



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 Big Sit at Little SunnySide, Sunday Sept. 28th

SIAS will be competing in the Illinois Audubon Society's annual Illinois Big Sit Competition the weekend of Sept. 26-28. Our Big Sit will take place on Sunday Sept. 28th, at SunnySide, the Rothrock property, at 7398 Hickory Ridge Rd, rural Pomona, SunnySide is 2 miles north of Little Grand Canyon, in the Shawnee National Forest.

What is a Big Sit? A Big Sit, similar to a Big Day, is a competition where

a team of bird watchers count as many species as possible within a 24-hour period. While the Big Day involves moving around from spot to spot to maximize the number of species sighted, a Big Sit is precisely that! You stay (sit or stand) in one location, a 17-foot diameter circle called a "count circle". Only species seen and/or heard from within that circle count toward the final day's tally. The Big Sit is a 24-hour competition, but members and friends are invited to come and go throughout the day at their leisure. We will count as a team but folks can come and go from our count circle as long as there are no more than five people actively counting at one time. Bring your favorite lawn chair and your binoculars. Some snacks and water will be provided.

Our Team, SunnySide (Not So) Swifts, is registered with Rhonda Rothrock as Team Captain. Folks planning to participate, are requested to register at the IAS link: <https://illinoisaudubon.org/illinois-big-sit/> In the Team Name line, print: *SunnySide (Not So) Swifts* In Location line: *7398 Hickory Ridge Rd., Pomona, Jackson County* And mark *Sunday, September 28* at the Date of Count. Also please RSVP with Rhonda (me) if you plan on stopping in by calling 618.684.6605 or emailing (me) at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com so we know who to expect. Note: Cell service in the rural Pomona area is limited, sometimes nearly non-existent.

Directions to SunnySide: From Carbondale, take Old Hwy 13 west to IL Rt. 127. Drive 3.7 miles south on Rt. 127 to Orchard Hill Rd. Go west on Orchard Hill Rd. to Poplar Ridge Rd. Continue west on Poplar Ridge Rd to a 4-way intersection with Hickory Ridge Rd. and Wiley Rd. Take Hickory Ridge Rd. southwest 1 mile. Old red barn and metal grain bin on right side of road, home driveway just beyond on left side of road. Sign will direct to parking.

SIAS 2025-26 Meeting Calendar

October 24th- Program canceled due to conflicting activities (SIU Homecoming & City of Carbondale Downtown Halloween Weekend events)

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

January 23rd- Annual Meeting, Potluck, & Program. Speaker to be announced.

February 27th- Program to be announced

SIAS HawkWatch at Giant City Tower

Join SIAS for a HawkWatch at the Giant City State Park water tower on **Saturday, Oct. 4th**, from **10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** Meet near the tower at the north end of the Lodge parking lot, 460 Giant City Lodge Rd, Makanda.

Fall is the perfect time for hawk watching, whether to view them migrating or just watching them soaring the thermals. "Soaring the thermals" is a natural phenomenon and a flight technique where birds use rising columns of warm air (thermals) to gain altitude and stay aloft without flapping their wings. The sun heats the ground. That warms the air, causing it to rise in columns. This seem to start mid-morning. Birds find these thermals and fly in circles to gain height, conserving energy and covering long distances.

Broad-winged, sharp-shinned, and rough-legged hawks, northern harriers, and peregrine falcons are all raptors that migrate from or to southernmost IL. It's likely other raptors will be up surfing the air thermals at the same time. Migrant songbirds will be on the move too. The water tower provides a panoramic view of southernmost IL, perfect for watching birds. Bring your favorite field guide, don't forget your binoculars.

Then stop in at the Giant City State Park Visitor's Center for their Explore the So. IL Outdoors Event from Noon-3 p.m. →

Picnic at Ferne Clyffe, Tasty & Edifying

SIAS hosted its late summer picnic at the Lakeview Shelter at Ferne Clyffe State Park. Despite the late summer heat, there was a nice breeze for the 17 attendees. A huge thanks to Bill and Phil on the grill and to all for the nice spread of salads and desserts.

As planned, Pat Dunbar, the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network/Illinois Odonate Survey Co-Coordinator for Southern Illinois gave an overview of her butterfly and dragonfly survey trail and data she has been collecting on their population in Southernmost Illinois. Pat has her trail along the popular lake at this park and many park attendees are curious by her activity as they witness her surveying her route. Anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer or to learn more about the program, please contact Pat at pdunbarmd@aol.com with preference of butterfly or dragonfly. -Vicki Lang





Giant City State Park Visitors Center

Saturday, October 4th

Noon-3 pm

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...There's an unrecognized fluid falling from the sky, something called rain???

SIAS Brown Bag Birding & Socializing at Evergreen Park, Carbondale

2nd Tuesday of the month lunchtime birding at **11:30 a.m., October 14th**

Meet at Red Oak Pavilion located in Evergreen Park, Carbondale, rain or shine! Directions (from IL Rt. 51/ South Illinois Ave.) Take IL Rt. 51 south from Carbondale to stop-light intersection with Pleasant Hill Rd, turn west onto Pleasant Hill Rd, follow it to western most park entrance then turn south next look for Red Oak Pavilion on right. Pavilion has picnic tables, if you would be more comfortable in a folding chair, then please bring one. Bring your lunch, drink, binoculars, and conversations. Sponsored by the SIAS. Questions? Call Kathryn Jenkel at 618.559.2908 or katenkel@yahoo.com

National Public Lands Day Trash Blast & Graffiti

Saturday, Sept. 27th, 9:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.

As part of National Public Lands Day, Friends of the Shawnee National Forest, the River to River Trail Society, and members of the Shawnee Forest Service, will hold a trash blast and graffiti removal at Garden of the Gods. Attendees will pick up trash along and below the observation trail and around the parking area and campground. Registration required. For complete details and to register, contact Alyssa at Alyssa.Macuiba#usda.gov.

If you cannot make it to this Trash Blast, consider picking up trash somewhere in the Shawnee National Forest near you.

Fun 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! 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. SIAS is one of the sponsors of these birding walks. Online registration for each event at go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLily will close the Tuesday before each event. Questions? Contact Lily at littleklaeser@gmail.com

Sunday, Sept. 28—Giant City St Pk Post Oak Trail: 460 Giant City Lodge Rd, Makanda; event is a sit so bring your lawn or camp chair to be comfortable.

Thursday, Oct. 19—GreenEarth Stan Harris Prairie,
at the corner of Edgewood Ln & New Era Rd, C'dale

Sunday, Oct. 19—Giant City St Pk Indian Creek Trail, Giant City Lodge Rd, Makanda

Fall Trash Blasts on the Shawnee National Forest

First Friday of each month, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Oct. 3 - Dutchman Lake, Johnson Co. & Nov. 7 - Iron Mountain, Hardin Co.

The SNF Forest Service, Friends of the Shawnee Nat Forest, and the IL Extension Office will host these annual Trash Blasts. Attendees will break into small teams of volunteers to collect litter from selected sites. No matter what we find, we try to remove it to help restore the area to its natural state. Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring their leather work gloves, wear long pants, and closed-toed shoes. If you do not have leather gloves we can help provide them for you. For complete details and location directions, contact Anne Townsen at cupquake@illinois.edu

Register at <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/fall-trash-blasts-2025>

Dogtooth Bend, a Floodplain Restoration Project

Thursday, October 9th, 7:00 p.m.

Tharran Hobson, Southern Illinois Program Director for the Nature Conservancy (TNC) will present "Dog Tooth Bend", a landscape-scale floodplain restoration project in Alexander County. Hobson will also discuss TNC partnerships with the Army Corps, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, focusing on human dimensions of the project as well as restoration of natural infrastructure. 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, contact Barb at 618.549.9684.

Trash Blast at Lake Murphysboro

Saturday, Oct. 11th, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

IL Extension is partnering with Giant City St Pk and Lake Murphysboro St Pk to host a fall Trash Blast at Lake Murphysboro.

Participants will break into small teams of volunteers to collect litter from selected sites. No matter what we find, we will try to remove it to help restore the area to its natural state.

Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes, bring gloves, long pants and closed-toed shoes to be prepared. If you do not have gloves, they will be provided. Trash buckets and trash grabbers will be provided but you are encouraged to bring your own. Bring your own water to stay hydrated or snacks to refuel. If you would like to learn more about this program, please contact Erica Lunde at erlunde@illinois.edu. Registration closes on Oct. 10th.

<https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/trash-blast-at-lake-murphysboro>

Kinkaid Lake Fall Ecology Hike

Sunday, Oct. 26th, 9:30 a.m.

Explore the Kinkaid Lake Trail starting below the Crisenberry Dam on this out-and-back interpretive hike of around 5 miles. Enjoy the views of the lake and fall colors while learning about the flora and fauna along the way. This area is located near the confluence of multiple natural divisions including the Greater Shawnee Hills, Illinois Ozarks, Southern Till Plain, and Lower Mississippi River Bottomlands Natural Divisions.

We'll meet at the small parking area below the dam (37.77536, -89.45387) but there is additional parking just down the way at the spillway if needed. This hike will be co-led by Kevin Rohling, Extension Specialist, and Kim Rohling, Extension Educator, and is a collaborative hike offered by the Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club and Illinois Extension.

For questions, please contact Kevin Rohling krohling@illinois.edu or 618.696.3383. Registration required, register at:

<https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/kinkaid-lake-fall-ecology-hike>



IDNR Awards Nearly \$1 Mill in Natural Areas Stewardship Grants

On Sept. 18, the IL Dept of Natural Resources awarded nearly \$1 million in grants to support 15 stewardship programs managed by land trusts on land protected by the IL Nature Preserves Commission. This grant funds projects that help land trusts expand staff and purchase equipment for activities.

<https://dnr.illinois.gov/grants/stewardshipgrants.html>

A River Wants To Run Through It: A Short Tale of Dogtooth Bend

-Rhonda R.

For twenty-five years going back to 1990, the Southern IL Audubon Society (SIAS) coordinated the Mid-Winter Eagle Survey in Union and Alexander Counties. The survey target dates were during the second weekend in January. Each county had two survey routes that focused on specific "drainage" or water bodies. It included one route each along the Mississippi River (drainage) levees in Union and Alexander Counties.

Around 1995, the survey was divided with one group, supervised by Cathie Hutcheson, covering the Union Co. routes and the other group, co-supervised by Vicki Lang and me (Rhonda Rothrock) covering Alexander Co. Both groups became very familiar with their routes and encountered various changes and obstacles over the years. The last survey SIAS coordinated was in the January of 2015. Just before New Year's Day 2016, the Mississippi River punched through the Len Small Levee in Alexander Co., flooding most of southwestern county area. We had to cancel the January 2016 survey. At that point we all agreed it was time to retire from the project. We passed it off to the then state coordinators, the Illinois Audubon Society. With regard to the surveys, even though over time we lost access to some areas, we noticed an overall increase in eagle numbers.

As for changes, I speak only for the Alexander Co. routes. Prior to 2011, we'd have access deep into the southwestern, Dogtooth Bend area of Alexander Co. We'd pass the remnants of a small, old cement pool belonging to a long since gone hotel. Several lone, massive cottonwood trees stood along the gravel roads we drove to reach as far south as we could. At some point, the cement pond was filled in. But in the years from 2011 to 2015, things changed drastically. Flooding over those years swept away the gravel roads to the point that they were not rebuilt, ending access into deep southwestern Dogtooth Bend. Fortunately, the sand left behind by the flooding formed sandbar-like summer nesting habitat for interior least terns.

Deep southwestern Alexander County has a long history of farming. The Len Small Levee in southwestern Alexander Co. was built in 1943 to protect farmland along an S-shaped curve in the Mississippi River known as Dogtooth Bend. (Surrounded by the Mississippi River between Dogtooth Bend and Kentucky is Dogtooth Island.) In 2019 Mississippi River flooding sent a set of barges through a breach in the Lev Small Levee onto a farm field near Miller City, where two still remain. The Might Mississippi had breached the levee twice before due to record floods. In 1993, after it breached, flooding washed away several farm buildings, leaving a large "blue hole" lake at the doorstep of one farm family home near Miller City. The levee was rebuilt by the Army Corps of Engineers. When it breached again in a nearby location in 2011, the hole was patched by local farmers.

But after yet another record flood in 2016 that again broke through the Len Small Levee, inundating lands and homes in and around Miller City and Olive Branch, the breach was too extensive and costly for local farmers to repair. The Army Corps of Engineers stated that it had determined it would not be worth the cost to repair this new breach. In a 2020 study by University of Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, that was based on river history (including pre-levee to current levee history) and soil studies, it was predicted that the Len Small Levee would continue to fail even if repaired. That left the folks of Dogtooth Bend with a difficult choice: Keep farming, at least until the next flood, or walk away from land that's been in their family for generations and give it back to nature.

Dogtooth Bend is what hydrologist call an avulsion zone, where the Mississippi River might be forging a new path. Thousands of years ago the nearby Horseshoe Lake area was part of the Mighty Mississippi's main branch. Over time, the river changed course, leaving behind the cypress tree filled, horseshoe shaped Horseshoe Lake we have today. The River has, over time, left behind more than just new paths. In more recent years, it's brought debris, including the barges in Adam Thomas' field, and sand. The flood in 2016 left more than 300 million tons of sand behind on Dogtooth Bend's thousands of acres of farmland. Also, out of 15,000 acres of tillable farms ground in Dogtooth Bend, Mr. Thomas said the 2019 flood "completely destroyed" about 4,000 acres.. "It's sad," said Thomas, a third-generation Dogtooth Bend farmer, "I remember when all this was excellent farm ground, the best of the best. And to see it slowly dissipate and disappear, it's kind of heartbreaking."

The Federal Government offers flood insurance programs that pays for damage if crops are in the ground prior to a flood (or drought or fire.) This encourages farmers to keep planting. In some areas of the country that are flood, drought, or fire prone, insurance subsidies are keeping, nearly compelling, farmers to work lands that are less than productive. These programs keep them farming, even when it makes more sense to walk away. And while there are newer federal programs that were designed to help farmers adjust to changes in climate related disasters (such as paying farmers to voluntarily retire their flood-ravaged fields), they are small, slow, and ineffective. These issues make farming insurance subsidies the safer bet for farmers. In Dogtooth Bend, that can mean getting your equipment stuck in sand dunes. Yet some are looking at it all differently.

The breach in the Len Small Levee allowed water to spread throughout Dogtooth Bend. Two farmers there recognized that while their land had been sacrificed, the flooding of their land had helped to relieve pressure on the levee system across the Mississippi River and down river. Some Dogtooth Bend farmers have agreed to easements and buyout offers from the federal government and the Nature Conservancy. Though the federal government paperwork moves slower than receding floodwater, locals are accepting that land that was once their heritage will have a new heritage.

My Big Thank you to Laurel Toussaint for putting me on to the excellent ProPublica article *The Federal Farm Policy Trap*-Rhonda R.

References & excerpts from the following three articles at links below. The articles are detailed and well worth reading!!!

The Federal Farm Policy Trap... <https://www.propublica.org/article/illinois-farming-soy-corn-flooding-subsidies-insurance>

Southern Illinois Farmers Face A Growing Problem... <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2025/06/12/levee-breach-dogtooth-bend>

Southern IL's Len Small Levee... <https://aces.illinois.edu/news/southern-illinois-len-small-levee-likely-fail-even-if-repaired-says-university-illinois-study>

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Knock Knock.
Who's there? Anita.
Anita Who?
Anita ask, will you
renew your dues?



Barge in Adam Thomas' field / Dogtooth Bend



**Wally Jakubas & Roadside Cottonwood
Dogtooth Bend**



August SIAS Program Highlights-

During her August presentation for SIAS, Kimberly Rohling enthusiastically taught members and friends what seemed like everything there was to know about moths and gardening for them. Very organized as always, she proved a folder for all in attendance that included informational handouts and a packed of buttonbush seed!

Kimberly started by speaking about the "Insect Apocalypse", a warning of widespread ecological collapse of insect populations with severe impacts on all life. Causes of these declines include climate change, light pollution, and pesticides. If we provide nectar sources for food, shelters for rest and reproduction, minimize artificial lighting, and avoid pesticides and herbicides, we can furnish appropriate moth gardens and help slow the decline.

Kimberly provided many suggestions for native plants that attract and sustain the hundreds of different moth species. She highlighted which native plants were hosts for which moths and made suggestions for garden design, garden planting, and garden management techniques that benefit moths. Folks were encouraged to leave leaf litter lie in areas of their yards and gardens to provides crucial habitat for insects and amphibians.

Thank you Kimberly, we all now have a greater understanding and appreciation for the moths of Illinois! Maybe we could try collecting moths some evening.

-Rhonda R.



**"Ahhh...
...It almost smells like our bathroom air freshener."**

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Roadside Cottonwood / Dogtooth Bend