



# 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](http://nwilaudubon.org) for specific monthly details, special events or any changes to the usual time and place.

*Please join us!*

### Questions About Your Membership?

Contact Teresa Smith at 815-238-3963  
or [timtreesmith@gmail.com](mailto:timtreesmith@gmail.com)

### INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

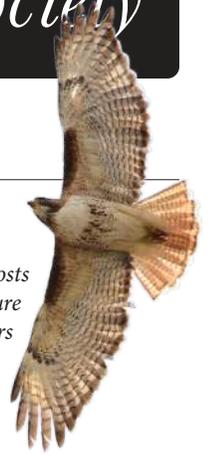
2. Calendar Considerations, Birdathon, Burn Volunteers Wanted
3. Field Trips and Events
4. CBC Results, Banquet Save The Date
5. "What's With All the Brush and Junk Trees?," Woodcock Walks
6. NIAS President's Tweet, Conservation Committee, "We Can't But You Can"
7. New Preserve Species, Thank You!

Top text: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)  
Top photo: Tom Koerner/USFWS  
Program photos provided by the presenter.

## FEBRUARY – MARCH 2020

### Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

The best way to find a Red-tailed Hawk is to go for a drive, keeping your eyes peeled along fenceposts and in the sky. Chances are good that the first hawk you see will be a Red-tailed Hawk. Just make sure to look for the *buteo* shape (broad, rounded wings; short tail), then check field marks like the dark bars on the leading edge of the wing. Across most of the continent, Red-tails are more numerous in winter, when birds from the far north arrive to join the birds that live in your area year round.



### FEBRUARY PROGRAMMING

#### THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE – A PRICELESS TREASURE

**7:00 PM Tuesday, February 4**

St. John United Church of Christ  
1010 Park Blvd. Freeport

The Arctic is alive, and it is all around us. Every year, birds that fly to all 50 states and across six continents will start their journey in America's Arctic. The Arctic Refuge is a vital habitat for some of the world's most beloved birds as well as caribou, polar bear and more. The Arctic Refuge is an incomparable landscape that is one of the last ecosystems on earth unaltered by human development. America has had a tumultuous tradition of protecting this treasure for over 50 years. Today, threats are greater than they have ever been from oil exploration and leasing – come learn about the history, the place and its values, and the ongoing battle to protect this national treasure. Some places are just too special to drill for a short-term gain – the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of these places.

Lois Norrgard, a National Field Organizer for Alaska Wilderness League, will present our February program. Lois implements strategic grassroots outreach activities for the League's Arctic Refuge, National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, and Tongass National Forest campaigns. Come learn about the priceless treasures in Alaska!



### MARCH PROGRAMMING

#### PELICAN NESTING ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

**7:00 PM Tuesday, March 3**

St. John United Church of Christ  
1010 Park Blvd. Freeport

During the spring migration, you can look up to the sky and see flocks of the large majestic water birds flying overhead. The sun catches their white feathered wings with black tips to give a spectacular show. The American White Pelican has been nesting along the Mississippi River in Iowa and Illinois for several years. Pam Steinhaus, Visitor Services Manager with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge in Thomson, will share information about the pelican nesting spots along the Mississippi River and other fun facts about these fascinating birds.



*For information about these programs, please contact Teresa at 815-238-3963*

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## CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS

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**February 4** - Program at 7:00 p.m. at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd. (See page 1 for details)

**February 9** - "Talking About the Issues" monthly discussion, 1:30-3:30 p.m. at the home of Dick Luthin, 1712 W. Parkview Dr., Freeport (815-232-8624). The first hour topic article will be available at the February meeting or by calling Laura Dufford at 815-947-2720. The second hour will be an open discussion of whatever issues are brought forth. Everyone is welcome.

**February 13** - Nicolas Conservatory Field Trip (See page 3 for details)

**March 3** - Program at 7:00 p.m. at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd. (See page 1 for details)

**March 10** - Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd

**March 13** - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watch, 7:00 p.m. (See page 5 for details)

**March 19** - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watch, 7:00 p.m. (See page 5 for details)  
*Happy Vernal Equinox!*

**March 19** - Understanding NAS Survival by Degrees report, 7:00 p.m. at Grace Episcopal Church, 10 S. Cherry Ave, Freeport

**March 26** - "Talking About the Issues" monthly discussion, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the home of Chris Kruger, 201 W. Zimmerman St., Dakota (815-238-9259). In the first hour we'll explore the connection between understanding the past and acting for the future regarding environmental issues. The topic article - Garrett Hardin's thought-provoking editorial "Why Plant a Redwood Tree?" - will be available at the March meeting or by calling Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204. The second hour will be an open discussion of whatever issues are brought forth. Everyone is welcome.

**March 28** - Mississippi River Spring Waterfowl Field Trip (See page 3 for details)

**March 30** - Elkhorn Creek Woodcock Watch, 7:00 p.m. (See page 5 for details)

## WANTED: BIRDATHON BIRDERS!

If you enjoy watching birds during the peak of the spring migration, we invite you to join our 2020 Birdathon on Sunday, May 3! Not only is being a Birdathon birder fun, but also it's rewarding. Your efforts help to raise money for several organizations - our chapter included - involved in bird conservation work along the Mississippi Flyway and in Central America, the winter home to many of "our" birds.

The organizations that benefit from Birdathon include: Northwest Illinois Audubon Society, National Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and the Belize Audubon Society. They all work to improve habitat along the migration

route for our feathered friends and provide educational opportunities for the public. Birdathon participation is easy: get pledges, go birdwatching on Birdathon Day and collect pledges.

**GET PLEDGES** - Names of Birdathon birders (including yours!) will appear on a pledge form in our next newsletter and on pledge forms at our April banquet. You also may ask anyone you choose - friends, relatives - to make a pledge per species that you will see. A 10¢/species pledge is common, but donors can pledge any amount or simply make a flat donation regardless of how many species you see.

**BIRDING** - Have a blast on May 3! You can bird alone, with a friend, or join a team (teams vie for the coveted Cardinal-On-A-Stick trophy!). You can bird for a few hours or all day. You can bird in your yard, at a park, or at a series of sites.

**COLLECT PLEDGES** - Let your sponsors know how many species you saw and how much they owe you, then send your pledge checks to the Audubon treasurer. That's it!



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. Plans are to burn several sections at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Usually you'll get the call 24-48 hours 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, as well as all needed equipment.

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*To get on the list, sign up at the monthly meetings or call: Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204.*



# FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS

## NICOLAS CONSERVATORY FIELD TRIP

**Thursday, February 13, 2020  
10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

*Leader Chris Kruger*

Please contact Chris (*call 815-238-9259*) by February 7 to confirm your attendance and lunch choice.

Join us for a tour and lunch at the third largest conservatory in Illinois. Located on the Rock River in Rockford, the facility offers tropical plants, water features, sculptures, and seating areas. The annual orchid exhibit includes hundreds of tropical orchids creatively arranged throughout the conservatory. Find more information at [Nicholas conservatory.com](http://Nicholasconservatory.com).

*Carpool from Harbor Freight in Freeport at 10 am. Expected return time is 2:30 pm. Admission \$8, seniors (65+) \$6.*

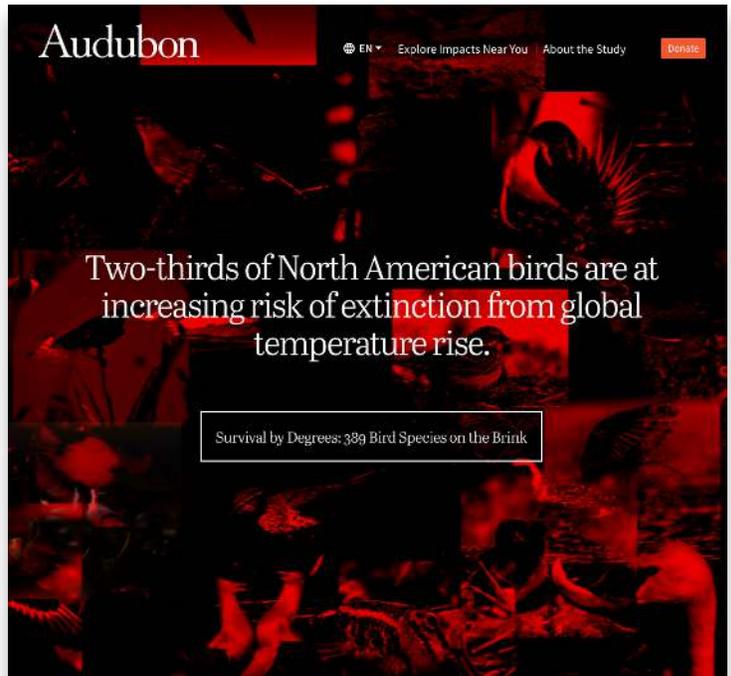
## MISSISSIPPI RIVER SPRING WATERFOWL FIELD TRIP

**Saturday, March 28, 2020.  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

*Leader Mary Blackmore.*

Please contact Chris (*call 815-238-9259*) to confirm attendance. Join us as we look for migrating waterfowl on the Mississippi River south of Savanna. Usually a wide variety of both diving and dabbling ducks are seen in all their breeding plumage and glory, along with grebes, Bald Eagles, and some early songbirds. If we're lucky we'll see some Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes as well.

*Carpool from Harbor Freight at 8 am or meet us at Spring Lake at 9 am. We'll have lunch in Thomson around noon then head south to Lock and Dam #13.*



## UNDERSTANDING NAS SURVIVAL BY DEGREES REPORT

*presented by Juliet Moderow*

**March 19, 7:00 p.m.  
Grace Episcopal Church**

*Highland Community College biology instructor Juliet Moderow will explain the science behind the National Audubon Society report Survival by Degrees, that was released in October, 2019. The results will be shared, with specific details from Freeport and surrounding areas. The predicted climate threats for our area will also be explained and what specific birds would be impacted.*

*This program was designed for those who have questions about the report that states that 389 bird species are at risk for extinction and want to learn how they can help.*

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

*Brian Lindquist Family – Oregon  
Carol Severson – Oregon  
Harold Harrison – Mount Morris  
Dianne Ludwig – Freeport*

*Barry and Wendy Dahlberg – Pecatonica  
Karen Hagen – Elizabeth  
Eric Staben – Cedarville  
Marley Drewelow – Rock City*

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS



The 120th Christmas Bird Count is history and the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society participated in it for the 44th time on December 14th. Our defined territory is a fifteen mile diameter circle centered at Read Park in Freeport. The CBC is a yearly citizen science endeavor to gather data on bird distribution and numbers. There are count circles, the same size as ours, in all fifty states, and in just about every country in the Western Hemisphere. The state of Illinois alone has roughly sixty-five counts. Each count must be done within the dates of December 14th and January 5th. Christmas Bird Count data, accumulated over the years, is used for various things including avian research. This database can be accessed online at [www.christmasbirdcount.org](http://www.christmasbirdcount.org).

Fifteen field observers and five feeder observers helped on the day of our count. We tallied a total of 6413 birds representing 38 species. This is roughly 1600 more total birds than last year's CBC but ten fewer species. The reason for the increase in total birds was the high number of Canada Geese observed; this year being the highest tally in our count's history and the rare

occurrence that one species represents over fifty percent of the total birds. Bald Eagles were seen for the sixteenth year in a row, and they were present in multiple locations within our count circle. A non-native species, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, was seen for the second year, last year being the first for this species. A Rough-legged Hawk was observed after a two year absence during our count.

Several species were not observed or down in numbers this year. Other than one flock of Lapland Longspurs open country ground birds were not seen. This could be due to the lack of snow cover making it extremely difficult for us to see them. Horned Larks, one of the open country species, were not seen for first time since 1980. American Tree Sparrows tallied the second lowest number ever for our count circle. Other absences included American Robin, Eastern Bluebird and Eurasian Collared-Dove, species that had been observed with some regularity the last several years.

This year's top ten list is as follows; Canada Goose (3347), House Sparrow (703),

European Starling (678), Rock Pigeon (328), American Crow (285), Dark-eyed Junco (246), Mallard (191), House Finch (96), Northern Cardinal (82) and Blue Jay (63). While year to year fluctuations are common it is the longevity of CBC data collection that is most valuable from a scientific standpoint.

Thank you to the following individuals for helping with this year's count. Field observers were Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore, Paul Brown, Harlan Corrie, Judy Corrie, Bob Curtis, Jeremy Dixon, Kara Gallup, Gary Gordon, Mark Keister, Juliet Moderow, Anita Nienhuis, John Nienhuis, Fran Shriver and Anne Straight. Feeder observers were Somer Elgin, Bernard Lischwe, Dick Luthin, Rebecca Shriver and Lurane Slaght. Special thanks to Tim Smith for storing our CBC data in digital format, and also to the Freeport/Stephenson County Convention & Visitors Bureau for allowing us to use a meeting room for our mid-day break.

*Richard Benning,  
Christmas Bird Count Compiler*



*Presenting*  
**DR. STEPHEN HAGER**

*SAVE THE DATE!*

## *NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SPRING BANQUET*

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1**

As global warming and chaos make for continued strange and, at times devastating events, some argue 'global warming' isn't the right term for our current and future state of affairs, but rather 'global weirding' best describes the situation.

As part of his nature studies photography program at Augustana College, Professor Stephen B. Hager, Ph.D., will share photographic reflections on climate change that seeks to ask questions about sustainability and how we might live full and happy lives now and in a future that will most likely continue to get weirder.

**Highland Community College | Silent Auction starts at 5:30 | Dinner at 6:00 | Program at 7:30**

*Registration forms will be mailed in late-February.*

# “What’s With All the Brush and Junk Trees?”



photo by Morgan Blackmore

“It looks terrible,” he concluded. Well, I wasn’t quite sure how to respond to this query made by a fellow Audubon member. He was referring to the former crop field on the west side of our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve which, yes, had developed a lot of woody growth over the years. It was the last field scheduled to be planted to prairie species, but that event was still several years away. I recall giving an answer along the lines of “We’re doing the best that we can.”

Since that conversation I’ve become enlightened about habitat that looks messy and undefinable, areas not readily recognized like prairie or forest. Turns out there is a term – early successional forest – and a definition: dense tangled thickets of young saplings, fruit-bearing shrubs, and vines. Most importantly, it turns out that such areas represent “some of the most-needed bird habitat today, and they are largely missing from many landscapes,” says noted author and ornithologist Scott Weidensaul.

Due to the complexity of vegetation species and profiles, early successional forest provides a lot of food – both fruit and insects – that even forest or grassland birds take advantage of, especially when teaching fledglings to forage or when bulking up for migration. Additionally some species, such as Willow Flycatchers

and American Woodcocks, find those areas appealing for nesting. Both of those species have been heard in that section of our preserve.

Last March we sowed the initial seeding of prairie species on the higher open area of that section. Our plans are to manage that area as grassland, with additional future overseedings, and to manage the middle and lower areas as early successional forest. Prescribed burns in the open area will penetrate somewhat into the dense area and occasional cutting of saplings will maintain the brushy nature of the dense area.

Our delight at finding the positive in what appeared to be negative will only grow over the years as this section attracts more species of birds, perhaps someday including a Golden-winged Warbler or a Bell’s Vireo. The next time you drive by that section along Freeport Road, remember that not all is what it appears, and that even “brush and junk trees” can constitute important habitat.

Mary Blackmore

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*Note: For more information, Weidensaul’s article about early successional forests appeared in the Spring 2018 Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “Living Bird.”*



Detail of ‘American Woodcock’ by John J. Audubon

## ELKHORN CREEK WOODCOCK WATCHES

**Friday, March 13, 7 p.m.**

*Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204*

**Thursday, March 19, 7 p.m.**

*(Happy Equinox!)*

*Leader: Anne Straight, 815-938-3263*

**Monday, March 30, 7 p.m.**

*Leader: Mary Blackmore, 815-938-3204*

Join us for any or all of these evening outings to watch and listen for American Woodcocks performing their amazing courtship display. The “Sky Dance” itself is part ground-strutting and part zig-zagging flight, barely visible in the early evening sky. More fascinating perhaps are the sounds that go with it, the repetitious vocal “peent!” followed by the twittering and chirping sounds made when air rushes through primary flight feathers during the birds’ descent. On a quiet evening, it is pure audio magic.

In the past we have had 2-6 woodcocks performing their twilight display for about 2-3 weeks. When and if this begins is an educated guess, so be sure to call the listed leader before you make the trip to confirm that the birds are back and that the weather is suitable.

*Carpool from the Harbor Frieght lot in Freeport at 6:30 p.m. or meet at the preserve at 7:00. The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Roads. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. Make time to experience this unique avian harbinger of spring. The joy will be all yours.*

# NIAS PRESIDENT'S TWEET

In October, you learned about the National Audubon Society Report, Survival by Degrees. Perhaps you have questions about it. Perhaps people are asking you questions about it. Perhaps you want to continue to learn more about how to help defend against climate change and help birds.

In March, I will do a special program to explain the report, specific to our area. If you are interested in learning about the details of the report and more about what you can do, we welcome you to attend. For more information, please see page 3 for details about the event.

Every day, it might be easy to feel hopeless when you have 50-degree temperatures in December and hear the bad news going on in the world...but don't lose hope. We have to continue to educate ourselves and others AND take action.

Please try to invite new folks to our meetings and our events. Education is key to understanding and slowing down climate change.

*Juliet Moderow, President*

# CONSERVATION COMMITTEE NEWS

How would you like improve our health and make a significant difference in addressing climate change? It's that time of year for making resolutions to help ourselves and the earth to begin healing and one of the most significant things we can do is consume a more plant-based diet. If you'd like to try this, but would like some help, visit the PCRM website (Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine) and sign up for the 21-day Kickstart – you'll get advice, information and good recipes to help you along the way. Take the challenge and see how you feel after 21 days. Even if you only go plant-based for a day or two a week, it makes a significant difference in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but if you're looking to improve your health, try for going meat-free most days.

A good website for all things environmental is "Treehugger." One recent article was entitled "Seven High-Impact Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Greenhouse Emissions." In a nutshell, the advice was: Buy an electric car, fly less, eat more plants, buy carbon offsets, don't waste food, support soil-friendly farms, and use solar or buy some wind or hydro-powered electricity. You can read the full article on Treehugger.com.

*Candace Colby*



## We Can't, But You Can!

Due to our chapter's 501(c)(3) non-profit IRS status, we are prohibited from engaging in election year activities. This includes, but is not limited to, endorsing candidates, participating in and donating to campaigns, and publishing candidate opinion pieces in this newsletter.

While our chapter cannot participate in those types of activities, our members as individuals certainly may do so. We encourage you to include environmental issues, especially climate change, in your decision process as you vote for the candidates of your choice in both the primary election on **March 17** and the general election on **November 3**.

*Mary Blackmore*

## 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

## BOARD MEMBERS

**President** | Juliet Moderow  
**Vice-President** | Fred Redmore  
**Secretary** | Pam Richards  
**Treasurer** | Mary Blackmore

### Board members At-Large:

Linda Black, Paul Brown, Jim Richards,  
Gary Gordon, Don Miller,  
Abby Strominger

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

**Conservation** | Laura Dufford  
**Programs** | Teresa Smith  
**Education** | Richard Benning  
**Publicity** | Deborah Lischwe  
**Membership** | Tim Smith  
**Field Trips** | Chris Kruger

### Sustainable Agriculture

Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore,  
Laura Dufford and Heidi Thorp

### Newsletter Editor | Dan Barron

2115 15th Pl. So. - La Crosse WI 54601  
815-541-3261 - dan@beewise.us

[nwilaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:nwilaudubon@gmail.com)

## New Species At Our Preserves

We continue to find new species at our preserves, celebrating each new find. Thank you to everyone who helped locate and identify these additions.

### ELKHORN CREEK (6)

#### Forbs

Prairie Cinquefoil

#### Skippers

European Skipper

Fiery Skipper

#### Damselflies

Eastern Red Damsel

#### Birds

Rough-legged Hawk

Western Meadowlark

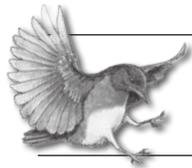
### SILVER CREEK (2)

#### Forbs

Brown-eyed Susan

#### Butterflies

Hackberry Butterfly



## THANK YOU!

Jim Richards for removing a downed tree along the trail at ECBP.

Bob Remer for your donation

Adam Moderow for his year of work providing us great book recommendations for the Kids and Families section "Nature's Book Nook."

Richard Benning for organizing and compiling our Christmas Bird Count.

Tim Smith for winterizing our preserves mower.

Prairie seed processing volunteers: Fred and Carol Redmore, Judy and Harlan Corrie, Tom and Chris Hartung, Bob and Carol Curtis, John and Anita Nienhuis, Keri Rainsberger, Bernard Lischwe, Molly Doolittle, Pam Richards, Paul Brown, Ernie and Karen Brose, Merry Blake, Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore, Juliet Moderow and Brenda Calvert. Special thanks go to John and Anita for their outstanding hospitality!

Silver Creek November stewardship volunteers: Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore, Bernard Lischwe, Paul Brown, Nancy Ocken, Harlan and Judy Corrie and Bob Curtis.

Recent field trip leader: Mary Blackmore

Pam Richards for monitoring the Elkhorn Creek bluebird boxes in 2019 and Jeremy Dixon for relocating two of those boxes to what we hope will be more favorable habitat.

To the following individuals for their recent donations: Wolf and Linnea Koch, John and Allison Gush, Laura Dufford, and the estate of Sharon Shaw

Mary Blackmore

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

**Northwest Illinois  
Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 771  
Freeport, IL 61032-0771

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**ADDRESSES/EMAILS OF YOUR LEGISLATORS**

Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 • State House Switchboard (217) 782-2000

*When using the state switchboard simply ask to be connected to the legislators office.*

*When using the capitol switchboard follow the series of prompts.*

**FEDERAL**

**Senator Richard Durbin**

Kluczynski Building 38th Floor  
230 S. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60604  
[www.durbin.senate.gov/contact/](http://www.durbin.senate.gov/contact/)

**Senator Tammy Duckworth**

230 S Dearborn Suite 3900, Chicago, IL 60604  
312-886-3506 | [www.duckworth.senate.gov](http://www.duckworth.senate.gov)

**16th District Rep. Adam Kinzinger**

628 Columbus Street, Suite 507, Ottawa, IL 61350  
[www.kinzinger.house.gov](http://www.kinzinger.house.gov)

**17th District Rep. Cheri Bustos**

2401 4th Ave., Rock Island IL 61201  
<http://bustos.house.gov/contact>

**STATE**

**45th District Sen. Brian Stewart**

50 W. Douglas Street, Suite 1001, Freeport, IL 61032  
[stewart@ilhousegop.org](mailto:stewart@ilhousegop.org)

**36th District Sen. Neil Anderson**

1523 47th Ave, Suite 3, Moline, IL 61265  
[senatorneilanderson@gmail.com](mailto:senatorneilanderson@gmail.com)

**89th District Rep. Andrew Chesney**

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**71st District Rep. Tony McCombie**

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