



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

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

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Nature Is All Around Us-You Just Have To Listen!

will be the subject of a presentation by Dr. Brent Pease for SIAS on Friday, March 24th, starting at 7 p.m. in the meeting room at Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St. Carbondale. Entrance is from the rear of the building (216. E. Monroe St.) where two parking lots are available for use. Mask wearing is encouraged but not required.

Dr. Brent Pease, assistant professor at SIUC, will discuss several ongoing research projects focused on changes in biodiversity and bird communities across southern Illinois, and how you can help wildlife researchers better understand these changes.

Last year, Dr. Pease and his graduate students partnered with the general public and private landowners to take on an ambitious task - recreate the Illinois Breeding Bird Atlas in southern Illinois just by listening. Using sound recorders, SIU graduate students resurveyed every Breeding Bird Atlas sampling location in the southern 11 counties of Illinois during the 2022 breeding season. Their motivation was two-fold: 1) understand how bird communities have changed across southern Illinois over the past 30 years, and 2) identify biodiversity hotspots in our region to improve wildlife conservation and management. So far, Pease and his students have focused on two bird groups: a once-familiar family of birds - the nightjars - that includes eastern whip-poor-wills and chuck-will's widows, and the migrant warblers that inhabit the forests of southern Illinois. Additionally, SIU graduate students are studying soundscapes to understand how sound can be an indicator for biodiversity and general ecosystem health.

Brent Pease is a southern Illinois native and joined the faculty at SIUC in August 2021. He, his wife, and two young boys live in Carbondale and are excited to be back in the region, studying, learning, and conserving the wild things that we share space with. You can learn more about his research at peaselab.com.

February Annual Meeting Highlights After twice reviewing my three pages of notes, I am still at a loss as to how to do justice to Dr. Joy O'Keefe's outstanding program. There was no question as to her knowledge of and enthusiasm for her study subjects. We were all quite taken by the presentation.

Indiana bats and grey bats are federally endangered. Northern long-eared bats are being reclassified as endangered and tri-colored bats are being proposed for reclassification to endangered status. Until recently little brown bats were regarded as on the most common bats but their numbers have dropped drastically due to white-nose syndrome. They too are being considered for federal endangered status.

In forests, the value of bats is underrated. When they're excluded from the forest, the forest loses the benefits of these insectivore eaters resulting in greater leaf damage. FYI-female bats prefer shelterwood harvest areas. These are areas where some older trees have been removed to open the forest canopy. This allows more sunlight to shine in to the growing saplings but it also warms the bat roosts and nurseries.

The benefits of bats to agriculture is more limited. The size of the cropped land and/or its distance from the roosts (at woodland edges) lowers the number of bats that feed in those areas.

This just barely skims the surface of Dr. O'Keefe's program. I hope she forgives me for the under reporting. We've invited her to do a follow-up that will have a focus on the use of bat boxes. -Rhonda R.

SIAS Program Calendar

- April 28th** - zoom presentation: *The Hellbender - A Journey in Saving a Declining Ozark Highland Salamander* by Dr. Jeffrey Briggler, MDOC state herpetologist
- May 21st** Picnic! (date tentative)
- June & July** - Summer break
- August 25th** - to be announced
- Sept. 22nd** - to be announced
- Oct. 27th** - to be announced
- Nov/Dec combined on Dec. 1st**

The 21st Birding Blitz of Southernmost IL, April 29th



What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...Pine Warblers are singing, native wildflowers are beginning to bloom

Nature Walks at SunnySide On Hickory Ridge

Wildflowers - March 25th, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Birds - April 16th, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

SIAS Outings Chair Rhonda Rothrock (and her hubby Robert) invite you for nature walks on their 40 acres. Rhonda calls it SunnySide. Their place is in rural Jackson County, adjoining the Shawnee National Forest, just two miles north of the Little Grand Canyon on the same road. A combination of woodlands and a prairie planting, SunnySide is home to or has been visited by 164 species of birds (some as flyovers), is host to 500 species of native plants, and supports a host of other animals including woodrats, DeKay's snakes, green tree frogs, opossums, and their armored counterpart armadillos.

Meet on site at 7398 Hickory Ridge Road, Pomona along the "wine trail." Carpooling with friends is advised. From Carbondale, take Old Hwy 13 west to IL Rt. 127. Drive 3.7 miles south on Rt. 127 to Orchard Hill Rd. Go west on Orchard Hill Rd. to Poplar Ridge Rd. Continue west on Poplar Ridge Rd to a 4-way intersection with Hickory Ridge Rd. Take Hickory Ridge Rd.

southwest 1 mile. Watch for an old red barn and metal grain bin. Sign will direct you to parking. Parking also available just beyond at Fairview Church parking lot if you don't mind the walk back to the house. Dress for walking outdoors. Mowed trails run through the acreage but insect repellent is suggested. Google map link: <https://goo.gl/maps/pyY1ZNABEC7npPMHA>

Rothrocks request that interested persons register, either by calling at 618.684.6605 or emailing Rhonda at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Note: cell service in this area is limited to non-existent.

Wildflower Walks at Giant City State Park

April 1st, 8th, & 14th, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Trillium Trail in Giant City is one of the best spring wildflower trails in southern Illinois. Join the Natural Resources Coordinator on a hike meandering through the spring woods and take a closer look at these petite beauties. This is a moderately difficult 2-mile trail with some steep stair climbing. Registration required. For more information or to register, phone 618.457.4836. <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofgiantcity>

SNF Spring Trash Blast at Ripple Hollow

April 7th, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

The University of Illinois Extension is again partnering with Friends of the Shawnee and the USDA Forest Service to host spring trash blasts in the Shawnee National Forest. This April cleanup will take place at Ripple Hollow in Union County.

Anne Townsend <cupquake@illinois.edu> will coordinate small teams of volunteers to collect litter. To be prepared, volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring their own work gloves, wear long pants and closed toed shoes. Buckets and trash grabbers will be provided. Registration required. To register and for directions to the Ripple Hollow location, visit go.illinois.edu/TrashBlastsSpring2023

2nd Saturday Monthly Birding with SIAS Outing Moving to Evergreen Park, Carbondale

April 8th, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. The location of SIAS's monthly birding gathering has moved from Bogart Point at Crab Orchard NWR to Evergreen Park on the south side of Carbondale. Meet at the Red Oak Shelter, that sets along Carbondale Reservoir lake.

Directions (from IL Rt. 51 a.k.a. South Illinois Avenue): Take IL Rt. 51 south from Carbondale to the stop-light intersection with Pleasant Hill Rd., turn west onto Pleasant Hill Rd., follow it to west most park entrance, turn south, follow road south then east to the small shelter near the water. For more details phone Kirsten Trimble at 618.524.4166

Cache Movie Screening: Owls

April 13th, 2-3:00 p.m. & 6-7 p.m., at the Cache Wetlands Center

For 2023, the theme of monthly nature films at the Cache is raptors of Illinois, this month featuring owls, a mysterious silent night hunter. Screenings are at the Barkhausen-Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 IL-37, Cypress. For more details, phone 618.657.2064.

Get Your Team Together for the 21st Birding Blitz of Southernmost IL, April 29th

The Birding Blitz is an event where teams compete on the last Saturday in April to see and hear the most species of birds in a 24-hour period while raising money for conservation in southernmost Illinois. In the past teams have collectively seen over 200 species in a day!

Teams can search for birds throughout the area of the 11 southernmost Illinois counties, from Jackson, Williamson, Saline, and Gallatin counties south through Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski, and Massac counties. This area includes cypress swamps, upland forests, grasslands, and the 2 big rivers. Public lands in the area include Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Giant City State Park, Trail of Tears State Forest, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, the Cache River State Natural Area, and Mermet Lake and Horseshoe Lake Conservation Areas, and the Shawnee National Forest. (Birds counted along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers must be no further than half way across the river when seen or heard.)

Teams must have a minimum of 2 members. With the exception of category "Open B", teams may start birding as early as 12:01 a.m. on April 29th and continue until as late as 12:00 p.m. that night. All teams must follow the American Birding Association's Big Day Count rules viewable at: <https://www.aba.org/aba-big-day-count-rules/> There are five categories:

- * Open A - This category is the true Big Day challenge, within the competition boundaries.
- * Open B / Dawn to Dusk - It mirrors category Open A with the exception that participants in this category may start no sooner than -1-hour before sunrise and must quit no later than -1-hour after sunset. Starting time: 5:00 a.m. Ending: 8:45 p.m.
- * County Big Day - Teams restrict their Big Day to one selected county of their choice within the competition boundary; enticing birders to more intensely explore previously under-birded areas.
- * Senior - Follows the true Big Day rules but all team members must be 55 years of age or older.
- * Muscle-powered - Follows the true Big Day rules but teams cannot use any motorized form of transportation in their pursuit.

The registration fee to compete is \$25 per team members (\$10 each for students). Certificates will be awarded to the winning team in each of the five categories at the awards brunch on April 30th at the Haven Day Lodge on Crab Orchard Lake. All team members will receive a Migratory Bird Day t-shirt.

Teams are required to raise a minimum of \$100 in the form of donated pledges. These donations will be used to support habitat restoration and preservation in the Cache River Watershed. If you'd like to help but don't want to compete, please consider pledging!

For all Blitz details including registration forms (due 04/22) and pledge forms, visit the Blitz Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/317666471615613/ or contact Rhonda Rothrock via phone at 618.684.6605 or via email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com

Be a part of fun birding for a great cause.

There's no better place to go birding in spring than in southernmost Illinois!

Early Birders: The Southern Illinois Bird Club

By Laraine Wright

On Jan. 16, 1952, almost two decades before our own SIAS was formed, 15 birdwatchers held their first meeting as the Southern Illinois Bird Club. The site was the “Wildlife Management house on S.I.U. campus,” and the group included local amateur birders, University professors, and one employee of Crab Orchard NWR (the fascinating Lee “Shaker” Bush who kept personal daily bird records for at least 70 years of his life in our region).

Bush reported on the “Christmas census” at Crab Orchard (58 species, 53,000 individuals) and begged for others to join in the counting. In the Murphysboro area, 57 species and 4,309 individuals were found. These included 200 Lapland longspurs and one catbird, “a rare winter visitor.” Field trips those first six months took members to Pine Hills, on a snipe census (23 found), and to the Big Muddy River and Mississippi River mudflats (62 species).

I found this information in an old notebook given in the 1980s to SIAS member Ben Gelman by Shaker Bush. The last entry for the meeting minutes was in the spring of 1955, which showed a treasury balance of \$11.00 after a club high of \$21.00. Dues were \$1.00 a year, and people paid 10 cents each to watch movies at the meetings.

In between were detailed reports of bird sightings, including a greater prairie chicken near Nashville, Swainson’s warblers at “Cave Hill” (possibly Cave Valley), Bachman’s sparrows, one white pelican at Crab Orchard Lake (much excitement), and two ospreys nesting in Grassy Bay, but one adult was killed. At two meetings the group discussed recommending to the state that mourning doves be removed as game birds. Even in the 1950s birders could see the decline in once-common species.

Shaker Bush also gave Ben all of his records of 70 years of daily counts, as a child and eventually as a biologist on the CONWR staff. Ben clung to these records with the same fervor he did to bird stamps, “New Yorker” magazines, his collection of hundreds of different unopened airline-size liquor bottles (bought each payday at Westroads Liquor), and Chinese carry-out boxes.

I inherited these when he died in 2007. Eventually I gave the Shaker Bush notebooks and lists to Mike Brown, who was an SIAS member as well as the biologist at Crab Orchard. This massive documentation was unfortunately deemed worthless for scientific purposes (but not by Mike himself). No times of day, no weather conditions, few site details were recorded so that (apparently) data couldn’t be properly tracked to satisfy the standards of federal or state researchers.

I can tell you that I cried over this news, and I still can today. This seems such a stupid and cruel end to the work of Shaker Bush and the bird club he started to promote the love and attention of birds in our region. Their goal, as stated at their first meeting, was “the self-improvement of the member through the planning and presentation of programs, talks or lectures at each meeting,” and the participation in “Christmas census, spring counts, breeding counts, and winter population studies.” The club pointed the way to what we, in SIAS, do today. Unknowingly they are today our ancestors in bird study, enjoyment, and conservation.



Sounds of Nature is a community research project to understand changes in biodiversity over time by studying these soundscapes. Citizen science – engaging and involving the general public in scientific research – is a promising approach to tackling large-scale biodiversity issues. Through Sounds of Nature, a team of researchers and the public are participating in and contributing to a state-wide project to monitor biodiversity in their backyard and beyond. The first step in this multi-year project is to focus on one sentinel of change – birds! Join us and other volunteers as we deploy sound recorders across our region to study changes in biodiversity over time. Monitoring starts April 2023! <https://peaselab.com/sounds/>

I want to believe, I want to believe. It’s silly but I want to believe.

Videos are to be analyzed by experts as the U.S. government considers declaring the Ivory-billed Woodpecker extinct. The federal government has been asked to consider at least two videos made in recent years as evidence that ivory-billed woodpeckers may still exist. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in July 2022, that it was looking for video or photos that all experts could agree showed the bird. The Center for Biological Diversity, a conservation nonprofit, has since submitted several letters in support of a declaration of extinction.

SunnySide, Hickory Ridge Road, Pomona

There is little I know of SunnySide’s namesake other than it was the home and vegetable farm owned and operated by John Rothrock, Robert Rothrock’s grandfather. It was located on the east side of Bangor, Pennsylvania. Why it was called Sunny Side, I’ve been unable to fully discern.

What I know is that it was Grandfather John who created and encouraged the use of the title he bestowed on his small corner of Pennsylvania. Harold, son of John, father of Robert, and a man of few words stated the sun did shine of the Sunny Side farm. Harold and his four brothers worked alongside their father on the farm until adulthood.

The vegetable farm no longer exists at Sunny Side. As of 2008, the house still stood but had passed out of the family. John, his wife Clara, and all five children (all sons) have since passed away. Still, the place was referred to as Sunny Side in stories told by the sons and daughters-in-law until their passing. The Rothrock grandchildren, most of whom had visited Sunny Side at one time or another, likewise have continued the name reference.

Stories tell that not all days of vegetable farming at Sunny Side were pleasurable. None-the-less, it rooted into and remained a small part of John’s son Harold’s life. Even at the age of 92, Harold nurtured a small garden, starting his bedding plants from seed then transferring them to the garden. He also sowed corn, beans, and seed potatoes.

And the roots of Sunny Side seem to have spread through multiple generations. Robert, son of Harold and grandson of John, inherited an interest in gardening that first surfaced as landscaping and a small vegetable garden but blossomed into native plant cultivation. Robert has turned 15 acres of what was idle ex-pasture land consisting of mostly fescue, nodding foxtail, and non-native lespedeza into an extremely diverse prairie of native wildflowers (forbs) and grasses. The prairie lies to the south, sunny side of the home Robert build on his 40 acres. Sunny Side lives on.

-Rhonda R.

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

Individual Member \$15
 Family \$25
 Student Voting Member \$ 5
 Donation \$ _____
 Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Your Name _____
 Street Address _____
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My thank you to everyone who has renewed dues!

**Mail to: Southern Illinois Audubon Society
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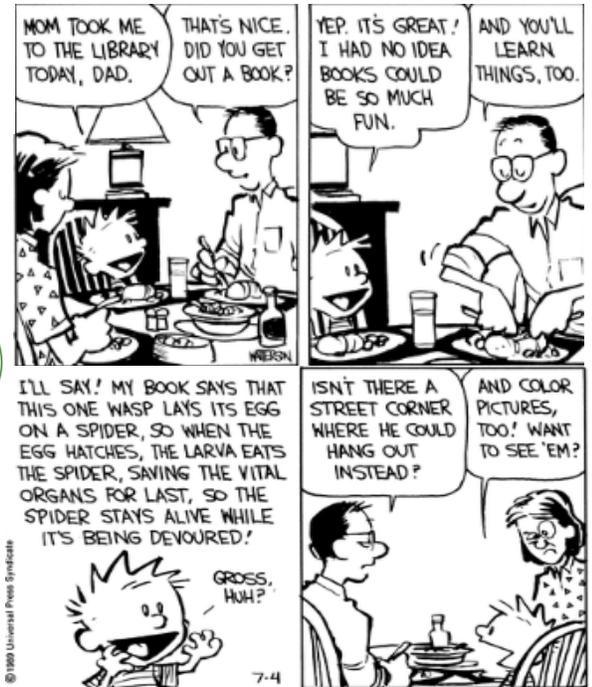
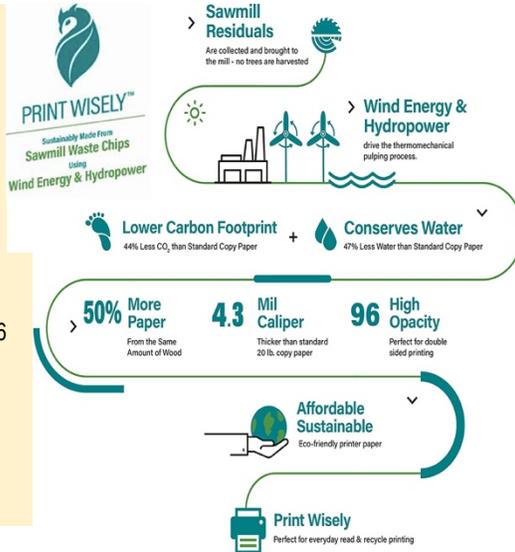
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 If you receive your newsletter electronically, contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.



We're printing on a different paper. We've been using recycled paper for years but we're trying PrintWorks Elementree sustainable paper. It's made from sawmill waste chips using wind energy & hydropower.

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

World Migratory Bird Day 2023
 their t-shirts with this artwork (in color) will be used for the 2023 Birding Blitz t-shirt

This year's theme is
Water: Sustaining Bird Life
<https://www.migratorybirdday.org/>