



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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SIAS is the sponsor of
The Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois

Details can be found at:
www.facebook.com/group/s/317666471615613/

They are
"the little
things that
run the world"

-E.O. Wilson



leafhopper



SIAS 2025 Meeting Calendar

April 18th- SIAS Birding at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Puxico, MO, led by Joe Merkelbach. Details below.

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

June & July- No meetings in summer

August 22nd- Kimberly Rohling: Gardening for Moths

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

October 24th- Program to be announced

Dec. 5th- Nov/Dec combined meeting.
Tom Caldwell: Art in Nature, the Bower Bird

Birding in Belize! On Friday, March 28th at 6 P.M., join SIAS for some Birding in Belize with Jyothi & Michael Wainer!

Belize is a small Central American country at the south eastern edge of the Yucatan peninsula with great biodiversity and distinct ecosystems. The rainforests, savannah, rivers, mangroves and wetlands of Belize support many species of birds and other wildlife like monkeys, wild cats, crocodiles, etc. Belize is also home to several sites of the ancient Maya civilization.

Jyothi and Michael Wainer are longtime members of SIAS. The program will highlight many of the birds and wildlife seen during their trip to Belize. It will also include some Mayan ruins and temples.

The presentation will be in the meeting room at Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale. Entrance to the Township Hall is from the rear of the Building, off 216. E. Monroe St., where two parking lots are available.

SIAS regrets that Heather Carey, Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager for the Shawnee National Forest, was unable to present her program on the History of the Shawnee National Forest originally scheduled for March. SIAS sincerely hopes that we will be able to reschedule Heather's program sometime within the coming months.

Birding at Mingo! Join Joe Merkelbach on Friday, April 18th in a day of birding at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Puxico, MO, a place dear to his heart! **Advance Reservations Required!**

April at Mingo is a great time for observing a mix of migrating warblers, shorebirds, and even a few ducks. Mingo NWR is located in Stoddard and Wayne Counties in southeast Missouri. Mingo NWR was established in 1944 under the authority of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as a resting and wintering area for waterfowl and other migratory birds, and for the preservation of bottomland hardwood forest. The refuge contains 21,592 acres and lies in a basin formed in an ancient abandoned channel of the Mississippi River. The refuge includes 15,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, 3,500 acres



of marsh and water, 1,300 acres of upland hardwoods, 1,200 acres of cropland and moist soil units, and 500 acres of grassland and early successional forest habitat.
<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/mingo>

Advance Reservations Required!

All who are interested should get in touch with Joe directly at jemerck2@yahoo.com or 573.275.0021 by April 16th . Meet in Cape Girardeau at 8:30 a.m. on the 18th at the Shawnee Park Center, at the intersection of South West End Boulevard and Shawnee Parkway (highway 34/74), about a mile west of Emerson bridge.

February SIAS Program Highlights Morgan Brown explained how insects are vital components to our ecosystem and provide ecosystems services to humans via pollinations, decompositions, and biological control. While they are also disease vectors and crop pests. A 2017 publication noted a more than 75% decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas. Morgan studied Auchenorrhyncha (of which there are 4000 described species) specifically the suborder Hemiptera comprised of leafhoppers, treehoppers, planthoppers, spittlebugs, and cicadas. They are considered great indicators of habitat quality, specifically grasslands. Morgan collected insects she studied with a modified leafblower. Morgan's conclusions, comparing samples collected in the 1990s and 2020s, were that insect communities are changing. While they found more species (species richness increased), most are decreasing in abundance. More research is needed to get a fuller picture of how insects are being affected at a global scale. These changes will likely impact other organisms like insectivorous bird species that are declining and humans.

SIAS thanks Morgan for a very interesting program. We all acquired more appreciation of the little things. -Rhonda R

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...Spring is in the air; trees are budding, early spring wildflowers are blooming, and songbirds are arriving from southern climes!

Impact of a Solar Eclipse on a Bee Colony

Friday, March 28th, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Steven Still, Assist. Professor, SIUC School of Agricultural Systems and Education, will give this presentation at the Guyon Auditorium in Morris Library on the SIUC campus. Watch and discuss on YouTube Live @NASASolarStream Past streams are also available at that YouTube site.

Wildflower Walks at Crab Orchard NWR

Saturday, April 5th, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. & 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Learn how to identify spring ephemeral wildflowers along the Rocky Bluff Trail at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. April is a great time to explore the great outdoors in search of these fleeting beauties. This walk will be led by IL Extension Horticulture Educator, Kimberly Rohling and Forestry Specialist, Kevin Rohling. Register at go.illinois.edu/RBTwildflowers

Crab Orchard NWR has a day use fee of \$1.50. If you do not have a pass or vehicle sticker go in the visitor center or purchase your pass online.

Spring Wildflower Walk at Giant City State Park

Saturday, April 5th, 12th, & 18th, 10:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Trillium Trail in Giant City is one of the best spring wildflower trails in southern Illinois. Join the Natural Resources Coordinator as we meander through the spring woods and take a closer look at these petite beauties. This is a moderately difficult two-mile trail with some steep stair climbing. Phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836 to register.

Cahokia Mounds Spring Native American Market

Saturday & Sunday, April 5th & 6th, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Native American artists will be selling arts and crafts. This event is held at the Collinsville VFW, 1234 Vandalia St, Collinsville IL. For more details, phone 618.346.5160.

Attracting Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds to Your Backyard

Monday, April 7th, 11:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Although ruby-throated hummingbirds are expected visitors to gardens east of the Rocky Mountains, several species of vagrant hummingbirds have been documented in Illinois. Did you know that there are citizen science projects looking for your observations on these magnificent creatures? Join Horticulture Educator Kim Rohling at the Crab Orchard NW Refuge Visitor Center to learn about the natural history of the ruby-throated hummingbird, tips on supplemental feeding, and native plant species that are attractive to hummingbirds. Register at go.illinois.edu/RTHU

Gem, Mineral, Fossil, & Jewelry Show

Saturday & Sunday, April 12th & 13th, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Southern Illinois Earth Science Club hosts their annual show. It will include several types of vendors and exhibits featuring minerals, fossils, artifacts, gemstones, jewelry, shells, lapidary work, and a dinosaur exhibit. There will also be silent auctions and door prizes. This event will be held at The Pavilion Events Center, 1602 Sioux Drive, Marion. Admission for adults \$2. For more details, phone 618.997.3690. <https://siesclub.org/>

Amphibian Night Hike at Giant City St Pk

Friday, April 18th, 7:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Join Jeremy Schumacher, local Forester and Amphibian enthusiast, as he leads a fun evening hike to identify calls and search for amphibians during the spring breeding season. Participants should be prepared for wet conditions, wet ground, and darkness. It is free but registration is required. Phone 618.457.4836 to register.

Birding Walks with Master Naturalist Lily Glaeser

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. / Various Dates / Various Sites

Join Master Naturalist, Lily Glaeser, for a leisurely walk in nature to look at birds! Learn to identify birds at some of our local sites. All ages and experiences are welcome. Registration is required in case the event needs to be cancelled due to inclement weather. Binoculars are available for use, please reserve a pair. SIAS is one of the sponsors of these birding walks.

Online registration for each event will close the Tuesday before each event. **Registration link is:** go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLily Participants will be emailed the Wednesday before the outing as a reminder to attend. If you have questions, contact Lily at littleglaser@gmail.com

-Thursday, April 10 - Green Earth Chautauqua Bottoms: Nature Preserve: Main Parking Lot - 2100 W Chautauqua Rd, Carbondale. If the parking lot is full, there is also a parking access on Freeman St.

-Sunday, April 13 - Giant City St Pk Indian Creek Trail: Unnamed Rd, Cobden

-Thursday, May 15 - Green Earth Brush Hill: 1085-1087 E Park St, Cdale.

-Sunday, May 18 - Giant City State Park Post Oak Trail: 460 Giant City Lodge Rd, Makanda. This event will be a sit. Please bring your own lawn or camp chair to be comfortable.

-Sunday, May 25 - Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Homestead Trail. Meet at the new Visitor Center: 8588 IL-148, Marion. We will walk to the Homestead Trailhead together. Crab Orchard NWR has a day use fee of \$1.50. If you do not have a pass or vehicle sticker, go in the Visitor Center to buy your pass, it opens at 8 a.m., or purchase one online.

Earthday, April 22nd, 2025

(And SIAS's Birthday! Happy 55th!)

<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2025/>



Friends of Crab Orchard Nature Dialogues

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

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

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

Dialogues will be at Crab Orchard Visitor's Center,

@ALTO VINEYARDS Saturday, APRIL 19, 2025
8515 IL-127, Alto Pass, IL 1 - 5pm

4th Annual Family Eco Festival

Fun for all ages! Hands-on Science Conservation Arts & Crafts Environmental Education Silent Auction & Vendors

Live Music:
John West - 1pm
Beth & Pocky - 3pm

Thank you to our sponsors:
Innovations in STEM Education's fundraiser for local teachers

SICF ALIO IEX Sun StraightUp

It's a fundraiser for Innovations in STEM Education Fund, to benefit local teachers and committed to broadening participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by making the process and content of science and engineering relevant to the community.

For the 4th year, SIAS is participating in the Family Eco Festival.

We'll have our display up and will offer a kids' craft.

If you're available to assist, please contact Rhonda Rothrock via email: woodthrusheola@hotmail.com or phone 618.684.6605

Monarch Butterfly Populations Bounced Back in Mexico This Winter

FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ, Thu, March 6, 2025

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The number of monarch butterflies wintering in the mountains west of Mexico City rebounded this year, doubling the area they covered in 2024 despite the stresses of climate change and habitat loss, experts said Thursday. The annual butterfly count doesn't calculate the individual number of butterflies, but rather the number of acres they cover as they gather on tree branches in the mountain pine and fir forests. Monarchs from east of the Rocky Mountains in the U.S.A. and Canada overwinter there. Mexico's Commission for National Protected Areas (CONANP) said that this year, butterflies covered 4.4 acres (1.79 hectares) compared to only 2.2 acres (0.9 hectares) the year before. Last year's figure represented a 59% drop from 2023, the second lowest level since record keeping began.

This impressive bounce back is attributed to better humidity and climate, as well as ongoing efforts to boost the number of plants the butterflies depend on for sustenance and reproduction. Still, Jorge Rickards, the Mexico director general for the World Wildlife Fund, noted that "you can't let down your guard."

Excerpts from yahoo news: <https://shorturl.at/z6YM3>

Job cuts and frozen funding could inch one of the world's rarest species even closer to extinction

by Benji Jones, Feb 26, 2025

In the open grasslands of South Dakota, not far from the dramatic rock formations of Badlands National Park, lives one of the continent's cutest, fiercest, and rarest animals: the black-footed ferret. Black-footed ferrets, weasel-like animals with distinctive dark bands around their eyes and black feet, are ruthless little hunters. At night, they dive into burrows in pursuit of juicy prairie dogs, their primary food source. Without prairie dogs, these ferrets would not survive.

From as many as a million ferrets in the 19th century, today there are only a few hundred of these furry predators roaming the Great Plains, the only place on Earth they live. That there are any black-footed ferrets at all is something of a miracle. In the 1970s, scientists thought black-footed ferrets were extinct, but a twist of fate, and an unprecedented breeding effort led by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), brought this critical piece of the prairie ecosystem back from the brink.

This success — one of the greatest of any wildlife revival program — is now at risk. Earlier this month, as part of the Trump administration's purge of federal employees, Tina Jackson, the head of the USFWS's entire black-footed ferret recovery program, was fired. USFWS also fired two other permanent staffers who were involved in keeping captive ferrets alive at the National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center, the nation's main breeding facility. Those cuts amount to more than a quarter of the center's permanent, non-administrative staff, Jackson said. The center also has a vacant biologist position that Jackson said may not be filled. Also fired was a staff biologist who led black-footed ferret conservation in Wyoming.

The staff changes imperil the tenuous success of ferret recovery and the very existence of these animals, several experts including current and former Fish and Wildlife Service employees stated. Critical funding has been restricted, too: Two organizations that rely on federal money for ferret conservation on public and tribal lands stated that funds for this work were frozen.

Excerpts from: <https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/401389/trump-doge-fish-wildlife-service-black-footed-ferret>

For the 23rd year, SIAS is sponsoring the Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois!

On **April 26th**, spend the day competitively birding with your best birding buddies. And there's no better place to go birding in spring than in the eleven counties of southernmost Illinois! The Birding Blitz is an event where teams compete on the last Saturday in April to see and hear the most species of birds in a 24-hour period while raising money for conservation in southernmost Illinois. In the past teams have collectively seen over 200 species in a day!

Teams can search for birds throughout the area of the 11 southernmost Illinois counties, from Jackson, Williamson, Saline, and Gallatin counties south through Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski, and Massac counties.

This area includes cypress swamps, upland forests, grasslands, and the 2 big rivers. Public lands in the area include Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Giant City State Park, Trail of Tears State Forest, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, the Cache River State Natural Area, and Mermet Lake and Horseshoe Lake Conservation Areas, and the Shawnee National Forest. (Birds counted along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers must be no further than half way across the river when seen or heard.)

Teams must have a minimum of 2 members. With the exception of category "Open B" (see below), teams may start birding as early as 12:01 a.m. on April 26th and continue until as late as 12:00 p.m. that night. All teams must follow the American Birding Association's Big Day Count rules found at:

<https://www.aba.org/aba-big-day-count-rules/>

There are five categories:

* **Open A** - This category is the true Big Day challenge, within the competition boundaries.

* **Open B / Dawn to Dusk** - It mirrors category Open A with the exception that participants in this category may start no sooner than -1- hour before sunrise and must quit no later than -1- hour after sunset. Starting time: 5:00 a.m. Ending: 8:45 p.m.

* **County Big Day** - Teams restrict their Big Day to one selected county of their choice within the competition boundary; enticing birders to more intensely explore previously under-birded areas.

* **Senior** - Follows the true Big Day rules but all team members must be 55 years of age or older.

* **Muscle-powered** - Follows the true Big Day rules but teams cannot use any motorized form of transportation in their pursuit.

While registration is required, there will be no registration fee charged this year and no t-shirts will be distributed. Certificates will be awarded to the winning team in each of the five categories at the awards brunch on April 27th at the Haven on the south side of IL Rt. 13 at 10289 Haven Ln., Carbondale, opposite the Cambria Road turnoff.

Because of the upheaval that has occurred at Cypress Creek NWR, the uncertainty as to how it will be managed in the future, and the serious responsibilities in properly directing donated funds, there will be no pledging requirement this year.

For all Blitz details including registration forms (due 04/20) and pledge forms, visit the Blitz Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/317666471615613/ or contact Rhonda Rothrock via email at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com or via phone at 618.684.6605.

Why did the tree give such great advice? Because it was rooted in wisdom.
What did one gardener say to the other gardener? "Botany plants lately?"



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



Silent Auction for Nikon EDG Spotting Scope at March 28th SIAS meeting

In January, Dr. Dee Tudor donated to SIAS a Nikon spotting scope that had belonged to her late husband Jim Tudor. A silent auction for the scope, will take place at the March meeting.

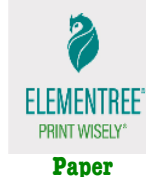
It is a Nikon EDG 65 mm Fieldscope straight viewing spotting scope with a FEP 20-60W zoom eyepiece, all in very good condition. Est age 12+. No tripod included. When new, the value of scope with upgraded 20-60W eyepiece was approx. \$2,700. See link for scope at:
https://www.opticsplanet.com/nikon-65mm-fieldscope-edg-16-48x-zoom-spotting-scope.html?srsId=AfmBOopvOLAK3FZKI77tOz44nLrUSzV_7YICHYxAmaFXHw4TZNYNFNV



A 1995 study, by Peter H. Kahn and Batya Friedman, of the way some children in Houston experienced pollution summed up our blindness this way: "With each generation, the amount of environmental degradation increases, but each generation takes that amount as the norm." In decades of photos of fishermen holding up their catch in the Florida Keys, the marine biologist Loren McClenachan found a perfect illustration of this phenomenon, which is often called "shifting baseline syndrome." The fish got smaller and smaller, to the point where the prize catches were dwarfed by fish that in years past were piled up and ignored. But the smiles on the fishermen's faces stayed the same size. The world never feels fallen, because we grow accustomed to the fall.



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

The 23rd Annual
Birding Blitz of
Southernmost Illinois
Saturday, April 26th!

