



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

September 2024  
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Southern Illinois Audubon Society (SIAS)  
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Established in 1970

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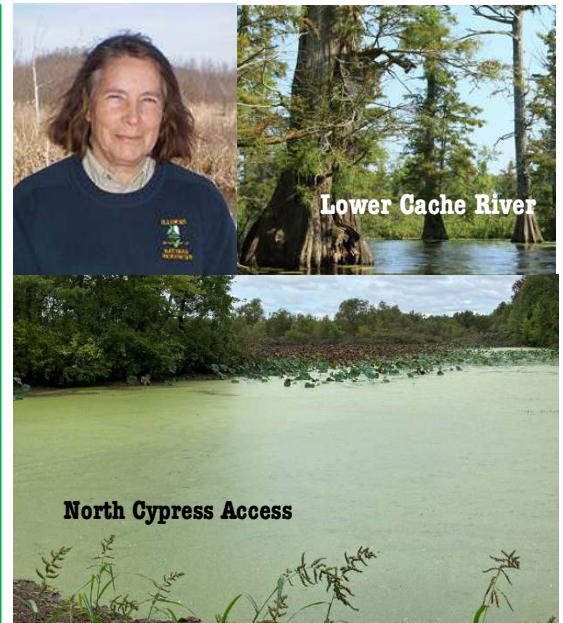
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SIAS is the sponsor of  
*The Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois*  
Over 22 years of team birding for a cause!  
Details can be found at:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/317866471615613/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/317866471615613/)

## An Update on Cache River Restoration

On Friday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>, Mollie Oliver will update us on recent efforts to restore the Cache River and the Cache River Wetlands, recognized as a RAMSAR wetland of international importance. And plenty of time will be set aside for Q & A. The presentation will start at our **new meeting time of 6 P.M.**, in the meeting room at Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St. Carbondale. 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 welcome but not required.

Mollie Oliver has been with the Illinois Dept of Natural Resources (IDNR) for 30 years, 18 of those were as Natural Resource Coordinator at the Cache River State Natural Area. Prior to accepting the position at the Cache, Mollie worked at the IDNR Tunnel Hill Trail Office in Vienna.



Lower Cache River

North Cypress Access

## Tragic Loss of Young Shawnee NF Employee

Thirty year old Austin Trey Davidson died on August 20, 2024. He and a fellow Forest Service employee had been performing maintenance at Oakwood Bottoms in Jackson County. Austin was using a weed-eater when he unknowingly hit a bumblebee nest. The bees attached him, stinging him dozens of times. That evening he passed away unexpectedly. He lived in Anna with his wife and their two very young sons.

From his obituary: Austin was a 2012 graduate of Cobden High School and graduated from SEMO with a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Biology. He worked his dream career at the US Forest Service for 7 years, 7 months, and 17 days. During that time, he earned several forest service qualifications. Additional qualifications included USDA certified pesticide applicator. He was also a proud member of the fire crew, aiding with prescribed burns and wildland fires around the country. Austin had a deep love for the outdoors and was passionate about the Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois. He was extremely proud of the work that he accomplished on the Shawnee and Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, especially his recent work in Oakwood Bottoms Recreational Area and a project in partnership with the Stinson Memorial Library.

*-Rhonda R.*

## August SIAS Meeting Highlights

We had a great turnout for our first program of the fall season. Over 2 dozen members and friends were in attendance. It was nice to see and visit with folks we hadn't spoken with in months. Plus, we had two folks attending who have just moved to our area and they joined SIAS! We welcome Barbara and James Sallee of Carterville, having moved here from upstate. They have interests in bird-watching and growing native plants!

Mike Blatz provided a wonderful presentation. It was so interesting and entertaining that I was distracted from taking notes. So, I asked Mike if he would provide me with some brief presentation notes. But he did one better, he provided me with a complete synopsis. It can be found in full on page 3 of this newsletter. Thanks Mike!

And a big Thank You to Hospitality Chair Phyllis Beck for always providing the coffee and a nice spread of after program refreshments. Thanks also to other members who have provided treats from time to time. I'm sorry that I forget to acknowledge everyone's generosity.

*-Rhonda R.*

## SIAS Upcoming Meeting Calendar

**October 25th**- Tom Caldwell - Living with Wildlife (at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary, MN)

**December 6th**- Nov/Dec combined mtg. Program to be announced.

**January 24th**- Annual Meeting and Potluck. Program to be announced

## Why Aren't They Talking Biofuels? Surprise, They Are!

"We must end our addiction to fossil fuel. We must switch to electric." While that is feasible for urban areas, I can't see it happening in rural areas in my lifetime. Why had hybrid vehicles been eliminated from the conversation? And talk of biofuels seemed to have evaporated. Then I heard Senator Dick Durbin had received the 2024 Fueling Growth Award for recognizing the importance of biofuel as a renewable clean energy. For me, that was a bit of a relief.

Senator Durbin stated that clean renewable energy is the future for our country and Illinois corn and soybean farmers are at the center of achieving that goal. And, yes, I'm aware that biofuels have potential drawbacks. But electric power has drawbacks as well. Lithium is a nonrenewable resource and mining of lithium is environmentally unfriendly. But it's a key component in lithium-ion batteries. I want to continue hearing biofuel discussed in energy conversations.

*-Rhonda R.*

**Treasurer Wanted** – After many many years of faithful service, our treasurer Laraine Wright, is ready to pass the role on to another. If you would be willing and able, please contact Laraine or any Board Member!

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

*...migrating warblers are arriving with their hearts full of song*

### SIAS Monthly Brown Bag Birding & Socializing

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month lunchtime birding on Oct. 8th at 11:30 a.m. Meet at Red Oak Pavilion located in Evergreen Park, Carbondale. We sit under a pavilion, so lunch happens rain or shine. Bring your lunch, drink, binoculars and conversations. For more details, contact Kathryn Jenkel at [katjenkel@yahoo.com](mailto:katjenkel@yahoo.com) or 618.559.2908.

Directions (from IL Rt. 51/ South Illinois Ave.) Take IL Rt. 51 south from Carbondale to stop-light intersection with Pleasant Hill Rd, turn west onto Pleasant Hill Rd, follow it to Evergreen Park's western most park entrance then turn south next look for Red Oak Pavilion on right.

### Saturday Birding with SIAS at Evergreen Park

Saturday, Oct. 12th & Nov. 9th, from 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Join Kirsten Trimble at the Red Oak Shelter that sets along Carbondale Reservoir lake in Evergreen Park on the south side of Carbondale, directions above. For details, phone Kirsten at 618.521.4266.

### Planning for Pollinators this Fall

Saturday, Sept. 28th, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Caring for pollinators doesn't stop in the fall. Learn about pollinator friendly garden cleanup and fall planting of native trees, shrubs, bareroot plants, and plugs. See what fall-blooming plants to add to your garden to provide food and habitat for pollinators after the spring and summer seasons. This program will be held at the Giant City State Park Visitor's Ctr, 235 Giant City Rd, Makanda Phone 618.457.4836 to register.

### Birding Walks with Master Naturalist Lily Glaeser

Sept. 29 Giant City State Park Post Oak Trail Bird Sit, bring a chair

Oct. 13 Green Earth Oakland Nature Preserve

Oct. 24 Giant City State Park Indian Creek Trail

From 8:30 p.m. - 10:00 a.m. All are welcome. Binoculars are available Register at: [go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLily](http://go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLily) Sponsored by: IL Extension (UofI), in partnership with the USFWS, SIAS, SIU, IDNR, & GreenEarth

### Fall Trash Blasts on the Shawnee National Forest

First Friday of each month, 1:00-3:00 p.m., (Oct. 4th & Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>)

The USDA SNF Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee, and the IL Extension Office will partner to host these annual fall Trash Blasts (clean-ups) at various locations in the Shawnee National Forest. Attendees will break into small teams of volunteers to collect litter from selected sites. These efforts are to help restore areas to their natural state. Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring leather work gloves, wear long pants, and closed-toed shoes. Some leather will be provided. This event is limited to 30 participants. For more info, contact Anne Townsend at [cupquake@illinois.edu](mailto:cupquake@illinois.edu) Register at <https://tinyurl.com/2p9876ux>

### Seed Dispersal and Propagation Presentation

Thursday, Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.

The Shawnee Group Sierra Club is sponsoring this presentation by Sonja Lallemand, horticulturist and educator. This presentation will look at the various means of plant reproduction via seed dispersal mechanisms and the various methods of propagation. What do they mean for the survival of the plant species and their predators? It will be at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St. Park in back off of Monroe St.

Sonja Lallemand is retired from her position as Horticulture Educator with the University of Illinois Extension Service for six IL counties. For the last 25 years, she has delivered numerous horticultural programs as well as conferences, workshops and seminars.

For more info, contact Barbara McKasson at [babitaji@aol.com](mailto:babitaji@aol.com)

## Explore the Southern Illinois Outdoors at Giant City

Saturday, Oct. 12th, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Southern Illinois is a playground for the outdoor enthusiast. Hiking, biking, camping, birdwatching, foraging, hunting, climbing, kayaking, we've got it all!

Join local outdoor professionals and nature enthusiasts to discover cool opportunities in your backyard! Informational booths:

Shawnee National Forest, Hiking with Shawn, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, River to River Trail Society, Sierra Club, Friends of Shawnee Forest, GreenEarth, Friends of Lake Murphysboro St. Park, Keep Carbondale Beautiful, U of I Extension, Little Grassy Fish Hatchery, Illinois Conservation Police, Outdoor Photography with Jennifer Wharton, Friends of Giant City State Park, Southern IL Audubon Society, Greater Egypt Planning Development Comm. Booths will be outdoors around at the Giant City State Park Visitor's Ctr, 235 Giant City Rd, Makanda Phone 618.457.4836 for more information.

### 2024 Christmas Bird Count Workshops!

Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, & 15<sup>th</sup>

Learn the ABC's of a CBC! Attend one of these workshops to go over National Audubon Society CBC policies, practice how to count, and learn about local count circle near you. Attendance recommended for first-time CBC volunteers. For full details or to register, go to: [go.illinois.edu/2024ChristmasBC](http://go.illinois.edu/2024ChristmasBC). Or contact Horticulture Educator Kim Rohling at [kimrohli@illinois.edu](mailto:kimrohli@illinois.edu)

### Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Office to Close Sept. 30th

In an action that has proceeded mostly under the radar, the Ullin office of Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge is being closing with little to no public input.

Several years ago, Cypress Creek NW Refuge was put under the oversight of Crab Orchard NW Refuge but a manager remained on site in the Ullin office. When Liz Jones (manager after Mike Brown) recently retired, a replacement was hired but he too reported back to Crab Orchard NWR. He was there for just a short time, then left rather abruptly this summer and no effort was made to replace him. The well-respected maintenance man at Cypress Creek had left prior to this last manager and was not replaced. That left only one employee at the Ullin office. Next came word thru the grapevine, without public announcement or public input, the office would be closing. The reason for the closer, "budget cuts", surfaced only when inquiries were made. Many folks scrambled to intercede, contacting IL Congressional Leaders and the US Fish and Wildlife regional office. The closure sped forward, a done deal. Everything from the office (which was nearly rent free), all machines & equipment, and the last employee are all being moved to the new Crab Orchard NW Refuge office building. Cypress Creek NWR management will now be fully in the hands of Crab Orchard NWR manager, Justin Sexton, who holds main responsibility for the Ullin office closure.

This is not the first action by Crab Orchard NW Refuge manager, Mr. Sexton, that has taken place without transparency. He attempted to terminate the CONWR Bluebird Box Trail, a scientific study that had been collecting bird data since the mid 1980s. (The late) Aimee Hemphil, then the trail coordinator, both defended keeping it and warned others of his proposed action. Selected bluebird boxes were removed but some of the boxes along the trail were left remaining.

Then this past summer, he was less than transparent over not renewing the Little Grassy Lake campground concessionaire. His actions left many folks angry and confused. After many Facebook posts and getting the local media involved, he provided details. The main reason given was that the Little Grassy Lake dam was old and in need of repair, repair that is currently under study. If/when approved, it likely won't start for another year.

Decisions are made, that's understandable, but these were all decisions that should have been publicly addressed in advance. Transparency would have prevented confusion and distrust or, in the case of Cypress Creek NWR, prevented or delayed the office closure.

*-Rhonda R.*



## Birds and Birding the Bahamas -By Dr. Mike Baltz

The Bahamas is an English-speaking, independent nation of approximately 400,000 people just off the east coast of Florida. The Bahamas is an archipelago nation with hundreds of islands and cays, stretching over 400 miles north-to-south. Thirty-one of the islands are inhabited, but the vast majority of Bahamians live on just two islands; New Providence and Grand Bahama. The capitol city of the Bahamas is Nassau, located on New Providence.

The primary "industry" of the Bahamas is tourism, with almost 10 million visitors to the islands in 2023. Having said that, the vast majority of tourists visit Nassau and Paradise Island, mostly via cruise ships. As such, much of the archipelago is both sparsely populated and seldom visited, making the so-called Family Islands of the Bahamas (all the islands except Grand Bahama and New Providence/Paradise Island) wonderful places for tourists seeking an authentic island adventure.

Unlike the majority of the islands in the West Indies, the islands of the Bahamas are not of volcanic origin. Rather, the modern-day Bahama islands represent the highest points of several large limestone "banks" that were exposed during the last ice age. The islands themselves have little topography, with the highest point in the country just 200 feet above sea level.

The climate of the Bahamas is considered sub-tropical and is very similar to that of south Florida and the Florida Keys. Within the country, when Bahamian meteorologists give the daily weather reports for the nation, they discuss the Northern, Central, and Southern Bahamas. The Northern Bahamas receive the most rain annually (55-45 inches), while the Southern Bahamas can receive half that.

The habitat types, flora, and fauna of the Bahamas also resemble that of south Florida and the Florida Keys visually, but the actual plants and animal species present are more similar to those found in Cuba.

On the Northern "pine islands" (Grand Bahama, Abaco, New Providence, and Andros), pine forest is the most extensive forest-type. But much of the plant and animal diversity is to be found in the broad-leaf coppices on the islands. Beach and mangrove "swash" habitats are also extensive on these islands.

Specific to birds, 360 species of birds have been recorded in the Bahamas, but only 109 of those are breeding species. The rest are migrants or vagrants. Indeed, during the winter months, the majority of bird species present in the Bahamas are migrants, with the Northern Pine Islands being a haven for migrant warblers and shorebirds.

There are a handful of endemic bird species in the Bahamas, but much of the avifauna is shared with Cuba. Indeed, birding in the

Bahamas is a version of birding Cuba. And while American/Canadian birders will find many familiar species in winter, there are only a handful of breeding landbird species that are also shared with North America.

In the grand scheme of global conservation, it is the marine resources and diversity found in the waters of the Bahamas that are really of global significance. The coral reefs and shallow water banks of the archipelago are of major importance to the health of the West Indian marine ecosystem. To that end, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been working with local NGOs in the region for the last 20 years.

Long before TNC however, the Bahamas were conservation leaders internationally with their establishment of the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park in 1958 – then, the first of its kind. And in 1965, the Bahamas established the Inagua National Park to protect one of the largest known breeding populations of West Indian Flamingos at the time. All parks in the Bahamas are managed and maintained by the Bahamas National Trust.

Beginning in 2002, the Bahamas initiated a flurry of land protection, establishing numerous new National Parks, including several on Andros Island. The parks on Andros are significant as the island accounts for almost half of the land area in the Bahamas, and a major park expansion in 2012 resulted in over 1.3 million acres of protected land on Andros.

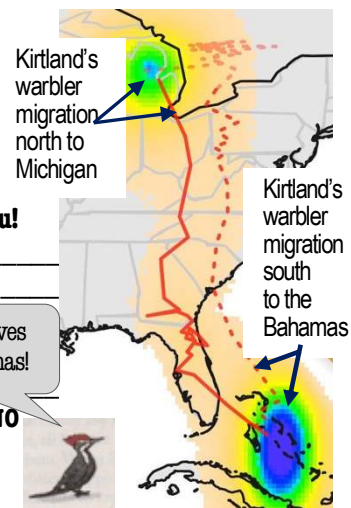
### Take a Trip with Mike to Andros Island this Coming January!

I will be leading a birding/eco tour to Andros Island January 18-25, 2025. Our "headquarters" will be Forfar Field Station, near the settlement of Blanket Sound. The trip will consist of daily excursions into "the bush" and local guides will accompany the group. The objective will be to explore and learn about the different habitat types on the island and, of course, look for birds. There will also be opportunities to snorkel the reef and in the mangroves.

I have led several birding trips to Andros in the past and our trip bird lists were always around 100 species, including up to 18 species of migrant warblers and another dozen species of migrant shorebirds. What I like about the trip for participants is that there are multiple opportunities to get "soul-satisfying looks" at most of the resident species as opposed to trips to more bird diverse parts of the world where most species are only briefly seen.

The cost of the trip is \$1499 per person and includes flights from Nassau to Andros, lodging, 3 meals a day, and all field trips and excursions. If you think you might be interested in joining us in January, you can visit the International Field Studies website [www.intlfieldstudies.org/birds](http://www.intlfieldstudies.org/birds) for more information. You can also contact Mike Baltz [mebaltz@gmail.com](mailto:mebaltz@gmail.com) with any questions.

Kirtland's warbler is one of the rarest songbirds in North America. In 1951, only 500 males were reported (by counting males singing.) In 1971, numbers of singing males had dropped to 200. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was implemented and efforts to protect and increase Kirtland's warblers began. Work took place in the Michigan breeding grounds and in the Bahamas were all Kirtland's warblers over-winter. By 2001, the goal of 1000 total singing males was exceeded and numbers continued up. In 2019, 2300 Kirtland's warbler males were recorded, signaling that recovery efforts were successful enough to have them completely removed from the endangered list that year. For more info on Kirtland's warbler or to donate in support of continued conservation work to benefit them, visit this quick link to the American Birding Conservancy's Kirtland's website: <https://shorturl.at/3hCkp>



### 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	_____
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Mail to: Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Attn: Membership

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If you receive your newsletter electronically, contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.



## Trout Hill Prairie Saved!

Less than 1% of Illinois' prairies are left in our beautiful prairie state – and only 600 acres of hill prairies (i.e., prairies on bluffs) remain. In August, SIAS joined dozens of organizations and 830+ individuals from 45 states and 4 countries donating in support of preserving a 15-acre remnant native hill prairie property in Monroe County.

Trout Hill prairie is home to many types of wildlife, including badgers, bees, and bobcats. Migratory birds use the prairie and forested bluff lands as a resting spot during their journeys. Prairie plants like hairy mountain mint and big bluestem are found here, too. The acreage was put on the mark in spring. Heartlands Conservancy < <https://heartlandsconservancy.org/> >

was informed and took on the goal to acquire the 15-acres of native prairie and succeeded with the help of an anonymous donor offered to match donations 1:1 to save the prairie, up to half the purchase price.

Funds raised for the hill prairie went toward the fee-simple acquisition of the property, including the purchase price \$150,000, closing costs, legal and title expenses, implementation costs, and the necessary staff time associated with preserving the property. Any funds raised over the project goal amount of \$175,000 will be used for future restoration, management, stewardship, access, and implementation costs associated with the project. How will funds be used and future plans?

Download a planning brochure here: <https://shorturl.at/6RCvo>



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

*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society and  
the Illinois Environmental Council*



Male Kirtland's Warbler, the "Jack Pine Bird"  
(photographed by Jim Forrest)

<https://abcbirds.org/bird/kirtlands-warbler/>

## It's Not too Late to Fight for the Cypress Creek NWR Ullin Office

Recent poor leadership and bad decisions have resulted in concerns over misuse/waste of maintenance funds, demoralizing treatment of career professionals and the disregard for management of the resource, private property rights (open flow/drainage), and public facilities. It's obvious, the "closure" decision was made without any regard to the Refuge purposes and commitments outlined in the establishing Environmental Assessment (1990). It also disregards the relationships that have been built over 35 years and an investment of thousands of hours and millions of funds to restore Cypress Creek/Cache River Wetlands. This investment of many has always moved the restoration project forward and deserves input and a decision-making process of more than just one person.

Good leaders find alternatives and ways to strategize a solution. The F&W Service should maintain the 3 full-time permanent positions at Cypress Creek Refuge. In the short term the current biologist and a knowledgeable maintenance worker from Crab Orchard Refuge should work to keep the Ullin office open until a long-term strategy is implemented. Contact the following list of folks. Tell them to keep the office open with the 3 employees! Phone the USFWS Leadership: -Will Meeks, Regional Director, USFWS at 612.713.5360 or email him: [Will\\_Meeks@fws.gov](mailto:Will_Meeks@fws.gov) Contact Congressional Leaders: -Mike Bost, IL Rep. at 202.225.5661. -Tammy Duckworth, IL Senator at 202.224.2854, and Dick Durbin at 202.224.2152

