



# Southern Illinois Audubon Society

October 2011 – Vol. 18. No. 9

P.O. Box 222  
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222

## NEWSLETTER

Established in 1970

### Biodiversity of the Cache River Watershed

is the title of a program John Schwegman will present for SIAS on **Friday, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m.**, to be held at the **Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale.** (Use the back entrance where adjacent parking is available.) **The evening will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a potluck dinner.**

John's program will cover the diversity of plants and animals in the watershed together with an explanation of past climate changes that left relicts in microclimate areas and species limited to special substrates such as sand, clay, sandstone, limestone etc. In other words, how it got and maintains its diversity. The connections to other biotic regions, past climate changes, and the diversity of substrates and topography all play a role in the biodiversity we see today. Several centers of biodiversity within the Cache basin will be discussed. John will also mention the watershed's loss of diversity due to extinction as well as mentioning a few newly described species from it.

John is a Charter SIAS member and well known to members and friends for providing splendid programs. A nature conservationist, John retired from the IL Dept. of Natural Resources where he developed a natural area program and later headed a native plant conservation program for the state.

**Potluck set-up begins at 6 p.m. SIAS asks members to bring an entree to share and their own dinnerware. SIAS will provide some beverages. And bring your pocket book because we will raffle off a 40 lbs. bag of sunflower seed, donated by Nelda and Conrad Hinckley, after the program with proceeds going to SIAS! Thank you Nelda and Conrad!!**

### NO FALL SEED SALE THIS YEAR

The board of Southern Illinois Audubon decided at the September meeting to not hold a fall birdseed sale this year. This decision was based on the extreme difficulties of last years' sales - a difficult relocation after the closure of Dillinger's central Carbondale store to an out of the way location and the increasing costs of sunflower seeds that made our margin of profit quite small compared to previous years.

The SIAS has a proud history of supporting conservation efforts in our area and we would like to continue that tradition. Our records as researched by our treasurer indicate that we have made the following support donations since 2005: (these totals are amazing!)

\$2,592 Free Again  
\$2,000 Friends of Cache River  
\$1,000 University of Illinois Foundation (Jeff Hoover research)  
\$1,000 Illinois Ornithological Society (grants for research in southern Illinois)  
\$ 926 Illinois Audubon Society's Land Acquisition Fund  
\$ 600 International Crane Foundation  
\$ 500 Green Earth  
\$ 250 Illinois Conservation Foundation  
\$ 100 The Science Center, Carbondale

The board would like to hear from any and all of our members who have alternative ideas for this year. Please bring your comments and ideas to the October meeting and we will devote some time to discussing this matter. We will still hold open the possibility of an after the first of the year seed sale.

### September Program Highlights

Dr. Jeff Hoover, the avian ecologist for the Illinois Natural History Survey, now an SIAS neighbor with a fieldwork home in Dongola, presented a riveting program on his research work in the Cache River valley and other areas of southern Illinois at the September meeting.

With a hand in southern Illinois songbird research for more than twenty years, Jeff is able to discuss long-term trends and developments with extensive data and images that strongly support his ideas. An exciting aspect of the entire presentation is the positive view of conservation developments, at least in southern Illinois, that is an outcome of this work.

The star of the show was and is the prothonotary warbler, the living golden highlight of spring and summer in southern Illinois swamps. This neotropical migrant is an almost perfect research species; easy to see and hear, and a cavity nester so it can be mist-netted as required for study. The brown painted, half gallon juice boxes that prothonotaries readily use in place of natural cavities for nesting are a plus as well. The boxes can be established in readily quantifiable locations and manipulated to evaluate various study questions.

The foil for the protho, and the villain of the show, though the characterization is not scientifically justified, is the brown-headed cowbird. The female cowbird is an obligate breeding parasite; it lays its eggs in the nests of host species and gets them to raise their offspring. Since the protho nests are rather easily located and observable by media monitoring, long stretches of inactivity interspersed with short bursts of interesting activity can be aggregated to statistically valid data rather than isolated rare anecdotal behavior.

The cowbirds have some striking patterns of manipulating host species, as represented by the protho, as Jeff's research has revealed. "Farming" by controlling the beginning of laying cycles and threatening behavior for rejecting cowbird eggs, as well as hints of teaching effective parasitic behavior to the next generation are all documented by the research.

With the help of his wife, an ecological geneticist, Jeff's group is now able to study the family relationships of the prothos and cowbirds that are the focus of ongoing work.

The ways that individual birds learn to select optimum nesting locations for increased reproductive success as well as the effectiveness of reforesting open lands adjacent to forests to reduce the cowbird parasitism of forest-nesting birds are good news for the restoration of natural conditions in the Cache wetlands

SIAS is very pleased to have been able to support a small part of Jeff's work and we appreciate the exciting report he gave us.

-Joe Merkelbach, President

## Future SIAS Programs:

### Nov./Dec. on Dec. 2nd

-Mary McCarthy on her Loon research.

### Jan. 27th

-Annual Meeting with Potluck & Silent Auction, Program: Uofi Entomologist Dr. May Berenbaum on her studies of Bees and Colony Collapse Syndrome.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Central American Adventure, January 4-11, 2012

The Birds and Natural History of Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a bird watcher's dream.

Not only is Costa Rica's avifauna diverse, but it is also well protected by a world-renowned national park system and well studied by a world wide scientific community.

Nelda Hinckley will again lead this adventure. For complete details or to reserve your spot on this great trip, please phone Nelda at 618.549.5588 or email her at neldahinckley@jalc.edu. (This adventure qualifies as 3 hours of Biology 240 credit at John A. Logan.)

## Vern's Nature Tours 2012

Vern Kleen has schedule two nature tours for 2012:

1<sup>st</sup>: 12-Day Costa Rican Expedition, Feb. 18-29

2<sup>nd</sup>: 12-day Ecuador Birding Tour, Mar. 10-21

For all details or to make reservations, contact Vern at 217-787-3515 or email vkleen@comcast.net

## The Big Year (movie) – Loved it!!

Yes, I'm still going on about The Big Year movie, but it was that good! Really! It is a breath of fresh air as movies go: truly PG, no violence (except for a gull attack), an almost heartwarming plot, awesome scenery, and even some birds to view!

Steve Martin was very human, Jack Black was endearing, and Owen Wilson successfully channeled the passion of the most obsessive birder in the world.

Big Year birding might not be your cup of tea but you will still enjoy the movie with all its quirky characters and their shared love of everything birdy. I had managed to control my urge to imitate bird calls while in the theater but can't hoot enough about the movie now!! -Rhonda

## The 112<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Season Dec. 14 -> Jan. 5

Local count names and known dates follow:

Big Oak Tree St. Pk. (MO)- Dec. 15, 2011

War Bluff Valley- Dec. 17, 2011

Mingo NWR (MO)- Dec. 17, 2011

Rend Lake- Dec. 17, 2011

Crab Orchard NWR- Dec. 18, 2011

Carlyle Lake- ?

Cypress Creek NWR- Dec 19, 2011

Newton Lake- ?

Marion County- Dec, 23, 2011

Middle Mississippi NWR- Dec. 22, 2011

Arklands/Pyramid St. Pk.- Dec. 27, 2011

Horseshoe (Alexander Co.) Lake- Dec. 28, 2011

Union County- Dec. 29, 2010

Mermet Lake- Dec. 30, 2011 (or maybe Dec. 31, 2011)

Jackson County- Jan. 1, 2012

Complete count details and compilers will follow in next newsletter.

## Landmark Agreement Moves 757 Species Toward Protection

On July 12, 2011, the Center for Biological Diversity struck a historic legal settlement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requiring the agency to make initial or final decisions on whether to add hundreds of imperiled plants and animals to the endangered species list by 2018. The Endangered Species Act is America's strongest environmental law and surest way to save species threatened with extinction.

Some of the latest species to benefit from the settlement - which was signed and approved by a federal judge on September 9 - are 374 Southeast freshwater species, the unique Casey's June beetle, 35 springsnail species, the Miami blue butterfly, 23 species native to Oahu, the Ozark hellbender, 26 Pacific Northwest mollusks and eight Southeast freshwater mussels.

The settlement caps a decade-long effort by the Center's scientists, attorneys and activists to safeguard 1,000 of America's most imperiled, least protected species including the walrus, wolverine, Mexican grey wolf, fisher, New England cottontail rabbit, three species of sage grouse, scarlet Hawaiian honeycreeper, California golden trout, Miami blue butterfly, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, 403 southeastern river-dependent species, 42 Great Basin springsnails and 32 Pacific Northwest mollusks.

[http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/species\\_agreement/index.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/species_agreement/index.html)



## Good Energy / Bad Energy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that in 2009, the wind industry was killing about 440,000 birds per year, yet has ignored its own estimate. With the Federal Government targeting a 12-fold increase in wind generated electricity by the year 2030, annual bird mortality is expected to increase into the millions absent meaningful changes in the industry. Species of conservation concern appear to be particularly at risk including the Golden Eagle, Greater Sage-Grouse and the endangered Whooping Crane.

More than 60 groups and over 20,000 individuals organized by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) have called for mandatory standards and bird-smart principles in the siting and operation of wind farms. The coalition represents a broad cross-section of respected national and local groups, as well as scientists, bird lovers, conservationists, and other concerned citizens. But the ABC states that the Dept. of the Interior (DOI) released a revised version of its voluntary wind development siting and operational guidelines that fails to ensure that bird deaths at wind farms are minimized. ABC states the DOI removed many key bird protection elements, reversing recommendations from professional DOI wildlife staff and adding unrealistic wind project approval deadlines that ABC concludes would lead to "rubber-stamping" of wind development. Read more at:

<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/110920.html>

## Exotic Bird Species

The most common birds in nearly every urban environment are exotic species introduced from other parts of the world. Exotic species also occur in most natural habitats in North America and many have significant negative effects on native birds, other wildlife, and humans. European starlings can damage seed and fruit crops. Mute swans, introduced in the 19th century, have displaced ducks and geese from wetlands and have over-grazed aquatic vegetation. Although some exotic birds do have positive economic impacts, such as Ring-necked Pheasant, a popular species with hunters, others like the house sparrows compete with native birds for nest cavities.

The 2009 State of the Birds report states that several exotic species have been established for more than a century and now occur across the continent. These birds, including Rock Pigeon, European Starling, and House Sparrow, show stable or declining trends over the past 40 years. In contrast, populations of some recently introduced species are growing, including Eurasian Collared-Doves, whose abundance and distribution have increased exponentially since they colonized Florida from the Bahamas in the 1970s.

The impacts of exotic species on the well-being of humans and our native flora and fauna are not well studied. Exotic birds merit closer monitoring, and careful vigilance will be needed to protect against negative impacts to our native birds.

## KY Sandhill Crane Hunting Season Expected to Meet No Opposition

Kentucky's 20,000 bird hunters will have the opportunity to kill sandhill cranes this year. Over the objections of environmentalists and bird enthusiasts, the state legislature's Administrative Regulation and Review Subcommittee approved a regulation in early October that would make Kentucky the first state east of the Mississippi to allow hunting of sandhill cranes. Thirteen western states allow hunting of the birds.

The regulation still must go to two other state legislative committees in early November, but the controversial measure is expected to meet no opposition. That means Kentucky hunters have until Nov. 30 to apply for one of 400 permits for the hunt, which would begin Dec. 15 and last 30 days, or until 400 cranes have been killed.

But environmentalists and bird enthusiasts questioned why the state was pushing the hunt and said more research was needed on the state's sandhill crane population. Carol Besse of the Kentucky Ornithological Society said the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife had not allowed enough public input into the plan. By the time the hunt proposal became public, those who opposed it had only one opportunity at a June meeting to voice their concerns. The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to approve the proposal that same day, she said.

Read more at: <http://www.kentucky.com/2011/10/12/1916974/kentucky-sandhill-crane-hunt-clears.html#ixzz1b4eG1U00>

## Two Whooping Cranes Shot

Senseless. That's how Dale Richter, Vice chairman of Operation Migration, which leads a flock of endangered whooping cranes from Wisconsin to a wildlife refuge in Florida each year, described the deaths of two endangered whooping cranes in Louisiana this fall. "This is two birds out of ten that were put in Louisiana, by humans, trying to restore the population. So you got one-fifth of those birds that are gone right off the bat in the first year," said Richter.

Louisiana authorities think two juveniles shot the cranes. Witnesses say the two teen boys opened fire from their truck, killing the birds. This story hits close to home for Richter because last year several whooping cranes were killed in Southwest Georgia. Read more at: <http://www.walb.com/story/15678914/two-teens-accused-of-killing-whooping-cranes#.TpdU8YVKvT8.email>

## Lots of Little Lobos

Despite the disappointing numbers of total Mexican wolves in the wild, it was a good year for wolf pups reports WildEarth Guardians. Lobos in the wild successfully reared 30 puppies this breeding season, up from 18 a year ago. If the survival rate is similar to 2010, at least 23 of those newborns will survive to next year. Seven of the wolf pups were born to the legendary Middle Fork Pack. Despite the mother and father both having only three legs, they were quite fruitful, raising almost a quarter of all the puppies in the wild. These numbers are inspiring for WildEarth Guardians and their presence renews the resolve to protect the lobo in the wild.

✂—cut here and return with dues—cut here and return with dues—✂

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### -- Join SIAS OR Renew Your Membership --

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

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Southern Illinois Audubon Society** Individual member \$15  
Attn.: Membership Additional member in a family \$10  
P.O. Box 222 Student voting member \$ 5  
Carbondale, IL 62903-0222 Amt. Enclosed:\$\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual membership renewal month is January and coincides  
with board elections held at the annual meeting in January.

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Member address labels reflect current dues status.

I/we would like to receive my newsletter via email. YES or NO

## Long-distance Migrant Seabirds From Two Colonies Differ In Behavior, Despite Common Wintering Grounds

Although seabirds that are trans-equatorial migrants show apparently broad overlap among populations in the non-breeding season, such large-scale pattern may conceal subtle but nevertheless key differences in migratory behavior. These specializations could reflect adaptation to different environments during the breeding season, carry-over effects from the breeding to the nonbreeding period, or asymmetries in competitive ability of birds of different origin. The migratory and wintering behavior of Cory's shearwaters nesting in Berlengas and in the Selvagens, two colonies in contrasting oceanographic environments were studied. Although no differences were found in winter distribution, there was a marked divergence in timing, route and the use of staging areas during the postbreeding (autumn) migration. Birds from Berlengas typically traveled to oceanic waters in the North Atlantic for an extended stopover, whereas those from Selvagens rarely did so. In the South Atlantic, birds from Selvagens spent more time in flight, perhaps because they had higher energy and nutrient requirements for feather replacement compared to birds from Berlengas, which molt more flight feathers during breeding. Differences in migration routes and stopovers may expose populations to distinct threats, and should be taken into consideration when defining units for conservation purposes and developing appropriate management strategies. Read more at: <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0026079>

SIAS Website: <http://www.siaudubon.org>

Email: [siaudubonsociety@gmail.com](mailto:siaudubonsociety@gmail.com)

**SIAS hats are available for purchase at SIAS meetings.  
A few sweatshirts are available too.**

## Southern Illinois Audubon Society

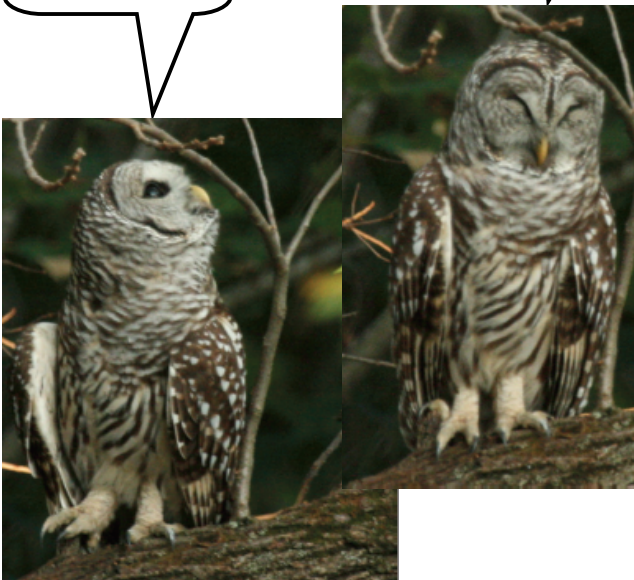
**P.O. Box 222**

**Carbondale, IL 62903-0222**

*Affiliate of the Illinois Audubon Society,  
the Illinois Environmental Council,  
& the North American Bluebird Society*

Hey, did you see  
The Big Year?

Yes, (hee hee)  
it was a Hoot!



## No Irruptives Species Southbound This Winter

Ontario Field Ornithologist Ron Pittaway forecasts that this will not be an irruptive year for boreal species like pine siskins, crossbills, and finches. He states that the evergreen cone crops are excellent and extensive across much of the boreal forest so species will find adequate food and have no need to search south. He also states that evening grosbeak numbers are increasing with the spread of the spruce bud worm. Species he monitors include: pine and evening grosbeaks, purple finches, white-winged and read crossbills, common and hoary redpolls, pine siskins, bohemian waxwings, and red-breasted nuthatches. Find Mr. Pittaway's forecasts at:

<http://www.jeaniron.ca/2011/finchforecast.htm>

## New Nature Center Opens at Riverlands

A new birdwatching center has opened in the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, West Alton. Named the Audubon Center, it was built as a partnership between the Army Corps of Engineers and the National Audubon Society. The Center is situated midst 3700 acres of prairie marsh and forest, 100 miles of bike trails, and many acres of other publicly managed habitat. For a schedule of daily hours, visit: <http://www.riverland.audubon.org>.

Don't forget to Save Your Stamps for the IAS Land Acquisition Fund.

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For more info visit: [www.illinoisaudubon.org](http://www.illinoisaudubon.org)

