



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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P.O. Box 222  
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

## NEWSLETTER

*Established in 1970*

**"Birding in the Bahamas"** is the title of a program John and Martha Schwegman will present for SIAS on Friday, October 26, 2012 at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale, **starting at 7 p.m.** Parking and entrance are at the rear, off Marion and Monroe Streets. *The evening will begin with a potluck dinner at 6:30 p.m.*

John Schwegman will take us on an armchair birding trip into the Bahamas, with narration and photos of the many beautiful species of birds in the Bahamas. John is a lifelong naturalist who had a long career as a botanist with the IL Dept. of Conservation and IL Dept. of Natural Resources. He was instrumental in forming the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and has been serving on the board of the commission. Since his retirement, John has continued to study wildlife, including mussels, dragonflies, birds and plants. He also enjoys sharing his photography and stories.

**Potluck set-up begins at 6 p.m. with the potluck starting at 6:30 p.m.** Members are asked to bring an entree to share and their own dinnerware. Some beverages will be provided.

**Nov./Dec. Program: December 7<sup>th</sup> - Speaker: Trevor Hinckley on Tropical Birding**



### In Memoriam: Genevieve Houghton

We lost a much-loved friend on October 2<sup>nd</sup> with the death of Genevieve Houghton, 80, of Carbondale. Although she belonged to many organizations, she felt particularly close to SIAS, and we to her.

Genevieve was passionate about watching, identifying, and talking about birds, from those in her own yard to trips in our region and other states. She was instrumental in the establishment of the annual Jackson County Christmas Bird Count on New Years Day.

Genevieve served for many years on our board. When we were forced to reorganize in the early 1990s, she stepped in as president, got our group set up as a non-profit, and wrote our new by-laws. She was involved for 20 years as a volunteer for SIAS's bluebird trail project at Crab Orchard Refuge and never missed a Cypress Creek Refuge Stewardship Saturday workday. Until recently, Genevieve faithfully attended our monthly programs, potlucks, bird counts, and picnics.

She was a serious environmentalist and outspoken in many political and social areas. Yet we most remember her sense of humor, her smile, her kindness, her confidence in saying aloud whatever was on her mind, and her devotion to birds and to saving their habitat. We will miss you very much Genevieve! And we thank you for your devotion to us and to our organization.



**Dear Nix I-66 & Don't Frack Illinois Supporters:** For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to sign the on-line petition to Nix I-66 through beautiful southernmost Illinois, we will have paper petitions awaiting your signature at following SIAS meetings. For more details visit <http://citizensforsouthernillinois.org>

For more info on efforts to control fracking in Illinois, visit <https://dontfractureillinois.org/> or sign a petition to Governor Quinn requesting a two-year moratorium on horizontal hydraulic fracking in southern Illinois until research reveals that our air, water, and soil can be protected from deadly toxins. This petition is at <http://signon.org/sign/impose-a-moratorium-on>.

## Snow Birding – of sorts

Our good friends and fellow SIAS members, John and Martha Schwegman, took us on a vicarious birding trip to see lots of species at locations all over the state where humans and birds escape the harsh weather of winter. Florida has lots of variety in habitats and our guides visited many of them in a clockwise trip around the state in February and March.

The trip began in the northeast at Flagler Beach State Park, where beachcombing shorebirds including some we see and some uncommon in the Midwest walked the sand. White-pated terns, with winter plumage, were much less flashy than black-headed ones we see. Cedar waxwings harvesting palm berries were a bonus sight.

The manatees at Blue Springs, up the stream to stay warm, were a side diversion. Scrub jays were also located on this inland trip.

Merritt Island and Viera lagoon was a spot for coastal waders like egrets and herons as well as many skimmers; all close to the Kennedy Spaceport.

The harlequin duck, well south of its usual winter range in the Sebastian River, was the most unusual bird of the trip according to John.

The treatment ponds at station five at the outlet of Lake Okeechobee, that clear water of sediment before releasing it to flow to the Everglades, were the next stop. Snail kites were a notable species there.

In Miami there was an excursion to find exotic species that have naturalized to south Florida. Red-whiskered bulbul, hill myna, spots breasted oriole, and various parrot types all showed up for images.

At the Everglades National Park anhinga's, short-tailed hawks and many white waders including probable great white herons were all visible.

Along the gulf coast the Corkscrew swamp and Tampa bay revealed more waders including ibises and the wood stork. The last location was Desoto County Park north of St. Petersburg with great views of the very handsome lark sparrow.

The Schwegmans are planning a program about a birding trip to the Bahamas. We will be looking forward to that program in the future.

*-Joe Merkelbach, President*

## Jim Smith Named 2012 Conservationist

The Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) named Jim Smith 2012 Conservationist of the Year on Sept. 17th during the IAS fall meeting, held in Springfield at Lincoln Land Community College. The award honored Smith for his lifetime commitment to the conservation of birds and plants, and the land itself. In 1999, Smith and his wife dedicated over 150 acres as an Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Land and Water Reserve. The Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve protects in perpetuity a 1.2-mile segment of the biologically significant Salt Fork River. The river provides habitat for four endangered mussel species and one threatened fish species. Of the 233 bird species that have been observed at Edgewood Farm, fifteen species are state endangered or state threatened. The 100-box bluebird trail at Edgewood Farm has kept Smith busy for many years, as have his many contributions educating the public about the importance of protecting and preserving natural areas in Illinois.

Although he resides in Homer, IL Jim has been member of SIAS for many years. Jim's wife and life conservation partner Eleanor, passed away two years ago. Another of their contributions to conservation was to travel down to southernmost IL where they would participate in multiple Christmas Bird Counts and provide programs on Edgewood Farm Land and Water Reserve.

## What's Happening?

Oct. 27, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sustainable Living Expo!  
At the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center. Promoting self-reliance and sustainability at home, in our communities, and across the Southern Illinois region. <http://slexpo.org/>

Oct. 27, Crab Orchard Self-guided Tour  
The Crab Orchard NW Refuge will open the gates to much of the normally restricted area for visitors to explore and discover on their own. Volunteers will be on hand to pass out maps and brochures. So come on out to the refuge to look for wildlife and enjoy the scenic wildlife habitats in all of their fall splendor.

Nov. 10, 7 to 11 a.m. The Friends of Crab Orchard Photo Safari  
Go behind the gates of Crab Orchard NWR into the restricted areas of the Refuge with a knowledgeable refuge guide and photographer. This event is free to Friends members. Non-members pay just \$10. Space is limited and reservations are required. Phone 618.997.3344 ext. 1 to reserve your spot.

Jan. 3-11, 2013 Ecuador Adventure with Nelda Hinckley  
One spot on this trip is still available! For complete details on this great trip, please phone Nelda at 618.549.5588 or email her at [neldahinckley@jalc.edu](mailto:neldahinckley@jalc.edu).

## 113th Christmas Bird Count Season Dec. 14 -> Jan. 5 Now No Participation Fee!

The annual Christmas Bird Count(s) makes an enormous contribution to conservation. National Audubon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and other organizations and agencies use data collected in this, the longest-running wildlife census.

Now there is no longer a participation fee! Beginning in mid November you can check "Find a Count near you" <http://birds.audubon.org/get-involved-christmas-bird-count> to get involved. Local counts with **tentative** dates are:

Rend Lake- Dec. 15, 2012  
Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 16, 2012  
Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 20, 2012  
Mingo NWR (MO)- Dec. 22, 2012  
War Bluff Valley- ?  
Cypress Creek NWR- Dec 17, 2012  
Carlyle Lake- ?  
Newton Lake- ?  
Marion County- ?  
Middle Mississippi NWR- (between 12/18 & 12/25)  
Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk.- Dec. 27, 2012  
Horseshoe (Alexander Co.) Lake- Dec. 28, 2012  
Union County- Dec. 29, 2012  
Mermet Lake- Dec. 30, 2012 (or maybe Dec. 31, 2012)  
Jackson County- Jan. 1, 2013

# Seeing Birds...

On 10/04 Vicki Lang-Mendenhall spotted about 150+ American White Pelicans at sunset Crab Orchard Lake off the Wolf Creek Causeway, Crab Orchard Refuge.

Cathie Hutcheson reported that on 10/04 there are about 1500-2000 white pelicans at Lyerla Lake and Bluff Lake, a lake about 1/2 mile east of Lyerla Lake along the Reynoldsville/Old Cape Road in Union County Refuge.

On 10/15 Frank Bennett reported two or three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds visiting his feeders on and off the last couple days. He keeps hoping a Rufus Hummingbird will turn up. Frank reminds that if you have a hummer now, look close it could be an immature Rufus hummingbird. He read a report of a female Rufus Hummingbird identified in Haywood, KY. This banded hummer was last years hatch bird that had been banded on 05/11/11. This represents the first returning Rufus Hummingbird ever documented in Kentucky. The area in Kentucky is just east of southern Illinois. Frank also reports that on 10/13 his yard was full of Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Amber Hanson reports that on 10/18 the Hanson's had two very hungry White-crowned Sparrows on their flat-post feeder that ate, and ate, and ate. She added that they still had a Ruby-throated Hummingbird too so had warmed two feeders.

I got a report on 10/18 that there are some 150-200 American White Pelicans on Crab Orchard Refuge Lake. The pelicans were on the lake on the south side of IL Rt. 13 where Rt. 13 crosses the lake.

David Brewer seconded the report on the white pelicans at Crab Orchard. At 4:30PM on 10/18 he spotted them through the old railroad cut (where the trestle once was) east of Wolf Creek Causeway. The pelicans were located almost due east of the bass ponds at the south end in a pocket on the lee side of the bay, in a spot where they could not be seen from the Rt. 148 Causeway.

On the morning of 10/20 Don Mullison phoned to tell say that and Leonard Stanley had just located an immature white-faced ibis at Arklands in Perry County. The bird was located at a small lake. To locate the lake, take Pyatt-Cutler Road to Denmark Road. Turn south onto Denmark Road and drive south, cross through an intersecting road, and then watch for a Cemetery on left/east and pond on right/west. The Ibis was at this pond.

Red-breasted Nuthatches have been gracing southernmost Illinois since mid-September. Rhonda Rothrock has enjoyed hearing their horn toots in her yard evergreens. Yellow-rumped Warblers are flying in to the yard in mass, dozens, just prior to dusk to roost in the evergreens. She also feels luck to now be hearing Red-headed Woodpeckers in the Shawnee NF to the north of her barn where these birds have returned after a decade's plus absence. They seem to relish the now partial opened forest with downed and damaged trees, a result of the May 8, 2009 Super Derecho. The storm has provided many new perches from which red-headededs can hawk for insects, possibly the only notable positive result of a storm that totally wrecked woodlands through-out Jackson, Union, Williamson, and counties to the east.

Piping Plovers flock to the same shores that attract people. These birds are on the brink, with only 8,000 adults left. From Canada to the Caribbean, (National) Audubon is working to safeguard sandy reaches critical to the birds' survival, and encouraging people to share the beach. Track "A Year in the Life of a Piping Plover" at <http://www.audubon.org/plover>

And Ron Pittaway's Annual Winter Finch Forecast for 2012-2013 is out and states, "This winter's theme is that a fair number of species—especially Red and White-winged Crossbills, redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks, and Evening Grosbeaks—are likely to be on the move this year due to widespread crop failure of fruiting and cone-bearing trees in Canada. ...Most Purple Finches will migrate south of Ontario this fall because both coniferous and deciduous hardwood seed crops are very low this year in the Northeast. Purple Finch numbers dropped significantly in recent decades as spruce budworm outbreaks subsided and currently a moderate population decline continues in the province. ...Some siskins currently in the Northeast should move south this fall and winter because cone crops are poor. However, siskins are an opportunistic nomad wandering east and west continent-wide in search of cone crops. Most siskins will probably winter in northwestern Ontario and western Canada where cone crops are generally very good. Major southward irruptions occur when cone crops fail across most of North America." The full report can be seen eBird's website: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/ff2012>



## Expedition Captures 26 Rare Millerbirds, Releases Them Safely at New Home on Remote Hawaiian Island

The second phase of an ambitious and historic effort to save one of the U.S.'s rarest bird species from extinction reached another milestone as a group of 26 Millerbirds captured on Nihoa Island were released by biologists on the northwestern Hawaiian island of Laysan.

This second such translocation took place between 08/12 and 08/18, and was carried out by a team of biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), American Bird Conservancy, and other organizations as part of a multi-year effort to restore Millerbirds to Laysan Island within the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage site.

Millerbirds have been absent from Laysan for almost a century as a result of habitat destruction due to introduced rabbits and other livestock. The FWS has been working to restore Laysan's native vegetation for more than two decades. A self-sustaining Millerbird population on Laysan will ensure that the species is no longer vulnerable to extinction from a catastrophic event on Nihoa such as a hurricane or the accidental introduction of an alien predator or disease.

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120904.html>

*"Don't it always seem to go. That you don't know what you've got til its gone." – Joni Mitchell*

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



Laysan Millerbird at nest Photo taken by Walker K. Fisher in May 1902

## SIAS Board of Directors

President: Joe Merkelbach 618.532.2112

Vice President & Programs Chair: Vicki Lang-Mendenhal 618.697.9868  
*-Have program you'd like to present, or know someone who does, contact Vicki-*

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Finance Chair: Greg Kupiec 618.684.5168 - *Fundraising idea?*

Hospitality: Karen Kaufman - *We're looking for volunteers to bring snacks.*

Outings: Trevor Hinckley 618.967.1157 - *Contact Trevor with outing ideas.*

Membership Chair & Newsletter Editor: Rhonda Rothrock

*Newsletter contributions welcome, contact Rhonda at:*

618.684.6605 or [woodthrusheola@hotmail.com](mailto:woodthrusheola@hotmail.com)

SIAS Webmaster: Jim Shofstall

SIAS Website: <http://www.siaudubon.org>

## Due to Loss of Native Birds

## Arachnophobes Might Want to Stay Away from Guam

A new study on the island of Guam reveals that the near-total loss of native birds caused by the invasive brown tree snake has led to a huge increase in the number of spiders. During certain times of the year, arachnids on Guam occur at 40 times the rate of nearby islands where the snake is absent and birds persist.

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120917.html>

**Three birds were walking down the street.  
Two walked into a bar, the other one ducked!**

Don't forget to Save Your Stamps for the IAS Land Acquisition Fund.

bring 'em to any IAS meeting!

For more info visit: [www.illinoisaudubon.org](http://www.illinoisaudubon.org)