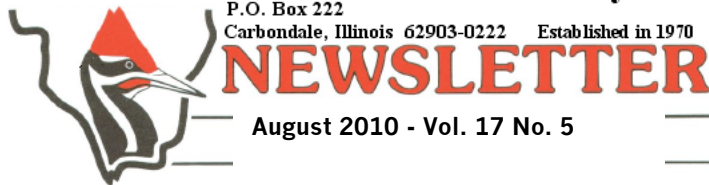


Southern Illinois Audubon Society



P.O. Box 222
Carbondale, Illinois 62903-0222 Established in 1970

NEWSLETTER

August 2010 - Vol. 17 No. 5

The Natural Resources of Australia -

will be featured in a program by Dr. John Burde on Friday, Aug. 27th at 7:30 p.m. to be held at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale. (Use the back entrance.)

Welcome the program season with guest speaker Dr. John Burde, Professor Emeritus for the Dept. of Forestry at SIU Carbondale, who will present us slides from his extensive studies while exploring in Australia. We will learn the cultural differences and the variety of ecosystems within the entire country/continent. Their National Parks are managed by the aborigines. The talk will cover the many similarities and differences of our National Park System. Dr. Burde received his PhD in Natural Resources Economics from Arizona and taught for 32 years at SIUC in Forestry. He shares his professional efforts along with some of our SIAS Charter Members. Dr. Burde joined forces with Dr. George Feldhamer to write the book *Creature Feature, Conserving America's Wildlife and Parklands* profiling the history, geography, vegetation, and animals of America's 56 national parks and including a discussion of conservation concerns for each park and group of mammals.

Future SIAS Programs:

Sept. 24 – Debbie Newman, *Threatened & Endangered Species*

Oct. 22 – Tom Clay, *IAS Land Acquisition Program*

Dec. 3 (Nov./Dec.) – Kim Wrenn-King, *Mexican Wolves*

Upcoming Events & Outings

Aug. 28 > Cold-blooded Creatures of the Cache

Discover some of the unique cold-blooded creatures and have the opportunity to experience an up close and personal interaction with reptiles native to the southernmost Illinois region. The program concludes with a hike to look for creatures at Heron Pond.

Meet at the Cache River Wetlands Center at 1 p.m. Event runs until 4 p.m. For more info, phone the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Aug. 28 > SIAS Hunt for Anhingas near the Cache

Rhonda Rothrock will lead a late afternoon outing to the Michael Wolff Wetlands at Marshall Ridge, near the Cache River State Natural Area (CRSNA) Belknap Office, with the goal of locating at least one of the anhingas that were recently seen there. Meet under the sign at Murdale Shopping Center, W. Main, Carbondale, at 3 p.m. or on site in the parking lot of the CRSNA Belknap Office at 4:15ish p.m. (If you arrive on site ahead of the group, please wait for the group before approaching the wetlands so to not flush any birds there.)

Plan for an approx. ½ mile hike (one way) on a mowed grassy trail with minimal shade and maximum ticks. Anhingas, if present, can be difficult to locate. We'll spend about an hour looking. Bring a spotting scope if you have one and tick repellent!

Sept. 25 > For the Love of Monarchs

Come assist folks at the Cache River Wetlands Center net, tag and release monarch butterflies during their migration south to Mexico. Learn about monarchs, which native plants they are attracted to, the vital importance milkweed plays in their survival, and what you can do to help them succeed.

Meet at the Wetlands Center at 9 a.m. Event runs until 12 noon. For more info, phone the Wetlands Center at 618.657.2064.

Jan. 4-11, 2011 > Costa Rica, the Birds & Natural History

This tour will introduce you to the incredible range of habitat present in the small nation of Costa Rica...cloud forest, elfin forest, paramo, and humid coastal forest. See Resplendent Quetzals at your first stop at Savegre Lodge. The following day visit the Corcovado Lodge, located in the longest contiguous rainforest in Costa Rica. The trip continues on to Wilson Botanical Gardens and La Amistad National Park, the largest most remote national park in Costa Rica.

Trip price is \$2,450, not including airfare. For more information or to register, contact Nelda Hinckley at 618.549.5588 or 618.457.7676 ext 8323. Email Nelda at neldahinckley@jalc.edu

Snakes Are Leading Predators in the Shawnee National Forest

Thanks to long-term research by Scott Robinson, we've known since the 1990s that the brown-headed cowbird is a devastating predator of songbird nests in the Shawnee National Forest.

Now a newer SNF study, conducted by the University of Illinois, points to snake predation as a serious issue, as well. Surprisingly, the snakes don't raid nests just on the forest edges, where one would expect to find them. Like the cowbirds, snakes go deep into the forest interiors, especially in fragmented forest stands.

U of I researcher Patrick Weatherhead said that the number-one snake predator is the rat snake. To gather data, radio transmitters were attached to rat snakes and field observers monitored more than 300 nests in the Shawnee. Snakes actually watch the activity of birds to locate nests, and predation more often occurs after eggs have hatched because parental activity at the nest increases.

This latest study leads to the confirmation of how Eastern North American forest tracks must be maintained in large, unfragmented stands to help improve the reproduction success of forest interior bird species. -- *Laraine Wright*

Three factoids about birds, did You Know --

-- The Arctic tern holds the record for the longest migration distance of any animal on Earth. The tern nests in Greenland or Iceland and spends winters in Antarctica, making an annual migratory round trip of 44,000 miles.

-- Researchers looked at the last 40 years of data collected by the National Audubon Society. The 305 species of North American birds included in the study have increased their northern range an average of 35 miles; 60 species have moved 100 miles or more north. Global warming and increased winter feeding of birds are two of the main reasons for this trend.

-- Mallards often sleep in lines where the first and last ducks serve as lookouts. These "sentry" ducks actually watch for danger by keeping one eye open, even though they are asleep. -- *Laraine Wright*

Seeing Birds: If you build it, they will come...

In the summer of 2009 an Illinois state nesting record was set when Matt McKim-Louder (a graduate student from University of Illinois doing research work in the Cache) located adult anhingas with young while canoeing the Cache River. Birders came from as far as Chicago to hang out at the Cache River Perk's Access in hopes of seeing an aninga fly by. A few birders did manage to catch some distant views of soaring anhingas. That summer Janet Sundberg was in the right place at the right time, catching sight of an aninga while exploring the new Michael Wolff Wetlands at Marshall Ridge, near the Cache River State Natural Area Belknap Office.

This summer anhingas returned to southernmost Illinois, setting another record. Both adults and juveniles were again located by Matt as he canoed in the Cache. Based on Janet's '09 sighting at the Michael Wolff Wetlands, Matt check out the Wolff Wetland complex where he located anhingas in a location within walking distance. The anhingas appear to be feeding and lounging at the Wolff Wetlands. Brings to mind the statement, "If you build it, they will come." *RTTB&R*

News Bytes & Tidbits

USFWS proposes to reintroduce cranes into Louisiana -- The US Fish & Wildlife Service is seeking public comment on a proposed rule to reintroduce the endangered whooping crane into habitat in its historic range on the state-owned White Lake Wetland Conservation Area in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana. The Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will attempt to establish a non-migratory flock that lives and breeds in the wetlands, marshes and prairies of southwestern Louisiana. If this proposal is approved, the reintroduction effort could begin during early 2011.

The Service proposes the new, reintroduced, non-migratory population of whooping cranes be designated as a non-essential, experimental population (NEP) under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act. This proposed designation and its implementing regulation are developed to be more compatible with routine human activities in the reintroduction area. The designation allows for take of whooping cranes when such take is accidental and incidental to an otherwise lawful activity, including agriculture practices, recreation, and hunting. The intentional take (including killing or harm) of any NEP-designated whooping crane would still be a violation of federal law punishable under the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

For complete details visit the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> U.S. mail or hand-delivery comments to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R4-ES-2010-0057; Div. of Policy & Directives Mngmnt; USFWS; 4401 N.Fairfax Dr., Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203. E-mails or faxes will not be accepted.

You don't know scat, or do you? -- People who spend a lot of time observing wildlife know that mammals leave all sorts of clues behind: piles of acorns, nipped-off twigs, leaf nests, and the like. And they know that there is one trace that all mammals leave behind: Scat (or droppings, or any number of less-polite terms).

While it's easy to make jokes about it, scat is like a mammal's calling card. Those who learn to "read" it can identify which species have passed through an area. So, do you know scat? Take eNature's scat quiz at <http://www.enature.com/articles/detail.asp?storyID=599>

Hummer Explosion -- Noticed a sudden increase in the number of hummingbirds at the feeders this month? It's not your imagination, nor is it an invasion of birds from somewhere else. It's the new crop of youngsters. The young birds of the year look like their mothers at first, regardless of sex. And that's why most people think that there are just more females around all of a sudden. Another interesting aspect of the increased number of hummingbirds at the feeders is that the dominant male will tolerate the newcomers. Early in the breeding season, the dominant male will try to run off interlopers at the feeders, but the youngsters seem to be allowed to feed.

With the increase in the number of hummingbird bellies to keep filled, the sugar water will disappear faster. This requires more frequent fillings to keep up with the increased demand. Keep in mind that the mixture is still one part table sugar to four parts water; heated to dissolve the sugar, but cooled before serving. -- *George H. Harrison, Author and Naturalist, <http://www.thebackyardbirdwatcher.com/>*

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Bat Faces Likely Northeast Extinction -- According to a scientific study out this summer, one of the country's most common bats could be completely wiped out in New England within 16 years unless something is done to save it from the frightening bat disease white-nose syndrome. The study ran 1,000 computer simulations of bat populations stricken by white-nose syndrome, finding a whopping 99% chance that the little brown bat will disappear from the northeast unless death rates significantly slow. The regional extinction of little brown bats, which have the amazing ability to eat their own weight in insects every night, would have a devastating effect on the Northeast's cave and forest ecosystems. Nine species are currently known to be affected by the fungus, which has killed more than a million bats and spread to 14 states in just four years.

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New Bird Species Discovered -- Thanks to American Bird Conservancy's (ABC) conservation efforts, a new species of bird has been discovered on a reserve in Colombia. The reserve was established by ABC partner Fundación ProAves to save another endangered bird species, and demonstrates the power of international conservation efforts. The new species has been named Fenwick's Antpitta after ABC President George Fenwick and Vice President Rita Fenwick and their family, in recognition of all that they and ABC have done for bird conservation. <http://www.abcbirds.org/>

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Rufous Hummingbird Flies From Florida To Alaska -- Fred Dietrich banded a Rufous Hummingbird on January 13th, 2010 in Tallahassee, Florida. He recorded basic information about the bird that he then reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory in Maryland. Rufous Hummingbird banding information by Fred Dietrich

On Monday, June 28th, this hummingbird was recaptured near Chenega, Alaska. A distance of nearly 4000 miles! This is the greatest distance between banding site and recapture for the Rufous Hummingbird notable on record. Mr. Dietrich wrote in a message on the Florida Birding Listserv, "While it has long been believed that the birds that winter in the Southeast states may have come from as far away as Alaska, this is the first time that we have been able to document it on both ends of the migration route." <http://www.burdr.com/2010/07/rufoushummingbirdfliesfromfloridatoalaska/>

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Senate upholds EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas pollution -- At issue was the EPA's authority to regulate six greenhouse gases found to pose a threat to public health under the Clean Air Act.

Don't Be Afraid -- Sometimes fear serves us well. It keeps us from taunting bears, for example. But fear can also be unfounded. Those animals that scare people the most seldom pose a real threat.

Consider the snake. Of the 137 different snake species in the U.S., only 20 are venomous, and the majority of these are rattlesnakes, which carry warning devices (rattles) to alert potential victims. The risks of a harmful snakebite are further reduced by the fact that half of all the bites administered by venomous snakes are benign -- no venom is released. Thus in the U.S. where some 7,000 snakebites are reported annually, a mere 15 or so prove fatal.

Another feared animal is the spider but there are only two venomous U.S. species. And bats are almost universally feared. But the only time bats pose a threat to humans is as carriers of rabies. A Colorado study showed that of 233 cases of bats biting humans, where 30 % of the bats were rabid, no victims contracted rabies.

The most widespread large predator in the U.S. is the mountain lion a.k.a. panther or cougar, and as its numbers increase in areas, the fear of attacks rises. But even among researchers who devote huge amounts of time to tracking these animals, many have never seen a live specimen in the wild.

And then there are sharks, which are probably responsible for keeping more people out of the water than the smaller organisms that should really be feared. Annually in the U.S. there are less than a dozen shark attacks, with one or two fatalities. By comparison, some 300 people are struck by lightning every year.

But, ironically, the most dangerous thing a person can do when embarking on an outdoor adventure is driving to the trailhead in a car.

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Court Restores Protections to Northern Rockies Wolves --

The Center for Biological Diversity celebrated a key victory this summer when a federal judge in Montana reinstated Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains. The decision means that planned wolf hunts in Idaho and Montana won't go forward and protections remain in place for wolves in those two states, along with Wyoming and parts of Oregon, Washington and Utah. The judge sided with the Center and our allies, represented by Earthjustice, in ruling that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was wrong to delist wolves in Montana and Idaho but exclude Wyoming for political reasons. The ruling will have important implications in keeping the feds from using anything but science in deciding whether to lift protections for other imperiled species.

Meanwhile, the Center continues to challenge the USFWS Service's assertions that just 300 wolves in the region constitute a "recovered" population. The Center also filed a scientific petition this summer for the federal government to produce a national recovery plan to reestablish wolves in suitable habitat in the Pacific Northwest, California, southern Rocky Mountains, Great Plains and New England. <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/>

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Seven Penguin Species to Win Protection --

Seven penguin species will get federal protection as part of a lawsuit brought by the Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network. The African, Humboldt, yellow-eyed, white-flippered, Fjordland crested, erect-crested and a population of southern rockhopper penguins are primarily threatened by global warming and overfishing. The terms of the settlement require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to finalize the penguins' addition to the protected Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. The Center is planning to sue the Interior Dept. for denying ESA protections to two more penguin species: the emperor and northern rockhopper. <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>

Coming to a roadside near you -- Nearly all of the canola used in the U.S. is grown in North Dakota, most are genetically modified versions that can resist two types of herbicides. Genetically modified crops are commonplace in fields across the U.S. but a new study suggests that some have spread into the wild. A survey of N. Dakota has turned up hundreds of genetically modified canola plants growing along roads across the state. The survey results show that the vast majority of feral canola plants in the state contain artificial genes that make them resistant to herbicides. Researchers also found 2 plants that contained traits from multiple genetically modified varieties, suggesting genetically modified plants are breeding in the wild.

"What we've demonstrated in this study is a large-scale escape of a genetically modified crop in the United States," says Cindy Sagers, an ecologist at the University of Arkansas, who led the study.

Canola plants are used in cooking oil and animal feed, as well as some forms of biodiesel, and nearly all of America's canola is grown in North Dakota. This year alone, the state will plant over 1 million acres of canola. Roughly 90 % of the plants are genetically modified varieties resistant to two types of herbicides, glufosinate & glyphosate.

Genetically modified versions of canola plants have begun to grow beyond the fields in which they were planted. Scientists say it's common for seedlings to spread, adding that these plants didn't fare well in the wild. Few scientists believe that the canola plants pose an environmental risk, but the study highlights the ease with which some genetically modified plants can spread beyond their fields.

Sagers and graduate student Meredith Schafer originally traveled to North Dakota to study the weeds that the herbicides were designed to control. But they were having difficulty finding any. It was during a pit stop that the two had an idea. "We looked through the windshield and there were these beautiful yellow flowers blooming," Sagers recalled. They recognized the plant as canola, and wondered if it was a genetically modified variety. The duo had test strips that would detect proteins present in genetically modified canola. They walked across the parking lot, documented the plant and then tested it. It was a genetically modified canola variety resistant to herbicides.

One year, 3,000 miles, and 406 samples later, they have clear evidence that genetically modified, feral canola is growing across much of North Dakota. 86 % of samples collected were genetically altered versions of the plant. Two samples contained multiple genes from different species of genetically modified plants. "It indicates that these things are probably self-perpetuating outside of cultivation and have been there for a couple of generations at least," Sagers says.

A researcher at Aberystwyth University in the United Kingdom has studied the spread of conventional canola in the U.K., and says that while it's common for the seedlings to spread, they don't fare well in the wild, stating that just because the plants are genetically modified, doesn't mean they'll be more successful than wild plants. In this particular case, herbicide resistance will provide little edge to plants growing in areas that don't receive many herbicides.

A researcher at the University of Alberta in Canada, agrees. She's studied colonies of genetically modified canola in that country for years, but says that they haven't spread far beyond the roads, adding, "It's used to growing in well-fertilized, clean seedbeds without competition, so it does not do well if it is having to compete with other plants,"

Sagers agrees that the canola won't take over. But she says her work highlights an important issue: Future varieties of genetically modified crops will escape into the environment. Studying North Dakota's canola should teach researchers exactly how that spreading occurs and what the potential impacts could be.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129010499>

-- Join SIAS! --

To join or renew your membership, fill in the following form and return it along with your dues to:

Your name: _____
 Street Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Email Address: _____

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Attn.: Membership Additional member in a family \$10
P.O. Box 222 Student voting member \$5
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222 Amt. Enclosed: \$ _____

Annual membership renewal month is January and coincides with board elections held at the annual meeting in January.
 Member address labels reflect current dues status.

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I/we would be interested in being on the Board. (circle one): YES/NO
 I/we would like to receive my newsletter via email. (circle one): YES/NO
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Always leave 'em laughing... :-)



Saving Stamps can help IAS protect habitat for wildlife

The Illinois Audubon Society (IAS) collects, sorts and sells stamps to raise funds for land acquisition to protect habitat in Illinois.

Illinois has already lost 90% of its original wetlands and nearly 100% of its original prairie. Working together, we can protect our state's wildlife and the habitats that support them.

Buy commemorative stamps for all your correspondence. Encourage your friends and family to buy commemoratives as well. These stamps are the same price as common (definitive) stamps and will add a distinctive flare to all of your correspondence.
<http://www.illinoisaudubon.org/MAINLINKS/LANDCONS/stampproject.html>

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*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society
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Anhinga illustration by Axel Amuchástegui



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