



nature notes

Journal of Webster Groves Nature Study Society

June 1998 Vol. 70, No. 6

Wrong Terns..... 144

Jim Malone
Tom Borman
Loy Barber
Mike Brady

The Nighthawks..... 136

Kevin Renick
Anne McCormack
Paul Bauer
Mike Treffert

David Becher..... 133

Paul & Barb Johnson 96

Bobolinks 140

Randy Korotev
Connie Alwood
Kent Lannert

Coles Group 134

Dick Coles
Rose Ann Bodman
Emily Beaver
Vivian Liddell
Jackie Chain
Jean Cook
Darlene Eyster

Composite total 177

'97 195
'96 195
'95 188
'94 179
'93 164
'90 193
'86 180

Big Day—It's For The Birds!

Ah, Big Day. The so-called "World Series" of birding. That nutty day at the peak of the spring migration, when hordes of determined birders race around across vast expanses of land trying to identify over 100 species in a 24-hour period. That nerve-wracking orgy of scanning, scoping, stomping and tromping through woods, meadows, marshes and mudflats looking for that one bit of birding luck that will give you the edge over rival teams. Yes indeed, it's a "loony" marathon of driving from site to site, jumping in and out of the car, trying not to spill the food and drink you're consuming on the fly, or trip over a log or low place in the muck as you run to get a

Kevin Renick

look at that fast-moving raptor the driver spotted on the horizon. And what a cheerfully undertaken endurance test, with your day sometimes commencing in bone chilling cold on the edge of a marsh at 5:00 AM and progressing to the blistering heat of an open mudflat at 2:00 in the afternoon, with umpteen mosquito bites, a sore neck, blistered feet, and that most *continued on page 9*

in this issue:

club news.....	2-4
Butterfly Counts	5
April Birding	7
Big Day lists.....	12
WGNSS events	15

May Banquet Festivities

Sue Gustafson

Our annual banquet was held on Thursday, May 7 at Eden Commons. Don Kurz of the MO Conservation Department and author of *Wild Shrubs and Vines of Missouri* gave a wonderful presentation on "Wild Plants and Sites of Missouri." We are grateful to Don for making the trip from Jefferson City to be our guest speaker.

We honored Rose Ann Bodman, as she is retiring from writing the monthly *Nature Notes* birding column—a task that she has performed for the last 20 years! Rose Ann was presented with an original Jim Ziebol watercolor of a Belted Kingfisher. Thanks Rose Ann for many years of hard work and dedication to WGNSS.

The board also presented a "Lifetime Achievement Award" to Marshall Magner. Here's what we had to say to our "WGNSS Legend":

"Our next honored guest doesn't know that he's an honored guest. And perhaps I've watched one too many Academy Awards presentations, but I first got the idea for this recognition when I was perusing the WGNSS 75th anniversary booklet and noticed the listing of former WGNSS Presidents. The president of 1948 caught my eye. 1948 50 years ago, and this man still resides on our board!

"To quote from the history of the first 50 years of WGNSS: 'Some of these young people (from the 1930's) went on to become professional scientists while others took up their studies as an avocation.' Among those who entered the professions, we should mention Marshall Magner in entomology.

"In the booklet chronicling the first 50 years of the organization, Marshall is mentioned not under the entomology group but under the ornithology group: "In 1930, WGNSS became an early participant in the

National Audubon Society's annual Christmas census. The first census covered the Ranken tract and 26 species were recorded by Marshall Magner." On page 15 of the 75th anniversary booklet, there's a picture of Marshall in 1947 showing a Saw-whet Owl to children.

"But back to entomology, Marshall's avocation: this group got its start in 1926 and had regular meetings up until World War II. The group was revived after the war and continued until a "final" picnic meeting at the Pinkus home in Glendale, Missouri on 14 June, 1968. It was not until 30 September 1984 after urging by David Tylka, that Marshall Magner presented a formal request to the WGNSS board to reconstitute an Entomology Section as set out by the Constitution and By-laws. The first meeting was held 14 November 1984. Meetings have continued to this day under Marshall's auspices with an average of eight meetings and several field trips each year.

"But WGNSS is not the only place that Marshall has maintained an enthusiastic presence. In addition to his involvement and honors in professional organizations, his name is synonymous with the city of Webster Groves. He has served on numerous planning commissions, councils, civic committees; he's been instrumental in Parks & Rec related issues, garden club activities, and currently resides on the board of Webster's newest Nature Sanctuary, a 10 acre parcel of land purchased by a citizens group and deeded over to the city in order to keep this scarce piece of untouched woods out of the hands of developers.

"I could go on and on about all of the worthwhile contributions that Marshall has made to his profession, his city, and this organization. It is with the greatest honor that I present the first WGNSS Lifetime Achievement Award to our mentor, our leader, and our friend, Marshall Magner."

Marshal was presented with an original Jim Ziebol watercolor of a Bronze Copper butterfly. ~

WGNSS Birding Report

Starting with the September newsletter, Yvonne Homeyer and myself will be doing the birding column. Kevin Renick will aid us in this project. Please mail reports or call in to Jim Ziebol at 781-7372. We wish once again to sincerely thank Rose Ann Bodman for the wonderful job she did on the birding column for the past twenty years.

Please try to report your sightings as soon as possible with pertinent details. We will be trying to include reports from the entire area as well as oddities.

Jim Ziebol
3900 Berger Ave.
St. Louis MO 63109
781-7372 ~

From the First Vice-President

Doug Corbett

Thank you to our speakers from the last year: John Behrer, Mike Arduser, Dennis Bozzay, Doug Jackson, Tom Liefeld and the 3-Dimension Club. Thanks for taking time to share with us your knowledge and photos. A special thank you to Don Kurz for speaking at our annual dinner.

Remember to save the second Friday of September for another interesting start to our lectures. ~

Bird-watchers in Columbia Freed

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported on April 26, 1998, that the last of a group of four birders who had been held hostage by rebels in Columbia were released. The four were taken in the mountains east of Bogota on March 23. ~

Membership Renewals

Linda Virga

A renewal envelope has been included in this issue. If you have an address change or correction, or if you are not receiving *Nature Notes* properly, please contact me. Also, if you do not plan to renew, please send a card of call:

Linda Virga, Membership
9734 Antonia Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63123
phone: 544-3313.

To renew your membership, please send a check for \$15 to:

Randy Korotev, Treasurer
800 Oakbrook Ln.
St. Louis 63132.

The board has decided that dues are delinquent on September 1. If we do not have your renewal *before* that date, our new membership directory will not be mailed to you nor will your name be listed. Renew now—we'd like to see your name there! ~

Riverlands Dedication

The dedication of Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, US Army Corps of Engineers will be held Friday, June 12. WGNSS is helping to sponsor this event. George and Terry Barker will be leading a field trip around the area. Stop in from 10:00 AM till 4:00 PM to see the new administration building and visitor's center.

The Riverlands EDA at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam near Alton, Illinois, is a 1,200-acre tract of wetland prairie along the Mississippi River, a haven for the millions of ducks and shorebirds that use the Mississippi flyway. For more information, call Julie Ziino at 899-2600, ext. 231. ~

Forest Park Savannah Project

Randy Korotev

The WGNSS board is delighted at the response we have received to our request for funds to help create a savanna in Forest Park. Thanks the following members for donations during the past month:

Connie & JoEtta Alwood
Walter Ballinger
George & Terry Barker
Rose Ann Bodman
Dennis Bozzay
Jill Clayton
Dolly Darigo
Scott Darrough
Jack & Patricia Harris
John & Dottie Herweg
Anne Storer Korr
Mary Lee Roche

WGNSS members have contributed \$965, and with along with \$250 from the WGNSS treasury we will be donating \$1215 to Forest Park Forever earmarked for the Forest Park Savannah Project. With the donations received from other organizations, the project fund totals about \$5000 at this time. Sometime this fall we will be requesting volunteers to assist in seed collection.~

I want my bird TV

"Birdwatch" is broadcast on Channel 9; Saturdays at 4! Be there! Aloha! ~

Thanks to Birding Leaders for NAOC Field Trip Support

Paul Bauer

The recent North American Ornithological Conference held in St. Louis in early April was a huge success thanks in part to the 15 volunteer birding leaders that supported the nine separate field trips.

The convention was the largest to date for the six supporting organizations, and was attended by over 1,400 persons. I'm told that 780 papers were presented.

However the field trips had to be limited to about 125 persons, to use the available number of van drivers and birding leaders.

The birding field trips included half-day trips to Riverlands, Forest Park-Kennedy Forest, and Tower Grove Park. Full day trips included the Shaw Arboretum and Tyson Research Center, St. Charles County from Busch C.A. to Riverlands, and Riverlands plus Mark Twain NWR. Overnight trips went to Mingo NWR in southeast Missouri, and west to visit Eagle Bluffs plus booming Greater Prairie Chickens in central Missouri. Several trips had brief stops at North Riverfront Park to visit the Eurasian Tree Sparrow colony there, (F-3, page 31 in the "book") and in all cases we had many sightings of the ETS in minute.

The weather during the week of 6-12 April was near perfect, but of course it was early for the neo-tropical migrants. All of these ornithologists managed to schedule a meeting in St. Louis after the ducks were gone, and before the warblers and shore-birds arrived. However I'm told the selected week was the only one in the desired season for three years at the Regal Riverfront Hotel.

Our sincere thanks to the 15 following persons that filled 25 leader positions on the field trip: Richard Coles, Mike Flieg, Susan Gustafson, Paul Johnson, Randy Korotev, Kent Lannert, Bob McFall, Jim Malone, Dave Pierce, Bill Rowe, John Solodar, Mike Treffert, Michael Thelen, Blaine Ulmer, and Paul Bauer.

The true highlights of the convention were the two outdoor social nights held at the St. Louis Zoo/Living World, and at the Missouri Botanical Garden. These entire facilities were open for all of the convention attendees, and the above helpers and spouses. The birds in the Bird House may never be the same again; so much noise from so many staring people when the birds

wanted to sleep! This experience was a true thrill. Also impressive were the number of birds this group found at the Garden during the twilight hours in early April. We should be extremely proud of these two world-class institutions in our city. Everyone was extremely impressed with both of these social events and the weather was perfect!

My impressions were: a—that about 70 of those attending were under 30 years of age (many must have been graduate students presenting all of those papers); b—the dress code is much more causal among biologists, than among the engineers at conventions that I remember! I loved every minute of it.

Thanks again to each of you that helped. I recommend that closer ties be formed with the UMSL Biology Department and their excellent leaders. ∞

Conference on Environmental Ed

The Missouri Environmental Education Association and the Office of Environmental Education will hold their third annual conference November 6–8, 1998 at Tan-tar-a, Osage Beach, MO. Registration is \$125 plus \$82 per night for the room. To register write:

MO Dept. of Conservation
Office of Environmental Education
PO Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180 ∞

1998 Butterfly Counts

Bill Brandhorst

This will be the sixth year we have been doing butterfly counts in Missouri. There are 14 areas where these are now being done across the state. St. Louis has 5 of them. They are open to the public, but if you plan to attend please call the leader to let him know you plan on coming and find out from him any details such as bringing lunch and where and when to meet. The Saturday dates of the main counts are:

June 20

September 5

Here is a list of coordinators:

Busch Wildlife Area

Bill Brandhorst 314-965-7269

Cuivre River State Park

Bruce Schuette 314-528-7247

Powder Valley Nature Center

Doug Jackson 314-301-1500

Valley View Glade

Marshall Magner 314-961-4588

Victoria Glade

George Winkler 314-993-1652 ∞

Birds of the St. Louis Area— Where and When to Find Them, revised edition

Randy Korotev

The Revised Edition of *Birds of the St. Louis Area—Where and When to Find Them* is now available.

The Revised Edition appears very similar to the original edition, and you will be hard pressed to find the differences in the first 182 pages, although there are, in fact, about 80 corrections in this part of the book. We have made only two changes in the Seasonal Occurrence Bar Graphs to correct errors in the first edition—try to find them!) We have not, however, changed the bar graphs or the Species Accounts chapter to reflect new bird records since the cutoff date for the first book, December 31, 1993. Instead, we have added a 10-page Appendix in which these records are discussed. Believe it or not, in the past 4 years, 9 new bird species have been added to the St. Louis area list—you'll have to buy the book to find out what those are. The Appendix also contains a complete checklist of all the bird species that have been seen in the St. Louis area since 1940.

Because we have printed fewer copies this time, the retail price has increased to \$19.50. Copies may also be obtained by

mail for \$20 (post paid) from: Paul Bauer,
4 Club Grounds, Florissant, MO 63033.
Make checks payable to "WGNSS." ~

New Bird Checklist Also Available

Randy Korotev

The supply of WGNSS bird checklists prepared by Dick Anderson in 1990 is exhausted, so I've prepared a new checklist which is now available.

The new checklist differs in several respects from the old checklist. First, I've made the checklist a bit less confusing by not including those species that have only been seen on one occasion since 1940. Dick prepared his checklist before the publication of *Birds of the St. Louis Area—Where and When to Find Them* and wanted the checklist to be a complete record of all birds seen in the St. Louis area since 1940. The book now serves that function better than any checklist can. The checklist is used mostly for keeping a record of a day's observations, or perhaps a year list or yard list. The new checklist, which is entitled "A Field Checklist of the Birds of the St. Louis Area" to reflect the change in emphasis, does include spaces for write-ins, however. Second, I've tried to make the new checklist more informative by indicating for every species whether it is common, uncommon, rare, or very rare. Common species, for example, are listed in bold typeface whereas the very rare species are listed in light italics.

Finally, the numbers are back. On the new checklist, for example, Common Loon is designated "A2." The "A" indicates the first-listed group of birds (i.e., loons) and the "2" indicates the second-listed loon.

We will try to have the new checklists available for purchase at \$0.25 a piece at WGNSS events. Alternatively, you can obtain them by mail from me at these rates:

2 for	\$0.84
4 for	\$1.57
10 for	\$3.76
25 for	\$8.69

In addition, for you record keepers, I have prepared a tabular copy of the checklist on eight 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper (one sided) with 15 columns for indicating the date and number of birds seen. This version of the checklist can be photocopied and placed in a 3-ring binder. Alternatively, I can supply the list on a 3.5" computer diskette (IBM format) in MS Word, MS Excel, and ASCII text format. Both of these version are available for \$2.00 each.

Make your check payable to "WGNSS," indicate what and how many you want, and send to: Randy Korotev, 800 Oakbrook Lane, St. Louis, MO 63132.

Coming soon: WGNSS butterfly checklist by Phillip E. Koenig ~

Nature Notes Archives

Betty Nellums

The bound volumes of *Nature Notes*, going back to 1929, will have a home in the library of the Missouri Botanical Garden's brand new Monsanto Center. The library houses more than 122,000 volumes and receives active subscriptions to about 1,000 journal titles. It has all the latest technology for conserving library materials. This safety arm has now been extended to our own *Nature Notes* bound copies. They will be shelved in the library and while they will not circulate outside the building, photocopy facilities are available. The volumes are open for use by WGNSS members at the Monsanto Center, 4500 Shaw Blvd., Mon.-Fri. from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. For information on visiting the site, please call 314-577-5155 before coming.

WGNSS is very fortunate to have the distinguished MBG Library to care for our books and for us to still have access to them. The Garden Library will bind future

copies of *Nature Notes* as they become available. ∞

April Birding In St. Louis Area

Rose Ann Bodman

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers had returned to Tyson Research Center when Jackie Chain birded there on April 1. She found Fish Crows, Winter Wren and heard a Louisiana Waterthrush. An Orange-crowned Warbler was observed by several birders at Tower Grove Park (TGP) on the 1st.

On the Saturday field trip, April 4, a Sora Rail was seen flying away from the railroad marsh, Sauget, Ill. Jack Van Benthuisen, Connie Alwood and Kent Lannert saw two pheasants at the end of Bend Road, Horseshoe Lake and several birders reported the arrival of Snowy Egrets. On April 6, Dick Coles counted nine Snipe at the Sauget marsh near I-255.

While leading a field trip for the North American Ornithological Conference on April 11, Randy Korotev and Jim Malone discovered a pair of Bewick's Wrens in the maintenance area of Pere Marquette State Park. A rare bird for Illinois, the Bewick's were state birds for Randy, Jim and Paul Bauer.

A Swainson's Hawk was an exciting sighting for Dave Becher at the end of Bend Road on April 10. The next day Dave led the Saturday field trip to Busch Conservation Area (BCA) where the group saw Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-throated and Parula warblers and an Osprey. They heard a Marsh Wren, but could not get it in view.

Dick Coles reported a Ruby-throated Hummingbird at his feeder in Hoene Springs. He has a resident Red-shouldered Hawk which frequently perches above his patio. Dick occasionally tosses a small road kill carcass on the patio and the hawk loses no time in accepting the handout.

It was a dull morning in TGP when the Saturday field trip met there April 18. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Yellow-rumps weren't that exciting. At the marsh at the end of Bend Road, the group flushed an American Bittern.

The Saturday evening Woodcock and Owl Prowl led by Jim Malone had better luck. They heard at least five Woodcocks and a Great-horned Owl.

By April 22nd, TGP had Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Summer Tanager, and Prairie and Worm-eating Warblers. Warbling, Red-eyed, White-eyed Vireos, as well as resident Blue-winged, Yellow-throated and Cerulean Warblers. Green Herons and Whip-poor-wills had arrived also.

Lou Haines reported a Yellow Rail at the marsh at Wise Road, Riverlands, on April 23. The rail, as yet undocumented, was not seen by other birders. Those who looked did find a singing Marsh Wren.

It was another wet day at Shaw Arboretum on the 25th for the Saturday field trip, Birders were rewarded by Prothonatory, Yellow-throated, and Parula Warblers and four vireo species. The resident Red-shouldered Hawk were seen as well as three migrating Broad-winged Hawks. On the 26th Sunday birders found 13 Warbler species in TGP. Included were Black-and-White, Kentucky and Yellow Warblers and Redstart. Tom Bormann had seven Long-billed Dowitchers in a flooded field on Hwy. B, St. Charles County on that Sunday. Kevin Renick and Bev Bross birded Castlewood State Park where they found all the resident warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, and noisy Fish Crows everywhere.

Clarence Zacher who was returning from Chicago on Amtrack found seven Great Egrets in a slough on the Illinois side of the Mississippi, proving that there are other modes besides interstates for travel birding.

A Hooded Warbler appeared at TGP on the 27th. It remained until mid-morning the next day along with a Prairie Warbler. Earlier a Worm-eating, Nashville and Kentucky Warblers were in TGP.

On April 28, Jack Van Benthuisen hot-lined four Willets off Rte. 111 north of Schoolhouse Road. And Franklin's Gulls at Riverlands. A few birders who drove there that evening saw the birds which had disappeared by early the next morning.

Jackie Chain saw an American Bittern at the railroad marsh, Sauget on the 28th. An American Bittern was at Heron Pond, Riverlands and Soras were at Wise Road marsh on the 29th. Connie Alwood and Kent Lannert reported hearing a King Rail at Sauget, but no one has reported seeing it. They had Forster's and Caspian Terns at Riverlands.

A pair of Bobwhite appeared in TGP on April 29 and were observed by Vivian Liddell. The next day the two quail were seen by Jackie Chain. A Northern Waterthrush has been seen for several days at TGP. Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes were in the bird garden.

Two Eared Grebes at Heron Pond were hot-lined by Connie Alwood and Kent Lannert on April 30. They had Black Terns as well as three Long-billed Dowitchers. Dave Becher has a Blackpoll on the 30th.

At the end of April Jim Ziebol reported on the dearth of 16 species of Neo-tropical migrants. Birds such as Blackburnian, Cape May and Chestnut-sided either haven't arrived at all or have been in very small numbers. In all there are some 16 species conspicuous by their absence. Curiously Black-throated Green and Pine Warblers seem to be having a good year as are Winter Wrens. ~

St. Louis Audubon Goes Online

Jim Malone

It has been a slow process involving a great deal of learning, but St. Louis' Audubon website is finally up and running. The website is located within the National Audubon Society site in the chapters section. To go directly to the site, use the following address:

<http://www.audubon.org/chapter/mo/SLAS/>
This address will take you to the home page, which you can use to access all of the other information in the site.

Presently, the SLAS website contains information about the board of directors, a complete calendar of monthly activities, birding trips, special events, St Louis birding resources, and an abbreviated version of the society's newsletter from the last few months. The site also contains information about the latest international trips sponsored by SLAS and information about conversation issues important to area birders. The birding resources pages contain a bird list for the St. Louis area, information about birding locations in and around St. Louis, links to SLAS/WGNSS birding trips, the Tyson Nature Line—the hotline for the area, and info about where to find our local birding specialty, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow.

At this time, there are no graphics or links to other sites, but these are some of the items which we hope to add in the coming weeks. We also need your help, in the form of suggestions for things that you would like to see in the site. Please send your suggestions to stlaud@inlink.com. So, if you're out surfing the net, drop in and see what's up at the St. Louis Audubon. ~

Tyson Nature Line

Call 935-8432 for a summary of the latest bird sightings in the St. Louis area. Please report any unusual birds to Jack Van Benthuisen, 961-3390 ~

1998 Shaw Arboretum Native Plant Conference June 5-7, 1998

The native plant conference will be held at Powder Valley Nature Center in St. Louis, Mo., June 5-7. Registration required: Shaw Arboretum, PO Box 38, Gray Summit MO 63039—314-451-3512 ~

Introductory Study Of Birds Biol 325 Washington University

On Thursday evenings (7-9:30 PM) next fall, Dr. Richard W. Coles will offer this class for the University College of Washington University. In addition to those enrolled for credit, there will be space for auditors. These pay a reduced fee (\$340), are not vulnerable to exams, papers, grades, or other pedagogical torture. The class will meet in the Tyson classroom using the collection of specimens there.

For further information call Robert Massa at the University College (314-935-6727) or Richard Coles (314-938-5271). ~

Deadline: Aug. 7!

There's lost of time before our next deadline so let's put on those thinking-caps and submit an article to *Nature Notes*! We'd love to read your adventures with nature, reviews of books of nature lore, or editorial on current environmental issues.

Submissions—handwritten, typed, IBM or Mac to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122. Computer wizards: It's safest to send a printout along with your disk. ~

Welcome to new members...

Colleen Foster Clayton
Cathy Re Fenton

Big Day—It's For The Birds

continued from page one

unforgettable of sensations, the realization that there is a tick crawling up your thigh, and there's nothing you can do about it right this moment, in the middle of nowhere.

And all for what? Just so you can announce to the "other guys," when they reveal their total, "Ha ha, we beat you by three"? In the words of songstress Peggy Lee, "Is that all there is?" Well, no. Big Day, an annual tradition observed by birders all over the country, certainly may have some of the stressful components mentioned above, but its real significance for me has less to do with a final count, and more with the nature of the experience itself. Big Day is the one day of the year when every species of bird you see and hear truly matters. This can be rather compelling. We take many common species of birds for granted most of the time. How often do we care about seeing a Robin or a Blue Jay, for example? But if the goal on Big Day is to build a big list, just try being blasé about Song Sparrows when it's 7:00 PM and you haven't found this bird yet. Or compare the apathy you feel about kinglets in early spring when they are abundant in the parks to the intense desire to find one, just *one*, on Big Day, when it is difficult some years. Trust me, there are birds that assume great significance on this one day in May, and become dearly beloved, when the rest of the year we give them scarcely a glance with our binoculars.

Big Day is a day to really sharpen your senses, to put all your faculties on full alert. In a sense, it's a renewal of all you know about birding and all you think about birding. Much of the time, we tune out the more common things we see and hear as birders. We're used to them, plain and simple. But to do Big Day "right," if there's such a thing, you have to listen through the

din of familiar songs for that one rarity you might miss. You have to scan *all* the ducks and gulls for the one that could be overlooked—secretly hoping that those other guys missed it. You have to check every small bird flitting around at the top of that sycamore tree, because one of them might be that Yellow-throated Warbler that's still missing from your list. On Big Day, you have to look up, down, and all around. You have to move quickly and efficiently through a wide variety of habitat, taking in the full picture of the bird life there at that time. And in so doing, you gain a deep appreciation of the diversity of the birding experience from year to year—what changes, what is still consistent, and what-the-hell-happened-to-all-the-shorebirds this year. What you *don't* find becomes conspicuous by its absence.

Birding sometimes takes on an almost theatrical sense of urgency on Big Day, something that I find perversely appealing. Though there are slow stretches, to be sure, there are also thrilling and unexpected moments, the kind of birding memories that stay with you forever, and these are more gratifying than your final tally at day's end. Only a birder could appreciate the drama of seeing a pair of Black-necked Stilts flying overhead before sunset at Marais Temps Clair, when you'd pretty much decided you weren't likely to add any great new birds to your list that day. Only a birder could understand the giddy feeling of spotting a Blackburnian Warbler at the top of a dead tree at Busch, when this bird hadn't been spotted by many prior to that day. A Surf Scoter at Riverlands, Yellow-Headed Blackbirds at MTC, a Franklin's Gull at the "Dredge," all seen on Big Day. It was on Big Day in 1988 that my infamous "Hooded Warbler Curse" was finally lifted with a glorious sighting near the "wet spot" at Forest Park—prior to that, I had gone six straight years without seeing a Hooded, de-

spite much effort. Ironically, I've seen one every year since then. My group delighted in the spectacle one year of seeing a whole branchful of young Barred Owls at Dardenne Creek, surveying us intently as they swayed from side to side. In one incredible 20-minute period on Big Day '98, we were awestruck at finding a female Yellow-headed Blackbird, a late Brewer's Blackbird, a Western Kingbird, a gorgeous male Pheasant and a Turkey, all on one stretch of Bend Road.

Every Big Day team has their stories. And while each group surely enjoys adding a rarity to their list, it's the drama and surprising circumstances surrounding the sighting of perhaps less rare birds that really help make the day special. So while Big Day can be exhausting and even a bit nerve-racking, it's also tremendously enjoyable, a chance to use everything you know in one 15-plus hour period. In my 30 years as a birder, I have participated in almost 20 Big Days, always with great enthusiasm and a real appreciation for the unpredictability of it all. Some years have been rather disappointing, some have been spectacular. But no other birding day packs the overall adrenaline punch of Big Day, or tests one's faculties as much.

So while we can rejoice or lament our final count, and how it compares to the other guys, it's good to remember that, on this day at least, we're obliged to pay attention to every species we encounter. Everything that flies over, every song that reaches our ears matters for just a moment. There is a sense of wonder in that, which reminds me of the innocence of first discovering the joys of birdwatching, an innocence that can be lost at times. So on Big Day, three cheers for the Cowbird! Salute the mighty Starling! Rejoice in the Rock Dove! And all hail the House Sparrow! Okay, maybe not. But hey, every bird should have his day. And for some species,

that's only once a year, on the second Saturday in May. We call it Big Day. Maybe it should be re-named "Bird Appreciation Day."

The Catbird Seat—5/8/98

Anne McCormack

Red Barber used to keep an egg timer in the broadcast booth to remind himself to announce the score. We didn't find old Red sittin' in the catbird seat on May 8, but we still want to know: what's the score?

The composite of all teams and individuals reporting to Rose Ann Bodman comes to 177 species—down 19 from Big Day '97. Of our 177, 102 species have been recorded every Big Day since I started my data base in '92.

How could we be lose 19 species? Well, actually, there were 38 seen last year but missed this time. However, we added 19 new species to this list, including 3 we haven't seen on a Big Day since '95, 1 not seen since '93 and *five* not reported since before 1992!

Could it be—perhaps—*El Niño*?

Need directions?

Arboretum, Gray Summit

- Take 44 west to Gray Summit (100) exit, left over highway, right onto service road and immediately left into Arboretum.
- Meet at Brushy Creek trail head.

Busch Wildlife Area

- Take 40 west toward St. Charles Co., left on 94, right on D, follow signs
- Hampton Lake—usual meeting spot—first right.

Castlewood State Park

- Take Manchester west, south (left) on New Ballwin Rd., east (left) on Kiefer Creek Rd., follow signs. Meet at boat ramp.

Forest Park, Kennedy Forest

- Highway 40 to Hampton north, follow signs to St. Louis Zoo's Living World. Kennedy Forest is about 1/4 mi. West.

Riverlands Evironmental Dem. Area

- From 1-270 in north St. Louis County, take Hwy. 367 north to Alton.
- Turn right into Riverlands at the Fisca service station, just before the approach to the Clark Bridge over the Mississippi River.

1997-8 WGNSS Board

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name	remarks '98
Pied-billed Grebe	
Eared Grebe	@Riverlands
Am Wt Pelican	*Riverlands
Double-crested Cormorant	
Am Bittern	Marias TC & Riverlands
Great Blue Heron	
Great Egret	
Snowy Egret	
Little Blue Heron	
Cattle Egret	
Green Heron	
Black-crwn Nt-Heron	
Yellow-crwn Nt-Heron	
Canada Goose	
Wood duck	
Green-winged Teal	*Riverlands
Mallard	
Northern Pintail	Riverlands
Blue-winged Teal	
Northern Shoveler	
Gadwall	
Canvasback	Riverlands
Redhead	Δ Riverlands
Ring-necked Duck	Riverlands
Lesser Scaup	
Red-breasted Merganser	Riverlands
Ruddy Duck	
Turkey Vulture	
Mississippi Kite	Goose Lk near Sauget
Sharp-shinned Hawk	● Busch-Wrong T
Cooper's Hawk	Weldon Spr
Red-tailed Hawk	
Am Kestrel	
Merlin	@∞Horseshoe-Ziebol
Peregrine Falcon	*Riverlands
Ring-necked Pheasant	*Marais TC & Bend Rd
Wild Turkey	
N Bobwhite	Tower Grove, et al

* not seen since '96

@ not seen since '95

Δ not seen since '93

● not since '91 or earlier

∞ listed as casual at this time

name	remarks '98
King Rail	*Sauget railroad
Virginia Rail	Collinsville Rd-Nthawks
Sora	Marais TC & Riverlands
Am Coot	
Killdeer	
Greater Yellowlegs	
Lesser Yellowlegs	
Solitary Sandpiper	
Spotted Sandpiper	
Least Sandpiper	Goose Lk near Sauget
Pectoral Sandpiper	Becher
Common Snipe	@Busch shrbd-Wrong T
American Woodcock	
Bonaparte's Gull	Riverlands
Ring-billed Gull	
Herring Gull	Riverlands
Caspian Tern	
Forster's Tern	
Rock Dove	
Mourning Dove	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*Bend Rd-Nthawks
Great Horned Owl	Katy Trail-Coles
Barred Owl	
Common Nighthawk	
Whip-poor-will	
Chimney Swift	
Ruby-thr Hummingbird	
Belted Kingfisher	Busch Lk 33
Red-headed Woodpecker	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	
Downy Woodpecker	
Northern Flicker	
Pileated Woodpecker	Lost Valley
Eastern Wood-Pewee	
Acadian Flycatcher	
Alder Flycatcher	●Weldon Spr-Wrong T
Least Flycatcher	
Eastern Phoebe	

* not seen since '96

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name	remarks '98
Great Crested Flycatcher	
Western Kingbird	*Katy Trail & Bend Rd.
Eastern Kingbird	
Horned Lark	
Purple Martin	
Tree Swallow	
N Rough-winged Swallow	
Bank Swallow	
Cliff Swallow	
Barn Swallow	
Blue Jay	
American Crow	
Fish Crow	*
Black-capped Chickadee	
Carolina Chickadee	
Tufted Titmouse	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*∞ Alwd/Lannert/Korotev
White-breasted Nuthatch	scarce
Carolina Wren	
House Wren	
Sedge Wren (Short-Billed)	
Marsh Wren (Long-Billed)	Alwood/Lannert/Korotev
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Busch-Wrong Terns
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Eastern Bluebird	
Veery	Busch archery-Wrong Tern
Gray-cheeked Thrush	
Swainson's Thrush	
Hermit Thrush	Tower Grove
Wood Thrush	
American Robin	
Gray Catbird	
Northern Mockingbird	
Brown Thrasher	
Cedar Waxwing	
European Starling	
White-eyed Vireo	
Bell's Vireo	Weldon Spr

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name	remarks '98
Blue-headed (Solitary) Vireo	Alwood/Lannert/Korotev
Yellow-throated Vireo	Busch
Warbling Vireo	
Philadelphia Vireo	Busch archery
Red-eyed Vireo	
Blue-winged Warbler	Lost Valley
Golden-winged Warbler	Busch-Wrong Terns
Tennessee Warbler	abundant
Orange-crowned Warbler	Tower Grove
Nashville Warbler	
Northern Parula	
Yellow Warbler	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Bend Rd-Nthawks
Cape May Warbler	Tower Grove
Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Black-thr Green Warbler	
Yellow-throated Warbler	Lost Valley-Coles
Prairie Warbler	● Highway 94-Coles
Palm Warbler	
Blackpoll Warbler	Highway 94-Coles
Cerulean Warbler	Wrong Terns
Black & White Warbler	Tower Grove-Nthawks
American Redstart	Bend Rd-Nthawk
Prothonotary Warbler	Busch Lk 33-Coles
Worm-eating Warbler	* 2 groups
Ovenbird	Tower Grove
Northern Waterthrush	
Louisiana Waterthrush	
Kentucky Warbler	
Common Yellowthroat	
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Summer Tanager	
Scarlet Tanager	
Northern Cardinal	
Rose-br Grosbeak	
Blue Grosbeak	Busch Weldon Spr
Indigo Bunting	
Dickcissel	

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name	remarks '98
Rufous-sided Towhee	
Chipping Sparrow	Busch archery-Coles
Clay-colored Sparrow	Horseshoe Lk 111-Ziebol
Field Sparrow	
Savannah Sparrow	
Grasshopper Sparrow	Katy Trail
Henslow's Sparrow	Weldon Spr-Wrong T
Song Sparrow	
Lincoln's Sparrow	Bend Rd-Nthawk
Swamp Sparrow	Alwood/Lannert/Korotev
White-throated Sparrow	
White-crowned Sparrow	
Bobolink	Katy Trail & Powers Rd
Red-winged Blackbird	
Eastern Meadowlark	
Yellow-headed Blackbird	♣ Bend Rd-Nthawk
Brewer's Blackbird	♣∞ Bend Rd-Nthawk
Common Grackle	
Brown-headed Cowbird	
Orchard Oriole	
Northern Oriole	
House Finch	
American Goldfinch	
House Sparrow	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	
composite total 5/9/98	177

name	remarks '98
Osprey	missed-seen 97
Broad-winged Hawk	missed-seen 94-7
Swainson's Hawk	missed-seen 97
Rough-legged Hawk	missed-seen 97
Common Moorhen	missed-seen 97
Black-bellied Plover	missed-seen 97
Am (Lesser) Golden-Plover	missed-seen 97
Semipalmated Plover	missed-seen 97
Hudsonian Godwit	missed-seen 97
Marbled Godwit	missed-seen 96-7
Ruddy Turnstone	missed-seen 97
Sanderling	missed-seen 96-7
Semiplamated Sandpiper	missed-seen 97
Western Sandpiper	missed-seen 97
White-rumped Sandpiper	missed-seen 97
Dunlin	missed-seen 97
Short-billed Dowitcher	missed-seen 97
Long-billed Dowitcher	missed-seen 97
Wilson's Phalarope	missed-seen 96-7
Red-necked Phalarope (North	missed-seen 96-7
Franklin's Gull	missed-seen 96-7
Common Tern	missed-seen 95-7
Least Tern	missed-seen 97
Black Tern	missed-seen 94-7
Black-billed Cuckoo	missed-seen 97
E Screech Owl	missed-seen 95-7
Chuck-will's-widow	missed-seen 96-7
Hairy Woodpecker	missed-seen 95-7
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	missed-seen 96-7
Willow Flycatcher	missed-seen 96-7
Bewick's Wren	missed-seen 97
American Pipit	missed-seen 97
Magnolia Warbler	missed-seen 92-7
Black-throated Blue Warbler	∞ seen Sun at TGP
Blackburnian Warbler	missed-seen 95-7
Bay-breasted Warbler	missed-seen 96-7
Wilson's Warbler	missed-seen 95-7
Canada Warbler	missed-seen 96-7
Lark Sparrow	missed-seen 96-7

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Webster Groves Nature Study Society

Meetings

Wednesday, Sept. 2:

7:00-8:30 PM Board meeting at Kirkwood Library on Jefferson in Kirkwood. All members welcome.

Botany

Beginners are welcome. Bring lunch, drink, insect repellent & weather gear.

Thursdays May-Sept:

Field trips usually meet at 9:30 AM; trip is normally 3-5 hr. plus travel time. Led by Fr. James Sullivan. Call Catherine Filla, 481-5298, after 5 PM Wed. for location.

Entomology

Sunday, May 24:

7-9:00 PM at Magner's. Jane Walker will present "Beginning Dragonflies."

Sunday, June 28:

7-9:00 PM at Magner's. John Christensen will discuss "Insects of Deserts and Sand Dunes."

Saturday, June 20:

Butterfly counts at 5 different areas. Call Bill Brandhorst for more information: 314-965-7269.

Saturday, Sept. 5:

Butterfly counts at 5 different areas. Call Bill Brandhorst for more information: 314-965-7269.

Birding

Open to all. For more information, call David Becher 576-1146. Bring lunch.

Thursdays May-Sept:

8:00 AM meet at West County.

Saturday, May 23

7:30 AM West County. No leader.

Saturday, May 23

8:00 AM-noon-Castlewood State Park-WGNSS/Aud. Castlewood is one of the best places to see Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, Parula, Cerulean Warblers, Fish Crows and possibly Miss. Kites and nesting Red-shouldered Hawks. Bring field guides and binocs. Call Jim Malone (314) 536-1119 for information.

Friday, June 12

10:00 AM-4 PM Dedication of Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area. Call Julie Ziino (314) 899-2600, ext. 231.

Saturdays Aug. 15, 22, & 29:


7:30 AM West County. See above.

Deadline for Nature Notes

Friday, August 7

join WGNSS

Send \$15 yearly dues to Randy Korotev, 800 Oakbrook Ln., St. Louis MO 63132.

 Webster Groves
Nature Study Society
PO Box 190065
St. Louis MO 63119

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MARJORIE RICHARDSON
1024 NANA LN
ST LOUIS MO 63131



WGNSS:	PO Box 190065, St. Louis MO 63119
President:	Sue Gustafson, 9007 N. Swan Circle, St. Louis MO 63144
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Editor:	Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122
Membership:	Linda Virga, 9734 Antonia Dr., St. Louis MO 63123

The objectives of the society are: To stimulate interest in nature study on the part of adults and children; to cooperate with other organizations in nature study; to encourage amateur research in the natural sciences; to promote conservation of wildlife and natural beauty. Open to all with an interest in nature.

established in 1920