

# Shawnee Trails

News of the Shawnee Group — December 2006

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



[illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee](http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee)

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## Shawnee Group Event Calendar

**December 7th (Thursday)**  
Shawnee Group ExCom Meeting

**December 10th (Sunday)**  
Iron Mountain Trail Hike

**December 14th (Thursday)**  
Public Member Meeting at Carbondale Township, 217 E Main at 7:30 PM.

**January 1 (Monday)**  
Annual Stone Soup Gathering, Giant City S. P.

**January 4 (Thursday)**  
Shawnee Group ExCom Meeting

**January 11 (Thursday)**  
Public Member Meeting at Carbondale Township, 217 E Main at 7:30 PM.

**January 21 (Sunday)**  
Cave Valley Trail Hike

## Ecuador's Cloud Forest Birds

In January of 2006, Shawnee Group member, Cathie Hutcheson, climbed up the cloud forest in the rugged hills of Ecuador. She was on an Earthwatch research expedition to study rare bird species, including 20 species of hummingbirds, with a special focus on the endangered Woodstar Hummingbird.

The hummingbird research is helping preserve these species and two Ecuadoran wildlife reserves. The researchers also plan to help the local community develop ecotourism, so the local inhabitants will have a stake in preserving the cloud forest reserves.

Cathie is a well-known hummingbird bander who has banded about 15,000 individual hummingbirds in Southern Illinois. She banded around 4,500 in 2006 and has developed her own equipment and delicate techniques for banding hummingbirds.

You can discover what Cathie learned on her expedition to her Ecuador through her stories and pictures of these beautiful birds and their cloud forest habitat. You can also learn more about the Earthwatch Institute Research Expeditions by joining us to at the Shawnee Group's monthly meeting on Thursday, December 14th, 7:30 PM at the Carbondale Township, 217 E. Main St., across from The Bank of Carbondale. Also, you are invited to join Club members for the dinner before the meeting at 5:45 at El Bajio Restaurant in Carbondale. #



Ernst Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Natur* showing a variety of hummingbirds (1904).

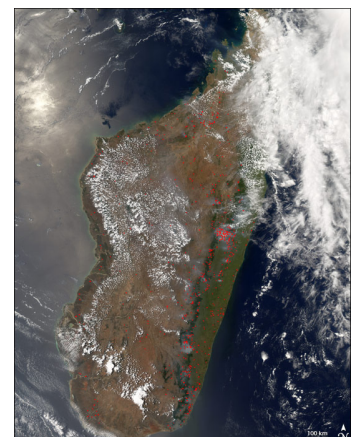
## Photography: Earth from Space

Bob Gill, an independent video producer and media instructor, uses detailed, high quality images to give us unique views of Earth from space. Photographs taken cameras on the space shuttle and satellites provide mankind a new perspective of the blue planet and illuminate earth's varied geographical features, human alterations and ongoing environmental destruction.

Gill has been involved with the media for over 20 years as a teacher, independent video producer and a multimedia specialist. He has produced numerous video documentaries on a wide variety of subjects. His "*Leclaire: Looking Back On 100 Years of Prosperity*" won Best Documentary from the Illinois Historical Society in 1990. In 1992, he produced "*Sierra Club: 100 Years of Activism*" to celebrate the Sierra Club's centennial. His holocaust documentary, "*Common Courage: Stories of Survival*" won the 1999 award for Best Documentary from the Missouri Film Festival.

For the past 13 years, Gill has been presenting regularly to community groups, environmental organizations, academic classes and at various educational conferences including the Missouri Community College Association, MORENet, the Midwest Educational Technology Conference, the League For Innovation in the Community College and the DESE Educational Technology Conference.

Join us for Gill's very special presentation on Thursday, January 11th, 7:30 PM at the Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St. in Carbondale. Also, join us for a dinner before the meeting at the Great Wall Restaurant in Carbondale at 5:45 PM. #



Madagascar Slash & Burn Sites, 11/06

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>

### **December 10 (Sunday) Iron Mountain Trail Hike, Alto Pass, IL**

This Shawnee National Forest trail is a delight during leaf-off season. Starting at a scenic pond, we will climb up the mountain to a level terrain which heads south along continuous views over valleys. Historical relics will be noted. We will learn the history of the Kaolin clay industry at this location. Limited to ten participants. Meet 12:30 PM at the Forest Service ranger station in Murphysboro or 1:15 PM at Kaolin Pit Picnic Area. Contact leader Bob Tyson at 684-5643 or Bob Emmett at 893-2667.

### **January 21 (Sunday) Cave Valley Trail, Pomona, IL**

This will be an easy Shawnee National Forest roadbed hike that takes in winter's beauty. We'll walk in about 2 miles and back while taking in a bluff line on the left, and wetland habitat on the right. And, learn about the forest plan to enhance habitat for non-game bird species. 10 participant limit. Meet at 12:30 PM at the ranger station in Murphysboro. Leader: Bob Tyson, 684-5643.

### **February 12 (Monday) Dixon Springs State Park, Glendale, IL**

Join us as we view waterfall cascades and pretty rock formations on the Ghost Canyon and Bluff trails while learning about the value of prescribed habitat burning. This area is described on our website archives October 2006 newsletter. 10 participant limit. Meet at 9 AM at the Murdale Shopping Center big sign in Carbondale or 9:30 old Wal-Mart parking lot in Marion. Leader: Bob Tyson, 684-5643. #

## **Adventures with Uncle Bob Tyson**

### **Your Guide to Self-Adventure**

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

This month I recommend to you the **Indian Point Loop Trail** located in the Garden of Gods Wilderness Area.

**Directions:** Upon turning onto the road which leads to the main parking area and the well-known Observation Trail, drive about 2/3 of its distance and look for the backpacker's parking lot sign (also visit the natural bridge across the road). After parking, follow the main trail going south. Note that this trail is for hikers only. On this gradual climb you will encounter an unmarked intersection where you should turn right. The other trail is our return loop. Total trail distance is under two miles. You will come to a stone glade with great views over the valley. I had not previously been aware that a trail continues on to our left. What starts out as a faint trail soon becomes an unofficial, but well-marked trail slowly descending to the base of a long cliff line. Please avoid using unmarked trails as they damage the forest.

A cave will become visible after 0.3 mile. Further on, you'll encounter a double-deck rock shelter and interesting formations. Next, look for a slot canyon and note the patterns in the rocks. After approximately 0.75 mile, there is a huge balanced rock; go behind it to find a deep canyon and also a 30 ft. deep rock shelter.

In the same spot, ascend another 20 ft. for an enclosed canyon with a crawl-in cave. Return to the main trail and climb up to a 20 ft. rock shelter and a cave located to the right. Upon exiting this shelter and cave, climb up on your left to a huge shelter bluff. As you continue further on the trail, it makes a moderate switchback to the top of the bluff line. The trail then winds between a pine plantation and the bluff line and soon completes the loop. Turn right at the intersection and return to the parking area.

This trail is not listed in any publication that I am aware of. This route will be our April 2007 Shawnee Group hike. More information is available from Bob Tyson at 684-5643. #

### **"Adopt A Trailhead" Service Project Opportunities**

A workday is scheduled by Kelly Pierson from Shawnee National Forest for Saturday, Dec 9th. We will meet on Bald Knob Road trailhead and will work on the uncompleted part of the reconstructed Godwin Trail. Sierra Club members are invited along with two other groups. Meeting time is undetermined yet. Register with Bob Tyson at 684-5643 so that tools and supplies will be reserved. As readers are probably aware, the forest service budget has earmarks for specific functions or activities. Surplus funds cannot be transferred from one activity to another. The new budget has no funds for trash cleanup on trails or trailheads. Ranger Kelly and I thought it worthwhile to put something in the newsletter to solicit volunteers to adopt certain trailhead parking areas to clean up trash/empty full trash cans once every 3-4 weeks. You may have a certain location in mind or I can assign you one. These in-kind volunteer contributions greatly extend limited budgets. Ranger stations have trash bins for your haul. Volunteers will be acknowledged on their website and their organization. Examples of trailheads include: Natural Bridge, Panther Den, Horse Creek Trail, Old Stone Face, or any location of convenience to you.

## Last Hurdle for Mercury Rule: Help Needed Before 12/12/2006

In January, Governor Blagojevich proposed that all Illinois coal-burning power plants eliminate 90% of their mercury emissions by 2009. If adopted, the new rule would give Illinois much stricter regulations on mercury than the Bush administration's regulations. This regulation was recently approved by the Illinois Pollution Control Board. The last hurdle for the rule is approval by the General Assembly's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). JCAR is expected to vote on the proposal on December 12th.

According to a 2006 study completed by the Sierra Club of Illinois, 1 in 4 Chicago-area women tested for mercury exceeded the federal mercury limit. This level of mercury can harm the brain, heart, and immune system. For women planning to have children, mercury can harm developing fetuses and children at lower levels of mercury exposure causing learning disabilities, developmental delays, and attention disorders.

Unfortunately, every Illinois waterway, including Lake Michigan, is contaminated with mercury. The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued "fish advisories" that warn everyone to limit their consumption of fish from Illinois' lakes, rivers and streams. **Six lakes and streams in Southern Illinois are among the fifteen listed in the highest advisory, as having the most mercury.** Not surprisingly, EPA data show that about one-third of the mercury deposited in the U.S. comes from U.S. power plants, and a NOAA study concluded that the leading source of mercury pollution in Lake Michigan is from Illinois coal powered plants.

Fortunately, inexpensive, modern pollution controls can capture 90 percent of a power plant's mercury, and can pay for themselves in a few years. Several states have already made it mandatory for plant owners to use this technology — and **now it is time for Illinois to take the same action.** The federal rule, which will take effect this year in the absence of a state rule, is considerably weaker and will fail to adequately protect Illinois families.

**Please make the effort to participate in this public comment process – before December 12<sup>th</sup>.**

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Send a short letter to the JCAR Committee. You can use the sample letter below. Feel free to change or add your own comments. If you are pressed for time, send an e-mail through the alert on the Illinois Chapter website, which you will also be able to personalize if you want. The portal to the alert will be on the home page at:

<http://illinois.sierraclub.org>

by Barbara McKasson #

Joint Committee on Administrative Rules  
Attn: R2006-025 PC  
700 Stratton Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear JCAR:

Mercury pollution from Illinois coal plants is a danger to our health and environment. Please adopt the Illinois Mercury Rule, as it will protect Illinois families by:

- \* Requiring IL plants to reduce their mercury pollution by 90% by 2009.
- \* Not allowing "pollution trading", which would allow polluters to buy their way out of cleaning up.

I urge you to protect Illinois families by adopting the strongest obtainable mercury limits for Illinois coal-fired plants.

Sincerely, < Signature, name, address >

## Activists Also Needed to Help Fight Global Warming!

Global warming has become the overarching environmental threat and the top priority for national Sierra Club. We agree that we all need to work towards reducing global warming gases to avoid catastrophe, such as extinction of over half of the species on earth, extreme flooding, and extreme weather conditions. There is a lot of educating to do, so Shawnee Group is planning to show films, give programs for groups, and make other efforts to convince our members and the general public to work towards reducing the impact of global warming. If you share this concern, please consider joining our **Shawnee Group Global Warming Committee**. We need people with all sorts of talents, so do not hesitate to volunteer. Your energy and ideas are needed! Please call Conservation Chair Barb McKasson at (618) 529-4824. #



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

#### ExCom Chair/Conservation Co-Chair:

Barb McKasson, 529-4824  
<mailto:barb@sierraclub.org> (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)

## Announcements

By Barb McKasson, Chair

### January 1, 2007 (Monday) — Annual Stone Soup Picnic, Giant City State Park, Makanda, IL

Join us in Giant City State Park to celebrate the new year, explore nature, and eat good food. Meet at shelter #2. Come at 11 AM to contribute ingredients to the vegetarian or carnivorous soup. Also, bring a dish to pass (veggie, salad, bread, desert or appetizer) and your own drinks. After a potluck lunch around noon, the hearty will take a leisurely hike on one of the park trails. We will have two fires going in the stone shelter to keep you warm. Bring your Frisbee, golf clubs, etc. if you want. We will also be counting the votes for the Group ExCom election. Come enjoy the food and fun!

### Have You Voted For Shawnee Group ExCom Yet ?

We need you to vote in the Shawnee Group ExCom election!! Your ballot was in the November Shawnee Trails. If you cannot find it, you can print it from the page in the online newsletter. Go to: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee> Then click on "Newsletter" at the top of the page. Then Click on the November, 2006 newsletter. The candidate statements for the four nominees are on printed page 5. You can print out the two ballot on page 6.

**MAKE SURE TO WRITE YOUR NAME(S) ON THE UPPER CORNER OF THE BACK OF THE ENVELOPE SO WE CAN CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE A MEMBER, AND THUS QUALIFIED TO VOTE IN OUR ELECTION. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COUNT ANY VOTES THAT ARE UNIDENTIFIED.**

If you have already mailed in your ballot and forgot to write your name on the outside of the envelope, please print a new ballot from the website (see above) and mail in a new ballot. We really do want your vote!

**Ballots must be received at our mailbox no later than Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. Alternately, you can come to the Stone Soup picnic on Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, and vote before 12 noon.**

### Please Help Shawnee Group Stay Strong !

Shawnee Group only receives 50¢ to \$1 of your yearly dues. That means that our group has to raise most of the money we need for our newsletter, refreshments at meetings, travel for training for group leaders, and all of the activities we undertake related to local, state and regional issues. Our calendar and water bottle sales will be our biggest fundraiser this year, so please call or mail in your order for Sierra Club Calendars or Water Bottles.

We are selling the wall **calendars** for \$12 each and the weekly engagement calendars (with 52 beautiful pictures) for \$13 – cheaper than you can buy them at the book store! If you want them mailed, postage is only \$2 for 1 calendar, \$3 for 2 calendars, and \$4 for 3 calendars, etc. Unlike stores, we do not charge any sales tax for the calendars!

**Water Bottles** can also be ordered. Each 0.6 liter bottle costs \$16 and 1.0 liter bottles are only \$18. The sales tax is 7.25% Checks must be made payable to Shawnee Group Sierra Club and mailed to: **Shawnee Group Sierra Club, P.O. Box 117, Carbondale, IL 62903-0117**. To print-out an order form, go to our website at <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee> and click on "Newsletter" at the top of the page, then click on the October, 2006, newsletter to find the order form. We will have ballots at the Stone Soup gathering on January 1st! ☺



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<http://Illinois.sierraclub.org/Shawnee>



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