

# Nature's Notebook

FALL 2023 ISSUE



# 5

**UPCOMING  
EVENTS**

*FALL FOREST  
HOT SPOTS*

A CLOSER LOOK  
AT TREE SQUIRRELS  
IN ILLINOIS

FALL BIRD BANDING

SAND BLUFF BIRD  
OBSERVATORY



# 5 FALL FOREST HOTSPOTS

## BLACKHAWK SPRINGS FOREST PRESERVE

One of Winnebago County's largest forest preserves, this 629.9-acre tract is heavily wooded, and provides a wealth of fishing and hiking activities. Walking the trails here will lead you to an exploration of flower-filled prairies, cool shady woodlands, the glistening Kishwaukee River, and a lovely little bubbling natural spring. Blackhawk Springs is an excellent site for birdwatching, especially during the spring and fall migrations. Look for Osprey and Bald Eagles fishing in the river.

# 1.



# 2.

## HEADQUARTERS FOREST PRESERVE

This preserve includes a paved trail that connects to the Sinnissippi Recreation Trail, a quarry lake and picnic area. Whether you are walking, biking, jogging, pushing a stroller, or walking your dog, the Headquarters paved loop trail is an extremely popular year round destination. A restored prairie, wetland area, and floodplain forest provide opportunities to encounter a variety of birds, insects and other wildlife. The eastern boundary is the Rock River and provides views of the river and access for fishing.





# 3.

## HONONEGAH FOREST PRESERVE

Hononegah is FPWC's oldest preserve and one of its most popular. Purchased in 1924, the preserve is located on the north bank of the Rock River and bisected by Dry Run Creek. Upon entering the preserve, visitors will enjoy the drive over the Rainbow Bridge and up into the cool maple grove. The campground has campsites interspersed in a mature stand of white oaks and hickories. Hononegah's majestic woods make it a popular spot to enjoy fall color displays.

## KISHWAUKEE RIVER FOREST PRESERVE

This preserve provides access to the south end of a 2.25-mile paved recreation trail and is a great place to park and then jump on the path for walking, biking or jogging. The primary vegetation here is mature woods, which make it a prime great spot for woodland birds. Kishwaukee River Forest Preserve is a historic and scenic preserve bisected by the Kishwaukee River, it receives a lot of use for canoeing, kayaking and fishing. Fall birding is excellent in this preserve as migrating birds use the mature forests as a stopover.



# 4.

## SEWARD BLUFFS FOREST PRESERVE

Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve is one of FPWC's most picturesque and most popular. It boasts woodland, streams and dolomite cliffs. The 400 acres in the western portion of the preserve is beautiful undulating restored prairie and oak-savanna. Because of its dramatic scenery and varied landscape, it is a favorite for hiking and horseback riding. Seward Bluffs is famous for its display of colorful fall foliage. Don't miss the show in October!



# 5.

# AW NUTS! A CLOSER LOOK AT TREE SQUIRRELS IN ILLINOIS

As the fall season arrives, temperatures begin to cool and walnuts and acorns begin to fall. The forest becomes busy with little critters like ground squirrels, chipmunks, and tree squirrels, gathering food to cache for the long winter ahead. Did you know there are four different species of tree squirrels that reside in Illinois? Let's take a closer look!

## Fox squirrel

The Fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) is the largest tree squirrel in Illinois. Their fur has an overall reddish tint, with a mix of rusty-yellow and black. Fur is lighter on the ears, belly, and parts of the tail.



**Fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*)**

## Eastern gray squirrel

With its gray to light gray fur, the Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) is one of the most recognizable tree squirrels in Illinois. There are also Eastern gray squirrels that are melanistic (black), leucistic (white), and albinistic (white) that reside throughout Illinois.

## Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



## Red squirrel

The Red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) is smaller than fox and eastern gray squirrels. Despite their name, the red squirrel's fur is more



of a reddish dark-gray on the back with white fur on the belly. Red squirrels are only found in the Northeast counties of Illinois.

**Red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)**

## Southern flying squirrel

Weighing in at only 2 ounces, the Southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*) is the smallest tree squirrel in Illinois. They can't actually fly, but the extra folds of skin on their body allow them to glide from tree to tree. Southern flying squirrels are mostly found in Southern Illinois.



**Southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*)**



# FALL BIRD BANDING

Grab your friends, your family, and your bird watching binoculars! Head out to Sand Bluff Bird Observatory this fall to view stunning migratory birds as they head south for the winter. Learn from experienced volunteers about different bird species, migratory patterns, and everything avian!



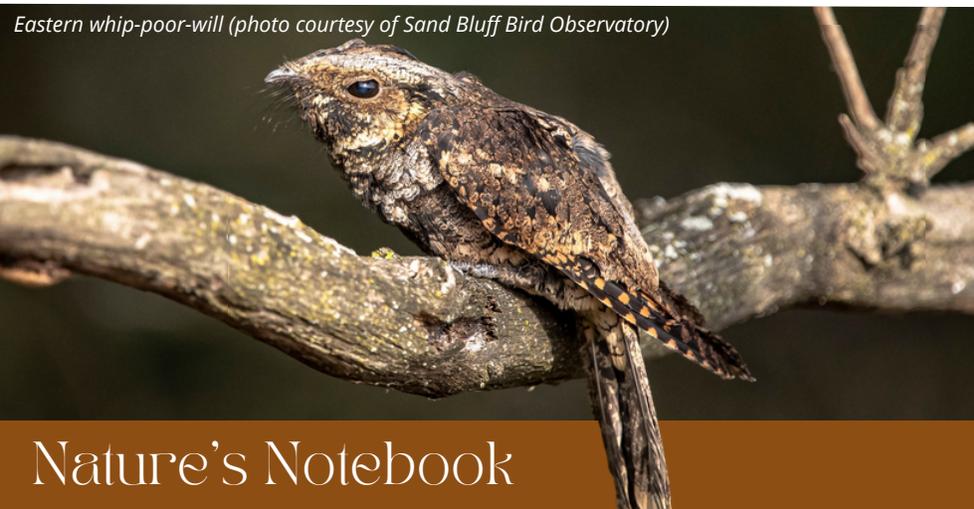
**ABOUT SBBO** "Located within Colored Sands Forest Preserve in Northwest Winnebago County, Sand Bluff Bird Observatory is one of the largest small-bird banding operations in the country that is open to the public. Originally purchased in 1964 as a working farm, Colored Sands Forest Preserve has been converted back into prairie over many years.

Although Sand Bluff is primarily a research facility, visitors are always welcome to come watch our operation and share in the learning process. Whether it's a House Wren or a Red-tailed-Hawk, the experience of seeing, in hand, the birds that share our planet will long stay in the memory."

Learn more about Sand Bluff Bird Observatory on their website: [sandbluff.org](http://sandbluff.org)

**COLORED SANDS FOREST PRESERVE | 10602 HAAS RD | ROCKTON, ILLINOIS 61072**

*Eastern whip-poor-will (photo courtesy of Sand Bluff Bird Observatory)*



*Black-throated blue warbler (photo courtesy of Sand Bluff Bird Observatory)*



# 2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

## September

- 23 Yoga In The Garden (Klehm)
- 24 Guided Birding Hike at Sugar River Alder Forest Preserve
- 28 A Path In The Forest Tranquility Walk (Klehm)
- 29 Howl at the Moon Hike at Oak Ridge Forest Preserve
- 30 Fall Textured ARt Workshop (Klehm)

## October

- 6-8 Autumn at the Arboretum 2023 (Klehm)
- 7 Walk With U Guided Walk at Colored Sands Forest Preserve
- 7 Apple Tasting Program with Valley Orchard (Klehm)
- 8 Cider Making (Macktown Living History)
- 11 Guided Hike at Funderburg Forest Preserve
- 21-22 Frenchman's Frolic (Macktown Living History)
- 21 Fall Pumpkin Tower Board Painting (Klehm)
- 22 Fall Color Walk & Tree Painting Workshop (Klehm)
- 28 Howl at the Moon Hike at Funderburg Forest Preserve

## November

- 4 Walk With U Guided Walk at Pecatonica River Forest Preserve
- 7 Guided Hike at Seward Bluffs Forest Preserve
- 25 Howl at the Moon Hike at Hononegah Forest Preserve

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### DON'T FORGET!

Make sure your team is registered on our website and your passport is turned in the Headquarters Forest Preserve by **November 10, 2023** to be eligible to win the *Back-To-Nature Bundle* Grand Prize!

**CLICK ON THE LOGOS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS!**



*discover the nature of life.*

For complete details on Forest Preserves of Winnebago County facilities, programs, and events visit our website at **winnebagoforest.org**