



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

“The Top 10 Places in Southern Illinois That You’ve Never Been To”

Chris Benda has spent the last four years as Regional Ecologist for the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Update. This work took him throughout southern Illinois, tasked with finding the most undisturbed plant communities left in the state. On **Friday, March 23rd at 7:30 p.m. at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale** Chris will discuss the Top 10 Places in Southern Illinois That You’ve Never Been To. His talk will feature the best-kept secrets in the Shawnee National Forest and beyond.

This is a joint program with the Illinois Native Plant Society Southern Chapter. Chris Benda is serving his third term as President of the Southern Chapter of the INPS and currently teaches biology and geography at Shawnee Community College.

On Saturday, March 24th, the following day, Chris will lead a hike to Degognia Canyon in northwest Jackson County, one of the featured areas. Degognia Canyon is a mesic sandstone cliff in the Shawnee National Forest. This will be a long and rugged hike over steep and rocky terrain. There are no facilities and no trails. Parking is limited so **participants are asked to meet at 1 p.m. at the small gravel lot along the west side of IL Route 3 where it intersects IL Route 151** (west of Murphysboro) to arrange car pooling from there.



February Program Highlights

Slow Plate to China

Dr. George Waring, emeritus professor of zoology at Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, presented a discussion of the effects of very long term geology on the unique animal life of India and Sri Lanka at the February meeting of SIAS.

The ancient super continent of Gondwana was a mashup of Africa, Antarctica, Australia, South America, and India about 300 to 250 million years ago. Since then the pieces have been moving apart slowly and steadily, at about the speed of fingernail growth, toward their present locations on the globe. India and its trailing pearl of an island, both situated on the same tectonic plate, have been crashing into Asia for millions of years and slowly forcing the Himalayas into the sky. Lots of threads of evidence now support the motion of crustal plates, but it was interesting to learn that birds are one of the lines.

Ratites, the large flightless birds of the southern hemisphere, are or were spread across most of these land masses. Rheas are in South America, emus and cassowaries in Australia and New Guinea, kiwis in New Zealand. Formerly elephant birds were in Madagascar and moas were in New Zealand, killed off by recently arriving humans. This wide distribution of flightless birds is viewed as supporting continental drift.

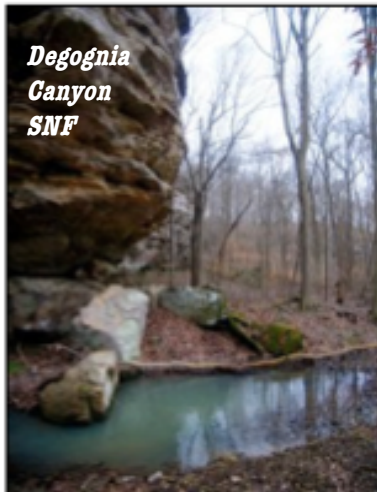
The ostrich, presently found only in Africa, had a far ranging distribution by ancestral species. Earliest fossils are from Asia and the birds moved across the steppe and into the Middle East before entering Africa as a more recent resident.

The various animal lines of India and Sri Lanka show quite a bit of endemism with naturally enough more species native to India as opposed to smaller Sri Lanka.

The newly discovered and described caecilian of Bangladesh presented an interesting subject. These subterranean worm-like amphibians are found throughout the tropics, but are so hard to find and study that they present increased chances for finding new species.

Dr. Waring presented many striking pictures of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals of the Indian sub-continent and nearby Sri Lanka. We appreciate his enjoyable programs presented for SIAS.

=Joe Merkelbach, President



*Degognia
Canyon
SNF*

The first reported Louisiana Waterthrush of spring was seen along the snake road at LaRue Pine Hills by Keith McMullen on Wed., 03/14 /12.

Future SIAS Program Speakers:

April 27th – Dr. George Feldhamer

May 20th – SIAS spring picnic

June & July – No meetings / programs

24th Annual Trinidad and Tobago Tropical Adventure

June 1st - 8th, 2012

Learn about the Tropical Ecology and the natural history this beautiful two-island nation in the Caribbean. Nelda Hincley will again lead this visit to several unique natural areas throughout both islands.

For complete details visit:

http://www.jalc.edu/internationaleducation/trinidad_tobago/index.php

To reserve your spot on this great trip, please phone Nelda at 618.549.5588 or email her at neldahincley@jalc.edu.

Upcoming Events & Activities

March 24 > SIAS/INPS Joint Outing to Degonia Canyon

Chris Benda will lead a hike to Degonia Canyon. Degonia Canyon is a mesic sandstone cliff in the Shawnee National Forest in northwestern Jackson County. This will be a long and rugged hike over steep and rocky terrain. There are no facilities and no trails. Parking is limited so participants are asked to meet at 1 p.m. at the small gravel lot along the west side of IL Route 3 where it intersects IL Route 151 (west of Murphysboro) to arrange car pooling.

March 24 > GreenEarth Work Day at Pyles Fork

Please join Green Earth as they partner with Keep Carbondale Beautiful for a litter pick up at Green Earth's Pyles Fork Preserve. Trash will be collected from Attuck's Park, the Pyles Fork Preserve, and Pyles Fork Creek. Volunteers will meet at the Attucks Park Pavillion, 400-800 Wall Street, at 9:00 am and will be assigned to a litter pick up location. Gloves, water, bags and gear will be provided. For more information visit: <http://www.greenearthinc.org/>

March 31 > Native Landscaping Symposium

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Ctr., Kirkwood, MO

Partners: GrowNative/Missouri Prairie Foundation, Missouri Department of Conservation, Shaw Nature Reserve, St. Louis Audubon Society, and Wild Ones (Partners for Native Landscaping) are sponsoring this workshop for to be held at: Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Rd., Kirkwood, Mo. This in-depth, day-long workshop, designed for both beginner and advanced gardeners, offers information and resources on how to landscape with native plants to enhance biodiversity, create beautiful habitat gardens and address issues such as invasive species and storm water management at home, in your own yard. Advance registration is required. \$15.00. For complete details or to register, phone 314.301.1500.

April 14 > LaRue Pine Hills Appreciation Day

Enjoy springtime and learn about one of the area's outstanding natural ecosystems, LaRue Pine Hills Research Natural Area. Specialists will lead group tours in and around the Natural Area; registration is at 9:00 am. at Trail of Tears Main Picnic Shelter and tours start at 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tentative schedule includes early bird birding with Vicki Lang-Mendenhall and Rhonda Rothrock at Pine Hills Campground, meet there at 7:00 a.m. Full schedule to be published soon. Visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/shawnee>

April 22 >
Earth Day



**Make every day
Earth Day**

April 21 >



The Middle Mississippi River Partnership has teamed up with the Chester Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau, Southern Illinois and Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Societies, Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site, Clifftop and the Kaskaskia Lock and Dam to host the 2012 Birding the Bottomlands Event. The event will highlight the Birding the Bottomlands map, identifying dozens of public birding locations along the middle Mississippi River, in both Illinois and Missouri.

The birding in the field is from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and will give birders of all ages and experiences a chance to view migratory songbirds in their most vibrant colors. Ten locations highlighted on the birding the bottomlands map, all within a 30 minute drive to Chester, Illinois, will be staffed for visitors that day. In addition, two locations will offer canoe birding adventures on a first-come, first-serve basis. The featured birding sites include the USFS's Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir legendary for housing migrating waterfowl and numerous migratory bird species. Across the river sits the Missouri Department of Conservation's Seventy Six and Red Rock Landing Conservation Areas where many river corridor species may be observed while listening to wild turkeys in the distance. Also on the list is the USFWS's Wilkinson Island Division, an area where river dependent species including eagles may be observed on a daily basis. Experienced birders will be on hand at the sites.

A birding festival will follow from noon to 3 p.m. at Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site. Come and visit the site of the fort constructed by the French in 1759 and overlooking what used to be Illinois's first capital. A number of fish & wildlife related demonstrations will take place, including mist-netting, rocket-netting, live raptors as well as law enforcement and fisheries personnel. Free Again Inc. will be there with live birds of prey and opportunities for a photo session. Posters and educational items will be available for the first 200 children. Visitors are welcome to visit these areas during daylight hours seven days a week to view migratory birds on their own. For more information, visit <http://www.midmiss.org/>.

April 28 & 29 > Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois!

Late April is the top time for birding in southernmost Illinois. Winter migrants are lingering while spring and summer species are arriving in full force. There are plenty of species to be located in the eleven southernmost counties of Illinois. In this eleven county area you'll find lots of places to go birding including three wildlife refuges, six big lakes, over a dozen state parks, and a 280,000-acre national forest, all between the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

A spring day birding in southernmost Illinois in the midst of migration with some of your friends is always great time spent. Forming a team and competing in the Birding Blitz adds an additional fun twist to birding with friends. Not only will you spend a great day out with your birding buddies but you'll also be birding for a cause... habitat restoration and preservation in the Cache River Wetlands.

Choose a category that best suits you from a list of five: Open A / Big Day - for those "hardcore" birders; Open B / Dawn to Dusk - for those who prefer not to go from 12:01 a.m. until they drop; County Big Day - spend the whole day birding in your favorite southernmost IL county; Muscle-powered - for those who prefer a day of non-motorized birding; and last but not least the Senior category - all team members must be 55 years young or better. And a new collegiate contest has been added. Student teams register and compete in their category of choice but student teams will also be competing against each other with the winning collegiate team bringing home a small trophy for their college/university/Jr. college. To participate, each team member must pay a registration fee. Make up a unique name for your team, such as, "Rockin' Robins," "the Roadrunners," or "the No Petrels (Petrels)." And, each team must raise a minimum of \$100 in pledges. All pledge donations go to the Friends of the Cache River Wetlands for habitat restoration and preservation in the Cache.

An awards brunch will be held on April 29th and is open to the public as a way for future competitors and non-birders alike to experience the camaraderie that exists between as well as meet other birders and possible pick up some new tips on birding and birding spots.

For details including registration, visit the Birding Blitz at the Cache Nature Fest website at <http://www.birdingblitz.org>. Click on the Birding Blitz link where you can view details about the categories, download the rules, pledge, and registration forms, and last year's totals. The Birding Blitz has a group page on Facebook too and all are welcome to join!

The Southern Illinois Audubon Society will provide \$100 in sponsorship pledges for any registered Birding Blitz team consisting of SIAS members, up to 5 teams!



May 5 > Spring Bird Count

Spring Bird Count takes place on one day each spring everywhere. This year it's on May 5th. Illinois Spring Bird Counts are designated county by county, with nearly all counties participating. Local counts and contacts are:
Williamson Co. - Vicki Lang-Mendenhall 618.697.9868;
Jackson Co. - Rhonda Rothrock 618.684.6605;
Union Co. - Vern Kleen 217.636.8476.
For unlisted counties phone Vern Kleen at his number.

Black Swift Wintering Grounds Discovered

It was one of the last North American bird species to be described to science, in 1857. Its nest was not found until 1901. The first audio recording of its voice was not made until 1993. And every summer, across most of its breeding range, it is the last species to arrive from the south, often not appearing until the end of June. But most remarkably of all, it was the only North American migratory bird to enter the 21st century with the location of its wintering grounds still a complete mystery. And it looks like a flying cigar.

The migration routes and wintering grounds of Black Swifts have remained unknown to science until now. By any measure, Black Swifts are bizarre. They nest in the spray zone of waterfalls, sometimes behind the water, so that juveniles may never have dry feathers between hatching and fledging. They take to the air before dawn, spend the entire day foraging for flying insects at altitudes so high that they often cannot be seen with the naked eye, and frequently do not return to the nest until after dark. Then they get up several times during the course of the night to regurgitate insects for their only child, who sat hungry and wet at home all day.

The high-flying habits of Black Swifts make them almost impossible to track during migration. The parents stay at the nest until the chick is old enough to fly in August or September, and then they vanish, not to be seen again until the following May or June. A few anecdotal observations and a couple of specimens have suggested that Black Swifts may migrate south along the California coast, and that at least some reach Costa Rica or Colombia in migration. For the full story visit: <http://earbirding.com/blog/archives/3602>

Doomsday Seed Vault has more than 740,000 samples

Jutting out of ice in a forbidding part of Norway, the "Doomsday Vault" (the Svalbard Global Seed Vault) literally holds the seeds to the world's future. This unmanned facility holds seeds that will still be viable 20,000 years from now.

Commercial farming has reduced the overall crop diversity in the world, so specific diseases could potentially wipe out a large chunk of production. In that instance, the Doomsday Vault holds seeds to older strains that could be reintroduced, or that might be more resistant to pests, disease and drought.

The Doomsday Vault also stands steadfast to protect against other situations: the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the looting during Egyptian unrest that destroyed several types of seeds, and the January fire that engulfed several varieties at the National Plant Genetic Resources Laboratory in the Philippines. The vault can hold 2.25 billion seeds and the natural arctic temperatures keep them preserved.

For more information on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, visit <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/lmd/campain/svalbard-global-seed-vault.html>



-- Join SIAS OR Renew Your Membership --

To join or renew your membership, fill in the following form and return it along with your dues to:

Your name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

I/we would like to receive my newsletter via email. YES or NO

Interested on being on the Board? Contact a Board Member!

-----cut here and return with dues-----cut here and return with dues-----

Southern Illinois Audubon Society Individual member \$15
Attn.: Membership Additional member in a family \$10
P.O. Box 222 Student voting member \$ 5
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222 Amt. Enclosed:\$ _____

Annual membership renewal month is January and coincides with board elections held at the annual meeting in January. Member address labels reflect current dues status.

-----cut here and return with dues-----cut here and return with dues-----

Attn.: Proposed SIAS Meeting Time Change

The SIAS Board is proposing a change to our monthly meeting time from 7:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. There will be a short discussion of this proposition at the March meeting.

If members agree to a change, it would begin in August of this year.

Check out SIAS's restyled website at:
<http://www.siaudubon.org>

>Many thanks to Jim Shofstall for his work on our website.<

The Citizens for Southernmost Illinois (CSI) website to Nix I-66 was adjusted and is now up and running. Please visit the CSI website and sign the petition and sign the new petition.

<http://citizensforsouthernillinoig.org>

Southern Illinois Audubon Society

**P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222**

*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society,
the Illinois Environmental Council,
& the North American Bluebird Society*

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Don't Forget to Save Your Stamps for the IAS Land Acquisition Fund. ☑

bring your own stamps to any SIAS meeting

For more info visit: www.illinoisaudubon.org

**Birding
the
Bottomlands**



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**Middle Mississippi
River Partnership**

