



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

September 2023  
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Southern Illinois Audubon Society (SIAS)  
P.O. Box 222  
Carbondale, IL  
62903-0222  
*Established in 1970*

<http://www.siaudubon.org>  
Email SIAS at:  
[siaudubonsociety@gmail.com](mailto:siaudubonsociety@gmail.com)

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SIAS is the sponsor of  
*The Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois*  
Over 21 years of team birding for a cause!  
Details can be found at:  
[www.facebook.com/group/s/317666471615613/](https://www.facebook.com/group/s/317666471615613/)

## Shawnee National Forest:

“Where we’ve come from and where we are today with management”

Join SIAS on Friday, Sept. 22nd for this presentation by Justin Dodson, Natural Resources, Planning, & Monitoring Staff Officer with the Shawnee National Forest, starting at 7 p.m. in the meeting room at Carbondale Township Hall\*, 217 E. Main St. Carbondale.

In this presentation, Mr. Dodson (Justin) will talk about forest management and silviculture in the Shawnee National Forest.

Justin has been with the Forest Service for 17 years. 11 years with the Shawnee and 6 with the Chequamegon Nicolet. Most of that time was spent in Silviculture, but some in Recreation. He has a Master’s degree in Forestry Human Dimensions and Bachelor’s degree in Forestry Outdoor Recreation Resource Management from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. He also attended the National Advanced Silviculture Program and has been a certified Silviculturist for 7 years. Justin lives in Carterville with his wife Beka, their 3 boys Jack (14), Levi (12), Cash (6), and their dog Olive. He is proud to work for the Forest Service and loves the Shawnee and Central Hardwood Region which has been a big part of his life.

\*Entrance to the Township Hall 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.

## SIAS Program Calendar

- Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>** – Adrian Macedo on amphibians in the Cache
- Nov/Dec on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>** – Mark Vukovich on cerulean warblers
- Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>** – Mark Vukovich on red-headed woodpeckers
- Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Dr. Joy O’Keefe on bat boxes

## April SIAS Program Highlights: *Damsels and Dragonflies*

This first fall presentation was given by Master Naturalist and Dragonfly/Butterfly monitors Pat Dunbar and Mary McCarthy – showcasing dragonflies and damselflies in Southern Illinois.

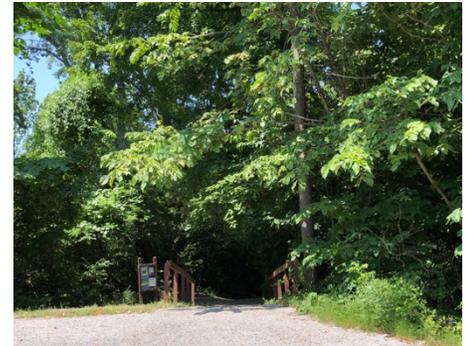
We learned about the mission of their Citizen Science project - Illinois Odonate Survey (IOS) - part of a group of dragonfly charmed enthusiasts who submit reports (species and numbers observed) over the summer months to the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago. <https://naturemuseum.org/>

Mary and Pat enthusiastically shared their knowledge of the odonates. They talked about the odonates’ habitat, their aerial and aquatic life cycle, the importance as bio-indicators of fresh water quality, their predation and procreation behavior, and lastly the personal incredible observations that can only be made with time in the field, via walking or via canoeing. There were images and stories told from their years of encounters with this interactive species. The talk closed with discussion of the limited odes that do not succumb and die from winter’s cold weather, by migrating to a better part of the world - most celebrated being the Common Green Darner, and the Wandering Glider (AKA Globe Skimmer).

Pursue your interest by looking at the website, Illinois Odonate survey ([illinoisodes.org](http://illinoisodes.org)) that talks about this project. Also review a YouTube video: “Sky Hunters, The World of the Dragonfly - Go Wild”. Or this short booklet that can be found online: “Introduction to Dragonfly and Damselfly Watching” by Mark Klym and Mike Quinn. We thank Pat and Mary for sharing their adventures with Odonates!



**Forest Service**  
Caring For the Land and Serving People



## In Memoriam: Betty Crelling

Member Elizabeth Betty Crelling passed away on September 5. Betty and late husband Jack lived and worked in University communities raising their two boys in active academic environments. Betty was an avid walker, birder, and gardener.

## SIAS Fall Picnic Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> at Evergreen Park, Carbondale & IOS Big Sit Fundraiser (then and there too!)

SIAS is having a **Fall Picnic on Sunday, Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>** at Red Oak Shelter in Evergreen Park, Carbondale. Arrive at noon for set up and socializing. We plan to eat at 1 p.m. SIAS will provide the meats and a meatless option, buns, condiments, and lemonade. Please bring a side dish, your own plate, utensils, and a beverage. If you can help grill, please inform Vicki at [vickil@siu.edu](mailto:vickil@siu.edu).

Directions to Evergreen Park and Red Oak Shelter (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 (left) to the second shelter on the right.

## SIAS/IOS Big Sit Fundraiser Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> at Red Oak Shelter in Evergreen Park

The SIAS Boom-ShakaLaka Chachalacas (a.k.a. Little Egypt Birdwatchers / Modicum Aegyptus Auspices)\* are again participating in the all-day IOS Fall Big Sit fundraiser to be held in conjunction with the SIAS picnic, Sunday Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> at Red Oak Shelter in Evergreen Park, Carbondale!

Join Vicki Lang, Kimberly Rohling, and Rhonda Rothrock from 6:44 a.m. to 6:44 p.m. (or any time in between) as we attempt to identify and count as many bird species as we can in one day from a stationary, 20-foot diameter, area. Folks are invited to join in on the count for whatever period of time they choose or just come visit throughout the day, before, during, or after the SIAS picnic.

Last year our Big Sit team tallied 62 species total. This year we're hoping for at least 10 more species. And thanks to our generous SIAS members, last year we raised \$303 for the IOS Grant Program. We've set a goal of \$600 for this year.

The Big Sit is a fundraiser for the Illinois Ornithological Society's (IOS) Grant Program funding state-wide avian studies. SIAS has funded grants supporting studies in southernmost IL through IOS in the past. If you would like to donate in support of our team, do so at the website link <https://shorturl.at/dfpN3>. Scroll down all the way to the bottom left to where it says: *Support Modicum Aegyptus Auspices* or just contact Rhonda directly at [woodthrusheola@hotmail.com](mailto:woodthrusheola@hotmail.com) or at the picnic!

\* Modicum Aegyptus Auspices: Modicum is Latin for little. Aegyptus is Latin for Egypt. 'Auspices' is from the Latin auspiciu and auspex, literally "one who looks at birds for omens". And yes, it's Latin not Arabic. Learn why southernmost Illinois is called Little Egypt at <https://tinyurl.com/5bkh2x6n>

## Join Vicki & Rhonda for a Cache Mini Sit on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>!

Consider participating in the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Cache River Wetlands Fall Migration Mini Sit on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. - noon! This citizen science birdwatching event invites birders of all experience levels to enjoy fall migration. Pack your binoculars, scope, camera, lawn chair, beverages, and snacks. To join Rhonda, Vicki, & other members of SIAS, register for the North Cypress Access hotspot at <http://go.illinois.edu/2023MiniSit>. Online registration closes on Sunday, Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. Phone registration will be open until the day of the event, call 618.657.2064 (or Rhonda at 618.684.6605.)

North Cypress Access is a beautiful, semi-secluded woodland with a small lake. It's located along Fain Lane. From the Intersection of IL Rt. 146 & IL Rt. 37, turn south onto IL Rt. 37. Go 3.8 miles to Bear Branch Rd., turn left (southeast). Drive Bear Branch to Old Cypress Rd., turn left (east). Drive Old Cypress Rd to Snake Hole Ln, turn right (south). Drive Snake Hole Ln to Fain Ln, turn left (east). Drive straight on Fain Ln to North Cypress Access parking lot. We're hoping to top our 2019 high of 33 species!

## What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...it's cooling off, *SNF Snake Road is closed (09/01-10/30) for the annual migration of snakes & amphibians, and it's time to collect native plant seed.*

## National Public Lands Day/SNF Stewardship Day at Garden of the Gods

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> is National Public Lands Day. The Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, the River to River Trail Society and the U.S. Forest Service are joining forces for a day of stewardship at Garden of the Gods from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., meeting location is the Observation trail parking lot. Volunteers are invited to meet at the Garden of the Gods Observation Trail at 9 a.m. Volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves, wear sturdy boots, and bring along water and a snack. For more details, email Friends at [friendsoftheshawnee@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftheshawnee@gmail.com). Come help be the solution to pollution.

There will be Woodsy Giveaways/Fee Free vouchers for Public Lands Day Event and possibly volunteer t-shirts while supplies last.

## Bicycling in the Restricted Area of Crab Orchard NWR

October 14<sup>th</sup>

Bicycling is a great way to explore the usually unseen areas of Crab Orchard NWR. Contact the Refuge Visitor Center at 618.997.3344 for complete details.

## Crab Orchard NWR Discovery Tours

October 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, & 29<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The Refuge will open up the restricted portion of the refuge for self-guided tours. Tours begin at the Wolf Creek Causeway, volunteers will be stationed throughout the tour to answer questions. For more details, call 618.997.3344.

## SNF Fall Trash Blast at Grantsburg Swamp

Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 this Trash Blast at Grantsburg Swamp. Registration required. To be prepared, volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring their own work gloves, wear long pants and closed toed shoes. Contact Anne Townsend [cupquake@illinois.edu](mailto:cupquake@illinois.edu) for more details or to register.

## Birding Hike at Giant City State Park

Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Join park volunteer (& SIAS member) Vicki Lang-Mendenhall as she guides participants along the 1/3-mile accessible Post Oak Trail. Registration required. For more information or to register, phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836.

@ALTO VINEYARDS SEPT 30, 2023  
8515 IL-127, Alto Pass, IL 1 - 5pm

## Family Eco Festival

Fun for all ages!

Hands-on Science

Arts & Crafts

Solar Eclipse Activities

Environmental Education

Silent Auction

Live Music:  
The Buckn' John Show @1pm  
Todd Pierson @3pm



Fundraiser for Innovations in STEM  
Education to benefit local teachers



Special thanks to our supporters: Alto Vineyards; Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program; National Science Foundation; and, SIU River Region Sustainability; Noyce Master Teaching Fellows Program

It's a fundraiser for Innovations in STEM Education Fund, to benefit local teachers and committed to broadening participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by making the process and content of science/engineering relevant to the people in our community.

For the 2nd year, SIAS is participating in the Family Eco Festival. We'll have our display up and will be offering one or two kids crafts.

The National Park Service has announced it will not illuminate the Gateway Arch at night for the month of September to protect birds migrating south for the winter. The majority of migratory birds fly at night using the night sky for navigation. Artificial light can disorient them and cause them to fly into buildings. And about 40% of the country's migratory waterfowl use the Mississippi River corridor a.k.a. the Mississippi Flyway.

**Limpkins Limpkins Limpkins** Limpkins are long-legged wading birds about as large as a medium-sized heron, basically all brown but heavily streaked and spotted with white. They wield a long, sword-like, slightly decurved bill. Limpkins are known to occur from peninsular Florida (and the Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia) and southern Mexico through the Caribbean and Central America to northern Argentina.

In 2019 came the first report of a Limpkin in Illinois, near Olney. This year it seems they made a mini-invasion throughout Illinois. At first it was as if there were just a couple moving all around the state but then the realization hit that they were more numerous, hanging out at spotted locations. Reports have come in from Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Sangamon River in White Heath, Galena, Chautauqua NWR - Mason County, Horseshoe Lake - Alexander County (2 together), Limekiln Slough at Cypress Creek NWR, and Mermet Lake - Massac County.

A limpkin would be a life bird for me. And although I've made a couple attempts at chasing one down in southernmost IL, as of this writing I've been unsuccessful. Planning one more search try but if I dip again that's ok with me. Maybe next year? I just hope they all enjoy their visit to Illinois and safely make it to where ever it is they plan to over winter. Happy flight trails to them all! (Next time you see me, ask me about crossbills.) -Rhonda R.

**Forest-dwelling Songbirds Do Not Appear to Experience Higher Rates of Cowbird Parasitism Immediately After Prescribed Fire**

In August of 2022, Dr. Jeff Hoover gave SIAS a presentation on Forest Management Effects on Breeding Bird Abundance with a specific focus on Trail of Tears State Forest, Union Co. He stated that the individual species responses to the treatment types (thinning and/or controlled burning) vary, but nearly all show positive or mixed responses to the types of forest management being employed. He stated that thinning and/or controlled burning seem a valuable potential tool in achieving forest management goals of having better recruitment of oak and hickories. He added that these management practices, while being done to benefit the composition and structure of the plants in the forest, are also having mostly positive or neutral effects on the breeding birds residing in the forests.

In May of this year, Dr. Hoover and graduate assistant Alexander Lowe-Massi published an article in the *Outdoor Illinois Journal* addressing brown-headed cowbird parasitism of Acadian flycatcher nests at Hidden Springs State Forest, Strasburg, IL and at Trail of Tears State Forest, Union Co., IL. Because prescribed fires burn through the leaf litter and understory vegetation, Dr. Hoover and his colleagues thought that this could potentially affect the cowbird parasitism rates for the remaining hosts nesting in the sub-canopy/canopy of the forest whose abundances are not affected by prescribed fire. During the summer of 2022, they located and documented parasitism status for 118 Acadian flycatcher nests.

Dr. Hoover states that parasitism rates were higher at Hidden Springs State Forest than at Trail of Tears State Forest and rates at Trail of Tears were unusually low compared to what they were historically. The higher overall rates of parasitism at Hidden Springs were likely a function of that forest being a much more fragmented and relatively narrow stretch of forest embedded in a mostly agricultural landscape relative to Trail of Tears. He and his colleagues speculate that the surprisingly low rates of parasitism at Trail of Tears, compared to historical values, may stem from the closure of the on-site tree farm and the conversion of a large cattle pasture west of the forest—both were known to serve as foraging habitat for large numbers of local cowbirds. Very low rates of parasitism at Trail of Tears suggest the site may contribute to maintaining or enhancing populations of songbirds in the region.

The preliminary data suggests that time-since-fire does not have a substantial effect on cowbird parasitism of Acadian flycatchers, which is good news for those concerned that the temporary disturbance in the forest created by prescribed fire might increase rates of cowbird parasitism. To further validate this preliminary result, the team plan to collect another year of nesting data at these two sites and at two new sites. [Read the complete article at https://tinyurl.com/42hzcrpn](https://tinyurl.com/42hzcrpn)

**Paleontologists May Have Found A Missing Branch Between Dinosaurs and Birds**

September 2023 - Amidst remains of turtles and fish preserved in a southeastern China fossil bed, scientists have uncovered the skeleton of a dinosaur with curious bird-like features. Estimated to be roughly 30 million years older than any confirmed bird fossil, the finding could tell us a thing or two about the first critical steps into their evolution. Chinese Academy of Sciences colleagues compared the new fossil, named *Fujianvenator prodigiosus*, with the remains of other dinosaurs from that time and more modern ones to identify the animal's place within the dino-bird family tree.

The researchers determined the pheasant-sized and likely feathered *Fujianvenator prodigiosus* belonged to the ancestral group avialae which includes modern birds and their most closely related dinosaur ancestors. Remains of early bird ancestors like this are hard to come by, so they each hold important clues to the evolution of birds and the environment of Earth they experienced.

For decades, the preserved 150-million-year-old remains of a dinosaur called Archaeopteryx defined a critical early moment in the evolution of modern birds. Now, researchers aren't so sure, finding the famously feathered creature has more in common with a group called Deinonychosauria than Avialae. With few other convincing bird-like fossils from this time, researchers can only guess at what such an early bird might have looked like.

Fujianvenator is an odd species that diverged from this main trajectory and evolved bizarre hindlimb architecture. These elongated lower hindlimbs and the fossils it was found amongst suggests Fujianvenator was a long-legged swamp dweller or a high-speed runner. Unfortunately, the feet of Fujianvenator which might distinguish between these options are not clearly defined, so further fossil finds will be needed to confirm. But this is the first time a potential swamp avialan has been identified. All the other avialans paleontologists have discovered so far have features of being tree dwellers.

This is excerpts from research published in *Nature* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-023-06513-7>

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**I/We would like to receive our newsletter via email: YES / NO**  
 If you receive your newsletter electronically, contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.

Knock Knock.  
 Who's there?  
 Al. Al who?  
 Al be ever so grateful if  
 you renew your dues!



## Biden ends drilling in ANWR, sparking criticism, as Willow Project moves forward

The Biden administration is canceling the only seven oil and gas leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska. The leases were originally issued by the Trump administration. The administration is required to hold at least one more lease sale in ANWR. Senior administration officials said they "intend to comply with the law" in regards to that mandate which requires another lease sale by December 2024. While the new regulations will block new oil and gas leases in the protected areas, they will not block the development of existing leases in the NPR-A, including ConocoPhillips' controversial Willow Project.

## Biden-Harris Administration Invests \$20M for Research on Restoration of Degraded Forests, Grasslands, and Watersheds

The Biden-Harris Administration announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is investing \$20 million to fund 30 research studies to develop new technologies and data that will increase restoration of degraded forests, grasslands, and watersheds.

The Forest Service distributed \$20 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to the agency's scientific community to focus research on ecosystem restoration. Scientist Ben Rau is leading an effort to study and monitor the Shawnee National Forest's Collaborative Aquatic Landscape Restoration project at Kinkaid Lake. In support of the funded restoration work on the national forest, scientists will test multiple methods for gully stabilization and restoration, provide data for evaluating the effectiveness of management actions aimed at improving water quality, and provide guidance for implementing future watershed restoration actions across the Southern Tier of national forests in the Eastern Region.

## Southern Illinois Audubon Society P.O. Box 222 Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

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

## Middle Mississippi River NWR Boundary Expansion Approved

In September, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a newly expanded acquisition boundary for the Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri and Illinois. Authorization of this expansion will allow the Service to acquire up to 90,000 acres of land purchases from interested landowners who are willing sellers within the expanded boundary.

The Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge was established as an individual refuge on May 31, 2000. The refuge consists of seven island divisions that lie within the uncontrolled portion of the Middle Mississippi River, below the confluence with the Missouri River, where river levels are not regulated by the lock and dam system, including areas in Randolph and Jackson Counties. These lands provide access to the floodplain for native fish during high water stages and create a corridor of floodplain forest habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. The acquisition boundary now expands south to the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The Middle Miss NWR was designated as an Important Bird Area in 2008. Learn more about the plan at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu3xs5dr>

