



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

Rowe Bird Sanctuary On Nebraska's Platte River

Lyle White will discuss the Rowe Bird Sanctuary on Friday, Jan. 26th, at 7:00 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. Follow signs to the elevator then take it down to the Hall.

SIAS member Lyle White recently spent two weeks as a volunteer at the Lillian Annette Rowe Bird Sanctuary on Nebraska's Platte River. Mr. White has a presentation on the work, volunteer opportunities, and history of the Rowe Sanctuary. This will include a 10-minute video specific to cranes.

Lillian Annette Rowe Bird Sanctuary, commonly known as Rowe Sanctuary, is dedicated to the conservation of sandhill cranes, whooping cranes and other migratory birds, and their habitat along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska. It is owned and managed by the National Audubon Society.

Lyle White has a longtime affiliation with SIU Carbondale and the college. He came to the university in 1989 as assistant professor in educational psychology and special education and as a clinical staff member at the Clinical Center. Since that time, he has served in a number of teaching and administrative roles, including as professor and chair of the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education. Recently retired, Mr. White states that he now has many more options in which to invest his time.

This meeting is our annual meeting with potluck. The evening will begin with a potluck dinner followed by a short business meeting and elections of officers. **Note: earlier potluck set-up time of 5:45 p.m.** with **earlier potluck starting time of 6:15 p.m.** SIAS will provide the main course and some beverages. Bring an entree to share and your own dinnerware and utensils.

The slate of officers to be elected/re-elected are: Finance: Greg Kupiec; Conservation/Education Chair: Cathie Hutcheson; Outings Chair: Don Mullison. Nominations for positions can also be made the evening of the meeting as well. If you interested or would like more details and any of these or other Board positions, please ask any board member on meeting night or contact one of us any time. Contact info is at the end of this newsletter.

We will hold a silent auction and possibly a drawing for door prize(s) as part of the evening's events. Members are encouraged to bring new or lightly used items for the auction or to be given as door prizes. Folks giving auction items are asked to suggest a value at which to start the bidding. And the collection of donated books will be available for purchase as well.



Silent Auction is important fund-raiser – and fun

For many years we've held a silent auction at our annual meeting, set for January 26 this year. My white elephant is eager to become your new treasure.

Bring to the meeting an item that is lovely or amusing or utilitarian. It doesn't have to be bird-related. Examples: jigsaw puzzle, picture/art, feeder, book, pottery, seashell, dog leash, platter. Please have a minimum bid amount in mind.

If you can arrive before the start of the potluck, it would be helpful. Vicki and I will fill out an auction form listing your item, the minimum bid, and your name. Normally we try to give your item back if it doesn't sell. But if you decide to run off and abandon it—feed it to the wolves!—we will offer it at the next meeting or use it as a future door prize.

I'd be glad to talk with you and could also pick up your auction item ahead of time or if you are unable to attend on the 26th. Call 457-8769. Money raised at our auction and other sales during the year helps us donate to worthy local conservation and education projects.

Thanks so much!

-Laraine Wright, treasurer

SIAS Meetings Calendar Winter->Spring 2018

Feb. 23rd: Program speaker to be announced

Mar. 23rd: Potluck & Program, speaker John Schwegman on Alaska

April 27th: Program speaker to be announced

May: SIAS annual picnic, date and location to be announced

Treasurer's Report for 2017

Last year SIAS took in more money than we paid out in basic expenses, as we have been doing for a few years now. We are self-sustaining while also being able to donate money primarily to local groups and for local projects that meet our missions of conservation and education.

Our income for 2017 was \$1,960 which came from membership dues of \$1,215 and annual silent auction and book sales of \$160. In renewing their annual dues, members made additional donations of \$585.

For those very important and appreciated extra donations we thank Sandy Anderson, Clark Ashby, Mike Brown, Bob Camp, Lilly Crane, Mary Dresser, Linda Dutcher, Sylvia Greenfield, Jill Hertzog, Nelda Hinckley, Judith Joy, Greg Kupiec, Dave Kvernes, Cindy and Richard LaSalle, Lois Lembke, Mike McNerney, Tim Werner, and Laraine Wright.

Our basic operating expenses totaled \$1,035.05 for newsletter stamps (\$218.34), affiliate dues (\$350), programs and awards (\$225), annual picnic (\$78.71), bank and state fees (\$22), bluebird trail (\$51), and post office box rental (\$90).

Because of past memorial donations and our surplus last year of about \$925, the SIAS board voted to donate \$1,416 to the following groups and people during the year and early in 2018: Free Again, \$500; Illinois Ornithological Society, \$271 for part of a grant to buy boots for wetland research by SIUC Cooperative Wildlife graduate students; Heartlands Conservancy, \$150; Illinois Audubon Society, \$150; the Carbondale Public Library, \$45; and \$100 each to the three public school teachers who were our speakers in December 2017 and who have created exceptional outdoor learning labs for their students and others.

As of January 13, 2018, we have cash assets of \$7,644.81 at the SIU Credit Union divided into a checking account, membership shares, and certificate of deposit. Part of that amount is actually a sub-account dedicated to the annual Birding Blitz that we now fully sponsor. The amount of that account is \$818.38, leaving SIAS itself with a cash balance of \$6,826.43. Last year the Blitz earned \$583 in registrations and cap sales but spent \$726.63. However, it had a large carryover from the previous year.

If you have questions or comments about this report or anything else related to our income and expenses, please call me at 618-457-8769. Our heartfelt appreciation to every member who continues to support our society, now in its 48th year! — Laraine Wright, treasurer

Good, Crumbly, Bird Dough Recipe

This recipe has been popular for years through "Bird Watcher's Digest" magazine.

Zick Dough

1 cup lard

1 cup peanut butter

2 cups quick oats

2 cups chick starter, unmedicated (or finely ground dried mealworms)

1 cup yellow cornmeal

1 cup flour

Melt together lard and peanut butter in microwave until liquid. Combine remaining ingredients with a mixer and blend. Slowly pour in melted lard/peanut butter mixture until lumpy consistency is attained. If too gummy, add more flour and cornmeal.

The mixture should break into crumbs. It doesn't need refrigeration. Store in glass containers. This mixture is meant for cold weather feeding only.

Chick starter will be available at Rural King.

— Laraine Wright

Upcoming Events & Activities

Jan. 31 > A Super Blue Moon Eclipse ----->

Feb. 3 > Frog & Toad Survey Volunteer Orientation

Complete this orientation then assist in listening surveys of the frogs and toads of the Cache River Watershed for the IL Natural History Survey! All materials will be provided for the surveys conducted four times between February and June. Orientation starts at 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 IL Rt. 37, Cypress. For more information call the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Feb. 8 > Nature Movie Night at the Cache

This month's movie night, from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 IL Rt. 37, Cypress, will feature the bison/buffalo now Illinois residents at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. For more info, call the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Feb. 10 > Winter Walk in the Woods at Giant City St. Pk.

Take in the fresh air and natural beauty of Giant City State Park on this leisurely stroll through the winter woodlands, from 10-11:30 a.m. For more information or to register, contact the Giant City Visitor's Center at 618.457.4836.

Feb. 11 > Bird Outing at Crab Orchard NWR

The tour is led by experienced birders and binoculars are available for checkout. Meet at 8:15 a.m. at the CONWR Visitor's Center, east of L Rt. 148. Beginning to advanced birders are welcome. The outing is limited to 15 participants, so call or visit the Visitor's Center to the sign-up sheet. There will be a brief introduction and board two Refuge vehicles. Stops will be made at several good viewing sites in both the open and restricted areas, and scopes will be set up for use by all. Photographers are welcome.

Super Blue Moon Eclipse!

The second of two full moons in one calendar month will pass through the Earth's shadow on January 31, 2018, to give us a total lunar eclipse. Totality, when the moon will be entirely inside the Earth's dark umbral shadow, will last a bit more than one-and-a-quarter hours. The January 31 full moon is also the third in a series of three straight full moon supermoons — that is, super-close full moons. It's the first of two Blue Moons in 2018. So it's not just a lunar eclipse, or a Blue Moon, or a supermoon. It's all three ... a super Blue Moon eclipse!

If you live in North America or the Hawaiian Islands, this lunar eclipse will be visible in your sky before sunrise on January 31. And, it is the first Blue Moon total eclipse in 150 years to occur in the Americas. If you're in Carbondale or the surrounding area on January 31:

Partial umbral eclipse begins: 5:48 a.m.

Total eclipse (totality) begins: 6:51.4 a.m.

Moonset at: 07:03 a.m.

For more details on this and other celestial happenings visit: <http://earthsky.org/>



Seeing Birds

Lots of birds were seen and reported by lots of participants as part of this year's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season. Folks flocked in from all around the state and from as far as Delaware and Arizona to participate in CBCs here in southernmost Illinois. Of the thirteen plus southernmost IL CBCs, I have data to share from ten of the counts.

The local CBC season started at Crab Orchard NW Refuge, a total of 93 species were tallied. Highlights included 16 American black duck, 1 American white pelican, and 3798 ring-billed gulls.

Next was the Rend Lake CBC. It was a cold, extremely windy day but sunny. No species total as of this writing. But a highlight for me was seeing flocks of American white pelicans lazily soaring over the lake.

Refuge staff and participants located 87 species during the Cypress Creek NWR CBC. The list of species included sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, short-eared owl, and wild turkey.

Marion County's CBC day started with a surprising snow storm of the big, fluffy, snowman type. But the 2+ inches of snow had nearly all melted by the end of the day. No species total to report but the day's list included 5 surf scoters and a Harris's sparrow.

The totals are not in from the Arklands CBC either but species tallied included many thousands of snow geese (around Super Lake), a merlin, a loggerhead shrike, and a snowy owl.

Twenty folks covered the Horseshoe Lake CBC circle, locating 101 species, a total of 40,066 birds including a fish crow, an indigo bunting, and a sandhill crane.

The Union County CBC, held the following day, had 19 birders who located 95 species, a total of 23,895 birds. The Union Co. species list included Lincoln's and LeConte's sparrows, 7 pine siskins, and 44 red-headed woodpeckers.

Next up was the Mermet Lake CBC. The ten participants included 2 folks from the Chicago area, one from the Quad Cities, and 1 from Delaware! This team of ten located 94 species, a total of 106,809 birds. The majority of these birds (82,579 of them) were made up of 4 blackbird species. Also tallied were 126 American pipits, 1 surf scoter, and a peregrine falcon.

The Middle Miss. NWR CBC was held on New Year's Eve. The ten participants located 77 species, a total of 516,208 birds. This total was mostly 2 species of blackbirds. The Middle Miss species list included 2 snow buntings, Lapland longspurs, and a pine siskin.

The southernmost Illinois Christmas Bird Count season ended with the Jackson County CBC on New Year's Day. Eight participants located 95 species, a good total for the Jackson Co. count with more waterfowl than on average years. The number of birds was 15,586. Included in the total were Vesper's sparrow, merlin, greater scaup, trumpeter and tundra swans, and redhead duck.

The Jackson counters then made their annual end-of-day invasion of the David and Anton Kvernes home to compile their lists. David and Anton again welcomed the birders with hot apple cider and amazingly delicious homemade soup. All participants send their gratitude to David and Anton because their hospitality makes for the absolutely perfect ending to a cold day of birding. Thank you ever ever so much David and Anton. *-Rhonda R.*

Tales of Two Southernmost IL Snowy Owls

On 01/08/18, Union County Animal Control (UCAC) received a call of a white owl that had been sitting in a yard not moving for 2 days. UCAC responded immediately to find a beautiful female snowy owl soaked and laying on the ground. They picked her up and secured her to await help.

Free Again Wildlife Rehabilitation came to get her as quick as they could. She is only the 2nd snowy owl patient Bev has received in her 30+ years of wildlife rehab in southernmost Illinois. Bev took the owl straight to see a veterinarian. An update came in the following day stating this snowy owl did not survive.

These irruptive snowy owls travel long distances, seeking territory and food. They are not accustomed to people, cars, highline wires, or anything human so are dealing with unfamiliar challenges this far south. If you see a snowy owl perching or resting, don't disturb it. Please let it rest. Enjoy it from a distance. Do nothing to stress it. If you see one that appears to be ill or in trouble, contact Animal Control and a Wildlife Rehab facility.

On a happier note, Judy Keasler reported seeing a snowy owl in Gallatin County on January 3rd. Four folks reported seeing this snowy owl east of Ridgway at four different locations. All locations were within a couple miles of each other. The last report of this owl was posted to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird website. The owl was seen and photographed most recently on January 8th.

House Sparrows: a Decline Has Begun

In 28 years of monitoring bluebird boxes at Crab Orchard NWR, I've never encountered nesting house sparrows, although for a while they were found in a few boxes near the old SIU Auto Tech buildings, since torn down.

But many of you closer to or in towns have found them crowding your yards, boxes and feeders. They can be awful – well they ARE awful: aggressive and destructive to other species. Where they exist in large families, their droppings may spread histoplasmosis.

So there is a bit of good news in hearing that they are beginning to decline in parts of the U.S., including Illinois. According to "Illinois Audubon" magazine (Spring 2016), where they used to rank first or second in abundance in Illinois, they have now dropped to fifth, due largely to changes in agricultural practices. That's the reason for their global decline, as well.

As you probably know, these sparrows were introduced to North America from England in the 1850s. Only 30 years later, their numbers had become alarming. Elimination was recommended in the 1890s with bounties offered by some Illinois counties. In a three-month period, some 450,000 house sparrows were killed for two cents each. But by 1958, says the magazine, more than 5 million house sparrows were present in the state.

The article lists some other interesting facts. "Miners in England have shared their lunches with house sparrows living hundreds of feet underground." The bird is also found 10,000 feet above sea level in the Rocky Mountains. "House sparrows have been observed swimming underwater to escape a threat."

You are legally allowed to remove house sparrow nests, eggs, and even nestlings from nest boxes (something you may do with starlings, as well, but no other birds). You may find that a bit tough, but to allow one successful nest will encourage many subsequent generations to keep using your boxes. Despite its presence on the continent for 160 years, the house sparrow is still viewed as non-native and non-protected.

Twenty years ago I went on a wonderful trip to Venezuela led by Nelda Hinckley. Our young, expert guide, David, told us about his recent trip to the U. S., a first for him and one he had saved and carefully planned for. He flew to New York City. When the taxi transported him from the airport into Manhattan, he jumped out with his binoculars to hear his first American bird call, "Chirp, chirp," and see and record his first U. S. bird, a house sparrow. It was also a lifer. He had never seen one. Our scourge was to him a total thrill. — Laraine Wright

To Join SIAS or Renew Your Membership, please fill in this form and return it with payment. Thank You!

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

Would you be interested in a lifetime membership option?

Welcome New Members: We welcome Sally Elms and Bob Camp of Carbondale. If you have recently joined and we have not formally welcomed you, we are very sorry. Please forgive our oversight.

Have You Been Getting Your Newsletter? I recently became aware that not everyone who requested his or her newsletter electronically has been receiving a newsletter. If I think you haven't been getting your newsletter, you will be receiving a hard copy for January. Please acknowledge any error by making a note on the renewal form and sending it in. I'm so sorry for any oversight. -Rhonda R.

Roads Kill, especially if you're an endangered Florida panther
 That was sadly true in 2017, according to The Revelator, which reports that last year vehicles killed at least 24 Florida panthers. That's a shocking 83% of 2017's total 30 known panther deaths — the highest-ever percentage of road deaths. Worse, many more panthers die annually than are born. Work is being done to save them, but with only 120 to 230 of the cats left, how many more highway fatalities till they reach a dead end?



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

