



Shawnee Trails



<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>

Sierra Club – Shawnee Group

September – November 2026 QUARTERLY

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Host Gatherings Without the Waste

In southernmost Illinois, the season for outdoor gatherings--picnics, block parties, festivals, family reunions, and even simple get-togethers with friends--extends through much of the fall.

Unfortunately, these events bring with them a high use of single-use plastics. From plastic cutlery to bottled water, disposable items are everywhere, and most end up in landfills or as litter. Even before disposal, plastic production relies on fossil fuels and contributes to climate change. After we throw them away, many plastics break down into microplastics that pollute our air, water, and even our bodies. Plastic isn't just a recycling problem—it's a pollution and public health problem, too.

We are hoping to extend Plastic-Free July, a global movement to reduce plastic waste in our daily lives, into the fall months and beyond. Whether you're planning a backyard cookout, a family picnic, or a larger community event, there are plenty of simple swaps that make a big difference.

Here are a few ways to reduce plastic at your outdoor events:



Ditch the Disposables

Single-use plastics may seem harmless, but many contain chemicals linked to hormone disruption and other health risks. Swapping in reusable plates, cups, utensils, and napkins helps protect both people and the planet.

Consider upscaling your event to glass plates, as this simple touch can instantly make a gathering feel more elegant. Of course, there may be events where reusable plastic plates are more appropriate. There are many ways to avoid disposables, including shopping at resale stores to build a dish collection, borrowing from family or friends, or renting reusable place settings from local reuse or sustainability organizations, which may include plates, cloth napkins, and silverware. Another option is to invite guests to bring their own dishes and take them home afterward. This may sound unconventional, but some community groups successfully use this approach for potlucks, and it can be fun to see everyone's unique dishes. Finally, skip plastic straws and stirrers altogether, or offer reusable metal alternatives instead. *(Continued on Page 2)*



Skip Bottled Water

Bottled water may seem convenient, but it's one of the most wasteful uses of plastic. Globally, over one million plastic bottles are purchased every minute, according to global market data reported by *The Guardian*. A significant number of these bottles aren't recycled, and studies show that bottled water is often contaminated with microplastics. Instead, set up a water refill station with pitchers or a cooler and reusable cups. You could also encourage guests to bring their own reusable bottles. It's a simple switch that reduces waste and helps guests easily keep track of their drinks.



Shop Smart for Food and Snacks

Thoughtful shopping can greatly reduce event waste. Choose bulk items instead of single-serving snack packs or plastic-wrapped desserts, and bring your own bags or containers to cut down on excess packaging. Farmers markets and local bakeries are great sources for unpackaged or minimally packaged produce, baked goods, and treats, and homemade or local options often taste better and feel more personal. For drinks, skip individual juice boxes or soda bottles and opt for larger containers that guests can pour from. Looking for cooperatives, local grocers, or community-focused food stores in your area can also open up more opportunities to shop sustainably.

Be prepared for leftovers by setting out reusable containers or inviting guests to bring their own to take food home.



Rethink Your Party Items

Skip plastic balloons, shiny mylar decorations, fireworks, and plastic glow bracelets, which often end up as litter and break down into harmful microplastics. Instead, opt for biodegradable or reusable options like fabric banners, paper streamers, or natural centerpieces made from flowers, branches, or herbs. You can also reduce waste and add a personal touch by borrowing decorations or repurposing items you already have.

Avoid handing out party favors made from plastic. Instead, choose something meaningful, reusable, or consumable, such as seed packets or homemade treats. You can also skip the giveaways altogether. Most people already have more than they need, and even well-intentioned favors often end up as clutter or go unused. Focus on creating a memorable experience instead, as that's what guests will truly appreciate.



Make Recycling and Composting Easy

Reducing plastic is more effective than recycling it. Still, helping guests dispose of waste properly and offering composting can make a big difference. Set up clearly labeled bins and assign a volunteer to help guests sort their waste.

Every small change helps shift the culture away from throwaway plastic. You don't have to be perfect—just start where you can. Every step away from single-use plastic is a step toward a safer, cleaner world, and by leading with these actions, you may also inspire friends, family, or guests to adopt more sustainable practices.

Please note: "Host Gatherings without the Waste" is one of a group of articles offered by the Chapter's Plastics Reduction Team for publication in Sierra Club Illinois Chapter group newsletters. For further information, you may contact co-chair for the team, Tim Dever at tdever67@yahoo.com

FALL 2026 – SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB MEMBER PROGRAMS

Note our **in-person** Shawnee Group member programs, at the Carbondale Township Hall Meeting Room, 217 E. Main, Carbondale, IL, unless otherwise noted. Enter through the Township's blue backdoor. Parking is available in lots along the alley near the backdoor, behind Township Hall and Buckwater Brew Works, on the block bounded by South Washington Street, East Monroe, and South Marion (by Rock Hill Baptist Church). Do also consider other Illinois Sierra groups' virtual presentations, as well as our own, listed on www.sctrips.org.

Sunday, September 20, 2026, 2 to 4 pm

Event: Kickoff for Sierra Club's Support of **Julie Fortier's** Campaign for the IL 12 Congressional Seat!

Location: **Murphysboro's Youth and Recreation Center, 1818 Walnut St, Murphysboro, IL** (near the Sally Logan Public Library). Map of the location: https://maps.app.goo.gl/1X5BFWbMLKd6ZHwn6?g_st=ac

Sierra Club is excited to announce our endorsement of Julie Fortier to represent us in Congress and invite you to come to our kickoff event. You'll have the chance to meet Julie and hear her speak about her positions on the environment and climate change -- including the multiple threats to our water, air, and quality of life posed by data centers. There will then be plenty of time for Q & A, enjoying the light refreshments, and learning how you can help Get Out the Vote for Julie! The qualities she will bring to representing us stand in stark contrast to those of her opponent, incumbent Mike Bost: her strong background in science, her honesty and forward-looking stance on the issues, and her commitment, demonstrated in her many town halls to date, to listening and working hard to forward the interests of folks in the 12th district. We look forward to seeing you at the gathering for Julie on the afternoon of September 20th! Contact Jane Cogie (jane.cogie@gmail.com) on any questions you may have about this event.

Thursday, October 8, 2026, 7 pm

Speaker: F. Agustin Jimenz, SIU Associate Professor of Zoology

Presentation: Swift armadillos: Neonatives herald the dispersal of heir creeping parasites

Location: **Carbondale Township Hall Meeting Room, 217 E. Main, Carbondale, IL**

Agustin Jimenz, SIU Associate Professor of Zoology, will present on armadillos and the parasites that "hitchhike" with their hosts northward. He will detail the effects of the nine-banded armadillo and other neonatives in the expansion of neotropical parasites across North America. Since changing environments change the chance of infections in mammals from parasites, his research findings help enumerate the factors that may explain infection and its transmission. Though his talk will focus mainly on armadillos, Agustin, as a naturalist who documents the distribution of parasites associated with mammals, will also offer the worm's perspective in their symbiotic relationship with their armadillo host.

Thursday, November 12, 2026, 7 pm

Speaker: Kevin Rohling, Extension Specialist, Forest Management & Ecology, University of Illinois Champaign Urbana, Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences, College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

Presentation: Conservation Connections: Forests, Moths, and Management

Location: **Carbondale Township Hall Meeting Room, 217 E. Main, Carbondale, IL**

Forests provide critical habitat for moths and other insects that, in turn, serve as prey for many species of conservation concern, including several bat and bird species. Forest ecosystems also benefit from active management practices like prescribed fire, invasive species control, and forest stand improvement. This presentation presents results from a study exploring how forest management influences Lepidoptera, their predators, and their interactions. In addition, the presentation will offer practical tips for improving habitat and engaging in citizen science initiatives to monitor changes in moth occurrences over time.

FALL 2026 – SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Little Grand Canyon Bluffs Bootleg Trail Hike, Sunday, September 20, 2026

Jon Womack will be hiking the little-known bootleg trail at Little Grand Canyon. The trail will be approximately 5 miles. It will feature spectacular views. Meet at the Little Grand Canyon parking lot before 9:30 am. Bring water and wear appropriate hiking shoes. You must call Jon Womack at 815-263-9625 in order to go on the hike.

Inspiration Point and Gorham Petroglyphs Hike, Sunday, October 18, 2026

Meet at the Hardee's parking lot in Murphysboro before 10 am. Inspiration Point is one of the most iconic spots in the Shawnee National Forest. We will also visit fascinating 1,000-year-old petroglyphs made by the Mississippian civilization. Bring water and wear appropriate hiking shoes. You must contact Jon Womack at 815-263-9625 in order to attend this hike.

Jackson Falls Hike, Sunday, November 15, 2026

Meet at 10 am at the Jackson Falls trail head. Or, call Bob Mulcahy in order to car pool from Carterville. This will be a moderately difficult hike of 5 miles. Bring water and a hiking staff and wear appropriate hiking shoes. The leader is Bob Mulcahy. Call Bob at 618-942-6342 to go on the hike.

Browse the lower right Index on our old blog page for numerous southern Illinois **hiking trail** descriptions, and explore some of these during your own time: <http://shawneegroup.blogspot.com/>. Check the Illinois Chapter listings for other outings across the region: <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/events-calendar>.

Service Outings – Help Save High Quality Natural Areas

Shawnee Group is committed to helping rid high-quality natural areas of non-native invasive plants (NNIS) that are threatening to crowd out our native plant communities at La-Rue Pine Hills Research Natural Area (Snake Road) and at Fern Rocks Nature Preserve (Trillium Trail) in Giant City State Park.

To volunteer, contact Barb at 618-549-9684, babitaji@aol.com or text 618-534-7440.



EV and Hybrid Car Show

Saturday, September 19. 2:00-5:00

First Christian Church

306 W. Monroe

Carbondale, IL



Piasa Palisades Group Outings Chair:

Carol Klinger, 618-288-5506, ciklinger@yahoo.com
<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/piasa-palisades>

Eastern Missouri Group Outings Chair:

Doug Melville, 636-288-1055
douglas.k.melville@gmail.com
<http://sierraclub.org/missouri/eastern-missouri>

Future Outings TBA:

Updates listed on our or Illinois Chapter websites:
<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>
<https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/events-calendar>
Other short notice outings and events may be announced on our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubShawnee>

Shawnee National Forest Committee Report – August, 2026

By Barbara McKasson, Chair, Illinois Chapter SNF Committee

The [Shawnee National Forest Conservation Bill](#) is now part of the Federal Farm Bill. Our Shawnee National Forest (SNF) Committee had to make changes to our section of the bill because our latest version of the bill was not attached. We succeeded in doing that, but now it appears that the Farm Bill may not pass this year. The Sierra Club and Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) agreed that Plan B will be combining our bill with 3 other land conservation bills in a package so that our [Senator Durbin](#) can shepherd it across the finish line by the end of this year before he is out of office. If that does not happen, it looks like Senator Duckworth will continue to sponsor the SNF Conservation Bill. The bill designates 750 acres as the new Camp Hutchins Wilderness. It also will provide strong protection against commercial logging, mining, drilling and motorized vehicles for 12,708 acres in three Special Management Areas in SNF. Since Sierra Club is opposed to some parts of the Farm Bill, non-passage in 2026 may give us a chance to improve the environmental and conservation sections of the bill, so that may be a plus.

As noted at our last Con Com meeting, the lack of transparency of proposed actions and decrease in public opportunities to comment continues to get worse on SNF. The web page for SNF is providing less and less information. Presumably in response to the Trump Administration “emergency” order to increase logging on public lands, SNF has recently performed logging without consistent public notice. For example, SNF management renamed a management project and announced a logging action in only one local paper, forcing concerned citizens to comb local papers for actions in the area and eventually to sue the Forest Service for not following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

We also have trouble contacting key people on Shawnee National Forest because many of them have been out west on firefighting assignments. We finally received a response from SNF Supervisor Filipe Cano and he promised to find out when various staff members can attend a meeting with us in August or early September.

Since SNF managers have been fast tracking logging projects using categorical exclusions and minimal (or non-existent) public notification, we will be working to find out how to rectify the situation through meetings with the Supervisor, District Ranger and others on the forest and possibly other means in order to have timely notice and meaningful input on projects in SNF.

In the Trump Administration reorganization of the Forest Service, besides moving the headquarters from SC to Salt Lake City and switching regional headquarters to 15 HQs headed by political appointees, the most heartbreaking change to me is the closing of 57 research stations, which means the monitoring of research which may have continued for decades will now be discontinued – a great example of the hostility to science and denial of facts in the current federal administration.

For questions, contact Barb at babitaji@aol.com.



VOTE! All Shawnee Group Members! It is time to vote for our Executive Committee representatives. This year Sierra Club has electronic ballots to vote online. Members will receive a postcard in October with more information. Your Member ID is needed for online voting and can be found on your membership card or obtained at member.care@sierraclub.org

Questions? Contact Membership Chair Carla Womack at 815-263-8173 or crusso1957@yahoo.com

Carla Womack

I have been a Sierra club member for 25-26 years. My husband and I moved to southern Illinois when we retired in 2015 then I became more active with the Shawnee Group. I have been a member of the ExCom for the past 7-8 years. I am the membership chair, am active with native plant sales, and lobby our legislators on behalf of Sierra club priority bills. I would be honored to be voted to be on the ExCom again. There is much work to do in our area and I feel I can continue to make a difference. Thank you for your consideration.

Steve Eberhart

I have been a Sierra Club member for 30 years and a member of the Executive Committee and Outings Chair for the last 12 years. As Outings Chair, I have organized approximately 125 hikes, kayak and canoe outings at a wide variety of locations throughout southern Illinois. I have recruited three outings leaders and have periodically organized and participated in CPR training for those leaders. When concern was expressed regarding the effects of dogs on trails, I researched and wrote an article regarding this for our newsletter. I have also helped organize several social gatherings for the Shawnee group. I would like to continue serving the Shawnee group as both a member of the executive committee and Outings Chair.

Patty Weyhrich

Learning to leave a lighter footprint is essential for our society and future generations. As a member of the Shawnee Group ExCom, I work with a team that helps our community enjoy and protect the environment in many ways--hiking, restoring habitat for plants and animal diversity, education, legal advocacy, and more. Making sustainable lifestyle choices through our actions—the food we eat, what we consume, hands-on work in natural areas, protecting wildlife, and enjoying nature are some values that I integrate as an ExCom member. I have served as Treasurer since 2013.

Tharran Hobson

Pleased to introduce myself to fellow Sierra Club members. I have been a conservation professional for 28 years. Four years ago, I had the privilege of being named the Southern Illinois Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. My family absolutely fell in love with southern Illinois, and we enjoy hiking, biking, and paddling around our natural wonders. I've worked in conservation in southern Illinois over eleven years, guiding our Invasive Species Strike Team and later our Interagency Habitat and Fuels Crew. Prior, my career transitioned from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to The Nature Conservancy where I've been for 24 years. I'm currently a board member of the Prairie State Conservation Coalition and was past president of Friends of the Illinois River, Versailles Fire Protection District, and LaMoine River Ecosystem Partnership. I am interested in stewarding some of the best remaining habitats in Illinois, right here in the Shawnee.

ICYMI - Recycling LEDs, Fluorescent Light Bulbs...and More

By Barbara McKasson



Let's review lightbulb recycling:

- ✚ Spent incandescent (old fashioned, electricity guzzling) lightbulbs go in the trash.
- ✚ LEDs can go in the trash, but are worth recycling for copper, aluminum, trace metals, and diodes.
- ✚ Fluorescent (CFLs) bulbs contain mercury, which is hazardous, so they do not go in the trash.

I have been collecting spent lightbulbs but haven't made it to the yearly hazardous waste recycling day for several years, so there they sat in a box in my basement. So, in my search to find out another way to recycle them, I found out the following: CRC Southern Recycling does not collect them for recycling, but Jackson County Health Department (JCHD) does. You just go to JCHD (M-F 8AM-4PM) and proceed to the building in the back where you can hand them to the receptionist for no charge. JCHD is on Rt. 13 between Carbondale and Murphysboro at 415 Health Department Rd. 62966. Carterville Winlectric Co. also collects LEDs but charges \$1 per bulb, at 1806 Clark St. Please note that neither place takes the long fluorescent bulbs, which must be taken to the yearly IEPA Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event in Jackson County or to another of many such events, which are held in various places in the state. The next one in Jackson County will be in the spring of 2027.

I will also be bringing a box to our Shawnee Group meetings so you can bring your recyclable bulbs to our meetings at the Carbondale Township Office the second Thursday of each month, October through May, and I will periodically take them to the JCHD.

There is a Shred, Med, Sharps and More Disposal Day on Saturday, September 26, 2026, sponsored by JCHD. To participate, you must schedule a time between 8AM and Noon by calling 618-684-3143. You can find more information on recycling from Angie at JCHD by calling 618-684-3143 or by going to www.jchdonline.org.

Illinois Legislative Contacts: CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS TODAY!

State Dist. 109 – Charles Meier: 618-651-0405; 217-782-6401; repcmeier@gmail.com

State Dist. 115 – David Friess: 618-282-7284; 217-782-1018; friess@ilhousegop.org

State Dist. 116 – David Severin: 618-440-5090; 217-782-1051; severin@ilhousegop.org

State Dist. 117 – Patrick Windhorst: 618-294-8703; 217-782-5131; windhorst@ilhousegop.org

State Dist. 118 – Scott Doody: 618-565-7115; 217-782-0387; Doody@ilhousegop.org

Senate Dist. 55 – Senator Jason Plummer: 618-283-3000; 217-782-5755

Senate Dist. 58 – Senator Terri Bryant: 618-684-1100; 217-782-8137; Sec'y.: cbrown@sgop.ilga.gov

Senate Dist. 59 – Senator Paul Jacobs: 618-559-7018; 217-782-5509

Governor J.B. Pritzker: 217-782-6830; <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/contactus/Pages/default.aspx>

Speaker of the House Emanuel Chris Welch: 217-782-5350; 708-450-1000; repwelch@emanuelchriswelch.com

Senate President Don Harmon: 217-782-8176; 708-848-2002; <http://www.donharmon.org/contact-senator-harmon>

Congressional Contacts: CALL YOUR CONGRESSMEN TODAY!

Senator Dick Durbin: 618-351-1122; 202-224-2152; <http://www.durbin.senate.gov>

Senator L. Tammy Duckworth: 202-224-2854; <https://www.duckworth.senate.gov>

Representative Mike Bost: 618-457-5787; 202-225-5661; <https://bost.house.gov>

Representative Mary Miller: 618-240-3155; 202-225-5271; <https://marymiller.house.gov>

President Donald Trump, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500, 202-456-1111; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Has Your Email Address Changed?

To receive notification when the latest Shawnee Group newsletter is posted online, be sure to inform the Group when you change your email address. Send email address updates to: crusso1957@yahoo.com.

Read current and past newsletters on our website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>. The website also lists information on upcoming local programs and outings, plus state and national Sierra Club issues.

Leadership Opportunities

Run for the Board! We need a few good women and men. Join the board of directors (the executive committee, also known as the ExCom) in overseeing the Shawnee Group's strategic direction and economic health. Board members meet monthly for about 2 hours. Board terms are for two years. We are always interested in potential candidates. Contact Jane Cogie, 618-713-7024, jane.cogie@gmail.com.

Call for articles and photographs for Shawnee Trails! The next issue will be published in November. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to sabrina@midwest.net by **Monday, November 2nd**.



Shawnee Group Sierra Club T-Shirts for Sale!

Show your support for our local group's activities.

Contact Barb McKasson,
618-529-4824,
babitaji@aol.com.

White logo on blue T-Shirt \$15
Medium Large or X-Large

2027 Sierra Club Calendars for Sale!

Wall calendars \$19. Engagement calendars \$20. Less than retail price! Contact Barb McKasson, 618-529-4824, babitaji@aol.com to buy some, or do so at the monthly meetings this fall.

