



Southern Illinois Audubon Society Newsletter

**March 2026
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Southern Illinois
Audubon Society
P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, IL
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*Established on the first
Earth Day, in April 1970*
<http://www.siaudubon.org>
(website currently down
for maintenance)

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

2026 Blitz to be held
on April 25th.

Details and registration
forms can be found at:
[www.facebook.com/group
s/317666471615613/](http://www.facebook.com/group/s/317666471615613/)

Forgotten Surface Mine Tree Plantings, Should they Remain Forgotten?

Is the title the program to be given by Clay Kolar for SIAS on Friday, March 27th, at 6 p.m. 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.

The legacy of tree invasion and planting on the coal surface mined lands of the United States encompass a large amount of acreage over a long time span and on a great variety of mined land conditions. A large volume of research on these plantings has been and continues to be done. What needs to be fully embraced and appreciated is that the real goal of both natural or human initiated forestation on coal surface mine lands is how well the trees ultimately perform in the long haul. This is the basis to better understand to what extent and the time scale these tree stands nurture natural processes that function and result in a desirable, diverse and rich forest habitat.

What is required to have the most complete understanding of how the process of forestation is best initiated to minimize the time to when a desirable forest condition is achieved, is to have a complete understanding of the factors that affected the establishment, survival and growth at the onset of forestation efforts. A very desirable step to gain that understanding is to follow up those early studies having good base-line establishment information with periodic long-term assessment as those trees grow and become the core engine of forest habitat development.

In 1978 in southeastern Illinois on lands surface coal mined by the Sahara Coal Company, Dr. Clark Ashby's Botany Dept. Ecology Lab at Southern Illinois University began a large-scale five-year establishment phase of tree plantings designed for long-term study. Since there exists a very complete and thorough record of initial site and establishment conditions and early tree performance, this is the type of tree planting that is a prime example where follow up research at this time in their age will yield some of the most important results of any forestation initiative. The trees in the Sahara study, among other older tree plantings throughout the United States coal fields, are past 30 years of age. They are calling out to us to come back and revisit them, and let them reveal for us their story of survival, endurance, growth, development, and regeneration to help us determine whether a success or failure or something in between was achieved by our initial forestation efforts. They should not be forgotten.



Clay Kolar retired from the IL Dept. of Natural Resources after 27 years in the Land Reclamation Division as a reclamation specialist and then as a wildlife specialist. He graduated from Southern Illinois University (SIU) in wildlife ecology then worked for 10 plus years as an assistant scientist in the Dept. of Botany at SIU, working on reforestation reclamation of surface mined land in and around Illinois prior to working at IDNR.

February SIAS Meeting Highlights

Presenter Kimberly Rohling came to the February SIAS meeting packing lots of handouts and other information to help folks attract hummingbirds to their backyards. She reminded us that while fifteen species of hummingbirds reside in the USA, along with 9 additional species that occasionally wander inside USA borders, the ruby-throated hummingbird is the only species in the eastern half of the USA. Kimberly described how as days grow shorter, chemical changes triggers hummingbirds to migrate. She stated that hummingbirds eat 1.5 to 3 times their own body weight daily, including a few dozen to 1000s of insects (80% of a ruby-throated hummingbird's diet) daily. Kimberly discuss supplemental feeding with a simple sugar and water solution at a 4 to 1 ratio and explained the need to sanitize feeders regularly and avoid nectar with dyes. She brought various feeders and described their good features and bad features.

Then Kimberly discussed the benefits of gardening for hummingbirds as an alternate option to feeding by creating habitats using native plants including shrubs and trees. She added that native plants increase the diversity of plants as well as benefit other pollinators and

Wishing SIAS's New VP Bill Davis Well

In January 2026 Bill Davis was elected to the position of Vice President for SIAS. But less than a month later, Bill had become seriously ill, ending up in the ICU at St. Louis University Medical Center. After multiple weeks of tests and treatments, Bill was allowed to come home to Carbondale. He's now living with Anna Smith-Davis, settled into a life of medical appointments and treatments and a restricted diet among other things. SIAS wants Bill to know he is in our thoughts.

local food webs. She also stated the importance of having appropriate alternate water sources, like misters or fountains, available. She concluded by encouraging folks to reduce their use of pesticides and to consider contributing to Citizen Science projects like Journey North, that tracks migrations and seasons.

SIAS thanks Kimberly for yet another engaging and educational presentation! -Rhonda R.

Why do hummingbirds hum?

Because they don't know the words.



SIAS 2026 Meeting Calendar

April 13th - SIAS fieldtrip to Carlyle Lake, details
April 25th & 26th - Birding Blitz, details on 3rd page of this newsletter
April 26th - SIAS Nature Walk at the Cache River Wetlands Ctr, details on 3rd page of this newsletter
May 17th - Annual spring picnic at Attucks Park in C'dale
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

What's Happening in Southernmost IL...

...March came in like a lion in lamb's clothing, then took it off.

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.

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.

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

Coffee on the Cache

Friday, March 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 on the 4th Friday of each month at the 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

Crab Orchard Refuge Spring Wildflower Walks

Saturday, March 28th & Saturday April 11th

Retired Fish & Wildlife Biologist Sam Spiller will lead these walks. Meet at the Rocky Bluff Trail Parking lot at 9:00 a.m. Registration Required.

For more info or to register, call the Refuge Visitors Center at 618.997.3344, Ext 1.

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>

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

Events at Giant City State Park -Registration Required

April 4th, 11th, & 17th - Park Naturalist: Spring Wildflower Walks, 1 - 3 p.m.

May 1st - Jeremy Schumacher: Amphibian Night hike, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Thursdays, May 7th, 14th, 21st, & 28th - Park Naturalist: Senior Social and Stroll, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

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

SIAS Fieldtrip to Carlyle Lake, April 13th

Joe Merkelbach will lead this fieldtrip to Carlyle Lake in Clinton County. Attendees will first walk the Chipmunk Trail, on the south end of the lake, to see and hear songbirds then look for ducks and gulls on the lake. Then attendees will drive up to the state office, on the east side of the lake, to walk another curated trail. **Registration Required, no later than April 11th.***

For carpooling to Carlyle Lake, meet Kirsten Trimble, 618.521.4266, under the sign at Murdale Shopping Ctr, 1901 W Main, Carbondale at 7:30 a.m. or meet Joe at Chipmunk Trail at 9:00 a.m. Directions to Chipmunk Trail: Take IL Rt. 127 to Carlyle, turn east onto IL Rt. 50 (Franklin St.), drive just under 2 miles to the McNair Campground sign, turn north/left to reach Carlyle Dam Rd, turn west/left onto Carlyle Dam Rd, watch for Chipmunk Trail parking lot on the north side of the road before you reach the dam.

***To register, phone or text Joe at 573.275.0021.** If you text (or leave a message), state that your calling about the SIAS fieldtrip. In case of bad weather, trip will be postponed until April 17th or 20th. Follow up with Joe.

Shawnee NF Trash Blast - Grantsburg Swamp

Friday, April 3rd, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Join Friends of the Shawnee National Forest at Grantsburg Swamp for their monthly Trash Blast. Trash Blasts take place the first Friday of every month from March through June and September through October at various locations in the Shawnee National Forest. Get more info or register at <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/trash-blasts-2026>

For questions, contact Anne Townsend at

<https://extension.illinois.edu/staff/anne-townsend>

2026 SINPS Indigenous Plants Symposium

Saturday, April 11th, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The Southern Chapter of the IL Native Plant Society will host its annual symposium at the Life Sciences 3 auditorium on the SIU Carbondale campus. This year's theme is "The Evolving Landscapes of Illinois" and will consist of a combination of in-person and Zoom (*) presentations. The seven speakers will address change in the landscape over large spatial and temporal scales, and geological and soil-based perspectives. Presentation topics: Geologic history and origins of Illinois, Dr. James Conder; Soil differentiation of Illinois, Dr. Eric Brevik; Anthropogenic effects of pollinators, Dr. Sedonia Sipes; and Contemporary quality of communities, Chris Evan.

Registration required. Visit link below to view registration options. Lunch will be provided as part of registration fee. Zoom registration option available. <https://forms.gle/DY32xhjp24bgZw7k8>

Butterflies and Dragonflies

Saturday, April 4th, 1:00 p.m.

Anne Parmley, assisted by Pat Dunbar and Mary McCarthy, will present "Butterflies and the Plants they need" along with a short lecture on "Butterfly and Dragonfly Surveys" followed by a Visitor Center Educational Hike at the 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

Brown Bag Birding and Socializing

Second Tuesday of the Month, 11:30 a.m.

April 14th, May 12th, June 9th, July 14th, August 11th, Sept 8th, & Oct 12th
Meet at Red Oak Pavilion located in Evergreen Park, Carbondale. We sit under a pavilion, so lunch happens 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.

There are restrooms in Evergreen Park. Pavilion has picnic tables, if you would be more comfortable with a folding chair, then please bring one. Please bring your lunch, drink, binoculars and conversations. Please invite family, friends and neighbors. Everyone is welcome. For more details contact Kathryn Jenkel at katjenkel@yahoo.com or 618.559.2908.

The 24th Annual Birding Blitz of Southernmost Illinois Saturday, April 25th 2026



For the 24th year, the Southern Illinois Audubon Society is sponsoring the Birding Blitz 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, first held as a land conservation fundraiser for 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.)

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.

Teams must have a minimum of 2 members. With the exception of category "Open B", teams may start birding as early as 12:01 a.m. on April 25th 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 that can be found at: <https://www.aba.org/aba-big-day-count-rules/>



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 26th to be held at the reopened Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center, 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL, from 9:30 a.m. -12 noon.

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

SIAS Nature Walk at the Cache River Wetlands Center

On Sunday, April 26th, SIAS will lead a nature walk around the grounds of the newly reopened Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Ctr, 8885 State Route 37 South, Cypress, IL

The walk will start at 1:00 p.m. and go to 2:00 p.m.
(or longer if folks are interested)

Arrive early to join in the Birding Blitz Awards Brunch to be held at the Wetlands center from 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon.

Walk will be canceled if weather doesn't permit. For further details, contact SIAS or the Wetlands Center 618.657.2064

Volunteers Needed at the Cache River Wetlands Center

Sydney Waters, the new Natural Resources Coordinator, at the Barkhausen Cache River Wetlands Center is looking for volunteer support in the Visitor's Center so she can step out periodically to make trail notes in preparation for a SIU Recreation Professions class coming out at the beginning of April as part of a class project. Sydney is looking for Visitor's Center Docents who would be comfortable covering the front desk temporarily while she is out on the trails.

In addition, she is offering other volunteer opportunities including marketing & social media, roving naturalists, trail maintenance assistance, invasive species removal, gardener, and event crew organizer.

For more information, including a list of functions and requirements for volunteers in each category, contact Sydney at the Wetlands Center office, 618.657.2064 or email Sydney.Waters@illinois.gov. Or visit with Sydney in person at the Wetlands Center, 8885 IL-37, Cypress, IL

Fifth Annual Family Eco Festival

Sunday, April 19th, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Alto Vineyards, 8515 Illinois Rt. 127, Alto Pass

Volunteers Needed to help SIAS with Kid Crafts at the 2026 Eco Fest*

For the 5th year, SIAS will be participating in the Family Eco Festival at Alto Pass Vineyard to be held on Sunday, April 19th, from 1:00-5:00 p.m. at Alto Vineyards. It's a day of family-friendly fun and learning. Attendees will engage in hands-on activities focused on our beautiful yet complex natural environment with its unique animal and plant inhabitants.

This is a fundraiser for the nonprofit organization, Innovations in STEM Education, including a silent auction. Money raised from the event will fund grants distributed to local teachers needing science materials. The program offers K-12 educators assistance developing effective classroom activities related to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), environmental sustainability, and environmental justice.

*SIAS will have our display up and will be offering simple kids crafts: making paper flowers and paper butterflies. Volunteers would help with the crafts and speak to folks about SIAS. Folks can volunteer in shifts. If you can help, please let me (Rhonda) know by our March 27th meeting or email me at woodthrusheola@hotmail.com Thanks! -Rhonda R.

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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fills the bill!

**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.



Welcome to the Illinois Forestry for the Birds Pocket Guide

Forestry for the Birds is a pocket guide for Landowners in Illinois and the Central Hardwood Region. This guide is intended to provide bird-focused forest management information for landowners in Illinois, which is part of the Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region. The Central Hardwoods Region provides diverse and essential habitats for birds and includes approximately 4.6 million acres in Illinois.

The twelve bird species highlighted in the guide were selected because they nest in the Central Hardwoods of Illinois and are relatively easy to identify by sight or sound, with most in need of conservation action to help address often significant population declines.

This work was funded by the Sam Shine Foundation, the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Guidance and feedback in the development of this guide were provided by Kyle Brazil and Richard Stanton, Central Hardwoods Joint Venture; Mark Vukovich, U.S. Forest Service; Sarah Kendrick, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Luke Garver and Jenny Lesko, IL Dept. of Natural Resources; Jeffery Walk, The Nature Conservancy; Jeff Hoover, IL Natural History Survey; Jessica Outcalt and Lenny Farlee, Purdue University Extension; Mike Ward, University of IL; Chris Evans, University of IL Extension; and Allen Pursell, Sam Shine Foundation.

The guide is intended to help landowners in the Central Hardwoods of Illinois understand how to incorporate bird-friendly practices into their forest management efforts. Twelve species are highlighted with information provided about their life histories, population trends, and conservation needs.

For additional help with species identification, readers can consult published field guides or online resources. Much more detailed species-specific life history information can be found at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's All About Birds allaboutbirds.org and the American Bird Conservancy's Bird Library abcbirds.org/birds.

The guide is distributed free by the Nature Conservancy or can be downloaded at: https://www.chjv.org/wp-content/uploads/IL-Pocket-Guide-2024_Final.pdf



What triggers migration in hummingbirds?

Fewer hours of daylight trigger hormonal changes. As the days grow shorter, chemical changes are triggered in the hummingbirds' bodies. These changes manifest themselves in hummingbirds going on a feeding binge.

Before leaving land to fly over the Gulf of Mexico, hummingbirds double their weight by gorging to add fat as an energy reserve; in good weather they can go 600 miles without stopping, and the Gulf crossing is only 500 miles. -*Journey North* <https://journeynorth.org/projects/hummingbird>

(This should have been in last month's newsletter.--RR)



"We appreciate your interest in the position, but our team is looking for someone who does a weird little dance and says 'peent'"

Southern Illinois Audubon Society

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Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society and the Illinois Environmental Council



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