



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Nov.-Dec. 2017 – Vol. 24, No. 7

P.O. Box 222  
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222  
Established in 1970

## NEWSLETTER

### Gardening at School has its Challenges and its Rewards

Three local teachers, Cindy Hepp of Trico Elementary, Campbell Hill, Meteicha Green of Carruthers Elementary, Murphysboro, and Julie Wittenborn-Sikorski of Murphysboro Middle School, will share their experiences with school gardens at SIAS's Nov./Dec. meeting, on **Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup> at 7 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale.** Each teacher tends a garden at a different school with a different focus. Their efforts began because the threesome loved nurturing their students' natural interest in environmental science. All of the gardens are constructed with environmentally friendly practices in mind, incorporate and emphasize native southern Illinois plants, are designed to attract local wildlife, and are kid-friendly. The discussion will include school garden successes, challenges, and benefits to students. Check out their project website with images at <https://sischoolsnativegardens.wordpress.com/> The southern chapter of the IL Native Plant Society and the students and faculty from the Plant Biology Dept. at SIUC partnered in the project. *In spring 2016, SIAS sent \$100 each to these three local elementary school teachers to help fund these plant pollinator gardens for students to learn about plants and butterflies.*



**SIAS Meetings Calendar Winter 2017**  
**Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>:** Lyle White on the Nebraska Platte River & Rowe Sanctuary  
**Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Program speaker to be announced  
**Mar. 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Potluck & Program, speaker to be announced

### 808 Birds Fledged at Our Refuge Boxes

In our 29th year of sponsoring and monitoring bluebird boxes at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, we supervised the fledging of 808 birds this 2017 season: 558 bluebirds, 173 tree swallows, 52 house wrens, 21 chickadees, 4 titmice, and 4 great crested flycatchers. An additional 48 birds were fledged at our boxes at Grassy Lake State Fish Hatchery.

Unfortunately, the monitor whose section includes prothonotary warbler nests was not able to check her boxes, so we don't have data from that section of the trail. Otherwise, our volunteers recorded 680 hours of service this year.

Even with the data missing from the unmonitored trail, our bluebird numbers were up by 64 from the previous year and our volunteers recorded 257 more hours. Five new people joined our bluebird project this year and they put in many hours of repairing, moving and adding boxes to their sections. The rest of us also dedicated extra hours to improving their sections. For the most part, the refuge trail and hatchery trail are in very good shape thanks to their enthusiasm and interest. - *Laraine Wright, trail coordinator*

### Recommended documentary:

#### "Birders: The Central Park Effect"

I discovered a wonderful, hour-long documentary through Netflix. "Birders: The Central Park Effect" follows several seasoned birdwatchers through the diverse habitat of New York City's famous green space. The filmmakers elicit very heartfelt responses to the general question of "Why do you look for birds?"

Best of all are the close-ups of the birds themselves. The 2012 documentary takes us through the four seasons and includes commentary from well-known bird experts. The film focuses most closely on an elderly woman who has been leading bird tours in the park almost every day for many years. Although dealing with stage-four cancer, she continues her tours and explains why being in nature has kept her going through many setbacks. - *Laraine Wright*

## Upcoming Events & Activities

### Dec. 3 > So. IL Alternative Gift Fair

The Carbondale Civic Center will host the 13<sup>th</sup> year of this special event. Find unique gift items while supporting wonderful organizations from the Science Center to the Peace Coalition. The fair runs from 2-5 p.m. at the Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Ave. For more details, visit the Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair on Facebook.

### Dec. 14 – Jan. 5 > Christmas Bird Count Season

This is the 117<sup>th</sup> year of these all-day censuses of winter bird populations. The Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS) has just made locating an Illinois circle very easy by plotting them all out on a map that can be viewed at: their site: [www.illinoisbirds.org/](http://www.illinoisbirds.org/) (Scroll to New CBC Map.) See the following list of local counts & compiler contact information.

**Mingo (MO)- Dec. 14** - Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at [weddleman@semo.com](mailto:weddleman@semo.com) for details including meeting time and location.

**Grab Orchard NWR- Dec. 15 or 17** - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at 618.687.9868

**Rend Lake- Dec. 16** - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Keith McMullen at 618.632.1057/[warbler7@sboglobal.net](mailto:warbler7@sboglobal.net).

**Baldwin Lake- Dec. 16** - For details check the IOS CBC map.

**War Bluff Valley- Dec. 16** - For details contact Andrea Douglas, compiler at 618.564.2079 / [anderatd@yahoo.com](mailto:anderatd@yahoo.com).

**Cypress Creek NWR- Dec. 18** - Meet for assignments at Shawnee Comm. College Bldg. D, Rustic Campus Drive, Ullin, at 6:00 a.m. For details, phone Cypress Creek NWR 618.634.2231.

**Carlyle Lake- Dec. ?** - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Dan Kassebaum at 618.233.5451/ [kdan@htc.net](mailto:kdan@htc.net). Meet for assignments at the McDonald's near the Lake entrance at 6 a.m.

**Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 18** - Meet on Count Day at 6:00 a.m. at the restaurant at Boomland, on the southeast corner of the interchange at the Charleston, MO, off I-57. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at [weddleman@semo.com](mailto:weddleman@semo.com).

**Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk. - Dec. 27** - Meet on site at the intersection of Pyatts Blacktop and Panda Bear Rd. at 6:00 a.m. Contact compiler Joe Merkelbach at 618.532.3112/ [jemerck@ecologyfund.net](mailto:jemerck@ecologyfund.net).

**Horseshoe Lake (Alexander Co.)- Dec. 28** - Advanced registration required. Meet in parking lot at the intersection of Rt. 3 & Miller City Rd., Olive Branch, at 6:30 a.m. Free lodging at the Wicker Club for Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Space is limited with beds and mattresses available but bring bedding, pillows, personal items, etc. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515 / [vkleen@comcast.net](mailto:vkleen@comcast.net).

**Union County- Dec. 29** - Advance registration required. Meet at the SW corner of the intersection of IL Rt. 3 and IL Rt. 124 (old gas station in Ware) at 6:30 a.m. 5 p.m. compilation at Anna McDonalds. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515 / [vkleen@comcast.net](mailto:vkleen@comcast.net).

**Mernett Lake- Dec. 30** - Advance registration required. For assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 / [woodthrusheola@hotmail.com](mailto:woodthrusheola@hotmail.com).

**Middle Mississippi River NWR- Dec. 31** - Advance registration required. Meet at Middle Miss Refuge location, 1293 Rocky Hollow Road, Rockwood at 6:30 a.m. Contact compiler John Hartleb at 618.763.4420 or Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 or email [woodthrusheola@hotmail.com](mailto:woodthrusheola@hotmail.com)

**Jackson County- Jan. 1** - Advance registration required. For assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 / [woodthrusheola@hotmail.com](mailto:woodthrusheola@hotmail.com). Compilation and soup (by Chef Anton) at sunset, at the home of David and Anton Kvernes, Skyline Dr., Carbondale. Jackson County CBC feeder watchers wanted!! Email or snail mail your feeder bird list to Rhonda by Jan. 3rd.

**Marion County- ?** - Advance registration required. Meet in the parking lot of the Raccoon School, just west of I-57 at the Centralia exit at 6:00 a.m. Contact compiler Joe Merkelbach at 618.532.3112/ [jemerck@ecologyfund.net](mailto:jemerck@ecologyfund.net).

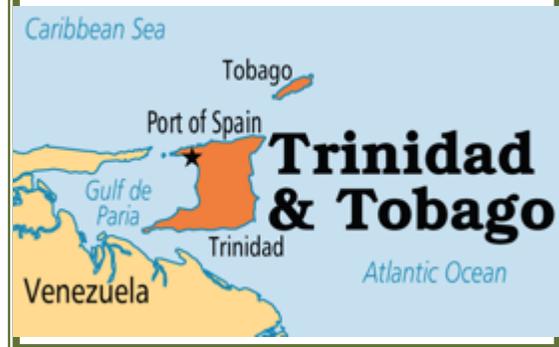
## Welcome Our New Hospitality Chair

SIAS would like to thank Phyllis Beck for volunteering to fill the Board's open Hospitality Chair position and taking on the duties for our group.

## 30th Trinidad & Tobago Adventure May 19-26, 2018

Join Nelda Hincley and naturalist guides for an 8-day tour of this two-island nation. Experience a tropical evergreen rain forest, a mangrove, tide pools, and tropical deciduous forests. The tour will be based at the Blue Waters Inn in Tobago and the Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge in Trinidad.

For details, phone: Nelda W. Hincley at 618.549.5588 or email [neldahincley@jalc.edu](mailto:neldahincley@jalc.edu)



## \$1.2 million Grant to fund 26-mile Trail System at Sahara Woods Gov. Rauner: Sahara Woods to be great off-road rider draw

On Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, Gov. Rauner visited southernmost IL to announce the coming of a "26-mile off-highway vehicle trail system" at Sahara Woods State Fish and Wildlife Area. A grant from the federal Recreational Trails Program will allow the IL Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR) to move forward with the project. IDNR will pitch in an additional \$303,000 from its state parks fund to complete the trail, the first state-owned off-highway vehicle trail facility and expected to be ready for riders in spring 2019.

"Expanding on the treasures that Sahara Woods already offers could translate into increased job opportunities and a much-needed economic boost for the region," State Senator Dale Fowler said. "It will go a long way in boosting tourism in Saline County, giving us a platform to continue promoting southern Illinois in the future."

Bad plan! Destroying a treasure in expectation of a couple jobs and an economic boost, what a waste of federal and state tax dollars. Let's watch as the money erodes away like the trails will. *-Rhonda R.*

## An Irruption of Owls

An irruption of birds is an influx of a species into a place they don't usually live.



Project SNOWstorm, a volunteer-fueled snowy owl tracking organization founded after an irruption of snowy owls in 2013, predicts another wave of Arctic raptors will hit North America this winter. It appears that big southward movements of snowy owls occur about once every four years. That's because lemmings, their preferred prey, go through regional population explosions at about the same interval. In 2013, those little Arctic rodents had a banner year on the Ungava Peninsula in Northern Quebec, fueling a highly successful breeding season for the owls that flocked to that area. The director of Project SNOWstorm, says the clues point to a big irruption but also admits there's no way to definitively know how big it could be or if it will even happen at all. Though Snowy Owl migration patterns are mostly mysterious, there have been some telltale signs that the birds are on their way.

No matter how many ultimately show up, these birds are tough. People often assume that if they see an Arctic bird in, say, Indiana, it must be sick or starving. In reality, the director says, these Snowy Owls are fairly fat and healthy and will eat anything they find. That includes the Snowy found gnawing on a bottle-nosed dolphin carcass in Delaware a few years ago, fending off its find from Turkey Vultures. Sometimes, though, the birds struggle to navigate developed landscapes full of buildings and telephone wires. Airport runways especially lure Snowy Owls in with their flat, treeless expanses, where planes taking off pose a danger. If seriously injured, the birds might need assistance, but otherwise, people shouldn't get too close. Young owls that have no experience with humans often let birders and photographers approach them; these interactions can end with the birds backing up into highways and other dangerous situations. [www.projectsnowstorm.org/](http://www.projectsnowstorm.org/)



## Seeing Birds

Now that winter is nearly here, seeing birds is a bit easier than in late summer and fall. Trees have lost most their leaves and the birds are bigger, like the two trumpeter swans that flew over Pomona on 11/16. My hubby Rob saw one and heard a second as the two circled over our property. I was not home but suspect they were heading south. Les Winkler later reported that trumpeter swans were present at Union County Refuge.

Linda Bobo and her husband spotted both trumpeter and tundra swans off IL Rt. 3 near the Union County Refuge. She said they also saw mixed flock of thousands of ducks.

Just a week ago, Don Mullison and others saw a lesser black-backed gull near the spillway at Crab Orchard NW Refuge. And just days before that Don spotted a pacific loon in the lake off the spillway.

Along with looking like a year for snowy owls, it has already been proven to be a year for other irruptive boreal species including the red crossbills that have been reported throughout Illinois. Closer to home, Don Mullison and others located them near Devil's Kitchen Lake. Don reported a flock of 20 some red crossbills there in the pines. Pine siskins are being reported too.

And one whooping crane, "Druid" (red left leg band, green over white right leg bands) was seen at Kaskaskia Island in early October. The crane was still present on 11/07.  
-Rhonda R.

## Milkweed for Monarchs Bill Passes Senate in Final Days of Fall Veto Session

This year Illinois Sierra Club worked with, Representative Anna Moeller (D-Elgin) and Senator Melinda Bush (D-Grayslake), to pass two important pieces of legislation aimed at helping the monarch butterfly. Back during the spring session, HB2568, designating milkweed as the state wildflower, passed both chambers and was signed into law in August. Also during the spring session, HB685, which provides that counties and municipalities may not classify milkweed as a noxious or exotic weed, passed the House, but got delayed from a vote in the Senate. During the final days of Veto Session in Springfield the bill passed out of the Senate and has moved on to the governor's desk.

Over the last 20 years monarchs have seen a precipitous 80 to 90 percent decline in population due to environmental threats, including a drastic reduction in native milkweed, the only source of food for monarch larvae. Of the twenty-three species of milkweeds that are native to Illinois, 5 are listed as endangered, and one is listed as threatened on the federal endangered and threatened species list. -Excerpts from a 11/07 story by Terri Treacy,

IL Chapter of the Sierra Club

Common milkweed & Monarch flutterby



## Body condition explains migratory performance of a long-distance migrant

Body condition affects the behavior of migrating birds, but how body condition affects migratory performance, timing and fitness is still largely unknown. Scientists studied the effects of relative body condition on individual departure decisions, wind selectivity, flight speed and timing of migration for a long-distance migratory shorebird, the red knot *Calidris canutus rufa*.

By using automated VHF telemetry on a continental scale, they studied the red knots' migratory movements over a 3-year period. Knots with a higher relative body condition left the staging site later than birds in lower condition, yet still arrived earlier to their Arctic breeding grounds compared to knots in lower relative body condition.

They accomplished this by selecting more favorable winds at departure, thereby flying faster and making shorter stops en route. Individuals with a higher relative body condition in spring migrated south up to a month later than individuals in lower condition, suggesting that individuals in better condition were more likely to have bred successfully.

Moreover, individuals with a lower relative body condition in spring had a lower probability of being detected in autumn, suggestive of increased mortality. The pressure to arrive early to the breeding grounds is considered to be an important constraint of migratory behavior and this study highlights the important influence of body condition on migratory decisions, performance and potentially fitness of migrant birds.

-Excerpts from article in *the Royal Society*: <http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/284/1866/20171374>

## Woolsey Withdraws its Fracking Permit Application

In early Nov., the Woolsey Operating Company withdrew its fracking permit and associated application for a wastewater injection well in White County, IL. The recently approved permit was the first horizontal fracking permit to be issued in IL since the Hydraulic Fracturing Regulatory Act was enacted in 2013.

As we celebrate this with others who opposed the permit, we should not allow ourselves to become complacent on the issue of fracking.  
-Rhonda R

## EPA Chief Pruitt Stars in Beef Industry Video

There's little doubt that President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency and the beef lobby are cozy bedfellows. But just to make it crystal clear, EPA chief Scott Pruitt starred in a promotional video produced by the National Cattlemen's Association, the largest beef industry trade organization in the country. Pruitt used his airtime to urge ranchers to submit comments in favor of repealing Obama's Clean Water Rule, that clarified safeguards against dumping waste in waterways. The Center for Biological Diversity filed a request for public records related to Pruitt's pro-beef promotional activities to expose the industry's influence over weakening protections for our water and wildlife.  
From: [www.biologicaldiversity.org/](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/)

## What is dicamba? And what's all this in the news about dicamba drift?

Dicamba is an herbicide that selectively kills broad-leafed weeds. It is commonly used in conjunction with other herbicides, such as glyphosate, and according to the National Pesticide Information Center is currently found in about 1,100 herbicide products. It mimics natural plant hormones that cause abnormal growth and eventually death.

Historically, dicamba was used in agriculture primarily as a pre-emergent (applied to the soil to kill weed seeds prior to planting a crop), since it COULD NOT be applied directly to crop plants BECAUSE it tends to evaporate from the soil or vegetation where it has been sprayed, creating a cloud of plant-killing vapor that can spread in unpredictable directions. It happens more in hot weather, and Monsanto's new strategy for planting their recently developed dicamba-tolerant soybeans inevitably would mean spraying dicamba in the heat of summer.

Monsanto developed dicamba-tolerant soybeans because over use of their other herbicide glyphosate on glyphosate-tolerant crops has led to naturally-evolved resistance to the herbicide in many weed species, turning them into "super weeds." In the U.S., where approximately 90% or more of all cotton, soy, and corn plantings are of glyphosate-tolerant GMO varieties, the acres of farmland harboring glyphosate-resistant weeds nearly doubled between 2010 and 2012, from 32.6 million acres to 61.2 million acres. But they began selling their new soybeans before their new "low-volatility" dicamba formulas were approved for sale. So the dicamba that was used was the old, volatile version. Reports state that it vaporized and killed crops on bordering farms. And evidence showed it also killed trees, shrubs and other plants in the path of the wind blown vapor.

Monsanto and two other chemical companies, BASF and DuPont, announced that they had solved this problem with new "low-volatility" formulations of dicamba that don't evaporate as easily. Yet the companies, especially Monsanto, have made it difficult for university scientists to verify those claims with independent tests before the products were released commercially.

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 (Annual membership renewal month is January.)

**President Trump is Changing the Environment, and NOT in a Good Way**

President Trump's Dept. of the Interior Secretary appointee Ryan Zinke, who road a horse to work at the Interior Dept.'s main building on his first day of work on March 2nd, overturned a ban on using wildlife poisoning lead ammunition on wildlife refuges that same day. No surprise that the National Rifle Association and hunting groups lauded Zinke's move as supportive of hunting's economic contribution.

In late March, EPA administrator Scott Pruitt rejected a decade-old petition asking the EPA to ban all use of the pesticide chlorpyrifos. Although research suggest that chlorpyrifos maybe associated with brain damage in children and farm workers, the Dept. of Agriculture welcomes the decision as helpful to U.S. farmers.

In March Trump also granted a permit for the construction of the Keystone IL pipeline. And Trump ended March by signing an executive order that seeks to dismantle much of the work on climate change enacted by President Obama's administration. Most notable, the order begins the process of rescinding the EPA's Clean Power Plan, designed to reduce CO2 emissions from new and existing power plants.

In early August, President Trump signed an executive order revoking federal flood-risk standards that incorporated rising sea levels predicted by climate science. The order claims to improve federal infrastructure decisions by quickening and streamlining the environmental review process and takes the additional step of revoking a 2015 executive order that required that floodplains had to be based on the "best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate science."

The Trump administration, in late August, suspended a study of health risks to residents who live near mountaintop removal coal mine sites in the Appalachian Mountains. Trump also disbanded a federal advisory panel for the National Climate Assessment. This 15-member group was created in 2015 to help business and state and local governments understand and prepare for the governments next National Climate Assessment, a report required by law to be issued every four years and due in 2018.

In October the Interior Dept. said it will auction off the oil and gas leases for all available unleased areas on the Gulf of Mexico's outer continental shelf. Also in October, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt declared that he will sign a proposal that would eliminate the Clean Power Plan, claiming, "the war on coal is over."

-Excerpts from a 10.25.17 National Geographic article: <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/03/how-trump-is-changing-science-environment/>

**Dues due in January**

Just a reminder that SIAS dues are due the first of each new year, also known as January. ☺ Please check your mailing label for your 'paid to' date. If you receive your newsletter via email, keep an eye out for a soon to come email referencing your "paid to" date. ☺

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

