



Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Newsletter

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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*
<http://www.siaudubon.org>

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

Details can be found at:
[www.facebook.com/group
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Attracting Ruby-throated Hummingbirds To Your Own Backyard Presentation by Kimberly Rohling on Friday, February 27th, at 6 p.m. at the Carbondale Township Hall.

Have you noticed different birds at your feeders? 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? Horticulture Educator Kim Rohling will speak about the natural history of the ruby-throated hummingbird, tips on supplemental feeding, and native plant species that are attractive to hummingbirds. Members and attendees are asked, but not required, to register online so Kimberly can provide adequate program materials. Register at <https://go.illinois.edu/RTHU>.

The presentation will be held in the meeting room at 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.

Kimberly Rohling is the Horticulture Educator with the IL Extension Office serving Franklin, Jackson, Perry, Randolph, and Williamson Counties. She spends her free time outside birding, gardening with native plants, hiking, and enjoying nature with her husband Kevin and their dog Cache.



January SIAS Meeting Highlights

With the evening's temperature predicted to drop into the single digits by 7 p.m., it was quite understandable that our program speaker John Schwegman and his family decide to postpone his presentation. No one questioned their wanting to avoid the long round trip from and back to their home in Metropolis in the frigid nighttime conditions. John's talk will be rescheduled.

Many members and friends did come for the potluck dinner and we still held a silent auction. We also held our annual election. Both Cathie Hutchison and Rhonda Rothrock were reelected. Vice President Joe Merkelbach had decided to resign from the board. Member Bill Davis agreed to and was confirmed to fill the second year of Joe's two year term.

SIAS would like express our sincere gratitude to Joe for the (over) 10 years he led SIAS as President and then the 3 more years as Vice President. *-Rhonda R.*

SIAS 2026 Meeting Calendar

- March 27th** Speaker Clay Kolar, IDNR Retired: Forgotten surface mine tree plantings
- April** Field trip replaces program; date, time, & destination TBA
- April 25th & 26th** Birding Blitz weekend
- May** Annual spring picnic, date, time, & destination TBA
- June & July** No programs, enjoy your summer!
- August 22nd** Mark Denzer: Reintroduction of Alligator Gar
- September** Fall picnic; date, time, & destination TBA
- October 23rd** Program speaker TBA
- Nov/Dec combined mtg., Dec 4th** Program speaker TBA

Cowbirds & Grackles & Red-wings Oh My! Massive flocks, why so many together?

Blackbird species excel at communication. Their ability to share information might equate to crowdsourcing. The winter cold might entice these birds to huddle together for warmth.

Or maybe it's beneficial to have access to multiple sources of food, even if it means sharing that bounty with multiple others. This might be especially true in winter, when food availability can be limited and quickly exhausted. (Lucky the scout who finds it first.)

Or maybe it's safety in numbers. A raptor such as a Cooper's hawk might easily target a lone individual, but it can be confused or overwhelmed when faced with choosing one from a group of hundreds or thousands.

For more on why blackbirds flock, visit <https://tinyurl.com/3xn9kepp>

The Prohibit Partisan Park Passes Act

Used by more than a million public-lands visitors every year, the America the Beautiful Annual Pass allows entry to every national park and special-fee areas on national forests, wildlife refuges, and other federal lands across the United States. By law, the 2026 pass version was to feature a contest-winning photograph of Glacier National Park. But last November the Trump administration abruptly inserted the president's face on U.S. residents' pass version instead, discouraging many people from buying it. Others bought the pass anyway and have now learned that it may be voided if they dare to cover the president's image with stickers or decals.

A new bill would ban any images of living political figures on digital and physical Publiclands passes because partisan politics shouldn't hinder our ability to find spaces where all Americans can gather and find common ground. Consider calling or going to the following link to tell your representative to support the Prohibit Partisan Park Passes Act so Publicland passes feature pretty places and wildlife – not political figures. <https://tinyurl.com/ywbnc93>

Illinoisans to Take Earthquake Awareness Month Seriously February is Earthquake Awareness Month. While hundreds of small earthquakes occur each year in the U.S., the worst in Illinois history occurred on December 17, 1811, and was so strong that it rang a church bell in a Cairo church in southernmost Illinois. It also blew smoke, sand, and coal 30 yards into the air and made the Mississippi River flow backward for a moment. Illinois rests between the New Madrid Seismic Zone and the Wabash Valley Seismic Zone. If you feel an earthquake or receive an alert about an earthquake, you are encouraged to "Drop, Cover, and Hold On." Sheltering on the floor under heavy furniture, protecting your head, and stabilizing yourself by holding onto furniture is your best chance to stay safe. Persons using walkers or wheelchairs are advised to lock down and then cover and hold on. For more information on earthquake preparedness, visit <https://iemaohs.illinois.gov/preparedness/earthquake.html>.

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...frogs are singing during our (temporary) spring in February

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.

Coffee on the Cache

Friday, February 27th, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

A Monthly Community Roundtable at the Cache River Wetlands Center. 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 Henry N. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL

Free and no need to RSVP! For more details, call 618.657.2064

From Glaciers to Genocide, An Illustrated Chronicle of the Inoca in Southern Illinois

Saturday, February 28th, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

After a brief focus on the spectacular geography of the Mississippi River Valley, speaker Kay Ripplemeyer will focus mainly on the tribes of the Illini nation as they were pushed south into what would be Southern Illinois, living for four generations in close trade cooperation with the French while suffering from both deadly diseases and competing native tribes before being briefly used by the English, and eventually shoved off their land and annihilated by the Americans. Presentation to be held at Giant City State Park Visitor Center, 235 Giant City Rd, Makanda. Registration Required. Phone the Visitor Center at 618.457.4836 for full details or to register.

John Schwegman on Dragonflies

Monday, March 9th, 10:00 a.m.

John Schwegman will present his dragonfly program to the Metropolis Garden Club on Monday, March 9, at 10 a.m. All their meetings are open to the public. Join the Metropolis Garden Club for coffee and refreshments at 9:30 a.m. John's program will follow at 10 a.m. Meeting will be held at the Metropolis Community Center, 900 West 10th St. (IL Route 45), Metropolis. For more details, contact Anne Parmley at 618.638.6549.

Friends of Crab Orchard Nature Dialogues

Saturday, March 14th, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

The Ultimate Insects: Dragonflies and Damselflies presentation by Pat Dunbar. Presentation will be at Crab Orchard Visitor's Center, 6987 Headquarters Rd, Marion. Phone the Refuge at 618.997.3344 for more details.

Amphibians

Saturday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.

Tony Gerard will give a program on Amphibians with an optional hike at the Henry N. Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center

8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL

Free and no need to RSVP! For more details, call 618.657.2064

Upcoming Events at Giant City State Park -Registration Required

March 7th – Jennifer Behnken: Buds & Bark Winter ID hike, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

March 8th – Vicki Lang-Mendenhall: Birding hike, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

March 8th – John Palis: What Frog is This? presentation, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

March 15th – Chris Benda: Understanding Grasses and Sedges, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Phone Park's Visitor Center at 618.457.4836 for full details or to register.

Conservation@Home's 2026 Spring Ephemerals webinar

Saturday, March 21st, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Have you ever wondered how some wildflowers bloom while the ground is still cold and the air feels like winter? Join UofI Extension for this free one-hour webinar to explore Illinois' native spring ephemerals and their vital role in supporting early-season pollinators. Learn how to plant and care for these resilient woodland flowers to bring early color and habitat into your landscape. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required at <https://shorturl.at/DbJ7C>

NOTE: You DO NOT need to login or create an Extension user account to register. Bypass that button and enter your contact information.

Moss Walk: Discovering the Small Plants that Shape our Landscape

Saturday, March 21st, 10:00 a.m.

Join the IL Native Plant Society Southern Chapter for a guided moss walk on Rocky Bluff Trail, Tacoma Lake Rd, Crab Orchard NW Refuge, to discover the small plants that quietly shape our landscapes. Note: a \$2 per vehicle Refuge access pass is required and can be purchased at the Refuge Visitor Center or at the D.K. Campground Kiosk near Rocky Bluff Trail. For more details, contact hike leader Jason Henry at jhenry@semo.edu.

Shawnee Group Sierra Club Presents

Saving Nature One Yard at a Time:

Screening & Discussion of Doug Tallamy's "What's the Rush?"

Wednesday, March 18th, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

5:45 p.m. arrival time for signing in, entering raffle, and visiting with co-hosts. At Carbondale's Civic Center, Rm 108, 200 S. Illinois Ave, Carbondale

During this free public event, we will watch the video

“What's the Rush?” by Doug Tallamy, which explores how our yards together can become part of the largest ever national park and a source of hope. After the film, our panel will facilitate a discussion of questions and comments on the film, including issues we face when committing to bird and insect friendly landscaping. Refreshments will be served! And we will raffle off a copy of two books by Tallamy: How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard (2025) and Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard (2019)! Panelists:

–Vicki Lang: In addition to being an avid birder, Vicki is President of Southern Illinois Audubon Society and a Giant City State Park volunteer who regularly leads guided bird hikes. She also compiles Christmas and Spring Bird counts and participates in local bird surveys.
–Jean Sellars: Jean is a biologist who specializes in restoration ecology; she has supervised the restoration of over 10,000 acres. In addition, she has designed & installed three gardens with natives.

–Laurel Toussaint: Laurel is a birder and native gardener, who has hosted tours of her bird and insect friendly garden, most recently for the 2025 Bee & Butterfly Garden Tour.

Co-Hosts include Faith In Place, Green Earth, Green Team of Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship, Southern IL Audubon Society, Green Team of the Church of the Good Shepherd, and the IL Native Plant Society Southern Chapter.

Birding Walks with Master Naturalists

Lily Glaeser and Indigo Nathani

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

Join Master Naturalists Lily Glaeser and Indigo Nathani 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.

Thursday, March 26th, GreenEarth Chautauqua Bottoms, Carbondale
Sunday, April 5th, Cemetery Trail, Oakland Cemetery, Carbondale
Thursday, April 16th, GreenEarth Brush Hill Nature Preserve, Carbondale
For more info or to register online for each event, visit

go.illinois.edu/BirdWithLilyIndigo

Learn and Burn: Public Prescribed Fire Demonstration

Saturday, March 28th, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Register to and join this Learn and Burn: Public Prescribed Fire Demonstration at Crab Orchard Visitor Center, 6987 Headquarters Rd, Marion, IL 62959. Learn why prescribed fire is a critically important ecological and wildfire safety tool, and see first-hand how a prescribed fire is implemented safely from conservation professionals in southern Illinois.

Register at <https://shorturl.at/PkxBZ>

A live fire demonstration is planned for 1:00 p.m. if conditions permit, and there will be many other opportunities to learn about prescribed fire from several conservation agencies and organizations at informational booths, presentations, and videos throughout the day. If the weather is not suitable for the demonstration burn, the event will still occur with other learning opportunities under the pavilion and inside the visitor center.

For questions, please contact Pen Johnson, Wildland Firefighter Fellow with The Nature Conservancy at pen.johnson@tnc.org

SIAS Sponsoring the 24th Birding Blitz

On **April 25th**, birders from throughout the state will again come spend the day birding with their friends as a team in southernmost Illinois. And there's no better place to go birding in spring than in our southernmost eleven counties! As most SIAS members and friends know, the Birding Blitz is an event where teams compete on the last Saturday in April to see and hear as many species of birds in a 24-hour period as they can. In past years the Blitz was a fundraiser for conservation in southernmost Illinois but that facet of the Blitz has been put on hold.

Participating teams can search for birds from Jackson, Williamson, Saline, and Gallatin counties south through Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski, and Massac counties. This eleven county area, between the two big rivers, includes cypress swamps, upland forests, and grasslands. Public lands in the area include Crab Orchard NW Refuge, Cypress Creek NW Refuge, Giant City State Park, Trail of Tears State Forest, the Cache River State Natural Area, Mermet Lake and Horseshoe Lake Conservation Areas, and the Shawnee National Forest!

For more details, visit the Blitz Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/groups/317666471615613/

Arevon's Big Muddy Solar Project Site Is Quite the Sight

The site of Arevon's 124 Megawatt Big Muddy Solar Project is quite the sight to see. This work in progress is a \$200 million solar facility set to deliver "American-made energy and long-term economic growth to Jackson County". It seems apropos that the project is named after the Big Muddy River with a logo that includes an outline of the Big Muddy Monster, because it is a stupefyingly massive leviathan. It dwarfs the solar project going up on Old Rt. 13, east of Murphysboro. Once in operation, Arevon's river of solar panels being installed on the 580 acres of leased farm land are slated to produce enough energy to power 24,000+ homes.

On Arevon's website they state "protecting and preserving the natural character of each project site is central to their approach to energy development, construction, and operations. In addition to producing secure, homegrown energy above the ground, Big Muddy Solar will also provide a safe, thriving home for pollinators, turning the land beneath and around the solar panels into a habitat that helps protect the soil and America's important pollinator population." Read more about Arevon, and the seed mix to be used, at the link to "*The Power Beneath the Panels: How Pollinator Habitat Helps Feed America*" at <https://shorturl.at/AIEKD>

Happy Belated 121st Birthday to the U.S. Forest Service

The Forest Transfer Act of 1905 - On February 1, 1905, Congress transferred the administration of the Federal forest reserves from the Department of the Interior's General Land Office to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry. On March 3, the Bureau of Forestry became the Forest Service and 2 years later the Federal forest reserves were renamed the national forests. The first Chief ["Forester"] of the Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, had sought the transfer of the reserves from the time he was appointed Chief of the Division of Forestry in the USDA in 1898.

Pinchot used his contact to members of Congress and other opinion leaders in Washington, DC, to argue for the transfer on two basic grounds: first, the General Land Office was staffed by political appointees who lacked the training in forestry required to manage the forest reserves on a scientific basis, and second, the centralization of the General Land Office resulted in long delays in granting lumbering, mining, and grazing permits to local reserve users. Unhappy with the tardiness of the General Land Office, the commercial sector and its allies in Congress supported Pinchot's goal. He even managed to persuade Theodore Roosevelt, who spoke in favor of the transfer when, in 1901, he addressed Congress for the first time after becoming President.

User Access - Pinchot convinced Roosevelt as early as 1901 that the transfer (of what were then) the Federal forest reserves to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) would ensure their more efficient management. It may be that this position of Pinchot's is rooted in two beliefs he held: the logic of placing the reserves under the control of trained foresters in the USDA, and his awareness that political support for Government-managed reserves would exist only if the reserves were open to use. Prior to 1905, Pinchot was speaking against proposals made by wildlife groups—including the Boone and Crockett Club—that game preserves be set aside in the existing Federal forest reserves, a move opposed by western livestock owners who wanted access for their herds to forage on the reserves. Pinchot further gained favor with livestock interests by his advocating controlled grazing on the reserves at a time when the Secretary of the Interior refused grazing permits. Fears of erosion and other problems caused by overgrazing had led the Secretary of the Interior to ban grazing from 1898 to 1901.

User access to reserves was a realistic policy stemming from the long-held tradition that public-domain natural resources existed for the benefit of the local residents who needed them. Division R (forestry) of the General Land Office in 1901 provided for "free use of timber and stone," allowing settlers, miners, residents, and prospectors the right to remove \$100 worth of timber yearly from reserves. The wood was to be used for firewood, fencing, buildings, mining, and other domestic purposes. Permits for timber harvests valued at over \$100 had to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior, which resulted in unpopular delays between request and final approval.

The continuity of the agenda of user access is found in the guiding policy of the Forest Service, which is first expressed in the 1905 letter of instructions to Gifford Pinchot from Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson (dated February 1, 1905, and drafted by Pinchot) on managing the reserves on the day of their transfer to the Department of Agriculture: "All the resources of forest reserves are for use. . . under such restrictions only as will insure [sic] the permanence of these resources." This is the clearest statement of Pinchot's view of wise use or conservation. From the perspective of the foresters in the Forest Service in 1905, three principals were to be followed in their work: (1) sustained yield, (2) multiple-use, and (3) protection of local communities. The guide book of the agency was the 1905 Use Book, which defined the object of the forest reserves as "preserving a perpetual supply of timber for home industries, preventing the destruction of the forest cover which regulates the flow of streams, and protecting local residents from unfair competition in the use of forest and range." *There's more to this history. These excerpts and the rest of the USFS origin details can be found at <https://npshistory.com/publications/usfs/fs-518/chap15.htm>*

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	\$ _____

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We knock on wood in hopes you will renew your dues.

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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.



American Woodcocks Don't Just Dance, They Rock!

While there's really no time when birders aren't amazed by bird behavior, certain times of the year provide exceptionally unique and magical moments. Often thought as a less eventful month, February offers birders their own special bird Valentine. It comes in the form of the courting display of male American woodcocks, also known as timberdoodles.

On a warmish February evening with little wind, just after sunrise or just before sunset is the time. An open, mowed field of maybe an acre or more that's flat or lowly rolling and adjoins a woodland is the habitat. Just about anywhere in southernmost IL with this habitat, that's mostly quiet, is the location. And patience is a necessity...and maybe a lawn chair.

Once you find what you think is the right place at the right time (on 02/18/26, the time was 6:10 p.m. at our place on Hickory Ridge Rd), then just start listening for what sounds like a "peent" made repeatedly every 4(?) seconds. At first it might sound close but then more distant because the male "peents" from one location but in different directions. In my experience, he'll "peent" maybe 4-6 times. Then he'll shoot up into the air, beating his specially designed feathers to make twitter-like sounds. Listen for the twitters. Timberdoodles are said to fly up, in somewhat of a spiral pattern, to about 200-300 feet, then hover just long enough to prepare for their decent. On the way back down, you should notice the twitterly noise changes a bit to include chirpy sounds. Sir Timberdoodle flutters back down to the ground, landing nearly exactly where he took off from. He is said to wait there to see if a femaledoodle notices him. If not, then he repeats the dance.

If you have a good ear for sound direction and a pair of binoculars, you might be able to locate the general spot from where the "peents" originate. Then, sometimes you can catch sight of him as he takes off into the air, you can track him in his circular aerial dance. In my experience, not only do they "peent" in at least 4 different directions, but the flights up also go in at least 4 different directions, rather like a 4-leafed clover. And luckily by accident, I was once within a few feet of a male when he was "peenting" so I witnessed firsthand that, yes, they do come back down to nearly the exact same spot each time.

However, it's not enough that this male aerial courting dance makes timberdoodles uniquely magical, they occasionally walk in a rocking motion that would put John Travolta's "Saturday Night Fever" movie strut to shame. I've only seen their rocking walk on film/video and both sexes, young and old alike, occasionally do the rocking walk. But when I see it, the movement and pace always bring to mind the Bee Gees' song "Staying Alive" from the above mentioned movie.

From what I've read, there are various explanations for their rocking walk. In a 1982 issue of *The Auk* Ornithological magazine, these four reasons were suggested: (1) A nervous action resulting from fear or suspicion. (2) Mimicry of leaves being moved by a breeze. (3) Mimicry of prevailing shadows. (4) Detection of earthworms or insects under the ground. To view a video of timberdoodles rocking or learn more about why they might do it, check out the article "Why do woodcocks rock when they walk?" at the link <https://whyevolutionistrue.com/2021/02/28/why-do-woodcocks-rock-when-they-rock/>

Or just do a search for Hidden Secrets of the American Woodcock on YouTube.

-Rhonda R



KNOW YOUR AMERICAN WOODCOCK



AMERICAN WOODCOCK

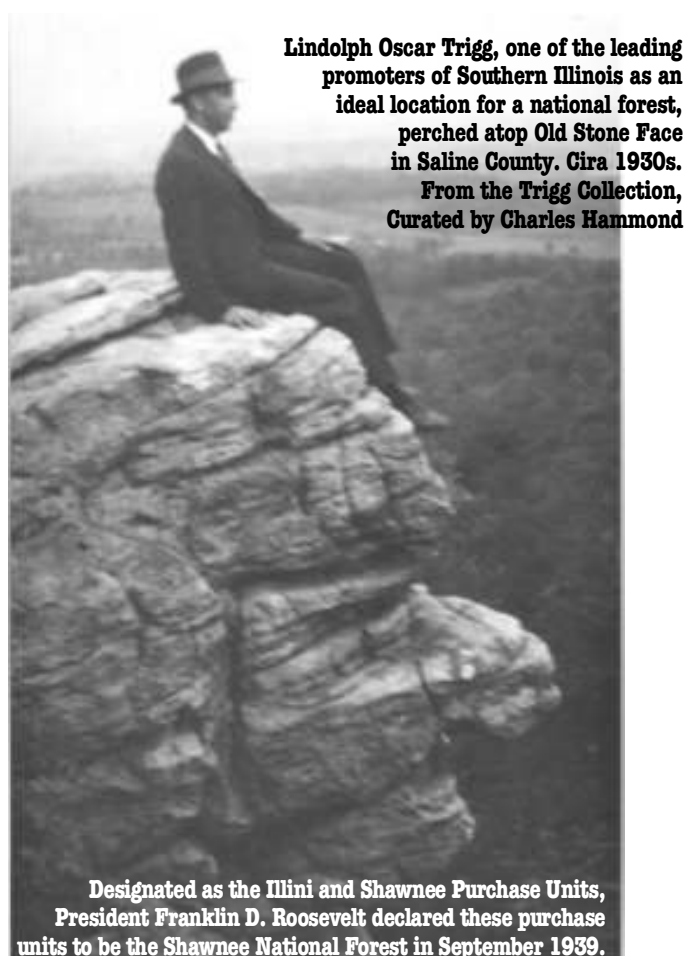


WILSON'S SNIPE



Southern Illinois Audubon Society
P.O. Box 222
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*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society and
the Illinois Environmental Council*



Lindolph Oscar Trigg, one of the leading promoters of Southern Illinois as an ideal location for a national forest, perched atop Old Stone Face in Saline County. Circa 1930s. From the Trigg Collection, Curated by Charles Hammond

Designated as the Illini and Shawnee Purchase Units, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared these purchase units to be the Shawnee National Forest in September 1939.