



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2018 – Vol. 25 No. 8

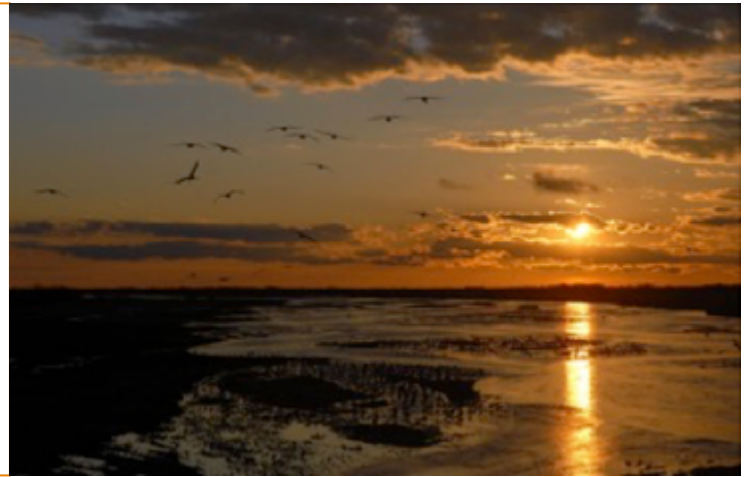
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Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

Established in 1970

Breeding Birds at Rowe Sanctuary is the title of a program that Jan Sundberg and Lyle White will present for SIAS on Friday, December 7th at 7:00 p.m. This presentation will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the First United Methodist Church, 214 W. Main St., Carbondale.

Jan Sundberg and Lyle White will provide an informative powerpoint presentation on conducting their first breeding bird survey at the Rowe Sanctuary, along the Platte River ecosystem in Nebraska. They will share their experiences of preparing for the surveys, the challenges they faced and how they executed the surveys. This is a great example of citizen scientists providing important data.



October Program Highlights: Birding Quiz

David Brewer, a long time member of SIAS, presented an unusual form of birding images program for the October meeting. He had visited the noted Magee Marsh region on the southwest edge of Lake Erie during a fly through of neotropical migrants and taken many images at close range from the boardwalks that crisscross the region. Rather than showing pictures and naming names in a standard show, David displayed his images and challenged the audience to identify species. With Vicki and Rhonda chiming in with mnemonics of many of the warbler songs, the members and guests were able to identify nearly all of the species.

There were many warblers, some vireos, a few sparrows, an eagle and a few others I have forgotten. A different and enjoyable means of presenting a bird images program.

It was interesting to learn that Magee Marsh is a remnant of a once much larger marshy edge of the lake. The area is actually owned and administered by a grouping of federal (NWR), state (several parks and refuges), and the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. The boardwalk is the heart of the area for observation, but there are plenty of locations to explore.

Thanks to David for this inspired and entertaining program. – *Joe Merkelbach*

Would You be Willing to Bring the Treats for an SIAS Program?

It's been a tradition to offer treats for members and guests at SIAS programs. SIAS is looking for volunteers to bring treats. Hospitality Chair Phyllis Beck will have a sign-up sheet with future program dates so that folks can commit to specific date.

Keystone XL Pipeline Blocked!

In early November a federal judge blocked construction on the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and ordered the government to revise its environmental review of the project.

The judge ruled that the Trump administration violated bedrock environmental laws when approving the proposed pipeline, which would carry 830,000 barrels of dirty tar sands oil each day from Canada's boreal forest through America's heartland. Among other things, the judge found that the administration's environmental impact statement glaringly ignored the pipeline's obvious impact on climate change, and the high risk of dangerous, hard to clean oil spills.

The court ruling is a major win for those who opposed the project, most specifically for Indigenous communities. *From www.nrdc.org/*

SIAS Winter to Spring Meeting Calendar

January 25th – Annual meeting with potluck, silent auction and All That Buzz: Southern Illinois Bee Keepers Association

February 22nd – To Be Announced

March 22nd – To Be Announced **April 26nd** – To Be Announced

Gulf Crossing: Story of Spring - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e20qNjdcSUK&feature=youtu.be>

Bird migration along the gulf coast is one of the most exciting and powerful natural experiences you can have. Millions of birds from hundreds of species are passing overhead each day, and you never know what's going to show up. But despite the hundreds of nature documentaries that are made each year, the story of trans-gulf migration has never really been told before.

Gulf Crossing is an attempt to document this remarkable and moving natural phenomenon. *Gulf Crossing* is a record of trans-gulf migration on America's southern coast: the expectation of arrival, the surprise each day of what birds appear, and the habitats they are found in. The experience is expanded by a scientific perspective on the phenomenon of migration, describing it's geographic shape, the coastal habitats birds rely on, physiological cycles in birds, and the effect of weather patterns on bird flight.

When the opportunity arises, I encourage all to go to the above link and watch the video. It is an astonishing achievement! –Rhonda R

Upcoming Events & Activities

Dec. 1 > So. IL Alternative Gift Fair

The Carbondale Civic Center will host the 14th year of this special event. Find unique gift items while supporting wonderful organizations from the Science Center to the Peace Coalition. The fair runs from 11 a.m. 'til 2 p.m. at the Civic Center, 200 S. Illinois Ave. For more details, visit the Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair on Facebook.

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

It is now the 118th year the annual Christmas Bird Count Season. The Illinois Ornithological Society (IOS) has made locating Illinois count circles very easy by plotting them all out on a map that can be viewed at:

www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1TswXNAYkCdxhJQHDker3CUHKRYw&usp=sharing

The following list of local counts & compiler contact information.

War Bluff Valley- Dec. 14 - For details contact Andrea Douglas, compiler at 618.564.2079 / anderatd@yahoo.com.

Rend Lake- Dec. 15 - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Keith McMullen at 618.632.1057 / warbler7@sbcglobal.net.

Mingo (MO)- Dec. 15 - Meet at Mel's Diner in Puxico at 6:00 a.m. for breakfast and assignments. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com for details.

Baldwin Lake-Kaskaskia River Valley- Dec. 15 - Contact compiler Tim Dever at 618.475.2366 / tdever67@yahoo.com

Cypress Creek NWR- Dec. 17 - Meet for assignments at Shawnee Comm. College Bldg. D, Rustic Campus Drive, Ullin, at 6:00 a.m. For details, phone Cypress Creek NWR 618.634.2231.

Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 17 - Meet on Count Day at 6:00 a.m. at the restaurant at Boomland, on the southeast corner of the interchange at the Charleston, MO, off I-57. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com.

Carlyle Lake- Dec. ? - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Dan Kassebaum at 618.233.5451 / kdan@htc.net. Meet for assignments at the McDonald's near the Lake entrance at 6 a.m.

Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 22 - Advanced registration required, contact compiler Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at 618.687.9868

Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk. - Dec. 27 - Meet on site at the intersection of Pyatts Blacktop and Panda Bear Rd. at 6:00 a.m. Contact compiler Joe Merkelbach at 618.532.3112 / jemerck@ecologyfund.net.

Horseshoe Lake (Alexander Co.)- Dec. 28 - Advanced registration required. 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 Thursday and Friday nights. Space is limited with beds and mattresses available but bring bedding, pillows, personal items, etc. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515 / vkleen@comcast.net.

Union County- Dec. 29 - Advance registration required. Meet at the SW corner of the intersection of IL Rt. 3 and IL Rt. 124 (old gas station in Ware) at 6:30 a.m. 5 p.m. compilation at Anna McDonalds. Contact compiler Vern Kleen at 217.787.3515 / vkleen@comcast.net.

Middle Mississippi River NWR- Dec. 30 - Advance registration required. Contact compiler John Hartleb at 618.763.4420 or Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 or email woodthrusheola@hotmail.com

Mermet Lake- Dec. 31 - Advance registration required. For assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 / woodthrusheola@hotmail.com.

Jackson County- Jan. 1 - Advance registration required. For assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605 / woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Compilation and soup (by Chef Anton) at sunset, at the home of David and Anton Kvernes, Skyline Dr., Carbondale. Jackson County CBC feeder watchers wanted!! Email or snail mail your feeder bird list to Rhonda by Jan. 3rd.

Marion County- To Be Determined - Advance registration required. Meet in the parking lot of the Raccoon School, just west of I-57 at the Centralia exit at 6:00 a.m. Contact compiler Joe Merkelbach at 618.532.3112 / jemerck@ecologyfund.net.

Dec. 9 > Winter Tree & Shrub ID Walk

Join Kevin Rohling, a forestry technician with the UofI Extension Forestry, to identify shrubs and trees throughout Big Cypress Access. This access within Cache River SNA showcases an area of forest that was never logged and has bald cypress trees that are over 1,000 years old. Meet at the Big Cypress Access off of Porter House Rd/Urbana Rd. at 1 p.m. For more info or to register call the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Dec. 8 > Invasive Species Pull at GCSP

Bundle up and come out to help the Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club and the Forest Restoration Support Team in an invasive species pull at Giant City State Park. Focus will be in the Fern Rocks Nature Preserve area. Meet at the Visitor's Center at 1 p.m. For complete details, contact Nathan Speagle at volunteerFRST@gmail.com

* * * * *

Seeing Birds

Not sure why but it seems that the brown pelican has decided it likes southernmost Illinois. As of 11/19 the brown pelican was still present at Crab Orchard Lake. Don Mullison and Judy Groskind saw it that day. They also reported that some 105 American white pelicans at Crab Orchard Lake too.



Another warm weather species, a ruby-throated hummingbird, has been lingering and still there in Cape Girardeau at the home of SIAS friend Alan Gathman.

Some rarities appearing upstate include piping plover, snowy owl, rufous hummingbird, varied thrush, harlequin duck, and western grebe.

Waterfowl, including bufflehead, ring-necked ducks, horned grebes, lesser scaup, ruddy ducks, and common goldeneye, are filling our lakes and geese our fields.

Boreal species have arrived for the winter. Ron Pittaway, in his winter finch forecast, had determined that this would be an irruptive year. He states that cone and birch seed crops were poor to low in most of Ontario and the Northeast, with a few exceptions such as Newfoundland that has an excellent spruce crop. He says to expect flights of winter finches into southern Ontario, southern Quebec, Maritime Provinces, New York and New England States, with some finches going farther south into the United States.

Outside, as our weather is getting colder, one can hear the visiting boreal species. There's the sweet tin horn toots of red-breasted nuthatches, the mews of yellow-bellied sapsuckers, the soft call notes of yellow-rumped warblers, the zreeees of pine siskins, and the warbling song of purple finches.

It's possible we'll see some crossbills.

I love birds! - Rhonda R.

How to save a species (if you really want to) Should we be spending millions to keep the black-footed ferrets alive?

Before September 26, 1981, the ferret – a 19 to 24 inch-long, 1.4 to 2.5 pound predator who mostly targets prairie dogs in the U.S.'s Western plains – was not just considered endangered; it was considered extinct.

Soon afterward, scientists called to the scene found a small colony of 18 ferrets near the Hogg farm. They've been a conservation priority ever since. Now, there's a concerted effort by the Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center in Wellington, Colorado, run by the federal Fish and Wildlife Service and supported by the government and some private partners, to reintroduce the species to the wild.

All reintroduction programs run into problems, but black ferrets have faced one whopper of a problem: the bubonic plague. The disease is spread by the ferret's food (those prairie dogs) and while some species of ferret are immune to the disease, the black-footed ferret is not.

Conservation specialist Kimberly Fraser calls the rescue of the black-footed ferret "the greatest American story we have in conservation. All else being equal, we should save every endangered species. But we know the plains ecosystem can get on without the black-footed ferret; it largely has for the past few decades during which the species has been in captive breeding." Seems some question whether we should continue.

Read all the details on efforts to save the black-footed ferret at <https://reviverestore.org/projects/black-footed-ferret/>

In October, a 39,915-acre expanse of cloud forest and wetlands was declared protected within the new Monte Puyo (Bosque de Nubes) Private Conservation Area in northern Peru. More than 500 bird species occur in the new Monte Puyo Private Conservation Area, including the Endangered Ochre-fronted Antpitta and Speckle-chested Piculet. This forest is also home to iconic mammals like the Andean bear and Critically Endangered Yellow-tailed Woolly Monkey.

The Green Jay is just one of the birds that draws tourists from around the world to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The species would be negatively impacted by an expanded U.S. – Mexico border wall. *Photo by Greg Homel*



170+ Organizations Take Action As Border Wall Expansion Threatens Wildlife And Public Lands

On 11/06/2018, a coalition of more than 170 organizations supporting wildlife conservation and public lands sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen M. Nielsen expressing serious concern over plans to expand the United States – Mexico border wall across environmentally sensitive conservation areas of Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park and National Butterfly Center, Big Bend National Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park, and Black Gap Wildlife Management Area.

The groups, which include American Bird Conservancy, American Birding Association, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Texas Audubon, are steadfastly opposed to a border wall across these parts of Texas due to the negative effects it would have on birds and other wildlife, and their habitats.

A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) letter states that: "DHS remains committed to environmental stewardship. DHS has been consulting, and intends to continue doing so, with stakeholders including federal and state resource agencies and affected landowners. Such consultation facilitates DHS's assessment of potential impacts and informs its efforts to minimize, to the extent possible, potential impacts to the environment, wildlife, and cultural and historic resources." But the Department has exercised waiver authority on nine occasions to avoid compliance with environmental laws.

"We urge that the environmental waivers be withdrawn, and that wall construction be halted in areas that threaten birds and other wildlife in favor of better high-tech alternatives," said Steve Holmer of American Bird Conservancy. "It is crucial that DHS prevent unintended impacts to already fragile wildlife ecosystems within some of the country's most biologically diverse parks and reserves. The proposed Border Wall and its associated levees, additional structures, fencing, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors pose an unacceptably high risk to flora and fauna."

The Lower Rio Grande Valley is a special region, gifted with an unusually wide variety and abundance of birds and other wildlife. Protected areas in the region attract large numbers of wildlife-watching tourists from around the world, and provide essential economic activity in Texas. According to a 2011 Texas A&M University study, nature tourism – primarily bird-watching – contributes \$463 million annually to the local economy.

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, which includes part of the World Birding Center, hosts several threatened species and is considered to be one of the nation's top bird-watching destinations. The park drew nearly 30,000 visitors in 2016 and, as with other state parks, tourism has been growing by about 5 percent annually.

According to a 2016 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service analysis, more than 100 federally listed endangered species, from obscure plants to Black-footed Ferrets, could be impacted by a completed wall. Endangered Species Act listed species and birds of conservation concern in the border region include Black-capped Vireo, Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, California Condor, California Least Tern, Coastal California Gnatcatcher, Golden Eagle, Least Bell's Vireo, Masked Bobwhite (Quail), Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Aplomado Falcon, Piping Plover, Red-crowned Parrot, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Snowy Plover, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Yuma Clapper Rail.

From the American Bird Conservancy - <https://abcbirds.org/>

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

JB Pritzker, Let's Fix the IDNR

Recently Les Winkeler wrote a column in the form of a letter to Governor-elect JB Pritzker asking that a biologist be appointed director of the IL Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR). Kudos Les! I think it's time we all start writing such letters to JB to get him on the right track.

As Les states, "There was a time a couple decades ago when the IDNR was one of the jewels of Illinois." And IDNR was once the model for Natural Resources departments across the nation. It's time to return the IDNR's full funding and people power so that they can truly protect Illinois' natural resources.

We need to start a serious letter writing campaign, don't you think? *-Rhonda R.*

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Sandhill Cranes at Rowe Sanctuary