



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Newsletter

October 2026
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Southern Illinois Audubon Society
P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL
62903-0222

Established on the first
Earth Day, in April 1970

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SIAS is the sponsor of
*The Birding Blitz of
Southernmost Illinois*

The 2027 Birding Blitz
will be on April 24th.

Details and registration
forms can be found at:

www.facebook.com/groups/
317666471615613/

(Return of the Megafauna) Bringing Alligator Gar Back to Illinois Waters

Southern Illinois Audubon Society Presents

Mark Denzer, Natural Resource Coordinator / Interpreter with the
Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), for an engaging presentation
on the remarkable alligator gar and its return to Illinois waters.

Friday, October 23rd
at 6:00 p.m. at the
Carbondale Town Hall*

Discover the ancient
biology of the alligator gar, its
historical decline, and the
conservation efforts underway
to restore this native predator
to southern Illinois rivers and
wetlands. Learn about the
reintroduction program,
including the June 2025
release of 81 alligator gar into
the Cache River wetlands and
explore why healthy floodplains and connected river systems are essential to restoring native
fish populations and protecting our natural heritage.



***Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale.** Entrance to Township Hall is
from the rear of the Building, off 216. E. Monroe St., where two parking lots are available.

Happy Trails Phyllis!

By the time folks receive this
newsletter, SIAS member (and one
of the best Hospitality Chairs ever)
will be settling into her new home
west of Denver Colorado near her
family. We are very happy for Phyllis
and wish her all the best!

Phyllis has been an SIAS
member for several decades and
joined the Board as our Hospitality
Chair in November 2017. Phyllis will
be sorely missed by all but we will
stay in contact by giving Phyllis a
life-time membership! -Rhonda R.

SIAS 2026 Meeting Calendar

Nov/Dec combined mtg., Dec 4th - Tom Caldwell on "Wetlands"

SIAS 2027 Meeting Calendar (subject to change)

January 22nd - Program speaker Kimberly Rohling

February 26th - Program speaker TBA

March 26th - Screening of the movie "Opposable Chums: Guts &
Glory at the World Series of Birding" at the Cache Wetlands Center

April 23rd - Program speaker TBA

April 24th & 25th - Birding Blitz Weekend

May - Spring picnic, date yet to be determined

New Hospitality Chair Needed With Phyllis having
moved away, we are in need of a new Hospitality Chair. If you
have an interest in this position, please us know. -Rhonda R.

Seeing Birds



Fall migration is winding down, as it relates to warblers and other bird species that nest from
here to Canada in the summer. A few are still passing through on their way to Central and
South America. But fall's flight is a much more subdued trip for them (maybe a bit less so for
the younglings.) All the pomp and circumstance associated with spring bird migration, the
feeding activity, the bright colors, and the cacophony of song that makes it an extraordinary
audiovisual experience for us, is not the mechanism of their fall flight south or their time
spent on wintering grounds. It's their down time. That makes fall a serious IDing test for
birders. Males don't have their flashy breeding colors and patterns that help us distinguish
species and sexes. Nor do males sing. Birds barely vocalize at all in fall. So, we can't use
vocalizations to locate or ID them as the bounce around in foliage. Even Merlin is helpless.

Have you heard of *Zugunruhe*? *Zug* is a German word meaning migration or pull. *Unruhe* in
German is defined as restlessness or anxiety. Put them together, they become *zugunruhe* or migratory
restlessness! It's the feeling migratory birds (and other animals) get when the time comes for them to
change locations for the season. In spring, androgens in male birds and length of daylight helps ignite
zugunruhe, sending birds north. Similarly, in fall neuro-endocrine controls and environmental affects like
shorter day length, awakens *zugunruhe*. But in fall it's calmer in birds due to a lower intensity of
physiological drive and a lack of reproductive urgency. It's said that while spring migration is high-stakes,
competitive sprint to secure breeding territories, fall migration is a leisurely, trickle south. -Rhonda R.



Bat Conservation Study

Take a 10-minute survey *Bats in Our Backyard: Understanding Public Engagement and Environmental Stewardship Motivations for Bat Conservation*. The purpose is to explore what motivates individuals to participate in

backyard bat conservation and is being conducted by Anne Gill, Graduate Student in Geography and Environmental Resources at SIU, C'dale. Contact her at anne.gill@siu.edu

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...it's harvest time and winter snowbirds are arriving!

Note to all: the events listed could be subject to change at any time or for any reason. For confirmation, please check with the contact listed in the event(s) description.

Friends of the Shawnee National Forest Annual Celebration

Saturday, October 24th – Alto Vineyard, 8515 Highway 127, Alto Pass, IL. Doors open at Noon! Join Friends for another fun filled afternoon at Alto Vineyard celebrating stewardship at work in the Shawnee National Forest. Guests will enjoy music from Noon - 5:00 p.m. as well as updates from the Forest Service, a silent auction, and drinks and food offered by Alto Vineyards. Friend memberships and new merchandise will be available for purchase at the door. **The Public is invited to attend!** General admission is \$10.

To view details and purchase a ticket, visit:

<https://friends-of-the-shawnee.square.site/product/2026-member-celebration-fundraiser/X5TQ34SHJCHQDTIXPATI7ASJ?cs=true&cst=custom>

Coffee on the Cache

Friday, October 30th, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Coffee on the Cache is a monthly gathering, part conversation, part idea-swap, and part “show-and-tell,” with free coffee and time to connect with each other at the Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South. For more info, phone: 618.657.2064

3rd Annual Southern IL Native Plant Seed Swap

Saturday, October 31st, 9:00 a.m. - Noon

To be held at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St, C'dale Park in back, off of Monroe St. Get free IL native plant seed from local growers.



Donate or trade native seed if you have extra.

Mighty Rivers Nursery will be providing native plant seed. and specialists will be there to guide you and answer questions about seed collecting, saving germination, and companion planting! While supplies last! Questions? Contact Rhonda Rothrock at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com

Birding Walk with Lily Glaeser and Indigo Nathani

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. > various dates & locations

Join Master Naturalists Lily Glaeser and Indigo Nathani for a leisurely walk to look at birds! All ages and experiences are welcome. Registration is required in case the event needs to be cancelled due to inclement weather. For more info or to register online for each event, go to go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLilyIndigo

November 5th – Green Earth Pyle Forks Trail, C'dale
November 15th – Crab Orchard NWR Visitor Central Trail

Shawnee National Forest Trash Blasts 2026

November 6th, at Iron Furnace (Hardin County) ; 1:00-3:00 p.m.

The Shawnee National Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee, and IL Extension will be partnering to host this Trash Blast on the first Friday, 11/6. During Trash Blasts, participants break into small teams of volunteers to collect litter from selected sites. Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, long pants, closed-toed shoes, and bring their leather work gloves. Trash receptacles and grabbers will be provided. Registration required. To learn more, please contact

Anne Townsend at cupquake@illinois.edu. Register at: <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/trash-blasts-2026>

Events at Giant City State Park -Registration Required

Friday, November 6th, 5:30 - 7:00p.m.

Evening Owl Prowl, led by Vicki Lang-Mendenhall

Sunday, November 8th, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Illinois Botanizer: Best of Illinois Nature 2026, by Chris Benda

Sunday, November 15th, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Christmas Bird Count Workshop, Kim Rohling, U of I Extension at the Giant City Visitor Center 1-245 Giant City Rd, Makanda Phone Visitor Ctr. at 618.457.4836 for all details or to register.

Winter Seed Sowing

Saturday, November 7th, 10:00 a.m. - Noon

Join Sedonia Sipes, Assoc. Professor in Plant Biology, as she demonstrates how to sow seed now for planting in spring. The demonstration will take place on SIU Campus in room 423 of the Life Sciences building #2. The Southern Chapter of the Illinois Native Plant Society is sponsoring this event. For more info, contact them at southernillinoisplants@gmail.com

Conservation Connections:

Forests, Moths, and Management

Thursday, November 12th, 7 p.m.

Presented by Kevin Rohling, Extension Specialist of Forest Management & Ecology at the UofI. Champaign Urbana Forests provide critical habitat for moths and other insects that, in turn, serve as prey for many species of conservation concern, including several bat and bird species. Forest ecosystems also benefit from active management practices like prescribed fire, invasive species control, and forest stand improvement. This presentation presents results from a study exploring how forest management influences Lepidoptera, their predators, and their interactions. In addition, the presentation will offer practical tips for improving habitat and engaging in citizen science initiatives to monitor changes in moth occurrences over time.

Program will be at Carbondale Township Hall Meeting Room, 217 East Main St. Park behind the Hall., off Monroe St. Enter through the back door. Sponsored by Shawnee Group Sierra Club, free and open to the public.

For more details, or to RSVP visit <https://tinyurl.com/yebvdnmc>

Events at Cache River Wetlands Center

Saturday, November 14th, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Christmas Bird Count Workshop, Kim Rohling, U of I Extension

Thursday, November 19th, (Time TBA)

Planning for Pollinators Fall Work Day and Presentation, sponsored by IDNR, U of I Extension, and Friends of the Cache

Friday, November, 20th, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Wild Turkeys and the Science of Sound, by Lucille Cheeley, Graduate Student in Forestry at SIU, Carbondale All Events will be held at the Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South. For more info, phone: 618.657.2064



SKUNK



SQUIRREL



OPOSSUM



ARMADILLO

Did you know that Monarchs aren't the only butterflies that migrate?

Most folks are aware that Monarch butterflies migrate. (Just a reminder, Monarchs undertake a two-way seasonal migration of up to 3,000 miles, across multiple generations.) There are other species that migrate too.

Red Admirals (*Vanessa atalanta*) fly northward in the spring from southern overwintering areas to breed. Later in summer and fall, the new generations fly back south toward warmer regions. They can travel 1,860+ miles during their seasonal generational journey.

Painted Ladies (*Vanessa cardui*) undertake the longest known butterfly migration in the world, up to a 9,000-mile round trip. Their north/south seasonal cycle round-trip takes up to 6 to 10 successive generations to complete, with each generation breeding and continuing the direction of the flight, then reversing course back.

In North America, Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebastria sennae*) butterflies (my favorites and truly the color of butter) migrate in a multi-generational pattern that spans hundreds to over a thousand miles. During the summer, they can be found throughout the Eastern U.S. and into Canada. But as fall approaches, they head south to spend the winter in southeastern states like Florida, Texas, and the Gulf Coast. Native partridge pea and wild senna are their hosts plants. (Senna is one of my favorite plants.) Both partridge pea and senna have yellow flowers and longish, narrow segmented seed pods. Sulphur caterpillars can be either green or yellow, depending on whether they feed on leaves or flowers, and have dark bars making them resemble unripened senna and partridge pea seed pods!

Find out more about butterflies and their habits at the link below.

-Rhonda R.

<https://www.fws.gov/story/2017-09/butterfly-migration-identification>

Photo by
Carol
Davit
found on
Missouri
Prairie
Foundation
website

Partridge
pea seed
pod.

Green
cloudless
sulphur
caterpillar
feeding on
partridge
pea plant.



Cloudless
Sulphur

Senna flowers
and pods.

Yellow cloudless
sulphur caterpillar
feeding on senna.

Photo from
Florida Butterflies
Facebook page.



Coming Soon to a Bird Habitat Near You: The National Audubon Society 127th Christmas Bird Count Season

We're just 2 months from 2026-27 Christmas Bird Count Season, Dec. 14th to Jan 5th!

In southernmost IL there are more than 10 count circles to choose from, or help with several!

Rend Lake, War Bluff Valley, Crab Orchard NWR, Cypress Creek NWR, Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk., Horseshoe Lake, Union County, Mermet Lake, Middle Miss NWR, and Jackson County. All local count dates and details will follow in the November/December SIAS newsletter. Never participated before? Learn more about this Citizen Science project at:

<https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count/join-christmas-bird-count>

And check "What's Happening" on previous page of this newsletter for pre-count workshop dates!

Please don't forget to Renew Your Membership. We consider January our "renew by" date because it's when we hold our yearly elections. If you appreciate our newsletters & programs but are not a member, please consider joining! Fill in this form and return it with payment or renew at the next meeting. Thanks! Sorry, we don't have a digital payment option.

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

Your Name	_____
Street Address	_____
City, State, Zip	_____
Phone Number	_____
Email	_____

I don't have email but I
know Morse Code!

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 Treasurer Judy M. or Rhonda R. to check your dues status.



Merlin and "Desirable Difficulty"

In the Sept. 10, 2026 article "The Birding Boom has a Smartphone Dilemma", author Alexandra Marvar discusses how she took up birding after meeting her husband who had a super power. He could ID a bird at just a glimpse. She took to birding as well, adding birding apps to her phone to assist her IDing skills. The apps replaced months of learning bird natural history...behaviors, seasons, and habitats in order to make correct IDs in just a few seconds. The Merlin App was one.

In her article she addresses how apps have brought folks to the hobby but have changed it in that they are shortcuts to bird identification. Old school-birder and former Nature Conservancy field biologist Julie Zickefoose stated she loves the "democratization" of birding brought by the Merlin App but regrets its shortcuts, including taking away a birder's reason to open a soft cover field guide.

By using Merlin, we lose the opportunity to attain desirable difficulty. Desirable difficulty is a concept that implies we learn more by making our tasks more difficult. Psychologist Nate Kornell states that when apps give us instant access to clear answers, we mistake fluency for expertise. It causes people to think that they know and understand something very well even if they don't--and even if they won't remember it. Plus, apps like Merlin can become a crutch and can result in incorrect identifications.

I think of myself as an old-school birder. I do use Merlin as a backup birding buddy of sorts but have a love/hate relationship with the App. I wish users would understand that Merlin is a tool, not a Wizard. I often still refer back to Doug Robinson's "Southern Illinois Birds, An Annotated List and Site Guide". -Rhonda R.
Read the full article at <https://11nq.com/pjx2lv4>

Spooky Bird Stories. Hoo Hoo Hoo Hooooo!



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Affiliate of both the Illinois Audubon Society and the Illinois Environmental Council

In 2027 Giant City will be celebrating 100 years as a State Park and we want to hear from you!



We love hearing your stories about Giant City! In 2027 we would like to share your Giant City memories with the public in a year long Visitor Center display.

- Stories should be no more than 100 words long and should include a copy of an original picture
- Stories/pictures will be accepted August-November of 2026
- Stories/pictures can be submitted via email at this address:

DNR.GiantCity100@illinois.gov

or, in person at the Giant City Visitors Center between 8:30am-3:30pm 7 days a week.

These can be funny stories, life events or just favorite Giant City memories.

For more information, please call Jennifer Randolph-Bollinger at 618-457-4836

Five days of over 55 field trips, workshops, and speakers!!