



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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

Established in 1970

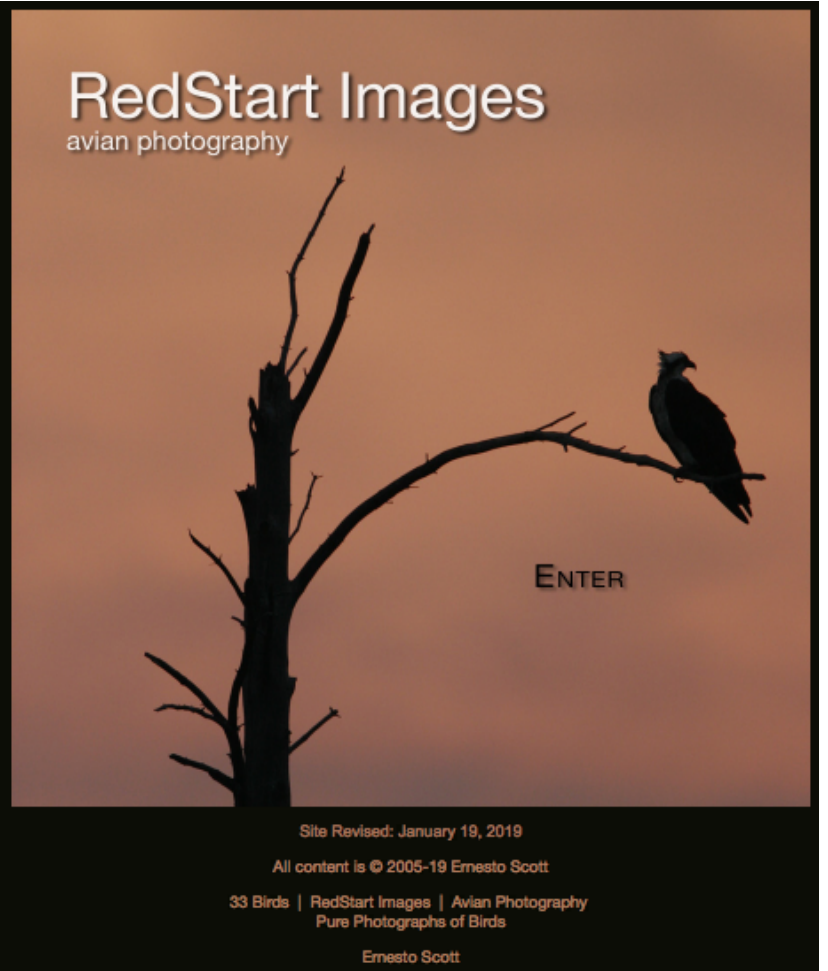
**NEWSLETTER** September 2019 - Vol. 26 No. 6

## Art and Bird Photography

Ernesto Scott, Professor emeritus of Art from the College of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, will be sharing images and speaking about the creative process behind the photography of birds **for the Friday, October 25th SIAS program. The program will start at 7 p.m. and will be held in the meeting room of the Carbondale Township Hall, Carbondale.** Entrance is from the rear, south side, of the building (216. E. Monroe St.) where two parking lots are available for use. **This evening will begin with a potluck dinner at 6 p.m.\***

With an educational and professional background as a fine artist, Ernesto has been photographing birds since 2006. His avian projects span books and catalogs, and contributions to various online collections including The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birds of North America & eBird projects. Ernesto has been awarded a lifetime Fellowship from the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming where his avian work there led to the designation of their 20,000 acre ranch as an IBA by the National Audubon Society.

\*Potluck set-up begins at 5:30 p.m. with the potluck starting at 6:00 p.m. Members are asked to bring an 'entree' to share and their own dinnerware. Some beverages will be provided.



## SIAS Meeting Calendar

**November 22nd** - Speaker: Michael McNerney on cemeteries

**January 24th** - Annual Meeting with potluck; speaker to be announced

## Our Nov/Dec Meeting Date Change

For several years SIAS has had only one meeting for the months of November and December, held on the first Friday in December. This was because of holiday conflicts with our regular Nov. "4th Friday" meeting night. But in more recent years, there have been an equal number of conflicts with the Dec. date. So the Board believed moving the Nov./Dec. meeting back to the 4th Friday in Nov. made sense.

The idea was proposed to members at the September meeting and those in attendance supported the change. So, SIAS will have it's Nov./Dec. meeting on the 4th Friday in Nov. with the possibility of the occasional change. There will be no meeting in December.

## Urgent: Our Help Needed with New "Citizen Science" Project *-Laraine Wright*

As an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society (NABS), we are being asked to join a fascinating online project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology sponsored by NABS. Please give this a try. It is easy and fun and will yield a wealth of data to researchers studying bird strengths and declines.

The lab has more than 300,000 hand-written data cards, dating from the early 1900s, that were filled out by birdwatchers like us recording sightings of nests. Some 62,000 of these are of bluebirds, for example, but anything and everything are on these North American Nest Record Cards. The project involves our transferring the hand-written data onto an online database. Each card transfer takes only a minute or two.

Here's what you need to do. Using a computer, smartphone, or iPad, log into [www.Zooniverse.org/organizations/brbcornell/nest-quest-go](http://www.Zooniverse.org/organizations/brbcornell/nest-quest-go). Create a Zooniverse account if you don't already have one. If the above long link doesn't work, simply search for Nest Quest Go! on the main Zooniverse website. You can pick the bird species you want to work on, such as Western bluebirds, warblers, kestrels, etc. More individual species will be added later.

Questions? Please call Laraine Wright at 618-457-8769. In the months ahead, perhaps we could write about our experiences with this project for our newsletter, sent to editor Rhonda Rothrock. Many thanks for your help. This is an easy way to contribute our time to the effort to save our beautiful planet.

## Martha Schwegman Is Honored Cache Champion

Martha Schwegman received a well-deserved honor at The Friends of the Cache annual meeting on August 29. She was chosen as their Cache Champion for 2019. The Cache Champion Award was created to celebrate those often-unsung heroes who love the Cache River Wetlands and put their passion into action as advocates and volunteers. As noted by Friends Chair Tony Gerard, Martha is well known in southernmost Illinois as a conservationist, avid birdwatcher and gardener, talented needlewoman and someone who always has information to share, whether it's about native plants, geology, or native peoples. All of these talents have been shared generously through her involvement with Friends of the Cache, Massac County Nature Study Society, Kinkaid Mounds Support Organization, Southern Illinois Audubon Society, Shawnee Quilters, Illinois Native Plant Society, Natural Areas Association, Metropolis Garden Club and other organizations. Congratulations Martha!

## "Let The Sun Shine In"

An inventory of Trail of Tears State Forest (Union County, IL) revealed that the number of oak trees in the forest over-story decreased about 50% between 1980 and 2014. At the same time, there was a steady increase in American beech and maple. Neither of these tree species provide a wildlife food source comparable to the oaks being lost. And the shadier understory beneath their canopies reduces the diversity of native plants, decreasing the quality of habitat. In 1980, one out of every 3 trees in the forest over-story was an oak. Today, that number has been reduced to 1 out of 5. And, it's pretty clear, the loss of oaks from our 'oak forests' is also an issue for both forest nesting and migratory birds using the Mississippi Flyway.

Oaks trees need sunlight. Right now, trees at Trail of Tears State Forest block 95% of the sunlight, meaning only about 5% reaches the forest floor. Oaks need a lot more light than that. Oaks prefer a forest where 30 to 50% of sunlight is able to reach the forest floor. Prescribed fire may allow up to 20% of sunlight to reach the forest floor. To increase that to 30 or 50%, tree removal is required. Selective tree removal is a technique used throughout the eastern U.S. to affect positive forest management. This method is now being used by the IL Dept. of Natural Resources at Trail of Tears. These efforts are being explained and promoted as the "Let The Sun Shine In" initiative.

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**What's Happening - Events & Activities**

**Guided Hike at Cedar Bluff > Oct. 26th**

12 noon-2 p.m. > Be part of a fall hike at Cedar Bluff Natural Area, an annex of Ferne Clyffe State Park. Experience dramatic views of southernmost IL's fall colors. For meeting place directions, contact the Cache Wetland Center at 618.657.2064.

**Backcountry Navigation > Oct. 27th & Nov. 3rd**

12 noon-3 p.m. > Join folks at Giant City St. Pk. for a 2-part class on backcountry navigation. Learn orienteering techniques, compass skills, and modern navigation apps. For more details or to register, contact the Park at 618.457.4836.

**Guided Hike at Max Creek > Nov. 2nd**

10-11:30 a.m. > Visit the site of a legendary "vortex" where some hikers have experienced feelings of dizziness, disorientation and unease! Spooky! For directions to the meeting place, contact the Cache Wetland Center at 618.657.2064.

**Wildcat Bluff Wander > Nov. 16th**

12 noon-3 p.m. > Join Kim Rohling on this 1-mile hike along Lookout Point Trail for views of the Cache River Basin and floodplain. For more info and directions to the meeting place, contact the Cache Wetland Center at 618.657.2064.

**So.IL Alternative Gift Fair > Dec. 7th**

11 a.m.-2 p.m. > Shop for unique gifts while supporting local non-profits. Event includes light refreshments and a silent auction. This Fair will be held at the Carbondale Civic Center, 100 S. IL Ave, Carbondale.

**Christmas Bird Count Season > Dec. 14 - Jan. 5**

Christmas Bird Count Season is less than two months away! This will be the 119th year of these all-day censuses of winter bird populations, providing the longest running database in ornithology. Volunteer for all or just part of the day. Feeder watchers needed too! The dates and details for our local circles will follow in the November Newsletter.

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**12 Highly Imperiled Species Denied Protections**

This month the Trump administration denied Endangered Species Act protection to a dozen species of plants and animals facing extinction. These species had been found to warrant protection by the Obama administration. Trump has refused to protect 74 species and protected only 18 – the lowest number of any president at this point in an administration. "The Act could save these species," said the Center of Biodiversity's Noah Greenwald. "But Trump officials only care about protecting corporate polluters from taking modest measures to save wildlife." <https://biologicaldiversity.org/>

The denials come on the heels of sweeping Trump administration changes to the Endangered Species Act. Finalized on August 12, the changes make it harder for species to gain protection, weaken habitat protections for listed species, and largely disregards climate change.

A landmark scientific report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services has warned that one million species are being pushed to extinction by human activities.

**Kirtland's Warbler To Be Delisted From Endangered**

The Kirtland's warbler will be removed from the list of federally protected species, it is said to have recovered more than half a century after being designated as endangered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service credited teamwork among numerous agencies and nonprofit groups with the survival of the warbler, which had fallen victim to its own picky habitat demands and competition from the brown-headed cowbird.

Biologists describe Kirtland's warblers as among the most geographically limited birds in the continental U.S. They nest on the ground beneath young jack pines in northern Michigan, parts of Wisconsin and the Canadian province of Ontario. If the trees get too old or large, they're no longer suitable. Wildfires historically swept through the region every few decades, burning down overgrown jack pines and popping open cones that produced new ones. But modern fire suppression disrupted the cycle, and warbler-friendly territory became perilously small. To enlarge it, agencies developed a system of logging overgrown pine stands and replanting new ones to imitate



**Kirtland's Warbler**

what nature previously did. Listed as endangered in 1967, its population later hit a record low of only 167 pairs. Kirtland's numbers rose steadily in the 1990s and have been above their recovery goal of 1,000 pairs for 17 years. The latest census put them at about 2,300 pairs. <https://www.washingtonpost.com>

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

