



Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

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Southern Illinois
Audubon Society (SIAS)
P.O. Box 222
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Established in 1970

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Southernmost Illinois*

Details can be found at:
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Join SIAS on Friday, Feb. 28th at our new meeting time of 6 p.m., in the meeting room at Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., C'dale* for a program by **Morgan Brown on Insect Decline in Illinois Prairies.**

Insects are the most numerous and diverse animal group on earth, and they provide many vital services to their ecosystems as pollinators, predators, prey, decomposers, etc. Recently, scientists around the world have documented insect populations declining at alarming rates, threatening the balance of their communities and the livelihood of other organisms that rely on their services. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of how insect communities have changed over time and the drivers behind that change is crucial to making informed decisions about how to best conserve these tiny but mighty creatures.

Morgan Brown is a master's student in the Entomology department at the UoI, Urbana-Champaign. While working towards their B.S. in Zoology at SIU Carbondale, Morgan got involved in research involving invertebrate ecology and decided to pursue similar research during graduate school. Morgan's master's thesis is focused on studying insect decline and conservation and contributing to the conversation by assessing the status of leafhopper communities in Illinois prairies.

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



January SIAS Meeting Highlights- A full house of SIAS members and friends attended this, the annual meeting, to hear about a grassland restoration but were also treated to details about Crab Orchard NWR going back over 80 years. With satellite images dating to 1938, prior to the presence of Crab Orchard Lake, Dan Wood's presentation on the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDA) of the Hampton grassland-savanna complex restoration at Refuge started at the very beginning.

The Hampton Contaminants of Concern" (COC) Sector had been used extensively for agricultural purposes prior to, during, and following World War II. Agricultural practices post war continued until 2022. Dan provided much detailed information about the evolving management of specific areas of Crab Orchard NW Refuge, addressing residual contaminants of concern and lingering munitions and explosives, the latter he became too familiar with.

Savannas and open oak woodlands are biomes that are considered either endangered, critically imperiled, or of special conservation concern (Grundel et al. 2020) and oak savannas are the most endangered communities in the Midwest (White 1984; Nuzzo 1986). It has been estimated that approximately one-half of the Midwestern landscape consisted of oak savanna prior to European settlement, constituting roughly 30 million acres (Schroeder et al. 2004). Only 0.02 percent of pre-settlement savannas persisted by 1985 (Nuzzo 1986). In the recent (past 300 years) community shift from grasslands, savanna, and open oak woodlands to closed canopy forest habitats. (Native populations were largely extirpated from Illinois at the time of the General Land Office surveys in 1807.) Savanna and open oak woodlands were still present and widely distributed throughout Williamson County and the refuge.

Priority Resources of Concern for this restoration is the Red-headed Woodpecker. Some other species benefitting from these restoration efforts: bobwhite quail, northern flicker, red-tailed hawk, eastern bluebird, blue grosbeak, savannah sparrow, barn owl, underwing moth, mottled dusky wing, buck moth, eastern hognose snake, smooth green snake, gray treefrog, five-lined skink, gray fox.

Dan provided way more information than I could possibly, properly condense into highlights. He has shared a pdf of his slide presentation that SIAS can, hopefully, attach at our website. He deserves a great amount of kudos for his work at the Refuge! SIAS thanks Dan for his detailed presentation provided in a way that we could all understand. -Rhonda R.

(Other meeting note, the slate of board members were unanimously re-elected. And don't forget to renew your dues!)

SIAS 2025 Meeting Calendar

March 28th- Program speaker: Heather Carey, Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager for the Shawnee National Forest on the History of the Shawnee

April (date to be announced)- all day birding outing to be led by Laraine Wright & Kirsten Trimble

May (date & location to be announced)- SIAS annual spring picnic

June & July- No meetings in summer

August 22nd- Program to be announced

September (date & location to be announced)- SIAS annual fall picnic

October 24th- Program to be announced

Dec. 5th- Nov/Dec combined meeting. Program to be announced

\$194 Raised for Free Again

On the evening of our annual meeting, we were able to raise \$194 for Free Again. Book sales, the silent auction, and multiple cash donations made this little fundraiser a success. We thank all contributors and this fundraising will continue via book sales at future meetings.

Bluebird Monitors Needed!! Southern Illinois Audubon Society has been involved with the Eastern Bluebird trail at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge for over 25 years. It all started with a partnership with SIAS and the SIUC Cooperative Wildlife Society. SIAS initially helped with the purchase of boxes and supplies which in turn recruited SIAS members to help with monitoring boxes and providing data during the nesting season. Currently SIAS is still involved with the compilation of the data that gets sent in to the East Central Illinois Bluebird Society and North American Bluebird Society. If anyone is interested in monitoring a Bluebird Trail (from March until end of August) or the compilation (late fall/early winter) please contact Vicki Lang-Mendenhall at vickil@siu.edu.

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...the groundhog saw his shadow and persistent shaded bits of snow will soon to be joined by much more.

Wild Things Conference

March 1st - Donald E. Stephens Convention Ctr, Rosemont, IL

Wild Things is a celebration of nature, wildlife, ecosystem restoration, birding, botanizing, networking and discovery. With a lineup of 140 inspiring and engaging presentations, panel discussions, and workshops, from bees and beavers to prairies and wetlands to arts and advocacy, Wild Things offers everyone a way to get involved with nature in their community.

Wild Things 2025 features workshops, presentations, and sessions including expert on dragonflies and damselflies Marla Garrison as the keynote speaker. Also, botanist and science educator Joey Santore, host of the YouTube channel Crime Pays But Botany Doesn't, will speak during the closing plenary and social hour.

Illinois Audubon Society is a Wild Things sponsor and hosting their own room. Stop by the Avian Collective and catch programs on Piping Plovers, Whip-poor-wills, Nighthawks, Black-crowned Night Herons, bird migration, Saw-whet Owls, and plenty of giveaways.

View the program and register (\$40-\$60) below.

<https://wildthingscommunity.org/conference-program/>

Birding with Vicki at Giant City State Park

Saturday, March 8th, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Join park volunteer and SIAS President, Vicki Lang-Mendenhall as she guides folks on a birdwatching hike at Giant City St. Park. The hike is free but space is limited and registration is required. To register, phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836.

Friends of Crab Orchard Symposium & Nature Dialogues

Spring Nature Photography Symposium

Saturday, March 8th, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Speakers: Chris Benda – Best Illinois Wildflower Spots

Sam Spiller & Bill Thomas - Flora at Rocky Bluff Trail

Miriam Link-Mullison - Tips to Great Flower Pics

Rick Whitecotton – CONWR Pollinator Gardens

Nature Dialogues - Sundays from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

March 9th - The Eastern Whip-poor-will

May 18th - Bats of Our Region by Joy O'Keefe

July 13th - Meet the Snakes & Reptiles of Southern Illinois

Symposium & Dialogues will be at Crab Orchard Visitor's Center,
phone the Refuge at 618.997.3344 for all details or to register.

What Snake is That?

Sunday, March 9th, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

It may be chilly out but spring is right around the corner! Join renowned Biologist John Palis to get a jumpstart on warmer weather by learning how to identify the snakes of southern Illinois. John will give this presentation at Giant City State Park Visitor Center. It is free, space is limited but registration is required. Phone 618.457.4836.

Attracting Hummingbirds to your Garden

Saturday, March 22th, 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are expected visitors to gardens east of the Rocky Mountains. Did you know that there are citizen science projects looking for your observations on these magnificent creatures? Join Horticulture Educator Kim Rohling to learn about the natural history of the ruby-throated hummingbird, tips on supplemental feeding, and native plant species that are attractive to hummingbirds. Attend this presentation at Giant City State Park Visitor Center. It is free, space is limited but registration is required. Phone 618.457.4836.

Snake Road Sentinel Spring 2025 Workshop, March 1st

Shawnee National Forest is seeking volunteers to assist with data collection on Snake Road during the spring season road closure. Snake Road Sentinels will be responsible for surveying the wildlife observed and monitoring visitor usage.

This year's workshop will take place on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the Mississippi River Bluff Ranger Station. Alternatively, you can complete the training online. During the workshop, Alyssa Macuiba, Wilderness Technician/Volunteer Coordinator, and Mycah Scoggins, Wildlife Biologist, will explain the data they aim to collect, the methods for collection, and the scheduling for the spring season.

The workshop will also cover previous results, rules, and ethical guidelines for being a Snake Road Sentinel. Additionally, federal and state law enforcement personnel may stop by to meet everyone and provide a brief talk. After the workshop, there will be an optional visit to Snake Road for a brief introduction to the area. If you have volunteered at Snake Road in the past, you are not required to attend the field demonstration. However, all new and returning volunteers must attend the workshop, either in-person or online, to complete required paperwork.

To register, you will need to create an Illinois Extension User Account at <https://tinyurl.com/4zf4ppcz>. Your username and password will be necessary to access your online resources and the virtual training course. Whether you attend the training in person or online, you will have access to the online course through Moodle. If you need assistance with registration or accessing Moodle, please contact Anne Townsend at cupquake@illinois.edu.

If you would like more information about this program or require reasonable accommodations to participate, please contact Alyssa Macuiba at alyssa.macuiba@usda.gov.

Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet access needs.



Be A Planet Protector Poetry and Artwork contest

Giant City State Park is excited to announce an Earth Day Poetry and artwork contest! Community members 8-14 years of age can submit their work of poetry and a photo, drawing, or artwork of their choosing following the theme of, "Be A Planet Protector." All submissions will be displayed in the Giant City Visitor Center Lobby for the public viewing and voting. The winner of each age category will receive an item of their choice from the Friends of Giant City State Park Gift Shop!

*Required Information Submission Forms are available at

www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1055586366610571&set=pcb.1055596843276190

*All poetry submissions should be written or printed on standard 8.5"x11" notebook or printer paper, though smaller sizes are also acceptable.

*Photos, pictures, and artworks should also follow the above size guidelines.

*Submissions can be mailed or dropped off in the Visitors Center, 1-245 Giant City Rd., Makanda, IL 62958, with required information forms attached.

*Submission deadline:

Poetry and artwork are due by April 1st.

Winners will be announced on May 2nd.

Any questions can be directed to:

Jennifer.Randolph@illinois.gov



From our history: Conservationists of the Year *By Laraine Wright*

For most years between 1976 and 2017 we presented an annual award to a person or group we felt was doing an outstanding effort to conserve our land and the life on it. The award itself was a commissioned stained glass pileated woodpecker set on a stand with a plaque showing the name and date of the award.

The award — kept a secret from the recipient — was a highlight of our annual meetings in January. Often we asked the recipient's family to attend. For many years it was well-publicized in the newspaper thanks to columnist Ben Gelman, one of the SIAS co-founders in 1970.

In 1997 the title "Conservationist of the Year" was changed to the "Todd Fink Award" in honor of a young state biologist/ornithologist who died tragically in 1995. Many deserving people were entitled to the award.

The list I kept in my files, (with 2 additions from other Board Members):

- 1976— Dan Pike, work to save the Middle Fork of the Vermillion River
- 1977— Judith Groves, Illinois Environmental Council
- 1978— Paul Biggers, bird bander and service to SIAS
- 1979— Robert Mohlenbrock, Distinguished Professor of Botany, SIU Carbondale
- 1980— Judith Joy, former editor of the "Illinois Audubon Bulletin"
- 1981— Judy Faulkner, Natural Land Institute and Green Earth
- 1982— Richard Rodrian, conservation activist in Caseyville
- 1983— George and Barbara Fell, The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Land Institute
- 1985— Max Hutcheson, The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Land Institute
- 1986— Clark and Rhoda Ashby, conversation activists and service to SIAS
- 1987— Jean and Frank Seyfarth, conservation volunteers and SIAS service
- 1988— Ben Gelman, "Southern Illinoisan" newspaper columnist and reporter
- 1989— Jim McGowen, wildlife biologist, U.S. Forest Service
- 1990— Ann Philippi, assistant professor of biology, SIU Carbondale
- 1991— Citizens Committee to Save the Cache
- 1992— Jean and Richard Graber, wildlife biologists, Illinois Natural History Survey
- 1993— Cal and Cathie Maginel, conservation volunteers, Jonesboro
- 1994— O.D. McDaniel, volunteer coordinator of the bluebird trail, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
- 1996— John Schwegman, IL Dept of Natural Resources and Nature Preserves Commission
- 1997— Lou Strack, Friends of Kinkaid Lake
- 1998— Steve Juhlin, conservation volunteer
- 1999— Beverly Shofstall, Free Again Wildlife Center
- 2000— Dave Maginel, The Nature Conservancy
- 2001— Conservation Cats, Lincoln Middle School, Carbondale
- 2002— Vern Kleen, state biologist/ornithologist
- 2005— Les Winkeler, outdoors editor, "Southern Illinoisan" newspaper
- 2008— Rhonda Rothrock, conservation volunteer and service to SIAS
- 2015— Cathie Hutcheson, bird bander
- 2017— Nelda Hinckley, leader of group trips to the tropics
- 2020— Scott Martin, USDA Soil Conservationist and Boy Scout Troup Leader

I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.
Nature is so resourceful. It can make dew with just water.
The rotation of the earth makes everyone's day!

2024-25 Christmas Bird Count Season Recap



It was another whirlwind Christmas Bird Count Season, at least for some of us.

Whether you participated in just one or two, or like a couple of crazy folks, helped with nearly the whole southernmost IL list of counts, it was another labor of love!

Now that compilation is complete, I have some numbers to share. Going in the order of count dates, the Crab Orchard NWR count totaled 90 species. The Arklands/Pyramid CBC tallied 104 species, including 6 owl species thanks to the midnight to dawn efforts of Kelly McKay and Isaac Grosner. The Mermet Lake CBC tallied 101 species but part of the lake access was closed for repairs. The Mermet count is split between Kentucky and Illinois. In Kentucky, 84 species were located, while the total for Illinois was 92. The Jackson County CBCers located 87 species. And the Middle Mississippi NWR CBC, another count split between 2 states, tallied 82 species total, 76 on the Illinois side and 62 on the Missouri side.

To all those that participated, thank you for helping! -Rhonda.R

USFS & NPS Losing Thousands of Workers

The US Forest Service is firing about 3,400 recent hires while the National Park Service is terminating about 1,000 workers under Donald Trump's push to cut federal spending and bureaucracy, according to a report on Friday, Feb. 14th. The terminations target employees who are in their probationary employment periods, which includes anyone hired less than a year ago, according to Reuters, and will affect sites such as the Appalachian trail, Yellowstone, the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr., and the Sequoia national forest.

Recently Reconstructed Trails in the Shawnee NF

Last winter, construction of a reroute of the River to River Trail was completed. The new section runs along the southeast section of Cedar Lake in Jackson County, Shawnee National Forest. All of this began with a cost share agreement between the Friends of the Shawnee and the Shawnee National Forest.

Also, over 1.1 miles of new and remodeled trails were constructed in 2024 along the western edge of Kinkaid Lake in Jackson County. This multiuse trail system is designed for mountain biking but also ideal for hikers, runners, and equestrian traffic.

Those that assisted were the Shawnee Mountain Bike Association, Trails Specialist Phillip Carrier, and Piney Creek Construction and Repair (with Ray and Angie Brockmeyer, Dave and Justin.) Go out and experience these upgrades in outdoor recreation on the Shawnee National Forest.

TIME TO RENEW Your Membership! or PLEASE JOIN if you appreciate our newsletters & programs!

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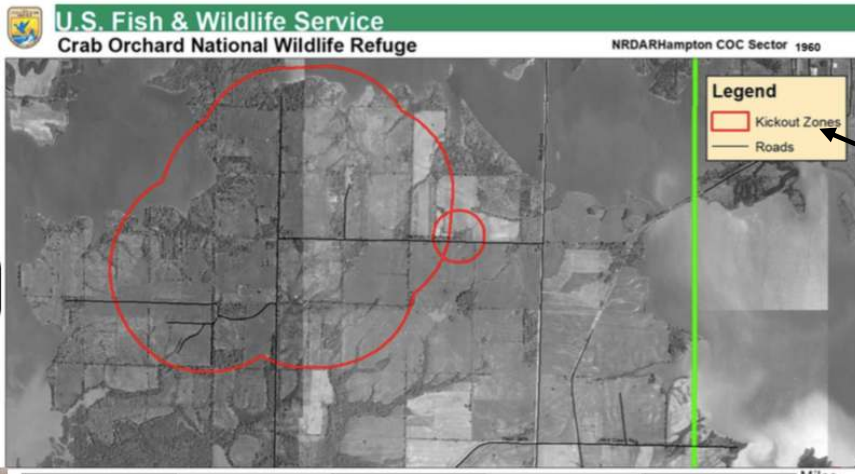
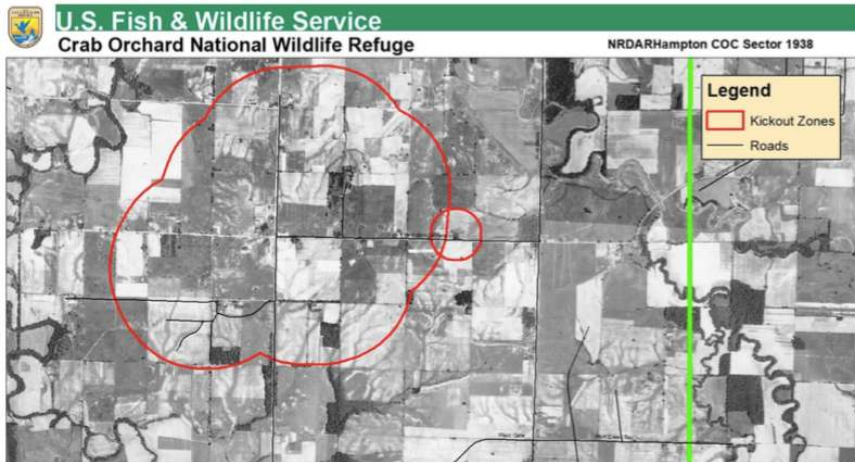
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Knock On
Wood that
everyone
renews
their dues!





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Marion, IL
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Produced 5/9/2023
Base map: 2017 NADP
Path: O:\BIO\GIS\NRDA\NRDA\Hampton\CO2023.mxd

1:12,500 Datum: NAD 83

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SIAS donated spotting scope silent auction

In January, Dr. Dee Tudor donated to SIAS a number of birding related books and a spotting scope belonging to her late husband Jim Tudor. The books were and will continue to be for sale at SIAS meetings. A silent auction for the spotting scope, will be take place at the March meeting. It is a Nikon EDG Fieldscope straight viewing spotting scope with a 20-60 zoom eyepiece, all in very good condition. Est age 12+. No tripod included.

The scope will be available for inspection at the February meeting. When new, the scope's value was approx. \$2,700.

← Before WWII
(note, no lakes)

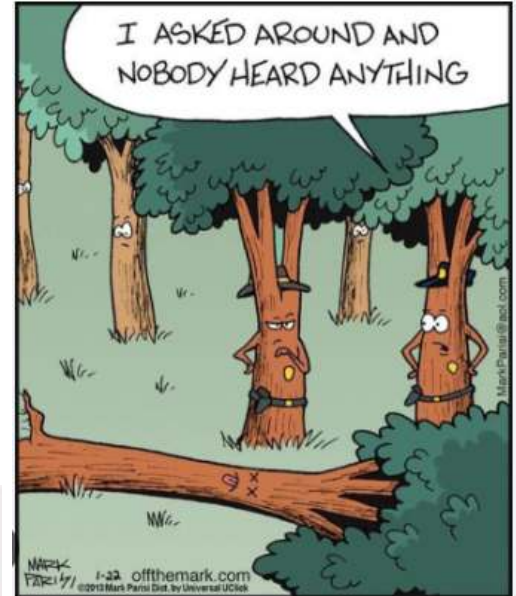
← After WWII
(Lakes!!)

{ Kickout zones
are areas that
could contain
military
munitions that
did not detonate
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Oak Savanna and
Open Oak Woodland Species

