



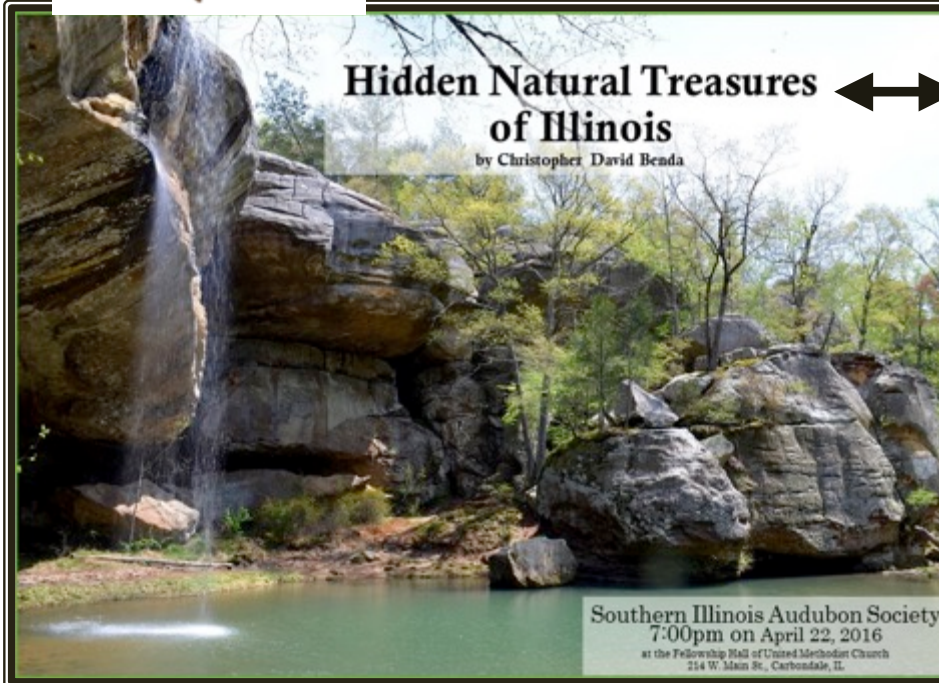
Southern Illinois Audubon Society

April 2016 – Vol. 23, No. 4

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

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970



In celebration of Earth Day, Christopher David Benda, botanist and President of the Illinois Native Plant Society will present his images of the Hidden Natural Treasures of Illinois for SIAS on Friday, April 22nd. The program, starting at 7 p.m., will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale. The last time Chris gave a program for SAIS, it was very popular and we expect him to wow the crowd again with beautiful nature photos from across Illinois.

Illinois is a large state, with fourteen natural divisions and a vast array of natural community types. Chris's program will feature eight unique natural divisions and the representative plants and animals found in each.

Chris can be found online under the moniker "Illinois Botanizer." A Google search will yield links to his Flickr page, website, and blog. A native of Minnesota, Chris moved to Illinois in 2004 and resides in Makanda with his wife Susan and dog Kozmo.

Costa Rica – Rich in Life - Our March program was a visual treat brought to us Tom Ulrich, an old friend of Carbondale and SIAS. An in demand professional photographer, Tom has traveled the world taking wildlife and scenic images and usually visits us each spring with a themed set of choice images from his collected works. This year he took us all on a vicarious trip to the splendid Central American country of Costa Rica. This is a nation that has a worldwide reputation as an enlightened protector of its natural heritage; places, organisms, and native cultures.

Tom had a kaleidoscopic collection of images from several locations in the country including an active volcano imaged at night.

Rather than an exhaustive list of all the species lets just say that Tom covered all the possibilities; with plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals included in his presentation. The stars of the show were hummingbirds, moths and butterflies, imaged at several of Tom's favorite in country locations.

As per his recent programs Tom had a musical coda of selected images from all over the world. One of the striking scenes was of large, many colored stones polished to a uniform smooth finish by wind and water flow action in a lake at Glacier National Park.

Thanks again to Tom for his enjoyable program. *-Joe Merkelbach, President*

SIAS Meetings Calendar for 2016

May 22nd: SIAS Picnic – Evergreen Park, Carbondale

August 26th: John Schwegman – Mermet Lake

Sept. 23rd: Mark Glenshaw – Great Horned Owls

Oct. 28th: Cathie Hutcheson – Chile

SIAS welcomes new member Wilma Reese of Carbondale. If you recently joined but were not formally welcomed, please forgive our oversight.

28th Trinidad & Tobago Adventure June 4-11

Experience a tropical evergreen rain forest, a mangrove, tide pools, a tropical deciduous forest, and stay at the 200-acre, world-renowned Asa Wright Nature Centre and Lodge. Land Cost: \$1595

For details, contact: Nelda W. Hinckley at

618.549.5588 or neldahinckley@jalc.edu



Nature Fest! Saturday, May 7th, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Rt. 37 South, Cypress, IL. Nature Fest features a full day of free educational and activities for nature-lovers of All ages including guided hikes, canoe tours, live wildlife exhibits, nature games and crafts, and more! Special programs include a close-up view of

live birds of prey from Free Again Wildlife Rehabilitation, presentations on research in the Cache River Watershed, and the grand opening of a new pollinator garden trail. Visit <http://www.cacherivernaturefest.com> to check out the day's exciting line-up of activities.

SIAS Annual Picnic Sunday, May 22nd!

SIAS will hold our Annual Picnic on Sunday, May 22nd, at Evergreen Park, Carbondale. Come at 8 a.m. for a morning birding walk or arrive at noon for dining. SIAS will provide the main course grilled. Members are asked to bring a dish to share and their own beverages and utensils. For more details, contact Laraine Wright at 618.457.8769.

Directions: From IL 51 (South University Avenue) just south past the University, turn west at its intersection with Pleasant Hill Rd. The park is approx. 3/4 miles west on Pleasant Hill Rd. Use the 2nd park entrance, closest to Evergreen Terrace Apartments, drive south back towards Reservoir Lake then left. Watch for the SIAS banner. Hope you all can make it!



Outings & Events

April 22 > Earth Day!

Make everyday Earth Day! Check for locale activities.



April 30 > Birding Blitz of Southernmost IL

Form a team and compete in the 2016 Birding Blitz! Spend Saturday, 04/30, birding in the midst of songbird migration with some of your friends. Try a new category you've not participated in before. The Awards Brunch held the following day, May 1, at Crab Orchard NWR Visitor's Center, is open to the public. This year pledging is optional but encouraged. For all Blitz details including registration forms (due 04/26) visit: www.birdingblitz.org or contact Rhonda Rothrock at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com or 618.684.6605

April 29 – May 1 > IAS Spring Fling

Springfield Audubon will be hosting the Illinois Audubon Society's Annual Spring Gathering. Take part in field trips, presentations and a banquet! For complete details or to register visit: <http://www.illinoisaudubon.org/>

May 2 > Native Landscaping for Pollinators

Dave Tykla, semi-retired Professor of Biology at St. Louis College and author of *Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People*, will give a program "Native Landscaping for Pollinators", with advice for planting where and what, for the Sierra Club, Shawnee Group, on 05/02 at 7 p.m. at the Carbondale Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Ave., Carbondale.

May 7 & 8 > Spring Bird Counts

Your Help needed! The Spring Bird Count takes place on Saturday, May 7th. Local counts and contacts are: Williamson Co. - Vicki Lang-Mendenhall 618.697.9868; Jackson Co. - Rhonda Rothrock 618.684.6605; Pulaski Co. will be held on Sunday, May 8th, contact Rhonda Rothrock.

May 7 > Cache River Nature Fest!

See details on first page of this newsletter.

May 14 > Sierra Club Native Plant Sale

The Sierra Club, Shawnee Chapter, will hold a native plant sale on Saturday, 05/14, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Town Square Pavilion, 100 N. Illinois Ave., Carbondale. They will offer for sale a large selection native wildflowers, grasses, trees, shrubs, and vines. For more details, contact Ruth Kelley at 618.684.2196 or rth_kelley@yahoo.com

Bluebird Season Begins at Crab Orchard NWR

The 200-box bluebird trail at Crab Orchard is now around 28 years old, and most of those have relied on the involvement of SIAS as a source of monitors and financial support.

The season this year began March 15 with 14 volunteers, many of them SIAS members, serving as the weekly monitors and keeping the boxes in good condition and well-sited. Depending on the tenacity of the birds themselves (a few nest three times a year) the season may run through the second week in September.

We volunteers have a great time as monitors, opening the boxes each week, recording data on eggs, hatchlings, and fledges, and keeping the boxes cleaned out for another occupancy. Eastern bluebirds are the target, but the boxes are also used by tree swallows, house wrens, Carolina chickadees, and (near A41 pond) prothonotary warblers. In all these years, only a few boxes near the old SIUC automotive barracks have been used by house sparrows, and those nests can be legally removed.

Last year was a rarely bad one in terms of numbers. Only 403 bluebirds were fledged, about half of those reported in some past years. A total of 707 birds of all species were fledged, but this number was low, as well. A longtime bluebird monitor in Kentucky experienced a big die-off for 2015, as well.

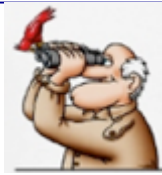
No doubt the weather was the main contributor: a severe, long cold snap in winter followed by an unusually wet, cold spring killed a large number of adult songbirds. In March last year, as we returned to get the boxes ready, we found a number of dead bluebirds huddled in the boxes for shelter. Their crops were empty, their bodies thin.

As project coordinator, I am always looking for people who would like to be volunteers in the future. Although we are well covered so far this season, people sometimes do have to give up their trail sections (generally 20-25 boxes).

If this is something you'd like to do, please give me a call at 618-457-8769. I'm also available to try to answer your questions about bluebirds or other species using your yard boxes. I'd like to tell you how to keep weekly data that you could give me at the end of the season. I turn in those totals to a group that maintains county records in the state. - Laraine Wright

Seeing Birds... Spring time, spring time.

Walking with the clouds and the flowers and the flutterbys. Spring time, spring time, I like the spring because it is the best by far! *-Hoops & YoYo*



Henry Detwiler went out to the "bottoms" near Jacob, Jackson County the morning of 03/27, locating 27 Wilson's Snipe, 11 Greater Yellowlegs, 6 Lesser Yellowlegs and a Pectoral Sandpiper.

The first Blue-grey Gnatcatcher of the season was reported by Henry Detwiler on 03/28.

Vicki Lang-Mendenhall reported her first Yellow-throated Warbler of spring in the pines at her home in Anna on 03/29.

On 04/02 Henry Detwiler saw multiple first of the season Great Egrets at Oakwood Bottoms and elsewhere in that area. He also photographed 49 Bald Eagles, both adults and immatures, at one of the fish ponds along Little Lake Rd., close to Jacob.

Keith McMullen found 2000+shorebirds, including Long-billed Dowitcher, Baird's Sandpiper, Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, and Dunlins, at Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve, Pulaski County, on 04/04.

SIAS friend John Van Dyke reported that on 04/05 he discovered a flock of 20 Wilson's Snipe in a moist weedy field near his home on Sarilda Lane, near Lake of Egypt. Normally John observes them singly so it was quite a surprise.

On the morning of 04/06 SIAS friend Jim Tudor was checking out the western Jackson County area where he located 5 Black-necked Stilts in the pond on Lover's Lane, near IL Rt. 3. On Little Lake Road he counted 30 American Golden Plover.

Also on 04/08, Henry Detwiler photographed an early spring migrant Northern Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler.

David Brewer reported a dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers visiting his garden the morning of 04/12.

Once this wave of cold northwest weather patterns subsides, I suspect spring migrants will start arriving in large numbers. -Rhonda R.

Computers Can Now ID 100s of Bird Species

It's actually a bit of old news now but in June 2015 Cornell Lab of Ornithology announced a breakthrough for computer vision and bird watching. Cornell and Visipedia (short for Visual Encyclopedia) are collaborating in the development of computer vision technology to identify birds in photographs.

"Merlin Bird Photo ID" is capable of recognizing 400 of the most commonly encountered birds in the U.S. and Canada. Merlin's success relies on collaboration between computers and humans. The computer learns to recognize each species from tens of thousands of images identified and labeled by bird enthusiasts. It also taps in to more than 70 million sightings recorded by birders in the eBird.org database, narrowing its search to the species found at the location and time of year when the photo was taken.

To see if Merlin can identify the bird in your photo, visit <http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/photo-id/>. Upload an image and tell Merlin where and when you took it. To orient Merlin, you draw a box around the bird and click on its bill, eye, and tail. Merlin does the rest. Within seconds, it looks at the pixels and combines powerful artificial intelligence techniques with millions of data points from humans, then presents the most likely species, including photos and sounds. Note: Merlin Bird Photo ID does not work on tablets or mobile devices at this time. For best results, use a computer with a recent version of Chrome or Safari.

Code of Birding Ethics - <http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html>

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first. To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming. Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern.

(Use of recordings is prohibited on most U.S.F.W.S. Wildlife Refuges.)

Dispersion Explains Declines -

Migratory birds are declining globally. A broad study of European migratory birds finds that species that disperse widely during the non-breeding season are less likely to be in decline than are species with more restricted dispersion. Migratory birds undertake some of the most extraordinary journeys of any animal, but many of these birds are in catastrophic decline. The very mobility of these species makes it extremely difficult to diagnose causes of the declines, and painstaking ecological studies are needed to unpick them on a case-by-case basis.

In an analysis of 340 migratory bird species, it was found that species that disperse widely during the non-breeding season, relative to their breeding distribution, are much less likely to be declining than are species that have relatively more-restricted distributions outside the breeding season.

The distances traveled by some migratory birds are astounding. The blackpoll warbler (*Setophaga striata*), a forest songbird weighing only 12 grams, flies more than 1,533 miles non-stop over open ocean in its make-or-break migration from the boreal forests of the Northern Hemisphere to northern South America. The bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) flies 7,456 miles non-stop over the Pacific Ocean from Alaska to New Zealand, and the Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) covers the distance to the Moon and back three times during its lifetime.

But these remarkable journeys depend on the availability of suitable destinations. The slender-billed curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*), which may now be extinct, migrated from breeding grounds in Siberia to tiny areas in southern Europe and North Africa, where suitable wintering habitat has rapidly declined through the conversion of wetlands to farmland. Its case is potentially the first extinction of a European bird since the demise of the great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) in the mid-nineteenth century.

There are more than 1,200 migratory bird species in the world, and many may wane to rarity or extinction before we have worked out why they are in trouble. Despite this scientific uncertainty, immediate conservation action is crucial. But little progress has been made in identifying general explanations for the enormous declines in migratory animals, which severely hampers effective conservation planning.

-Excerpts from Richard R. Fuller's article "Dispersion Explains Declines" published in Nature, Vol. 531, 24 March 2016

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I/We would like to received our newsletter via email: YES / NO
 Member mailing labels reflect current dues status.
 If you receive your newsletter electronically,
 Contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.
 (Annual membership renewal month is January.)

International Migratory Bird Day

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) celebrates and brings attention to one of the most important and spectacular events in the Americas - bird migration. IMBD is celebrated in Canada, the U.S.A., Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean at protected areas, refuges, parks, museums, schools, zoos, and more. More than 600 events and programs hosted annually introduce the public to migratory birds and ways to conserve them.

IMBD officially takes place the second Saturday in May for the U.S.A. and Canada, and in October for Mexico, Central/South America and the Caribbean. But birds don't migrate on the same day so bird lovers are encouraged to celebrate it when they can. Visit the IMBD website to find event dates and locations and also some wonderful bird related educational tools and apparel to purchase.
<http://www.migratorybirdday.org/index.html>

10 Of The Worst-Sited Wind Energy Projects For Birds

Although the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) supports Bird-Smart wind energy, hundreds of thousands of protected birds, including some endangered species, die each year when they collide with wind turbines and associated power lines. The number of turbines is set to grow significantly as wind energy projects continue to expand across the landscape, likely causing a major increase in this already serious problem. The ABC has named 10 of the worst wind facilities from a bird conservation standpoint.

One of their worst sites is the proposed Rock Creek in Atchison County, Missouri (TradeWind Energy). It poses a high risk to migratory birds and Bald Eagles moving in and out of the Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge. This already-controversial project would place turbines in the migratory corridor used by vast numbers of birds on their way to and from Iowa to the Squaw Creek Wildlife Refuge in northwest Missouri. Migratory waterfowl, including Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, over a million Snow Geese and a wide variety of duck species also visit this area, which has been designated an Important Bird Area by ABC. Bald Eagles migrate into the Squaw Creek refuge and surrounding areas. By late fall and early winter, as many as 300 immature and adult Bald Eagles and an occasional Golden Eagle can be seen at the migration's peak. The USFWS, Missouri's Dept. of Natural Resources, and ABC have expressed serious concerns about the location of this project. A similar project, Mill Creek, was to be located near the refuge, but was canceled and moved due to opposition by ABC and local partners.

To see all 10 "worst-sited" wind energy projects, visit
<https://abcbirds.org/10-worst-wind-energy-sites-for-birds/>

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

