



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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

Established in 1970

NEWSLETTER

A Naturalist's Visit to Alaska is the title of a talk John Schwegman will present for SIAS on Friday, March 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.

In 1982 the Schwegman family made a trip to Alaska. John has digitized his photos from the visit. The presentation will include some of the spectacular scenery and interesting wildlife of Alaska.

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 continues to serve on the board. John's wife Martha and his sons (when they were young) often accompanied John on various treks throughout the state and the county. Since John's retirement, John and Martha have continued to study wildlife, including mussels, dragonflies, birds and plants.



SIAS Meetings Calendar Spring 2018

April 27th: Program speaker Dr. George Waring

May 20th: SIAS annual picnic at Giant City State Park

June & July: Summer Break! (no program or newsletter)

Welcome New Members:

Jill Rendleman of Cobden and John Van Dyk of Marion
If SIAS neglects to welcome you as a new member,
please let us know and please forgive our oversight.

January Program Highlights: Crane Conventions

The annual meeting of the Southern Illinois Audubon Society featured a program about the annual gathering of the majority of sandhill cranes in North America on the Platte River in central Nebraska.

During the trip north to breeding regions each late winter and early spring about one half million red capped cranes gather and pass through the historically shallow and braided channels of the river in central Nebraska. The river with its wide yet shallow character is a magnet for the birds that are seeking waters to roost in over night during migration. The flocks of birds gather to feed in the area during the days, fanning out to agricultural areas, and then return to the river for safety at night. The flocks of cranes pass through in waves, so that the entire half million is not present at any time, instead some arrive and others leave in intervals.

Lyle White, with the assistance of Jan Sundberg, presented an appreciation of the crane migration as viewed with his knowledge gained from volunteer assistance at the Rowe Bird Sanctuary, administered by the National Audubon Society.

The Platte is famous for being a mile wide and a foot deep, but the agricultural use of lands on either side of the river have tended to force it into a narrower and deeper course. There is also a tendency for trees and shrubs to invade the watercourse. Volunteers work to clear the larger trees from the channels and keep waterways open from crane roosts.

Mr. White presented a short video of the crane migration at its most populous interval and then discussed his particular volunteer work clearing timber and restoring watercourses. Other water birds, including geese, ducks and waders also benefit from this river restoration work.

Each season there are a few individuals of what was for a long period the rarest bird on the continent, the whooping crane, mixed into the flocks but they are hard to pick out in the huge aggregations.

The cranes spend their time at the Platte resting and gaining food reserves for the final flight to breeding areas that stretch from eastern Siberia across all of the suitable regions of the northern US and Canada. During this interval the pairs reinforce their bonds by engaging in elaborate dancing and jumping behaviors. This is one of the most famous wildlife spectacles in north America and SIAS thanks Mr. White for sharing his first hand appreciation with us.

-Joe Merklebach, President



Sandhill Cranes at the Platte - Photo by Jan Sundberg

On March 10th, Jan Sundberg reported that she and Lyle had just returned from 2 weeks at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary in Nebraska. They had volunteered at the visitor center, the area where the sandhill cranes stage before heading north.

February Program Highlights:

A View on the Other Trail of Tears

Mr. George Godfrey, a member of the citizen Potawatomi band, presented a largely unknown story of second removal that happened shortly after the well-known story of the Cherokee nation. The Potawatomi, related to the Ojibway of northern Michigan and Wisconsin, were located in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana at the time that President Andrew Jackson forced organized Indian groups off their ancestral lands toward the Indian territories of Kansas and Oklahoma. Many of the Potawatomis traveled across Indiana and central Illinois and Missouri to reach assigned lands in Kansas. Mr. Godfrey's lineage traces from Shabonna and his daughter Josette Watcheke, who traveled on the Trail of Death to Kansas.

There are recognized bands of Potawatimis in Michigan, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

The present generation of Potawatomis, with George acting as one of the organizers, has now set out trail markers along this route with campsites for each stop noted. This event happened in 1838 and was as fearful, with hunger privation and disease, as the more well known Trail of Tears.

Mr. Godfrey and his wife showed and discussed the typical clothing items for tribal members at the time of the removal. The shawl was especially significant for women, with the style of wearing indicating marriage status and whether the wearer was a mother. The turban worn by men had an interesting history - it was brought to North America by the British from east India and adopted by several tribes.

George does some dancing at yearly tribal gatherings, and displayed his deer antler rattle with deer hoof noisemakers. Three books, written by Mr. Godfrey, present both a documented and then a well-informed imagination of tribal history of those who traveled the Trail of Death. -Joe Merkelbach,

Events & Activities con't.

Apr. 12 > 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 cat of many names - cougar, puma, or mountain lion. For more info, call the Cache Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

For a complete list of this season's many events and activities schedule at the Cache, including their new Stewardship Saturdays, visit their website at <http://www.friendsofthecache.org/events-activities>

Apr. 13-15 > IL Indigenous Plant 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. Other activities include informative sessions, field trips, and native plant sale (see below). Full details and tickets available at: <https://ill-inps.org/2018-illinois-indigenous-plants-symposium/>

Apr. 14 > Annual Native Plant Sale

The IL Native Plant Society and Carbondale GreenEarth are sponsoring a native plant sale at Building H on John A. Logan College Carterville campus. The sale will be from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. A variety of high quality grasses, wildflowers, ferns, vines, and shrubs will be available from Southernwood Gardens native plant nursery.

Apr. 21 > Cove Hollow Earth Day Trash Blast

Join the Friends of the Shawnee National Forest and the U.S. Forest Service at Cove Hollow for their annual Earth Day Trash Blast! The purpose of this trail day is to protect this resource through trash and graffiti removal!

Volunteers will be meet at the Cove Hollow Trail Head, off Cove Hollow Road, Carbondale, at 1 p.m. Please wear pants and closed-toe shoes or boots. Bring your own water. Friends of the Shawnee will provide snacks. The Forest Service will help facilitate the event and will provide personal protective equipment and graffiti removal supplies.

For more details email friendsoftheshawnee@gmail.com

Apr. 28 > Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois

It's time to set up your team, choose a category, and start planning your day out midst the height of songbird migration. You'll find it's really a lot of fun and a fun challenge. An awards brunch will be held the following day at the Crab Orchard NWR Visitors Center at 9 a.m. It's open to the public!

For all Blitz details including registration forms (due 04/22) and pledge forms, visit the Blitz Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/317666471615613/> Or contact Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 or via my email woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. The 5 categories remain the same as in past years: Open A Big Day, Open B Dawn to Dusk, County Big Day, Senior (over 55) and Muscle-powered.

If you'd like to help but don't want to be part of a team, consider pledging to one. Pledge donations will be used to help support habitat restoration and reservation efforts in the Cache River Watershed.

Upcoming Events & Activities

Apr. 7, 14, & 19 > Spring Wildflower Walks at Giant City

Registration required. Join Giant City's Natural Resources Coordinator for one of these spring wildflower hikes along Trillium Trail. Get a close relook at all the spring beauties. This is a moderately difficult 2-mile trail hike with some climbing. For more details, including meeting location or to register, phone the Giant City Visitors Center at 618.457.4836.

For a complete list of this season's activities at Giant City, check their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofgiantcity/>

Apr. 7 > Birds 'n Blooms Photo Workshop at CONWR

Meet at the Crab Orchard NWR Visitors Center at 10 a.m. for this photography workshop. Come learn about strategies and locations for taking great pictures of birds and wildflowers at the refuge. For more details contact the Refuge at 618.998.5933.

Apr. 9 > Butterfly Monitoring Training

Meet at the Cache River Wetlands Center at 9 a.m. Join the IL Butterfly Monitoring Network for this workshop for anyone who would like to help monitor the butterfly population in southern Illinois. For more details, contact the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Apr. 11 > Crab Orchard Photography Group Meeting

Meet at the Crab Orchard NWR Visitors Center at 10 a.m. for the initial organizational meeting of the Crab Orchard Photography Group. Share nature pictures and related information. All experience levels welcome. For more details contact the Refuge at 618.998.5933.

May 5 & 6 > Spring Bird Count(s) - Your Help Needed!

The Spring Bird Count(s) takes place on Saturday, May 5th and Sunday, May 6th. If you're not available to help the full day, consider feeder watching for two hours. Below are some of the local counts and compiler contact information.

Alexander County, 05/05: Allen Gathman agathman@gmail.com

Franklin County, 05/05: Bob Drennan drennanb@hughes.net

Jackson County, 05/05: Rhonda Rothrock

Massac County, 05/05: Frank Bennett? frankbennett@gmail.com

Pulaski County, 05/06: Rhonda Rothrock

Pope County, 05/05?: Andrea Douglas anderatd@yahoo.com

Saline County, 05/05?: Tara Beveroth beveroth@illinois.edu

Union County, 05/05: Vern Kleen vkleen@comcast.net

Williamson County, 05/05: Vicki Lang-Mendenhall vickil@siu.edu

30th Trinidad & Tobago Adventure – May 19-26

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

In Memoriam: Mary Rendleman & Jim Waycullis

Mary Rendleman died at home on Thursday, March 1st. Mary was an avid ornithologist, an active bird counter, and a loyal lifetime member of the Southern Illinois Audubon Society. I will miss her occasional calls to tell me of the various birds visiting her feeders.
–Rhonda R.

Memorial can be made to Saint Francis Animal Care or to the Rendleman Endowment at SIU Carbondale, or to SIAS.

Jim Waycullis passed away on March 8th. Jim worked for the IL Dept. of Natural Resources for 37 years prior to retirement, the later as the Superintendent of Cache River State Natural Area, Belknap. Jim did great work in the Cache and was a great friend to SIAS. Many of us worked with Jim during Cache Stewardship Saturdays and with the Nature Fest, and went on some of the many hikes Jim lead along Heron Pond trails or the bike trail. Jim will be greatly missed.

Memorials can be made to Habitat for Humanity in Marion, or The Wilderness Society, Washington, DC.

Experimental Anthropogenic (i.e. originating in human activity) Noise Impacts Avian Parental Behaviour

Human-produced noise, from transport, urbanization and industry, is widespread. Studies of noise pollution show a wide range of effects on birds, such as alterations in communication, parental behaviour, physiology and reproductive success. These human-induced changes are likely to have long-term impacts, such as altered nestling physiology and survival, as well as reduced local population size. Recent study results show negative consequences of traffic noise exposure, despite a relatively modest playback regime (6 h, every other day). Adults in noise-exposed territories were less vigilant earlier in the nestling period and fed at a higher rate later in the nestling period, compared to controls. However, increased feeding rate in noise-exposed nests did not compensate for noise impacts on nestlings: noise-exposed nestlings were smaller and had higher oxidative status, compared to control nestlings. Noise-exposed nestlings took longer to fledge, but with no effect of noise on fledging success. These results highlight the potential long-term consequences of short-term noise exposure (decreased nestling size and increased oxidative status) and add to a growing body of literature, showing that noise pollution can negatively impact birds through both direct and indirect pathways.

–Excerpts from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2017.12.003>

Why are Big, Insect-eating Birds Disappearing? Maybe We're Running Low on Bugs. by Brandon Keim | 03.14.18

No guild of North American birds is declining so rapidly as aerial insectivores: acrobatic marvels whose maneuvers make our hearts soar, and who provide a vital ecosystem service. Why are their numbers plummeting? A leading explanation is a widespread decline in insect populations — a troubling possibility, hinted at by many studies but also one difficult to pin down. There are few records of historical insect numbers against which to compare.

In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, researchers led by biologist Philina English of Simon Fraser University describe their ingenious workaround: they used museum specimens of whip-poor-wills, a medium-sized insect-eater whose populations are falling by 3.5 % each year, as biological time machines. By contrasting the chemical composition of their bodies with the composition of living whip-poor-wills, the researchers could extrapolate how the birds used to eat. “These results are consistent with the hypothesis that aerial insectivore populations are declining due to changes in abundance of higher trophic-level prey,” wrote the researchers. To translate that into normal speak: the birds are suffering because there seems to be a lot fewer big bugs than there used to be. If insect populations are indeed falling, surmised the researchers, it stands to reason that bugs higher up the food chain, who consume insects smaller than themselves, would be declining even faster. This would push whip-poor-wills, who prefer to eat larger, more nutrient-rich insects, to eat smaller and less-sustaining fare.

An important next question is where the decline is happening: on southern wintering grounds, northern breeding grounds, or along migration routes? English noted the importance of the Gulf Coast, a crucial migratory stopover region. If insects are in short supply there, at a time when migrants need all the fuel they can get, it would be especially harmful. In addition, why are insects in decline? Climate change and habitat loss are possible culprits. Collisions with automobiles are also an underappreciated problem, says English. And hovering over it all is the issue of pesticide pollution, and in particular neonicotinoids, the world's most widely used class of pesticides. Initially thought to be environmentally benign, they've been described accumulating in soil and water, where they're toxic to insects and linked to insect-eating bird declines.

The implications of this are not restricted to whip-poor-wills. They are, wrote the researchers, a “case study.” The same may well be happening in other members of their guild, such as nighthawks and swifts and swallows. An entire way of being — and one that humans rely upon to control insects we consider pests — is threatened.

“Aside from admiring the beauty and grace of birds like swifts and swallows,” says English, “I genuinely fear a world where we are compelled to rely on controlling agricultural and disease-carrying pest insects exclusively through the use of chemicals and technology because too many of their natural predators have been effectively eliminated.” If people wait too long, the only aerial insectivores left might be in museums. <http://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/2018/03/running-out>

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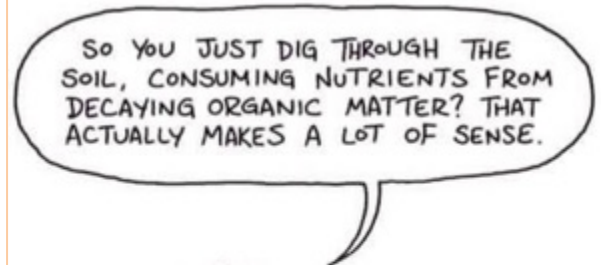
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 If you receive your newsletter electronically,
 contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.

Leprosy From An Armadillo? That's An Unlikely Peccadillo.

Dr. Richard Truman, acting chief of the laboratory research branch of the National Hansen's Disease Program in Baton Rouge, LA, states that 95 % of humans are completely immune to leprosy. But with just 150 to 200 new cases a year in the U.S., and most of those coming from people who were overseas in countries with much higher leprosy rates, even people who live in armadillo-rich environs needn't fret. That doesn't mean you should canoodle with an armadillo, he notes. Dr. Truman has authored 31 articles on armadillos and leprosy, using them as an animal model to study the disease. "All wild animals can harbor infectious agents that are harmful to people," Truman says. "If we leave animals alone and exercise caution, they don't pose a risk to us." www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/07/22/425380811/leprosy-from-an-armadillo-thats-an-unlikely-peccadillo



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



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