



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

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

The Ultimate Winter Bird Survey: Summary of the First Ever Christmas Bird Count Marathon

is this month's program via Zoom, on **Friday, October 28th at 7 P.M.** Kelly McKay is a World Class birder and independent research biologist. His presentation will give an overview and history of the Christmas Bird Count Program. Kelly will also describe the successful competition of the first Christmas Bird Count Marathon by discussing each individual count and highlighting noteworthy birds identified. Kelly will be assisted by his good friend Mark Roberts, Naturalist for Clinton County Iowa and avid birder.

During this presentation Kelly will discuss the specifics of the Christmas Bird Count Program (CBC) and discuss how we utilized years of CBC data to monitor the population trends of several raptor species throughout eastern Iowa and western Illinois.

Kelly covers miles and miles of fields and woods in Iowa and Illinois as part of a project that brings tens of thousands of people from across the country together for the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. For 23 days volunteers will fan out across the region not just to identify different species of birds but to also count every one. It's significant because it's something that's been going on every year for more than 100 years.

"It's the longest continuous wildlife survey on the planet," Kelly says. Experts work side-by-side with ordinary 'citizen scientists' to pool their findings. The long-term data is then used to establish trends, whether they are changes in the bird population or changes in where they migrate. "What we've seen over the last quarter century, is the winter ranges of a lot of these species are shifting dramatically northward," Kelly said. "We think that's due to climate change," he added.

Kelly has been part of the count since the 1980s and has seen some species decline while others have increased. And while chemicals were once the biggest threat to birds, today he says it is the loss of habitat. In fact, scientists have found that tracking bird patterns is much like a canary in a coal mine. "They're sort of an indicator of our environment as a whole, so it's incredibly important," he said. And so is the community Christmas Bird Count. Kelly has been coming to southernmost Illinois for years to participate in counts down here as part of his marathon effort.

This presentation will be via Zoom. Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88085150120?pwd=TGdLVm85Sk94eExJVjBQRzZNUkZJZz09>

If you have to manually type in the link, use this shortened version:

shorturl.at/hCF0Z

Meeting ID: 880 8515 0120 Passcode: 391654 Dial by your location: +1 312 626 6799

September SIAS Program Highlights: The Beauty of Science

Tara Kate stated that she was not formally trained in any form of art. Rather, she has a PhD in Biology from the University of Illinois. She came to art just ten years ago but she believes she's reached the level to call herself an artist in only the last six years. Illustration is her preferred medium for expressing herself and her ideas.

Tara stated that her interpretation of Art is Visual imagery created primarily for aesthetic or intellectual purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness while Illustration is imagery created to explain a text, concept or process. Her images have a story to tell. She shared a charming story about a scrub jay that she observed and illustrated as it went on with life after injuring its leg. (see right leg in illustration bottom left)

Tara stated that she enjoyed sharing her ideas and methods with others and has taught art classes. When asked if she was planning to publish any books, Tara admitted that she was working on illustrations for a book her husband Doug (Robinson) was writing on the Birds of Oregon. To learn more about Tara or to contact her about her art or art classes, visit her website at <http://www.tarakatedesigns.com/>. Tara was inspiring! -RR



Kelly scoping
for waterfowl

SIAS Meeting & Program

Calendar *Kudos to Vicki for great programming!*

Nov./Dec. combined meeting (to avoid holiday conflicts) will be held on Dec. 2nd

Tara Beveroth Avian Ecologist with Illinois Natural History Survey, *final zoom program*

Jan. 27th Annual meeting, potluck, and presentation in person at First United Methodist Church (basement) in Carbondale

Feb. 24. March 24, (April 28 tentative) meeting/program at Carbondale Township Hall

May 21 (date subject to change) picnic

Summer break

August 25, Sept. 22, December 1 meeting/program at Carbondale Town Hall

Possible 2nd picnic in September

October 27 meeting/program potluck at Carbondale Town Hall

In Memoriam: Clara McClure

Longtime member Clara McClure, 92, died on June 8 at her beloved retreat of Lopez Island, Washington. Clara and her companion, Stan Harris, led many wildflower and geology hikes for us and the Sierra Club. She was a social worker, political and environmental activist, and co-founder of the Women's Center, among many other interests. Many of us celebrated her life of service to others and the Earth at her memorial on October 15 in Carbondale. — Laraine Wright

IOS Big Sit & SIAS Picnic a Perfect Combo

It was fun having a fall picnic at Evergreen Park even with the brutal wind. It was that much more fun to have it while three of us were there birding for the IOS Big Sit Fundraiser. Our Big Sit team tallied 62 species total, including the prettiest cormorant ever. And, thanks to our generous SIAS members, our team raised \$303 of our \$600 goal. In all, IOS raised \$4660 for bird research and conservation in IL and in support of their Youth Birder programming.

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...because the Mississippi is so low, everyone's heading to Tower Rock

INPS Management Field Tours

Oct. 29th, 10:00 a.m. - 300 p.m.

If you have your own property you are looking to manage or are interested in forest restoration, join the IL Native Plant Society for a tour of two properties in Union County! The first tour will be of a homestead owned by Dave Nadolski, who manages his property with fire, TSI, and invasive species removal. The second property is the public Trail of Tears State Forest. IDNR District Forester Ben Snyder will provide information on how the forest is managed through fire, TSI, and invasive species removal. Space is limited for this tour so please pre-register at:

<https://forms.gle/L5faGcMKwdxmduiK9>

Boo at the Slough in the Cache

Oct. 30th, 1:00 - 3 p.m.

Join folks at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center for Boo at the Slough! Families are invited to hike through the Egret Slough Trail behind the Wetlands Center on a guided trick-or-treating adventure to meet misunderstood creatures of the swamp. There will be games, crafts, and more! Everyone is welcome to wear their Halloween costume! This a free event, open to the public, and offered by Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, Friends of the Cache, and UofI Extension. Pre-register today at go.illinois.edu/booattheslough22

Garden of the Gods, SNF, Invasive Species Removal

Nov. 1, 8, 12, 29 (Tuesdays) & Nov.12 (Saturday) - 10:00 a.m.-2 p.m.

Join the Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, the U.S. Forest Service, UofI Extension office, and River to River Cooperative Weed Management in an effort to remove the invasive Autumn Olive that has taken root along the entrance road to Garden of the Gods. This will be very physical work; wrenching out trees, chopping roots, and removing the debris from the area. Wear appropriate clothing, bring some water, a snack, and your hard-working self. Pre-register please at go.illinois.edu/AutumnOliveRemoval For more info, visit https://www.facebook.com/shawneefriends/?ref=page_internal

Giant City, Off the Beaten Path

Nov. 10, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Jennifer Randolph-Bollinger, Natural Resources Coordinator, Giant City State Park, will give this presentation for the Shawnee Sierra Club at Carbondale Township Mtg. Room (use back door). Public welcome, but limited to first 25 people per Township and Sierra Club requirements.

Most people have walked the "streets" of Giant City and visited the CCC built lodge, but Giant City has lesser known treasures to find if you know where to look. Join Jennifer as she shares some of her favorite off-the-beaten-path gems. Masks required!

2nd Saturday Monthly Birding with SIAS

Nov. 12th Outing at Bogart Point, CONWR, 9:00-11:00 AM

Nov. 10, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Directions (from Carbondale, IL Rt. 13): Take IL-13 east to S Division St in Carterville, 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 right/south onto N Wolf Creek Rd. Continue south to the causeway. Turn left/west into parking lot. Walk to the point **NOTE**— Day use passes are required on Crab Orchard Refuge and can be purchased at the Headquarters Bldg.

Christmas Bird Count Season Dec. 14 - Jan. 5

Christmas Bird Count Season is just under two months away.

It will be the 122nd year of this important bird census.

All local counts with dates and details will follow in the November newsletter but will likely parallel last year.

CONWR Bluebird Nesting Report for 2022

There are currently 140 bluebird nest boxes on Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge being monitored each season, spring to fall, by a host of volunteers (including several SIAS members).

Aimee Hemphill, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Bluebird Trail coordinator, reports that there were 136 nesting attempts by bluebirds this season. Ninety-eight broods were monitored. Five-hundred and three eggs were laid, 402 of the eggs hatched, and 371 hatchlings fledged!

Aimee, states that this year's nest fledgling success of 371 is a 240% increase over last year's (2021) number of 152 but not as good as in 2019 when there were 667 bluebird chicks that fledged.

Additionally, this season, there were 204 tree swallow broods with 167 eggs laid and 164 chicks fledged. Other species using the boxes included Carolina wrens (4 eggs, 3 chicks fledged), Carolina chickadees (11 eggs, 5 chicks fledged), house wrens (31 eggs laid, 29 chicks fledged), and tufted titmouse (5 eggs laid, 5 chicks fledged).

The Crab Orchard NW Refuge "Bluebird Trail" began several decades ago. Many thanks to Aimee and all the dedicated bluebird monitors over all these years. Hopefully it will continue for many decades to come!



Watch the Skies for Upchucking Gulls *By Laraine Wright*

These next few paragraphs should be put aside if you are having your dinner right now. Otherwise, read on to discover just what it is that herring gulls eat on a daily basis if they can find this stuff to begin with. I share this information from a new book called "Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law" by Mary Roach, a popular, funny, interesting writer of every day science. (She has also written "Stiff," "Gulp," and "Spook." I recommend them all.)

On a trip to Rome and the Vatican, she asked how the Catholics prevent gulls from destroying huge displays of fresh flowers in St. Peter's Square ahead of outdoor ceremonies and services. For 2017 Easter, many thousands of daffodils and roses were set out ahead in pots. By 6 a.m., the flowers had been plucked and ruined. Curious gulls had yanked them out to look for (perhaps, who knows?) nothing but worms.

Roach's book examines worldwide efforts to control animals considered pests. Thankfully, these days it usually means non-lethal means of discouraging (for example) birds from nesting by runways and invading farm fields.

Back to the gulls. One issue in trying to escort them away has to do with their diet. They eat just about everything. She lists bologna, ants, strawberry shortcake, mackerel, hot dogs, mice, rats, squid, sanitary napkins, lobster bait, eider ducklings, beetles, chicken drumsticks, muffin wrappers, loaded baby diapers, spaghetti marinara.

How do we know this? Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania studying herring gull colonies got vomited on by the defensive gulls. The theory is that the gulls are offering their own tastier stomach food to tempt potential predators from eating the gulls themselves. It is not, by the way, to make their bodies a bit lighter so they can fly more quickly away. As we have all witnessed, if you have a pile of French fries at your picnic table, gulls aren't easily scared off by your flapping arms and shouts of "scat."

The Vatican gull problem, Mary Roach tells us, has been solved by the use of flashing laser beams aimed at the flowers, low enough not to hurt either human or gull eyes. She also reports that just a few gulls in each colony are cannibals, eating their own and neighboring gull chicks. The rest are loving model parents. In most societies, it is just a few psychopaths that ruin the reputation of all the nice others. Think about that now while you finish your dinner.

Increased Tourism results in Infrastructure Improvements in a form of Uncompensated Eminent Domain

When areas like southernmost Illinois were first settled, those settlers made and regularly used trails from their homesteads to the homesteads of their relatives and neighbors and on to developing towns. Over time, those trails became regularly used dirt roads. Many of those dirt roads are now county, state, or federal roads covered in gravel, oil and chip, or asphalt. Some of those roads are the backbone of our countries intermodal transportation system.

In many locations throughout southernmost Illinois, evidence of the origins of those roads still exists and can be seen wherever such roads pass through what seems like bulldozed road cuts. But they are actually erosion made many years earlier by decades of horse drawn wagons and Model "T" Fords as they progressed through dust and mud.

As most of those roads originated at or passed adjacent to someone's homestead, a farm in most cases, they were on land owned by those settlers. It's reasonable to believe that, over all, those landowners welcomed the county or state improvements to those dirt roads...gravel then in some cases oil and chip. Progress! Maybe they didn't realize they would still have liability to pay taxes on that land. Maybe they believed that the improvement of roads on that small amount of their land was worth losing other use of it even though they would still hold liability for it, including taxes. Whether they realized it or not, whether they had a choice or not, they gave the node to public use of their land at their own annual expense.

When Illinois became a state in 1818, the Illinois Constitution allowed the state and local taxing districts to tax property in direct proportion to its value. The last year the State of Illinois imposed real estate taxes was 1932. Since then, property taxes have only been imposed by local government taxing districts. See [Illinois Property Tax System](#)

Eminent Domain as defined by Cornell Law School https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/eminent_domain refers to the power of the government to take private property and convert it into public use. Eminent Domain is recognized as part of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Federal Government may only exercise this power if they provide just compensation to the property owners. Federal Eminent Domain power was first examined by the U.S. Supreme Court 1876 in Kohl v. United States. This case presented a landowner's challenge to the power of the United States to condemn land in Cincinnati, Ohio for use as a custom house and post office building.

The road to the Little Grand Canyon, Hickory Ridge Road, bisects our property. The land the road occupies is our property. It's been a road since long before Rob bought the property. It appears to be one of the original roads. The age of the road is somewhat discernable by the exposed roots of one of our large old roadside oak that stands about 12 feet above the road. (The basement of our neighbors' home was built in that same road bed, years after part of the road was rerouted.) For over 45 years Rob has paid taxes on the acreage the road occupies, as did the previous owners. It was gravel when Rob bought the place, it is now oil and chip and slightly wider than before. While he doesn't miss the dust that rose from cars driving down the gravel road, the increased speeding traffic that enjoys the "hard" road has become dangerous. We daily cross the road to access our shed and barn, each time we must carefully listen and watch for vehicles that often zoom down the hill from Fairview Church. On weekends the traffic is often intolerable. Visualize 75 loud Harley-Davidson motorcycles or 200+ Jeep-type vehicles all in a row on a fundraising "poker run."

There is a group who are proposing that the Shawnee National Forest (SNF) be eliminated. They have issue with the Forest Service so want a National Park and "Climate Preserve" instead. One of their selling points is that this would be a tourist boom for southernmost IL. Based on their own definition, a "Climate Preserve" and increased tourism are counterintuitive. If the Shawnee National Forest were to be eliminated to be replaced in this way, infrastructure improvements would undoubtedly be needed. In this day and age, neither the US Forest Service nor the National Park Service take land through Eminent Domain. But infrastructure improvements would result in a version of un-compensated Eminent Domain.

The road through our place that runs to the Little Grand Canyon and beyond through the SNF, would need to be widened and improved to carry the touted tourist traffic load. Folks like us living in rural southernmost IL, living along the roads or with roads cutting through their property, would lose more of our land for those infrastructure improvements without financial compensation. Because, unlike eminent domain, the land wouldn't be purchased from us. We wouldn't receive the financial compensation that eminent domain provides. Land for these types of roads is not purchased, it is just used. We would lose our land, more of our land, but would still be the owners of it so we would still be required to pay the taxes on that land. And it's more than just a financial burden, it's a major safety issue. Improved roads encourage faster, more reckless driving.

This non-paying eminent domain type of situation would occur to land owners throughout southernmost Illinois. Folks like us already go day to day not knowing when some vehicle accident will occur to others or ourselves. Our infamous dachshund-mix Bean only has three legs because she darted from the north side of our property, across the bisecting road, to the south side at just the time a car shot down it from Fairview Church hill. Call me selfish but we and others like us cherish our quality of life in rural areas of southernmost IL. While some might gain from a touted increase in tourism this proposal is touted to bring, many of us would lose both financially as well as with regard to our safety and quality of life.

And, personally, I love the Shawnee National Forest as the Shawnee National Forest. May the Forest Be With You!

-Rhonda Rothrock

Nearly 1 million people come from around the country to visit the Shawnee National Forest annually!

1 million!
Would that be a
murmuration?

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



It's Oaktober, Again! -By Mike Baltz

Oaktober started in 2015 when October was officially proclaimed as Oak Awareness Month in Illinois. It makes sense. Our State Tree is the White Oak and there are twenty species of oak trees native to Illinois. To put that in context, Illinois is one of the 'oakiest' states in the country.

While I might sound like a broken record as I extoll the virtues of oaks, ecologically, oaks are 'keystone species' in our Illinois forests meaning that other species in the ecosystem depend on them and if they were removed it would be a disaster for the ecosystem.

For example, the caterpillars of hundreds of moth and butterfly species feed on oak leaves. In turn, those insects are an important food source for birds during migration and through the summer. Deer, turkey, squirrels, and other species also feed on the acorns that oaks produce. Those squirrels and other small mammals are then important food sources for foxes and bobcats.

Oaks have historically dominated Illinois forests with the majority still classified as oak/hickory forest types (3.3 million acres/ 68%). However, while the number of forested acres in Illinois is increasing (from a low of 3 million to 4.75 million acres in 2012), the dominance of oaks is waning.

This is due in large part to almost a century of fire prevention that began in the 1930's. Prior to that time, relatively frequent fires favored the survival of fire-resistant oaks and discouraged the growth of shade-tolerant tree species, like beech and maple. Invasive species have also become a huge threat to oak regeneration and forest health, in the last 100 years.

Today, oak saplings make up just 1% of young trees in some forests while many of the mature oaks are reaching the end of their lifespans. Our southern Illinois forests have essentially become 'old oaks homes', which is bad news for our wildlife.

The approximately 300,000-acre Shawnee National Forest is ground-zero for this forest conversion and researchers at SIU have predicted that the oak forests of the 'Illinois Ozarks' may convert to beech-maple forests in less than 30 years.

The good news is that it's not too late to save our oak forests and current management of the Shawnee National Forest for oak regeneration is being guided by the best available science. And there is literally a small army of dedicated conservation professionals working toward that end.

Not surprisingly, there is a local group making claims that the professional conservation community is misguided in its oak protection efforts. And that group is actively promoting a change in designation of the Shawnee National Forest to a National Park.

However, the proposed National Park idea is opposed by well-known conservation groups including The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, American Bird Conservancy, Sierra Club, and others, specifically due to concerns that National Park status would limit necessary forest management actions.

Needless to say, I'm siding with the professionals on this, because like they say, every disaster movie starts with folks ignoring the scientists. And a future without oaks in southern Illinois would truly be a disaster for our wildlife. Long live Oaktober!

For more info about oaks and oak ecosystem conservation efforts in southern IL visit www.letthesunshinein.life.

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When all the proposed timber management in the current Shawnee National Forest plan occurs, only some of those acres will actually have trees removed from them. The selective tree removal and follow-up work in the current management plan areas will take years. These management efforts overall will affect less than .03% of the 289,000 acres of the Shawnee National Forest.



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

