



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

NEWSLETTER

November/December 2022 - Vol. 29 No. 9

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

The Importance of Bird Monitoring

Bird monitoring has multiple benefits and not just for the birds. **Join in on Friday, December 2nd, at 7 P.M. for a Zoom program by Tara Beveroth**, to hear about why we monitor birds and a few of the different research projects that are currently taking place in Illinois.

Tara Beveroth is an Avian Ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. She primarily works for the Critical Trends Assessment Program (CTAP) which is a long-term monitoring program that assesses the biological condition of Illinois' forests, wetlands and grasslands. She also co-coordinates the statewide Illinois Spring Bird Count with Mike Ward and coordinates the Monitoring of Owls and Nightjars Program.

This presentation will be via Zoom. Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87493584336?pwd=bnFiajZyVk9zdjAvRnQldXp5RWVwUT09>

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

<https://tinyurl.com/ytdtacf>

Meeting ID: 874 9358 4336 Passcode: 135597 Dial by your location: +1 312 626 6799

October SIAS Program Highlights: The Ultimate Winter Bird Survey: Summary of the First Ever Christmas Bird Count Marathon

The October presentation was quite a ride and participants didn't have to even leave their homes. Kelly McKay, with the assistance of his good friend Mark Roberts, took us along for his first 23-day Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Marathon, from December 14, 2003 to January 5, 2004.

He described each count, the count date and location, special aspects of the count, the weather conditions, and the number of species tallied. He provided images of a few birds seen during each count. Kelly added details like how far he drove from one circle to the next, from as far south as Alexander County IL for the Horseshoe Lake Count, as far west as Cedar Rapids Iowa, as far north as Adams County Wisconsin, and as far east as the Chicago Lake Front. Kelly stated that were 6 species he tallied on all 23 of the marathon counts: rock dove, American crow, downy woodpecker, American tree sparrow, house sparrow, and European starling. He added that he caught up on the most sleep while he was down here in southernmost Illinois participating in 4 counts in a row.

One thing extra special to Kelly that year, and all following years, was the Jackson County count compilation and dinner hosted by Anton and David Kvernes. It helped power him up for the long drive north to his next count. (David and Anton hosted this dinner compilation for 15 years. Anton always prepared two soup options that were always outstanding. We all will be forever grateful to them for the many years of wonderful meals, the warm home, and excellent comradery.) *-Rhonda R.*

CBC Marathon Man - by Matthew Cvetas, Past President of the IL Ornithological Society

Twenty-three consecutive days of winter birding no matter how bitter the cold. Rising before dawn to listen for owls and staying up late to compile the day's sightings. Thousands of miles of driving often traveling through the night without sleep to get to the next destination, sometimes navigating treacherous stretches of highway in blizzard like conditions. Sound like heaven or hell?

To the National Audubon Society, it's officially the nation's longest-running citizen science project, designed to capture long-term data on the status and distribution of bird species. Every day during the count period (December 14 - January 5), all across the United States, birders and conservation enthusiasts alike gather to count birds within a well-defined 15-mile-wide circle. Many Christmas Bird Count "CBCers" participate in a single count and then not another until the following year.

To wildlife biologist and CBC iron man, Kelly McKay, the count is a chance to do what he loves most - identify as many bird species as possible in a day while also contributing to science. Unlike most who are "one and done," Kelly attempts to contribute to a different CBC every day of the count period, a grueling 8+ hour/day logistically challenging feat known as the "CBC marathon."



ILLINOIS
Illinois Natural History Survey
PRAIRIE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
SPRING BIRD COUNT
IN PROGRESS
IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:
Tara Beveroth
1856 S. Oak St.
Champaign, IL 61820
217-265-7369
beveroth@illinois.edu

SIAS Meeting & Program

Calendar *Kudos to Vicki L. for great programming!*

Jan. 27th Annual meeting, potluck, and presentation **in person** at First United Methodist Church (basement) in Carbondale. Speaker will be John Schwegman presenting some of his rare and unusual nature photos.

As of January 2023, we will resume in-person meetings at the Carbondale Township Hall, unless otherwise stated in the newsletter.

Feb. 24 - Dr. Joy O'Keefe on Bat Ecosystems

March 24 - Dr. Brent Pease on Sounds of Nature

April 28 (tentative) - to be announced

May 21 (date subject to change) picnic
June & July - Summer break

On top of that, Kelly compiles the data for not one but seven count circles, a significant challenge in itself.

Inspired in the early 1980s as a teenager by his mentor and avian biologist, Pete Peterson, Kelly has now participated in more than 568 CBCs all time.

It wasn't until the 2002 - 2003 season that Kelly began to plan his first marathon, but he quickly ran into problems. He couldn't find a count within reach on three count days! The following year, Kelly started planning much earlier and on January 5, 2004, after the Andalusia IL CBC, he successfully completed his first marathon. In January 2022, he finished his 13th marathon of the last 19 years, 568 counts covering more than 25 counties in 5 states - Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

While Kelly takes his CBC participation very seriously, he doesn't expect many to even think about let alone attempt a CBC marathon. He does hope his story inspires others to get more involved in community citizen science projects to advocate for bird conservation and preserve our state's biodiversity.

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...it's beginning to look a lot like winter

Shawnee National Forest Christmas Tree Permit

Now Through Dec 31st

This \$5 permit allows you to cut a Christmas Tree, an eastern red cedar, within designated areas of the Shawnee National Forest. Lifelong memories are built during these special times. As it can be hard to find the "perfect" tree, the Forest Service recommends a preliminary scouting trip to identify an area with a good selection of red cedars. To view maps of areas where trees can be cut or to acquire a permit, visit: <https://www.recreation.gov/tree-permits/3fe0d0df-ec5b-11ea-bc8a-fa43c1aabcce3>

Garden of the Gods, SNF, Invasive Species Removal

Nov. 29 (Tuesday) – 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

Marlene Rivero as Harriet Tubman at Giant City SP

Dec. 3 (Saturday), 1-2 p.m.

Marlene Rivero brings Harriet Tubman to life as she reenacts the life of this civil rights activist and abolitionist at Giant City State Park Visitor Center. Learn more about Harriet's life, and how songs and signal quilts communicated information for runaway slaves during her time in the Underground Railroad. This is a free indoor presentation but space is limited, so registration is required. Call 618.457.4836 to register. The Visitor Center is located at 1-245 Giant City Rd., Makanda.

Illinois Botanizer's Best of Illinois Nature 2022

Dec. 4 (Sunday), 2-3 p.m.

Botanist Chris Benda (a.k.a. Illinois Botanizer) travels throughout Illinois every year, visiting nature preserves, leading nature tours for the public, and encountering all kinds of neat plants and animals. Join Chris at Giant City State Park Visitor Center as he presents photographs highlighting his best nature encounters of 2022. The Visitor Center is located at 1-245 Giant City Rd., Makanda. Call 618.457.4836 to register.

2nd Saturday Monthly Birding with SIAS

Outing at Bogart Point, CONWR, 9:00-11:00 AM

Dec. 10th, 9:00 – 11:00 a.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

Be Aware if out in nature: Illinois is in the middle of hunting season.

Archery season runs from October 1 to January 15 but is closed during firearm deer seasons. Next firearm season is December 1 - 4 with muzzleloader season Dec. 9 - 11.

123rd Christmas Bird Count Season > Dec. 14 - Jan. 5

Your Help Needed! 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 or check the CBC map at the following link to see if you're are: <https://audubon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ac275eeb01434cedb1c5dcd0fd3fc7b4>

Marion County- (?) - 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. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com to register and work out details. Areas to cover will be confirmed via email prior to count day.

Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 17 - Advance registration required by Dec. 1st. Contact compiler Dr. Bill Eddleman at weddleman@semo.com to register and details.

Rend Lake- Dec. 17 - Advanced registration required. Contact compiler Keith McMullen at 618.632.1057, email at warbler7@sbcglobal.net

War Bluff Valley- Dec. 17 - For details contact Andrea Douglas, compiler at 618.564.2079, email at anderatd@yahoo.com

Cypress Creek NWR- Dec. 19 - 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.

Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 20 - To pre-register and for area assignment, contact compiler Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at 618.687.9868 prior to Dec. 14th.

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 Tuesday and Wednesday 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 - 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. 10th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock at 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Middle Mississippi River NWR- Dec. 31 - Advance registration required by Dec. 10th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock via phone 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

Jackson County- Jan. 1 (2022) - Advance registration required by Dec. 10th. To register and for assignments contact compiler Rhonda Rothrock. Via phone 618.684.6605, text 618.543.8659, or email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com. Feeder watchers wanted!*

***Feeder watchers wanted.** Contact Rhonda to confirm that 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. Record the number of hours spent during the day counting, no more than 2 hours.

If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix In -by Mike Baltz

At a recent Carbondale City Council meeting, there was a presentation specific to a proposal to create a Shawnee National Park and Climate Preserve, presented by a representative of a group calling themselves the "Shawnee Defenders." To summarize the 30-plus minute presentation in a few words: A National Park would be better than the current National Forest and it would also help fight climate change.

The group has been actively trying to drum-up support for the change in designation, suggesting, among other things, that a National Park would be a boon to local economies. What's important to know, however, is that the Forest-to-Park idea has not been supported by a virtual who's who of national conservation groups active in Southern Illinois, including The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, American Bird Conservancy, and the Sierra Club.

Put simply, the professional conservation community's opposition to the proposal could be summed-up as, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" But to elaborate, opposition is mostly specific to concerns about forest management, or the potential lack thereof, as a National Park.

First, it is important to understand that the ecology of our Southern Illinois oak forests is currently out of whack. Oaks have historically dominated Illinois forests, but while the number of forested acres in Illinois is increasing 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 an '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 by the U.S. Forest Service of the Shawnee National Forest for oak regeneration is being guided by the best available science — management actions that are supported by, and contributed to, by all the professional conservation interests in the region.

Having said all that, the concern of the professional conservation community is that a change in designation from National Forest, managed by the Forest Service, to a National Park, managed by the Park Service, could jeopardize our Southern Illinois forests because National Parks, by definition, are managed more for recreation than they are for forest health. And as stated above, without proper management, our oak forests will soon cease to be the forests that our wildlife depends on.

Unfortunately, an ugly part of the 'pro-Park' campaign has been an effort to smear the Forest Service and misrepresent their management of the forest, with an emphasis on timber harvest activities. So, here is some clarification:

First, there is no clear-cutting on the Forest. Rather, there are areas that are selectively cut, reducing the density of trees and canopy cover so as to let more light into the forest. The result is a less-dense stand of trees that will encourage oak regeneration. I have recently walked areas that are being actively harvested on the Shawnee and I have seen this with my own eyes.

Second, the level of planning, regulation, oversight, and monitoring involved in timber harvests on the Shawnee guarantees that these efforts dot every 'i' and cross every 'T' legally and that they are ecologically beneficial to the forest. In comparison, there are really no legal constraints on timber harvests on private land, often resulting in timber harvests that are ecological disasters.

Finally, there are just a few hundred acres being cut on the forest, annually, in contrast to pro-Park references to thousands of acres scheduled for harvest. To clarify, when the Forest Service plans a project, only a fraction of that project area is scheduled to be harvested, and only a fraction of that fraction is actually harvested.

Regarding a Climate Preserve designation for a new Park, restricting the selective cutting of a few hundred acres of forest, which is all a Forest-to-Park transition might actually accomplish, would clearly not qualify as a contribution to the fight against climate change, above-and-beyond what the Shawnee National Forest already contributes in the form of carbon sequestration. In summary, friends I'm siding with the scientists and conservation professionals on this, and they are saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

And if there is some potential economic benefit to a few business owners to be gained from a National Park in Southern Illinois, but forest health suffers because of it, then, in the end, we all lose.

Mike Baltz has a doctorate in ecology; is a 20-plus year resident of Jackson County and a former Southern Illinois area director for The Nature Conservancy.



Image by naturalist Mary Ronan, Pennsylvania

FROST FLOWER

It's been warm so watch for possible late frost flowers. Frost flowers develop when air temperatures are freezing but the ground is still warm enough for the plant's root system to be active. Plant juices flow from these roots up into the stem where the cold air freezes them. As the moisture in the plant freezes, the ice crystals push out through their stems.

<https://mdc.mo.gov/wildflower-grass-facts/frost-flowers>



HOAR FROST

Hoar Frost occurs on a clear, cold night where water vapor sublimates, transitioning immediately from a gaseous state to a solid state.

<https://tinyurl.com/7pyyxdm>



RIME ICE

Rime ice occurs with the moisture comes from freezing fog water droplets that turn directly from a liquid state to a solid state, or through direct freezing. <https://tinyurl.com/7pyyxdm>

For the ice chewers out there: Ice cubes are formed as the surface water first freezes around the edges. The ice slowly freezes in from the edges.

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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.

**Birds of a feather
 join SIAS together**



And One More Ice Fun Fact: Ice Circles!!

Ice circles, ice discs, ice pans, ice pancakes or ice crepes are a very rare natural phenomenon that occurs in slow moving water in cold climates. They are thin circular slabs of ice that rotate slowly on a body of water's surface. Ice discs form on the outer bends in a river where the acceleration creates a 'rotational shear' that breaks off a chunk of ice and twists it around. As it rotates, it grinds against surrounding ice, smoothing it. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_circle



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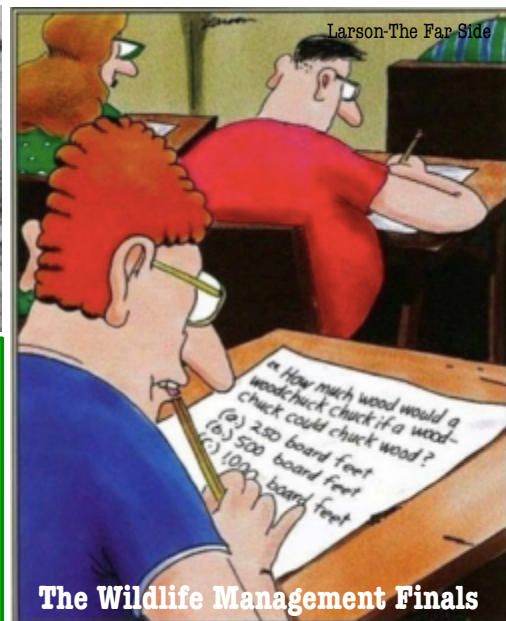
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What is it called when
 a snowman has a
 temper tantrum?

A meltdown!

Did you hear that
 reindeer like to gather
 in large groups?

Yep, herd that.



The Wildlife Management Finals

**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*

