



Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

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Southern Illinois Audubon Society (SIAS)
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Established in 1970

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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/group/s/317666471615613/

Living with Wildlife On Friday, October 25th, Tom Caldwell will share stories of his years as a volunteer at Vince Shute Wildlife, MN.

Join SIAS as Tom Caldwell shares his years as a volunteer at the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary in Orr, Minnesota, and how local bears had become accustomed to human contact as the sanctuary steered them back to their wild ways while also promoting a facility for education, research, and eco-tourism.

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.

Tom is a Certified Arborist with a degree in Horticulture. He currently serves as Arborist in the City of Anna Parks, is currently a student in the Forestry program at SIUC and retired from the community college system. Tom and his wife, Nancy, live on a 40-acre plot in rural Union County where they are planting natives and removing invasives. His property has been established as a Certified Tree Farm and provides habitat for wildlife.



September SIAS Meeting Highlights

SIAS sends a big thanks Mollie Oliver, Natural Resource Coordinator, for sharing the history of and restoration efforts in the Cache River State Natural Area.

From the installation of many small ripple weir dams to slow erosion to the dredging of silt from the river to increase flow, the Cache River Wetlands is a continuing work in progress. Mollie described, with the help of images, some of the many completed and ongoing management projects. She also discussed management challenges that still remain, like controlling non-native invasive species and the issues with maintaining water levels.

The state of Illinois acquired the first parcel of Cache River State Natural Area in 1970, following cooperation among private, governmental, and commercial groups working together to conserve this unique natural resource. A cooperative effort called the Cache River Wetlands Joint Venture Partnership works to acquire, protect, and restore a 60,000-acre wetland corridor along 50 miles of the Cache River. Partners include the IL Dept. of Natural Resources, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Ducks Unlimited with support from the Friends of the Cache River Watershed. Over 18,000 acres of land in Johnson, Massac, and Pulaski Counties is now in IL state ownership making up the current Cache State Natural Area. The area provides food, water, and living space for an incredibly diverse family of plants and animals, more than 100 of which have been listed state endangered or threatened. The area also offers amazing recreation opportunities including birdwatching, biking, canoeing, fishing, and seasonal hunting.

Side Note After 30 years with the IL Dept. of Natural Resources, Mollie Oliver is retiring. The Wetlands Center will not be the same without her. SIAS thanks Mollie for her many years of public service and wishes her happy trails and lots of fun in her retirement!
-Rhonda R.

Member Slide Night - Dec. 6th

Here's advance notice that we're bringing back member slide night for our Dec. 6th program! Members can provide up to 14 of their favorite nature-related images (scenery, plants, animals, birds, and/or pictures of critters you couldn't identify.) Bring the images on a portable USB flash drive. SIAS will provide a laptop (older model but USB friendly) unless you prefer to use your own computer. Please let Vicki or Rhonda know by Dec. 3rd if you plan to share some pictures.

SIAS Upcoming Meeting Calendar

December 6th– Nov/Dec combined mtg. Member slide night!!

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

February 28th– Program to be announced.

National Audubon Society 125th

Christmas Bird Count Season, 2024-25

Christmas Bird Count Season, Dec. 14th to Jan 5th, is just under two months away. It will be the 125th year of this important bird census. This, the nation's longest running community science bird project, fuels the National Audubon's work throughout the year. It provides vital bird statistics for use by state scientists and land managers.

In southernmost IL there are more than 10 counts: Rend Lake, War Bluff Valley, Crab Orchard NWR, Cypress Creek NWR, Arklands/Pyramid, Horseshoe Lake, Union County, Mermet Lake, Middle Miss NWR, and Jackson County. All local count dates and details will follow in the November/December newsletter but will likely be similar to last year. To learn more about Christmas Bird Counts, visit Audubon's website:

<https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>

Never participated in a Christmas Bird Count before? Consider signing up for a Christmas Bird Count Workshop. See details on second page of this newsletter!

We're Still Looking for a Treasurer

If you would be willing and able, please contact Laraine or any Board Member!

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...there's a chill in the air and a comet in the western sky

Saturday Birding with SIAS at Evergreen Park

Saturday, 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.

Guided Senior Van Tour along Tunnel Hill State Trail

Thursdays: Oct. 31st, Nov. 7th, & Nov. 14th

Cache River State Natural Area is offering guided van tours for senior citizens of southern Illinois along Tunnel Hill State Trail on the above listed Thursdays, with departure times of 10 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Enjoy wildlife and history of the area as you travel between the communities of Vienna and Tunnel Hill on Thursday, Oct. 31; Tunnel Hill past New Burnside on Thursday, Nov. 7; and between Vienna and Karnak on Thursday, Nov. 14, 2024. Registration required.

Call 618.6572064 for information and to reserve your seat.

Fall Trash Blasts on the Shawnee National Forest

Friday Nov. 1st, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

The USDA SNF Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee, and the IL Extension Office will partner to host this fall Trash Blast (clean-up) at Forest Service Road 1901, Hardin County, 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. This event is limited to 30 participants. For more info, contact Anne Townsend at

cupquake@illinois.edu Register at <https://tinyurl.com/2p9876ux>

SI IL Native Plant Society Native Seed Swap

Saturday Nov. 2nd, 9:00 a.m. - Noon

Get free IL native plant seed - donate seed - trade seed

To be held at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Park in back off of Monroe St.



Learn the ABC's of a CBC

2024 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Workshops!

Nov. 10th, 13th, 14th, & 15th

Is this your first time on a Christmas Bird Count (CBC)? This workshop will set you on the path for success. Did you know most counts in southernmost Illinois are a 30+ year tradition? As a CBC participant, you will coordinate with your local compiler prior to the count date. At this workshop we will go over National Audubon Policies, local count circles, and practice how to count. Attendance is recommended for first-time CBC volunteers. Get your questions answered from IL Extension Horticulture Educator, Kimberly Rohling, about this annual event! Registration for all workshops will close Thursday, November 7. For full details or to register, go to: go.illinois.edu/2024ChristmasBC. Or contact Kimberly Rohling at kimrohli@illinois.edu If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact Kimberly. Workshop dates and locations:

Sunday, Nov. 10: Crab Orchard NW Refuge, 8588 IL-148, Marion
Wednesday, Nov. 13: Rend Lk. Visitor Center, 11981 Rend City Rd, Benton
Thursday, Nov. 14: Giant City St. Park, 235 Giant City Rd, Makanda
Friday, Nov. 15: Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 IL-37, Cypress

Invasive Autumn Olive removal at Garden of the Gods

Nov. 12th & Nov. 19th, 10:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.

Friends of the Shawnee National Forest and partners are again holding autumn olive removal events. Autumn olive is an invasive species that has infested Garden of the Gods along the road to the Observation Trail.

Volunteers should wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, and bring water and a snack. Safety glasses, gloves, helmets, and other tools will be provided, but volunteers are welcome to bring their own personal protection equipment. This project is in cooperation with the USDA Shawnee National Forest, Uoff Extension, and the Nature Conservancy of Illinois. Registration required at go.illinois.edu/NNIS2024fall

The Illini in Southern Illinois Presentation

Thursday, Nov. 14th, 7:00 p.m.

The Shawnee Group Sierra Club is sponsoring this presentation by Kay Ripplemeyer-Tippy, Regional Historian and author. The program will focus most on 1700 - 1800s, the period of final decline of all native American tribes still in the Illinois Country - as well as the American Revolution and the Northwest Ordinance. Kay will draw on accounts of the Illini's extensive marital relationships with the French in Illinois Country.

It will be at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St.

Park in back off of Monroe St.

Kay's ancestor, Michel Danis, a French-Canadian and Illini Indian man, was an interpreter between the Illini and the French.

For more info, contact Barbara McKasson at babitaji@aol.com

Birding Hikes with Vicki at Giant City State Park

Sunday, Nov. 17th & Dec. 7th, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Join park volunteer, & SIAS President, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall as she guides participants on birdwatching hikes at Giant City St. Park. This program is free and open to the public but space is limited and registration is required. Binoculars will be for loan to anyone who would like them.

To register, phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836.

Birding Walks with Master Naturalist Lily Glaeser

Nov. 28th, GreenEarth Stan Harris Prairie, Carbondale

Dec. 12th, GreenEarth Brush Hill, Carbondale

Dec. 15th, SIU Carbondale Campus Lake

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



Pumpkin Glow

Oakland Nature Preserve

Oct. 24th - 26th, 5:30-9:30 p.m.

You won't want to miss out! Hike the Oakland Nature Preserve, 1201 N Oakland Ave, Carbondale,

to see the magical display of over 750 jack-o-lanterns.

Children are free, Adults \$7 suggested donation

Free Parking and Hayrides!

Visit www.greeneearthinc.org/pumpkin-glow-2024 for more info.

Would you like to be involved? It takes a small army to pull off the three nights of this popular nighttime jack-o-lantern hike. GreenEarth is seeking help carving pumpkins, prepping the site, and running, this, GreenEarth's largest annual fundraiser.

SIU Students can sign up on the SIU Volunteer Portal for: Workday at Oakland Oct. 19th

Carving pumpkins on campus on Oct. 21st-23rd

Helping Prep or Working The Event Oct. 24th-26th

Community Members who would like to carve pumpkins or help set or work the event can contact us at director@greeneearthinc.org.



Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge Office Closure Update

Liz Jones, Retired Manager of Cypress Creek NWR, recently provided an update on the unexpected Cypress Creek NWR office closure:

Since a meeting with Congressman Bost on Sept. 6, we wanted to provide an update regarding issues and concerns. We ask for your continued support to address issues related to mismanagement at the Cypress Creek NWR, the Playport Marina concession/perceived conflict of interest, and Little Grassy Marina's closure at Crab Orchard NWR.

Sept. 30th - The Cypress Creek NW Refuge Office was closed. The decision was made by Justin Sexton without input/involvement from agency/organization partners, Friends of the Cache, community members, or other special interest groups.

Oct. 8th - Congressman Bost's office facilitated a meeting to discuss questions and concerns raised over the Cypress Creek NWR office closure. Bost Staff requested Mr. Sexton provide a Plan of Action that addresses maintenance, management, and operational concerns at Cypress Creek NWR. Katie Main and Lacy Bowersox will follow-up with Mr. Sexton to provide constituents with a summary. A date to when this will happen has not been provided at this time.

Attendees on the meeting/call included: Congressman Bost Staff: Katie Main-District Director and Lacy Bowersox-Senior Legislative Asst.; FWS Staff: FWS Congressional Liaison Paula Sunde, FWS Congressional & Legislative Affairs Specialist Kaitlyn Pritchard, Crab Orchard NWR Refuge Manager Justin Sexton, and Cypress Creek NWR Biologist Karen Mangen.

Oct. 16th - A teams meeting with USFWS Staff & Friends of the Cache Members was initiated by FWS Regional Office staff. The call focused on the decision-making process and the lack of transparency regarding the Cypress Creek NW Refuge office closure and relocation of staff & equipment to Crab Orchard NW Refuge. Discussion also included Mr. Sexton's lack of leadership/communication skills and his perceived conflict of interest with PLD Building Company. Regional office staff actively listened and seemed interested in gathering facts.

Attendees on this meeting/call included FWS staff: Assistant Regional Director for Refuges Sarena Selbo and Acting Refuge Supervisor Area 2 Bridget Olsen. Also, included were the Chair of Friends of the Cache River Watershed Tony Gerard and Retired FWS employee & Volunteer Liz Jones.

On Saturday, Oct. 19th a Public Demonstration will be held to protest the closure of Little Grassy Marina and the Cypress Creek NW Refuge office. The event will take place at the Square in Downtown Carbondale from 12-2:00 P.M.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Phone Will Meeks, Regional Director, U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, 612.713.5360; Mike Bost, Illinois Representative, 618.457.5787; Tammy Duckworth, Illinois Senator via her assistant Jim Kirkpatrick, 618.722.7070; Dick Durbin, Illinois Senator, 618.351.1122.

Tell leadership to re-open the Cypress Creek NW Refuge office and maintain adequate permanent full-time staff members onsite to continue Refuge maintenance and management!

The Chachalacas' 2024 IOS Big Sit

Any day birding is a good day and I always go into a birding day with great expectations. On Sunday the 22nd, Kimberly Rohling, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall, and I returned to Evergreen Park in Carbondale for our Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS) Big Sit. The City of Carbondale had removed some trees and shrubby from the park since last year's Big Sit so I suggested we try the area just to the west of our previously sited spot. It put us closer to more trees but still provided the ability to scan the Evergreen Lake. And we again coordinated the SIAS Fall Picnic to coincide with our Big Sit.

The morning weather was threatening rain and southernmost IL had been a bit drought stressed so rain would have been welcome but didn't fall. The morning was rather quiet, without the morning songbird calling or activity we'd expected. As the morning passed, we got a mix of waterfowl and a few shorebirds but migrant songbirds were just not around.



By noon it had become unseasonably hot and muggy. We enjoyed the company of 16+ SIAS folks and 3 dogs for the lunchtime picnic. We had our Little Tikes tote board set up and current with the species we'd already seen or heard listed for folks to read.

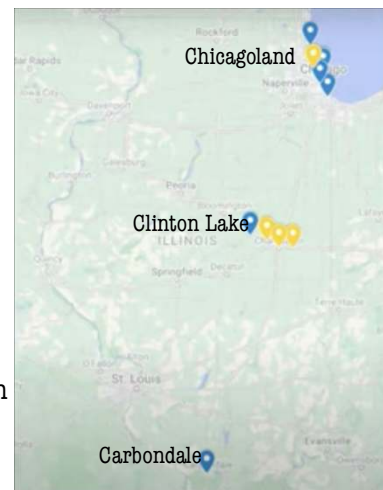
While we'd intended to Sit until 6 p.m., by late afternoon, with the weather still stagnant and overly warm and having not added any species for some time, we decided to call it a day at 4:15 p.m. with 59 species, less than we'd hoped for.

Birds of the day included a magnolia warbler, least sandpipers, our first white-throated sparrow of the season, and cedar waxwings (96 but likely

more). Testing us throughout the day were the mimickers: European starlings and multiple northern mockingbirds...and the musical ice cream truck. View our eBird species list for the day at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S196154916>

Our Big Sit was part of the state-wide IOS Big Sit contest that took place from Sept. 20th-22nd. Ten teams participated with our team being the only team south of Champaign. The winning team with 90 species was the Big Sit-owski at Clinton Lake. The second and third place teams tallied 63 and 62 species. Our 59 species put us in 4th place.

The contest raised a grand total of \$3,633.58, (\$484.44 from those of you who supported us, thank you!) Funds go directly to cultivating the next generation of birders thru the IL Young Birders program and supporting bird research conservation in IL thru the IOS Grant Program, and more. View the complete awards ceremony and team discussions at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meU9R22exk4> -Rhonda R.



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

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 Family \$25
 Student Voting Member \$ 5
 Donation \$ _____
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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.

As I've said before,
 SIAS members are
 birds of a feather!



Are bugs really disappearing?

-by Benji Jones, Vox Environmental Correspondent

Many of the bugs that humans encounter — the mosquitoes and houseflies, cockroaches and bed bugs — are, in a word, disgusting. But these loathsome pests represent an almost unimaginably small fraction of the planet's insect diversity. Scientists have discovered about one million species so far, and they estimate there are likely several million more that they have yet to describe.

This incredible diversity of bug life sustains our planet. Insects pollinate our favorite foods, clean up our messes, and even help reduce the number of insects that we don't like. Dragonflies, for example, eat mosquitoes, and certain wasps prey on cockroaches. That's why recent headlines warning of an "insect apocalypse" — the idea that a huge number of insects are disappearing — are so alarming. A world without insects is not one we want to live in.

But are bugs actually disappearing? It's a good question, considering there's an ongoing debate over the true extent of insect loss. For help answering this question, I spoke with someone who knows insects better than almost anyone: Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a nonprofit that works to protect insects. He's been with the group for more than two decades.

Yes, insects are really vanishing "Unfortunately, the data is conclusive," Black told me.

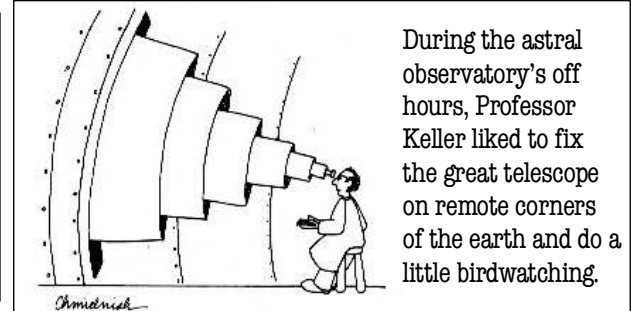
"Insects on the whole are now declining. And it's very worrisome." Understanding the scale of this decline is a bit more complicated. Many groups of insects, like flies, haven't been thoroughly studied, so there are still a lot of unknowns. Some critters, meanwhile, are thriving in the world humans have created. Disease-carrying mosquitoes, for example, are expanding into new areas as the climate warms. But on the whole, studied populations of insects are declining by about 1 to 2 % each year, according to the best available research, Black said. When compounded over two decades, that amounts to as much as a 30% decline.

The first problem, Black says, is that we're gobbling up insect habitat, like prairies and forests, with our farms, buildings, and homes. He points out that there are some 40 million acres of lawn in the U.S. (bluegrass, mostly), which has replaced native habitat. "Very few animals, insects included," can live off of bluegrass, Black said. "It's a giant monoculture."

The extremely common practice of spraying insecticides only makes the landscape less habitable. Then you add in climate change and its many symptoms — from rising temperatures and deepening droughts to more extreme rainfall and hurricanes — which together can amplify these downward trends. "That affects us, but it also affects all of the animals," Black said.

Relative to other major issues that face our planet and our communities — war, American politics, life-threatening natural disasters — insect declines have not, rather unsurprisingly, drawn much attention. They're harder to see. But what's heartening, Black said, is that in his nearly 25 years of work at Xerces he's seen support for insects swell dramatically. "There are tens of millions of people across the world who now garden for pollinators," he told me. "There's a growing movement."

Excerpts from <https://www.vox.com/explain-it-to-me/371434/insect-apocalypse-bees-decline-loss>



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

