

SHAWNEE TRAILS

Shawnee Group, Sierra Club March 2002



General Meeting

Shawnee Group, Sierra Club
March 2002

The March General Meeting of the Shawnee Group will take place at the Unitarian Fellowship building, at **7:30 PM**, on Thursday, March 14.

The Unitarian Fellowship is located at the corner of University Avenue and Elm Street, in Carbondale, Illinois.

This month's program will be presented by **Max Hutchison** on the "Unique character of the sandstone and limestones glades of Southern Illinois.". Max participated in producing the Inventory of Natural Areas in Illinois during the 1970s. He prepared the reports for the Forest Service describing the Research Natural Areas of the Shawnee National Forest. In recent years he has worked in the Cache River Basin and the Cypress Creek projects for The Nature Conservancy.

Hope to see you there!

Dinner Before Meeting

Join some of the Executive Committee, the speaker for the evening's program, and other members for dinner at the El Bajio, Mexican Restaurant located west of the Vic Koenig's Chevrolet at **5:45 p.m.** on Thursday, March 14, before the meeting.

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ALERT!! HELP PROTECT ILLINOIS NATURAL AREAS IN SHAWNEE FOREST!!!!

WRITE TODAY!

DEADLINE: MARCH 11th

We need your help to preserve eight high quality designated Natural Areas in Shawnee National Forest that are being threatened by heavy equestrian use and by erosion from user-made trails. Please help us defeat the U.S. Forest Service (FS) proposal to build 6-8 foot wide "trails" through 8 Natural Areas (NAs). Send in your comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) by March 11th. Feel free to borrow points from the facts below and from the sample letter.

Illinois Natural Areas

- * Are a special designation given by the State to those few areas with high quality or unique native plant communities, endangered species and/ or unique geological features.
- * There are 81 designated Natural Areas in Shawnee National Forest
- * They comprise only 5% of the total Forest area.
- * These areas are sensitive, and must be protected if we are to preserve our natural heritage.

The Threat

- * A U.S. Forest Service proposal to build 6-8 foot wide gravel horse/hiker trails in seven Natural Areas (NAs), with 5-6 foot clearance on each side - for a total 15-20 foot wide swath - in effect, a "horse highway."
- * No guarantee that the user made trails currently causing serious erosion problems will be obliterated.

The Result

- * Habitat fragmentation from the wide, graveled trail.
- * More weeds brought in by horses hooves and feces.
- * Continued serious erosion caused by many user-made trails.
- * Increased water pollution from muddy runoff and manure.

Background

- * Since 1990, the number of commercial horse campgrounds and stables has increased from 5 to 25.
- * The Forest Service has failed to maintain existing trails, close and fix damage from illegal user-made trails, or enforce reasonable restrictions such as seasonal and/or wet weather trail closures.

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- * Traffic from 1000s of horses have decimated rare native plant communities, and turned some of the once beautiful areas into mud filled quagmires.
- * Due to public pressure, the Forest Service closed 79 of the 81 NAs to all incompatible uses in 1999.
- * Since 1999, the areas are recovering, as documented by the IL Dept. of Natural Resources.
- * Lusk Creek and Bay Creek are two of only 24 streams in Illinois given the highest "A" rating. Both creeks are being adversely affected by siltation from unmaintained and illegal trails.

Sample Letter - Deadline for Comments: March 11th

Mr. Richard Johnson
Shawnee National Forest
P.O. Box 37
Vienna, IL 62995

Comments may also be sent:
Via Email: [http://mlross@fs.fed.us](mailto:mlross@fs.fed.us)
FAX: (618) 658-2071, with "Attention
Monica Ross" written prominently

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please include my comments below as part of the record for the DEIS for the proposed construction of horse/hiker trails in 7 Illinois Natural Areas (NAs).

The FS proposal to build such wide graveled trails is completely unacceptable to me. NAs contain sensitive native plant communities that must be protected. 95% of the Shawnee is open to horse riding, with many potential scenic areas in need of new trails. The most effective use of the limited FS money would be to obliterate the user-made trails causing the most erosion and siltation AND to identify alternative scenic areas that are more appropriate for horse use than the NAs.

The piecemeal analysis of NAs is inappropriate. Analysis should be done on a watershed basis, taking many more factors into consideration, including the horse traffic demand and the amount of money that would be available from Special Use Permits that could be used to build and maintain trails.

Some of the NAs where trails have been proposed, such as Lusk Creek and Double Branch Hole, have already been unacceptably degraded by horse use, and should be closed to horses to allow these areas to recover. Surveys done by IDNR since the 1999 closure have shown that the NAs have been recovering. These areas will continue to recover only if horses are kept out of these areas.

The FS is correct in the assessment that Bulge Hole and Little Grand Canyon are too steep, too dangerous, and too flood prone for horse trails. They are very high quality and should not be further degraded by horse traffic. I also agree with the FS that there should be no new equestrian/hiker trails designated in LaRue-Pine Hills or Garden of the Gods. The present trails are sufficient.

The proposal to increase trail density in the wilderness areas should be determined on a case by case basis. Trail density should be calculated separately, for each wilderness areas - each area should be at or below the maximum density prescribed.

The FS should put horse confinement areas near the natural areas, with "hiker only" trails leading from the confinement areas to the scenic attraction. Then everyone could enjoy the Natural Areas without destroying them.

Sincerely,

(your name and signature, plus your snail mail address so you will receive updates from the USFS)

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Volunteers Needed to Track Monarchs

USA Today Feb 18, 2002, (p 12B)

Scientists are asking for the public's help in monitoring monarch butterflies northward trek this spring. A catastrophic storm in Mexico last month killed an estimated 270 million--nearly 80% of the entire population of monarchs. "Volunteers can help scientists assess the effect of this storm" says Elizabeth Howaad, founder and program director of the Journey North monarch Migration Project, <http://www.learner.org/jnorth>. Besides reporting sightings, volunteer can help monitor monarch reproduction this summer through the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project: <http://www.mimp.org>.



LaRue-Pine Hills Appreciation Day

April 13 & 14

There will be many learned specialists on hand to lead walks to point out the many native plants, animals and geology of the area. This will be the first such celebration of the area in five years. It is always a fun and informative event.

Forest Service Trails Planning Meeting

This is a continuing series of meetings for public input on existing trails, new trails, and obliterating user made trails. The next meeting is **March 19, 6:30pm, Marion High School cafeteria**. We are currently discussing Lusk Creek watershed. The forest service has announced five volunteer work project trail days for 2002. Each one commences at 9 am on the last Saturday of each month. The first one is May 25, where we will work on the River to River Trail in Lusk Creek. More info contact Bob Tyson 684-5643, or ranger Peterin 687-1731.

Jackson County Greenways and Trails Task Force

The **Jackson County Greenways and Trails Planning Task Force** and **Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Office of Economic and Regional Development** will hold two "Open House" Public Information Meetings concerning the development of **bicycle and pedestrian** pathways that will connect multiple communities and points of interest within Jackson County. **March 11: Davis-McCann Center**, 15 N. 14th Street, Murphysboro, Illinois 62966 and **March 18: Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center**, 150 E. Pleasant Hill Road, Carbondale, Illinois 62901

The Task Force has completed route planning for the establishment of non-motorized, multiple-use trails, including some associated greenways, within Jackson County. **The proposed trail routes would primarily utilize abandoned railroad right-of-ways between Carbondale and Murphysboro, Murphysboro and Alto Pass, and Carbondale and Cambria.** Additional trails have been devised to connect Carbondale to Makanda, in part paralleling the east side of Cedar Lake, and a route connecting Murphysboro to Lake Murphysboro State Park.

All persons interested in this project are invited to attend these informal, open-house style, informational meetings any time between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Project representatives will be available to discuss the project and answer questions. Maps, drawings, aerial photography and other project related information will be available for viewing and discussion during these meetings. Questions or comments should be directed to **Loren J. Easter, Greenways and Trails Coordinator** (618-536-4451).



SHAWNEE GROUP OUTINGS



March 23, Saturday - Day hike to **Martha's Woods**, a small remnant of virgin ravine forest with huge beech trees in the vicinity of **Little Lusk Creek**. The hike will be about 3 miles, with one third of it off trail. We will see a broad and completely forested "gulf", a hogback ridge formed by the Lusk Creek fault, the pristine Little Lusk Creek, the site of the old "Lost 40 Flourspar Mine" and the remnants of an old settler coal mine. Some interesting flora should be greening up as well. Botanist and naturalist, **John Schwegman** will be our guide to this very special place. Participants should meet at the Shawnee Mart (convenience store) on Route 145 at Eddyville at 9:00 AM. Sturdy hiking boots are required, plus water and trail snacks. If you have waterproof knee boots bring them along in case we have to wade Lusk Creek. **If anyone has a 4x4 pickup and would be willing to ferry people across the creek, please contact Terri Treacy at 618-521-1030 (leave message).**

ADVENTURES WITH UNCLE BOB

(column for those unable to participate in our group hikes and unable to find the places on their own)

by Bob Tyson

As a side note, last year I did an article on **Cove Hollow**. I want to call your attention to a newly discovered bluff shelter on that trail. Assuming you start your hike from Cove hollow Road on the north end, you hike about 2 miles to a trail sign junction. Approximately 100 yards before that point, look upward to the cliffs on your right and climb up to it.

This month we feature **CARTER CAVES STATE PARK**. It is located on I-64 in eastern Kentucky, not far from the West Virginia line; a welcome respite on the way to Washington DC. While guided-tour caves in the park are of interest, the most significant feature of the park is its four natural arches(bridges). Three are found on the 5 mile Red Trail loop; one is on the Natural Bridge Trail spur. The trails are rated as easy. The arches range from 15-90 ft high, and their width from 40-100 feet. More info from me at 684-5643.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE & FOLDING

Every month we get together to fold the newsletter for the newsletter mailing. We welcome **all the help we can get**. The **deadline** for the **April** newsletter will be **March 23** with **folding** on **March 28** at Don Lawrence's house at 5:30 PM. To check on directions call Don at 457-8989.

EXCOM MEETING

Our March ExCom meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 21, 5:30 p.m.** at Clara McClure's. For directions, call Clara at 457-2025. Any member is welcome to attend.

Have you made the switch? Are you on the List?

Have you made the switch like hundreds of others have to the electronic version of the Shawnee Trails Newsletter? If you haven't yet, do it today. Simply go to <<<http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/il-shawnee-trails.html>>> and click on the "join or leave the list" menu option. Once you join the newsletter mailing list, every issue will then be e-mailed right to your computer within minutes of its publication. Its a good thing!

STONE SOUP, JANUARY 1, 2002





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Shawnee Group ,Website: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee>

Yes, I want to join! I want to safeguard our precious natural heritage. My payment is enclosed.

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