



Friends of Thorn Creek Woods

Thorn Creek News

Winter 2021

Winter Woods



Unlike the summer forest,
That has secrets hidden in the green,
Where the ovenbird makes its
home out of site,

Unlike the summer forest,
That hides its branches, among the
leaves,
That mark the way
for nuthatch and squirrel,

Unlike the summer forest
That obscures the view, with mystery,
And winding paths that disappear so
quickly,

Unlike the summer forest,
The winter forest bares all,
And stands tall,
And open,
And waits.

- Steve Aultz

THE CROSSING

Nature is not just found in the places we have designated to contain it or to show it off or to protect it from development. Trees on our streets leaf out and blossom in the spring, turn deep red in the fall and drop their leaves as winter closes in. Mourning doves build their nests high up on our porches, robins hop across our lawn in the summer, sparrows and squirrels flock to our bird feeders and, as the sun begins to set, Canada geese fly back to home base for the night, honking and calling to each other against a backdrop of brilliant clouds and sky.

Golf courses, marinas and even some parks pretty much see these geese as a major nuisance. They are large birds that can weigh up to nine pounds. They settle on the ground in large numbers and start moving as a herd across the grass, grazing as they go. In the summer many are shepherding their young and are very protective. Wings are immediately raised, making them appear larger and more menacing, as they lower their heads and extend their long necks. Hissing loudly, they begin moving towards the perceived threat (you!). But perhaps their most annoying habit is undoubtedly the plethora of poop they leave behind. Everywhere. In the grass. On the sidewalk. In our playgrounds, on our docks and parking lots. All with total disregard for where we humans may prefer to walk or play.



Photo by Jim Pisani

Beginning in the 1950's, when they were facing extinction, their numbers in North America have swelled to about seven million today. Humans have to accept some responsibility for this surge in population. Water retention ponds and reservoirs are a big draw for Canada geese. Additionally, our obsession with neatly manicured lawns is a major factor. Geese tend to avoid water with tall grasses and other foliage on the shoreline where predators can hide and attack them as they move onto the land. Letting the grass grow long around a pond doesn't work for golf courses. Most subdivisions discourage what they consider "untidy" shorelines around decorative ponds. So the geese come. Some are putting up black metal silhouettes of dogs to discourage geese from landing at, or inhabiting, their grounds. So far all the "solutions" rely on discouraging Canada geese from inhabiting an ideal habitat that we have determined should be off limits. After all, we own the land, don't we? We can use it as we please.

We could consider another approach. Take the small retention pond between a parking lot for a small shopping mall, a bike path and Cicero Avenue. Every year at least one pair of Canada Geese builds a nest, lays their eggs and raises their young in this small body of water. As the goslings mature, the pressure grows to move them to an area to the east that offers more water and food. And less humans. Unfortunately, Cicero Avenue presents a barrier that can be lethal for the young ones who cannot yet fly. Six lanes of very busy traffic lie between the retention pond and the marshy area on the other side of the highway. There is a traffic light to allow vehicles from a big chain store and the small shopping mall to safely exit onto Cicero. But what do geese know about traffic lights?

When the time comes, one of the parents takes the lead and marches out of the pond with the goslings pressing close behind. He takes up a position next to the highway peering both ways at the cars and trucks roaring by. The goslings, with his mate taking up the rear, wait with him. And then something unexpected happens. As the birds perch on the edge of the road, cars begin to slow down. This gives courage to the leader, who takes a few tentative steps forward. Traffic slows down even more, without regard to whether the traffic light is red or green. As the family of geese continue to crowd ahead, cars and trucks heading south come to a halt. Vehicles on the other side of the highway, heading north, notice this anomaly. They also begin to slow down. By the time the geese have crossed the lanes heading south, the traffic going north has also stopped. No one blows their horn. No one tries to go around the other vehicles or indicates any irritation with this disruption. Everyone watches as the father proudly leads his brood across all four lanes and steps up onto the grass on the other side. Cars begin moving again and life returns to normal. Feeling they have all witnessed something special, people go back to getting to their destination and to the rest of their day. As do the geese.

Perhaps, if we view ourselves as part of the pattern of nature, instead of separate from it, we will find that co-existence, not exclusion, works better for everyone.

-Kendra Reinshagen

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Serving area wildlife for 12,000 years

Long sleeve -
Forest Green with Mint Design
Short sleeve -
Blue with White Design

Thorn Creek Woods



"Serving area wildlife for 12,000 years"

NEW DESIGN
Short sleeve -
Maroon with Crème Design



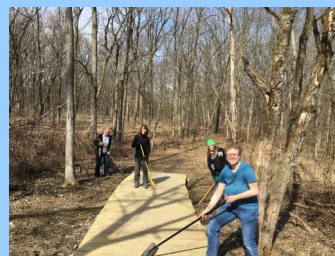
Short Sleeve = \$ 10 + \$5 per shirt shipping/handling
Long Sleeve = \$15 + \$5 per shirt shipping/handling

Please make your check to:
Thorn Creek Nature Center, 247 Monee Road,
Park Forest, IL, 60466

Call 708-747-6320 or mail or email
thorn_creek@att.net your order.

What are you seeing
or hearing at
Thorn Creek Woods?

Do you have an essay,
article, poem that you
would like to share
with Friends?



If you can help out
on trail work or
special projects
this spring,
just contact April
at 708-747-6320
and
thorn_creek@att.net.

Programs at Thorn Creek Woods

247 Monee Rd, Park Forest
708-747-6320

Thorn_creek@att.net
tcwoods.org

**Nature Center closed
to the public**

Trails Open Dawn to Dusk

Prairie
Sampler &
Trail
Workday

Saturday
March 13
1-3 p.m.

Ages 13-adult

Seasons at
Thorn Creek
Woods Hike

Saturday
March 20
10:30 a.m.-
noon

Age 13-adult

Woodcock
Walk

Saturday
March 27
Rain date:
April 3
6:45-8 p.m.

Age 13-adult

Seasons of
Thorn Creek
Woods Hike

Saturday
April 10
10:30 a.m.-
noon

Age 13-adult

Earth Day at
Thorn Creek:
Amphibians

Saturday
April 17
2-4 p.m.

Age 13-adult

Prairie
Sampler &
Trail
Workday

Sunday
April 25
1-3 p.m.

Ages 13-adult

Newsletter editor:
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Richton Park, IL 60471,
dolanmendel@aol.com



The Perfect Gift

Inspired by
Thorn Creek Nature Center
Prairie Chapel
is an original
graphite drawing
by Marikay Peter Witlock

Intrigued by a promise of a patch of prairie, Witlock visited Thorn Creek Nature Center in the late summer of 1988. She left that visit with a vision of prairie and chapel woven as one, and a profound sense of the sacred in the land. *Prairie Chapel* became the first in a series of over 35 drawings combining architectural elements with the grasses and forbs of Illinois.

Available in limited edition of 300 signed and numbered prints

Image size 13" x 17", finished size 18" x 21"

Printed on acid free 80 lb. paper, the reproduction retains every detail
of the original graphite drawing

Through the artist's generosity, this print is available with a donation
to Friends of Thorn Creek Woods of \$75 or more.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to
FRIENDS, over the value of the *Prairie Chapel* print (valued at \$75) are tax-deductible.

Consult your tax advisor.

Donation - \$ _____
Shipping/Handling for a print - \$ 5.00
Total amount enclosed - \$ _____

Mail check made out to: Friends of Thorn Creek Woods
P.O. Box 32, Richton Park, IL 60471

Come Visit our Oak-Hickory Woodlands

Our *trails* are open! Do come and see what nature has to offer.

When visiting remember:

- * Visit alone or with members of your household
- * Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet
- * Wear a face covering when unable to social distance

And visit our webpage often...

Unfortunately Thorn Creek Nature Center will remain closed to the public for the foreseeable future.

We are scheduling outdoor programs for limited numbers of participants. These programs are announced on the following websites:

- Thorn Creek Woods—www.tcwoods.org
- Forest Preserve District of Will County— www.reconnectwithnature.org
- Village of Park Forest—www.villageofparkforest.com

Our Naturalists continue to work at the nature center and from home. April is working one-on-one with volunteers for trail projects, nature center cleaning and other projects. She can be reached as usual by phone and email: 708-747-6320 and thorn_creek@att.net.



Thank You for Your Support this Past Fall and Winter

- Welcome to New Members Nancy Dannels, Michael McDonnell
- Donations to the Friends Capital Fund: Jeffrey Fortman & Michele Medhurst, Allison McCray, K. Schultz, Nancy Dannels, Dawn Means in memory of Geri Setzke, John Donohue, Maureen Cribbs, Melinda Geist, Jonathan Smith, Alice Hanes
- Donations to the Friends Capital Fund in memory of Neil Higgins: Gregory & Christy Ott, John Field, Lois Lauer, Kathleen Van Kampen
- Donations to Friends General Purposes Fund: Mark Petnuch, Kendra & Matt Sandstrom, John Yunger, Robin Condro
- Many membership renewals.

Donations of items: 90 printed copies of Audubon Adventures youth newsletters (bird topics) -Thorn Creek Audubon Society; various office supplies—Penny Chamberlain; transfer of nature center photo slides to digital files— Judy Mendelson.; 50lb. bag of sunflower birdseed and 50lb bag of mixed birdseed. —Penny Chamberlain. \$950 donated by Friends to purchase supplies, tools and wood for AmeriCorps trail project; Books on Interpretation- Gifts of Interpretation, Interpreting our Heritage, Making a Difference on Purpose - April Richards ; buckets of loose gravel, ice melt and bird seed- Bob Hernandez; 5 tree cookies (slices of a tree trunks with tree rings visible)- Mark Petnuch ; office supplies – Judy Mendelson.

Program Assistants:

-Judy Mendelson hosted the garlic sale. Dan Moore, Janice Richey, Susan Inman, Marcy Marzuki, and Ian Murphy assisted at sale. All garlic bulbs were sold out by 9:15am. 304 garlic bulbs were sold and 7 t-shirts were purchased.

-April led the Know Your Oaks Hike, Monica assisted. Dave Schmidt and Bob Hernandez handled parking and helped on trail.

-Judy Mendelson hosted the garlic planting at the historic farm. Carolyn Gann, Taylor Adams and Riley helped with planting.

-Monica continued the labelling of digitized slides for the Nature Center Photo Library. She also is organizing paper photographs to be used for displays and creating typed lists of documents. She completed reviewing material on the history of Thorn Creek Woods and will continue to work from home.

(Continued from page 5)

- April led the December Soils Hike and Dave Schmidt assisted.
- April completed the Morton Arboretum's Woodland Ecology and Plant Identification courses, and attended virtual Wild Things conference. She prepared a draft map and work plan for the new connector segment, on the Woodland Loop Trail. She hiked the preserve trails frequently with helpers and conducted regular telephone meetings with Monica Banaszak.
- Sue Zelek plans to lead the Woodcock Watch this March. Dave Schmidt plans to assist in all the upcoming public programs Feb- April 2021.



Special projects

-AmeriCorps: For AmeriCorps trail project this summer, April and Judy planned and prepared for the program and the trail projects including acquiring the tools and supplies needed, paid for by Friends. The AmeriCorps Team Sept. 14- Sept 18 removed buckthorn trees from the entire length of the pine tunnel. They bagged fruiting buckthorn trees for disposal. They installed 7 new square water diversion bars on the creek side portion of the Woodland Loop Trail and cleared the trail to 10' wide. The old round water bars were removed and stored. Natural materials were placed on the defunct trail. FPDWC Resource Mgt. collected 25 garbage bags of fruiting buckthorn trees from NC parking lot for disposal. Rob Gunther, Village of Park Forest provided a golf cart for the 5-day AmeriCorps project. Mike Holden installed new blades in the bow saws, cleaned and checked the battery powered Sawzall. Mary Gaffney and April cleaned all the tools and the tarps used for AmeriCorps, labelled, and put them away.

-April led Troop 175 for a trail workday and Dave Schmidt assisted. Rachel Ricci and 4 scout troop members opened channels on all 20+ water bars on the Nature Center Loop Trail, cleared overgrowth along the trail and removed all overgrowth on the new boardwalk at Woodland Loop Trail intersection.

-Mike O'Neal maintains our webpage tcwoods.org.

-Judy Mendelson organized another batch of digitized slides to be labelled.

-Mike Holden updated the scanning program and created a shortcut. This allows for paper scanning from the printer and automatic file storage in the NC computer system. Mike Holden created a short video of April answering questions about TCWNP for AmeriCorps.

Many Premise Activities:

-Bob Hernandez checked the outside of nature center building, took in mail, fed the birds, checked trail, removed trash from parking lot, cleared snow from walkway, and reported to April. He cleaned the main room and balcony floors, and the basement floor. He shampooed and vacuumed the carpeted areas. Bob cut back overgrowth on NC parking lot fence and cleared overhanging branches. He also cut a small trench to drain the rainwater out of the parking lot and removed garbage from the basement. He assisted in pounding trail signposts back in their locations, hauling benches back on trail and correcting the trail sign information. He filled the potholes in the driveway of the NC parking lot.

-Dave Schmidt and Bob Hernandez assisted April in hiking the preserve trails and monitoring conditions.

-Jim Pisani assisted in clearing tree trunks and limbs from Owl Lake Trail, remaining from the storm, and picked up birdseed donated from Penny Chamberlain and bought it to the nature center.

-Dan D. of Village of Park Forest repaired the cement post at the entrance to the NC walkway, and turned on the heat for the nature center and set the thermostat. Also, he made plans to install the Jim Marzuki memorial plaque in the prairie sampler. Plaque was donated by Friends.

-FPDWC removed downed and leaning tree trunks from the NC yard, remaining from the August storm.

-Rich and Will Rousseau swept the north bridge, swept and trenched all the boardwalks to the bridge, and removed downed limbs from the trail.

-The installation of the gutters on the nature center was completed, funded by Friends of Thorn Creek Woods.

-FPDWC installed two deer cull signs one at the entrance of the nature center driveway and at the entrance of Camp Pompeii. (Culling took place Dec 2020-Feb 2021)

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-In October April found evidence of a fire in the preserve near the bridge, on the edge of the creek. A bench was moved there also. April reported the fire remains location to the FPDWC police. Officer Steven checked the fire location and walked the preserve checking for other fire remains and shelters. The Officer said they will be patrolling the preserve at least twice a week. Bob Hernandez buried the remains of fire and camouflaged it. The bench was returned to its permanent location.

-On Oct 14 a hiker on the preserve trails behind the church adjacent to the preserve heard rifle shots. The Park Forest Police responded. The Park Forest police report stated that possibly hunters were near trails behind the church; unknown where they parked or if they were on preserve land. The FPDWC Police were also contacted.

-Cindy Hostert, volunteer for FPDWC, reported she picked up many empty beer bottles near the bridge on November 11 in the preserve, and she reported bicycle tire tracks on preserve trails 12/21. April reported this to the FPDWC police.

-University Park Chief of Police confirmed that an injured hiker was carried out of the Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve on November 7. The Park Forest and University Park fire departments responded. Chief Wilson said the injured hiker was among a group from Governor State University who were on a hike in the preserve.

-In December, April and Bob Hernandez removed trunks and limbs being used as a bridge to cross the creek at the defunct south bridge. They also barricaded the old path with natural materials. A new path to cross the creek was observed in the same area, near a log jam. This path was barricaded off with some natural materials.

-On 12/6 a fire was found at the big bend, trail signs and posts were removed, and benches thrown off trail. Dave Schmidt assisted April to clean up the fire. Many large chunks of burning wood, were carried to the creek to extinguish. The ashes were buried, empty alcohol bottles strewn around were picked up. When leaving the preserve at dark, Dave Schmidt and April saw 2 males entering the preserve trails. April photographed their license plates and called the FPDWC police and made a report.

-In January, Service Sanitation changed the service date to every Tuesday (formerly on Thursday).

-April purchased boards from Crete Lumber as part of a temporary barricade to be installed on the Nature Center Loop Trail, at the defunct south bridge path.

-In January, Bob and April installed a trail closed sign and directional arrows on the Nature Center Loop Trail at the defunct south bridge spur. April observed that Trail Closed signs on the Nature Center and Woodland Loop trails were torn down, including the posts. Need to order more trail closed signs.



Thank you for your kindness

Neil Higgins

Neil Higgins passed away Oct. 26, 2020.

Neil enjoyed visiting national parks, attending concerts and plays, volunteering at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, and participating in Key City Toastmasters. He walked Thorn Creek Woods with his family and attended so many Thorn Creek events, especially the music concerts.

Memorials may be made to Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

We offer Neil's wife, Georganne and daughter, Robin, our condolences.

Friends of Thorn Creek Woods
Box 32
Richton Park, IL 60471

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

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Membership.....\$20 Organization & Business.....\$50 Life Membership.....\$200
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____ I'd like to help as a volunteer at Thorn Creek Nature Center, please call me.

____ I am donating \$ _____ to the Friends **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.

Name _____
Address _____
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Make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THORN CREEK WOODS, Box 32, Richton Park, IL 60471



Annual Renewal Date is May 1st