



OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2020

NORTHWEST ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY



A chapter of the National Audubon Society

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

Tufted Titmice eat mainly insects in the summer, including caterpillars, beetles, ants and wasps, stink bugs, and treehoppers, as well as spiders and snails. Tufted Titmice also eat seeds, nuts, and berries, including acorns and beech nuts. Experiments with Tufted Titmice indicate they always choose the largest seeds they can when foraging.

Tufted Titmice nest in cavities but aren't able to excavate them on their own. They use natural holes and old nest holes made by several woodpecker species, including large species such as Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Flicker. Additionally, Tufted Titmice also nest in artificial structures including nest boxes, fenceposts, and metal pipes.

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.

Please note: schedule and location of programs are subject to change due to COVID-19 restrictions; please see newsletter and website for up-to-date information.

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

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

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

Please join us!

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

2. Calendar Considerations
3. President's Tweet
4. Noting a Balance Butterfly "Festival"
5. Field Trip Snapshot Fall Seed Collecting
6. Rusty Patched Bumblebee Preserves and the Derecho

Questions About Your Membership?

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

Bird ID text: allaboutbirds.org
Bird ID photo: Jocelyn Anderson
Oct. 6 photo: provided
Nov. 10 photo: Kara Gallup
Illustrations by Carol Litus



Understanding the National Audubon Society "Survival by Degrees Report"

Virtual Program through Zoom
Tuesday, October 6, 7pm

NIAS past president and Highland Community College biology instructor Juliet Moderow will explain the science behind the National Audubon Society "Survival by Degrees" report that was released in October of 2019. Two-thirds of North American birds are at increasing risk of extinction

from global temperature rise. The results will be shared, with specific details from northwest Illinois. The predicted climate threats for this area will also be explained and what specific birds would be impacted. Juliet will also share how you can help and make a difference.

For all individuals who want to join the program, please email nwilaudubon@gmail.com to receive the link and password to join this Zoom program. You can also call Juliet at 815-599-3578 to receive the audio only telephone number.

We will begin at 7:00 pm, first with any chapter announcements from the president and board members. The program will follow with time for questions and discussions at the end.

NOTE: Our November meeting is being held a week later in observance of election night.

Members' Night

Virtual Program through Zoom
Tuesday, November 10, 7:00 pm

Since we have not had a meeting with our members since March 2020, we thought this would be a good opportunity to see what our members have been doing! For this virtual members' night, we will offer a chance for you to share any birding, plant or other nature adventures, stories, photographs, short videos, etc., showcasing any experiences that you might have done since the beginning of the year.

Please submit your photos to nwilaudubon@gmail.com by October 27. All photos will be added to a single slideshow. On the night of the program, the host will share each presenter's section of photos and have them speak about it to the attendees.

There are two options:

1. No more than 5 photos of favorite birds and/or native plants or other nature scenes.
2. You have 5 minutes just to tell your story if you don't have photos.

For all individuals who want to join the program, please email nwilaudubon@gmail.com to receive the link and password to join this Zoom program. You can also call Juliet at 815-599-3578 to receive the audio only telephone number.

We will begin at 7:00 pm, first with any chapter announcements from the president and board members. The program will follow with time for questions and discussions in between each presenter.



CALENDAR CONSIDERATIONS

DUE TO THE UNCERTAINTY OF FUTURE CANCELLATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19, PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE CALENDAR BEFORE ANY SCHEDULED EVENT OR CALL ANY LEADER ON THE EVENT. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE NOTIFIED BY EMAIL, PLEASE SEND A MESSAGE TO NWILAUDUBON@GMAIL.COM TO BE PLACED ON AN EMAIL CONTACT LIST.

E October 1 – Full Moon Campfire at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. We'll take a socially-distanced stroll at 6 p.m. to observe plants and animals and begin the campfire at 6:30. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, group size is limited so you must call Mary at 815-938-3204 to reserve your place.

We will provide packets of s'mores and individual roasting sticks. Please bring your own water, if desired, plus a lawn chair and flashlight.

The preserve is located about 3 miles southwest of Forreton in the southeast corner of West Grove and Freeport Rds. The parking lot is off of West Grove Rd. Bring your face covering in case there are times when you will be unable to social-distance.

E October 3 – Family Scavenger Hunt at Oakdale Nature Preserve, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Getting out in the natural world can be a great way to relieve the sense of isolation caused by the pandemic. This activity will encourage family units to get out and about at Oakdale searching for certain tangible and intangible things.

Meet at the parking lot near the Mogle Center anytime within the above stated time parameters to get your scavenger hunt list. Wearing masks and physical distancing will be requested when getting your list and should you find yourself in close proximity to other family units.

Participants are asked to call Richard Benning (815-865-5279) to register for this activity in case it becomes necessary to limit participation.

M October 6 – Monthly Program: Understanding the National Audubon Society "Survival by Degrees Report" 7:00 p.m., Virtual Program through Zoom

O October 15 and 16 – NIAS annual Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser: Freeport pickups and deliveries. If you did not receive a Bird Seed Sale flier, call Tim at 815-835-5109 or visit nwilaudubon.org to print out a copy.

O October 17 – NIAS annual Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser: Stockton, Forreton, Davis and Dakota pickups only.

F October 27 – Field Trip: Pecatonica Wetland Forest Preserve, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Leader: Richard Benning (815-865-5279)

Join us for an October field trip to the Pecatonica Wetland Forest Preserve. Our focus will be on the migrating waterfowl visiting the oxbow lakes of the Pecatonica River.

Call Richard at 815-865-5279 for reservations and to get directions.

M November 10 – Monthly Program: Member's Night, 7:00 p.m., Virtual Program through Zoom

F November 14 – Field Trip: Migrating Waterfowl on the Mississippi River, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Registration is required by calling Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204.

Due to the repairs closure of Spring Lake, we'll meet at the overlook opposite the FWS Ingersoll Wetlands Center on River Rd. about a half-mile off of HWY 84 south of Savanna. There should be migrating ducks passing through from their northern nesting grounds, and hopefully some Tundra Swans. We'll make several stops along the river for additional viewings, ending the trip at Lock and Dam 13 just south of Thomson.

COVID-19 Precautions: There will not be carpooling. Equipment, including spotting scopes, will not be shared. Bring your face covering in case there are times when you will be unable to social-distance.

M Meeting

F Field Trip

E Event

O Other



August 14th Lake Carroll Prairie Club tour attendees enjoy their lunch under a cottonwood tree. | photo by Kara Gallup

Every Vote Counts

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, such as climate change, in your decision process as you vote for the candidates of your choice on November 6.

THE PRESIDENT'S TWEET

Greetings! As I sit here and type this, I am able to watch the very hungry Ruby-throated Hummingbirds filling up with nectar as they get ready to take their long journey to Central America later next month. I realize how lucky we are to live in the best part of Illinois where we get to see some wonderful birds which reside here and also all the beautiful birds which migrate through this area. The Southern migration has begun and will continue for a while. NW Illinois is a wonderful region and there are opportunities all around to observe the big movement. In addition to a beautiful region, we have the best members who make up NIAS. That's what makes this whole COVID lockdown so hard. We don't get to see each other like we normally would have done in the past few months. But if we continue following the guidelines set by the state, eventually we will see some progress.

We also happen to have some of the best Board Members who are wonderful servants and are committed to finding our way through the difficulty of not being able to meet as a full group. We did take the opportunity on August 28th and in full conformity with COVID guidelines, to hold our annual retreat. The Board met outside in perfect weather near Debate Square in Freeport and did some brainstorming about the future. It was good to see each other in person, even if we were always 6 feet apart. It was so much better than seeing little faces on a computer screen as we have held several Zoom meetings prior to the retreat. Masks prevented us from seeing each others mouths , but you can see a smile in someone's eyes, so that was good. Unfortunately the current restrictions in place are going to prevent the entire group to meet in person for the time being. But we do have a lot of great ideas coming up which will at least allow us to meet in a virtual setting.

We discussed our plans for the remainder of 2020 (only 4 months left to go!!) By the time you read this we will have held a virtual program on September 1st. The

October event will also be a virtual event as well. If you need assistance in how to view or be involved in those virtual meetings please contact any one of us by phone or email.

Our November program will be one week later than normal (the 2nd Tuesday of the month) as November 3rd is election day (Anybody ready for this election to be over??).



*2020 Board Retreat, held August 28th in Debate Square, Freeport
photo by Pam Richards*

Speaking of Election Day, I can't stress enough how important it is to get out and vote. Or make arrangements to vote by mail or by absentee ballot. Voting is such a privilege and is a right we should all exercise. There are a number of important decisions on the ballot especially locally and regionally. If you need any assistance getting to the polls please let me know and we can make arrangements to get you there.

Finally, I just want to encourage everyone to continue to stay safe, wear your masks, practice social distancing and we look forward to the day when we can gather together again as a group. If you need anything feel free to call or email

*Gary G Gordon
815-541-1228
gary.gordon@comcast.net*

NOTICING A BALANCE

During the pandemic many of us have had more time due to both cancelled events and gatherings with friends and family. More time can mean that we notice more things, especially in nature. When we notice more things we often learn new things. This has been the case with me as I've worked in my garden this summer.

Tomato hornworms are familiar to most gardeners. Less familiar is the fact that the caterpillar with the insatiable appetite for your tomato leaves, flowers, small stems and sometimes unripe fruit ultimately develops into the amazing Five-Spotted Hawkmoth (*Manduca quinquemaculatus*), a large sphinx moth, sometimes referred to as a hummingbird moth for its hovering behavior as it feeds on tubular flowers.

Well, as awesome as that is, I really like my tomatoes, and am a bit greedy about getting all of the fruit that I can. So when I began discovering the larvae, they "went for a swim" in my container of soapy water, joining the Japanese Beetles that I had picked off of my grapevines. I didn't get all of the larvae. As most gardeners

can attest, you find the tomato damage so much easier than the cause of said damage, the green caterpillar that blends in beautifully with the tomato foliage.

One day when I spotted significant damage on a tomato plant I began my search for the larva. This time it was easy to find. The caterpillar had been parasitized by a braconid wasp (*Cotesia congregata*). Dozens of white cocooned wasp larvae were attached to the hornworm. My search and destroy mission now had turned into one of curiosity.



Dozens of white cocooned wasp larvae were attached to the hornworm. | photo by Mary Blackmore

The wasp, which is only about 1/8 of an inch long, lays its eggs in the hornworm. Those eggs then hatch into larvae that, when fully mature, tunnel to the outside of the caterpillar's body and each spins a whitish cocoon. Thus parasitized, the hornworm will die, but it sometimes

takes weeks. By the time I got around to photographing the parasitized caterpillar it was no longer green, but brown and shrunken, well into the process of dying.

I couldn't decide which was worse for the caterpillar – "going for a swim" or being paralyzed and parasitized.

What I did decide was that it's OK to not find all of the caterpillars. Fewer tomatoes seems a perfectly fine trade-off for the perpetuation of both Five-Spotted Hawkmoths and braconid wasps.

Mary Blackmore

THE BUTTERFLIES HAD THEIR OWN FESTIVAL

The butterflies were there, even if we were not.

On July 24, the day before what would have been our annual Butterfly Festival, several chapter volunteers conducted a butterfly survey at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve in order to avoid a data gap from the cancelled festival.

For a couple of hours in the afternoon, each volunteer walked about 1/3 of the trails, tallying species as they went. Afterwards they all sat in the shade of the kiosk and vehicles, socially distanced, to create the total list.

The number of butterfly and skipper species seen was 14, tying for the 3rd highest count since the first festival in 2010. Species observed included Meadow Fritillary, Clouded Sulphur, Monarch, Buckeye, Viceroy, Tiger Swallowtail,

Black Swallowtail, Cabbage Butterfly, Question Mark, Painted Lady, Red-spotted Purple, Pearl Crescent, Silver-spotted Skipper and European Skipper. Also two other species – Red Admiral and Eastern Tailed-Blue – were seen during the week of the count day.

Our counters were initially puzzled by the abundance of Cabbage Butterflies, considering the non-garden habitat. However, according to the authors of Butterflies of Illinois, in addition to cultivated crucifers, caterpillar host plants can be wild crucifers, including Garlic Mustard. Since that plant experienced a banner year locally and at the preserve, we assumed that accounted for -at least in part - the explosion of Cabbage Butterflies.



Tiger Swallowtail on Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) | photo by Mary Blackmore

Many thanks go to Richard Benning, Mary Blackmore and John Walt for tolerating the heat and providing this important data.

Mary Blackmore

On a beautiful August morning NIAS members visited the Lake Carroll (L.C.) Prairies located between Pearl City and Lanark.

Covid-19 procedures with masks and social distancing were followed. Hosted by the Lake Carroll Prairie Club; Becky Janopoulos gave a history of the LCB units 1 & 2, Remnant Prairie, and Edgewater Circle Prairie. The LCB's were a joint effort of the Stephenson County Pheasants Forever, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and the Lake Carroll Association in 1989. Becky also noticed prairie plants along the ATV trail there. Pam and Jim Richards accompanied her to visit these sites and decided to form the club to preserve and protect these lands. The remnant was realized following Jim's discovery of the *Asclepias viridiflora* (a rare green milkweed) and *Spiranthes* orchids. Visits by an IDNR heritage biologist and a Northwest Illinois Prairie Enthusiast seed



(L) Harlan and Judy Corrie saunter down the prairie trail. | (R) A group up on the remnant to see it and the rare *Asclepias viridiflora*. photos by Pam Richards

specialist confirmed that it is a remnant prairie.

Tom Young gave a report on the bluebird boxes he donated to both prairies. There was a good success rate with two sets of fledglings on the LCB 1 prairie and at least one on the remnant. Tom and his wife Jan monitor over 60 boxes and he states it has not been a good year for the bluebirds.

After the tours; Pam led members in separate cars to view the newest Edgewater

Circle Prairie and then to their prairies at their home. It was exciting that Mary Blackmore discovered a new plant for us on the remnant: *Gaura biennis* (Biennial gaura or beeblossom) a very pretty and pink/white flower. We have been very thankful for Mary and the NIAS stewards for their expertise, training, advice, and kinship on our work days with them. Wonderful people!!

Pam Richards

**WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS!**

Jim and Melissa Edwards
– Sterling

Grant Wiegert
– Savanna

Linda Hastings
– Freeport

Josephine Graybill
– Freeport

Andrew Dvorak
– Freeport

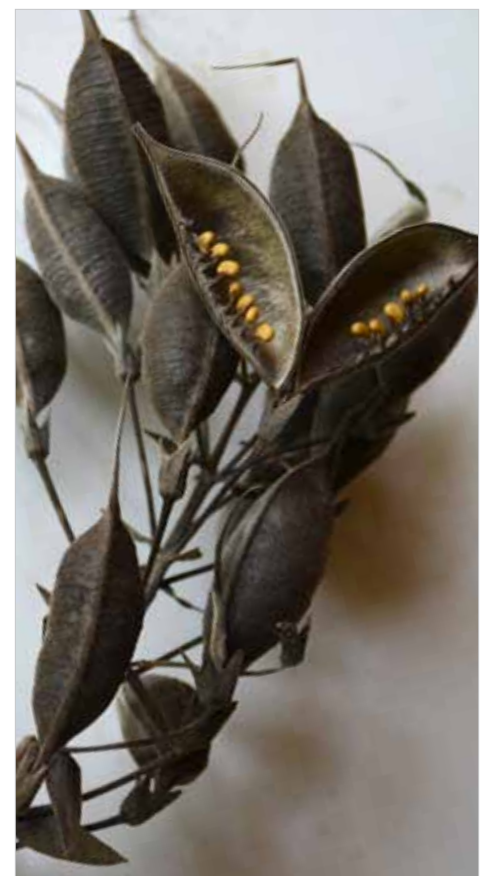
**PRAIRIE SEED
COLLECTING**

It's not too late to get on our contact list for fall prairie seed collecting.

To sign up e-mail Nancy Ocken at rnocken@gmail.com or call Mary Blackmore at 815-938-3204. We hope to have many collecting opportunities and to provide as much notice as possible.

No experience? No problem! Seed collecting is an easy, leisurely task. Novices are welcome. There will always be one or more leaders to point out which plants to pick seed from. Equipment is 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, insect repellent, your face covering for when social distancing isn't possible and a snack, if desired.



Pods and seeds of Cream Wild Indigo (*Baptisia bracteata*) collected from our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve. | photo by Mary Blackmore



Bombus affinis or Rusty Patched Bumblebee | photo by Pam Richards

'IT'S ALL THE BUZZZZZ'

Ecologists: Be on the lookout for an endangered bee species: *Bombus affinis* or Rusty Patched Bumblebee. They are a tad larger than other bumblebees but have a rust-colored patch on the middle of their second abdominal segment. Their first and last sections are the typical yellow. This species has declined by 87% from its habitat range. It is an excellent pollinator

for cranberries, crops like plum, apple, alfalfa, and onion besides the many wildflowers and other vegetables. Some of these plants require a 'buzz' pollination made by bumblebees. (Xerces.org)

After the Xerces Society sponsored a petition in 2013, the rusty patched bumblebee was listed as an endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 2017. Several reasons are attributed to their decline including the spread of pests and diseases by the commercial bumblebee industry, insecticides and pesticides, habitat destruction, grassland and prairie losses, livestock grazing, invasive species, and climate change.

Pam Richards, Audubon member, has spotted the *B. affinis* on her front yard prairie at Lake Carroll. Another property owner has found them on her prairie and encouraged Pam to report it for research purposes. If you are lucky enough to spot one take a photo and submit it to either

bumblebeewatch.org or beespotter.org. We both reported our findings and as we are more than five miles apart; this indicates there are two separate colonies. Look for them on Bergamot (beebalm), anise hyssop, goldenrods, thistles, Joe Pye weed, saw-tooth sunflowers, etc. Good luck!

Pam Richards



Silver Maple across a trail | photo by Mary Blackmore

OUR PRESERVES AND THE DERECHO

On August 10 a powerful complex of thunderstorms – a derecho – with hurricane-force wind gusts roared through northern Illinois. Fortunately our preserves came through with minimal damage.

At our Silver Creek Biodiversity Preserve only a couple of dead trees fell across trails in the north woods. Our policy, generally, is to only remove the portion of a downed tree that is blocking a trail.

Our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve didn't fare as well, but had better tree survival than one might have expected considering its proximity to the village of Forreston which sustained significant damage. Seven trail areas had varying amounts of blockage from fallen trees or large limbs. Most of those trees were live species of cherry or maple. Additionally our original signage by the parking lot blew down.

Chapter volunteers worked rapidly to assess the damage, clear the trails and repair the sign. A crew also spent time clipping trailside herbaceous vegetation that had blown over trails. Many thanks go to Tim and Teresa Smith, Mary Blackmore, Jeremy Dixon, Kara Gallup, Judy and Harlan Corrie, Nancy Ocken and Paul Brown.

Would you like to join Audubon as a NEW Member or give a GIFT membership? *Two types of membership are available:*

1. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and National Membership
includes this local newsletter, local mailings and the national "Audubon" magazine.

_____ National Membership \$20

All renewals for national memberships need to use the national membership form.

2. Northwest Illinois Audubon Society Local only Membership
includes this newsletter and other mailings from our local chapter.

_____ Local Only \$15

Name of new member or gift recipient _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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

Name _____

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

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Laura Dufford and Heidi Thorp

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THANK YOU!

Preserves stewardship volunteers for July and August: Nancy and Randy Ocken, Jeremy Dixon, Mary Blackmore, Kara Gallup, Juliet Moderow, Paul Brown, Judy and Harlan Corrie, Keri Rainsberger, Teresa Smith, Anita Nienhuis, Bob Curtis, Don Miller, Anne Straight, Pam and Jim Richards, Bernard Lischwe, Laura Dufford and Molly Doolittle.

Pam Richards and Mary Blackmore for monitoring the nest boxes at our Elkhorn Creek Biodiversity Preserve.

Dave Derwent for his many, many hours of independent work on the Freeport Prairie Nature Preserve

Recent field trip leaders and assistants: Richard Benning, Pam Richards, Becky Janopoulos and Tom Young.



**Northwest Illinois
Audubon Society**

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When using the capitol switchboard follow the series of prompts.

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