



# Shawnee Trails

News of the Shawnee Group — January 2003

## The Galápagos Islands

Membership Meeting Program

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In 1835 the British naturalist **Charles Darwin**, traveling aboard HMS *Beagle*, spent six weeks studying the animal life of the Galápagos. His observations furnished considerable data for his *Origin of Species* and the study of evolution. The islands were also more recently visited by Donald Lawrence, a retired

biology teacher and long-time activist in the Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club. His experiences and photography in these volcanic islands form the basis for his free and illuminating presentation at 7:30 PM on January 9th at the Unitarian Fellowship.

The Galápagos Islands, a World Heritage site, contain as many as 85 different species of birds, including flamingos, flightless cormorants, finches, and penguins. See also: <http://www.darwinfoundation.org> and <http://www.galapagos.org>

Meet your peers for dinner before the meeting at 5:45 at the Great Wall Restaurant.

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## Final Forest Service Meetings for Development of Shawnee Forest Plan Alternatives

The Forest Service has held four public meetings in the Fall of 2002, and will hold two meetings this January to develop alternatives to the changes proposed by the Forest for its new Land and Resource Management Plan. Members of Sierra Club and other environmentalists have attended all the meetings. However, people concerned with the conservation of the resource of Shawnee Forest have been greatly outnumbered by people who want to engage in activities that can cause much erosion and other damage to the forest. We really need a better showing at the last two meetings.

Please come, and give your input. The meetings have been structured so that every person who comes has a chance to give oral and/ or written input. If you wish to help even more or if you just can't possibly come to the meetings, then please respond to the alert found elsewhere in this newsletter. The dates, times and subjects of the last two meetings are:

Wednesday, January 22, 2003, 6:00 - 9:00 PM  
Topic: Recreation, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers  
Executive Inn (formerly Holiday Inn, Marion Convention Center)  
2600 West DeYoung, Marion, IL

Tuesday, January 28, 2003, 6:00 - 9:00 PM  
Review of Plan Revision Alternatives Resulting from Workshops  
Davis McCann Township Hall, 15 North 14th Street, Murphysboro, IL

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Steve Hupe of the FS at 618-253-7114. If you want to carpool from Carbondale on Jan. 22nd, call Barb McKasson at 529-4824.

## Event Calendar

**January 9** ~ Membership Meeting @ Unitarian Church, 7:30 PM

**January 16** ~ EXCOM Meeting @ Clara McClure's at 5:30 PM.

**January 25** ~ Newsletter Content Deadline @ Noon.

**January 30** ~ Newsletter Folding @ Don Lawrence's at 5:30 PM.

**February 13** ~ Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance Program

## Outings Calendar

(See outing updates at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee/outings/outings.htm>)

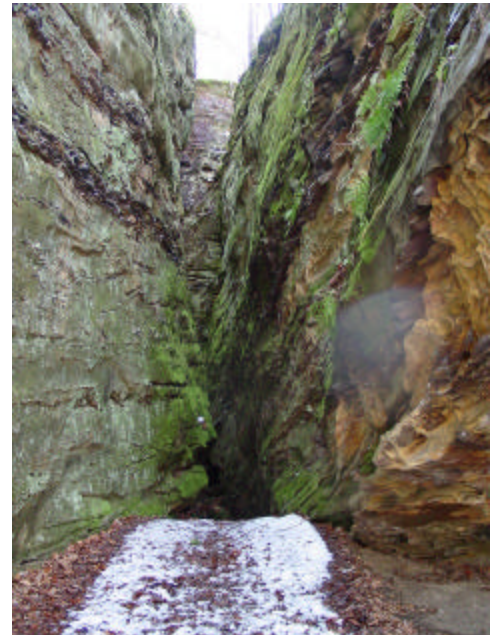
### SHAWNEE GROUP OUTINGS

**January 12 (Sunday) - Cove Hollow Hike.** This is a moderate hike exploring cliff walls, rock formations, rock shelters, a cave, etc. This is a delight if we have layers of snow on cliffs and frozen waterfalls. We'll walk in about 2 miles and out. Our trailhead will be the end of Cove Hollow Road. Meet at the Murphysboro ranger station at 12:30 PM. In the event of inclement weather or for more information, please contact Bob Tyson at 684-5643.

Our hike in December was at Panther Den Wilderness and had an excellent turnout of 15 people. On Jan 1st members and guests enjoyed the annual Stone Soup Picnic at Giant City State Park. During this event, we went on a short hike in the Fern Rock Nature Preserve.



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## Adventures with Uncle Bob

See <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee/unclebob/adventures.htm>

### *Your Monthly Guide to Self-Adventure by Bob Tyson*

Continuing with our series on wilderness areas in the Shawnee National Forest, we will visit the **BURKE BRANCH PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA** in this issue. There are no marked trails here, nor any spectacular scenery. Rather, Burke Branch is an unspoiled area of particular interest to those that enjoy diversity in geology and botanical habitats. You may explore this area on either user-made trails or "bushwhack". This 6,230 acre area contains two main creeks. Twenty-three different habitat types offer a rich diversity of plants and animals. Sinkholes are numerous on the forested ridge tops. Local mammals include bobcat, wild turkey, deer, and beaver. Within Burke Branch is the 300 acre Cretaceous Hills Nature Preserve which contains several seep springs that form wet, boggy areas. Plants here include cinnamon, marsh, royal ferns, and sphagnum moss.

**Directions:** For southern Burke Branch, take I-24 exit 37 to US 45. Go east 2.5 miles, turn left on Unity School Road and continue 4 miles to CR 144, turn left and go 4 miles to the parking area. To north Burke Branch, follow as above except continuing on Unity School Road 6.5 miles to CR 144, turn left, go about 2.5 miles to a "T" intersection. Turn left onto CR 140 and continue north for 5 miles to FR 1410.

## ALERT: [Comments Needed for Forest Plan Alternative](#)

By Barbara McKasson

The voices of people who believe in conserving the resources of Shawnee National Forest (SNF) are being drowned out by people who want to use the forest in a manner that damages the resource. It is imperative that more people write to the Forest Service to make sure they hear the conservationist point of view loud and clear. The seven issues that SNF planners have identified as needing change from the current SNF Forest Plan are:

1. Recreation Management
2. Wildlife Habitat Management and Biological Diversity
3. Watershed Resources
4. Forest Ecosystem Health and Sustainability
5. Mineral Resources
6. Roadless Areas, Wilderness, and Wild and Scenic Rivers
7. Land Ownership Adjustment.

The Forest Service needs to hear from YOU on these topics. Please personalize your comments by telling the Forest Service how these issues affect you. Please send in your comments preferably as an individual, not as a Sierra Club member. Discussion topics of particular concern to most environmentalists would include:

- > Protection of state and federal threatened and endangered species, plus other sensitive species should be a top priority in the SNF forest plan. The national forests are an important refuge for many of these species. The forest plan should not compromise any populations of these species.
- > End commercial logging in the SNF. This is a very fragmented forest, and the logging, plus logging roads, greatly increase the fragmentation. Less than 4% of wood supply for our country comes from our national forests. Many forest interior species that depend on large, contiguous blocks of forest would be negatively affected by timber cuts.
- > Recreation that does not destroy the resource plus wildlife habitat should be primary uses of the forest. Illinois has less than 2% of the land in public ownership. Shawnee National Forest is the largest "block" of public land in Illinois. For this reason, extractive and destructive uses of SNF should be minimized. Former Chief of the Forest Service, Mike Dombeck, recognized that recreation, tourism, wildlife and preservation of threatened species deserve a higher priority than in the past. This philosophy should be continued.
- > The two existing roadless areas, Burke Branch and Ripple Hollow, should remain roadless. These two areas, plus Camp Hutchins, should be protected in the Forest Plan at the level of wilderness protection. These three areas deserve to be designated by Congress as wilderness areas, so the Forest Service should protect their wilderness qualities. The decision whether or not to designate these areas as wilderness should be made by Congress, and not by the Forest Service.
- > Do not issue new oil and gas leases in SNF. Oil and gas are much more plentiful in other areas. The Shawnee Forest is the 3rd smallest forest in the country, and it is fragmented. Oil and gas drilling would cause further fragmentation and disturbance in SNF.
- > The eighty (80) designated Natural Areas in SNF should be protected from all incompatible uses and should remain closed to all recreation except hiking trails. These areas are among the few areas left in Illinois that have high quality native plant communities.
- > More horse trails should be designated so that horse use can be limited to designated horse trails. Illegal, poorly placed, user-made horse trails have caused terrible erosion of the land and sedimentation into streams in many areas in SNF.
- > Do not issue new leases for mineral extraction in SNF. Mining on leases granted before the FS purchased the land should be controlled to minimize surface disturbance. Do not renew temporary mineral leases.

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*"Interior Secretary Gale Norton travels the country telling audiences that she predicates her decisions on the four Cs: communication, consultation, and cooperation, all in the service of conservation. But this new initiative is nothing but conniving, callous, careless, and contemptuous."*

- Rep. George Miller (D-CA),  
12/11/2002,  
on the Bush Wildfire Initiative

### ***Alert re. Forest Plan Meetings Continued ...***

- > Keep all ATVs off of SNF land. ATVs cause serious damage wherever they go, especially on the erodable soils and wet climate of Shawnee Forest. The Forest Service has proposed to limit ATVs to forest roads only. However, since the number of enforcement officers in the SNF has declined from five down to one, keeping ATVers strictly on forest roads would be almost impossible.
- > The waterways listed as possible candidates for "Wild and Scenic River" designation should be protected from sedimentation, turbidity and pollution by maintaining their present "Scenic Rivers level" protection. This includes Big, Bay, Big Grand Pierre, Lusk, and Hutchins Creeks, plus the Big Muddy River.
- > Support extending the Shawnee National Forest purchase area to include the Mississippi bottomlands that flooded in 1993 and 1994 which the federal government purchased and which should be made part of the forest.

Please Send your Comments January 28th!

You can call Steve Hupe, Anita Ahrends, or Richard Blume-Weaver at the Harrisburg Forest Service Office for the information that was handed out at the public meetings this fall on each of these topics, or call 1-800-MYWOODS. IF POSSIBLE, please attend the Forest Service meetings on January 22nd and/or 28th.



Photos: Stone Soup Gathering – January 1, 2003

