



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

Cuba – It's Birds and People

Join SIAS as Vern Kleen takes us on a travelogue through Cuba on Friday, Feb. 24th, at 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the 1st United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale. (Take the elevator to the Fellowship Hall on the lower floor.)

Vern states that he had the privilege of visiting Cuba twice: early December 2014 and mid-January 2015. This presentation will contain lots of close-up bird photos as well as scenery, old cars, and how people get around (from walking to large trucks carrying people). Vern adds that the people of Cuba are very friendly and definitely appreciate Americans.

Vern attended grad school at SIU-C from 1969 to 1972 (his thesis work was on the Prothonotary Warbler at Crab Orchard Refuge); worked for the IDNR from 1972 thru 2001 (initially as the Non-game and Endangered Species Biologist), and retired as the Avian Ecologist. He initiated the Illinois statewide Spring Bird Count in 1971 and both coordinated and was the senior author of the final publication (in 2004) of the Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas. In his retirement, Vern has had the privilege of leading annual birding expeditions throughout Central and South America and is involved in numerous bird banding projects here in Illinois.

Vern Kleen is no stranger to SIAS, having been a past member, having provided a wonderful program on the Birds of Midway Atoll, and having been the recipient of our Todd Fink Award.



January Program Highlights

Bird Imaging in 2016

David Brewer, an SIAS member with a fine photographer's eye, shared his favorite images from 2016 with us at the annual meeting. Some of the images were from his own pond near Desoto, others from around southern Illinois as well as Florida.

The beginning of 2016 David was in Florida capturing images of the distinctive behavior of the reddish egret. This heron relative sometimes adopts a stir-them-up hunting tactic instead of the usual stealth and sudden strike technique. The bird was pictured in various poses during its scatter and mantle hunting action.

David talked about the "golden" morning light which he seeks to lend interest and mood to his photographs.

Back in Desoto he had some pictures of hummingbirds, some of his favorite subjects, as well as others. These pictures, some in fine detail, showed their iridescence very well. Black feathers very often have a colorful appearance when viewed in close view.

The final portions of the program were selected images of the celebrated rare bird visitors to Kaskaskia Island. Four wanderers from the discontinued ultra-light led whooping crane flock have taken winter quarters on Kaskaskia and David made a number of visits to photograph them. Each bird is identified by sets of colored reflective tape rings around their legs. They also wear lightweight radio transmitters that locate their position for monitoring researchers. Unfortunately one of the males; there were two of each gender, has recently died.

The cranes grew rather accustomed to David's presence and indeed the last time he imaged Flambeau, the male who died, he was walking forward while foraging.

David has large format prints of some of his images that are suitable for mounting and display.

SIAS would like to thank David for agreeing to present a program of his images at such a short notice.

January Meeting Highlights

Over 40 members and friends attended the annual meeting in January. As in the past, the potluck was brimming with yummy entrees and deserts. The slate of officers up for re-election was unanimously approved. A new collection of used books was made available to purchase and a dozen items were sold on the silent auction. Our thanks to those who donated silent auction items.

The Todd Fink Spirit of Audubon Award was presented to Nelda Hinckley for her years of teaching and dedication to conservation in southernmost Illinois and beyond.

In Memoriam: Tom Ulrich

SIAS good friend and nature photographer extraordinaire Tom Ulrich, 67, died on Feb. 10 at Barnes-Jewish Hospital after a 40 day hard fought battle with T-PLL leukemia. His life partner Linda Martin was by his side and had been present with him day in and day out from the time he entered the hospital.

Tom was one of a kind and will be greatly missed by all those who's life he touched through his outstanding nature images. Our thoughts and sympathies are with Tom's family and Linda.

SIAS Meetings Calendar for 2017

March 24th: Program speaker: George Waring

April 28th: Program to be announced

May: SIAS Picnic-date to be announced

Upcoming Events & Activities

Feb. 25 > Bellrose Bike Tour (Cache Adventure Series)

Get a special “behind-the-scenes” look at how wetland areas are managed during this bicycle tour of Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve, which is normally closed to the public this time of year. Meet at Bellrose Viewing Platform, off Cache Chapel Rd., at 10 a.m. Tour runs to 12-noon. Advance registration required. For complete details or to register, call Cypress Creek Refuge at 618.634.2231.

Feb. 26 > The Natural Heritage of Illinois

John Schwegman will share his vast understanding of Illinois, its geography, plants, animals, and people in a slide program detailing the biodiversity in Illinois’ ecosystems. The program starts at 2 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL. John’s book The Natural Heritage of Illinois, Essays on its Lands, Waters, Flora and Fauna will be available for purchase.

Mar. 4 > Bird of Mermet Lake

Friends of the Cache invite you to join in on this birding from 9-11 a.m. Meet at the parking area for the Bluebird Trail and take a guided driving tour around Mermet Lake. For more info, phone the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Mar. 9 > Movie Nights at the Cache

Enjoy a relaxing evening of nature movie watching on the 1st Thursday of each month at the Cache River Wetland Center. This month’s showing is *Silence of the Bees*. For more details, phone Cypress Creek Refuge at 618.634.2231.

Mar. 11 > Bicycling in the COWNR Restricted Area

Explore parts of Crab Orchard NW Refuge usually unseen. Bring the whole family and join in on this bike trip through some of the restricted parts of the refuge! Registration required for this morning outing. Contact the Refuge Visitors Center at 618.998.5933 for complete detail and to register.

Mar. 12 > CONWR Bird Tour

Come and join this birding tour guided by Crab Orchard NW Refuge’s experienced birder volunteers. Reservations required. Binoculars will be available for check-out. Program begins at 8:15 a.m. at the Refuge Visitor Center, 85588 Route 148, Marion, IL. For more details or to register, phone 618.998.5933.

Mar. 12 > Landscaping with Native Grasses

Learn how to pair native grasses with wildflowers in you home landscape. This presentation will be from 2-3 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center. For more info, phone the Center at 618.657.2064.

Mar. 14 > Birding the Bottoms

Bring you binoculars and rubber boots for this early spring evening, 6-7 p.m., birding hike at Hickory Bottoms. For more info including meeting place call CCNWR at 618.6634.2231.

Mar. 31-Apr. 2 > Illinois Indigenous Plant Symposium

Registration is live for the annual Illinois Indigenous Plants Symposium to be held at John A. Logan College in Carterville, Illinois. Jim Wiker, co-author of *Butterflies of Illinois*, will be the keynote speaker. Many other wonderful speakers will be giving presentations. There will be guided hikes to Cove Hollow and Pine Hills’ “snake road”. Native plants will be available for purchase. For more details or to register, go to: www.ill-inps.org/2017symposium

The 2017 Birding Blitz of Southernmost IL – April 29th

The 2017 Birding Blitz is just two months away! Consider forming a team and registering in one of the five categories. Registration forms will be updated and available at the Blitz website soon.

For complete details visit: www.birdingblitz.org

Nelda Hinckley Receives the Todd Fink Award

The Todd Fink Spirit of Audubon Award was presented to Nelda Hinckley at the SIAS annual meeting. Rhonda Rothrock nominated Nelda and began the award ceremony with a little story about Nelda’s contributions to conservation.

Nelda began her teaching career in the biology department of John A. Logan College in 1984 where she developed the curriculums and gained approval for five new biology courses, including Human Anatomy and Physiology, General Microbiology, and Introduction to Tropical Ecology. The tropical ecology course, a travel study course, was the first one of its kind to be approved by the state and helped to educate many students on the natural history of biologically rich Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela.

Nelda has been a long time member of the Illinois Native Plant Society, the Shawnee Sierra Club, and SIAS. For many years Nelda and Conrad hosted SIAS’s January seed sale.

Nelda, along with Genevieve Houghton, was a faithful volunteer early on with the Cache volunteering for the monthly Stewardship Saturdays and later with the Nature Fest. She has participated in the Birding Blitz since it’s inception, collecting donations for habitat restoration and preservation. Nelda has participated in countless spring and Christmas bird counts. She was one of the first persons in our area to embrace hybrid car technology when it was first introduced. Her tan Prius became her trademark and was just one more of her ways of helping protect the environment and wildlife.

Rhonda stated, “When I was new to SIAS and birding, Nelda told me that she kept a list of the birds she saw each day. That seemed like a great idea to me so I began doing the same. The process greatly helped to improve my birding skills. It instilled in me an appreciation of and a need for keeping records on bird populations and trends and a need to protect and conserve habitat for birds. All this and so much more is why I nominated Nelda for the SIAS Todd Fink Spirit of Audubon Award.”

29th Trinidad & Tobago Adventure May 24-31, 2017

Join Nelda Hinckley and other naturalist guides for an 8-day tour of this two-island nation. Experience a tropical evergreen rain forest, a mangrove, tide pools, a tropical deciduous forest, and stay at the 200-acre, world-renowned Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge. Land Cost: \$1695 (with 10 participants, includes all meals, lodging, and field trips with naturalist guide).

For details, contact: Nelda W. Hinckley at 618.549.5588 or neldahinckley@jalc.edu

Staying in touch with Three Treasured Members

Longtime member Stan Harris, who for years led spring wildflower outings for us (with companion Clara McClure), will be 99 years old on March 5. To mail a card and a greeting: Stan Harris, 98 Edgewood Lane, Carbondale, IL 62901.

Cal Maginel now lives in Anna. Cal and his late wife, Cathie, received our Conservationist of the Year Award in the 1990s. Among many other conservation activities, he and Cathie gathered and planted thousands of acorns to restore the Cache River area. Cal was on local television in December, enjoying a visit from young children at the Veterans Home. To send him a card and note: Cal Maginel, 482 N. Main Street, Anna, IL 62906.

A co-founder of SIAS in 1970, Clark Ashby enjoys corresponding with friends and receiving photos and news of Southern Illinois, which is still very close to his heart. Clark is emeritus professor of plant biology at SIUC. In 1970, he joined with the Schwegmans and others to oppose the damming of Lusk Creek and for many years represented SIAS as an activist against bad environmental policies in our area. No alternative facts: he based his views on exacting scientific research. Now a widower (his wife was Rhoda), you are encouraged to stay in touch with him at Clark Ashby, 11750 Asbury Circle, Apt. 109, Solomons, MD 20688-3059. Clark still enjoys gardening at his retirement complex right by the water.
- Laraine Wright

Our Bluebirds Also Thrive at the Fish Hatchery

In the January newsletter I recapped our 28-year sponsorship of the bluebird trail at Crab Orchard NWR. But we have added even more to that effort which I had failed to mention.

In 2013, we asked the Little Grassy Fish Hatchery manager if we could begin regular monitoring of the boxes that had been a part of that state property for years. Mary McCarthy volunteered to be the weekly monitor.

With husband Wally's help, Mary exchanged the older boxes for new "slot-opening" boxes paid for by SIAS. (Rather than a round box opening, the slot makes it harder for nest predation by crows, jays, and other birds as well as easier for the fledging of tree swallows.) She and Wally also installed 20" sections of PVC pipe over the poles to reduce predation from raccoons.

From 2013 through 2016, Mary fledged 115 Eastern bluebirds and 55 tree swallows in the 10 boxes she monitors at Little Grassy Fish Hatchery. Thank you, Mary! - Laraine Wright

Climate change affects birds in different ways. It can alter distribution, abundance, behavior, even genetic composition. It can affect the timing of events like migration or breeding. And climate change can act in combination with other major threats like predation,

habitat loss, and alien invasive species. Because birds are one of the best studied groups of organisms, we already have the data needed to demonstrate that birds are being affected by climate change. This is occurring in a variety of ways: *Egg laying is occurring earlier*- One large-scale study showed that birds are laying eggs at an average rate of 6.6 days earlier per decade; *Migration times are shifting*- birds are migrating earlier in the spring; *Bird behavior and their environment are becoming mismatched* - a mismatch occurs when birds cannot shift their behavior, such as breeding times, enough to coincide with changes in environment, such as when prey is available; *Distributions are changing*- bird populations are expected to shift poleward, or to higher elevations, to stay with their ideal temperatures as the climate changes; *Ecological communities are disrupted*- global warming can change the entire ecological community; *Extinction risks are on the rise*- birds most at risk of extinction from climate change are those with restricted ranges, poor ability to move their range, small populations, or those already facing conservation challenges.

Excerpts from <http://naturecanada.ca/what-we-do/bird-conservation/climate-change-birds/>

Milkweed Seeds for Monarch Butterflies

To distribute through another organization I belong to, I recently received 150 packets of native milkweed seeds that sustain monarch butterflies. I'll bring some of these packets to our March meeting for anyone who pledges to plant them.

But you can order your own through Save Our Monarchs Foundation, PO Box 390135, Minneapolis, MN 55439. They will send three packets for free, but they need and appreciate donations, such as \$5 for 5, \$10 for 10, etc. For a donation of \$25 you will receive 50 packets. Thank you for helping.

- Laraine Wright



Help scientists learn more about monarchs. In a unique partnership, you can join citizen scientists across North America to track the monarch butterfly's spring migration from Mexico. Report your sightings each fall and spring as the monarchs travel to and from Mexico. Track migration on real-time migration maps. Spring migration begins in March. Report your Monarch sightings at: <https://www.learner.org/jnorth/sightings/> *Journey North is a free, Internet-based program presented by Annenberg Learner, a division of the Annenberg Foundation.*

First IL Bobcat Hunting Season Deemed a Success During the first year of Illinois' new bobcat hunting season, 141 bobcat kills were reported. Often referred to as "harvests", that 141 kills breaks down to: 69 through hunting, 49 through trapping, and 12 through archery plus 11 through road salvage. "It's good wildlife management," IDNR spokesman Tim Schweitzer said in an interview prior to the season, adding that wildlife conservation biologists have said that culling 10 to 20 percent from the bobcat population would keep it in balance with other species and the larger ecosystem.

It seems curious that under IDNR's previous director Marc Miller, the state's population of bobcats was in check. But almost overnight, when the new IDNR director Wayne Rosenthal was appointed, it became necessary to cull bobcats. - Rhonda R.

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I/We would like to received our newsletter via email: YES / NO
 Member mailing labels reflect current dues status.
 If you receive your newsletter electronically,
 Contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.
 (Annual membership renewal month is January.)

EPA Staff Preparing for Trump Executive Orders

Staff at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have been told that President Donald Trump is preparing a handful of executive orders to reshape the agency, to be signed once a new administrator is confirmed, two sources who attended the meeting told *Reuters* on Feb. 15, 2017. A senior EPA official, who had been briefed by members of the Trump administration mentioned the executive orders at a meeting of staffers in the EPA's Office of General Counsel on 02/04, but did not provide details about what the orders would say, said the sources, who asked not to be named. A second source said attendees at the meeting were told Trump would sign between two and five executive orders. Trump administration officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Trump has promised to cut U.S. environmental rules - including those ushered in by former President Obama targeting carbon dioxide emissions - as a way to bolster the drilling and coal mining industries, but has vowed to do so without compromising air and water quality. Trump has also expressed doubts about the science behind climate change and promised during his campaign to pull the United States out of a global pact to combat it. Since his election in November, he has softened that stance, saying he would keep an "open mind" to the climate accord.

Trump's pick to run the EPA, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, is scheduled to face a Senate confirmation vote on 02/17, according to a Senate aide, after a contentious hearing last month in which lawmakers pressed Pruitt on his ties to the oil industry. Pruitt sued the EPA more than a dozen times to block its regulations while he was the top prosecutor for the oil and gas producing state. Trump and Pruitt's positions have worried EPA staff, who are concerned the new administration will cut the EPA's budget, critical programs, and scientific research.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-epa-idUSKBN15U2MW>

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

