

Shawnee Trails

News of the Shawnee Group — March 2005

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Putting the Pieces Together on the Cache

The March membership meeting of the Shawnee Group will feature a presentation by Dr. Michael E. Baltz, Director of the Nature Conservancy's Southern Illinois operations. He will speak about the Cache River – one of only 15 "Wetlands of International Importance." This designation from the Ramsar Convention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ranks the Cache River with other important wetlands, such as the Florida Everglades.



Mike, a native of Milstadt, IL, will explain why the Cache River Basin is such a unique area, and how organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited are partnering to restore a controlled amount of water from the Upper Cache into the Lower Cache River segment of the river.

Due to past manipulation of the waterway, the Cache River is a stream with two distinct sections. The upper Cache section flows swiftly through a narrow floodplain and drops up to 15 feet per mile, whereas, the lower Cache slowly drains through a flood plain measuring 1.5 to 2 miles in width and drops on average only about 1 foot per mile.

The Cache River basin is home to cypress trees more than 1,000 years old, (possibly the oldest living things east of the Mississippi River), 104 state threatened and endangered species, and eight designated Illinois Nature Preserves. It lies at the biological midpoint of North America – one of only 6 areas in the U.S. where four or more physiographic regions overlap.

Over the past 100 years, the extensive swamps and wetlands associated with the Cache River have been affected by widespread hydrologic alterations and land clearing. The Post Creek cut-off, completed in 1916 was especially damaging to the wetlands because it diverted the upper segment of the Cache directly into the Ohio River and isolated 40 miles of the shallow Lower Cache River.

Michael E. Baltz received a B.A. in biology from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington; an M.En. degree in environmental science from Miami University of Oxford, Ohio; and a Ph.D. in avian ecology from the University of Missouri- Columbia. In partial fulfillment of his master's degree requirements he spent 2 years living and working at a field station on Andros Island, Bahamas. His Ph.D. dissertation was titled "The Ecology of Neotropical Migratory Land Birds Overwintering in the Dry Zone of Puerto Rico". During parts of five winters he studied Prairie Warblers and other migrants overwintering in wooded pastures in southwest Puerto Rico. He currently resides in Carbondale, IL, with his wife Monique and daughter Sophia.

For more information on the Cache River, visit:

- ★ <http://cacheriver.fws.gov/>
- ★ <http://nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/illinois/preserves/art1124.html>
- ★ <http://refuges.fws.gov/profiles/index.cfm?id=43514>

The 7:30 presentation will be preceded at 7 PM by a social hour with refreshments at the Carbondale Township office, 217 E Main Street, Carbondale, IL. The public is welcome. ☪

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Shawnee Group Event Calendar

March 3 ~ ExCom meeting, 5:30 at McClure's.

March 10 ~ Membership Program.; Cache River: 7:30 PM at the Carbondale Township Office, 217 East Main Street, Carbondale.

March 13 ~ Fountain Bluff River Trail Hike.

March 24 ~ Newsletter Folding @ Carbondale Township Office.

URGE THE IL COMMERCE COMMISSION TO ADOPT NEW RENEWABLE ENERGY STANDARDS

By Barbara McKasson

Here is a chance to do your part to help reduce "global climate disintegration" and increase our energy independence. Governor Rod Blagojevich has sent his "Sustainable Energy Plan" to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). The proposal calls for both a Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and an Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard.

During his State of the State speech, Governor Blagojevich announced the plan to adopt a Renewable Energy Standard requiring Illinois electric utilities to provide 2% renewable energy as part of their overall power mix by 2006, ramping up to 8% by 2012. Expanding the use of renewable energy will create jobs, spur economic development, lead to a cleaner environment and stabilize electric power prices.

The Governor has also included an Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard in his proposal with the goal of reducing annual growth of electricity consumption by 25% by the year 2017. By investing in energy efficiency and electric demand reduction, Illinois residents will save money. Greater efficiency also means the electric grid will be more reliable.

There are at least a dozen areas in Illinois that have commercially viable wind power. Illinois has more than 3,000 megawatts of high quality wind resources. Currently, developers have proposed new wind farms in Illinois equaling 1,700 megawatts of power and representing new investment of more than \$1.5 billion.

If implemented, the Governor's proposal would make Illinois the second largest wind power state in the country by 2012. It would mean that nearly 4,000 megawatts of power would be generated by renewable sources in Illinois by 2012, enough to serve nearly 1,000,000 Illinois households. At least 75% of renewable energy – or 3,000 megawatts – would be generated by wind power.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can help make this a reality by calling or writing the chair of the Illinois Commerce Commission, Edward Hurley. Urge him to adopt the Governor's "Illinois Sustainable Energy Plan" by raising the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards for electric utilities to 12% by 2012. Also urge him to adopt the Governor's proposed Energy Efficiency Standard of 25% by 2017.

Call: Chairman Edward Hurley at (217) 782-7907 OR

Write to: Edward Hurley, Chair, Illinois Commerce Commission,
527 E. Capitol, Springfield, IL, 62794 ☎

Join Us For Lobby Day – April 7th

The Illinois Chapter Sierra Club sponsors a yearly lobby day in Springfield for all members across the state. This year, it will be held on Thursday, April 7th. The legislation proposed for the year is still being determined. However, we do know that the issues of protecting isolated wetlands, keeping ATV trails out of our state parks, funding for the IL Department of Natural Resources and for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will be on the table. There will likely be other issues pertaining to water and air pollution. There also is a new committee in the House – the Environmental Health Committee, which is introducing some new bills that we would support. If you are interested in participating, call Barb McKasson (529-4824) or Tim Stenson (687-5456). We may also be conducting in-district lobby visits, so contact us even if you cannot come on April 7th. ☎

Earth Day Volunteers Needed

We are working with other groups in the Southern Illinois Center for Sustainability to plan "Earth Week" activities. Tim Stenson is our liaison to the group. We will be giving a program on campus on the Shawnee Forest Plan and proposed wilderness areas the evening of April 21st. We will also have a booth at the Earth Day Fair. We need volunteers to help educate the public at the Earth Day Fair on April 22nd. We will have shifts both during the day and in the evening. Call Tim Stenson at (687-5456) or Barb McKasson at (529-4824) to find out more or to volunteer. ☎



Shawnee Group ExCom Leaders
(x) = ExCom officers with voting rights

ExCom Chair/Conservation Co-Chair:

Barb McKasson
529-4824 <mailto:babitaji@aol.com> (x)

Secretary:

Jo Ann Nelson
529-1884 <mailto:jnelson@siu.edu> (x)

Treasurer:

Yolanda Comiskey
549-2119 <mailto:yolandajeweler@hotmail.com> (x)

Membership Chair/Conservation Co-Chair:

Tim Stenson
687-5456 <mailto:timstnsn@netscape.net> (x)

Outings Chair: Bob Tyson

684-5643 <mailto:robkay43@webtv.net> (x)

Vice-Chair/Webmaster/News Editor/Chapter Delegate/Chapter Outings Chair:

Bob Pauls
549-9408 <mailto:sg618@yahoo.com> (x)

Program Chair:

Phyllis Beck
549-9819 <mailto:wdswlker@midwest.net>

Publicity Chair:

JaDean Johnson
203-9679 <mailto:johnson812@hotmail.com>

Safe, happy and inspired

Descriptions of all outings of the Shawnee Group and five other Chapter Groups in Illinois are now available in one central location thus making it easy to find a wider range of outdoor activities by any Sierra Club member or the general public. Go to the Group website for the link to this feature: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee/outings.htm>

March 13 (Sunday) Fountain Bluff River Trail Hike, Gorham, IL

This abandoned railroad trail is level and offers continuous views of the Mississippi River on one side and views of steep bluffs on the other. As we hike, we will learn about the fragmentation between public and private lands. This trail is roughly 2.5 miles from our parking area to the power plant. We will retrace our route back to our cars. Meet 12:30 PM at the ranger station in Murphysboro. Contact Bob Tyson, trip leader at 684-5643.

April 18 (Monday) Hayes Creek Canyon and Sand Cave, Eddyville, IL

Join us in the Shawnee National Forest where we take two hikes. The first is a short trail into Hayes Canyon, a unique rock glade covering several acres. Hopefully, a waterfall will add to our views. While there, we will also walk further to study the extent of equestrian damage to public trails in southern Illinois. At the nearby Sand Cave we'll hike the surrounding cliff line. The cave is about 50 ft wide and deep, and 30 ft high. Meet at Murdale shopping center big sign in Carbondale 8:30 AM or Marion Wal-Mart parking lot (near Ryans) at 9 AM. Contact trip leader, Bob Tyson at 684-5643. Sand Cave is described on our website. <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee/outings.htm>.

Adventures with Uncle Bob Tyson

Your Guide to Self-Adventure

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

This month I recommend to you **Draper Bluff and Cedar Bluff**. The first area is private acreage owned by Eric Ulner and open to the public. The second area is managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Directions: Take I-57 south of Marion to Lick Creek exit. Go into town to the four-way stop sign. Proceed ahead (east) for approximately 3 miles. Look for a parking lot on your left. Sign in at the kiosk. They ask that a donation be placed in a can to help with maintenance of the lot and chemical toilet. To begin, follow the fence posts on your left north to a junction at the base of the cliffs. At the cliffs go left and experience the beauty of the 100 foot cliff line filled with different formations and unusual patterns in the rock surface. The trail becomes faint as you circle around to the north, but this will take you to a couple nice rock shelters. Turn around at the last one and re-trace your route back to the original junction. On any nice day you can expect to encounter people rappelling down the cliff walls. Wander around the numerous huge boulders.

At the junction, go straight ahead (east) for more cliff formations and note a couple places where one can ascend to the top (note the private property signs near the top). Wandering along the top affords one with some great views over the countryside. Head back to the junction, turn left, and return to the parking lot. More information available about Draper Bluff and Eric's climbing school, Vertical Heartland, is available at <http://www.verticalheartland.com/Default.html> and 995-1427.

Back in the car, drive east to Cedar Bluff. At the next junction, turn left to Cedar Grove Church. Park at the church and follow the well-marked trail. It is a steady climb to the base of this tall cliff line. At the base, turn left and follow the cliff line with its overhangs, rock formations, and wavy patterns in the rock. The trail ends at approx one-third mile at a private property sign that says "keep out". Re-trace the route back to the junction. Along the way, you are sure to pass rock climbers. Go straight ahead along the cliff line for further cliff wall scenery, including a nice shelter bluff. Just past a rappelling sign, note a way to access the top of the bluffs. There is one obvious side trail on top which will afford you a memorable view over the countryside. Re-trace your route back to the car. A map of this area is only available on the back of the Fern Clyffe State Park brochure.

Goreville Falls (also known as Rick's Falls) is nearby and this will be the subject of another adventure article. For more information on this adventure from Bob Tyson, call 684-5643. #

WE MISSED YOU!

Ten of us enjoyed our hike at Trail of Tears State Forest on February 21. The approximately 3 mile trail on top of the bluffs afforded us constant views into canyons and ravines. The weather was perfect.



February Trail of Tears trail hikers strike a pose. Photo by Don Lawrence

Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Celebrates 30 Years and New Funding for an Update

by Bob Pauls

The mission of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) is to assist private and public landowners in protecting high quality natural areas and habitats of endangered and threatened species in perpetuity, through voluntary dedication or registration of such lands into the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The Commission promotes the preservation of these significant lands and provides leadership in their stewardship, management and protection.

Since 1978, the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory has helped to establish criteria to judge the conservation value of both public and private natural lands, Its data have helped to guide responsible development in Illinois, and its inventory process was responsible for the training of dozens of field biologists. Plans are now underway to conduct the inventory once again. The Nature Conservancy in Illinois recently received a \$125,000 grant from Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and \$20,000 from IDNR's Wildlife Preservation Fund to develop a new coordinated plan, in collaboration with the Illinois Natural History Survey,

Helping to kick-off the implementation is a two-day symposium this Spring (Friday and Saturday, April 8 - 9, 2005) in Galesburg, Illinois that is being held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Illinois State Academy of Science. The symposium entitled "THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE ILLINOIS NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY" will explore the many accomplishments of the Inventory and share an understanding how state agencies and commissions use the inventory. Visit the symposium web-site at: <http://www.indianaacademyofscience.org/htmlfiles/ilmeeting.htm>

The Inventory originally listed only 2,352 acres – just 1/100th of 1 percent – of high-quality original prairie remaining. This is amazing given the facts that in 1820, forests covered 13.8 million acres of the Illinois, 8 million acres involved some type wetland, and the rest – a figure believed to encompass at least 60 percent of Illinois – was grassland.

Illinois now has about 39,000 acres of dedicated nature preserves located in 78 counties. There are 61 registered land and water reserves, located in 39 counties, totaling more than 22,100 acres.

See the Illinois Natural Areas website at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/INPC/>

See the distribution map of inventoried sites at: <http://dnr.state.il.us/INPC/Sites/300thsitemap.htm>

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