

# Shawnee Trails

News of the Shawnee Group — May 2006

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



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## Shawnee Group Event Calendar

- May 4th (Thursday)**  
Beer Party for new member recruitment, Mugsy McGuire's from 7–10 PM. Come All!
- May 8th (Monday)**  
Mill Branch Trail Hike
- May 11th (Thursday)**  
Public member meeting at Carbondale Twp., 7:30 PM.
- May 13th (Saturday)**  
Chapter ExCom, Urbana, IL
- May 20-21**  
IL Outings Leader Training  
Elgin, IL
- May 27th (Thursday)**  
Shawnee ExCom and  
Newsletter Folding,  
Carbondale Township, 6 PM.

## Galapagos Islands, Evolution and Charles Darwin

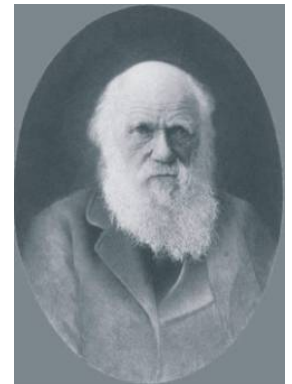
The Galapagos are a group of 19 volcanic islands laying on the equator about 1000 km off the coast of South America. Although officially discovered in 1535 by the Bishop of Panama, Fray Thomas de Berlanga, the islands had been visited previously by people from pre-Columbian coastal settlements.

Charles Darwin spent five weeks on the islands in 1835 on his 5-year voyage around the world. He would later make the islands famous because it was here that he noticed the specialization of the species and their adaptation to life on these islands. This was one of the important discoveries that led to his theory on evolution. Today there's a stop to immigration, a limit on tourist numbers, tight control on the importation of foreign plants and animals and several projects to try to return the islands to their natural state.

Don Lawrence, a former biology and zoology teacher at CCHS, has visited the islands and will present his observations at the Sierra Club regular meeting on May 11th at 7:30 PM. Don will highlight the Galapagos Islands' unique plants and animals, emphasizing their evolution and their influence on Charles Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection. His talk will include video and still pictures of numerous species including the Albatrosses, Galapagos Turtles, Penguins, Fur Seals, Galapagos Snakes, Finches, Sea Lions, Cactus plants, penguins and a large variety of other plants and animals. In addition, Don will explore the many unique geological features of the Galapagos Islands, including spatter cones, volcanic lava tunnels and special weather conditions such as the garua (mist) that persist several months of the year.

Attendees will also learn about the Charles Darwin Research Center, including the efforts by the Island's administrators to combat introduction of exotic species (including 23 species of terrestrial vertebrates) and control poachers. The presentation will include an advocacy for the serious teaching of evolution in our schools.

You are invited to join Don Lawrence and other Shawnee Group members for dinner at Italian Village Restaurant, 405 S. Washington Ave. in Carbondale at 5:45 PM. The meeting will start at 7:30 at the Carbondale Township Hall at 217 East Main St. (across from the Bank of Carbondale). #



## Hazardous Waste Collection — June 3 at SIU

Everyone is encouraged to use this special hazardous waste collection event to be held June 3rd only from 8 AM - 3 PM at the SIU Arena's south parking lot in Carbondale.

Items accepted include oil-based paint, paint thinner, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, poisons, pool chemicals, old gasoline, motor oil, anti-freeze, aerosols, adhesives, polishes, waxes, cleaners, degreasers, solvents, batteries, and many more. Residents are especially encouraged to bring in mercury-containing products like fluorescent bulbs, thermostats and thermometers.

This free collection is open to all Illinois residents. No wastes will be accepted from business, agriculture, industry or government. Sponsors for the event are Illinois EPA, SIU and Jackson County Health Dept. For more information, call 684-3143, ext. 128 or visit: <http://www.recyclejacksoncounty.org>

This year, Jackson County Health Dept. is also sponsoring a mercury thermometer exchange in conjunction with this event. Help keep mercury out of our lakes and streams! The first 200 residents to bring in a mercury thermometer on June 3 will receive in exchange one new, non-mercury digital thermometer. All mercury thermometers can be identified by the silver liquid inside. (Thermometers w/ red liquid do not contain mercury and should not be brought to the collection). Mercury thermometers should be brought to the collection in a sealed plastic bag for added protection. PLEASE help in spreading the word! #



Descriptions of all outings of the Shawnee Group and five other Chapter Groups in Illinois are now available in 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>



### May 8 (Monday) Mill Branch Trail Hike, Dellwood, IL

This two mile loop rim trail in Bell Smith Springs affords continuous views into a sandstone canyon, sculpted by water erosion. If time permits, we may also visit nearby Burden Falls. As part of a wilderness designated area, we will discuss the value of such protection and previous threats to it. Leave Murdale Shopping Center big sign in Carbondale 9 AM, or Marion Wal-Mart north parking lot at 9:30 AM. Leader is Bob Tyson 684-5643.



### May 20-21 (Saturday-Sunday) Illinois and National Midwest Outings Leader Training, Elgin, IL

In a very special joint gathering of Illinois Group Outings leaders and qualified national outings leaders in the Midwest, a two day training session will be held at Camp Tu-Endie-Wie YMCA camp. Topics include how to become qualified for outings leadership at both the Group and National level, plus a dozen workshops on special outdoor topics. Join the adventure. Contact event organizer, Bob Pauls, IL Chapter Outings Chair and Midwest Outings Subcommittee Chair at 618-713-2069. This is free training to Illinois Sierra Club members interested in outdoor adventures.



### Jun 10 (Saturday) How to Use a GPS For Fun and Adventure, Carbondale, IL

This workshop will provide hands-on experience in the theory and practical use of Global Positioning System (GPS) devices for exploring the out-of-doors. You will learn about basic compass navigation, GPS purchase criteria, and then go into the field to navigate a course with GPS and map to your final "reward." This is an all-day event (10-4) with class in the morning and field use in the afternoon. Contact leader Bob Pauls at 618-713-2069. Pre-registration required. No walk-ins. #

## Adventures with Uncle Bob Tyson

### Your Guide to Self-Adventure

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

This month I recommend to you **Rock Cave Nature Preserve**. Directions: Take Interstate 57 north to the Farina exit. Go south into town to RT 37 where you should turn left. Travel 0.8 miles to a sign for Altamont that is 15 miles north on RT 25/300. Upon arrival at the south end of Altamont, proceed left (WSW) on US 40 for 3.3 miles and then turn north (right) on RT 128. In less than five miles you will see the boundary signs posted by for Illinois Nature Preserve Commission on the right. Look for a small parking lot on the east (right) for parking of up to four cars.

This 79 acre preserve has no official trail, but the user-made trail is quite evident. You won't get lost since the trail travels in a valley surrounded by steep ravines. Note the sandstone outcrops, a wide shelter bluff, three small shelter bluffs. The name of Rock Cave is actually a misnomer. According to Bob Edgin of the Nature Commission, it refers to a sandstone overhang.

The trail begins with a northerly heading and then turns east along the ravines. When the boundary signs end, it is time to turn around and re-trace your route to the parking lot. It is difficult to travel south from the parking area along the canyon due to overgrown vegetation. The trail is slow going because a hiker needs to cross a winding creek bed several times. As such, visitors may not want to visit this area after heavy rains.

The preserve consists of 448 acres. It is home to two state-threatened plants: the fibrous-rooted sedge and blazing star. There are a number of unusual species among the approximately 350 plant species in the area, including Harvey's buttercup, interrupted fern, pinesap, bird foot violet, and poke milkweed. Solomon Seal, white flowers, and Christmas Fern were in evidence during my March exploratory hike. According to the Illinois Nature Preserve handbook, this area includes Hydrangea, White and Black Oak, Basswood, Eastern Box Turtle, Fowler's Toad, and Leopard Frog.

While in this area, I also recommend that you visit the Ballard Nature Center located near Altamont. From the RT 40 intersection south of town, proceed ENE on RT 40 for two miles. The center has a museum, wetland loop trail, woodland trail, and a restored prairie trail. Additional information about this location is available by calling either Bob Tyson at 684-5643 or George Mitchell at 217-342-9378.

### Outings Notes

Bob Pauls sponsored the recent hike to the Winters Pond area of La Rue/Pine Hills and Fountain Bluff where Clara McClure and Stan Harris guided eleven people through the bounty of April's emerging Spring flower beauty.

Despite a forecast of possible rain, seven outing participants enjoyed my April hike on the White Pines Trail (no rain). We were joined on the last mile of the trail by Shawnee Forest rangers Kelly Pierson and Bran Bourne. They demonstrated for us some new trail reconstruction techniques.. My One Horse Gap outing was cancelled due to inclement weather and is rescheduled for later this year.

Out of fairness to carpool drivers, future outings with the Shawnee Group will contain a request for participants to help directly reimburse drivers for the cost of gasoline. A typical donation of \$2-3 would be an appropriate offer; more if the outing is greater than 40 miles from the rendezvous site. Thanks. #



#### 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 and Political 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/Midwest Outings Subcommittee Chair:

Bob Pauls, 549-9408 <mailto:bob.pauls@sierraclub.org> (x)

#### Program Chair:

Phyllis Beck, 549-9819

#### Publicity Chair:

Shelby Seegers-Schafer, 529-5760

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## Burn Prairie, Burn

Two local Club leaders, Yolanda Comiskey and Bob Pauls, recently returned from a training workshop on prairie restoration through controlled burning. It was sponsored by the Chicago Wilderness Natural Resources Management Team.

The workshop covered the prairie fire behavior, controlled burn techniques, and smoke management. The course objective was to provide participants with the background necessary to safely participate on the crew of a controlled prairie burn.

Bob and Yolanda look forward to assisting local prairie restoration efforts in that result in preservation of prairie and bio-diversification of local habitats. ♣



## Thanks to Our Hardworking Volunteers

*By Barbara McKasson, Chair*

In the last year your local Shawnee Group has been out in front on many environmental issues, while simultaneously providing its members great monthly programs and outings. Our volunteers donate a lot of time to accomplish all of this and they deserve our appreciation. Thanks go out to **Yolanda Comiskey** who sweated over the intricacies of the complicated annual treasurer's report, plus organizing our recent fundraisers. Thanks to **Shelby Seegers-Schafer** for handling the publicity for all of our meetings, plus the Tongass Forest guest speaker event and the organizing for the tabling this Earth Day. Thanks to **Bob Tyson** for taking the time to scout so many new places to hike and for working with the Shawnee National Forest Service to get trails repaired, marked and protected. Thanks to **JoAnn Nelson** for working with the group trying to save Hickory Lodge Park and for taking detailed minutes of our meetings. Thanks to **Bob Pauls** for making our newsletter and website always look professional. Thanks to **Laurel Toussaint** for collecting over \$1,000 in honor of member Anne Hill's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday as a contribution to Green Earth for enlarging their nature preserve on North Oakland Ave. in Carbondale. Thanks to **Bob Pauls** and **John Schwegman**, who presented our last two excellent programs - and to **Don Lawrence**, who will be presenting our May program on the Galapagos. Thanks to **Sandy Anderson** for baking goodies and making coffee for all of our member meetings this year. Thanks to **Tim Stenson** for organizing our May recruitment party. Thanks to **Phyllis Beck** for arranging many of our programs. Thanks to the **Topciks** for implementing our new member welcome mailings. ♣

## Sierra Club Beer Recruitment Party Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 7-10 PM



Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Let the regularly active, the occasionally interested, and the soon to be new members meet, mingle, drink and be merry as we discuss the many environmental issues affecting

southern Illinois and beyond at the upcoming Sierra Club Beer Party. Come to Mugsy's in Carbondale (1620 W. Main St.) 7:00 PM., Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, and bring friends.

At the time of this writing, the Shawnee Group will be providing beer, snacks, games, trivia, door prizes, speakers, and music to fill the night with fun, frolic and light environmental talk.

While Beer Party events are increasingly being used by other Sierra Club groups around the country, it is new for our Shawnee Group. Your attendance is the most crucial element necessary for success. Please come and bring your friends and neighbors.

Call me with any last minute event suggestions or party donations (money, door prize donations, beer).

Thank you,

Tim Stenson, Membership Chair  
(618) 687-5456 or (618) 559-9377

## Two Victories to Celebrate!

*By Barbara McKasson, Chair*

The Illinois Legislature passed two of the Sierra Club's high priority bills that called for recycling mercury switches in cars and limiting idling time of diesel trucks. As a result of Club efforts, the hazardous mercury in switches in vehicles will be recovered when the vehicle is scrapped at the end of each vehicle's life. The switches have been the second largest source of mercury pollution in Illinois. The bill requires auto manufacturers to create a program for recovering the switches with a goal of recovering at least 70% of the switches after 2 years. The diesel idling bill passage will now limit stationary diesel vehicles to ten minutes of idling per hour in the Chicago and Metro East areas. Currently, some diesel trucks are left idling for hours. Diesel trucks are a major source of soot. Soot particles found in outdoor air is a hazard that is particularly bad for people with heart disease, chronic obstructive lung disease and asthma. Particles can travel hundreds to thousands of miles downwind, affecting people far from the sources.

A "Permit Outsourcing" bill allowing firms to expedite pollution permit applications, SB 2580 (Senator Clayborne and southern Illinois' Rep. John Bradley) is still alive as of this writing. The Sierra Club opposes this bill because it would give preferential treatment for big polluters and makes it more difficult for citizens to challenge the permits for such polluters in order to strengthen their pollution limits.

The Illinois legislature also responded to many landowners who were concerned about the change in assessment for woodlots on parcels of land that have less than 50% of the area in crops. These woodlots were no longer being assessed at the lower agricultural rate, thus causing a huge jump in real estate taxes for the owners. Many environmentalists are concerned that many people would feel compelled to log these wooded lands in order to pay the taxes. The Illinois legislature passed a law to put a two-year moratorium on changing the assessment category of these lands, and established a committee to study the issue. ♣

## Alert: Letters Needed to Lower Mercury Emissions in Illinois

By Barbara McKasson

Governor Blagojevich has proposed a new regulation that would require Illinois coal burning power plants to lower their emissions by an average of 90% by 2009. This proposal will be reviewed first by the Illinois Pollution Control Board, and then by the Illinois Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. The technology to accomplish this is already available and affordable. If you agree that protecting Illinois' children from learning disabilities, birth defects and mental retardation is worth less than \$1.50 per month on your electric bill, then please write a letter to the Illinois Pollution Control Board to let them know you support the Governor's proposal.

Almost half of the mercury found in Illinois' lakes, streams and ponds comes from coal burning power plants. The mercury is turned into methyl mercury by bacteria in the water. This very toxic form of mercury is then concentrated up the food chain, resulting in the advisory for young women and children up to age 15 to eat only one meal of predator fish per month in the popular fishing lakes in Southern Illinois. Yes, folks, our beautiful Southern Illinois is a mercury "hotspot."

### Sample Letter

TO: Pollution Control Board, James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph, Suite 11-500, Chicago, IL 60601.  
ATTN: Mercury Docket Rule

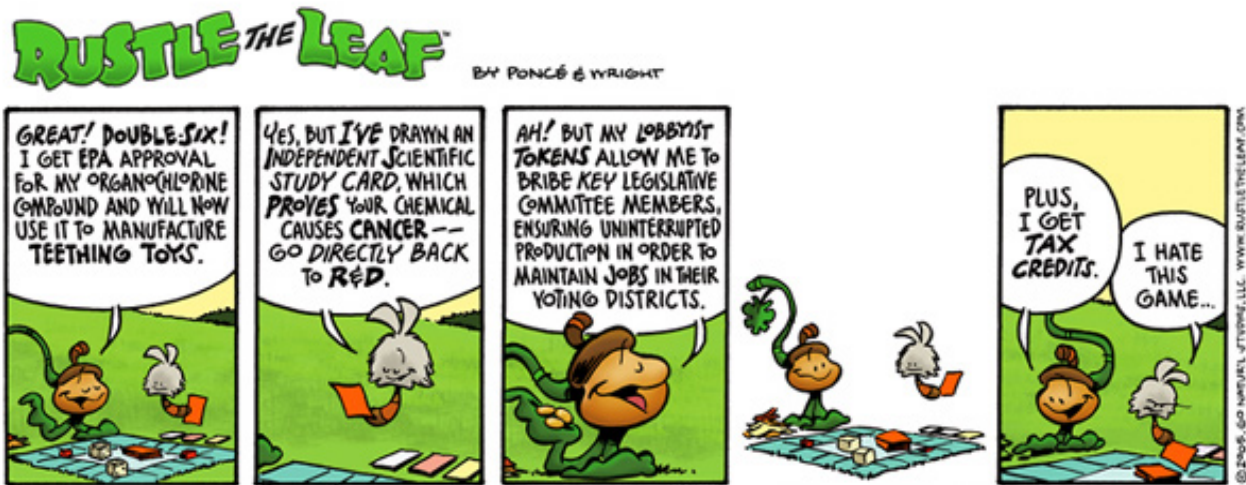
I urge the members of the IL Pollution Control Board to approve the Governor's proposal to limit mercury emissions from coal fired plants to an average of 90% for each company by 2009. I also support the provision to disallow mercury credit trading, since Southern Illinois and the Chicago area are already "hotspots" for mercury pollution. Six of the top 15 lakes and streams on the strictest mercury advisory are in Southernmost Illinois.

Studies done in Massachusetts, where mercury emissions have been greatly reduced, have shown that mercury levels in fish are lowered when mercury pollution from coal burning is decreased. The latest nationwide study done by Sierra Club indicates that as many as 1 out of 4 women of child bearing age have so much mercury in their bodies that their children are in danger of birth defects, mental retardation and learning disabilities. In addition, high mercury levels have been associated with an increased number of heart attacks in adults.

Wildlife is also affected by mercury at levels less than half the level shown to affect humans, resulting in less success in spawning, nesting and survival to adulthood. Besides the warnings to limit consumption of predator fish, hunters are now being warned to limit their consumption of wild ducks. Our family does not even feel free to enjoy eating fish from our backyard pond as much as we used to, because it is reasonable to assume that the bass in our pond have high concentrations of methyl mercury, since all the lakes around us are highly polluted with mercury.

The technology to capture 90% of the mercury from burning coal is already available and cost effective. I am certainly willing to pay the estimated \$1.50 per month to protect Illinois' children, adults and wildlife from mercury pollution.

Sincerely,  
Your signature, printed name and address



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