewis, Bernard Lischwe, Katelyn McWethy, Juliet Moderow, Teresa Smith and Anne Straight. Thank you also to everyone who pledged to a birder, helping to raise hundreds of dollars for organizations supporting bird conservation!

Birdathon 
Your money goes where the birds go

**40
YEARS**

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**

NIAS PRESIDENT'S TWEET – SUMMER

What a summer we had! Despite the copious amount of rain and buffalo gnats, I hope you had a pleasant one.

As we continue to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve (didn't you have fun reading the features in the newsletter?!), we have another big event approaching – the return of Carrie Newcomer to Freeport! This time, she will be bringing her pianist Gary Walters. If you missed the concert in 2017, I hope you can make this one!

I first heard Carrie in 2017 and I was impressed by her voice and magnetism. Her music was warm and inviting. At times, I felt like I was in a small café with only 20 people.

This year's concert is entitled "Sanctuary," which is a name of one of her songs (listen closely to the lyrics when you get a chance). There are many definitions of sanctuary, such as "a place of refuge or safety" or a "nature reserve" as found in Oxford Dictionary. If you connect the word to the 20th anniversary of Elkhorn, perhaps you look at the preserve as a sanctuary. I know many of our hard-working volunteers enjoy the preserve in that capacity. For me personally, after removing a few parsnip plants and taking a quick break, the moment when I hear the birds sing or see a pollinating insect in my view, I realize the place is a sanctuary for them and the work is worth it. But I also see it as a sanctuary for me – it gives me a chance to get away from everything for a few hours and be in nature.

This fall is a great chance for you to truly experience the beautiful preserve – join a seed collecting day, a campfire, or a simple stroll on your own. See what 20 years of stewardship has done!

*Juliet Moderow
nwilaudubon@gmail.com*

ELKHORN CREEK BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE

20TH ANNIVERSARY



Spiderwort blooming at ECBP June 19th | photo by Kara Gallup

In this issue, Elkhorn Creek volunteer comments are from Lynn and Sandy Feaver (Freeport), Juliet Moderow (Freeport), and Tim and Teresa Smith (rural Dixon).

What is your favorite habitat type at Elkhorn Creek and why do you like it?

LYNN: "Hillside Prairies – especially when they are in bloom. One of my favorite such memories is of a hillside of dew-covered spiderwort laced with spider webs one early morning a couple of years ago."

SANDY: "Definitely woodland – probably because of where we live. The birds and the green make me feel like I'm home. But maintaining those pieces of native prairie seems important to me."

JULIET: "I love the prairie! I love learning about the prairie plants over and over again! There's so much diversity."

TIM: "Prairie...because of the seasonal beauty; the opportunity to observe the life to which it hosts."

TERESA: "Prairie, because of the variety of colors in the prairie. The green plants in the spring, the flowering white, yellow, orange, violet and blue during the summer months and the golden harvest colors in the fall."

What got you interested in volunteering?

LYNN: "Because of what I hoped to learn from all the knowledgeable people who were involved. Sandy: It's a valuable educational opportunity and service to the community. I'm grateful to all of the people who have made it a priority."

JULIET: "I enjoy making a difference. It is hard work, but when you're out there removing invasive plants and enjoying the native plants, while birds are singing around you, you realize why you are out there. It takes me away from work and technology and makes me a part of nature."

TIM: "It is an opportunity to learn new things. I belong to Audubon and it is a way of supporting their goals. I enjoy being out of doors and enjoying nature. I enjoy the step by step planning and execution of a logistical task. (i.e. felling a tree if required with equipment in a safe manner, conducting a burn for prescribed fire). It is another way of supporting a spouse who wants to be involved."

TERESA: "I love seeing the changes throughout the growing season from the time the prairie

plants are seeds in the ground waiting for fire to the seed harvesting time in the fall. I also really like learning new things about nature and the volunteers at the preserve are a wealth of knowledge (and they are happy to share that knowledge.) What a great group of people!"



Prairie Gentian
Gentiana puberulenta

MEMORIES

- 2002** Began seed collecting and brush cutting
A summer tour day was organized for our members.
- 2003** First seed planting took place and more seeds were collected.
- 2004** A fall tour day took place for our members.
- 2005** Stewardship sections were created and adopted.
- 2006** The first campfire took place on the Summer Solstice.
- 2007** Articles about our management methods appeared in our newsletter.
- 2008** First spring birdwalk in May, and the first blooming Prairie Gentian was observed in the fall.
- 2009** We acquire Parsnip Predators!
In early spring the first woodcock was observed and the bluebird houses were put up.
- 2010** The first Butterfly Festival was organized.
We bought out the Prairie Society's half-interest in the preserve so we are now the sole owner! Money from the sale helped the Prairie Society buy an important prairie remnant in Ogle county.



(left) A group of 14 energetic eradicators descended upon sweet clover and parsnip at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve on July 3rd, 2018 under Mary Blackmore's leadership. | photo by Pam Richards

**"I can't change the whole world
But I can change the world I know,
What's within three feet or so."**

*"Three Feet or So"
Carrie Newcomer*

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 _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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*

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Secretary | Pam Richards
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Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore,
Laura Dufford and Heidi Thorp

Newsletter Editor | Dan Barron

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BIRD SEED SALE ALERT

This year's Bird Seed Sale will be held October 17-19. Sale fliers will be mailed in September.

If you can volunteer to help sort orders or deliver seed, please call 815-238-9259 or 815-938-3204.

THANK YOU!



Lynn Feaver, Paul Brown and Tim Smith for mowing trails at our preserves.

Bird Festival volunteers who helped with set-up and clean-up, provided equipment or refreshments and led tours: Tim and Teresa Smith, Laura Dufford, Richard Benning, Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore and Chris Kruger.

Recent field trip leaders/coordinators: Richard Benning, Laura Dufford, Heidi Thorp, Cindy and John McKee and the Bardell family.

Prairie stewardship volunteers from May and June: Nancy and Randy Ocken, Pam Richards, John and Anita Nienhuis, Harlan and Judy Corrie, Paul Brown, Mary Blackmore, Kara Gallup, Fred and Carol Redmore, Bob Curtis, Bernard Lischwe, Laura Dufford, Tim and Teresa Smith, Anne Straight, Juliet Moderow and Dave Derwent.

Tim and Teresa Smith, Laura Dufford and Mary Blackmore for doing set-up for the Odonata field trip.

www.nwilaudubon.org

**Northwest Illinois
Audubon Society**

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When using the capitol switchboard follow the series of prompts.

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