

Sangamon River Showcase May 6th

Paddling Season Underway

Nest Box Project Reboot

Stewardship Opportunities

USRC Mussel Film Accolades



Recreation * Stewardship * Citizen Science

USRC Newsletter



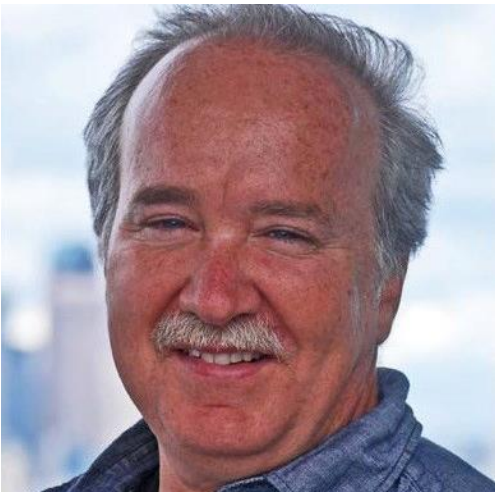
Breaking news >>>

Scott Hays Guest Speaker

Illinois RiverWatch Winter Speaker Series

Scott Hays, USRC River Runner Coordinator and President of the Illinois Paddling Council, spoke via Zoom for the RiverWatch Winter Speaker Series held on March 7th. In the presentation titled *Paddling in Illinois*, Scott presents numerous scenic photos from previous paddles, indicating the beautiful and exhilarating opportunities that await paddlers of Illinois streams. He presents a wide range of information for Illinois paddlers, showcases an interactive map available through the ICP, and answers questions from the Zoom participants. The event is one in a series of many Illinois RiverWatch speaker events that focus on issues related to Illinois streams. You may view this very informative talk by using this link: [Paddling Illinois Streams](#)

Happy paddling!



River Runners Optimistic for 2023

Paddling Season Kicks Off Early This Year

After Very Few Quality Paddling Opportunities in Drought Hampered 2022

USRC River Runners coordinator, Scott Hays, was anxious to get back on the river after the 2022 drought resulted in a limited number of paddling opportunities on the Sangamon River. "The USRC River Runners are excited about gearing up for the 2023 paddling season!" says Scott. "River conditions willing, we'll try to have 'themed' float trips every month from now through October focusing on cleanups, the Sangamon River nature experience, beginners' floats, and maybe even a post-trip cookout once or twice." For the first float, the USRC River Runners' goal was to assess conditions for a popular segment of the river to paddle. "We were checking the river for blockages and picking up surface trash along the way," says Scott. "We went with experienced paddlers only this time, because of cold blockages, cold water we



water temperatures and possibly cooler air temps as well." Although early season paddles can present challenges, Scott goes on to say, "It is always a fun adventure, but probably not for the faint of heart."

River and weather conditions cooperated for the first exploratory 5-mile float trip on March 5. Floaters departing from Sangamon River Forest Preserve (SRFP) at 10am and ending at Riverwood. "We counted on progress at around 1 mile per hour, but with higher water levels we completed the trip much sooner than expected. End times are rarely predictable," warns Scott. Float trips are free events, but online registration is required. If you are interested in participating go to sangamonriver.org under events to register. See you on the river!



Nest Box Project Ready for Spring

USRC board member and secretary, Joey Anthony, has taken charge of the Nest Box Committee. The USRC first began building and installing nesting boxes in 2014 with 36 bluebird boxes and in 2015 with 19 wood duck boxes. Many of those are now in need of repair or replacement. “We have been taking inventory of our old boxes along the Sangamon and giving them some much needed maintenance,” says Joey.



Joey and other volunteers have been busy preparing nest boxes for spring. They have cleared many of the previously installed boxes of sticks and leaves and supplied fresh wood shavings to wood duck boxes. Additionally, two new boxes have been installed. Joey reports, “We pushed to complete this work before March 1st when the wood ducks and bluebirds typically return to the area to breed.” Joey with father-in-law, Ben Reynolds, are pictured with new cedar nest boxes. The boxes were constructed from a recycled Ameren transmission pole. Pictured to the right is Parker Sands, who helped install new nest boxes. If you are interested in helping with this project, or if you own a property suitable for nesting boxes, or if you have some cedar or cypress lumber that you would like to donate, please reach out to Joey at joey.anthony11@gmail.com.



Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*): A Conservation Success Story

One study from 1977 estimated a 90% decline in Eastern Bluebird populations in the 40 years previous. Among the primary reasons was a significant decline in nesting cavities. While many species of birds have experienced significant populations declines since 1977, populations of eastern bluebird have since made a comeback. This is due in a large part to constructed nesting boxes from conservation groups, such as the USRC, and conservation-minded individuals, who have taken it upon themselves to create nesting opportunities for this strikingly beautiful species. Eastern bluebirds typically have two clutches per year. Consequently, nesting boxes can be busy through spring and summer. Tree swallows and house wrens are two other beneficial species that are often drawn to bluebird nesting boxes.



Free Public Event >>>

Sangamon River Showcase May 6th



On the first Saturday in May each year the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy hosts the Sangamon River Showcase. The Showcase celebrates the river with a variety of displays and activities for the whole family. Information about USRC activities that include recreation, stewardship, and citizen science opportunities are on display. Additionally, demonstrations at the event include a rain simulator, erosion table, and floodplain table. There are opportunities to paddle a canoe or kayak, cast a fishing pole, or get a close-up look at (or touch) a Sangamon River fish captured by Trent Thomas from Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Mussel shells will be on display and microscopes will be available to get a close-up look at the macroinvertebrates (bugs) that make their home in the Sangamon River. There is something for everyone, so feel free to bring the whole

family. “It’s a great time of the year to venture out to the Sangamon River at Lake of the Woods – abundant wildflowers are in bloom, and spring is in the air,” says USRC President and Showcase coordinator Mike Daab. “We hope that visitors leave with a greater appreciation of the Sangamon River maybe even leading some to join us by volunteering to help conserve the resource.”

SANGAMON RIVER SHOWCASE

06 MAY, 2023
FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY
♀ IZAAK WALTON CABIN - LAKE OF THE WOODS
MAHOMET
10am-3pm
sangamonriver.org



Stewardship Update >>>

Many Volunteer Opportunities From Woodland to Roadside

Weekly workdays to remove invasive plants at Mahomet Greenway Park resumed this year on Thursday, April 6. Joe Niernberger, USRC Natural Areas Coordinator, reports that “Initial cutting of bush honeysuckle in the park was completed in 2022—this year will focus on the remaining stumps and regrowth, as well as attacking other invasives such as garlic mustard and winter creeper. Once a month we will be burning the many brush piles from last year’s work. Amazing progress has been made in the past two years!” If you are interested in helping contact Joe at naturalareas@sangamonriver.org.



Upper Sangamon River Conservancy participation in the Illinois Adopt-a-Highway program resumed in 2023 with the first cleanup on Sunday, April 23. Target areas are IL-47 from the I-74 interchange to County Road 2425N and I-74 exit 172 entrance and exit ramps. USRC Roadside Clean-up Coordinator, Joe Niernberger explains “All of these areas drain directly into the Sangamon River, so our goal is to collect the trash before it gets there. There is always a lot of trash to pick up at the first and subsequent cleanups throughout the year.” Volunteers logged 154 volunteer hours last year collecting 119 large bags of trash. The USRC is in its 12th year of participation in the program. If you are interested in helping with the project, please contact Joe Niernberger at adoptahighway@sangamonriver.org.

Become a Volunteer

To learn more about the many volunteer opportunities available at the USRC contact Mary Stech at volunteer@sangamonriver.org or visit our website at sangamonriver.org.



2022-23 USRC Board and Leads

Mike Daab – President
Mary Stech – Vice-President/Volunteer Coordinator/Hospitality Coordinator
Joey Anthony – Secretary/Nest Box Coordinator
Bart Duesdieker – Treasurer
Joe Niernberger – Invasive Species Coordinator/Roadside Clean-up Coordinator
Scott Hays – Board Member/USRC River Runners Coordinator
Bruce Colravy – Board Member/Citizen Science Coordinator/Communications Director/ Newsletter Editor
Michael Lambert – Board Member/Web Master
Phil Hult – Board Member
Tamara Ducey – Duck Race Coordinator

Citizen Science News >>>

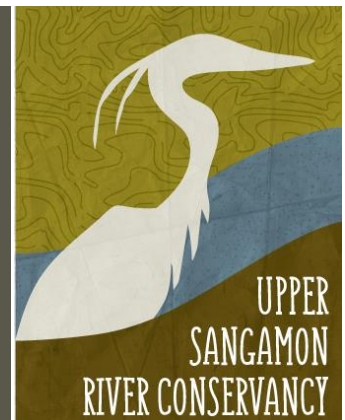
USRC Invertebrate Monitoring

The Upper Sangamon River Conservancy begins its 15th season in the Illinois RiverWatch Program. The program is designed to provide citizen scientists the opportunity to learn first-hand how to use macroinvertebrates as bio-indicators of stream health. Volunteers conduct a short habitat survey before sampling each stream for macroinvertebrates. The invertebrates collected are stored in isopropyl alcohol until an open lab held later in the year. Illinois RiverWatch provides microscopes and expertise at the open labs to assist in identification. This is a great opportunity to learn about the many amazing macro-invertebrates that inhabit Illinois streams. Sampling is conducted in May and June at 6 sites, four in the Sangamon River and 2 of its tributaries. Bruce Colravy is the USRC citizen science coordinator. If you are interested in becoming a citizen scientist, contact Bruce at citizenscience@sangamonriver.org.



Best Documentary Film at WORLD WATER FILM FESTIVAL

Mussel Grubbing: A Citizen Science Treasure Hunt



The Freshwater Mussels of the Sangamon River: Citizen Science in Action, is a joint project of the USRC and Illinois RiverWatch. The contribution of citizen scientists to this project is the subject of a short documentary film, *Mussel Grubbing: A Citizen Science Treasure Hunt*. The film is directed by Jason Lindsey and produced by Talia Watkins of Perspective Visions, Inc. The film was accepted into the World Water Film Festival (WWFF) as one of two films to kick-off the event. The festival, a lead-in to the United Nations 2023 World Water Conference, was held in New York City on March 19th. Filmmaker and environmental advocate Robert Strand, who founded the WWFF says, "News coverage alone won't inspire change on the global water crisis; it is creatives who will save the day. By combining art with activism, we strive to enhance relationships between filmmakers, organizations, and the entire human population to build advocacy and activism in water-related matters."

In the film, Nina shares her experiences as a USRC citizen scientist. She offers a message of encouragement for others who might be apprehensive about volunteering as a citizen scientist. Nina and Jason were both guest speakers at the festival. WWFF showcased dozens of films by water advocates from around the world. You may view *Mussel Grubbing* and other fine films here: www.worldwaterff.org/films-1

Further accolades for the film includes acceptance into:

- Wildlife Conservation Film Festival
- World Water Film Festival (awarded best documentary film)
- Wild & Working Lands Film Festival
- Oregon Documentary Film Festival 2023 (finalist for Best Director Award and finalist for Best Micro Film Award)
- Nature Without Borders International Film Festival
- Downstream Environmental Film Festival
- University of Illinois Sustainability Shorts Film Festival

Presented at:

- Illinois Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, Effingham, Illinois
- 13th Biennial Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society Symposium, Portland, Oregon

The film was made possible by funding from the Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Sciences, Inc.



Volunteer Opportunities >>>

2023 Events

Adopt-a-Highway Clean-up

Check website for location

April 23 9am – 11am

June 18 9am – 11am

If interested contact Joe Niernberger at

adoptahighway@sangamonriver.org

Invasive Species Removal

Mahomet Greenway Park

Thursday Workdays

9am – 11am

May 5, 12, 19, 26

June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Burn Days

10am – 1pm

April 30, May 21, June 25

If interested contact Joe Niernberger at

naturalareas@sangamonriver.org

RiverWatch Monitoring

Small Streams

May 13 9am-12pm & 1pm-4pm

Sangamon River

June 3, 10 9am-12pm & 1pm-4pm

If interested contact Bruce Colravy at

citizenscience@sangamonriver.org

USRC River Runners

Monthly Themed Float Trips

April 1, June 3 Times TBD

For more information contact Scott Hays at

riverrunners@sangamonriver.org

Upper Sangamon
River Conservancy

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www.sangamonriver.org