



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

"Flora and Fauna of the Seychelles Archipelago."

Dr. George Waring will present a program on the Flora and Fauna of the Seychelles Archipelago for SIAS on Friday, Feb. 27th at 7 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale. The Fellowship Hall is on the lower level of the church. Take the elevator or stairway down to the Hall.

The tropical multi-island country of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean harbors numerous plant and animal species found nowhere else on Earth. This program will focus on the unusual granitic islands, their scenic beauty and unique natural resources.

Dr. Waring is a Zoology Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University Carbondale where he has been a Scholar, Ornithologist, and Animal Behaviorist since 1966. His research has taken him to many locations throughout the world.

Who Knew – Great Horned Owls in the City

Mr. Mark H. X. Glenshaw, an avid citizen scientist living in the urban heart of St. Louis, presented a very entertaining and wise presentation about the pair of Great Horned Owls that live in the expanse of Forest Park in the center of the city.

Mr. Glenshaw is a Missouri Master Naturalist and participant in Forest Park Forever. He has won awards for bioblitz participation in the city.

His subjects are Charles and Sarah, a well-established duo, who Mark has watched most nights for nine years. Mark was walking home through the park on an evening in 2005 when he first saw the birds. They drew his interest immediately and a long and interesting study has followed.

The owls were an established pair of adults when Mark began following them and they have successfully nested and raised chicks each season. The first ones were a revelation to Mark as he learned they grew very rapidly while still covered with down. The small fully feathered owls he had seen were not babies but screech owls.

Over the following years Mark has observed and learned many of the behaviors of the pair. The calling duets that key and perpetuate their pair bonds were revealing; Charles' calls are lower and slower in cadence, Sarah's are higher pitched and more rapid. The duets were a prelude to mating.

The pair ranges over the entire park and take many kinds of prey including rabbits, squirrels, mice and they periodically take a run at great blue herons.

After chicks reach adult plumage, learn to fly, and begin to feed themselves they are kicked out of the park. Mark has only recently found a second pair in the far west end of the park, and it is not sure they will be allowed to remain. Charles and Sarah definitely are the chief pair of the park.

A revelation of behavior was the stretching and fluffing shake up as the owls awaken.

This was an enjoyable and entertaining program for all. – *Joe Merkelbach, President*

Cathie Hutcheson Receives Todd Fink Award

On July 11, 1995, avian ecologist and naturalist Todd Fink passed away. Todd was a young man well known and well respected by SIAS and the various state and federal agencies in southern Illinois. As a tribute to his memory, SIAS designated our annual conservation award, "The Todd Fink Conservation Award". For many years it was given annually with recipients including Les Winkeler and Vern Kleen. Some 8 years have passed since a recipient was honored.

SIAS is proud to announce that Cathie Hutcheson is the 2015 Todd Fink Conservation Award winner! Cathie was presented with her award at our annual meeting. Cathie, a charter member of SIAS, has a long, devoted history of bird conservation and education and she knew Todd Fink.

Cathie has held a position on the Board for more years than not. Her degree of volunteerism is hard to match. Thirty years ago, Cathie was a member of the Southern Illinois Bird Observatory, an organization that banded birds at Giant City State Park. Since then she has assisted in Christmas and Spring Bird Counts annually. Cathie acquired a certification to band birds. Hummingbirds have become her forte' and she has banded over 6000 hummingbirds since she was first certified. As part of her banding, Cathie regularly gives free programs on hummingbirds, other species, and bird banding for various organizations, garden clubs, and at nature festivals...all at her own expense. Her efforts are greatly appreciated!

Other Annual Meeting Notes-

Over 50 members and friends attended the annual meeting and program. Many were visitors that came to see Mr. Glenshaw's program on Great Horned Owls.

The potluck and silent auction were a success. David Brewer made a motion that the slate of board members up for re-election be accepted and approved, which passed unanimously. President Joe Merkelbach, Vice President Vicki Lang-Mendenhall, Secretary Mary McCarthy, Treasurer Laraine Wright, Hospitality Chair Karen Kaufman, and Membership Chair Rhonda Rothrock all will retain their positions. Don Mullison was welcomed onto the board as Outings Chair.

Tom Ulrich Returning on March 27th!

Tom Ulrich will return to give a program titled "Anomalies & Curiosities" for SIAS in March. In the 40 years of his career, Tom has been put into many unusual situations. Tom will show some of the rarest birds in the world and behavior not yet listed in the literature. He states the program is just full of some of the strangest things he has photographed over the years. The program will be at the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale, at 7 p.m.



2015 Meetings Calendar – March 27th: Tom Ulrich
April 25th: to be announced **May:** Annual SIAS Picnic
June & July: No meetings / Summer break

Birding Blitz of Southernmost IL will be on May 2nd

The 14th Annual Birding Blitz will be held on the Saturday, May 2nd this year. Spend this spring day birding in the midst of songbird migration with some of your friends while supporting habitat restoration and preservation in the Cache River Watershed.

Visit the Birding Blitz website <http://www.birdingblitz.org> where you can see details about the categories, download the rules, pledge, and registration forms, and check out previous year's winners.

If you would like to help the cause but prefer not to participate, please consider pledging to a competing team. Pledges can be made per species seen or in a lump donation or you can donate to SIAS for the Friends of Cache in support of all teams. *The Blitz is coordinated by the SIAS.*

Upcoming Events & Outings

Feb. 28 – Waterfowl Birding at Mermet Lake

Master Naturalist Anne Parley will lead a driving tour around Mermet Lake from 9-11 a.m., making several stops to identify birds along the way. Meet at Mermet Lake in the Bluebird Trail parking area near the entrance to the lake. For more details, call the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

March-May – Movie Nights at the Cache

Bring your family and friends for a relaxing evening with fellow nature lovers on the First Thursday of each month. The theme of this year's series is "Critters of the Cache". March 12th is *Venom: Nature's Killer* (be advised this video contains graphic images and content); April 2nd is *Leave it to Beavers*; and May 7th is *Earth Flight*.

These free Movie Nights are held at the Cache River Wetlands Center from 6-8 p.m. For more details, call Cypress Creek Refuge at 618.634.2231

March 12 – Disaster – Are You Prepared?

Are you prepared for an emergency? Family emergency planning can be the key to surviving a disaster. In extreme situations, emergency resources may be limited. Be prepared to care for yourself and your family for at least three days (72 hours). Presenter Shawn Priddy started with the Jackson County Emergency Management Agency as a volunteer storm spotter. He has served as the Deputy Coordinator for the agency since 2005 and has conducted many training sessions and public presentations throughout the County.

The program will be held at 7 p.m. at 216 East Monroe Street in Carbondale. It's sponsored by the Shawnee Chapter Sierra Clubs, is FREE and open to the public. Parking and entrance are at the rear.

March 14 – Gems of Blue at the Cache

The Eastern Bluebird has made a comeback in southern Illinois. Come explore the natural history of this beautiful bird and build a nesting box to encourage bluebirds to nest in your area. **Advanced Registration Required.** Call the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064 to register.

May 1-3 – IAS Spring Gathering

From limestone cliffs and caves to hill prairies and glades, Southwestern Illinois' Ozark region has many uncommon natural communities. These wildlands harbor many rare and endangered plants and wildlife, including several not found anywhere else in Illinois. Come explore this unique area, including the large reserve that Illinois Audubon Society has played a critical role in preserving. Hosting this event are Clifftop, Kaskaskia Valley Audubon Society and Salt Lick Point Stewardship Committee. For full details or to register visit:

<http://www.gifttool.com/registrar/ShowEventDetails?ID=2046&EID=19355>

May 15-17 – IOS Spring Birding Weekend – Galena/Northwestern IL

Songbird migration should still be in full swing in the scenic hills of the driftless area of northwestern Illinois, and the wetlands along the Mississippi River always hold a few surprises. Lodging will be at the Chestnut Mountain resort, located on a wooded bluff a few miles outside Galena with a commanding view over the river valley below. Details on the field trips are being finalized and all registration information will be posted on the IOS website. <http://www.illinoisbirds.org/>

Something you don't see every day



Images by Joe Merkelbach

Welcome New SIAS Members!

Janet Hunter of Cobden;
Deanna Putnam and Brent Pease of Carbondale; and Maxine Williamson of Anna. If you recently joined SIAS but did not get welcomed, please forgive our oversight.

CONWR Looking for Volunteers!

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge needs volunteers for Visitors Center, currently on:

*Second Tuesday 9 a.m. to noon

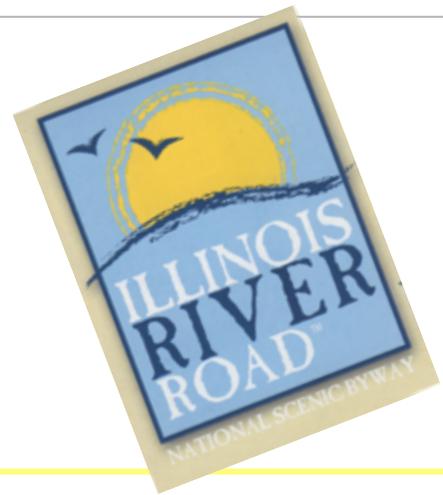
*Third Tuesday 9 a.m. to noon

*Second Thursday 12 to 3 p.m.

*Fourth Thursday 12 to 3 p.m.

*Fifth Thursday 12 to 3 p.m.

For more information or to volunteer contact Kim at 618.997.3344 ext. 1.



Embrace spring with Illinois River trip

Last May, Jerry and I took a five-day trip along the Illinois River to explore the exciting recovery of natural wetlands and prairies. I recommend the same for you: leisurely travel involving plenty of birds, museums, trails, quaint stores and restaurants, art and craft galleries, and beautiful sights of a more natural river.

Our itinerary included Beardstown marsh, Chautauqua NWR and nearby Emiquin wetlands, Peoria Lake, Illinois 29 river road, Peru/La Salle, and Starved Rock State Park.

We also took a side trip to the Nachusa Grasslands that has been a priority for The Nature Conservancy for years. TNC and the state have recently released buffalo on the extensive prairie land. (Nachusa is northeast of Dixon and south of Lowden-Miller State Forest, which was full of warblers, tanagers, and other migrants in early May.)

There is plenty of literature about the river. Our essential brochure was "Guide to Birding Sites Along the Illinois River Road" which includes a map and recommended stopping places. On the Internet: www.illinoisriverroad.org. If you start at Starved Rock State Park and then head south along the river, you can find good brochures at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center on North 27th Road just across the river from the park. Eagles nest near the center and are easily seen there.

Our favorite food stop was the historic Willows Hotel in Utica, which is in the heart of antique and art stores. If we had included one more day for the trip, we would have spent time in Princeton, a town known for its great local shops and restaurants.

We want to take this trip again with maybe a few more days for side trips. There are many choices to make in central and northwest Illinois for both outdoor and cultural activities. – Laraine Wright

A Shadier Shawnee Spells Trouble for Songbirds

A very interesting and well-reasoned article in the Winter 2014-15 "Illinois Audubon" magazine points out the troubling changes taking place in the Shawnee National Forest.

Author Tracy Boutelle Fidler discusses the continual growth of maple and beech species that are shading out the regeneration of oaks and hickories. The latter are critically important food sources as well as trees that leave an open understory for birds such as whip-poor-wills, whose numbers have greatly declined. Our region "boasts an unfortunate designation: it's on track to become one of the first forests in North America to shift away from oaks and toward shade-loving tree species," says Fidler.

She cites opinions and research of such scientists as Jeff Hoover and Chris Benda (both with the Illinois Natural History Survey) and Eric Holzmüller, an SIUC forest ecologist, in the loss of birds and native plants in the Shawnee over the last 30 years. "As recently as 1978," she says, "the forest boasted flowers and grasses galore, nearly all of which depended on sunlight. A Southern Illinois University botanist cataloged asters, sunflowers, goldenrods, black-eyed Susans, bee balm and variegated milkweed, to name a few. Yet in a recent check by Benda of a forested area near Jonesboro, he saw hardly any flowers but plenty of shade-thriving plants such as Virginia creeper and poison ivy.

In what she says is "a pretty startling statement," one conclusion of a U.S. Forest Service sponsored report says that a "near complete loss of the oak-hickory forest component is imminent."

Those with long memories recall research of scientists who, 20 years ago, strongly recommended filling in any openings in the Shawnee to discourage cowbirds from laying eggs in the nests of forest-interior songbirds, including many tropical warblers. Other professionals warned even then of the potential of takeover by maples and beeches unless ongoing management of the Shawnee continued (selective cutting and burning, strongly opposed by some environmentalists active back then). In fact, SIAS dissolved and reorganized in the mid-1990s to distance itself from "don't touch the forest" proponents.

Fidler points out that oak forests do need some fire to thrive. Smokey the Bear went too far in his warnings.

As a test case for extensive forest management, a coalition of professionals last fall launched a 925-acre project in the Trail of Tears State Forest. The study comes in three phases: do nothing, burn first, or cut first. The scientists hope to work through all of the complexities to discover the best type of approaches to discourage widespread stands of dense shade trees in our area.

I encourage you to join the Illinois Audubon Society to support their educational and conservation efforts. Our group is an affiliate of IAS. You will receive the quarterly "Illinois Audubon" magazine with wonderful articles about our state's natural challenges as well as success stories, places to visit, people to know, and upcoming events. Basic membership is \$25. Go to www.illinoisaudubon.org or call 217.544.2473. *-Laraine Wright*

USFWS Teams with Conservation Partners to Launch Campaign to Save Beleaguered Monarch Butterfly

On Feb. 9, 2015, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched a major new campaign aimed at saving the declining monarch butterfly. The Service signed a cooperative agreement with the National Wildlife Federation, announced a major new funding initiative with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and pledged an additional \$2 million in immediate funding for on-the-ground conservation projects around the country. While monarchs are found across the U.S. — as recently as 1996 numbering some 1 billion — their numbers have declined by approximately 90 percent in recent years, a result of numerous threats, particularly loss of habitat due to agricultural practices, development and cropland conversion. Degradation of wintering habitat in Mexico and California has also had a negative impact on the species. <http://www.fws.gov/savethemonarch>

Renewable Projects Fall Short of "Green"

Conservation Alert - January 2015 - Volume 19 Number 1

- by Donnie R. Dann

The development of renewable energy technologies is a significant advancement as we transition away from fossil fuels. But "renewable" does not necessarily mean "environmentally responsible," as explained by Dave Yarnold and Michael Brune, CEOs of the National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, respectively: "'Environmentally responsible' means not throwing birds and other wildlife under the bus in some blind rush to hit the numbers. Siting, installation and operation of renewable energy projects must be done in ways that uphold the highest standards of protection for wildlife and great American landscapes."

We couldn't agree more. Renewable energy projects might be greener than fossil fuels, but that does not make them "green". Yet a variety of private and governmental actions, supported by certain environmental organizations, have overlooked the damage caused by some of these projects in the rush to develop greener energy sources:

Where there is wind, there are often birds and bats; therefore, the careful and conscientious siting of wind energy projects is imperative. The poster child for poorly sited wind farms is Altamont Pass, east of San Francisco in Central California, one of the earliest wind farms in the country. It was built atop the ridgelines favored by hawks, eagles, and other raptors. It has since become a major killer of these and other birds, including as many as 1,300 birds of prey per year. Several actions were undertaken, some successful and some less so, to reduce this unacceptably high level of fatalities.

After extensive deliberations that included wind developers, some environmental groups and the federal government, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service promulgated relatively rigorous wind turbine siting guidelines. However, these guidelines are voluntary, and thus largely without teeth.

The Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating Station in the Mojave Desert provides non-fossil fuel energy to 140,000 homes, but it hardly can be described as "green". It was built in the habitat of the Desert Tortoise, a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, birds literally burst into flames when they fly through its 800-degree-heat generating mirrors. The Associated Press estimates bird deaths of as many as 28,000 per year. Also killed are sizable numbers of bats, some species of which are already in precipitous decline.

Looking ahead, sizable populations of songbirds gather on the Lake Erie shoreline of northern Ohio during spring migration before attempting the long overwater crossing. As Lake Erie is relatively shallow, it could be ideal for proposed off-shore wind turbines, but for the conflict with migrating birds and bats. Several of the Great Lakes also harbor large concentrations of wintering waterbirds. It remains to be seen whether offshore turbine arrays can be designed and operated to minimize the impact on avian wildlife.

We must continue to wean ourselves away from coal, oil and other fossil fuels to preserve the future of life on this planet. Solution #1 continues to be conservation. Using less is key, from shutting off lights upon leaving a room, to better insulating our buildings, to continuing to push for better fuel economy in vehicles. But of course we will continue to need new energy sources. Renewables like wind and solar, and emerging technologies like fuel cells, tidal and wave energy have to be researched and vigorously supported. Most importantly, projects using renewable technologies must be developed and located where they cause minimal environmental destruction. We must balance our energy needs with the wonders and bounty of the natural world that sustains all life on earth. It is up to environmentally conscious consumers to demand more from our renewable energy technologies.

Donnie R. Dann lives in northern Illinois and is on the board of multiple conservation organizations including the The Nature Conservancy and Bird Conservancy Network. Donnie writes monthly Conservation Alerts that may be excerpted, reproduced or circulated without limitation.

I-66 Corridor Project Update by Barbara McKasson

Sierra Club has opposed the proposal for a new I-66 interstate highway for decades and now oppose the newly named 66 Corridor - a new or "improved" highway through southernmost Illinois. This corridor appears to benefit truck traffic between Paducah, KY and Cape Girardeau, MO, but would only be detrimental to Southernmost Illinois. If a new interstate highway is built, it would most likely impact many southern Illinois natural areas, including the Cache Wetlands, Trail of Tears State Forest, Shawnee National Forest, Mermet Lake Fish and Wildlife Area, and sensitive wetlands in the Mississippi bottoms.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process going on for "66 Corridor" is now apparently stalled. The NEPA study process is currently in the study phase, during which they get input from the public and government officials. However, this process has currently been put on "hold" by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The reason for this, judging from meeting minutes and letters on the 66 Corridor website, is because the Kentucky legislature has decided not to devote further funds to this project, and will not be participating in the project. Apparently, this highway was meant to be part of the congressionally approved Transamerica Corridor, and must go through Kentucky to meet the Congressional requirements. Thus, the 66 Corridor Study is apparently stalled out.

As we all know, these projects are like zombies and can be revived over and over again. The Illinois Dept. of Transportation and the FHWA are currently trying to convince KY officials to remain in the project. If that fails, the project will have to start over with a new definition of the project area that would exclude Kentucky. We will continue to monitor the pulse of this zombie project. You can view the documentation for these developments at <<http://www.66corridor.org/doclib>> and scroll to the following documents: 11/5/2014 - Agency Coordination - KYTC Meeting; 10/31/2014 - IDOT letter to FHWA; and 8/28/2014 - FHWA letter to IDOT.

The Southern Illinois Audubon Society also opposes the I-66 Corridor Project and has been actively monitoring the Feasibility Study Process.

On 02/12/15 the House voted 270 to 152 to approve the Keystone XL pipeline as expected. The vote clears the way for President Obama to veto the bill when it crosses his desk as he said he would. This will set up a showdown with the Senate, which is only four votes shy of overriding his veto. That's too close 4 comfort! The media are reporting that the President's veto is safe. But we can't afford to be complacent.

Contact Senator Durban, Senator Kirk and all your senators (if your not from IL) to tell them to support the President by vote NO to a Keystone XL veto override!



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Newsletter

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