



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

February 2018 – Vol. 25 No. 2

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

NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

Watchekee's Life After Noel LeVasseur will be presented by author **George Godfrey** for **SIAS** on **Friday, Feb. 23rd** at **7:00 p.m.** at the **Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale.** The Fellowship Hall is on the lower level of the church. Follow signs to the elevator then take it down to the Hall.

Born on Christmas Day 1799 in Canada, Noel LeVasseur arrived in Iroquois County, IL, in 1823. He was employed by the American Fur Company. Born around 1810 and described as intelligent and beautiful, Wa-che-ke (daughter of Shabbono who was a signatory to the Treaty of Chicago) played an instrumental role in the settlement of Iroquois and Kankakee counties, especially Bourbonnais Grove. (Wa-che-ke is the namesake for the city of Watseka in Iroquois County.) In 1832, Potawatomi Wa-che-ke, now wife of LeVasseur, moved with her husband to establish a trading post at a place in Bourbonnais Grove called La Pointe, a "point" of timber that grew along a branch of Bourbonnais Creek and was a landmark for travelers along the Danville-Chicago road (Route 102). They lived there until LeVasseur divorced her in 1837. The divorce coincided with the U.S. government's removal of the Potawatomi from the area. Wa-che-ke left the area for Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1838.

Godfrey is a Potawatomi native American and a descendent of Shabbona, the well-known Chief of the Potawatomi tribe. Godfrey's Potawatomi culture, ancestry, and history have become a dominant part of his life. During 1993-2001, Godfrey taught and became the vice president at Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence, Kansas. He later worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture assisting Tribal Colleges with their teaching and research programs. He and his wife, Pat, retired to Athens, Illinois, in 2005 where they built a new home on two acres. Godfrey is a storyteller of history and has written three books about his Potawatomi ancestors. The books follow his Potawatomi great-grandmother, Josette Watchekee, and her family as they lived during the era of Indian removals. He has been an integral part of the efforts to mark the route of the 1838 Potawatomi Trail of Death that crossed northern Indiana to east central Kansas.



January Meeting Highlights

We had an outstanding turn out for our annual program. Over 50 members and friends attended, dined on wonderful food entrées, and stayed to listen as Lyle White shared his wealth of knowledge and beautiful assortment of still images and video of the Platte River and its grand sandhill crane visitors. I suspect everyone is now planning a trip to the Platte to experience the wonderful bird life found there. Our thanks to Lyle White for providing a very interesting and detailed program.

A unique array of items were donated for the silent auction. We sold more books and several Birding Blitz t-shirts as well. We thank everyone who donated items and everyone that bid on these treasures. —R.R.

Becoming an Advanced Birder

The following tips were in a recent issue of "Illinois Audubon," the quarterly magazine of the Illinois Audubon Society. In my own experience, each one is important and each one works. But the very best one for me, these days, is this one:

- Learn to identify birds by sound. My eyesight without contact lenses has greatly worsened, but I can still do my two annual breeding bird surveys for the feds each June. Years ago I learned all the songs and calls of the species who breed here, plus a great many of migrants. I can go out most days year round and identify many birds without lifting my binoculars. Learning the songs is so much easier now with online sites that teach them to you. I learned most through the "Birding By Ear" and "More Birding. By Ear" CDs.
- Bird every day. Learning birds comes with repetition.
- Don't get discouraged. Learn a few birds at a time & be happy for each one.
- Don't automatically dive for your field guide. Keep watching the bird, study its marks and movements, listen to its song or call, and observe the habitat it's in before you turn to the guide. One of my mentors years ago advised me to leave my guide in the car when I was on a birding walk. It would improve my memory, she said, and it worked.
- Learn the different habitats. Gradually you will automatically stop at places where you know birds might be found. —Laraine Wright

Recent research on birds and nature

WOODPECKERS. The emerald ash borer, introduced to North America in the year 2000, has already killed millions of our native ash trees. One small piece of good news, however, is that woodpeckers are coming to the rescue. Populations of hairy, downy, red-headed, and red-bellied woodpeckers (as well as white-breasted nuthatches) have increased markedly with the spread of the beetles. Two things are at work here: the beetle larvae is available in winter as a food source and the dead ash trees are providing good places for cavity-nesting birds.

WHITE PELICANS. White pelicans began to spend summers in Illinois in 1991, when 24 were found on sandbars in the Mississippi River near Thomson, Ill. Twenty-five years later, the non-breeding population had reached 1,000. The first documented Illinois nesting was in 2009. Last year, the Pelican Island nesting colony had greatly expanded to 1,000 pelican nests. Once it hatches, a white pelican chick needs about 150 pounds of food until it can forage on its own.

BATS. Birds in the swift family were long thought to be the swiftest (!) animal species, with speeds of 60 miles an hour. But the Brazilian free-tailed bat is much faster, flying close to 100 miles an hour, according to a recent international study.

AMERICAN TREES. Climate change is making leafy deciduous trees migrate west in the U.S. A study of 30 years of U.S. Forest Service data reveals this surprising fact. The westward spread is thought to relate to increases in moisture, not to temperature increases. Evergreen trees, however, are slowly expanding north.

WOOD FROGS. In Alaska, wood frogs hibernate longer than any other animal, up to seven months a year. In the fall, they begin to produce glucose to help keep their cells alive even when they go into deep freeze. Biologists found 100 percent survival rate despite the frogs being frozen over 60 percent of their bodies over winter.

SQUIRRELS. Nothing too squirrely about their behavior, it turns out. Using GPS tracking devices, observers discovered that fox squirrels sort and bury nuts together by type, perhaps as a way to remember where their caches were. A single fox squirrel gathers between 3,000 and 10,000 nuts a year. —Laraine Wright

SIAS Meetings Calendar Winter->Spring 2018

Mar. 23rd: Potluck & Program, speaker John Schwegman on Alaska

April 27th: Program speaker to be announced

May: SIAS annual picnic, date and location to be announced

Occam's Razor for Birders: When searching for an explanation, always consider obvious possibilities before thinking about more unlikely options. *OR* Think horses not zebras.

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 _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone Number _____
 Email _____

**Mail to: Southern Illinois Audubon Society
 Attn: Membership
 P.O. Box 222
 Carbondale, IL 62903-0222**



Would you be interested in a lifetime membership option?

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.)

Illinois Environmental Council on the FY19 Budget

On 02/04, Governor Rauner released his FY19 Budget Proposal in an address to the General Assembly. The Governor's budget is an effort to close an estimated \$9 billion budget hole while also assuming a lower income tax rate than the increase that was passed last year.

While this budget seems to be a slight increase in overall spending from FY18, it still includes significant cuts to important environmental and conservation programs. Moreover, the damage of the past several years has led to overall declines and staffing cuts for agencies we rely on. There appears to be some beneficial funding increases, as well as significant program cuts.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources budget is slightly increased, coming after devastating cuts over the last four years that included a cut in the number of conservation police. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) budget has also increased, although a majority of this increase is a result of funds allocated to the state from the Volkswagen emissions scandal settlement. The budget also gives IEPA the ability to hire additional staff, which is sorely needed. The Department of Agriculture has seen stark cuts including funds that are critical to protecting farmland and reducing agricultural runoff into our waterways. It appears important natural areas funds such as Open Space Land Acquisition and Development fund (OSLAD) and Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF) also have adequate funding. While he has not introduced a capital-spending plan in previous years, Governor Rauner did include \$7.8 billion in new capital appropriations. There is \$400 million for capital projects under the Department of Natural Resources.

✪ Jen Walling, Illinois Environmental Council Executive Director

Upcoming Events & Activities

Mar. 8 > Nature Movie Night at the Cache

This month's movie night, from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 IL Rt. 37, Cypress, will feature the cuddly black bear. For more info, call the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Mar. 24 > Waterfowl of the Prairie Potholes presentation

John naturalist John Schwegman for his program on the waterfowl of the prairie potholes of South Dakota, many of which winter in the Cache River Watershed. For more info, call the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Apr. 13-15 > Illinois Indigenous Plan Symposium

The annual Illinois Indigenous Plants Symposium to be held at John A. Logan College in Carterville, Illinois. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Jerry Wilhelm. Details at: <https://ill-imps.org/2018-illinois-indigenous-plants-symposium/>

April 28 > Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois

It's time to set up your team, choose a category, and start planning your day out in the midst of the height of bird. You'll find it's really a lot of fun and a fun challenge. For all Blitz details including registration forms (due 04/22) contact Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 or email me at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com.

May 19-26 > 30th Trinidad & Tobago Adventure

Join Nelda Hinckley and other naturalist guides for a tour of this two-island nation. 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 includes all meals, lodging, and field trips with naturalist guide). Contact: Nelda W. Hinckley at 618.549.5588 or neldahinckley@jalc.edu

We Welcome New Members: Loretta Satterthwaite and Bob Stamps of Makanda and Patricia and Ernest Scott of Marion!

SIAS Board of Directors

President: Joe Merkelbach 618.532.3112
 Vice President & Programs Chair:
 Vicki Lang-Mendenhall 618.697.9868
 Secretary: Mary McCarthy 618.684.8182
 Treasurer: Laraine Wright 618.457.8769
 Conservation/Education Chair:
 Cathie Hutcheson 618.529.2022
 Finance Chair: Greg Kupiec 618.684.5168
 Hospitality: Phyllis Beck
 Outings: Don Mullison 618.203.2869

Membership Chair & Newsletter
 Editor: Rhonda Rothrock
 618.684.6605
woodthrusheola@hotmail.com
 SIAS Webmaster: Jim Shofstall
selsyn@midwest.net
 SIAS email:
siaudubonsociety@gmail.com



This guy in a station wagon is riding down the road with the back seat full of penguins. A cop sees him, pulls him over and says, "I want you to take those penguins to the zoo right now!" The guy says, "O.K." Next day the cop sees this same guy going down the road with the penguins in the back. This time the penguins are wearing sunglasses. He pulls the guy over again and says, "I thought I told you to take those penguins to the zoo." The guy answers, "Yeah, that's right, we went and had a heckuva time. We're going to the beach today!"

Southern Illinois Audubon Society

P.O. Box 222

Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

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

