

Press Release

December 10, 2024

New Name: Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance

Our Board is excited to announce our new name! After much discussion among the Board with input from the membership, we are ready to share the new name which represents our organization: **Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance**. The new name is just one of the many things our organization is doing to help make all people feel welcome at our events.

In 2022, the National Audubon Society Board investigated the potential to change their name. After much discussion, in 2023 the National Audubon Society announced the National Audubon Society would retain its name and put more emphasis on their efforts to be more inclusive and diverse. The staff at National Audubon is now more diverse and they provide many resources to the local chapters to help them be more inclusive of our diverse community.

Changing the name was not something our Board took lightly. Our Board members started talking about a name change in 2023. We wanted input from the membership and appreciate the feedback that we received from our two focus groups held in October 2023 and feedback from the solicitation of potential names in our February/March 2024 newsletter. The feedback from members and diligence of the Board helped us to identify a name that reflects our common interests and send a message to the public that we are welcoming and inclusive.

We understand that the new name will take a little time to get used to, and excluding the Audubon name will omit the namesake of someone whose bird art influenced those who formed the National Audubon Society. Our goal with changing the name is to send a message to the public and to our members that we are a progressive organization that wants to be more inclusive and diverse as our community changes. Since our formation in 1972, we have had three different names including: Stephenson County Audubon Society, Northwest Illinois Audubon Society and now Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance. Each new name progressively increased a wider group of people with a common interest.

Will we remain a chapter of National Audubon Society?

Many chapters of National Audubon Society have made the decision to change their name and many have made the decision to include the word "Alliance" in their name. The word "Alliance" defines what we are. Our members work together for a common interest in birding and preserving nature. Our activities focus on our common interest in birding and preserving nature. And, our two Biodiversity Preserves bring us together with our two common interests of birding and nature.

We will continue to be a chapter of National Audubon Society just as many other chapters across the country have done with their name change that includes the word "Alliance". Being part of National

Audubon Society is important so that we have additional resources to help our chapter continue to grow. National Audubon offers many educational sessions for board members and provides us with the opportunity to connect with other chapters of National Audubon Society to make our organization strong and inclusive.

People who are currently National Audubon Society members and live in our geographic area will continue to receive our 6 wonderful newsletters each year with opportunities to participate in our events and invite friends from our diverse community.

As in the past we will continue to offer membership at the local-only level for those folks who want to support Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance and our efforts to educate the local community about birds and nature and support our efforts at our two Biodiversity Preserves.

What is next for Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance?

The Board is working on the numerous documents that need to be updated and we will continue to promote our new name to the greater Northwest Illinois community of bird and nature lovers. A new logo and our website will be updated with the new name soon. You will see our email address change to nwilbirdandnaturealliance@gmail.com and our web address change to www.nwilbirdandnaturealliance.org. Facebook will also update to the new name without creation of a new page. Over the next several months, signage throughout the community will be updated to reflect our new name.

As we have done since our chapter's inception, we will continue to offer monthly programs, bird outings, and field trips that feature diverse aspects of nature, birdseed sales, prairie and woodland stewardship, and youth and family programs to educate our community on the benefits of nature. We will also continue to support other organizations both in our corner of Northwest Illinois as well as across the world including an annual Birdathon donation to Belize Audubon Society that is the winter home for many of our favorite birds. We do all of these things because of your supportive and a very active membership. Thank you for supporting our efforts as Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature Alliance with the common interest of birds and nature.