



Friends of Thorn Creek Woods

# Thorn Creek News

Summer 2017

## BATS

Sunday, June 11, 1-3 p.m.

Bats! Stuff of nightmares  
or helpful neighbors?  
Find out here!

Learn more about these largely misunderstood,  
fascinating and ecologically important creatures  
with experts from the

### **Illinois Bat Conservation Program**

Explore why we need bats as predators,  
see how they care for their young,  
learn the latest in acoustic monitoring and mist netting,  
and find out how you can do to save our dwindling native bat populations.

*We have two bat houses for sale and plans available to help you build your own bat house.*

The event is open to all ages.

Register by Friday, June 9.

Additional Parking at New Community Church  
just north of nature center

Enjoy a Bake Sale too!

*Program is sponsored by  
Friends of Thorn Creek Woods  
and Thorn Creek Audubon Society.*



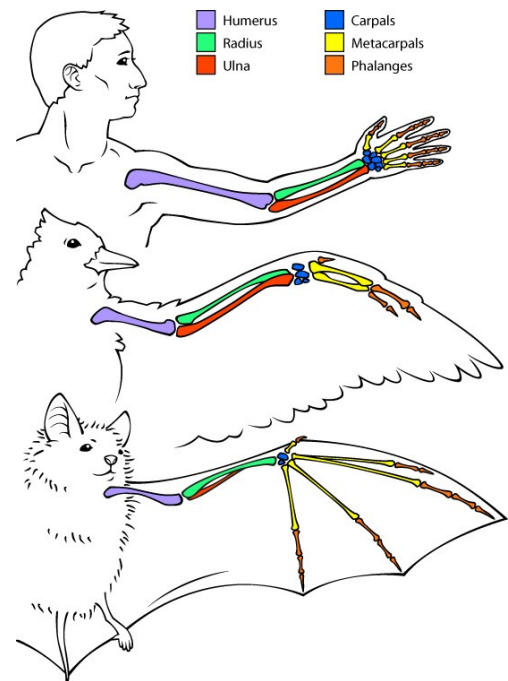
## Bats

Bats are among the most beneficial, least understood and most maligned animals in the world. In the United States you're most apt to see bats swirling around a streetlight or pulling five G's in an Immelmann as they devastate your local mosquito population. At debugging, bats wrote the book. Bats are the only major predators of night flying insects and one gray bat may eat up 3000 insects in a single night. Now, honestly, can you touch that with your blue-light bug zapper or your spray can? No way.

Chances are that you have never seen a bat up close. You've probably seen pictures, often taken by a know nothing photographer who has teased the bat into a snarling position so as to represent a vicious animal. Actually bats are, in truth, very gentle, intelligent little animals. There are many myths which have grown up over the years maligning the bat which just aren't true. Some people believe that bats are rodents, kind of a flying mouse. Wrong. Bats are much more closely related to man than to mice. And unlike mice, reproduce slowly—in most species producing one baby per year. Some bats have funny ears, some funny noses, but by and large are beautiful animals. Outsize ears and nostrils on some are adaptations that permit them to use a sonar system a thousand times more sophisticated than the best invented by man. Some people think this bat sonar has been developed by bats because they are blind. Wrong. Bats see quite well, but if you make your living by catching mosquitoes and gnats in the dead of night, good eyesight isn't enough.

Some people think that bats are creepy and try to get into women's hair, are dirty and carry strange diseases, especially rabies. None of this is true. If a bat can detect a mosquito in the dark of night, he's hardly going to get himself tangled up in your head. Bats are exceptionally clean little animals and do not carry diseases. Poor research some fifty years ago suggested that bats had to be the carrier of rabies because they didn't die of it. Tests of a group of bats who had a Rio Bravo virus fatal to mice led to this conclusion. Recent research has indicated that while some bats can be rabid, the percentage is far below that of other animals such as dogs, raccoons or skunks. Less than half of one percent of bats contract rabies, and they do not, like dogs, become aggressive. And yes, there are vampire bats, but they live in Latin America and are only a nuisance to cattle owners, not man, and constitute one third of one percent of bats.

Bats are the only truly flying mammals and the unquestioned champions of aerobatics. As was pointed out earlier, they are our distant relatives and the bones in a bat wing are essentially the same as those in our arms and hands; thus the scientific order for bats, Chiroptera, meaning "hand wing". Like humans, most bats are family oriented and enjoy living in groups. They develop mating habits and exhibit traits similar to other mammals. While seventy per cent of bats are bug chasers, many others depend on fruits and nectar. Thus the fruit bats are very important in seed dispersal and pollination of countless tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs. Without them we might not have bananas, mangoes, figs, avocados, cashews and a lot of other goodies. With all of this good stuff going for bats, they certainly have gotten a bum rap in many parts of the world. Indeed, they are actively persecuted and exterminated by people who just don't know better. In China bats are considered as symbols for happiness and good wishes. We can learn a lot from the Chinese.

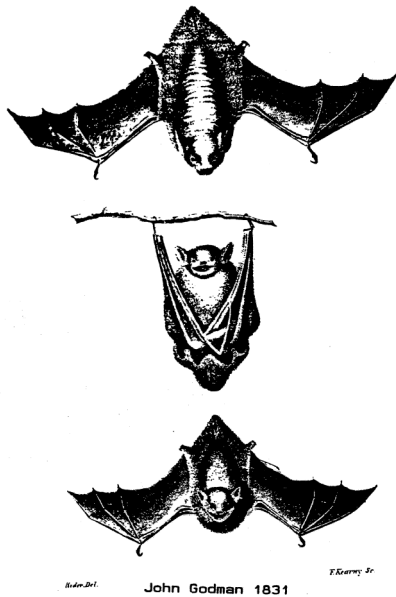


In the United States, there are 39 species of bats. Three of these are nectar loving while the rest are working to keep down the number of insects that bother us. We know that in Thorn Creek we have at least

two species, the Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) and the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and probably others. Their numbers have decreased over the past years. Probably because of mosquito spraying and possibly because of habitat loss (old barns and outbuildings). In an attempt to increase the numbers, we suggest that you might like to replace your bug zapper with a bat house. They are easy to build and if you attract a small colony of the critters, you will have efficient mosquito eliminators....

-Jim Marzuki

Reprinted from Thorn Creek News, May 1991.



## The Bat-in 1854

A singular genus of animals, partaking of the nature of both quadrupeds and birds, and appearing to be the link which unites these two classes together.

The common bat is much like a mouse, except that it has leathern wings that will support it in the air for the space of about an hour, after which it must cling to some wall or stump of a tree to rest itself. This creature rears a family of from two to five young ones at a time.

The eddies and circuitous ranges in the flight of the bats, on a beautiful summer evening, are quite amusing. They are peculiarly fond of frequenting old deserted buildings, and may be seen playing their gambols at eve around the romantic ruins of old castles, according perfectly with that pleasing, musing melancholy mood into which the mind falls in such places and at such an hour.

This creature does not live long; and the greatest part of its life, short as it is, is wasted in laziness and sleep. It passes the whole winter in a dormant state; and even in summer never ventures out but in a fine warm evening, being much afraid of being caught in the rain.

The bat is very harmless, and useful in destroying a great number of gnats, moths, and other troublesome insects.

Mr. White, in his Natural History of Selborne, gives the following account of a tame bat:... "it would take flies out of a person's hand. If any thing were given it to eat, it brought its wings around before the mouth, hovering and hiding its head in the manner of birds of prey when they feed. The adroitness it showed in shearing off the wings of flies, which it rejected, was worthy of observation, and pleased me much. Insects seemed the most acceptable, though it did not refuse raw flesh when offered; so that the notion of bats going down chimneys and gnawing bacon seemed no way improbable.

"While I amused myself with this wonderful animal, I saw it several times confute the opinion that bats, when down on a flat surface, cannot get on the wing again. It arose with the greatest ease from the floor. It ran, I observed, with much more speed than I was aware of, but in a most grotesque and ridiculous manner."

*Note by Jim Marzuki:* From Natural History by the Rev. Daniel Smith published in 1854 for use in Sunday schools. "The pursuit of Natural History, in almost any way, as a study or an amusement, is both indicative and productive of gentleness, refinement, and virtue".

-Reprinted from Thorn Creek News, January 1992



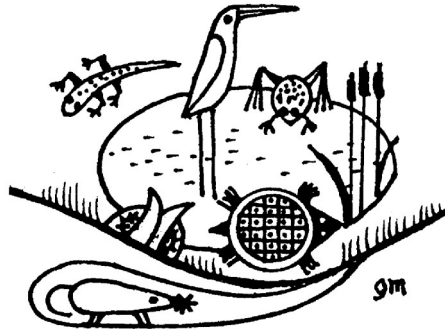
## Hidden Ponds at Thorn Creek Woods

Saturday, June 17  
1 - 4 p.m.

Join us for a guided tour of the wet  
areas of Thorn Creek Woods.

Discover vernal ponds,  
listen for amphibian choruses and  
explore the marshes of Owl Lake  
and beyond.

Free! Ages 10 years and up.  
Registration required by  
Thursday, June 15



## Creek Walk For Kids

Sunday, July 9  
1-3 p.m.

Explore Thorn Creek

\*to discover the world of  
aquatic insects and metamorphosis.

\*take measurements and do  
experiments to learn some of  
the properties of water.

\*observe what lives in and near the creek.

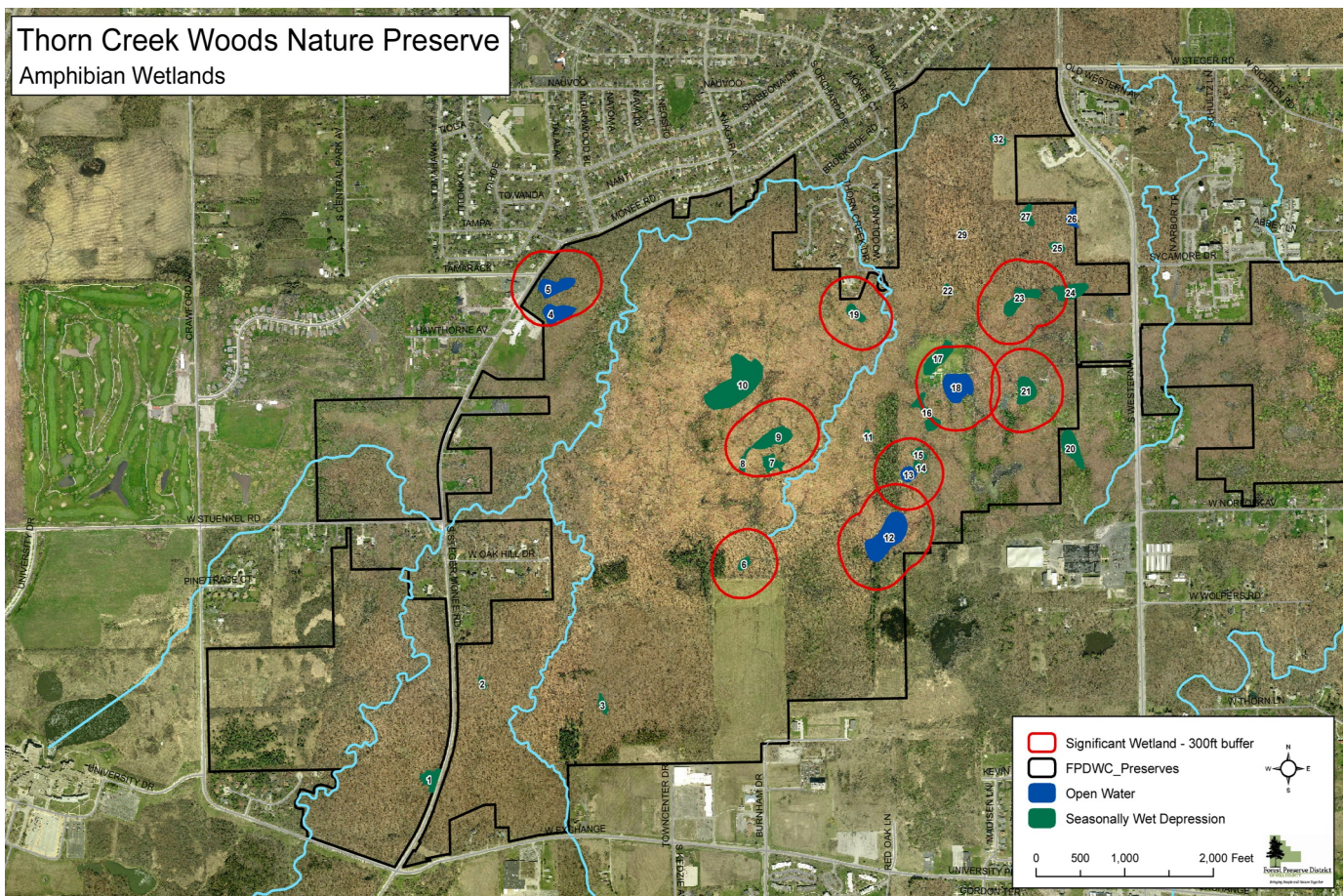
\*discover how many of these organisms  
transform to live on the land!

Free! Ages 5-12.

Children younger than 6 years must be  
accompanied by an adult.

Registration required by Friday, July 7.  
Wear old clothes and boots

Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve  
Amphibian Wetlands







## Improvements at Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve

- \* Repair and paint Nature Center exterior *IN PROCESS SUMMER 2017!*
- \* North Bridge piers stabilized **DONE**
- \* *IN PROCESS* Trail Improvements
- \* Kiosk sitting area repairs **DONE**
- \* New connector trail to bypass closed south bridge **BEING SCOUTED**



## Thorn Creek Woods TRAILS for hiking and nature study

247 Monee Road, Park Forest, Illinois 60466  
Telephone: 708-747-6320, Email: [thorn\\_creek@att.net](mailto:thorn_creek@att.net)  
Website: [www.tewoods.org](http://www.tewoods.org)

**Nature Center Trail** travels 1/2 mile loop through young, developing forest and shrubby, successional old fields - wonderful habitat for bird watching.

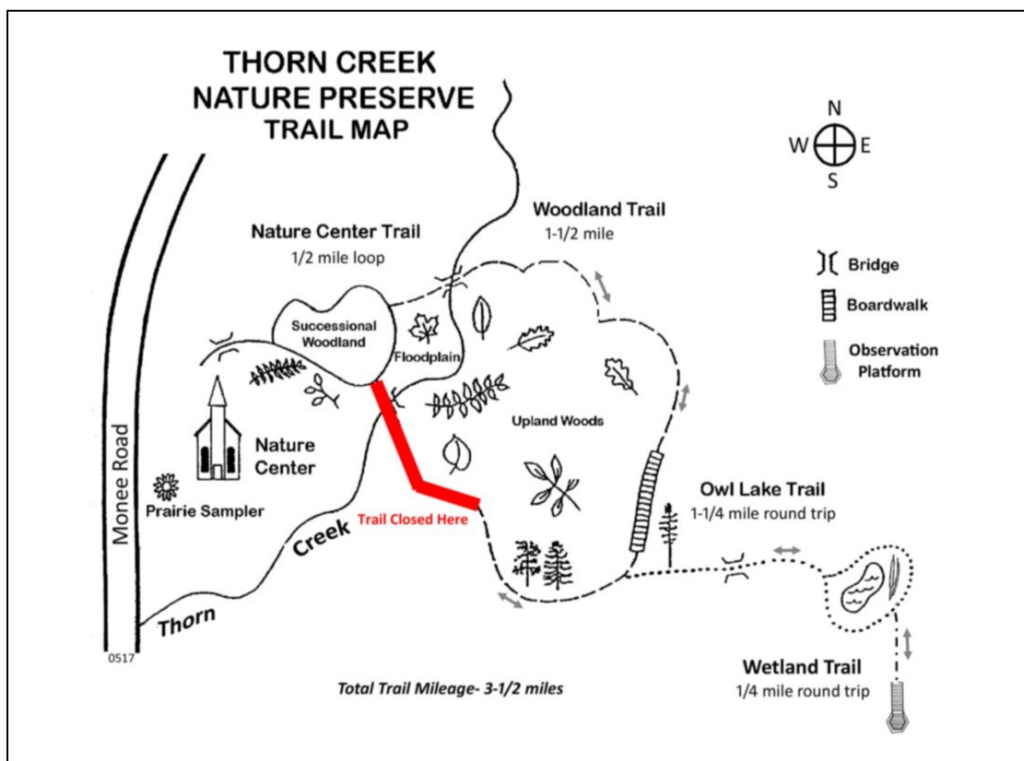
**Woodland Trail** of 1-1/2 mile crosses Thorn Creek at the north bridge and meanders through floodplain forests, mesic and dry-mesic upland forests and pine plantations.

**Owl Lake Trail** is a 1-1/4 mile round trip spur taking you from the pine plantation on the **Woodland Trail** to and around Owl Lake, a marsh that developed on and around a glacial pothole.

**Wetland Trail** excursion off the **Owl Lake Trail** is a 1/4 mile round trip to an observation platform overlooking a large wetland complex.

A walk to the **Wetland Trail** observation platform and back around the trails is a 3-1/2 mile nature adventure, open to the public year round, dawn to dusk.

*Note that there is a section of Woodland Trail which is closed due to the removal of south bridge.*



Note trail closure on Woodland Trail



Thorn Creek Chamber Players  
scheduled for Friday, June 2  
is cancelled.

An emergency prevented  
a player's participation.  
Watch for Thorn Creek Chamber  
Players on September 15.



A special thank you to  
Jim and Judy Rastorfer

for the donation of a large number of books—botany, ecology, astronomy and more. Many of these will be housed in our Eugene Schwartz Memorial Library and in our Youth Library for use by program participants. Some more technical books were given to noted botanist Jerry Wilhelm and others.

Jim and Judy are long time Friends members.

### *Flora of the Chicago Region: A Floristic and Ecological Synthesis*

by Gerould Wilhelm and Laura Rericha, and illustrated by Mary Marguerite Lowther is available for purchase at [indianaacademyofscience.org](http://indianaacademyofscience.org) and at the Morton Arboretum bookstore.

This is a magnificent volume. It is an update of the *Plants of the Chicago Region* plus so much more, including extensive plant community descriptions, new sections on all insect, birds and mammals seen to have relationships with our vascular plants and original illustrations for each of the 900 genera, among other features.

### Summer at Thorn Creek Woods

247 Monee Rd, Park Forest  
708-747-6320

Thorn\_creek@att.net  
tcwoods.org

**Nature Center open  
Friday & Sunday, noon -4 pm  
Trails Open Dawn to Dusk**

Wednesday Walkers	Wednesdays 9 a.m.
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Historic Farm Walk All ages	Sunday June 4 1-3 p.m.
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Bats- Sponsored by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods	Sunday June 11 1-3 p.m. All ages
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Hidden Ponds Ages 10-older	Saturday June 17 1-4 p.m.
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Trail Workday Ages 15+	Saturday June 24 Noon- 4 p.m.
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Creek Walk for Kids Ages 5-12	Sunday July 9 1-3 p.m.
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Fireflies Night Hike All ages	Saturday July 22 7:30-9:30 pm
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Nature Camp for Seniors: Animal Tracks	Monday August 7 9a.m.-1 p.m. \$5/person
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Insects Abound For Kids Ages 12 & under	Sunday August 13 1-3 p.m.
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Sounds of Insects Night Hike	Thursday August 17 7:30-9:30 pm All ages
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Newsletter editor:  
Judy Dolan Mendelson  
Friends: P.O. Box 159,  
Richton Park, IL 60471,  
dolanmendel@aol.com

## 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 Memorial Fund** - to make a difference in 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

## So What Can You do?

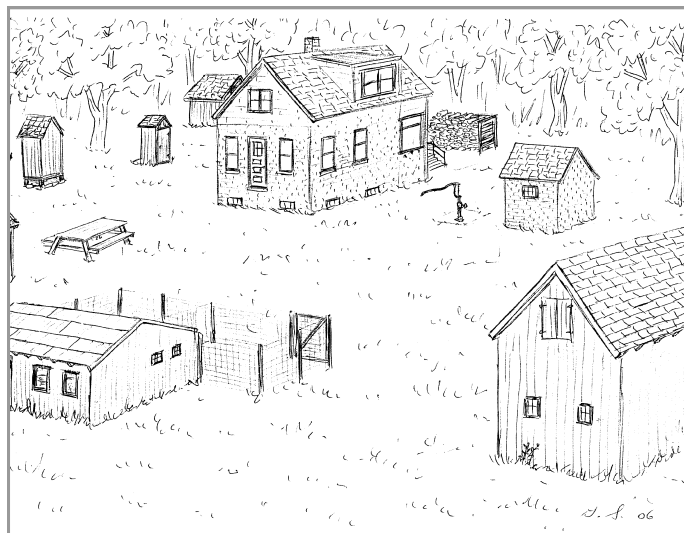
- Help staff Open House 12-4 p.m. on Fridays & Sundays



- 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 Workday June 24

- We also have trail & boardwalk building projects for individuals and 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.



## Historic Farm Walk

**Sunday, June 4**

**1-3 p.m.**

**Free! All ages**

Enjoy a summer day on the historic Hornicek Farm nestled in Thorn Creek Woods.

Tour the farm buildings, organic garlic gardens and the old-fashioned flower gardens.

Meet brown-egg laying hens and maybe some blue egg layers too.

Sip lemonade and listen to music by our favorite folk singer

*Anna Stange.*

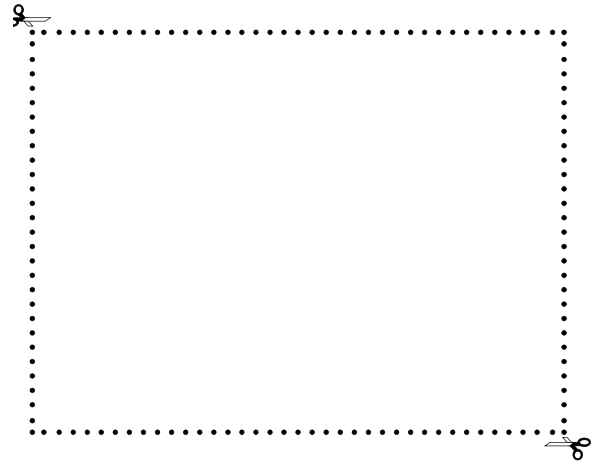
**Registration required by Friday, June 2.**

Meet at the Nature Center, and then we will carpool to the farm.



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



**Friends Summer  
Program on**

## **Bats**

**Sunday, June 11  
1-3 p.m.**

Learn about these  
fascinating flying  
mammals.

And a bake sale, too.

**Renew Now!**

## *Come Work Your Trail Off*



## **Trail Workday**

**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.

Ages 15-adult  
Registration required  
2 days before the program day.

Community groups are welcome!