



APRIL – MAY 2024

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY



A chapter of the National Audubon Society

41ST ANNUAL BANQUET

Illinois' Wild and Wonderful Early Bloomers
Presented by Cindy Crosby

Tuesday, April 9th

Note the banquet is on Tuesday, April 9th not on April 16th as indicated in the previous newsletter.

Silent Auction at 5:30 p.m.

Dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Program Begins at 7:30 p.m.

Highland Community College
Student Conference Center

Meal reservations due by March 29th (\$32.00)

No reservation needed to attend just the program (no meal \$5.00)

NEW FOR 2024 – ONLINE REGISTRATION IS AVAILABLE AT: NWILAUDUBON.ORG

Cindy Crosby, an author, compiler, or contributor to more than 20 books will be sharing stories and photographs of the beauty in nature that our hearts are seeking throughout the late winter and early spring. There's nothing like a blast of beautiful wildflower color after a long winter! Hear stories about our earliest spring wildflowers, their folklore and their uses throughout history by Native Americans and early settlers. Be inspired to add some of Illinois' wildflowers to your own garden.



Cindy is a Master Gardener that teaches in the Master Gardener Program and coordinates volunteers on the fourth oldest restored prairie in North America. She trains dragonfly monitors and coordinates dragonfly monitoring programs at two sites in Illinois. Cindy serves on the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands Science Grants committee that works to support the tallgrass prairie. Her books include: Chasing Dragonflies: A Natural, Cultural, and Personal History, Tallgrass Conversations: In Search of the Prairie Spirit and Tallgrass Prairie: An Introduction.

Further details about the banquet can be found at www.nwilaudubon.org. or by calling Tim at 815-835-5109. The cost for the program only is \$5 for adults with no charge for students.

POTLUCK IS BACK!

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM AND POTLUCK

The Freeport Prairie:
A Jewel in our Own Backyard
Presented by Mary Blackmore

Tuesday, May 7th

Potluck at 6:00 p.m. • Program at 7:15 p.m.

St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL

We will 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 some brief announcements with the program to follow at approximately 7:15.

Join us as we pay tribute to the Freeport Prairie Nature Preserve, the last of the original upland prairie known as Shannon Prairie. Located on Freeport's south edge and owned by the Jane Addamsland Park Foundation, the Freeport Prairie is home to many species of grasses and forbs, some quite rare such as Pasque Flower, Prairie Parsley, Prairie Brome and Downy Yellow Painted Cup. The history of the prairie, changes in adjacent land use and the beauty and wonder of the species that survive there will be explored.



Mary Blackmore's awareness of prairie ecosystems began with the Freeport Prairie in the 70s. Her decade-long relationship with this site continues to include stewardship, field trips, learning and . . . just looking.

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis* (above)

Goldfinches often flock with Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls. Spring males are brilliant yellow and shiny black with a bit of white. Females and all winter birds are more dull but identifiable by their conical bill; pointed, notched tail; wingbars; and lack of streaking. During molts they look bizarrely patchy.

The Northwest Illinois Audubon Society celebrates diversity in nature and among the people and communities with whom we work. We are dedicated to providing an inclusive, welcoming, and judgement-free atmosphere where people of all experience levels, identity groups, and cultural backgrounds are actively encouraged to participate.



Scan QR to visit:
nwilaudubon.org

NIAS MONTHLY PROGRAMS

Most programs are held the first Tuesday of the month (Sept.-May) at St. John United Church of Christ, 1010 Park Blvd., Freeport and begin at 7 p.m., followed by refreshments. All programs and events are open to the public.

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

PLEASE JOIN US!

Please note: schedule and location of programs are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Please see newsletter and website for up-to-date information.

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

2. Calendar Considerations
3. Programs, Events and Field Trips
4. Crane Count, Spring Stewardship, Spring Bird Count
5. Conservation Committee
6. Birdathon, Chapter Name Change
7. Ballots and Birdathon Form
8. ECBP 25th Anniversary
9. Spring Migration
10. World Migratory Bird Day
11. Website, Thank You!

About Bird: birds.cornell.edu
Bird header photo by Terry Sohl
Program photos provided

CALENDAR

- F** **April 2** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- F** **April 6** – Field Trip: Spring Mississippi Waterfowl, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (see page 3)
- P** **April 9** – NIAS 41st Annual Banquet (see page 1 for details)
- F** **April 12** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- O** **April 13** – Midwest Annual Crane Count at 5:30 a.m. (see page 4)
- F** **April 14** – Field Trip: Blooming Pasque Flowers at the Freeport Prairie, 2-3 p.m. (see page 3)
- F** **April 18** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- S** **April 22** – Earth Day Preserves Roadside Clean-up, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (see page 3)
- F** **April 24** – Field Trip: Elkhorn Creek Amphibian Listening, 6:30 p.m. (see page 3)
- F** **April 27** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- F** **April 30** – Field Trip: Mississippi Palisades Wildflower Hike, 8:30 a.m. (see page 3)
- F** **May 2** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- O** **May 4** – The Spring Bird Count (see page 4)
- E** **May 5** – Annual Birdathon Fundraiser! Your pledge is MOST welcome! See page 6 for our list of birders and for details about making your pledge that will help birds on their wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting habitat. (see page 6)
- P** **May 7** – Monthly Program: The Freeport Prairie: A Jewel In Our Own Backyard, 6 p.m. for the potluck and 7:15 for the program (see page 1 for details)

- F** **May 9** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- E** **May 11** – World Migratory Bird Day event, 10:00am to 1:00 pm, Oakdale Nature Preserve (see page 10 for details)
- M** **May 14** – NIAS Board Meeting at St. John United Church of Christ at 7 p.m.
- F** **May 17** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- F** **May 20** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- F** **May 21** – Field Trip: Spring Prairie Blooms at Elkhorn Creek, 10 a.m. - noon (see page 3)
- E** **May 23** – Full Moon Campfire at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve. We will take a leisurely stroll to observe blooming plants and resident birds at 7 p.m.; the campfire will start at 7:30. S'mores will be provided. Bring a lawn chair, flashlight and water (if desired).
The preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.). The preserve parking lot is just off of Leaf River Rd. If the weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204. Carpool from the Harbor Freight parking lot in Freeport at 6:15 p.m.
- F** **May 29** – Bird Walk, 8-11 a.m. (see page 9)
- F** **May 31** – Field Trip: An Evening of Birding at Lost Mound, 5:30-9:30 p.m. (see page 3)



Field Trip Recap:
Nicholas Conservatory
Tuesday, February 20th
Photos by: Chris Kruger

PROGRAMS,

SPRING MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATERFOWL

Saturday, April 6, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Coordinator: Anne Straight
815-938-3263 (call to register)
Carpool as indicated

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 can be observed, with males in their colorful breeding plumage. We also should see grebes, pelicans, eagles, geese, songbirds, and perhaps some cranes and swans.

Carpool from the Forreston municipal lot on the south side of the village library along HWY 26 at 9 a.m. Or meet the group at the Spring Lake parking lot just off of HWY 84 about 2 miles south of Savanna at 10 a.m.

Following our time at Spring Lake, additional downstream sites will be visited, ending at Lock and Dam #13. Bring a sack lunch if you plan to stay past noon. Expected return time to Forreston is 4 p.m.

Please call Anne to register for this trip.

BLOOMING PASQUE FLOWERS AT THE FREEPORT PRAIRIE

Sunday, April 14, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204.

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

The Freeport Prairie is an Illinois Nature Preserve located on Freeport's south side. Meet in the preserve's parking lot just off of Walnut Rd. at 2 p.m.

If weather is questionable, call Mary.

- M** Meeting
- P** Program
- F** Field Trip
- E** Event
- S** Stewardship
- O** Other

EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

EARTH DAY PRESERVES ROADSIDES CLEAN-UP

Monday, April 22, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

**Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204**

**Carpool from the Harbor Freight lot in
Freeport at 9:30 a.m.**

Join us as we commemorate Earth Day by picking up litter on the roadsides of both our Elkhorn Creek and Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserves. Both preserves have about half of their boundaries along roads, and the more heavily trafficked ones produce considerable roadside trash. We'll have orange vests for visibility, plenty of bags for trash and recyclables and work gloves. Meet in the parking area at Elkhorn Creek at 10 a.m. Bring a sack lunch, insect repellent and water. After our clean-up along Freeport and West Grove roads, we'll head east to Silver Creek, stopping first at Mary Blackmore's home to eat our lunches and for a bathroom break. At Silver Creek we'll work along West Grove and Leaf River roads. Everyone is welcome to help for only morning, only afternoon, or both. As with most roadsides, the ground is uneven and sometimes steep.

If weather is questionable, call Mary.

LISTENING TO AMPHIBIANS AT ELKHORN CREEK

Wednesday, April 24, 6:30 p.m.

**Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204**

**Carpool from the Harbor Freight lot in
Freeport at 6:00 p.m.**

Join us at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve to listen to the spring advertisement calls of frogs and toads. While 6 species of amphibians have been identified at Elkhorn Creek over the years, our best chances are for hearing the rapid metallic clicks of the Western Chorus Frog and the long musical trill of the American Toad. We'll walk near both wetland areas at the preserve that provide amphibian habitat.

Meet in the parking lot in the northeast corner of the preserve off of West Grove Rd. The preserve is located 3 miles southwest of Forreton in the SE corner of Freeport and West Grove Rds.

If weather is questionable, call Mary.

MISSISSIPPI PALISADES WILDFLOWER HIKE

Tuesday, April 30th 8:30am to 2pm

**Coordinator: Chris Kruger
815-238-9259**

Join us as we hike the trails at the Mississippi Palisades State Park. The area is rich with native woodland wildflowers including Virginia Bluebells, Large-Flowered Trillium, and Amethyst Shooting Stars, to only name a few. Bring a sack lunch.

Carpool from the Harbor Freight parking lot at 8:30 am or meet us inside the park's south entrance at 9:30 am. Planned return time to Freeport around 2 pm.

***Please confirm your attendance with
Chris at 815-238-9259.***

SPRING PRAIRIE BLOOMS AT ELKHORN CREEK

Tuesday, May 21, 10 a.m. - noon

**Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204**

**Carpool from the Harbor Freight lot in
Freeport at 9:30 a.m.**

Enjoy the beauty of blooming spring prairie species at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. We'll stroll the trails looking for anything in bloom, but especially Cream Wild Indigo and Violet Wood Sorrel. There also should be plenty of birds to observe, perhaps even some late migrants. Trails can be steep with some uneven ground.

If weather is questionable, call Mary.

AN EVENING OF BIRDING AT LOST MOUND

Friday, May 31, 5:30-9:30 p.m.

**Coordinator: Mary Blackmore
815-938-3204**

Carpool from the Forreton municipal lot on the south side of the village library along HWY 26 at 5:30 or meet the group in the parking area of the Fish and Wildlife office building (see directions below) at 6:30 p.m.

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

Directions for meeting at Lost Mound: Turn left to enter the refuge off of HWY 84, about 9 miles north of Savanna. After crossing railroad tracks, drive up the hill to the intersection and turn right. Drive about .5 mile and turn left into the parking area. There is a restroom in the parking area.

We'll car-caravan from the parking lot traveling the paved roads and do little or no walking. The timing sequence will be songbirds, Common Nighthawk, American Woodcock and at the end, Whip-poor-wills. If you want to leave the caravan for an earlier departure you may do so.

If the weather is questionable, call Mary.

TICK AVOIDANCE

Due to an exceptionally mild winter and early spring the timing of tick emergence is expected to be sooner than usual. Therefore we recommend that you use tick avoidance strategies for all spring outings. An easy method is to wear socks long enough to tuck your pant legs into, followed by using insect repellent from the knees down. Both socks and pants should be light-colored for easier tick detection, and always do a tick check when you get home.

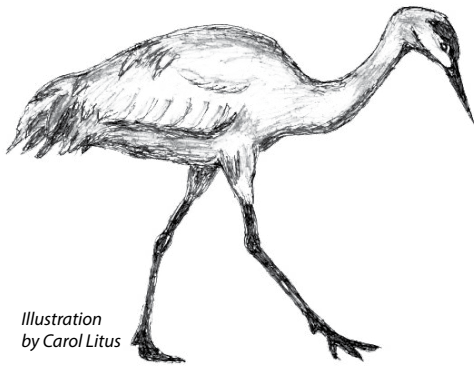


Illustration by Carol Litus

BE PART OF CITIZEN SCIENCE CALLING ALL CRANE COUNTERS

Saturday, April 13 is the Annual Midwest Crane Count and Stephenson County has over 12 sites that are monitored each year as part of the Count.

Saturday, April 13 is the Annual Midwest Crane Count and Stephenson County has over 12 sites that are monitored each year as part of the Crane Count. Participants are on site from 5:30-7:30 am to listen and watch for cranes. It is a great way to participate in a citizen science project and enjoy the early morning sights and sounds.

Notify Teresa Smith at 815-238-3963 by April 3rd if you are interested in participating in this event.

Experienced and blossoming birders are encouraged to participate. No experience with crane counting is necessary! If you are new to the Crane Count you will be partnered with an experienced counter who can help you to learn more about cranes. Inexperienced counters can also learn more about cranes on the International Crane Count website savingcranes.org/.

Individual preferences regarding carpooling will be accommodated. In past years, we have gathered together after the count to enjoy breakfast and sharing of crane stories, but have put this on hold the past 3 years. In 2024, we will plan to meet as a group after the count to share stories and turn in data sheets. Looking forward to hearing stories from the counters!

SPRING STEWARDSHIP AT OUR PRESERVES

We invite you to join us on one or more of our Spring Stewardship Sessions as we work together to reduce the numbers of Wild Parsnip, Garlic Mustard, Multiflora Rose and honeysuckle on our Silver Creek and Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserves. Early removal means not only cooler working temperatures for us, but also less biomass to handle.

Spring stewardship is especially rewarding. In addition to the enjoyable conversations with fellow volunteers and more comfortable temperatures, we get to experience a lot of "firsts": first amphibian call, first leaf-out or bloom of various plants, and the first sights and sounds of returning birds. The fresh air and exercise are added bonuses. The efforts of every volunteer is very much appreciated!

Considering both the unpredictability of plant emergence times and the increasing wild fluctuations in spring weather, we're going to use our contact list to notify volunteers of each work session in April and May. We'll do our best to provide as much advanced notice as we can. If you're available, please join us; if not, we hope you can join us another time. To get on the contact list email Kathy Weber at nosyturtle@gmail.com or call Mary at 815-938-3204.

Each session will be 2 hours long and could be morning or afternoon, depending



The July 7th, 2023 stewardship crew, at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. (L to R) Sarah Barron, Mary Blackmore, Anne Straight and Kara Gallup. | Photo by Dan Barron

upon the temperature. Tools, guidance and snacks will be provided. Volunteers should bring gloves, water and insect repellent. Be sure to wear a hat, long sleeves, long pants (light-colored is best) and socks long enough to tuck your pant legs into (for tick avoidance). **If weather becomes questionable contact Kathy or Mary as noted.**

Our Elkhorn Creek preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. Our Silver Creek preserve is located about 2 miles south of Leaf River (S. Main St. in Leaf River becomes Leaf River Rd.), with parking just off of Leaf River Rd.

SPRING BIRD COUNT LOOKING FOR COUNTERS ON MAY 4!



Illustration by Carol Litus

Once again, NIAS will be participating in the annual Spring Bird Count on May 4, 2024. The Spring Bird Count (SBC) is a yearly bird count sponsored by the Illinois Natural History Survey, and consists of volunteers conducting bird counts on the Saturday that falls between May 4 and May 10. The counts are conducted in all 102 counties in Illinois. This count has been going on for over 50 years! The website for more information is: <https://spring-bird-count.inhs.illinois.edu/>

NIAS has been participating for several years, compiling the Stephenson County count. For those familiar with the Christmas Bird Count, where the count boundary is a circle, the SBC boundary is the entire county. However, the process

is the same, count every bird you see, so we can see where the trends are going in Stephenson County.

This year, I am looking for experienced birders who can devote at least 6 hours to the count. Depending on how many volunteers I get, I will split up the county accordingly so there are no overlaps and we can get as much coverage as possible. However, if you live in Stephenson County and would like to be a Feeder Counter, let me know, as that data will help as well.

Thank you!

Carol Beatty, Compiler
Stephenson County Spring Bird Count
Cjbeatty17@gmail.com
630-284-1134

SPRING REMINDERS FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

1. Spring landscaping: wait to do your spring garden clean up until the days consistently reach 50 degrees. Many beneficial insects overwinter in our flower stalks. By leaving them standing until the days are warm, it allows insects to come out of their overwintering homes. If you can't wait that long, cut them at 8" and loosely lay them in an area where they won't get disturbed. The same temperature parameters should be considered for removing leaves in your gardens. Many insects as well as butterflies and moths overwinter in leaf debris. There is additional information on the internet if you want to learn more, including our page at: <https://nwlaudubon.org/conservation/native-plants/>.



Organizations like The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation provide educational resources and signage for urban native plantings (xerces.org).

2. If you're working on your landscaping this year, strongly consider planting native flowers, grasses, trees and shrubs species. These are tuned in to our growing season and are hosts to our native birds and insects. Many non-native species or cultivars do not offer optimal if any nutrition to our native fauna.

3. Visit a local farmers market this spring/summer or join a food buying club (i.e. Jo Daviess Local Foods) which lowers your carbon footprint and also supports local producers. Many farmers markets open up at the beginning of May. Visit the NIAS website to find the Local Food Brochure featuring many local producers. Eat Local and Eat Fresh! Another option is to grow your own veggies. Many local producers grow plants in greenhouses so you can purchase and easily plant them in your garden/yard.



Even if your garden is small, growing food yourself is rewarding and better for the planet. Photo by Sarah Barron

4. If you feed birds during the spring and summer months remember to keep them clean. Many migrating birds will use your feeder as they come through our area in April and May and keeping your feeding station clean and disease free is so important
5. Remember to put your hummingbird feeders up for those early arrivals! Keep your hummingbird feeders clean – every day or two is best. If it feels wasteful to dump the water, put out smaller quantities and keep the rest in the refrigerator. And remember NO red dyes in your sugar water!
6. Consider putting in a bird bath if you don't already have one. These provide fresh water to birds and other critters including butterflies and bees.
7. Purchase certified Bird Friendly coffee. This helps maintain habitat in Central America for our migrating birds that overwinter in the coffee growing area.
8. Contact your legislators for environmental legislation that arises. Stay in touch with the IL Environmental Council website or get on their email list to keep up to date on the most recent legislative actions that need our attention. ilenviro.org/

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF FREEPORT FIELD TRIP

to the Bald Eagle Watch event in Clinton, Iowa



On February 17th, following the conclusion of another children's bird class at the Boys and Girls Club of Freeport, a group of children, teachers and parents were accompanied on a field trip to the Bald Eagle Watch event in Clinton, Iowa, sponsored by the Stewards of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge and the US Fish and Wildlife Service and others. There were presentations with live raptors including a Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and a Barn Owl, plus a trip to Lock and Dam 13 where over 50 Bald Eagles were observed. We were also thrilled by the unexpected sighting of hundreds of Trumpeter and Tundra Swans pausing on their migration north.

Jeff and Fran Shriver photos by Gary Gordon



Birdathon

Your money goes where the birds go



This year, our chapter marks its 45th year of sponsoring a BIRDATHON fundraising event! In that time, thousands of dollars have been raised for bird conservation. Please join us in making this year's effort our best yet!

We invite you to make a pledge to any of the birders listed on the form to the right who will be participating in our chapter's annual BIRDATHON on May 5th. Your pledge, for instance 15¢, will be per SPECIES of bird that your selected birder(s) identifies on that day. Your birder will contact you after the count with their species total and collect your contribution.

Your money indeed goes where the birds go! All BIRDATHON proceeds are shared by organizations that do a tremendous job of:

- *protecting and improving bird habitat*
- *on wintering grounds, migration corridors and nesting sites,*
- *connecting people with nature,*
- *providing education opportunities for the public, and*
- *collecting scientific data through bird counts and birdbanding.*

THOSE ORGANIZATIONS ARE:

- Northwest Illinois Audubon Society***
- National Audubon's Mississippi River Initiative***
- Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin***
- Belize Audubon Society***
- Stewards of the Upper Mississippi***
- Sand Bluff Bird Observatory***

Please complete the pledge form (adjacent) ► and mail as indicated.

THANK YOU so much for your support of birds and our BIRDATHON!

A NEW CHAPTER NAME? YES!

During a special February meeting of the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society Board, a motion was made, seconded and passed to change our chapter name so as to exclude the word "Audubon." The Board did not reach this decision without a considerable amount of deliberation. Discussion on this issue started last July during the Board retreat, and it has been an ongoing item at Board meetings since then. Last fall, all NIAS chapter members were given the opportunity to provide input concerning this issue via U.S. Mail, email, an in-person meeting or a Zoom meeting. Thank you to those who responded/attended. The input received indicated a variety of thoughts and beliefs with no clear consensus. How other chapters around the country are dealing with this issue is also mixed.

It is understandable that not all members will view this decision favorably. During Board discussion, John James Audubon's

contribution to a greater appreciation of birds was expressed. However, the Board thought that his legacy of slave ownership/dealing could portray a negative image of our organization, and that the use of his name could be a hindrance to our chapter's ability to attract new members. This decision provides an opportunity to choose a new name that better reflects who we are and supports our mission.

Now comes the process of deciding on a new chapter name. We will remain the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society until a new name is chosen and officially adopted by the Board. We will remain a chapter of the National Audubon Society, even though that organization decided last year to retain the word "Audubon" in its name. To help with the naming process NIAS members are again being asked to respond.

On the adjacent page is a simple questionnaire. ► Please mark as noted and return; by U.S. Mail to NIAS, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032; by email to nwilaudubon@gmail.com; bring to the banquet on April 9th or to the May 7th general membership meeting, where there will be a special box for returning new name questionnaires. The deadline to respond is May 7, 2024.

These responses will be carefully considered and will help the Board make the new name decision at an upcoming Board meeting. Whatever the new name becomes we will remain steadfast to providing our members and our community with opportunities to learn about, and enjoy, natural history, especially the birds we love.

Richard Benning
President,

Northwest Illinois Audubon Society

2024 BIRDATHON PLEDGE FORM

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jesse Akins | <input type="checkbox"/> Gary Gordon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Richard Benning | <input type="checkbox"/> Dylan Lewis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mary Blackmore | <input type="checkbox"/> Kent Lewis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judy Corrie | <input type="checkbox"/> Laura Dufford |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jeremy Dixon | <input type="checkbox"/> Juliet and Willow Moderow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mason Dixon | <input type="checkbox"/> Bernard Lischwe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teresa Smith | <input type="checkbox"/> Kara and Bob Gallup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anne Straight | |

CLIP AND MAIL to Mary Blackmore, 9024 W. West Grove Rd., Forreton IL 61030 or include your pledge form with your chapter ballot mailed to NIAS, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032. Questions? Call Mary at 815-938-3204

A NEW CHAPTER NAME QUESTIONNAIRE

**Which chapter name(s) do you favor?
Indicate any and all that apply.**

- Northwest Illinois Bird Alliance
- Northwest Illinois Nature Alliance
- Northwest Illinois Birding Society
- Bird Enthusiasts of Northwest Illinois
- Pecatonica River Valley Bird Enthusiasts
- Pektannon Bird Enthusiasts
(Note: Pektannon is a Sauk (Sac) word for the Pecatonica River.)
- Other _____

Please mark as noted and return; by U.S. Mail to NIAS, PO Box 771, Freeport, IL 61032; by email to nwilaudubon@gmail.com; bring to the banquet on April 9th or to the May 7th general membership meeting, where there will be a special box for returning new name questionnaires. The deadline to respond is May 7, 2024. Thank you.

2024 – 2025 BALLOT FOR NIAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

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

Elected Officers

PRESIDENT

- Teresa Smith Write-in
- _____

VICE PRESIDENT

- Steve Simpson Write-in
- _____

SECRETARY

- Elizabeth Boettner Write-in
- _____

TREASURER

- Mary Blackmore Write-in
- _____

MEMBERS AT LARGE *(vote for six)*

- Terri Clark Pam Richards
- Gay Broocks Leah Dixon
- Fran Shriver Carol Beatty
- Write-in _____

Standing Committee Chairs *(appointed)*

Conservation | Laura Dufford

Programs | Don Miller

Education | Juliet Moderow

Publicity | Sarah Barron

Membership | *(open)*

Field Trips | Chris Kruger

**SEND YOUR BALLOT TO NIAS, PO BOX 771
FREEPORT, IL 61032 BEFORE APRIL 15.**

**Results will be announced in the next newsletter and
the new Board will assume its duties in mid-May.**

ELKHORN CREEK 25TH ANNIVERSARY

April-May Events at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve

April 22 – Earth Day Roadside Clean-up
see page 3 for details

April 24 – Listening to Amphibians
see page 3 for details

May 9 – Spring Bird Walk
see page 3 for details

May 21 - Spring Prairie Blooms Walk
see page 9 for details

This May marks 25 years since our chapter has owned and cared for the 43-acre Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Originally a co-purchase with the Prairie Preservation Society of Ogle County, we were able to buy out their interest in the preserve in 2010 thanks to a bequest to us from the estate of Clarence Mitchell. Much credit goes to Jim Akins and Keith Blackmore for facilitating the purchase and providing management leadership for this unique area. Over the years we've identified over 500 species.



To commemorate this 25th anniversary we plan to have many scheduled events at the preserve to celebrate the plants, animals, insects and more that call this wonderful place home. We'll begin with woodcock watches in March and continue through the year with numerous field trips, campfires, our annual July Butterfly Festival, and stewardship sessions, including both prairie seed collecting and sowing.

We encourage you to visit the Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve in 2024 for one or more of the scheduled events and/or on your own – the preserve is open dawn to dusk and is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreston at the corner of Freeport and West Grove Rds. The parking area is off of West Grove Rd.

▲ June 2015 Campfire at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve | Photo by Anne Straight.

▲ The parsnip crew during a stewardship day at ECBP.

We also encourage you to take photos when visiting. Please send any that you wish to our newsletter editor Dan Barron (email dan@driftlessflora.com) for printing in 2024 newsletters. Get to know this gem in our backyards; you'll be glad you did.

– Mary Blackmore



▲ Owl pellet at ECBP with some intact parts of the prey!
Photo by Mary Blackmore

Prairie stewardship group at Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, July 9th 2016. | Photo by Chris Kruger ▼



SAVE THE DATE!



NIAS PRESENTS

**CARRIE NEWCOMER AND PIANIST
GARY WALTERS "A GREAT WILD
MERCY - CELEBRATING KINDNESS,
COMMUNITY, AND NATURE"**

Thanks to an anonymous donor, we are pleased to announce a 2024 concert featuring Carrie Newcomer with pianist Gary Walters.

**Thursday, September 26, 2024, 7:00 p.m. at
Highland Community College**

**WE WILL HAVE MORE DETAILS IN
UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS...**

**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS!**

Jason Carter – Freeport
Kee Henze – Ridott

ENJOY THE SPRING MIGRATION

Palm Warbler by Dan Barron

From the first Killdeer singing on a crisp February day to the last Bobolink checking out nesting sites on a sunny May morning, the spring migration is a phenomenon of wonder. Truly, as many have said, this never gets old! Every year our chapter schedules spring bird walks to leisurely observe, enjoy and learn about these migratory species and the habitats they pass through or stay to nest in. These walks are suited for beginning or experienced birders and everyone in between. All are welcome!

Among the many highlights of last year's walks were great views of a juvenile Bonaparte's Gull, American Black Duck, Scarlet Tanager and both Blackpoll and Prothonotary Warblers. We also enjoyed vocalizations of both Wood Thrush and Pileated Woodpecker. An added bonus at several sites were lovely blooming wildflowers.

Expected trail conditions are described in each outing below. Restrooms are not available unless noted. We've resumed carpooling from the Harbor Freight east parking area on Freeport's south side adjacent to the McDonald's along HWY 26. For walks where there is a carpool option, the departure time is indicated.

All of the walks will begin at 8 a.m. and conclude at 11 a.m. Feel free to join or depart the group anytime during those three hours. Those who wish to will gather for lunch afterwards at a nearby restaurant. If the weather is questionable or you need further directions to the site, please call the listed leader. We hope you can join us!

April 2 – Wetland Areas of Eastern Stephenson County. This outing has little walking as we drive to each wetland area and often view the birds from our vehicles. Carpool at 7:45 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

April 12 – Duck's Misery and the southern Jane Addams Trail. During most of this outing we are walking on the level, hard surface of the Jane Addams Trail. Some observations will be made from the shoulder of Winneshiek Rd. Carpool at 7:40 a.m.

Leader: Laura Dufford (815-541-8958)

April 13 – Annual Midwest Crane Count (*details on page 4*)

April 18 – Northern Jane Addams Trail and the Orangeville Wetlands. Walking will be on the hard, level surface of the Jane Addams Trail. Restrooms are available at the trailhead in Orangeville where we begin. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Somer Elgin (815-275-0719)

April 27 – Newell Tract, Oakdale Nature Preserve, Freeport. Some parts of the trail are steep and the ground can be uneven. Meet in the parking area of the Newell Tract, the part of Oakdale on the west side of Crane's Grove Rd. Restrooms are available in the parking area.

Leader: Anne Straight (815-938-3263)

May 2 – Pecatonica River Forest Preserve (main entrance by the campground). A special bonus of this walk will be stunning wildflowers and perhaps singing frogs! Trails have some steep portions and the surface can be uneven. Restrooms are available in the parking area. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

May 9 – NIAS Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve, rural Forreton. We'll walk the mowed trails through grasslands, woodland and wetlands. The trails have some steep sections and the ground is often uneven. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

May 17 – Harry and Dorothy Espenscheid Forest Preserve northeast of Freeport. A variety of habitats will be explored including forest, savanna and the riparian areas of Rock Run Creek. There are a few steep portions of the mowed trail and the surface can be uneven. Carpool at 7:30 a.m.

Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

May 20 – Krape Park, Freeport. We'll meet in the parking lot by the dam and walk the paved path along Yellow Creek and then on some of the road shoulder downstream to the pedestrian bridge. Restrooms are in the park.

Leader: Juliet Moderow (201-233-0946)

May 29 – NIAS Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve and the Bald Hill Prairie, rural Leaf River. We'll walk the mowed trails (uneven ground in some places) of Silver Creek's woodlands and grasslands. For the last hour we will visit the nearby Bald Hill Prairie where we should be treated to displaying Bobolinks. Carpool at 7:15 a.m.

Leader: Mary Blackmore (815-938-3204)

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY 2024

FOCUS ON INSECTS AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO BIRD LIFE

The Environment for the Americas (EFTA), a non-profit organization that has been coordinating International/World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) since 2007, focuses their effort on the flyways in the Americas and strives to educate the public about migratory birds and ways to conserve them. Although their efforts are ongoing throughout the year, WMBD is a special celebration (celebrated in May and October). Every year, a new global theme is determined and this year the focus is about the importance of insects. All over the world, people celebrate migratory birds and are united by the same theme, to create a central message and promote the urgency for conserving and protecting migratory birds.

Insects are essential sources of energy for many migratory bird species, not only during the breeding seasons but also during their extensive journeys and greatly affect the timing, duration, and overall success of bird migrations.



Along their migration routes, birds actively seek out insects in fields, forests, wetlands, and various habitats during stopovers. The timing of bird migration often coincides with peak insect abundance at stopover locations, supplying nourishment for birds to replenish their energy reserves before continuing their journeys.

The loss and disturbance of insect populations at breeding sites and along avian migration routes threaten bird survival and well-being. Natural spaces like forests and grasslands that have been transformed or endangered by intensive agriculture and urban development and its effects such as light pollution can result in a decline in insect populations. Pesticides and herbicides designed to protect crops harm insects that birds rely on for food. A scarcity of energy- and protein-rich insects can hinder bird migration and breeding, leading to weakened immune systems, reduced reproductive success, and increased mortality rates for both adult birds and their offspring.

Birds play crucial roles in pollination and pest control, and a lack of insects disrupts these ecosystem functions. Overpopulation of certain insects, without natural predators from birds, can also cause outbreaks that damage plant health and agriculture.

The World Migratory Bird Day campaign in 2024 will stress the need for proactive conservation measures. This includes reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and where possible, switching to organic farming. Other measures include maintaining and connecting areas of natural vegetation which provide food and shelter for birds and other species, in agricultural landscapes.

We need to protect insects for all forms of life. This year, NIAS will be spreading the message to the public that insects are important to bird life.

Information provided by:
migratorybirdday.org/conservation-theme/



CHOOSE A CAPTION!

A Sharp-shinned Hawk waits at a feeder for 30 minutes.

Photo by: Mary Blackmore

1. *Hey, where is everybody?*
2. *Guess who's coming to dinner!*
3. *Don't mind me, I'm just a decorative feeder-topper!*
4. *Why hide? I'm proud to be a Sharp-shinned Hawk!*

ANNUAL WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY EVENT – INSECTS

Saturday, May 11 at Oakdale Nature Preserve, 4433 S. Cranes Grove Rd.

Mogle Building and Oakdale Pavilion plus the trails and Yellow Creek

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Free and open to the public.

Co-hosts: Freeport Park District, University of Illinois Extension, and Freeport Public Library

Join us for a fun, family-friendly event at Oakdale Nature Preserve. This location provides wonderful opportunities for finding birds, but also early spring insects! We will have activities for all ages and abilities.

In an open-house style event in and around the Oakdale Pavillion, we will have many hands-on activities including

crafts, games, insect identification, bird-watching, and obstacle course that fits this year's theme. We will have giveaways while supplies last.

On each hour at 10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m., and 12:00 p.m., there will be three outings to take the trails to bird watch and look for insects as well. Please meet at the Pavilion to join one of these outings led by NIAS members and Park District members.

We will ensure that the accessible trail be used for each of these outings before taking other trails.

Oakdale Nature Preserve also provides accessible parking and restrooms. There are benches along many of the trails.

Please wear appropriate footwear, in case we explore the water for aquatic insects. Bring binoculars if you have any and we will have some available to borrow.

This is a rain or shine event and hope to have plenty of shelter in case of rain.

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 _____

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

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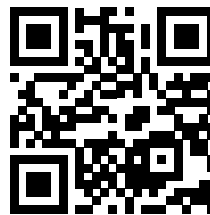
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NEW WEBSITE

Over the past months, a team of members has been working on updates for the Northwest Illinois Audubon website **nwilaudubon.org**. The site has now been updated to allow for easy viewing on a variety of devices including tablets and cell phones. The new site includes an easy to use page to identify good birding spots by season or by location throughout Northwest Illinois. With the new site you will also have the option of contacting us through the website as well as make online donations, renew your membership or sign up for programs such as our annual banquet. Check out the new website to find

details about all of our events on the calendar, identify family activities related to birds, or identify an option to participate in citizen science.

Thank you to Dan Barron, Fran Shriver, Juliet Moderow, Carol Beatty, Leah Dixon and Teresa Smith for working on the website updates.



Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to visit our website!

THANK YOU!

Tim and Teresa Smith for removing downed trees from the trails at both of our preserves.

Mary Blackmore, Chris Kruger, Anne Straight, Gary Gordon, Jeff and Fran Shriver and Juliet Moderow for leading recent field trips and events.

Kara Gallup and Mary Blackmore for overseeding the remainder of our collected seed at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve in February.

Dan Barron for designing the DEI stickers for our preserves and chapter brochures.

Teresa Smith for updating our Local Foods brochure for 2024.

Jeff and Fran Shriver, Bob and Kara Gallup, and Kee Henze for their recent donations.

Jeremy Dixon for rebuilding and installing bluebird house at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Kriss Mulder for providing funding for s'mores supplies for our 2024 campfires.

**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS
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