



Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

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Southern Illinois Audubon Society (SIAS)
P.O. Box 222
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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/

ABC's of a CBC (Christmas Bird Count)

On Friday, Dec. 6th, join SIAS to learn the ABCs of CBCs.

Did you know most Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) in southernmost Illinois are from 30-50 year traditions? Whether you're just curious about Christmas Bird Counts, or you've been a life-long CBC participant, or you're looking to help for the first time, this presentation will have something to interest you. Kimberly Rohling, Horticulture Educator, will go over the history of the CBC, the National Audubon CBC Policies, local count circles locations and compilers, and counting practices. Attendance is recommended for anyone thinking of participating in a CBC for the first-time. CBC compilers Vicki Lang-Mendenhall and Rhonda Rothrock will also be in attendance. Get your questions about this annual event answered by Kimberly, with a little the help from Vicki & Rhonda.

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, off 216. E. Monroe St., where two parking lots are available.



Kimberly Rohling is the Horticulture Educator with the IL Extension serving Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, & Williamson Counties. As a child, Kim enjoyed reading books about wildlife in far away places. Kim rekindled her love of birding in 2006 when she visited Ecuador and the Galapagos islands for a winter term undergraduate experience. She has worked on over ten ornithological related projects and has participated in CBCs since 2015.

So far in 2024, Kim has identified 515 species of birds from countries like New Zealand, waters off of Cuba, Bahamas, Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Mexico and the United States.

This has been one of her biggest birding years.
Her life list on eBird is nearing 1,000 birds!



Kimberly Rohling is the Horticulture



October SIAS Meeting Highlights-

The October presentation on Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary by Tom Caldwell was "beary" interesting! Tom was "beary" enthusiastic and entertaining.

Years ago, a Minnesota logger, Vince Shute, chose to stop shooting the bears that broke into his cabins and found a way to peacefully coexist with them. In his own words he claimed, "The bears weren't mean, just hungry!" This began Vince's long and celebrated life with the black bears at his homestead in the north woods. Then feeding the bears donuts was popular.

Generations of black bears still visit Mr. Shute's former homestead, now designated as the Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary. Managed by the non-profit The American Bear Association, the Sanctuary feeds them a mix of donated items, including dried fruits and nuts (and M&Ms, favored by the bears) and promotes a better understanding of the bears through education and observation. All sanctuary bears are free-roaming. New famous quote: "When you're on a trail, yield to the bear, or it will suck to be you."

SIAS thanks Tom for sharing his experiences at the Sanctuary. His passion for the bears there was contagious! -Rhonda R.



Feeding stations & bear poo.
The poo gets cleaned up daily.

As a fundraiser, the Vince Shute Sanctuary is hosting an Online Benefit Auction. Bidding begins Dec. 2nd at 5:00 p.m. To view the dozens of auction items or to make a donation to the Sanctuary, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/4usx9juk>

SIAS Upcoming Meeting Calendar

January 24th- Annual Meeting and Potluck. Program speaker: Dan Wood, Wildlife Biologist for Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, on Oak Savannah Habitat Restoration Project on the Refuge.

February 28th- Program speaker: Morgan Brown, Graduate Student at U of I Champaign-Urbana on Insect decline in Illinois Prairies.

March 28th- Program speaker: Heather Carey, Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager for the Shawnee National Forest

Wanted: SIAS Treasurer

Laraine Wright has been the SIAS Treasurer for what seems like forever. Laraine is now ready to retire from the SIAS Board and pass the position to someone else. We're hoping that a someone else exists in the SIAS member ranks. We need a someone else who can and will step up to fill the treasurer spot. It's not as overwhelming as it might sound. Please reach out to me or a board member if you are willing and available. -Rhonda R.

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...snow birds have arrived & it's beginning to look a lot more like winter

It's Hunting Season - Be Aware (& wear blaze) if you're out in nature!

Illinois is in the middle of hunting season. FYI: Archery season runs to Jan. 15th but is closed during firearm deer seasons. Next firearm season is Dec. 3 - 8th, with muzzleloader season Dec. 13 - 15th.

Shawnee National Forest Christmas Tree Permits

Now Through Dec 31st - (*But, be aware it's hunting season*)

For a \$5 fee, folks can cut a Christmas Tree, specifically an eastern red cedar, within designated areas of the Shawnee National Forest. As it can be hard to find the "perfect" tree, the Forest Service recommends a preliminary scouting trip to identify an area with a good selection of red cedars. Be sure to read and agree to all the tips and guidelines when selecting your tree. To get a permit & to check locations, visit:

www.recreation.gov/tree-permits/3fe0d0dfec5b11ea-bc-ba-fa43c1aabc3

Birding Hike with Vicki at Giant City State Park

Saturday, Dec. 7th, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Join park volunteer, & SIAS President, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall as she guides participants on a birdwatching hike 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.

Illinois Botanizer's Best Illinois Nature 2024

Presentation at Giant City State Park

Sunday, Dec. 8th, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Botanist Chris Benda (a.k.a. Illinois Botanizer) travels throughout Illinois every year, visiting nature preserves, leading nature tours for the public, and encountering all kinds of neat plants and animals. Join Chris as he presents photos highlighting his best nature encounters of 2024. To register, phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836.

19th Annual Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair

Sunday, Dec. 8th, 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Gifts that make your community and your world a better place. The Gift Fair will be held at the Carbondale Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Ave., Carbondale. For more details, visit their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthernIllinoisAlternativeGiftFair/>

Birding Walks with Master Naturalist Lily Glaeser

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 (UofI), in partnership with the USFWS, SIAS, SIU, IDNR, & GreenEarth

Restoration Projects at the Crab Orchard NW Refuge

Thursday, Dec. 12th, 7:00 p.m.

The Shawnee Group Sierra Club is sponsoring this presentation by Neil Vincent, Visitor Services Manager at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge (CONWR). In this presentation, Neil will provide a general overview of CONWR and then discuss restoration projects at the Refuge, completed, current, and planned. Neil has worked for 34 years with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. In 2005 he was appointed Visitor Services Manager at CONWR, a position that entails overseeing all activities that deal with visitors (hunting, camping, fishing, fees, volunteers, and etc.). Presentation will be at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., park in back off of Monroe St. and enter in back door.

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

Christmas Bird Count Season > Dec. 14 - Jan. 5

Help Needed! 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.

You can participate all day or for just part of a day. If you don't want to commit to a bigger area in the count circle but you live within the circle area, you can survey your property and or do a feeder watch. Contact the count compiler to verify that you live within their count circle or check the CBC map at the National Audubon Society site: <https://audubon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ac275eeb01434cedb1c5dcd0fd3fc7b4>

Rend Lake- Dec. 14 - Advanced registration required. Contact compiler Keith McMullen at 618.632.1057, email at warbler7@sbcglobal.net

War Bluff Valley- Dec. 15 - For details contact compiler Andrea Douglas, at 618.564.2079, email at anderatd@yahoo.com

Cypress Creek NWR- Dec. 16 - Advanced registration required. Contact compiler Jeff Hoover via email at hoover_jeff@hotmail.com or cell phone 217.417.8277, prior to count day. Areas to cover will be assigned prior to the count and results are to be emailed to Jeff at the email address above.

Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 23 - Advanced registration required. To register and for area assignment, contact compiler Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at 618.687.9868 Prior to Dec. 8th.

Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk. - Dec. 27 - Advance registration required by Dec. 8th. Meet at 6 a.m. on count day, at the parking lot in the Arklands Denmark Unit. (Turn south at the intersection of Pyatt-Culter Rd. & Denmark Rd., drive approx. .5 mile south to parking lot on right/west side of road.) Contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com.

Horseshoe Lake (Alexander Co.)- Dec. 28 - Advanced registration required. Details subject to change but as per past counts, meet in parking lot at the intersection of Rt. 3 & Miller City Rd., Olive Branch, at 6:30 a.m. Free lodging at the Wicker Club for Wednesday and Thursday nights. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515, email at vkleen@comcast.net

Union County- Dec. 29 - Advance registration required. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515, email at vkleen@comcast.net to verify details for meeting location.

Mermet Lake- Dec. 30 - Advance registration required by Dec. 8th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Jackson County- Jan. 1 (2025) - Advance registration required by Dec. 8th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock via phone 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Middle Mississippi River NWR- Jan. 4 (2025) - Advance registration required by Dec. 8th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock via phone 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

***Feeder watchers wanted.** Contact Rhonda to confirm that you live within one of the circles she compiles. If you live near Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, contact Vicki Lang-Mendenhall regarding being a feeder watcher during that count day.

To be a feeder watcher, just record the highest total number of each species observed at any one time at the feeder/feeder area during the day of the count. Record the number of hours spent during the day counting, no more than 2 hours.

Politicians and Others Seeking National Historical Park Designation for Cahokia Mounds

In 1982, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized the cultural and archaeological significance of Cahokia Mounds and named it a World Heritage site. It is also a U.S. National Historic Landmark and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2014 Heartlands Conservancy released a study outlining the feasibility of elevating Cahokia Mounds, and associated Mound Centers, to a National Designation within the auspices of the National Park Service. The study was spearheaded by Heartlands Conservancy, with funding assistance from numerous generous foundations and anonymous donors. If Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site were to be elevated beyond its current designation as a National Historic Landmark, the site would be given additional protections for the ancient mounds in St. Clair and Madison Counties along with Sugarloaf Mound in St. Louis – the city's only remaining mound. A National Designation will give influence to preserve what remains of the mounds in our region and embrace their vitality and heritage through interpretation, economic vitality, and conservation.

Heartlands Conservancy had hoped that President Barack Obama would declare Cahokia Mounds a national monument before leaving office in January 2017. When that didn't happen, Heartlands refocused on the congressional route. In 2018, the IL Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR) signed on to the national park plan. IDNR took over administration of Cahokia Mounds in 2017 after then-Gov. Rauner dissolved the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which had overseen the site. An important component of the proposed national park is that it would create a collaborative partnership between the National Park Service and local and state governments, stated IL House Rep. Mike Bost. Illinois would retain ownership of Cahokia Mounds.

The feasibility study concluded that the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and the satellite mound sites meet all the National Park Service criteria when presented together as a holistic view of the Mississippian Culture. They are stronger together and through a collaborative model of preservation, ownership, and management. Together the mounds can and should stand as Cahokia Mounds Mississippian Culture National Historical Park.

This is an initiative with tremendous public and political support from both Illinois and Missouri and beyond. As a part of this effort, Heartlands Conservancy has continued to engage stakeholders and technical advisors and conducted 13 regional public meetings to gather input. They have met with and continue to seek guidance from 11+ First Nations with origins in the Mississippian Culture, including Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Eastern Shawnee Tribe, Loyal Shawnee Culture, Miami Tribe, Osage Nation/Tribe, Ottawa Tribe, Peoria Tribe, Ponca Tribe, and Quapaw Tribe.

A National Historical Park designation requires approval by the US House and Senate and ratification by the President of the United States. In 2019, companion bills, HR3824 and S.2340, were introduced in Congress (by Representative Mike Bost, R-IL, and Senator Dick Durbin, D-IL) and heard by the Sub-Committees for National Parks in each chamber. The 116th Congress ended in 2020 before the full committees could consider the bills. In 2021 the two above mentioned members of Illinois' congressional delegation reintroduced measures to make Cahokia Mounds part of a new national park.

In April of this year (2024), Senator Tammy Duckworth, D-IL, and Senator Dick Durbin, D-IL, introduced the Cahokia Mounds Mississippian Culture Study Act to require the National Park Service to conduct a Special Resources Study on Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and its satellite sites. Durbin and Duckworth have long pushed for Cahokia Mounds to receive a National Historical Site designation from National Park Service, but in a congressional hearing last Congress, the National Park Service indicated that a Special Resources Study must first be conducted on the site. These studies – which cost an average of \$350,000 and are supposed to be completed within three fiscal years– assess a site's national significance and the feasibility of adding it to the National Park System. Some sites have already been determined as National Park Service sites and require a study to help plan it out while others undergo studies to determine whether they even qualify for National Park Service status. As of February 2023, the National Park Service was behind on studying 28 potential sites to add to its system, that number did not include 11 more that had been added in December 2022.

And it should be noted that in July 2024, the House of Representatives passed a fiscal year 2025 spending bill that cuts \$210 million (more than 6%) from the National Park Service's budget. This reduction would mean thousands fewer park rangers to ensure visitor safety and fewer resources to protect our beloved natural and cultural sites. The spending bill also includes cuts to the Park Service's budget for maintenance and repairs (more than a \$22 million cut), as well as historic preservation funding (\$20 million cut), which are critical to protecting stories and places that tell our nation's history. This cut adds to a cut of \$433 million (12.5%) from the National Park Service's 2024 budget. (Additionally, the 2025 budget bill slashes funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's clean air and water programs while undoing investments to help our communities and park landscapes better face climate change and natural disasters.)

While I've heard that there are a few folks who are concerned about this designation, this is a proposal that has bipartisan congressional support from both Illinois and Missouri as well as support from thousands of individuals, organizations, public agencies, and the First Nations. A big "Thank You" to Heartlands Conservancy, Rep. Bost, Senator Duckworth, and Senator Durbin for their continued efforts!

This article contains info from the Heartlands Conservancy's feasibility study, a number of related press releases, and .gov websites. To read the study, visit <https://heartlandsconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/the-mounds-america-s-first-cities-exec-sum-final-draft-for-web.pdf> -Rhonda R.

Keeping our Shawnee a National Forest - There is still no congressional support for the proposal to eliminate our beloved Shawnee Nat. Forest to make it a National Park and climate preserve. Congress would need to allocate billions in new taxpayer funds for a new Shawnee national park, funding that is needed to support the national parks we have; funding that should go to designating Cahokia a National Historic Park. And no matter what the Shawnee Park group says will occur, it's all speculation. Plus, you can walk your dog nearly anywhere in our Shawnee National Forest! -Rhonda R. & Bean

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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We treasure
the treasurer
who treasures
our treasure!

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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.



Mike's Nature Notebook on 91.9 WSIU

Ornithologist and ecologist Mike Baltz is back on WSIU Radio (91.9) with his monthly essays on the natural history of southernmost Illinois. This year, Mike's taking his inspiration from the late Todd Fink's Southern Illinois Natural Events perpetual Calendar.

For December, Mike will be featuring the Christmas Bird Count season. Listen on Wednesday, Dec. 4th at 8:44 a.m. &/or 5:44 p.m.

Hear his past Nature Notebook commentaries at <https://www.wsiu.org/people/mike-baltz>

This fall two western hummingbird species, Anna's and Rufous, have shown up in Illinois. Consider leaving a 1/4 filled hummingbird feeder out for these vagrants until January if possible. Bring it in at night to keep it from freezing.

It's weird to realize how many of the gifts in the 12 Days of Christmas are birds.
 Six out of the first seven days, your true love just gives you birds.
 That's 23 total birds.
 What if you don't even like birds.
 I bet on day five you're like, golden rings!
 Phew, we're finally done with all the birds.
 Then, bam, six geese and seven swans.

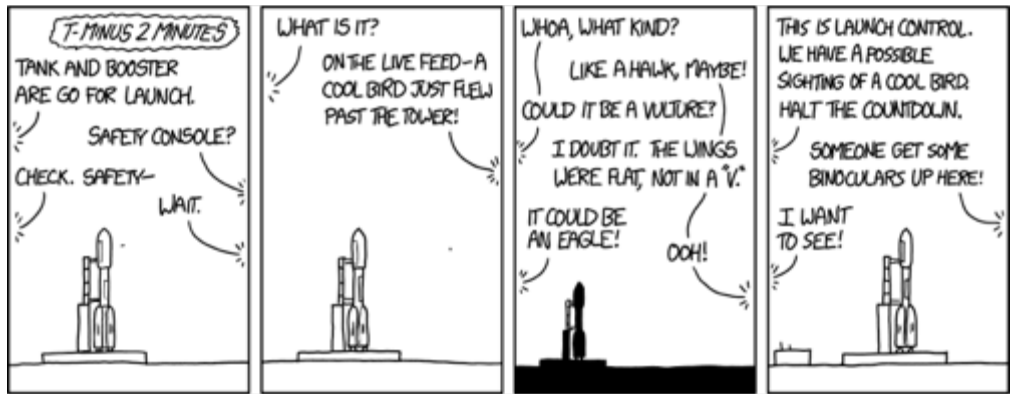
IAS's New Acquisition to Expand Prairie Ridge State Natural Area

The Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) has purchased 106.8 acres of land in Marion County Illinois to expand the mosaic of grasslands at the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area. Funds for the purchase were provided from the bequest of long-time member, Judith Joy*. With the goal of restoring prairie to the former agricultural field, prairie seeding has already begun.

Bob Gillespie, Site Manager at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area said, "The addition to the Loy Land and Water Reserve (LWR) increases that 216-acre site by approximately 100 acres. The original Loy LWR was purchased by IAS in Dec. of 2010. This welcome opportunity to expand the preserve will allow for more prairie reconstruction."

The newly acquired property will provide for the development of populations of imperiled species including the state-threatened eryngium stem borer moth, state-endangered royal catchfly, and state endangered prairie rose gentian. Bird species such as the northern harrier, short-eared owl, and barn owl will be common visitors as the newly planted prairie flourishes in the next few years.

*Judith Joy was a resident of Centralia who was connected to SIAS dating back to our beginning in 1970. Judy attended our first organizational meetings as a representative of IAS. She stayed concerned for us when we had to reorganize in the mid-1990s even when we chose to drop our status as an IAS chapter. Judy came to most of our meetings in the 2010s, brought down to Carbondale by then SIAS President Joe Merkelbach. She was quiet, humble, interested. She held a master's degree in botany and had been a newspaper editor and writer for more than half a century.



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Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society and the Illinois Environmental Council

