

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, abilities 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 Preserve Seed Processing Fall Stewardship
- 3. Programs, Events and Field Trips Sloth Storytelling Hour
- 4. Fall Seed Collection
 Community Composting
- 5. Beginning Birder Club Spring Bird Count ECBP Nest Boxes
- 6. ECBP 25th Anniversary
- 7. Thank You!

Feature Bird: Cornell Lab All About Birds Feature Bird Photos: Daniel Irons (L), Matthew Will (R)

November Program Photo: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on Anise Hyssop Photo by Alan Branhagen

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

A chapter of the National Audubon Society

Common Nighthawk Chordeiles minor

On warm summer evenings, Common Nighthawks roam the skies over treetops, grasslands, and cities. Their sharp, electric peent call is often the first clue they're overhead. In the dim half-light, these long-winged birds fly in graceful loops, flashing white patches out past the bend of each wing as they chase insects. These fairly common but declining birds make no nest. Their young are so well camouflaged that they're hard to find, and even the adults seem to vanish as soon as they land.



Cardiphonia – Utterances From the Heart

Presented by Ed Collins

McHenry County Conservation District Director of Land Preservation and Natural Resource Management

Tuesday, October 1 | 7:00 p.m.

St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL

Beyond biological inventories, species indexes, and the precise language of science lies a deeper and more profound truth driving those lives spent in the service of wild places. In a world where communication is increasingly defined by technology and artificial intelligence, the land seeks those who would learn a more ancient form of speech, taught in a language rising from the very bones of the earth itself.

We know the truth of that language intuitively, not in the synapses of our minds but in the chambers of our heart. For it is our heart that understands the entire cosmos is scripture each time we marvel at a thunderstorm, gaze into a sea of nighttime stars or feel our breath race as the cranes call overhead on a foggy spring morning. What is spoken by the heart is heard by the heart and rediscovering our hearts in conservation work empowers us to shape our own destiny and that of the future.



What's Up with Butterflies?

Presenter Alan Branhagen

Executive Director of the Natural Land Institute

Monday, November 4 | 7:00 pm

St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, IL

PROGRAM
HELD ON
MONDAY DUE TO
THE ELECTION

The program will be presented by Alan Branhagen, who will reveal to us the marvelous array of butterflies (and moths) that can be found in our area.

You will learn about the various species found here, their status, how you can attract them to your yard with their host and nectar plants. You will also learn ways to garden or maintain your landscape so that you don't harm them. Alan hopes the program inspires some reverence for these amazing insects that are sadly in trouble. What you see now is the new normal, but it is not normal. Luckily, they have resiliency to rebound if given a chance.

Alan is an all-around naturalist specializing in birds, butterflies, botany, and planning and design with nature. He is the author of three books: The Gardeners Butterfly Book, Native Plants of the Midwest, and The Midwest Native Plant Primer. These books will be available for purchase and signing after the presentation.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued on page 4)

CALENDAR

- P October 1 NIAS Monthly program, Cardiphonia - Utterances From the Heart, Presented by Ed Collins, St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, 7:00 p.m.
- **E** October 2 New Moon Campfire at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. Stroll the trails at 6:00 p.m., to observe plants and animals; the campfire follows at 6:30 p.m. Clear skies should give us a spectacular star show. S'mores will be provided. Bring a lawn chair, flashlight, insect repellent and water.

The 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. If weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204.

- October 3 Birdseed sale order deadline. Orders must be received by this date. See Annual Birdseed Sale | Northwest Illinois Audubon Society (nwilaudubon.org) for details.
- S October 6 Prairie Seed Collecting at our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Tools, snacks and guidance provided. Bring water, gloves and insect repellent.

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. The parking lot is off of Leaf River Rd. (S. Main St. crosses HWY 72 in Leaf River and becomes Leaf River Rd.). If the weather is questionable call Mary at 815-938-3204. For information on more seed collecting opportunities see the article on page 4.

- O October 17 and 18 NIAS annual Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser - deliveries and Freeport pickups at O'Mara Transport Company. Be prepared for possible delays in getting to O'Mara's due to roadwork on Adams Avenue.
- October 19 NIAS annual Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser - Stockton, Forreston, Davis and Dakota pickups only.
- **▼ October 26** Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve Geological Field Trip, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

- **E** October 27 Birdability® Event with RAMP, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Krape Park. See page 3 for details.
- October 29 Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 1:00-4:00 p.m. See adjacent column for details.
- S November 1 NIAS Preserves Reflections and Potluck Lunch for Elkhorn Creek and Silver Creek preserves volunteers at 10:30 a.m. We'll gather at the home of Randy and Nancy Ocken (815-440-5768), 3445 N. Union Rd., Polo. Bring a dish to pass; beverages and table service will be provided. We'll discuss 2024 preserves stewardship and consider ideas for 2025 before we have lunch. All preserve volunteers from stewardship or educational activities are welcome to participate. Please RSVP to Ockens if you plan to attend.
- P November 4 (PROGRAM HELD ON **MONDAY DUE TO THE ELECTION) NIAS** Monthly program, What's Up with Butterflies? Presented by Alan Branhagen, St. John United Church of Christ, Freeport, 7:00 p.m.
- S November 10 Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 1:00-4:00 p.m. See adjacent column for details.
- F November 16 Field Trip: Migrating Waterfowl on the Mississippi, 12:30-5:00 p.m. See page 3 for details.
- S November 23 Prairie Seed Processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed, 9:00 a.m. - noon, followed by a potluck lunch. See adjacent column for details.



View our calendar considerations at: nwilaudubon.org/news/calendar/

PROCESSING SEEDS FROM OUR PRESERVES

Join us for prairie seed processing at the Nienhuis Deluxe Shed on October 29 from 1:00-4:00 p.m., November 10 from 1:00-4:00 p.m., and November 23 from 9:00 a.m.-noon. For many years the Nienhuis family generously has provided this great set-up with many tables for our work, delicious snacks and, if needed, a toasty fire in the woodstove.

Seed processing is easy and fun; no experience is necessary. It's sort of like a botanical quilting bee, with lots of good conversation.

Dust masks will be provided (or bring your own) since we raise considerable dust while rubbing seedheads across screens. All mint species will be processed in an outdoor workspace.

Our traditional potluck will be held at the conclusion of our work on November 23. Bring a dish to pass and table service. Be sure to RSVP to Anita at 815-443-2401.

Directions to the Nienhuis home at 3350 S. Mill Grove Rd., Pearl City: Take Pearl City Rd. west from Freeport for about 7 miles. Turn left (south) on Block Rd. In a little over 1 mile turn left (south) on Mill Grove Rd. The Nienhuis driveway is on your right, less than ½ mile down Mill Grove Rd. and is directly across from the entrance to a campground.

FALL PRESERVES STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship will be scheduled on shorter notice by using our volunteer contact list. To get on this list call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204 or e-mail Elizabeth Boettner at elizabethjboettner@gmail.com. We will try to provide as much notice as weather permits. We plan to focus on honeysuckle and Multiflora Rose removal as well as trail-trimming at both preserves.

Volunteers should wear long pants, long sleeves and a hat. Bring water, insect repellent and gloves. Snacks, equipment and guidance will be provided.

PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS



BIRDABILITY® EVENT WITH RAMP

Sunday, October 27, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Krape Park, 1799 Park Blvd, Freeport

Location: Krape Park Gunkel Shelter and Krape Community Building

Our chapter is partnering with RAMP to host a FREE, FAMILY-FRIENDLY event to recognize Birdability® week. The event is open to all individuals.

We will have a Bird of Prey show with the Northern Illinois Raptor Rehab and Education group at 1pm. They will bring three birds of prey for their 45-minute show.

Following the raptor show, we will have opportunities to join NIAS members for a Slow Birding outing around Krape as well as a Bird Sit, where individuals can remain seated to listen and look for birds. Also during that time, local artist Jaime Elliott will offer some bird arts and crafts. Individuals can also enjoy the bird photography display from the Freeport Area Camera Club.

The location will be weather dependent, so the event will be in the Gunkel Shelter but may also use the Krape Community Building (near the boat dock/bridge) for the duration of the program. We will keep the website and Facebook event updated close to the day of the event with specific details about locations.

Birdability® Week is an annual celebration dedicated to birders with disabilities and other health concerns. It serves as a platform to share resources and ideas. fostering an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming birding community. Inspired by other inclusive celebrations such as #BlackBirdersWeek, Latino Conservation Week, and Let's Go Birding Together,

Birdability® Week aims to ensure that birding is a joyful and enriching experience for everyone.

Learn more at birdability.org

RAMP is a non-profit, non-residential Center for Independent Living (CIL) that emulates the Independent Living Philosophy with a mission to build an inclusive community that encourages individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential.

Learn more at rampcil.org

YOU ARE WANTED!

for the Sloth Storytelling Hour hosted By Northwest Illinois **Audubon Society.**

You may have heard of the "Moth Radio Hour" a program where people tell their stories? The Sloth Storytelling Hour is our version of that great storytelling program. Ours will be much more cuddly, cute and slower paced, hence the name the "Sloth Storytelling Hour." We are looking to fill a night with your personal stories in nature; of an animal encounter, a gardening escapade, an adventure ordeal, or maybe your perfect moment in nature? We would love to hear your tale! So far, the lineup is Mary Blackmore with her story, "The Hot Mama and the Cool Bird" and Don Miller's saga, "Terror on the Eleven Point River."

So, do you have a story you can't wait to tell? How do I sign up and what do I do?

Let us know that you are interested before Oct 18th. That is coming quickly so do not be slow. (That is because of the December/January newsletter deadline.)

Send your name, story title or questions to rivermiller@hotmail. com (subject heading NIAS). Your story should be around 5 minutes.

Come and tell your story Tuesday, December 2 at our monthly program. It promises to be a memorable night!

ELKHORN CREEK BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE GEOLOGICAL FIELD TRIP

Saturday, October 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Anyone who has been to the Elkhorn creek preserve can't help but be impressed by the biodiversity of the site. However, you might be surprised to learn that the same location supported an entirely different, but equally impressive ecosystem 450 million years ago, when a shallow sea covered the entire Midwest. Join retired HCC Geology Instructor Steve Simpson as we explore the preserve and the fossil rich quarry just across the road.

Carpool from the Harbor Freight parking lot in Freeport at 12:40 p.m. or meet us at the preserve at 1:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

Confirm your attendance with Chris Kruger at 815-238-9259.

MIGRATING WATERFOWL ON THE MISSISSIPPI FIELD TRIP

Saturday, November 16 12:30-5:00 p.m. **Coordinator: Mary Blackmore** 815-938-3204

We'll start our trip south of Savanna at Spring Lake Wildlife Area to view migrating waterfowl, hopefully including Tundra Swans. Several more stops will be made along the river before our last site. Lock and Dam #13.

Carpool from the Forreston municipal lot off of HWY 26 at 12:30 or meet us at Spring Lake at 1:30. Please confirm your attendance by calling Mary.



prairie seeds at our preserves for planting in less diverse and more disturbed areas of those same sites.

TWO SEED COLLECTING OUTINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED:

September 14 at Elkhorn Creek. 10:00 a.m. - noon

October 6 at Silver Creek, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

We plan to have many more collecting opportunities as weather permits, using our contact list to notify volunteers. To get on this list, e-mail Elizabeth Boettner at elizabethjboettner@gmail.com or call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204. We will provide as much notice as possible.

FREEPORT COMMUNITY COMPOSTING WANTS YOU

If you have kept up with NIAS newsletters the past two years, you know about Freeport Community Composting (FCC). This project based at the Freeport Student Garden located behind Freeport Junior High School collects food scraps from area residents that becomes rich compost used on the students' garden beds. Collecting food scraps that would otherwise be thrown away means less organic refuse in the landfill and lower methane production – a big win for environmental sustainability.

FCC's popularity has drawn attention to the importance of this worthwhile

No experience? No problem! Seed collecting is an easy, leisurely task. Novices are always welcome. There will always be one or more leaders to point out which plants to pick seed from. Equipment and snacks are provided. Typically we collect for a two-hour period of time at one of our preserves in late morning or afternoon.

Be sure to wear long pants, long sleeves and a hat. Please bring water, gloves and insect repellent. Be aware that some of our collecting areas have steep slopes and uneven ground.



household activity. Numerous NIAS members are already participating in FCC. Now, thanks to a grant from The Foundation for Northwest Illinois, two additional bays have been added to the original three at the compost site. That means easier drop-off and delivery for community composters.

To join, contact Deborah Lischwe deborahlischwe@hotmail.com or call/text at 815-275-6866.

(October 1st program continued...)

Ed's career spans thirty-eight years with the McHenry County Conservation District where he currently serves as the Director of Land Preservation and Natural Resource Management, administering restoration and land preservation efforts on 26,000 acres of open space. During that time, he has been involved in a number of interesting projects including the re-meandering of Nippersink Creek in Glacial Park, the development of the first comprehensive spatial mapping of oak loss in the region and most recently playing an instrumental role in the creation of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. Ed teaches classes in Forensic Ecology and Ecological Spirituality. His hobbies include collecting drain tile memorabilia, constructing stone labyrinths and working as a trained hypnotist.

(November 4th program continued...)

Alan Branhagen is the Executive Director of the Natural Land Institute in Rockford. Illinois: one of the nation's first land trusts and organization.

Alan was Director of Operations at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in suburban Minneapolis-St. Paul (America's 15th largest public botanical garden) from 2017-2023 where he managed Horticulture, Plant Curation, and Natural Resource Management.

For over 20 years he was the Director of Horticulture at Powell Gardens, Kansas City's botanical garden where he oversaw all horticulture and site planning as well as resource management of the 915-acre site.

Alan's career began at the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County in Rockford, Illinois where for almost a decade he oversaw all forest preserves' planning, development, and management. He was part of the beginning of the Klehm Arboretum which launched his public horticulture career. Alan's career has come full circle back to Rockford.

Alan has a Bachelor's of Landscape Architecture from Iowa State University and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Louisiana State University.

BEGINNING BIRDER CLUB

Third Saturday of the Month -September through April!

Freeport Public Library, Meeting Room A/B 10:30 a.m. to approximately 12:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Beginning Birder Club - Join anytime!

This is a fun, educational program for youths to learn about different topics about birds. Lessons will be tailored for ages 6-10. An adult must be present with the youth during the entire program. All sessions are independent from each other, so you are welcome to attend any that you are able and/or interested.

Each program will be held at 10:30 am to approximately 12:00 pm on the third Saturday of the month (to remember, third rhymes with bird!). Sessions will be held at the Freeport Public Library in meeting room A/B, but we will try to end the session outside to look for birds. Please dress appropriately for the weather as well. Please register in advance as space is limited and to help determine amount of materials needed for each session.

Contact Juliet Moderow

at moderowja@gmail.com or phone 201-233-0946

to register or by this form ▶ https://forms.gle/W16pZ5Aiyt8Hh7At8

TOPICS:

October 19, 2024 - Finding and naming birds: We will learn about habitats where birds can be found and how to identify local birds that can be found in the area.

November 16, 2024 - Bird tools: We will learn about the natural tools that birds use (beaks and feet), especially when it comes to feeding.



2024 STEPHENSON COUNTY SPRING BIRD COUNT

Once again, NIAS participated in the Annual Spring Bird Count (SBC), which is sponsored by the Illinois Natural History Survey. We are responsible for the Stephenson County count. count process is basically similar to the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), however, the SBC focuses on counting birds across the entire county. All 102 counties in illinois are part of the SBC.

This year's count took place on May 4th, and we had 2 "traveling" counters and 3 feeder counters helping out. This small but mighty team was able to count 84 species and 1242 individuals! Some of our highlights included 11 species of Warblers, including a beautiful Blackburnian Warbler. The bird with the highest count was Red-winged Blackbird, with 199 observed.

Stephenson County has count data back to 1975, so we are proud to be continuing with this important Citizen Science work!

Thanks go out to Richard Benning, Lurane Slaght, Laura Keith-Schwartz and Jeff Shriver for helping out this year. We will be looking for more counters in 2025!

- Carol Beatty

(Editors apology: this article should have printed in our August – September newsletter, but was unintentionally left out.)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Susan Smith - Dakota Iulia Reifschneider - Dakota Jeannine Hugill - Freeport Shirley Gray - Freeport

Betty Calvert - Mount Morris Betty Swalve - Mount Morris Joan Bear - Orangeville Renee Holland - Savanna Darlene Becker - Stockton

2024 ELKHORN CREEK NEST BOXES

This year Eurasian Tree Sparrows, our historic nemesis, attempted to nest in 6 of our 9 boxes, twice as many as last year. House Wrens continued to be relentless competitors, with 5 successful nestings and 1 nest failure.

We finally had a successful Eastern Bluebird nesting late in the season, after an earlier nest failure in a different box. Only 1 Tree Swallow nesting occurred and it failed. All of the nesting failures had 2 or 4 dead chicks in the nest. Since the blackfly season was again mild and of short duration, the chick mortality cause is a mystery.



▲ ECBP – Nest box monitoring in 2021, with Christian Cooper.

Many thanks go to our nest box monitors, Kara Gallup and Mary Blackmore, for their numerous monitoring visits in March through August.



▲ ECBP – Possibly a Arcigera flower moth. photo by Benjamin Ryan



▲ (header) *Eupatorium maculatum* (Spotted Joe-pye Weed) ▼ Liatris aspera (Rough Blazingstar) on August 13th photos by Bernard Lischwe



2024 Butterfly Festival (top) Anne Straight, Laura Keith-Schwartz, and John Walt 🛦 Richard Benning provides educational experiences ▲▶, Willow Moderow marvels at a bold Lepidoptera ▶



ELKHORN CREEK BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE GEOLOGICAL FIELD TRIP

Saturday, October 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m. See page 3 for more details!



▲ Hornets nest | Paul Brown showing the extensive height of the sunflowers this year ▶ photos by Teresa Smith



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 _____ Email State Zip Code If this is a gift membership, please indicate the name of the person providing the gift membership: Name

THANK YOU!

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

- Butterfly Festival volunteers who provided equipment and refreshments, set up, staffed and took down our hospitality area, led butterfly tours, provided informational materials on butterflies and much more: John Walt, Richard Benning, Tim and Teresa Smith, Laura Dufford, Judy Corrie, Anne Straight, Kara Gallup, Mary Blackmore and Chris Kruger. We really appreciate the work that you did!
- Stewardship volunteers from July and August: Kara Gallup, Bernard and Deb Lischwe, Mary Blackmore, Randy and Nancy Ocken, Judy Corrie, Ben Ryan, Paul Brown, Anita and Dave Nienhuis, Leanne Konkel-Briggs, Pam and Jim Richards, Tim and Teresa Smith, Anne Straight, and Juliet Moderow.
- Bob and Kara Gallup for providing ATV transportation for our September campfire.

- Recent field trip and event leaders/ coordinators: Chris Kruger, **Juliet** Moderow, Richard Benning and Mary Blackmore.
- Recent financial donations: Stockton Township Public Library and the Freeport PEO chapter LI in appreciation for the presentations given by Juliet Moderow.
- Tim and Teresa Smith for chainsawing and removing fallen trees across trails at our preserves.
- Kathy Weber for sending e-mails to our preserves volunteers for the past year and Elizabeth Boettner for her willingness to take on this job.
- Bryan Schoeny for his generosity and talents when doing emergency welding and repairs on our preserves mower.

BOARD MEMBERS

President | Teresa Smith Vice-President | Steve Simpson **Secretary** | Elizabeth Boettner **Treasurer** | Mary Blackmore

Board members At-Large:

Leah Dixon, Fran Shriver, Kee Henze, Gay Broocks, Pam Richards, Carol Beatty

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Membership | (open) **Programs** | Don Miller **Conservation** | Laura Dufford **Education** | Iuliet Moderow **Publicity** | Sarah Barron Field Trips | Chris Kruger

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (adhoc) Juliet Moderow and Gary Gordon

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ADDRESS CHANGES **FOR USPS**

If you have recently changed your USPS address, let us know so we can send vour newsletter to the correct address. If newsletters are returned to us because of an incorrect address, it can take several weeks for the USPS to return the item to us with your new address and thus you would receive the newsletter much later.

You can email us at

nwilaudubon@gmail.com

or call 815-238-3963 with any change of address information.



NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

When using the capitol switchboard follow the series of prompts.

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230 S. Dearborn, Suite 3892, Chicago, IL 60604 www.durbin.senate.gov/contact/

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