



Southern Illinois Audubon Society NEWSLETTER

November 2021 – Vol. 28 No. 9

P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222
Established in 1970

Some Great On-Line Videos to Watch in lieu of November-December In-Person Programs

In the last 20 months, low quality (or for some, complete lack of) internet access has increased the alienation and sense of loneliness for many in our area. As most of you know, many of our friends and neighbors in rural areas of southernmost IL still lack internet access and/or cell phone service.

As someone who only this summer entered the Zoomosphere via Frontiers newly laid optic cable, I hope SIAS as a group can all soon gather if not in person, via Zoom. But until then (January 28, 2022?), here are some links for those who have access and time.

View a charming four minute video on the history of the Christmas Bird Count narrated by Chandler Robbins. Mr. Robbins, 94 when this video was made, founded the North American Breeding Bird Survey and participated in more than 200 Christmas Bird Count over 60 years, until his death.

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count>

On the Audubon's site you will find four additional short videos on bird count related topics including one about irruptive species. Those species include purple finches, crossbills, and evening grosbeaks.

The Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) has a collection of videos about IAS sanctuaries and other projects posted on YouTube. Check these out at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/illinoisaudubon/null>

Chicago Ornithological Society has a YouTube site they refer to as "Virtual Birding Adventures". Their video presentations feature an array of birding related topics from *Better Birding Skills* and *Inclusivity in Birding* to *The Notorious Cowbird*. View these at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVp5lQZwsOCbmHUzsq_BTpg/featured

The Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society has also posted videos of their monthly zoom presentations on YouTube for all to view at: <https://bit.ly/2SIHs2B>

And, if you make it through all of these videos with time to spare, visit PBS's Nature website for full episodes of their programs.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/> -Rhonda R.

Board Election Might be Via Mail/Email

In January 2021 SIAS members were unable to meet. The Board agreed that we all would be willing to continue serving until we could meet in person. Seems we are not there yet. While all Board members have agreed to continue in their positions, the Board is considering sending out ballots in January that could be mailed or emailed back.

The slate of officers to be elected/re-elected are: President - Joe Merkelbach, Vice President - Vicki Lang, Secretary - Mary McCarthy, Treasurer - Laraine Wright, Conservation/Education Chair - Cathy Hutcheson, Hospitality Chair - Phyllis Beck, and Membership Chair - Rhonda Rothrock. Details will follow in the January newsletter.

IN MEMORIAM: Chris Schwegman

Chris, son of Martha and John Schwegman, passed away at his home on November 2, 2021, at the age of 47. He graduated with a Bachelors in Chemistry from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and then from the University of Kentucky with a Masters in Chemical Engineering. Chris often accompanied his parents to SIAS programs along with his brother John Andrew.

Monthly Birding with SIASers and Friends

Dec. 11th (and the 2nd Saturday each month)

Outing at Bogart(d)t Point, 9:00-11:00 AM

Directions (from Carbondale, IL Rt. 13): Take IL-13 E from Carbondale to S Division St in Carterville (the 4-way intersection), turn right/south onto Division. Take Division to Old Rt. 13 then turn left/east. Take Old Rt. 13 to N Wolf Creek Rd. Turn left/south onto N Wolf Creek Rd. Follow it south before the causeway. Turn left/west into parking lot. Then follow the sidewalk south to Bogart Point.

NOTE— Day use passes are required on Crab Orchard Refuge and can be acquired at the Headquarters Bldg. Purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp for \$25 provides the bearer with a year pass to the Refuge. For seniors over 62, a lifetime recreation pass can be purchased for \$80. Crab Orchard NWR and other Fish and Wildlife Service locations, as well as the Forest Service, National Park Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Land Management all honor the Senior Pass at sites where Entrance or Standard Amenity Fee(s) (Day use fees) are charged. This pass can be purchased online at <https://store.usgs.gov/senior-pass>

Outings at Evergreen Park Are on Hold Until the Park Re-opens.

For more information on outings, or if you have an outings suggestion, contact Outings Chair Kirsten Trimble at 618.524.4166. While masks are not required outdoors, respect distancing and those who feel it necessary to wear a mask.

Rex's Great Adventure

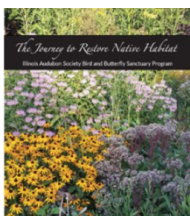
The recent Makanda Vulture Fest turned into a great outdoor adventure for Free Again's charge Rex the turkey vulture. I don't have the whole story. My understanding is that, as in past years, Rex was attending the Festival with the Shoftalls as a representative for all vultures. During the day something occurred that enabled Rex to slip away from his personal assistant and make his way to a treetop roost.

While his wings and feathers are in outstanding condition, as flying goes, Rex is a bit out of shape. And he has spent nearly his whole life in the company of humans so doesn't really know any food acquisition techniques or vulture etiquette. So, after several days of roughing it, Bev was able to convince Rex to cut his rustic camping trip short. He is now back home, possibly planning his next great adventure. -Rhonda R.

The Journey to Restore Native Habitat, Illinois Audubon Society Bird And Butterfly Sanctuary Program

The Illinois Audubon Society is offering a booklet to help promote the idea of converting Illinois lawns to oases of habitat featuring native species that benefit Illinois wildlife and require the landowner to spend less time on yard maintenance.

Download a free online copy at their website: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/BB-Web-Single-Final.pdf> or receive a copy in the mail by filling out a request on-line here: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/contact/>



122nd Christmas Bird Count Season > Dec. 14 - Jan. 5

It will soon be that time again! You can participate all day or for just part of a day. Some counts welcome feeder watchers. Count on your property if you don't want to commit to a bigger area. Contact the count compiler if you think you live within their circle. (And check with the compiler as to whether they support the use of eBird or the eBird app. Confirm with them that they accept lists forwarded via the eBird app/site instructions.)

This year counts will still be conducted following National Audubon Society (NAS) designated CoVid-19 pandemic guidelines

(<https://www.audubon.org/news/christmas-bird-count-compiler-announcements>), including:

- Carpooling should only occur within existing familiar or social "pod" groups.

- Activities must comply with all current federal, state, and municipal CoVid-19 guidelines. Be aware of public lands access rules or restrictions.

View local CBC circle maps at link below. (Circles at link are accurate but some count details might not yet be updated.)

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1TsWxNAYkCdxhJqHDKer3CUHKRYw&ll=37.299046743057865%2C-88.8572740082679&z=9>

Carlyle Lake- Dec. ??- Advanced registration required, contact compiler Dan Kassebaum at 618.233.5451, email at kdan@htc.net

Marion County- Dec. 14 (tentative date) - 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, email at jemerck2@yahoo.com

Mingo Wildlife Refuge (MO)- Dec. 14 - Advance registration required by Dec. 1st. Areas to cover will be confirmed via email prior to count day. Participants have to go either as solo birders, drive separately and maintain social distance when you are doing counting on foot, or bird with family. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com to register and work out details.

Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 17 - Advance registration required by Dec. 1st. Areas to cover will be confirmed via email prior to count day. Participants have to go either as solo birders, drive separately and maintain social distance when you are doing counting on foot, or bird with family. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com to register and work out details.

Rend Lake- Dec. 18 - Advanced registration required. Contact compiler Keith McMullen at 618.632.1057, email at warbler7@sbcglobal.net

War Bluff Valley- Dec. 18 - For details contact Andrea Douglas, compiler at 618.564.2079, email at anderatd@yahoo.com

Cypress Creek NWR- Dec. 20 - Advanced registration required. Contact Jeff Hoover via email at hoover_jeff@hotmail.com or cell phone 217.417.8277, prior to count day. Areas to cover will be assigned prior to the count and results are to be emailed to Jeff at the email address above. Participants can hike in bottomland forest all day or drive/hike in areas that are a mixture of agriculture, grassland, forest, and wetland habitats. We historically have had some of the highest species totals for Illinois, as well as high counts for several species.

Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 21 (tentative date) - To confirm date, to pre-register, and for area assignment contact compiler Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at 618.687.9868 prior to Dec. 14th. Participants must follow NAS guidelines.

Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk. - Dec. 27 - Advanced registration required. Meet at 6 a.m. on site on count day, at the parking lot in the Denmark Unit. (Turn south at the intersection of Pyatt-Culter Rd. & Denmark Rd., drive approx. .5 mile south to parking lot on right/west side of road.) Contact compiler Joe Merkelbach at 618.532.3112, email at jemerck2@yahoo.com.

Horseshoe Lake (Alexander Co.)- Dec. 28 - Advanced registration required. Details subject to change but as per past counts, 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 Sunday and Monday nights. Contact compiler Vern Kleen to confirm these lodging options. Contact Vern at 217.787.3515, email at vkleen@comcast.net

Union County- Dec. 29 - The 51st Union County CBC! Advance registration required. Contact Vern Kleen to verify details for meeting location and compilation at Anna McDonalds. Contact compiler Vern at 217.787.3515, email at vkleen@comcast.net

Mermet Lake- Dec. 30 - Advance registration required by Dec. 23rd. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Participants must follow NAS guidelines. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Middle Mississippi River NWR- Dec. 31 - Advance registration required by Dec. 23rd. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Participants must follow NAS guidelines. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Jackson County- Jan. 1 (2022) - Advance registration required by Dec. 23rd. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Participants must follow NAS guidelines. Feeder watchers wanted!*

***Feeder watchers wanted.** Contact Rhonda to confirm you live within one of the circles she compiles. If you live near Crab Orchard NWR, contact Vicki Lang-Mendenhall regarding being a feeder watcher during that count day. To be a feeder watcher, just record the highest total number of each species observed at any one time at the feeder/feeder area during the day of the count. Also record the number of hours spent during the day counting, 2 hours is the average amount of time for feeder watching.

16th Annual Alternative Gift Fair Sunday, Dec. 5th @ 2 P.M.

At the Carbondale Civic Center

200 S. Illinois Avenue, Carbondale
The Alternative Gift Fair is a Southern Illinois holiday tradition where shoppers can purchase "gifts that matter" from participating local non-profits. Admission is free. Masks are required.

Autumn Olive Removal Garden of the Gods on Tuesdays in November

UofI Extension partnered with Friends of the Shawnee National Forest and the U.S. Forest Service are holding invasive species autumn olive removal days at the Garden of the Gods National Recreation Area. Volunteers shifts are from 10:00 a.m. to noon or from noon to 2:00 p.m., removing invasive autumn olive shrubs using weed wrenches. Terrain maybe uneven with tripping hazards. Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring their own work gloves, safety glasses, and a face mask. This event is limited to 12 participants in order to follow recommended COVID guidelines from the UofI and Friends of the Shawnee. Registration required at: <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/registration/?RegistrationID=24445>
Meet in the Garden of the Gods Backpacking Parking Lot at Indian Point Loop, Herod, IL 62947.

Seeing Birds



White-throated sparrows help make cold winter days way more tolerable. They chip and call all day as they bounce around the yard and under shrubs searching for food. As the sun begins to set, their calling gets louder while they move into thicker cover for the night. Then their calls turn into their sweet, nearly ethereal song, "poor Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody" (or as some interpret it "pure sweet Canada Canada Canada.") It's a heartwarmingly serene end to a cold winter day.

-Rhonda R.

On 10/23, Amber Hanson wrote that it had been a good bird week for her even though she'd said good bye to her last ruby-throated hummingbird of summer. She welcomed her first white-throated sparrow of the season on 10/19. The next day her first dark-eyed junco arrived. Then on 10/23 her beloved red-breasted nuthatch returned followed by a white-crowned sparrow on 10/27.

As per eBird, a sandhill crane was spotted and photographed southeast of Marion along IL Rt. 166, approximately 3 miles south of IL Rt. 13 on 10/28. Eleven days later one (most likely the same one) was seen by Kevin Rohling near the same area off IL Rt. 166. At approximately 4.5-5 feet tall and 10-14 lbs., sandhill cranes are pretty unmistakable (and pretty.)

Joe Merkelbach had an interesting sighting while walking to the Dollar General, it is about a long block from his home in Centralia. There is a drainage ditch alongside highway 161 and as he got to the corner a red-shouldered hawk flew up from the ditch about 20 feet in front of him. The hawk stopped in a tree overhead. Joe images it was the resident red-shouldered that lives in his neighborhood.

John VanDyke spotted a Ross's goose among a flock of white-fronted geese at Heron Flats on Crab Orchard NWR on 11/12.

Five SIAS members braved the first really cold morning of fall on 11/13 to bird at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. Phyllis Beck, Jill Hertzinger, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall, Kirsten Trimble, and Rhonda Rothrock, along with hot coffee, met at Bogart Point tallying a combined total of 25 species in 2 hours. While they were unsuccessful in locating a Franklin's gull said to be in the area, they did see an American avocet, a pied-billed grebe, a large flock of ruddy ducks, green-winged teals, and 3 species of shorebirds just a bit too far away for positive IDs. As the last 3 birders walked back to their cars, small flocks of rusty blackbirds flew off from the nearby treetops.

Vicki-Lang Mendenhall and Rhonda Rothrock will discuss the ABCs of CBCs (Christmas Bird Counts) on Dec. 4th at Martha's Theater across from Headquarters Rd. on Crab Orchard NWR. This discussion will be a way to introduce folks to the methods used and effort requirements needed to successfully contribute to a Christmas bird count. As part of the discussion, attendees will be led along the Harmony Trail to learn tips for identifying birds in winter. We'll meet at 9 a.m. for 2 hours. Please RSVP to Rhonda at: woodthrusheola@hotmail.com

Confirmed Parthenogenesis In California Condors

It has recently been determined that female California Condors — those large, critically endangered vultures of the mountainous Southwest — are capable of asexual reproduction, despite access to fertile mates.

The discovery was made during a routine analysis of biological samples from the birds. Since the 1980s, biologists have been breeding California Condors in captivity, carefully monitoring the birds and their parentage. In the case of two male condor chicks, it was determined that the birds' genetic material matched that of their mothers but not of any males.

This type of asexual reproduction is known as parthenogenesis, and is rarely documented in birds. In fact, this may be the first known case of parthenogenesis in a wild bird species. It leads us to wonder whether this sort of "virgin birth" occurs in the wild more than we realize. At any rate, it is a fascinating discovery and may have a role in the future conservation of the species.

Since the captive breeding program began in 1983, California Condors have been reintroduced to the mountains of southern California, Arizona, Utah, and northern Baja California in Mexico. From <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/>

Widespread Coronavirus Found In Iowa Deer

Analysis recently released by Penn State and Iowa researchers indicates that deer are getting the coronavirus from humans. Experts now worry about a deep wild reservoir for the virus. The study of hundreds of white-tailed deer infected with the virus in Iowa found that the animals are likely contracting the virus from humans then rapidly spreading it among one another. They were not able to identify specifically how the deer might have contracted the virus from humans. They add that there's no reason to believe that the same thing isn't happening in other states where deer are present.

Up to 80% of deer sampled in Iowa from April 2020 thru January 2021 were infected. It's a troubling development and could make eradicating the pathogen even more difficult. The study has yet to be published in a peer-reviewed science journal but its authors found the results so disturbing that they are alerting deer hunters and others who handle deer to take precautions to avoid transmission.

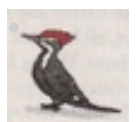
A number of other animal species are susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes CoVid-19 in humans. If the virus were to become endemic in wild animals like deer, it could evolve over time to become more virulent and then infect humans with a new strain capable of evading currently available vaccines.

As scientists probed deeper, using tests to decode the genomic makeup of each viral sample, they found similar patterns between the emergence of mutations and variants in the state's deer population and those infecting people. Researchers said that offered stronger proof of human-to-deer transmission as well as evidence that deer were then spreading the virus to one another at a rapid pace. Mapping the location of each sample also suggested the infections were occurring simultaneously across the state as hunting season ramped up. The study's authors say it is unclear whether the deer were sickened by the infection.

How the virus passes from people to deer is not entirely clear. Rachel Ruden, Iowa's state wildlife veterinarian and an author of the study, said there were plenty of opportunities for transmission given that 445,000 deer roam the state. The virus can spread when people feed deer in their backyard, through sewage discharges, or maybe when an animal licks a splotch of chewing tobacco left behind by an infected hunter. "Perhaps it doesn't take much of a loading dose to get deer infected," she said. "But either way, all of this is a striking example that we're all in this pandemic together."

Excerpts from: *Widespread Coronavirus Infection Found in Iowa Deer, New Study Says*
Full story at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/02/science/deer-covid-infection.html>

Wild animals can get CoVid from humans? Oh deer!



To Join SIAS or Renew Your Membership, please fill in this form and return it with payment. Thank You!

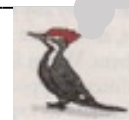
Individual Member \$15
 Family \$25
 Student Voting Member \$ 5
 Donation _____
 Amount Enclosed \$ _____

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

I/We would like to receive our newsletter via email: YES / NO
 If you receive your newsletter electronically,
 contact Laraine W. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.

What would you call me
 if I only consider
 renewing my dues?
 A wouldpecker!



3 Billion Birds Gone Across the continent, numbers of birds have plummeted, even among common species. In less than a single lifetime, North America has lost more than 1 in 4 of its birds (30%), according to a report in the journal *Science*. The findings by researchers at 7 institutions show that 2.9 billion breeding adult birds have been lost since 1970, including birds in every ecosystem. The losses include eastern and western meadowlarks (down by 139 million) and favorite feeders visitors, such as dark-eyed juncos (down by 168 million) and sweet-singing white-throated sparrows (down by 93 million). The disappearance of even common species indicates a general shift in our ecosystems' ability to support basic birdlife, the scientists conclude. Full report at: <https://www.3billionbirds.org/>

SIAS Board of Directors

President: Joe Merkelbach 618.832.3112
 Vice President & Programs Chair:
 Vicki Lang-Mendenhall 618.897.9888
 Secretary: Mary McCarthy 618.884.8182
 Treasurer: Laraine Wright 618.457.8789
 Conservation/Education Chair:
 Cathie Hutcheson 618.529.2022
 Finance Chair: Greg Kupiec 618.654.5188

Hospitality: Phyllis Beck
 618.549.9619 Outings: Kirsten Trimble
 618.521.4266
 Membership Chair & Newsletter Editor:
 Rhonda Rothrock 618.884.8808 Or
 woodthrushes@hotmail.com
 SIAS Webmaster: Jim Shofstall
 SIAS email: slaudubonsociety@gmail.com
 SIAS Website: <http://www.slaudubon.org>

Canada's Boreal Forest - North America's Bird Nursery

Canada's boreal forest is the largest intact forest in North America and one of the largest intact forest left on Earth. Stretching from Alaska to Labrador, it provides nesting grounds and migratory stopovers for nearly half of the common bird species found in North America. Every fall, up to 5 billion birds pour out of the boreal forest and fly south to backyards, parks, and wildlands throughout the Western Hemisphere. Caribou, bears, wolves, lynxes, wolverines, and countless other species thrive in the boreal in numbers rarely seen elsewhere as well.

The boreal forest captures and stores enormous amounts of carbon, especially within its soils, peatlands, and permafrost. It is home to a quarter of the world's wetlands, with millions of lakes – including some of the largest and most pristine on Earth – and the longest free-flowing rivers remaining in North America. Visit the following Audubon website to watch a wide selection of videos about boreal forest and its residents: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/boreal-forests>

Yet the boreal forest is under constant threat from logging, hydrodams, and mining. Worst of all is tar sands oil extraction. Visit the Natural Resources Defense Council's website where you can scroll down to sign a petition asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to develop a comprehensive plan to protect the boreal forest before it's too late. <https://www.nrdc.org/save-canadian-boreal>

Knock, knock! Who's there? Anna. Anna who? Anna partridge in a pear tree.

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*



7 Simple Actions to Help Birds

