



Friends of Thorn Creek Woods

Thorn Creek News

November 2021

Fall Foliage

If you ask where the fall colors are at their best in the U. S., most people will point you towards the northeast. Specifically, New England. Even more specifically, Vermont or New Hampshire. But we've got some pretty spectacular colors right here in our own backyard. And some special features that aren't available in the northeast.

Thanks to local forest preserves that have protected our woodlands from development, we are blessed with an abundance of trees whose colors can take your breath away. Maples flame with deep reds and golds. Sumacs turn a rich crimson as summer's chlorophyll disappears, allowing the hidden colors to emerge. Oak trees abound in the local oakwood uplands with leaves that turn a russet so rich that they take on a deep purple sheen. Because they are the last to turn, oak leaves hang on the trees long after most of the others have given up the ghost and fallen to the ground, lending their beauty to the final weeks before winter swoops in.

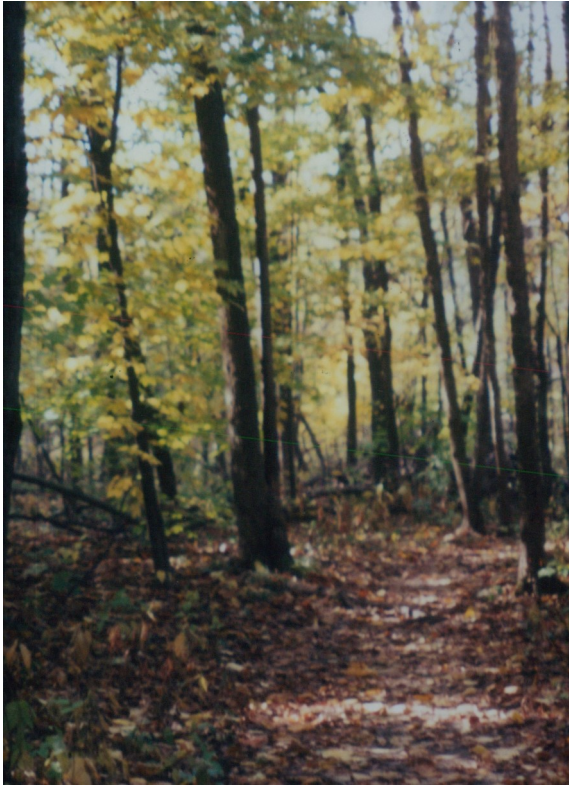
One of the best things about our region is that it's more than our trees that give us this impressive last burst of color before winter sets in. As a transplant to the midwest from Pennsylvania, I noticed something in the fall that I had never seen out east. Driving to work during my first autumn in Will County, I saw something completely unexpected. The **ground** also glows with shades of gold and yellow, scarlet and orange. Deep purple, pale blue and snowy white asters dance along the roads and in the fields as fall winds begin to pick up strength. Goldenrod graces the roadsides and adds a burst of color to the edges of our woodlands. Soybean fields morph from dull green to a deep gold, reflecting the changing color of the sun as the earth makes it's annual shift in relationship to the sun and prepares to usher in the winter.

Another plus for this area are the rich reflections of color seen in the many bodies of water scattered throughout the heartland. Here in the midwest, water settles into ponds and lakes. As you go east you begin to encounter more hills and, finally, mountains. Water there doesn't stay in one place. It runs downhill and keeps going. Here in the heartland, the weight of the glaciers flattened the land, filled valleys with sediment, moved rocks and earth, and carved out basins with their massive weight. When temperatures started to rise, about ten to twelve thousand years ago, the glaciers began to melt, leaving millions of gallons of water behind in those glacial basins. Here, on the southern edge of the Great Lakes created by the retreating glaciers, the fall colors are not only seen in the trees that line the woods and fields. They are also reflected in every one of the bodies of water, large and small, that abound throughout the Midwest.



You don't need to drive a thousand miles to enjoy autumn's spectacular colors. Just walk out your door and drive the back roads of Illinois. Take in the abundant colors around you in the fields and along the roadsides. End the day by sitting next to a quiet pond or lake. Enjoy the stillness and the brilliant colors of the trees and grasses reflected in the water as the sun adds it's deepening glow to the beauty that surrounds us here in the heartland.

-Kendra Reinshagen



Autumn Zen

Sixty-six times have these eyes
beheld the changing scene of autumn.
I have said enough about moonlight,
Ask no more.

Only listen to the voice of
pines and cedars when no wind stirs.
— Ryonen (1797-1863)

It seems to me that autumn is the most Zen-like season of the year. For me all the other seasons seem to announce that they are on the way. The cold November winds are a prelude to the winter that is coming, and the southerly winds, in late February, indicate that spring is on the way. While summer, slowly manifests itself as each springtime flower flows into early summer. But autumn, for me, is always a surprise. A question arises, deep within myself: Where did the summer go?

As the last flowers of the year fade away, as the courting rituals and songs of birds have ceased, nature seems to relax into a realm of silence. Looking through the forest, or across the prairie, the silence is more than that. It is what Zen masters call “stillness.”

This “stillness” is not so much a product of “doing” as it is an action of wu wei, or, “not doing.” Not doing is a way of action that entails very little work. Flower petals fall to the ground, seeds ripen and spread through the forest and prairies with little effort. Trees drop their leaves, one at a time, until none are left. All of nature seems to be letting go. The impermanence of everything is plain to see and comprehensible. As all of this progresses, I become more aware of the space that all living things inhabit. Experiencing this awareness of space is a wonderful way to contemplate nature.

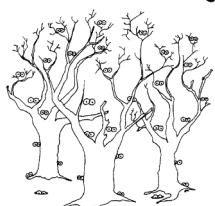
To contemplate this space, look between the trees, not at them. Look at the space between the leaves. Notice how the black cherry winds its way to the forest canopy through the space that is left for it. Space is as necessary as the objects located within. No space, no objects, it is as simple as that! Looking through the spaces within the forest, gives us a new view of the depth of nature.

Thorn Creek Woods is a perfect place to experience the depth and space within nature. On a still, fall day, take a walk and find a place to sit and contemplate on the space that is also the woods. Sit quietly, and look at the space between everything, until you can hear the voice of the oak trees when no wind stirs.

-Steve Aultz

Get your Thorn Creek T-Shirts

THORN CREEK WOODS



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"

Short sleeve -
Heather Maroon with Crème
Design
**NEW Long sleeve -
Maroon with crème Design**

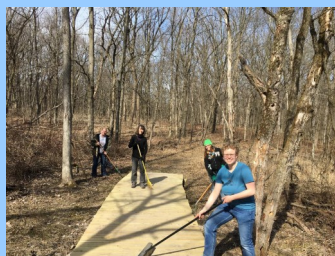
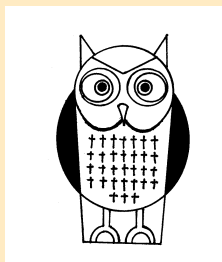
Short Sleeve = \$ 10 + \$5 per shirt shipping/handling
Long Sleeve = \$15 + \$5 per shirt shipping/handling

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 winter
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 open Fridays
noon to 4 p.m.**

Trails Open Dawn to Dusk

Seasons at Thorn Creek Woods Hike- Trees	Saturday November 20 10:30 a.m.- noon
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Seasons at Thorn Creek Woods Hike- Wintertime	Saturday December 4 10:30 a.m.- noon
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Story of the Landscape	Saturday December 11 1-3 p.m.
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Wild Animal Tracks	Saturday December 18 1-3 p.m.
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Learn Your Birds by Spring Ages 11-adult	Sundays January 9- February 13 1-3:30 p.m. 6 classes \$50 prepaid
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Seasons at Thorn Creek Woods Hike- Trees in Winter	Saturday January 15 10:30 a.m.- noon
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Seasons at Thorn Creek Woods Hike- Owls	Saturday February 5 10:30 a.m.- noon
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Ancient Life of Illinois- Fossils	Saturday February 12 1-3 p.m.
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Birding by Sight & Sound for Kids	Sunday February 27 1-3:30 p.m. \$10 fee Ages 7-12
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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

The Jim Marzuki Prairie Sampler



The prairie in front of the Nature Center was created by volunteers moving prairie sod, transplanting plants, scattering seed, weeding and doing prescribed burns. For many years Jim Marzuki did the transplanting & weeding, and with the naturalists kept track of species and blooming times. Jim often described the prairie and its occupants for us in this Newsletter.



Winter at Thorn Creek Nature Preserve

Thorn Creek Nature Preserve Trails

Open to the public and visitors are urged to adhere to the state's guidelines for their safety and the safety of others.

Thorn Creek Nature Center

Masks are required for indoor program attendees and visitors to the Nature Center to help keep visitors and staff safe and to help curb the spread of COVID-19 and its more contagious Delta variant.

Members-especially LIFE MEMBERS-please keep your address and email current.

If a newsletter cannot be delivered, we are charged for its return and must spend additional postage to resend.

*Send changes to Friends P.O. Box
or email to newsletter editor
dolanmendel@aol.com*

Thank You!

Linda Bronson



Linda and her wonderful daughter Lisa have long volunteered on the third Fridays of each month Open Hours.

With the recent passing of Linda, her fellow Open Hours Volunteers share:

Linda always brought a smile to our faces and a spirit that made each task performed that much more enjoyable.

We miss her already but we are thankful for the opportunity of working with her to support the nature center.

Linda wasn't just a volunteer, she was a gift. Her enthusiasm, dedication and great good humor set high standards for us all.

Condolences to Linda's family and friends.

Woodland Trail is a Loop Again!

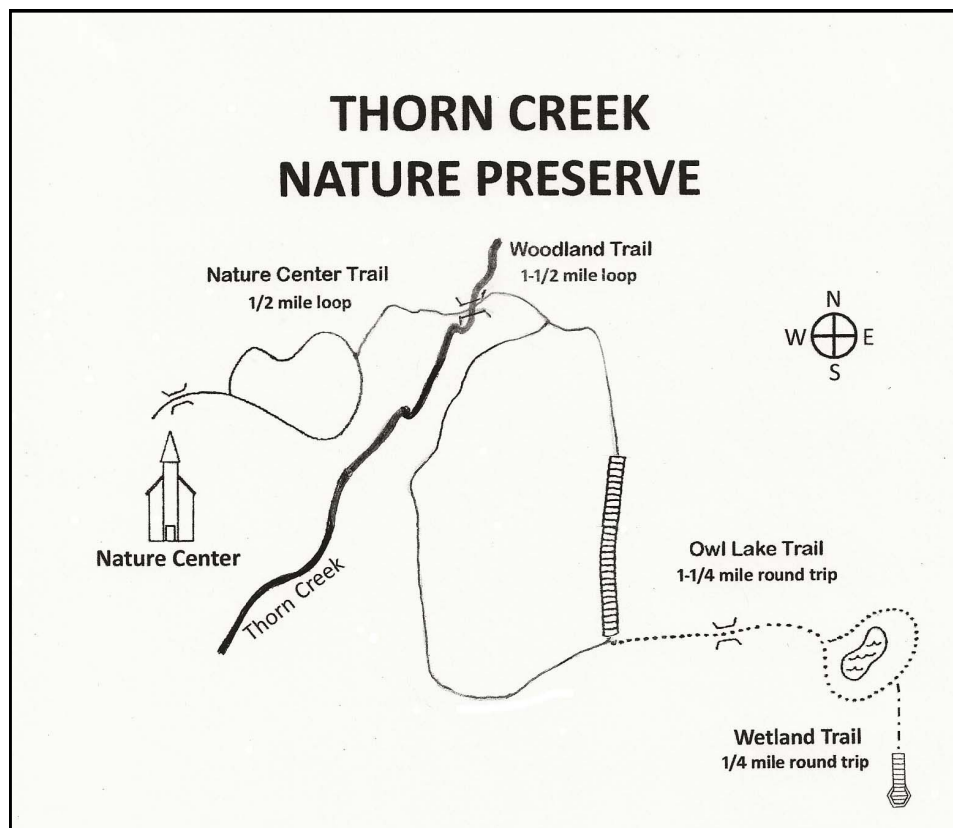
After the much repaired south bridge had to be demolished, we spent a good deal of time and used many advisors to figure out where and how to rebuild a south bridge, eventually determining that there was no good location and no effective design. We turned our attention to rerouting the Woodland Trail to provide a loop again. Our naturalist April Richards with advice from Forest Preserve District of Will County landscape architects scouted routes through the seasons.

Then in the summer of 2020 the AmeriCorps young adult work group led by April totally revamped the trail section that goes uphill from the wide gravel path at the south end of the woods—up over large tree roots. That route now has proper steps/water bars. Then this summer AmeriCorps cleared the new trail portion to connect just above the north bridge. ***The Woodland Trail Loop is now complete with arrow signs.*** The finishing touch will be new You-Are-Here trail map signs—coming soon.

We think you will like the new route. It is relatively level, not in the floodplain, and has just two shallow crossings of wet areas. ***The Woodland Trail Loop is again 1-1/2 mile in length.***

It was important that we not route the trail in the floodplain. That would be destructive to plants but also impossible to maintain—impassible in flood times, muddy most of the year, even with constructed boardwalks. And just imagine the maintenance required to maintain boardwalks flooded and bashed by debris. Remember that our Thorn Creek is known as a “flashy” stream—bone dry in the summer but topping its banks and filling up the floodplain and floodways in the spring and fall with fast moving water carrying anything in its way.

Enjoy the newly completed Woodland Trail Loop



Message from the President

Sue Zelek at our Annual Meeting October 9, 2021



Thorn Creek Nature Preserve was built by dedicated volunteers and contributors.

It began as a group of people wanting to save Thorn Creek Woods from development and to save it to share with future generations. Today, Friends of Thorn Creek members help staff the nature center, develop exhibits, lead programs, build and repair trails, monitor species, raise funds for programs and improvements. The Friends Capital Fund has helped pay for materials needed for continued trail repairs and other projects throughout the preserve.

We also have continued support from Thorn Creek Audubon Society with grants for programs and volunteers with open hours.

During the past year (2020) things changed at TCNC as it did everywhere. The Nature Center building and parking lot were closed and programs canceled. But that didn't stop people from coming out and enjoying TCWoods. The closures brought more people outside to enjoy their backyards and forests near to their homes. People were doing more hiking and exploring. I know that I personally spent more time at Thorn Creek Woods enjoying all that nature has to give (BIRDS; LOTS OF BIRDS). 2020 brought a lot of new people to TCWoods; some live in town or in nearby towns and others farther away. I ran into many people who said they live just up the street or the next town over, coming out here for the first time. I met a couple from far north side of Chicago that found us through a book by Ted Villair, 60 hikes within 60 miles of Chicago. They said they would come back. People were looking for places to go that were close to home. To say the least we are lucky, we have this wonder forest in our backyards.

Things are getting back to normal, slowly. But throughout the shutdown, dedicated volunteers were here to help where needed and to keep Thorn Creek Woods an Oasis for all.

This is to say you matter. You make a difference. Your generosity has a deep and lasting impact on TCNC and Preserve. Your willingness to share your time, your talents, donations and by volunteering is what has allowed TCWoods Nature Preserve to continue through the years.

Words cannot express the gratitude that we wish to convey. Please know that you, as a volunteer and contributor are recognized, appreciated and valued. We thank you and look forward to continuing to work with you into the future.

Gene Gann

Gene passed away this spring.

Gene is the husband of Carolyn— our long time volunteer, Friend, garlic planter, Secretary of Friends, and all around great person. Gene and Carolyn's kids Brian and Lisa have attended our events and helped out at the preserve. The grandkids too. Livia at so many programs and as helper at events, and Taylor as our garlic planter and harvester.

We offer our condolences to the wonderful family and friends of Gene.

Friends Board

Sue Zelek-President

Jim Pisani—Vice President

Dan Moore-Treasurer

Carolyn Gann-Recording Secretary

Board Directors appointed for one years terms:

Penny Chamberlain, Carolyn Gann, Alice Hanes, Susan Inman, Lisa Bronson and Judy Dolan Mendelson.

Alice and Judy were reappointed to represent Friends to the Thorn Creek Woods Management Commission.

Friends Board meets the 4th Monday each month at the nature center at 10 a.m.

Come join us!

Nature Center Needs Things and Helpers of All Kinds

◇ *Helpers for Nature Center Open Hours Fridays noon— 4 p.m.*

◇ *Trail workers-scouts, groups, individuals*

Trail work of all kinds from monitoring trails to clipping, hauling, digging water bars, repairing benches and bridges and boardwalks

◇ *Assist at programs and hikes*

◇ *Volunteers to prepare mailings and other clerical work*

△ *Loppers & hoes*

△ *Large plastic storage boxes 1.5' x 3' w/lids*

△ *Shoe box size boxes with lids*

△ *Birdseed (mix or black sunflower seed— no corn)*

△ *Suet cakes*

△ *1" x 2 5/8" address labels – ink jet or lase*

△ *6" x 9" mailing envelopes*

Call or email the Nature Center

708-747-6320, thorn_creek@att.net.

Sign up today to help!

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

Won't you please renew
your membership now?

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 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 _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____
E-mail _____

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



Annual Renewal Date is May 1st