

# Thorn Creek News

Spring 2017

## The Harbinger



For some years now my husband and I have had a minor disagreement about what constitutes the first sign of spring.

In the Chicago suburbs and small Wisconsin and Pennsylvania towns where I grew up everyone agreed that this event occurred with the arrival of the first robin. My friends and I learned to recognize their distinctive “*cheer-up, cheer-up, cheery*” call and eagerly listened for it at the first hint of warm weather. Every year we sought to be the winner in an undeclared contest to spot the first robin hopping across someone’s lawn looking for earthworms and other delicacies.

After moving to Will County, I changed my viewpoint somewhat about what heralded winter’s end. It was still a bird I was trying to spot, but not the American Robin. For the past 3 decades living in a woods that is surrounded by marshes and fields, the avian presence that signaled the new season for me was a different one: the Red-winged Blackbird. There was a marsh next to the train station where I began my daily journey to work. I could count on seeing one there before any robin had made its appearance. Perhaps because of the early hour or the location, I was usually the first one I knew to spot one. When that momentous sighting occurred, I couldn’t wait to get on my cell phone and report that spring was indeed upon us.

As with the robin, I would often hear it before I saw it. Like most birds, redwings have several calls. Their signature, and most familiar, one is “*conk-a-reeee*” with a long buzzing trill at the end. Once you hear that, the singer is easy to spot. A glossy jet-black bird with bright red shoulder patches, they prefer to perch as high as possible, whether that be on a tree branch or last year’s cattail. They fluff out their wings to better display that deep red patch and the tawny yellow feathers that edge it, throw their heads back and send their call trilling out across the fields for everyone to hear.

About that disagreement I mentioned earlier: my husband does not agree that the sighting of a single blackbird is spring’s harbinger. He has always insisted that it is the “event” of a flock of blackbirds appearing in our woods and marshes that signifies winter’s end. Having grown up under a tradition of sighting the earliest, usually solitary, robin I have clung to an initial sighting as my touchstone. I would joke that he had just set a different standard for spring’s beginning because I had such a good opportunity to spot that first bird every year. Then something happened to change my mind.

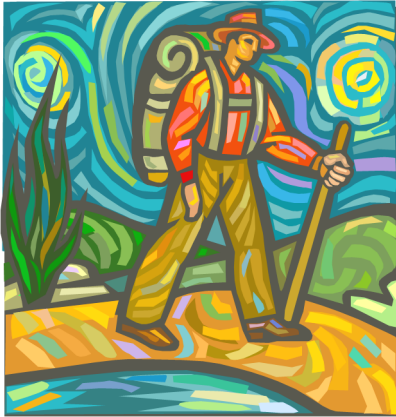


Having retired, I no longer take the train in to Chicago each day. Which means that I was at home this year when the first cloud of migrating blackbirds descended on our woods at February's end. Seemingly out of nowhere, hundreds of birds dropped out of the sky to occupy every tree branch and bush and garden stalk in sight. It was a flock of male Redwings and Common Grackles traveling together. And they wanted everyone to know they had arrived. The Redwings threw their signature *conk-a-ree* call to the skies. The Grackle's competed with a loud "*readle e-e-eak!*" while others kept up a raucous, chattering "*chack! chack! chack!*" The woods was engulfed in a wild, overwhelming, exhilarating cacophony of sound. I hurried outside and stood gazing upward in awe at their sheer numbers, at their boldness, and at their absolute certainty that they were exactly where they wanted to be at that moment in time. Suddenly, with a great wooshing sound, they descended to the forest floor as if responding to some unseen signal. Hundreds of dark forms swept across the ground with military-like precision, moving in row upon row through a winter's worth of fallen oak leaves, trailing vines and downed branches.

Most were foraging for insects and seeds hidden under the leaves. The grackles, however, had a built-in tool that gave them a singular advantage in our oak woods: a special, tooth-like keel on the inside of their upper mandible. It allowed them to pierce the acorns, twirl them inside their beaks and saw them open to consume the nut inside. They took full advantage of this evolutionary gift as they continued their march through the forest.

The birds stayed for several hours, rising back up into the trees and then returning to the feast again until they had had their fill and rested enough to move on to their next destination. All throughout the afternoon their piercing, chattering calls filled the woods and let everyone know, in no uncertain terms, that **THEY HAD RETURNED!** Spring had indeed arrived.

-Kendra Reinshagen



## Building and Trail Plans at Thorn Creek Woods

This year Thorn Creek Nature Center plans to do needed nature center building repairs and painting, and also scout and plan a new trail connector rather than pursue a replacement south bridge.

“We are excited to move forward on these projects this year. So many Friends members, volunteers, supporters and agencies contribute their time and funds to maintain Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve – a beautiful regional resource,” said Judy Dolan Mendelson, chair of the Thorn Creek Management Commission.

This economic and environmental decision came after detailed reviews of the projects at the January meetings of the Thorn Creek Management Commission and the Friends of Thorn Creek Woods Board of Directors. Many factors were considered.

Completing work on the nature center building is a major concern to all. In the last few years the building’s windows were repaired and replaced, the roof replaced and steeple repairs done. The next vital task is to repair the rotted beams and siding, and then to paint the building’s exterior.

“Today we have three and a half miles of exceptional trail experience here at Thorn Creek Nature Preserve. Even without the old south bridge, hikers walk the Woodland Trail to the old bridge site and then return, maybe taking a side trip to Owl Lake. A new connecting trail will be scouted to make the Woodland Trail a full loop again,” said naturalist April Richards. She added, “just this past winter volunteers repaired a badly eroded trail section on the Nature Center Loop. We’re planning a Clean Up Day and three Trail Workdays from March through June to continue trail improvements.”

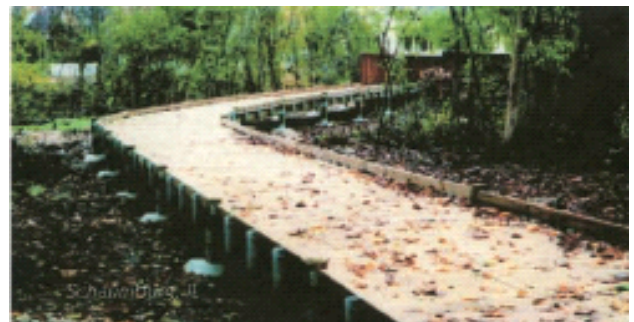
The site for any south bridge replacement would present many difficulties, especially the long span needed and adjusting for the west bank being a full two feet lower than the east bank.

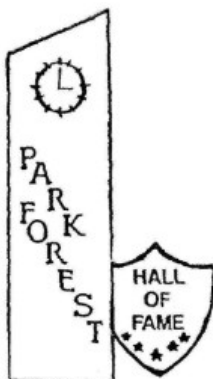
There are also concerns about the impacts to the woods expected with building any new bridge.

Importantly, there is no one good complete affordable design. The six designs available range from \$27,000 to 50,000 plus additions plus permits. Additions mean ways to accommodate the much lower west bank and also the costs of boardwalk type ramps for a new bridge. Permits will be needed from the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission and then probably by Army Corps of Engineers. The ACOE permitting takes time, and may include hiring engineers and possible cost in the tens of thousands for the process.

Money for building repairs, any possible new south bridge and for trail repairs come from the Capital Fund established by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods to support the preserve and allow the Commission’s small budget to be used for staffing and dialing operations. The Capital Fund currently has \$25,569.92 through generous donations large and small.

“The directors on the Friends of Thorn Creek Woods Board strongly suggested that we make the nature center building our priority now since it is badly in need of repairs and painting. And since we have limited funds, we recommended foregoing the south bridge rebuilding for now,” said volunteer and Board Director Penny Chamberlain.





## Park Forest Hall of Fame Inductees

Our very own Carl and Peggy Glassford, and Peg and Jack Donohue are among those being inducted into the Park Forest Hall of Fame 2017.

The ceremony will take place Sunday, April 23, 3 p.m. at Freedom Hall, 410 Indianwood Boulevard.

Congratulations to these long time Friends of Thorn Creek Woods for their efforts and support through the years.

## Education On The Wing



Thorn Creek Audubon Society presents  
the Illinois Raptor Center's program **Education on the Wing**  
with 4 live predator birds in attendance.

April 5, 7:00 p.m.

Freedom Hall, Park Forest

(no fee required – children encouraged)

The IRC has presented hundreds of programs to thousands of people over the years. Many consider the IRC the expert in conservation and environmental education presentations. Many permanently injured birds of prey live full time at the IRC. These birds serve the community as Wildlife Educational Ambassadors.

Jacques Nuzzo, Jane Seitz and these beautiful ambassadors travel across Illinois with lively, entertaining conservation and environmental programs. IRC also travels with bioartifacts (feathers, wings, skulls, feet, eggs, etc.) and real life stories to encourage youth (and adults) to get outside and enjoy nature.

## Thorn Creek Woods

247 Monee Rd, Park Forest  
708-747-6320

tcwoods.org

Thorn\_creek@att.net

Nature Center open Friday and  
Sunday, noon to 4 pm

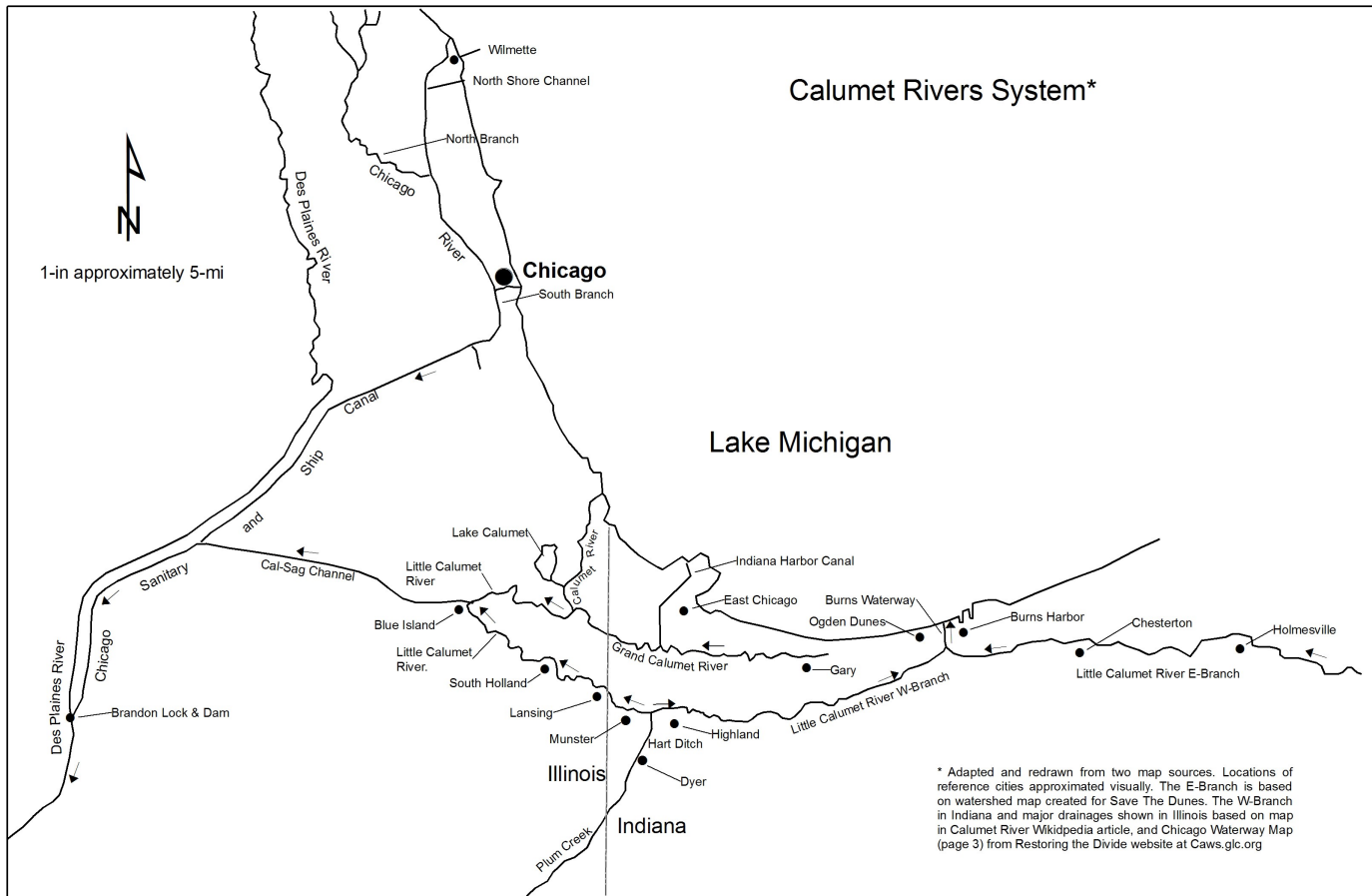
Trails Open Dawn to Dusk

Wednesday Morning Walkers	Wednesdays 9-10:30 am
March into Spring Hike	Sunday April 9 1-3 pm
Earth Day: <b>Soil</b>	Saturday April 22 Noon- 4pm
Trail Workdays Noon-4pm	April 30 May 14 June 24
Flower Moon Hike 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Friday May 10
Wildflower Hike for Kids	Saturday May 20 1-3 p.m.
Thorn Creek Chamber Players	Friday June 2 7-9 p.m. \$10/person
Historic Farm Walk	Sunday June 4 1-3 p.m.
Friends of Thorn Creek Woods: <b>Bats</b>	Sunday June 11 1-3 p.m.
Hidden Ponds Hike	Saturday June 17 1-4 p.m.

Newsletter editor:  
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Richton Park, IL 60471,  
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## A River Runs Through It

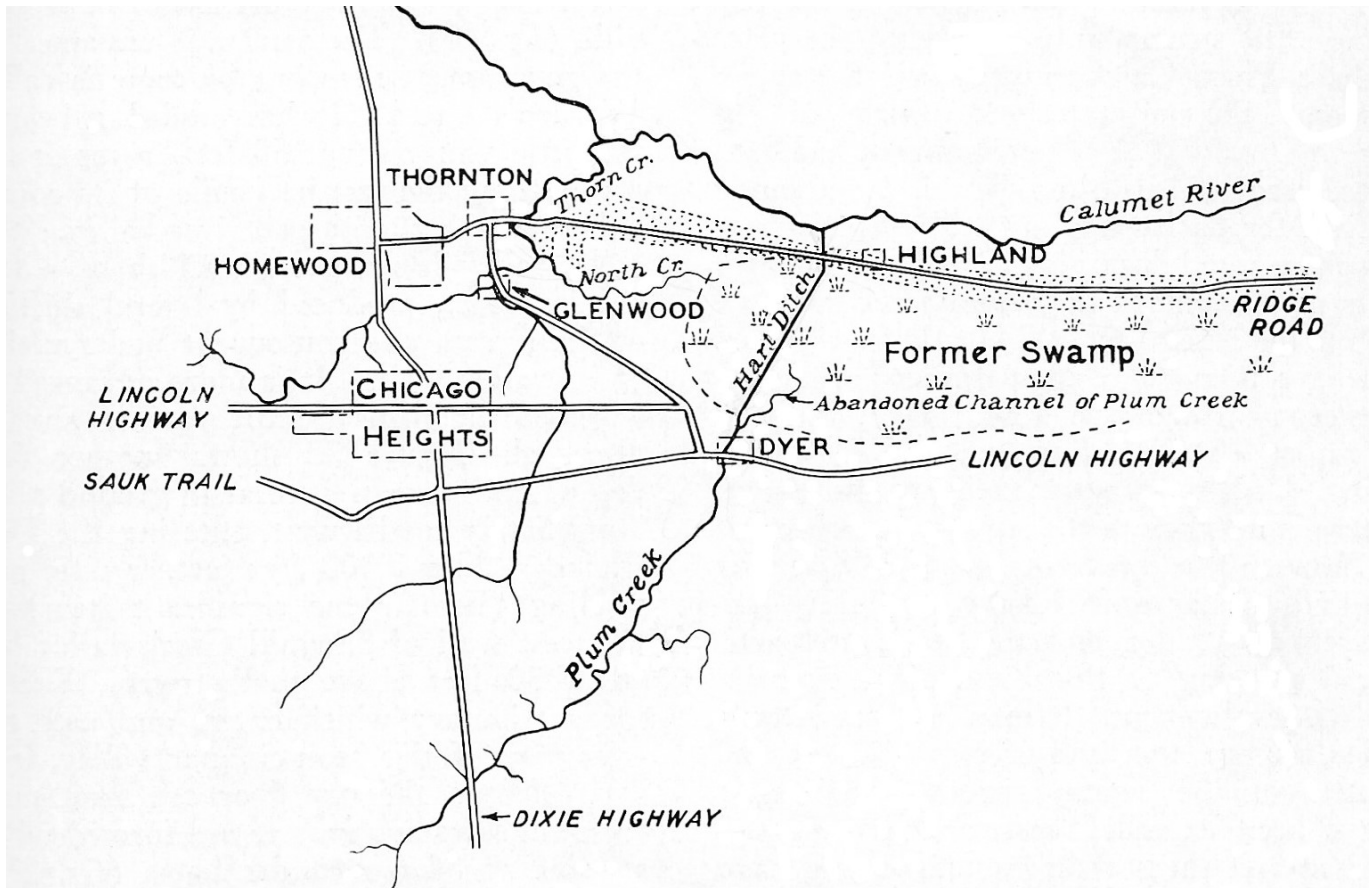
The title for this essay is obviously borrowed from the story written by Norman Maclean and the 1992 film adaptation directed by Robert Redford: a story set in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Montana near a pristine river revered for its fly fishing. But the river for my story is not pristine and most people probably pay little attention to it until heavy rains cause the river to swell and it threatens to overtop its levees. The river in my story is the Little Calumet River. It originates in La Porte County, Indiana and extends westward through the communities of Portage, Lake Station, Gary, Highland, Griffith, Munster and Hammond, Indiana, then westward in Illinois through Lansing, Calumet City, South Holland, Dolton, Harvey, Riverdale, Phoenix, Dixmoor and Burnham to its juncture with the Grand Calumet River and Cal-Sag Channel near Blue Island. To see this river in its natural glory would take us back to the days of early fur trade exploration and settlement, for it is a river that has been subjected to hydrological modifications and decades of abuse and pollution.



Originally the Little Calumet flowed west from its beginnings in Indiana, then in Illinois made a complete reverse turn, flowing back east along the Grand Calumet River channel and emptying into Lake Michigan in the Miller Beach area of Gary, Indiana. Industrial development in the Calumet Region began in the 1870's and by 1890 much of the system was heavily polluted with industrial wastes and sewage. In part to protect Lake Michigan which provided the drinking water for Chicago, and in part to facilitate barge transportation, hydrological alterations were made that reversed flows to the west from Lake Michigan along the Grand Calumet River channel to eventually empty into the Des Plaines River.

The history of all the hydrologic alterations in the Calumet Region is complex and a full treatment is beyond the scope of this essay. So herein I describe only a few that have had the most significant impact to the Little Calumet River. One of these is the Cal-Sag Channel that was constructed over an 11-year period from 1911 through 1922 to serve barge traffic, but also to divert storm and waste water from emptying into Lake Michigan. This was the major alteration that reversed flow westward to the Sanitary and Ship Canal in Joliet, and southward through the Des Plaines River, then eventually to the Gulf of Mexico via the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers.

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Geology of the Chicago Region Part I - General, J. Harlen Bretz, Bulletin No. 65, Part I, 1939, Urbana, Illinois, 2nd printing, 1953.

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The other remarkable change was the creation of Hart Ditch. In the early days of settlement, the land south of Ridge Road and north of Lincoln Highway was a large marshy swamp (Cady Marsh) that extended from just north of Dyer, east of Highland, Indiana to as far east as Griffith and Schererville, and extended westward into Lynwood and Lansing. Ridge Road represented the old beach ridge of the Calumet Stage of glacial Lake Michigan, and Lincoln Highway and Glenwood-Dyer Road represented the earlier beach ridge of the Glenwood Stage. Plum Creek emptied into the huge swamp just north of Dyer and the swamp drained westward through North Creek in Lynwood and Lansing, emptying into Thorn Creek, that flowing northward to join the Little Calumet River in South Holland. This combined North Creek-Thorn Creek course of stream channel was 13.5 miles long and its drop-in elevation over that distance was only 30 feet.

In 1850, Aaron Hart, presumably landowner of much of the swamp, dug a ditch northward from the swamp through the old beach ridge at Ridge Road in between the towns of Highland and Munster. This shortened the outlet stream course distance to a mere 1.5 miles. The swamp water, formerly with a discharge gradient of about 2.2 ft./mi, now flowed at a gradient of 20 ft./mi. This resulted in extensive head-cutting southward through the beach ridge, continuing south through the swamp basin until capturing the flow from the original location where Plum Creek channel emptied into the swamp at Dyer. This "stream-pirating" made Hart Ditch the modern day outlet of Plum Creek that now empties into the Little Calumet River just west of Indianapolis Boulevard at Wicker Memorial Park in Highland, Indiana.

One other significant alteration was the construction of the Port of Indiana-Burns Waterway in 1926 (herein referred to as Burns Waterway). It divided the Little Calumet River into west and east branches. The east branch begins near Holmesville in La Porte County, Indiana and is about 22 miles long, draining into Lake Michigan via the Burns Waterway. The west branch is 41 miles long starting from the Burns Waterway, then westward to join the Grand Calumet and Cal-Sag Channel. But Hart Ditch also splits the flow in the West Branch of the Little Calumet in opposite directions, flowing westward to its juncture with the Cal-Sag Channel, but also eastward to its juncture with the Burns Waterway. Since the westward flow eventually discharges into the Gulf of Mexico via the Sanitary and Ship

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Canal, Des Plaines, Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, while the eastward flow eventually goes to the Atlantic via the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, Hart Ditch, now the modern day lower reach of Plum Creek represents a manmade Continental Divide! You can observe this split flow from the Levee Trail from the trail access at Wicker Memorial Park.

I was born in 1953 and the West Branch of the Little Calumet that flowed through Lansing and Calumet City between Wentworth Avenue west to South Holland where Thorn Creek joined was my wilderness playground in the early 60's -70's. As I first grew up in the house on Walter Street to the south side of Bernice Road, there existed a large area of former pasture land and a belt of forest along the Little Calumet between Wentworth and Burnham Avenues. Along the river banks was floodplain forest dominated by silver maple and cottonwood, but in some areas away from the banks upland forest persisted and bur oak was often the dominant species. Outlying this band of river forest was the pasture land that we called "Nau's Farm." Although the grassland was primarily Eurasian pasture grasses, there were remnants of prairie plant species, mostly along old fence and boundary lines.

This land would eventually be platted as the Reavis Estates Subdivision. In 1962 my dad had a new house built and it was the first home constructed in the subdivision. Other homes would follow over the years, but initially in this pocket of suburban wilderness I would catch snakes, mostly eastern and plains garter snakes, but the smooth green snake was always a prize capture! Armed with my Benjamin .22 caliber pellet gun I would hunt squirrels and rabbits. And in this refuge of nature I learned to identify many of the tree species, spring wildflowers and relict prairie plant species. At the confluence with Thorn Creek there was a small oak woodlot that was my favorite spot to hunt squirrels. Until 1970, I could roam undetected along the riverbank from my house in Reavis Estates to that Thorn Creek confluence woodlot.

Adjacent to the woodlot there was a farm field and a dirt road where heaps of spoil had been dumped. I recall being told that the spoil came from excavations at some construction site in Chicago. The dirt was loaded with old bottles including pint and half-pint milk bottles from the 40's-50's, but also older cork style bottles, some dating to the 1880's-90's. Here, I spent some of my summer days in 1968 through 1970 digging through the piles and collecting old bottles.

More construction followed through the 60's until the subdivision was fully built out and homes and backyards went right up to the silver maple dominated banks. Development continued elsewhere to the west of Burnham and Torrence Avenues, eventually destroying my continuous suburban river wilderness, or at least creating significant gaps so that it was impossible to hike through undetected. The Calumet Memorial Park District eventually acquired lands along the south side of the Little Calumet River at the confluence with Thorn Creek and that action has helped to preserve some of the river wilderness and provide access to the river today.

In the 1940's-50's the Little Calumet River was so polluted that carp were reported as the only fish species that could survive in it, but I have no recollection of ever seeing any swimming in the river channel where I lived. In the early

60's as a young youth, one hot dry day of summer, the river was really low exposing a large dry cracked mudflat. It appeared solid, but as I stepped out to get to the water's edge, I broke through and sank into a thick, smelly, oily black sludge. I felt nothing solid under my feet and was hopelessly stuck well above waist height. Fortunately, I had a few of my "river-rat" neighborhood friends with me and grabbing onto limbs they extended, I was able to belly crawl my way out. I didn't know what they were in those days, but in the shallows along the river's margin were extensive colonies of what looked like wiggling worms. In retrospect, these were colonies of Tubifex - sometimes called "sludge worms" - a clear indicator of highly polluted and low oxygenated water.

The common mammals that frequent rivers such as opossum, raccoon and muskrats were there, but life dependent on clean, oxygenated water was lacking. Once, the neighborhood river rats experienced what we nicknamed the "Fish-In-The-River" event. It occurred after heavy thunderstorms the prior day and evening. One of the river rat friends came running back shouting "fish in the river!" We grabbed our poles, buckets and landing nets and headed to the bridge at Burnham Avenue. Sure enough there were fish in

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Adult female common map turtle, levee trail ride.  
August 16, 2015.

*(Continued from page 7)*

the river; hundreds and hundreds of them flowing westward with the current and turbid waters, many of them gulping for air at the surface. Bullhead, largemouth bass and sunfish of various species all in the mix. Not all were as oxygen starved as we were catching some on baited lines below the surface, but we scooped up many at the surface with landing nets. Where they came from still remains a mystery, but I have to suspect those fish were flushed into the river by floodwaters from Plum Creek.

What importance do some of these anecdotes have? Well, in 2015 I was working on an amphibian and reptile inventory of the preserves along Plum Creek as part of a contract awarded to Hey and Associates by the Forest Preserve District of Will County. In my years working for the District and prior to retiring I had put a lot of effort into documenting records of amphibians and reptile species throughout the county. For the Plum Creek preserves, we had only a couple of records or reported observations of eastern spiny softshell and common map turtles. In the 2015 survey I observed a large female softshell basking on two occasions and we caught a single male in a trap at one site. Our work further downstream at the Lower Plum Creek Preserves where the channel showed better conditions to sustain populations of both these turtle species was thwarted by heavy rains and flooding that compromised our trapping success. Thus the survey work in 2015 and the couple of historical records didn't provide enough proof of the presence of populations of these two turtle species. Were they simply transients moving from areas further downstream?

In an effort to gain more insight, I undertook surveys along the Little Calumet River, focusing on the sections east and west of the confluence with Plum Creek. Biking and hiking trails constructed on the levees along the Little Calumet in northwest Indiana extending through the towns of Munster, Hammond and Highland were ideal to get access to long stretches of the river to make observations for basking turtles.

On four separate survey trips that I conducted on bike in July and August of 2015, I documented ten softshell turtles, including one huge female basking on a mudflat a few hundred feet east of the confluence with Plum Creek. Also seen were two adult map turtles and one adult red-eared turtle. The bulk of my turtle observations occurred to the east side of the bridge at Kennedy Avenue in Highland where the river broadened out noticeably and there was a large expanse of exposed mud or silt bars at low flow, plus lots of basking logs elsewhere along the banks. But in my stops elsewhere further west I did observe and photograph one adult female map turtle basking on a log in Munster just east of Calumet Avenue, as well as made a few other observations of basking softshell turtles as far west as the Monon Trail Bridge in Munster, well east of Calumet Avenue. In 2016 riding my bike on the Burnham Greenway Trail in Lansing, crossing the bridge over the Little Calumet, I saw and then photographed a moderate sized map turtle basking on a log close to the bridge along the north bank.

What significance do these turtle observations have? Consider that softshell turtles prey on fish and map turtles are specialists that feed on mollusks or clams. In the 1960's the Little Calumet was essentially a dead river that would not have supported the prey base that could sustain populations of these two turtle species. Thus, these recent observations suggest that populations of these two turtle species exist today where they did not occur back in the 60's, indicating that water quality has vastly improved since my river-rat days and since passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. I didn't count painted turtles on my surveys, but they were incredibly abundant on logs at the Kennedy Avenue site. Snapping turtles undoubtedly are present also, but they spend most of their time submerged and are less likely to be seen basking.



Caspian tern

The Little Calumet River runs through an urban and suburban landscape that many of its residents may not recognize was once a dead river. And over decades it has slowly rebounded as the presence of softshell and map turtles reflect. I hope to continue making more observations not only of turtles, but other species indicative of cleaner water and/or greater biotic diversity. For example, numerous Caspian terns were observed and photographed at the Kennedy Avenue site. The trails on the levee in northwest Indiana and the recently built trail system along the Cal-Sag Channel in Illinois are excellent examples of greenway corridor planning that incorporate trails for recreational use. Calumet Memorial Park District's site at the Thorn Creek confluence was a sound move that provides local access to the river. But on the section of river from the Indiana-Illinois state line along Lansing through South Holland, so much development has encroached so close to the river, that creating a continuous greenway corridor with recreational trails would appear to be a formidable, if not unfeasible task. It is unlikely I will live long enough to see the day when a continuous greenway corridor through both states becomes a reality, but I have witnessed some remarkable recovery of this abused river that runs through the Calumet Region. I hope others will discover this river's unique history and potential too!

-Dave Mauger

## Thank You All



### Donations:

Fruit trays and desserts-Penny Chamberlain; Sugar and cups-Cosi Dean; 25 lb bag of sunflower seeds-Leo Arms; adhesive wall hangers and coffee-Linda Gattis; Prairie Chapel print-Carolyn Gann; Bird house-Melinda Geist.  
\$50.00 check-Garden Club of Park Forest; Bird Books-Penny Chamberlain; Birds of Illinois hardback book and tree Posters-Park Forest Public Library; Bird house instructions-Helen Funk; paper cups-Richton Perk.

Two copies of Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds-Al Thomas; shoe box sized storage containers, suet cakes, and cases of bottled water-Valerie Baxter and Carmen Burnett; sweater box storage containers-Mary Lubertozzi; Audubon stamps-Leo and Lois Arms; dozen small plastic containers-Ginny and George Coppess.

Garden raffle basket-Penny Chamberlain; Birds raffle basket-Lisa Horvath.

--Purchased Bird field guides and binoculars with a generous donation of \$500 from Thorn Creek Audubon Society.

### Trail and Premise Work:

--Mark Petnuch continues replacing boards on N-S boardwalk and replaced a broken board on a new short boardwalk.

--Mark Petnuch and Greg Hejnar transported new boards out to the N-S boardwalk; Greg carried in old waste boards from N-S boardwalk; Jim Pisani disposed of them

--Jim Pisani, Dave and Mark placed new water bars at a very eroded trail section at intersection of the Nature Center Loop Trail & the Woodland Trail.

--Dan Moore removed old tires and other trash from Thorn Creek near North Bridge.

--Village of Park Forest replaced weather stripping on front door and reset thermostat for winter.

--Forest Preserve District of Will County plows the parking lot and clears trail of large fallen trees as needed.

--**New Community Church** allows use of their parking lot for our larger programs.

### Helpers:

-- Penny Chamberlain and Diane Kozlowski decorated a tree for the nature center at the Park Forest Tree Lighting ceremony

--Milley Just, Vicki Schmidt, Alice Hanes, Judy Mendelson and April Richards washed over fifty gourds to prepared for birdhouse program. Then Milley Just, Alice Hanes, Pat Moore and Judy Mendelson hollowed out and added hangers to the gourds. Lisa Horvath and Penny Chamberlain set up Earth Day raffle.

**Open Hours Volunteers-** Penny Chamberlain, Tom Gallagher and Allison McCray, Lisa & Leanne Horvath, Dan Moore, Tomacenna Lyle, Vicki Schmidt, Audubon members, Mary Lubertozzi, Carolyn Gann, Helen Funk, Mike Ploski.

**Program Assistants-** Dave Schmidt, Wendy Leonard, Carolun Gann, Tom Wegrzyn, Judy Mendelson, Dan Moore

### Other Helpers:

--delivered flyers

--regularly put out and took in garbage & recycling bins.

--Judy works with naturalists to plan and develop programs, develop materials/displays, set up for programs, arrange for various volunteer tasks to be done. She prepares program schedules for agencies, brochures, PR and flyers.

--Penny Chamberlain coordinates the Open Hours volunteers.

--Ingrid, April and Judy Mendelson, and Audubon volunteers prepare items and posters for displays.

### Woodland Carols :

Musicians: Ingrid Krizan, Anna Stange, Phil Cooper, Kate Early, Margaret Nelson and Susan Urban. April coordinated the event. Diane Kozlowski and Carolyn Gann handled refreshments, Sue Zelek sold CDs, t-shirts etc., Jim Pisani and Tom Gallagher handled parking, and Penny Chamberlain hosted admissions and delivered donations to Food Pantry.

Six types of soups plus breads and desserts for Woodland Carols- Penny Chamberlain, Carolyn Gann, Milley Just, Vicki Schmidt, Allison McCray, Linda Gattis, Karen Anderson, Diane Kozlowski, Alice Hanes and Sue Zelek. The Gann's packed food donations for delivery. All donations- \$255 and bags of groceries – were donated to Rich Township Food Pantry.

### Volunteer Thank You Party:

April coordinated the party, Ingrid assisted. Carolyn Gann, Allison McCray, Penny Chamberlain, Dave Bartlett and Alice Hanes made chili. Lisa Horvath, Elaine Davis, Georganne Higgins, Milley Just, Linda Gattis, Ann LaFrance, Judy Mendelson, Wendy Leonard, Greg Hejnar donated desserts, fruit and other side dishes. Lisa Horvath, Dan Moore, Jim Pisani, Allison McCray and Tom Wegrzyn assisted with set up, parking, refreshments and clean up.

## So What Can You do?

- Help staff Open Hours 12-4 p.m. on Fridays & Sundays
- Be a Trail Watcher. **Trail Watchers** are our eyes & ears on the trails. Use the blue Trail Watchers forms or email nature center with concerns.
- Join our Trail Workdays this spring & summer
- We also have trail & boardwalk building projects for groups like Eagle Scouts
- Bake and/or make soup for our events
- Volunteers to assist at programs & nature hikes
- Donate money for nature preserve projects
- Become a member of Friends.
- Know your local wildflowers? Come identify wildflowers and fungi depicted in our photos.
- Post Thorn Creek events on the Friends Face Book page.
- Share our Nature Education Program Brochure – available on our website & at Nature center—with your clubs, home school group, scouts, seniors group, garden club or school.



## Nature Center Needs

### We Need:

- Cases of bottled water for our spring-summer events
- Batteries—C and AA
- Large plastic storage boxes about 1.5 ft. by 3 ft.
- Middle sized plastic storage boxes with lids
- Night scopes
- Portable easels
- Hand clippers and loppers
- Hoes

### Always needed:

- Birdseed (mix or black sunflower seed—no corn)
- Stamps you saved for Audubon Society
- 3M Command medium Picture Hanging Strips
- 3M Command Poster Hanging Strips
- 1" x 2 5/8" address labels – ink jet or laser
- 6" x 9" mailing envelopes
- Suet cakes

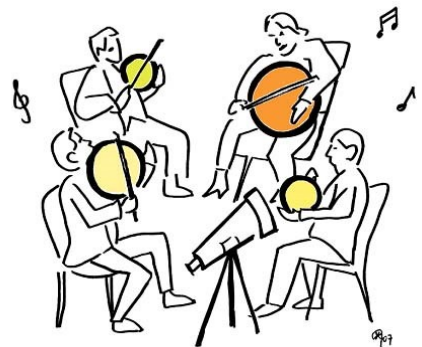
## Helpers Needed

- Helpers for Earth Day—bakers, parking attendants, helpers with refreshments and crafts
- Bottles of water for spring-summer programs
- Open Hours volunteers to work Friday or Sunday noon to 4 p.m. to greet visitors, answer phones and work on a whole variety of cleaning, office work, and miscellaneous jobs to keep our nature center open.

## Thorn Creek Chamber Players

Friday, June 2  
7-9 p.m.

Ages 12 or older  
\$10 per person



Ingrid Krizan is a classically trained professional cellist who weaves seasonal nature narratives into her music. Join us for a fun-filled evening of music echoing through the woods.

Refreshments will be provided.

Get your tickets by Wednesday, May 31:  
708.747.6320 or [thorn\\_creek@att.net](mailto:thorn_creek@att.net)

## Be a FRIEND OF THORN CREEK WOODS

\_\_\_\_ Membership \$20 \_\_\_\_ Organization & Business \$50 \_\_\_\_ Life Membership \$200

☐ New Member \_\_\_\_ Renewing Member \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I'd like to help as a volunteer at Thorn Creek Nature Center, please call me.

\_\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the **Thorn Creek Woods Capital Fund**  
for improvements in the Nature Center building & in the Preserve.  
In memory of \_\_\_\_\_ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the **Jim Marzuki Fund** for Thorn Creek  
Public Programming.

\_\_\_\_ I am donating \$\_\_\_\_\_ to **Friends** general purposes.

Total Enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone & e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS, Box 159,  
Richton Park, IL 60471



Annual Renewal Date is May 1st  
Send in your dues today!

### Friends of Thorn Creek Woods Board

Sue Zelek-*President*

Jim Pisani-*Vice President*

Dan Moore-*Treasurer*

Allison McCray-*Recording Secretary*

Penny Chamberlain-*Open Hours Coordinator*

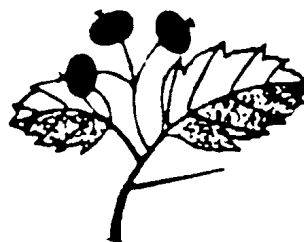
Carolyn Gann-*Director-Director at large*

Alice Hanes-*Director at large*

Judy Dolan Mendelson-*Director at large*

Diane Kozlowski-*Director at large*

*The Friends Board meets  
the 4th Monday of each month at 10:30 a.m.  
at the nature center. Come join us.*



Treasurer's  
Report for  
Friends of Thorn  
Creek Woods  
as of  
January 31, 2017  
Treasurer Dan Moore

—**Friends General Operating Funds** = \$6,056.49  
which includes Membership funds, General donations and  
Eugene Schwartz Library Fund

—**Prairie Chapel Print income**  
(Artist Marikay Peter Witlock donated prints which  
Friends sells for \$75 each, and these funds are then given  
over to TC Management Commission annually) =  
\$486.73

—**Jim Marzuki Fund for Public Programming** =  
\$667.69

—**Capital Fund**  
(for vital improvements to the trails &  
the historic nature center building, and which includes  
funds donated in memory of Larry Lubertozzi and of Jon  
Mendelson) = \$25,569.92

**For a total Friends of TCW = \$32,780.83**

FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS  
is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

### Work Your Trail Off

#### Trail Workdays

Sunday, April 30; Sunday, May 14;

Saturday, June 24

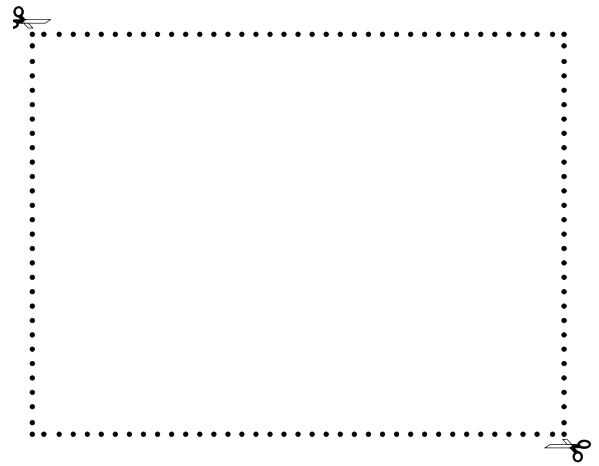
Noon-4 p.m.

Join in maintaining the trails, and building  
boardwalks throughout the Preserve.  
Or come help weed and nurture our Prairie  
Sampler and butterfly garden.

Registration required 2 days before  
each program day. Ages 15-adult  
Community groups are welcome!

Friends of Thorn Creek Woods  
Box 159  
Richton Park, IL 60471

Please clip commemorative stamps  
& bring to Nature Center for  
Audubon Stamps  
for Wildlife Habitats



Want to receive  
*Thorn Creek News*  
only via email-  
then email editor  
Judy Dolan  
Mendelson at  
dolanmendel@aol.com

**Renew Now!**

## Earth Day at Thorn Creek: Soil

Saturday, April 22    Noon - 4 p.m.    Free! All ages

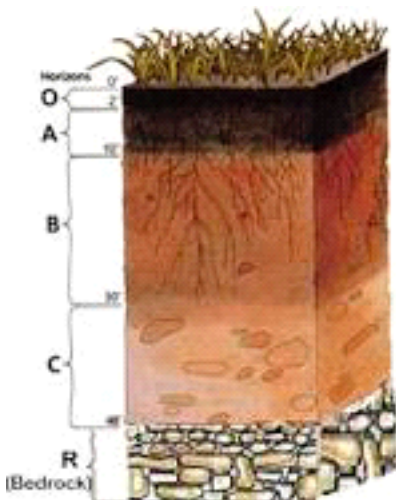
Earth Day celebrates the soil underfoot

### 1 p.m.—IS SOIL DIRT?

Join us for a presentation on what makes up soil  
and how soil is formed.

2 p.m.—HIKE the trails with our naturalist to understand  
the story told by the layers of soil here in  
Thorn Creek Woods.

*There will be lots of fun for everyone including  
refreshments, activities, a hike and our Spring Raffle.*



Refresh yourself with a **Mud Pie** that you build yourself.  
See how it is a reflection of the living organism that is soil.

This event is sponsored by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods