



nature notes

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Tropical Birding at Sept. General Meeting

Doug Corbett

Welcome again to another year of varied programs for our general meetings. Our first meeting on September 10 will be "A Birding Visit to Trinidad and Tobago." Our guest speaker, Paul Bauer, will present a 40-minute sample of his best color photos for over 60 species of tropical birds acquired during 6 weeks on these lush islands just a dozen miles off the coast of Venezuela. We will enjoy stunning Blue-crowned Motmots, Bearded Bellbirds, White-bearded Manakins, the rare Oilbirds, many hummingbirds and colorful tanagers, and honeycreepers, Scarlet Ibis, Common Potoo, and the Red-billed Tropicbirds hovering in flight. Come early—this show will dazzle your eyes, and bring your binoculars!

Again, our WGNSS general meetings take place on the second Friday of each month, September through April, excluding December. We meet at the St. Louis County Library Headquarters, located on Lindbergh just south of Clayton Road, in the West Meeting Room at 8:00 PM. Hope to see you soon! ~

From the President...

Sue Gustafson

"I know what you mean. One day I'm looking at eiders in the Arctic Ocean, and the next day I'm looking at Cardinals in my back yard." Such were Randy Korotev's words of consolation to me upon my return to St. Louis after spending six weeks as a field biologist at Long Point Bird Observatory in southern Ontario. Randy, of course, was referring to his own experience upon returning from an unforgettable birding trip to Alaska in June. Fellow WGNSS board member Anne McCormack also participated in that birding trip, where I understand she perfected her Monty Python lumberjack songs. I hope all of *you* had such interesting experiences over the summer. We'd love to hear about them—

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birding, botanizing, or just sight-seeing and enjoying the beauty of the natural world. Join us as our new "year" starts up in September with the first general meeting on Friday, Sept. 10. Our First Vice Pres. Doug Corbett has some interesting speakers lined up for our monthly meetings. Hope to see you there! ~

A Moment of Reflection

Steve Roth

With the passing of my mom Louise Roth recently, I felt it appropriate to share the profound impact WGNSS had on our family.

My brother Andy and I had our early training from the many feeders my mom had each winter. This interest grew into our membership with Audubon and then eventually with WGNSS. Through the 1970's, my mom would join my brother and I on Thursdays each summer for our "day of adventure." Riding with notables such as Ms. Mickey Scudder and Kyrle Boldt always proved fun and exciting, even if the birding was slow.

Our ages were meaningless with WGNSS as we all shared the passion for birding. My brother and I were welcomed despite our young ages. What wonderful memories we carry!

As Andy and I moved on to college my mom continued her birding pursuits with WGNSS sharing many great stories with us. This time for her proved an oasis from the daily chores of work and home.

Our love of nature and birding that my mom encouraged us to explore and appreciate will continue on with my daughter Anne, who will soon learn all the wonders that await her.

Thank you WGNSS for being a part of our lives! ~

Butterfly Walks

If you would like to learn more about butterflies and how to sight-identify them "on the wing," please join us on one of the walks scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 28 and Saturday, Sept. 18. Yvonne Homeyer or Kraig Paradise will be the leaders. The Department of Conservation staff at Busch Wildlife is partnering with WGNSS to publicize these walks. All walks start at the headquarters parking lot at Busch at 10:00. If you have binoculars, bring them.

An excellent new book with 625 outstanding photographs is Dr. Jeffrey Glassberg's *Butterflies through Binoculars—the East: a Field Guide to the Butterflies of Eastern North America*, an incredible value at \$18.95. Dr. Glassberg is the founder of the North American Butterfly Association, and WGNSS has participated 2 years in a row with NABA's annual 4th of July Butterfly Count.

Species we are likely to see are: Buckeye, Pipevine Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, Tiger Swallowtail, Red-spotted Purple, the Sulphurs, Comma, Question Mark, Red Admiral, Monarch, Viceroy, Pearl Crescent, Eastern-tailed Blue, Spring Azure, and various Skippers. ~

Camp Scholarship Awarded

Betty Kellerman

The Audubon Camp Scholarship Committee has selected Vickie Svaglic, a teacher with the St. Louis Special School District, to be the recipient of the WGNSS scholarship to an Audubon Ecology Camp for the summer of 1999.

Mrs. Svaglic is certified K-12 in learning disabilities, behavioral disorders and mentally handicapped and has worked in a wide variety of situations. She is currently working with sixth-grade students in a resource room at Steger Sixth Grade Center in the Webster Groves School District.

Mrs. Svaglic has spent twenty summers working various summer resident camp programs with the Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis and directed a resident program for fourteen years. She directed the first Wider Opportunity the Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis sponsored in 1990 and was a unit leader for the second one in 1995. Among the outdoor skills Mrs. Svaglic teaches are archery, maps and compass skills, lashing and knots, and troop camping skills. She is particularly interested in teaching camping skills to adults so that they will take girls camping.

Her current involvement is a particularly demanding one: a Girl Scout Troop formed of girls whose mothers are incarcerated in a Missouri Correctional Institution, Vandalia, MO. The girls are taken to the prison twice a month to visit with their mothers. This program is designed to break the cycle of mother, daughter imprisonment; challenging but highly rewarding. This month the leaders will take the troop for a day outing to Camp Tuckaho in Troy, MO where Mrs. Svaglic will spend the day in the creek with the girls helping them to identify various forms of aquatic life. She has been certified as a fresh water tester by the MO Dept. of Conservation and hopes to become certified in lake water testing as well. With this background, she is able to teach the campers which creatures live in clean fresh water and which ones are tolerant of almost any water situation. The camping environment is one that few of these girls have experience before as it is hoped that it will help them to become more resourceful as individuals and more appreciative of the natural world.

Mrs. Svaglic's experience at Audubon Ecology Camp will enhance her outdoor skills which she will pass on to her young students. ☺

Spring Botanizing

Carl Darigo

With exception of the annual week-long spring trip, the Botany Group continued their Thursday excursions. The following attended one or more weeks, Father James Sullivan, John Archer, Leonard Blake, Marvin Boisseau, Marian Brickner, Jeanne, Kristin & Gene Clauson, Carl Darigo, Jane Deschu, Pat & Jack Harris, Nels Holmberg, Louise Langbein, Barbara Lawton, Anne Mitchell, Joy & Rick Moll, Lisa Nansteel, Betty & Bob Nellums, Tom O'Gorman, Peggy Otto, Marge & Jim Ruschill, Suzy, Bob & Dick Russell, Albert Seppi, Bob Silver, Bob Smerek, Jan Surbey, James Trager and Bob Wells.

March 4, Busch Conservation Area, St. Charles County—when numerous members had other last minute commitments, two faithful followers managed to uphold the Botany Group's weekly trip schedule, by strolling the Fallen Oak Trail in fairly nice 45° weather. The abundance of exotic bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*) would perhaps suggest another name for this trail; however, numerous large American basswood trees (*Tilia americana*) were a pleasing sight; this species' red buds make identification fairly easy in winter.

March 11, Busch Conservation Area, St. Charles County—seven people covered the Field Archery Range road and bottomlands around Kraut Run Creek on another pleasant and sunny 45° day. Flowering plants were few and far between, with *Sibara virginica* (Virginia rock cress) being the only new candidate for the year's list. Rick Moll spotted the reddish-bronze over-wintering leaves of *Botrychium dissectum* (cut leaf grape fern). Adam & Eve (*Aplectrum hyemale*) orchid's characteristic green leaves were abundant in the moist bottomland with Dick Russell finding the first one and Father Sullivan pointing out fruiting stems from last year's plants. The original

owner of scattered bones was a mystery until a deer skull provided identification.

March 18, Mastodon State Historic Site, Jefferson County—a 50°, sunny day greeted 12 people including botany student John Archer, who checked out the Visitor Center parking lot perimeter and lawn, the Bone Pit Trail, then a short excursion on the Upper Forest Trail. What at first appeared to be a large, layered, shelf fungus high in a dead persimmon tree (*Diospyros virginiana*) alongside the entrance road, with the aid of binoculars, proved to be a wasp nest. New flowering plants for the year included red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*) near the parking lot, fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), chervil (*Chaerophyllum procumbens*) and henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) on the Bone Pit Trail plus bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) from the forest trail. No one was able to answer Father Sullivan's hop tree (*Ptelea trifoliata*) test; this tree has very distinctive, depressed (hidden) buds below the leaf scar. In a small water drainage below the bone pits was found many swimming, shrimp-like crustaceans, identified by Jane Deschu as scuds (probably *Hyaella azteca*). Covering the rocks nearby was *Hygroamblystegium tenax* (water-loving willow moss); this plant is very common along stream banks and wet rocks.

March 25, Weldon Spring Conservation Area, St. Charles County—a chilly, 50° spring day greeted 13 participants who walked Lost Valley Trail to the spring and back. Bob Smerek, Jane Deschu's brother-in-law, was on his first trip, with Nels Holmberg and Bob Wells being welcomed back after long absences. Pickings were still slim for flowering plants with only nine, including *Cardamine pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania bittercress), *Thlaspi arvense* (field penny cress), *Isopyrum biternatum* (false rue anemone) and *Corydalis flavula* (pale corydalis), the latter being abundant

in several locations. Jack Harris pointed out two water plants, *Ludwigia palustris* (water purslane) and non-native *Potamogeton crispus* (curly pondweed). Dick Russell demonstrated *Urtica dioica*'s (tall nettle) stinging ability by rubbing the plant on wrists of several lucky volunteers, but then redeemed himself with a comparative display of slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*) and American elm (*U. americana*) flowering twigs. Nels Holmberg took "non-herbaceous plant" honors for the day by spotting an unusual moss, *Astomum muehlenbergianum* (mouthless pigmy moss), a colorful lichen, *Cladonia macilenta* (red point lichen) and a large patch of *Concephalum conicum* (great scented liverwort) overhanging the bank of Little Femme Osage Creek. The group spent some time admiring the work of beavers, who have created a large multi-pond complex at the spring discharge.

April 1, Young Conservation Area, Jefferson County—on a cloudy 60° day, 12 persons, including new member Bob Silver, toured the nature trail where Jack Harris achieved the trip's goal by finding hepatica (*Hepatica nobilis*). The year's record total of 29 flowering plants was amassed, some of which were peach (*Prunus persica*), bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*), Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) and mouse ear cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*). In addition, Suzy Russell found a healthy blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), Pat Harris spotted toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*) and rue anemone (*Anemonella thalictroides*), but an early flowering sedge (*Carex sp.*) defied identification due to lack of mature fruits. A Holy Thursday commitment caused Father Sullivan's expertise to be sorely missed, especially as the group floundered with several confusing mustard family (*Brassicaceae*) plants.

April 8, Katy Trail State Park, Warren County—12 people congregated to trek

southeast below high bluffs from the Dutzow trailhead, with a fairly chilly 60° and occasional rain showers. Flowering species were in full display, including *Viola missouriensis* (Missouri violet), *Erigeron philadelphicus* (Philadelphia fleabane), *Delphinium tricorne* (dwarf larkspur), *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw), *Ranunculus hispidus* (hispid buttercup), several wild plum trees (*Prunus americana*) and even the fertile stems of common horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*). James Trager spotted *Draba cuneifolia* (wedgeleaf draba), a glade plant, growing on the trail's gravel shoulder and then successfully answered a *Buglossoides arvense* (corn gromwell) test. James also heard the call of an eastern gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) and pointed out a falcate orange tip butterfly (*Anthocaris midea*). After finding no takers on his *Androsace occidentalis* (western rose jasmine) test, Father Sullivan identified a cottonwood leaf beetle (*Chrysomela scripta*), found on a wooden bridge by Marian Brickner; this beetle has thin, wavy, black markings which somewhat resemble writing, accounting for the species name. Harold Meyer and Marvin Boisseau were about to go AWOL halfway up the hill to the nearby winery before being enticed back to the main trail.

April 15, Rockwoods Reservation, St. Louis County—45° and a continuous drizzle did not deter 9 faithful who traversed the Trail Among The Trees. Despite the weather conditions, many plants were flowering, including *Trillium recurvatum* (purple trillium), *Viola striata* (pale violet), *V. triloba* (cleft violet), *Uvularia grandifolia* (large bellwort), *Arisaema triphyllum* (Jack-in-the-pulpit), *Phlox pilosa* (prairie phlox) and *Lithospermum canescens* (orange puccoon). Pat Harris spotted the first morel mushroom (*Morchella esculenta*) of the season, then later found golden seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*). Jack Harris saw

a rattlesnake fern (*Botrychium virginianum*), which had not yet developed the fertile stalk. Bob Wells pointed out a flowering American bladdernut tree (*Staphylea trifolia*) and Dick Russell an Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) with large, pyramid-shaped blossoms. Father Sullivan's test on dried fruits of a last year's *Ruellia strepens* (smooth ruellia) plant had no takers.

April 22, Grant's Trail, St. Louis County—when forecast thunderstorms failed to materialize, 11 people left Missouri Botanical Garden to walk a section of Grant's Trail in glorious sunshine. Urban areas abound in non-native plants and this trail is no exception; nevertheless, some interesting finds were jagged chickweed (*Holosteum umbellatum*), thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), Indian strawberry (*Duchesnea indica*), bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), corn gromwell (*Buglossoides arvense*) and tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*). Extra floral nectaries were examined on the stems of Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), but few ants were seen. A field of what at first appeared to be yellow rocket (*Barbarea vulgaris*), instead was field mustard (*Brassica rapa*). A black rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*) provided some variety.

April 29, St. Francois State Park, St. Francois County—15 people, including Jeanne Clauson's daughter, Kristin, visiting from Paris, walked part of the Mooner's Hollow Trail on a fine 65° and sunny day, although somewhat chilly early. Many plants were in full bloom, some of which were *Zizia aurea* (golden alexanders), *Asarum canadense* (wild ginger), *Silene virginica* (fire pink), *Senecio aureus* (golden ragwort), *Sisyrinchium campestre* (prairie blue-eyed grass), *Pedicularis canadensis* (wood betony), *Polemonium reptans* (Jacob's ladder) and *Hypoxis hirsuta* (yellow star grass). Pat Harris pointed out a nice stand of heartleaf plantain (*Plantago*

cordata), thriving in Coonville Creek and Betty Nellums found celandine poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), while Jim Ruschill and Jack Harris spotted one-flowered cancer root (*Orobanche uniflora*). Hopefully, field keying came up with the correct answers on *Cardamine bulbosa* (bitter cress), *Rhamnus lanceolata* (lance-leaved buckthorn) and *Tradescantia virginiana* (Virginia spiderwort). Rounding out the sightings were *Carex blanda* (woodland sedge) and *Eleocharis compressa* (flat stemmed spike rush).

May 13, Emmenegger Park, St. Louis County—14 persons assembled on a chilly, 60° day to trudge along the muddy trails. Members Joy & Rick Moll, who volunteer at Powder Valley and lead Emmenegger walks, explained highlights of the park's history. Some time was spent field keying *Allium sativum* (garlic). Several interesting plants seen were *Monarda bradburiana* (beebalm), *Tradescantia ohiensis* (smooth spiderwort), *Hybanthus concolor* (green violet), *Taenidia integerrima* (yellow pimpernel), *Pedimelum esculentum* (prairie turnip) and *Scutellaria parvula* (small skull-cap). Sedges were everywhere, especially in the wet bottomland, with 10 being found, including *Carex grayii* (spaceship sedge), *C. normalis* (larger straw sedge), *C. davisii* (Davis's sedge) and *C. granularis* (meadow sedge).

May 20, Creve Coeur Lake Park, St. Louis County—under 80° skies, 11 persons carefully avoided bikers, roller-bladers and Page Avenue bridge construction, while botanizing along the asphalt loop trail on west side of the lake. The area had a nice variety of both exotic and native plants, perhaps partly due to the loess soil. Father Sullivan found good displays of *Cardaria draba* (lens-podded hoary cress) and *Anemone canadensis* (white anemone), while Jack Harris came up with *Carex hyalinolepis* (clear scale sedge), growing in

a low, wet area below the trail. Some other interesting finds were *Silene antirrhina* (sleepy catchfly) with many flies attracted and stuck to the sticky stems, *Oenothera laciniata* (cut-leaved evening primrose), *Iodanthus pinnatifidus* (purple rocket), *Amorpha fruticosa* (false indigo) and *Matricaria discoidea* (pineapple weed) exhibiting the characteristic pineapple aroma. Nels Holmberg successfully called the wild four o'clock (*Mirabilis nyctaginea*) test and Pat Harris did likewise on Aunt Lucy (*Ellisea nyctelea*).

May 27, Hunter's Ford, St. Louis County—a large group of 17, including Suzy and Dick Russell's son Bob plus new members Lisa Nansteel and Peggy Otto, enjoyed a pleasant 80° day, walking an old road along the Meramec River south of Allenton, at the site of a proposed county floodplain park. Among the more interesting plants were *Wisteria frutescens* (wisteria), leaves of *Clematis terniflora* (Japanese virgin's bower), *Rumex acetosella* (sheep sorrel), *Amsonia illustris* (shining blue star), *Verbascum blatteria* (yellow moth mullein), *Triodanis biflora* (small Venus' looking glass), *Sedum sarmentosum* (yellow stonecrop) and *Nuttallanthus texanus* (southern blue toadflax). Also seen were *Carex retroflexa* (reflexed sedge), *C. shortiana* (corn cob sedge), *Bromus inermis* (smooth brome), *Panicum acuminatum* (wooly panic grass) and *Juncus interior* (inland rush). Birders present spotted a yellow breasted chat and James Trager pointed out cornfield ants building mounds in the path. Father Sullivan identified a milkweed leaf beetle (*Laebidomera clivicollis*) found by Nels Holmberg, while Louise Langbein's arm hosted a female Dobson fly (*Corydalus cornutus*) for all to see.

Thanks to Pat Harris for helping with this article. ☺

The New Geographic

Bill Rowe

National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America, Third Edition (1999); Chief Consultant Jon Dunn, Art Consultant and General Consultant Jonathan Alderfer, and Map Consultant Paul Lehman.

When the National Geographic Society guide first came out, in 1983, many birders felt a keen sense of anticipation, generated by the Society's advance mailings: this was going to be a new kind of guide, more detailed in text and more lavish in illustration than Peterson or Robbins, the two primary field guides at the time. And indeed, the book largely lived up to its promise, displaying more plumages and revealing all kinds of identification tips that we previously had to dig out of magazine articles—or had never heard of—and still managing to remain one volume that fit in your pocket—well, almost.

Good as it was, "NGS1" had some obvious problems, and it was impressive how rapidly the editorial team put together a second edition, with a number of minor corrections as well as new plates to replace a few of the less successful ones—like the swallows and the dowitchers. After it came out in 1987, "NGS2" secured the book's position as the standard one-volume field guide for intermediate and advanced birders—the one you hauled out and checked whenever you couldn't remember a field mark. It still had its high points and low points in both text and illustrations, and of course ornithology didn't sit still for the ensuing twelve years. Over that span of time, taxonomy changed—mostly splits of one species into two or even three—many new species were added to the North American list, ranges expanded and shrank, old tried-and-true field marks were refined and new ones developed, and a whole new generation of specialized guides to particular

groups of birds came on the market, offering yet more detail and more illustrations for the bird student willing to acquire and study them. So for many reasons we began looking forward to another upgrade that would keep pace with the changes. That book, NGS3, is now here. Reviewing it is an intimidating task, and for those who don't want to wade into the details, I will state the bottom line right here—the third edition brings a host of improvements small and large and has turned a good bird book into an almost-excellent one, although it still has shortcomings and even one problem that NGS 1 and 2 did not have, namely hybridization of art work—see below. To keep everything in perspective, we should remember just how complicated and difficult it is to produce a modern bird guide; the lengthy editorial and staff credits on the back page hint at this. Given all the deadlines to be met and the tradeoffs to be made, it would be amazing if there were not some imperfections in the final product.

Opening the book, which is now slightly thicker, we are struck by three physical improvements. The range maps are printed in colors that are easier to read—red for breeding range, light blue for wintering, purple for resident; the smooth, high-grade paper stock is flatter and less glossy, making the pictures seem more vivid and the print more legible; and each species account, though still presented in one big block of type, now contains a scattering of boldface words—such as "male" or "female," "first-winter" or "adult", and usually "range"—that structure the paragraph and help the reader's eye find and sort the information. This latter point may seem pretty trivial, but I have always felt that liberal use of boldface, italics, and open space is one of the secrets of Peterson's clarity, and I'm glad to see the editors of NGS making a nod in that direction.

The content of NGS3 is completely revised. About 80 new species are discussed and illustrated, ranging from recent splits, like the Oak and Juniper Titmice, to birds recently added to the North American list, like the Common Redshank. A few have even been dropped, such as the Black Francolin that no longer lives wild in Louisiana. Names, both common and scientific, follow the new seventh edition of the AOU's Check-list of North American Birds (1998), and the order of presentation hews closely to the Check-list; e.g., the vireos are far from their previous location. The introduction, extensively rewritten, tells more about birds and bird study and now offers a lot of pictures in the margins of the previously unadorned text. To pick one example, the discussion of scientific nomenclature, which explains generic and specific names—binomials—and then subspecific names—trinomials—has added some marginal figures of Three-toed Woodpeckers to make the idea of subspecies concrete, and also has added some text to explain the concept of the "nominated" subspecies. To conserve space, the introduction is now printed in the same smallish (but handsome and legible) font as the main text, instead of a larger font.

The species accounts seem to have been gone over with a fine-tooth comb. In a fairly thorough check, almost all of them seem to contain at least slight changes of wording—sometimes just to fit a new space better, sometimes to add or change information, and some of them are totally rewritten. Only one factual error jumped out at me: under Short-tailed Hawk, the text says, "Secondaries seen from below are paler than primaries," whereas the opposite is actually true, as the pictures show. Otherwise, I just have small quibbles with the text here and there—some odd wording changes, some omissions. For wording, consider the Baird's and White-rumped

Sandpipers; the first phrase in both accounts, which used to be "Long wings extend beyond tail," has now been changed to "Long primary tip projection beyond tertials." It's hard to see why this is an improvement, since the earlier version seems clear and simple, and the projection past the tail is almost certainly easier to make out at a distance in a scope—especially in silhouette—than the projection past the tertials. In the omission department, here's Example 1: the Hepatic Tanager account does not mention that the bills of both male and female are dark gray, a good distinction most of the time from the pale-billed Summer Tanager—see the recent photo quiz in *Birding*. True, the facing illustration does show the bill color, but a birder trying to identify her first Hepatic should have confirmation of this in print. It turns out that she will find this printed confirmation in both Peterson (west) and *All the Birds*, two books that her birding mentors may have dismissed as "less thorough" or "not as good." And it wasn't a space issue, since the last line of the account has plenty of room left to mention the bill color. Example 2: under Gray Hawk, no mention is made of the juvenile's barred thigh feathers, a mark that can help you be sure that your bird isn't some other brown, streaked hawk. It's clearly shown in the plate, it's pointed out in Clark and Wheeler's Hawks guide, it's even mentioned in Peterson, and there was room to insert it in the text—so they should have. Example 3: What well-known behavioral trait helps you identify a Hermit Thrush? Go look in Peterson to find out; you won't learn it from NGS3. And as a final complaint, there are problems of disproportionate coverage: I wish they had devoted more space to, say, Brewer's and Rusty Blackbirds—a real problem for many birders—and a lot less to the Eastern Towhee and its geographic variation—interesting, but way more than necessary.

On the whole, however, the text is very good and gets an amazing amount of detail into a short space. A prime example of well-rewritten text would be the two meadowlark accounts, which no longer duplicate their introductory sentences—as often happened in NGS 1 and 2 with two very similar species—and offer a completely reworked discussion of ways to tell Eastern from Western, including calls and behavior and taking into account the nasty complications of geographic variation. The going isn't easy, but the resulting two entries pack in about as much information as humanly possible in such a short space, complemented by new meadowlark pictures. To take another example, the accounts of Chipping, Clay-colored, and Brewer's Sparrows, as before, offer much more detailed descriptions of these birds than other field guides; furthermore, NGS3 has altered the wording a little by using more precise terms than NGS2, like "submoustachial" and "postocular." This kind of change helps create a general impression all through the new book that it is aiming a little higher this time, at a clientele that knows its stuff better and already has a good handle on birding. In turn, this reinforces my long-standing belief that the book is not for beginners; it's too dense. Those same accounts of the three *Spizella* sparrows, while full of detail, may leave a novice scratching his head in confusion. Better to start with Peterson or some other guide to get oriented, then study a book like Kaufman's *Advanced Birding* or a magazine article, and then use NGS3 as a field reference to remind yourself of what you learned. This isn't my original observation; someone else has remarked that NGS is like a notebook full of memos and reminders for birders who have already learned the material once before.

The maps have undergone the same detailed revision as the text, with a myriad of

corrections under the consultantship of Paul Lehman. They are still annoyingly small, but the range colors seem to have been laid on with great care and precision. The Cerulean Warbler map, for instance, now shows much finer ins and outs of distribution. On the NGS2 map, Missouri and Iowa were just solid yellow breeding-range blobs, suggesting statewide distribution; now you can see that much of Iowa and a large swath of northern Missouri have no Ceruleans. Illogical quirks remain: if the Snail Kite map shows only Florida, why does the Yellow-billed Magpie map show most of the American west instead of just California, where the bird actually lives? And if the Long-billed Thrasher and the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl rate a range map, why don't the Olive Sparrow and the Green Jay? Oh, well...it's a publisher's job to leave the reviewer something to fuss about. The big picture is that the maps are good.

Now for the hardest evaluation—the illustrations. It is to the consultants' credit that they saw the need to create a lot of new art, not just to show new species but also to replace old pictures that fell below their standards; in the process the number of contributing artists has now risen to twenty. Besides a number of wholly new plates, many old ones have been spruced up by the addition of new bird figures and the replacement or rearrangement of others. Starting first with the "wholly new" category, I count 35 of them, or about one-sixth of the plates in the book. These range from good to superb, with no finer example than the loons by David Quinn, which start things off with a bang. More than just a big improvement over the previous loon plates, these are equal, in quality if not quantity, to the best anywhere, namely those by Lars Jonsson in his *Birds of Europe*. They are accurate, handsome, and much more profuse than before, with a total of 34 separate figures of loons on the water and in flight—

that's an average of about seven per species. Quinn also contributed two gorgeous plates of old world flycatchers and thrushes—including the Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear, and vagrant Red-breasted Flycatcher plus newly-added vagrants like the Stonechat and Narcissus Flycatcher—as well as a number of individual figures on other plates. I found myself wishing he could have done the whole book.

But other new plates meet this standard too, or come close. Check out the replacement for the Red-shoulder/Broad-wing/Gray Hawk plate, one of the poorest in NGS2; it is now perhaps the best hawk plate in the new book, although the others—unreplaced, only tinkered with here and there—are still generally good. It would double the length of this review to go through all of the new material, but here are some highlights, all a pleasure to look at and a great way to study these groups: the *Pluvialis* plovers, the dowitchers, the phalaropes, and certain other shorebirds—the Stilt Sandpiper finally looks good; the doves, now including the locally-inevitable Eurasian Collared-Dove; the parrots and parakeets, with many more species shown; the swifts, which have moved up from adequate to excellent; the western thrashers; the brilliant tanagers and orioles; and the meadowlarks, with double the number of figures and double the detail, reflecting the intricacies described in the new text. David Beadle, the artist for Rising's *Sparrows* and half of *Warblers of the Americas*, took on the almost impossible challenge of the *Empidonax* and vastly improved them, showing two, three, or four figures per species, with seasonal changes and worn birds for comparison; besides showing the most subtle shadings of color and structural differences, he has managed to make them truly realistic and appealing, perched on sprigs of foliage that at least suggest the breeding habitat—with Willow and Alder

each on its proper shrub. This series is certainly one of the high points of the new book; it even does artistic justice to the Buff-breasted Flycatcher and gets the Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet right.

At least one artist has replaced parts of his own previous work: Thomas Schultz, who set a high standard with his gulls and terns the first time around, has come up with two new plates, one showing improved California Gull pictures along with three recent immigrants—the Black-tailed, Band-tailed, and Kelp Gulls—the other showing the Herring Gull in all manner of plumages—including the Siberian/Alaskan *vegae*—plus the Yellow-legged Gull, a recently-split European form that has occurred on the east coast. Moreover, he has altered a couple of figures in his previous work—a second-summer Slaty-back, standing, and a first-summer Slaty-back in flight—to depict better what the birder might see on a trip to Alaska (or St. Louis?). Even a small detail, the dark pattern on a Thayer's Gull's wingtips, has been corrected by changing it from gray to black.

The new plate of thrushes, though good, illustrates again why I don't think this book is suitable for the novice: there are so many figures so close together—thirteen for the five species of *Catharus*, showing geographic variation—that the beginning birder might tend to see them as a blurry continuum of brown, spotted birds all nearly the same. Studying Peterson first would at least lay the groundwork by emphasizing the most fundamental points of difference. But this is not to disparage the plate, which is once again an improvement over NGS2: the shapes and general "look" of the birds are lifelike, the color tone and spotting of the Veery (for instance) are just right, and the newly-split Bicknell's Thrush is illustrated even if there is not a whole lot useful to say about its identification.

A few of the new illustrations don't strike me as quite so artful. The towhees, now on two plates instead of one, are definitely an improvement but a bit stilted and unnatural; they display more than we ever wanted to know about variation in the Spotted Towhee, while some other birds that really need a more detailed treatment go begging. The *Myiarchus* flycatchers aren't entirely successful—the birds are skinny and sort of goofy-looking—but on the other hand the colors, patterns, and sizes appear true, and the two vagrant species, La Sagra's and Nutting's, are shown. The House Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow have been repainted—just fine but no better than before—and repackaged with two exotic escapees on the last plate. And, by the way, they still don't describe the characteristic flight call of the ETS, once again leaving Peterson as the only field-guide author who does.

Certain other bird groups or species pairs have been painted afresh by a different artist but don't occupy a whole plate. The Glossy and White-faced Ibises are new—and good—but the White Ibis and Roseate Spoonbill that they share a plate with are unchanged. The Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos are new, but they sit beside the previous Red-eyed, Black-whiskered, and Yellow-green. And the Nelson's and Salt-marsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows plus the LeConte's have fine new illustrations while the Seaside Sparrow, still on the same page, does not. In some cases we see small, newly added or altered supplementary pictures while the main illustrations remain—witness the accipiter plate, still the same except for the small flight figures of juveniles, which have been redone by a new artist and inserted in place of the old ones. Here this technique worked out well, for the old flight pictures were poor and the new ones are very good.

We all know that hybrids complicate matters, and hybrid illustrations do too. The examples I just mentioned, like the ibises, came out all right, but some others have problems, caused by differences both in style and in reproduction quality. The pipit plate, for instance, keeps the old illustrations of American and Red-throated Pipits at the top and bottom, while in between it sandwiches new pictures of Sprague's, Olive-backed, and Pechora Pipits by another artist. All the pictures are good, especially the Sprague's, but the new ones look pale and washed-out because the old ones came out dark in the reproduction process, or at least so it seems. You can't just scan the whole plate and assume that color-tone comparisons between the three middle species and the two outer species are correct. Worse off is the Mexican Jay, a bird that is roughly the same color as a Western Scrub-Jay but now looks almost leucistic in its pale new depiction right below a group of much darker scrub-jays. Differences of style sometimes grate on the viewer too, as on two of the hummingbird plates, where Sophie Webb's new figures of Lucifer, Xantus's, and some others have a light, watercolor look that just doesn't blend with the more "molded" style—and much darker tones—of the other hummingbirds retained from NGS2. A final example is a single new picture of a single species, the Vesper Sparrow. Admittedly this bird was in dire need of repainting, but now it sits inconspicuously hunkered down, intimidated by the ring of Song and Swamp Sparrows around it and refusing to show its white outer tail feathers. It doesn't fit with the art around it, and—unlike most of the other new figures—it isn't a very good replacement either.

Beyond all the hybridization and re-arrangement of figures on the plates, we are still left with a great many that are simply recycled from NGS2, about which every

Conservation Committee Report

Yvonne Homeyer

Over the summer, several WGNSS members participated in a breeding bird survey at Busch Wildlife. Thanks to Dave Becher, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Anne McCormack, Jim & Charlene Malone, David Rabenau and Kevin Renick. Woodland/forest species such as Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird and Yellow-billed Cuckoo were found in only a few places. Chat, Yellow Warbler, Warbling Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, and Indigo Bunting were well-represented in their field/edge habitat. Black-billed Cuckoo, Blue Grosbeak, and Bewick's Wren were not located at all, although all 3 species formerly nested in Busch. Only one Bell's Vireo was found. Cooper's Hawks were found in several areas in good numbers. This data is being compiled by Jim Ziebol so we can share it with Busch Wildlife officials and monitor the birds on an annual basis.

A 30,000 acre tract of wetlands is in danger in southeast Missouri. Once the subject of a proposal to protect it as a national wildlife refuge, this wetlands is now the subject of a Corps of Engineers project, known as the New Madrid Floodway project, to DRAIN it. Nearby Big Oak Tree State Park will be negatively impacted. Please express your opinion by writing to Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt, Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson (132 Cannon, Washington, DC 20515), Senator Kit Bond (274 Russell Senate Office Bldg., Washington, DC 20510), Senator John Ashcroft (Hart Senate Office Bldg., Room 316, Washington, DC 20510).

Several of you wrote as individuals to Dept. of Conservation officials regarding concerns over the proposed timber cuts in the Weldon Spring forest near Busch Wildlife. Jack Harris and I, along with other committee members, will continue to

birder has had his or her own opinions for years now. They include personal favorites of mine like the gulls and terns, the woodpeckers, and most of the warblers, as well as ones that I think could still use replacement, such as the sparrows—cute, but not always helpful as field guide illustrations, especially in a tough genus like *Aimophila*. Two somewhat contradictory things seem to have happened to these pictures: the darker reproduction mentioned above, which is pervasive and sometimes creates problems; e.g., the wood-pewees look even less like wood-pewees now, being too dark and too brown, but also in some cases a sharpening of the fine detail, as if you were seeing the bird through a better pair of binoculars; e.g., the plate of peep sandpipers, which show brighter, crisper feather edgings and breast streakings in my NGS3 than in my NGS2.

In conclusion, NGS3 is like a bull market: more and higher peaks, fewer and less serious low points, and overall enough improvement to make you happy—but some unevenness nonetheless. The consultants and their collaborators have taken great pains to bring it fully up to date and renew its luster as the best of our true field guides—defined as one volume that goes with you in your pocket. It will keep that title for a while, at least until we see David Sibley's forthcoming guide—and see how portable it is. As noted above, it isn't the right place for beginners to start, but it is a book that everybody needs eventually. If you want a strong, well-rounded, and mostly very accurate knowledge base about North American birds, here is a simple plan: get NGS3 and memorize it. ☺

 **Next Deadline: Sept. 10**

express our concerns to the Dept. of Conservation on behalf of WGNSS.

Concerning the Columbia Bottom proposal, Jack Harris and Rad Widmer attended the public hearing at Powder Valley. Our main concern is that the present proposal now calls for leaving 50% of the acquired 4300 acres in crops. We think a better use would be to allow some variety of vegetation to grow back; this would provide habitat for wildlife as well. If you want to obtain a copy of the proposal or offer your input, write to: Daniel Zekor, Policy Coordination Supervisor, Dept. of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, Mo. 65102-0180.

Lost Valley Trail continues to be one of a handful of breeding locations in the St. Louis area for the Cerulean Warbler. Doug Corbett, 1st Vice President, is participating in a national study of the decline of the Cerulean Warbler sponsored by the ornithology department at Cornell University. When some members of WGNSS noticed that sycamores along the trail had been marked with red paint, the Committee asked for clarification from the Dept. of Conservation officials at Busch, who have assured us that there are no plans to cut these trees down.

Over the summer, Dianne Benjamin worked hard to ensure that a section of the Page Avenue mitigation land, set aside for wildlife purposes, was not changed to recreational use. Dianne communicated WGNSS's point of view to members of the St. Louis County Council, County Parks Dept. and Maryland Heights Planning Commission. WGNSS, along with other groups, was successful in defeating a proposal that would have allowed radio-controlled model airplanes to encroach upon a wildlife area. Congratulations, Dianne. Meanwhile, Jim & Charlene Malone continue to monitor the birds at Little Creve Coeur Lake, part of the mitigation land.

David Rabenau, Sue Gustafson and Yvonne Homeyer conducted surveys of birds, butterflies and plants this summer at the request of the St. Louis County Parks Dept. Areas surveyed included Hunter's Ford, Lower Meramec State Park, and the prairie at Greensfelder Park.

Our wildflower project at the North County Recreation Area is a success, thanks to the dedication of Kraig Paradise who selected and planted the native Missouri species. Visitors to our garden can see 3 kinds of Coneflower, Butterfly weed, Common Milkweed, Joe-Pye weed, Mountain Mint, New England and White Heath Aster, Blazing Star, Ironweed, Black-eyed Susan, and more. Special thanks to Dora Gionalikis, who donated 15 purple coneflowers. The only thing lacking is a SIGN letting the public know about WGNSS! Is there a volunteer lurking among our readers?

If you would like to get involved in the Committee, please join us at our next meeting, Tuesday, Sept. 14 at 7:00 p.m. at Yvonne Homeyer's (963-7750). (Our meetings are usually on the third Wednesday—please note meeting was moved to Tuesday just for September). ☺

May Bird Report

Jim Ziebol and Yvonne Homeyer This year's Big Day, May 8, produced better results than in the last few years. Only shorebirds were sparsely reported. The highlight of Big Day, besides the excellent songbirds, was the Western Grebe found at Riverlands (MAA).

White Pelicans, which have usually left by this time, were still being seen on Big Day and later in May (FH). Good counts of herons and egrets included 75 Great Blues and 50+ Great Egrets in Monroe County on 5/22 (T Be). Eleven Little Blue Herons were at Dwiggin's Road on 5/23 (J Mo). Least Bitterns were seen at Little Creve

Coeur Lake on 5/20 (JM, CA). Two Yellow-Crowned Night Herons were joined by an American Bittern on 5/8 at the Collinsville Golf Course (P&BJ, FH). Two Yellow-crowneds were also seen at the Chain on 5/30 (LH). A Surf Scoter found on 5/8 at Busch was the latest spring migrant ever located in Missouri (JE, PB*). A total of 14 Surf Scoters reported this spring is a record. A Hooded Merganser with chicks was seen at Pump Road/Swan Lake (LH). Two very late White-fronted Geese were found at Stump Lake on 5/8 (Edna Alexander).

Mississippi Kites were reported sparingly, with one seen near his home in Ill. on 5/15 (LH). Also on that date, one was observed at Castlewood (MB). On May 8, Bald Eagles were seen near the Katy Access along Hwy. 94 (JM) and 2 were also seen in Calhoun Co., Ill. (LH). An Osprey was reported on 5/8 at Riverlands (MAA). Three Broad-winged Hawks were seen at Busch on 5/15 (J Mo). The Red-tailed Hawk that apparently fledged from a nest in TGP was observed eating a rabbit, a robin, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (DC). A migrant Peregrine Falcon was observed in Tower Grove Park for several minutes on 5/3 (DG, JZ). A late migrant Merlin was found in Calhoun Co. Ill. 5/30 (LH, HW, et al.).

A good find on 5/19 at Little Creve Coeur Lake was a Black-necked Stilt (JM). Three Black-bellied Plovers were seen at Riverlands on 5/14 (CA) and 6 were seen on 5/17 (J Mo). An Am. Golden Plover in breeding plumage was seen at Mark Twain NWR on 5/20 (DB). Four Willets were found at Pump Road/Swan Lake on 5/8 (LH) and 2 were reported at Riverlands on 5/11 (LB). On 5/8, a Willet was located near the end of Wise Road/Riverlands (PB). Fifty+ Pectoral Sandpipers appeared at Harbor Point on 5/18 (T Be). A total of 25 Lesser and 10 Greater Yellowlegs were seen throughout St. Charles Co. on 5/8 (T

Be). Four Wilson's Phalaropes were a good find at Hayford Road on 5/8 (T Be). Thirty-five Semipalmated Sandpipers were a high count in Monroe Co. on 5/22 (T Be). On 5/2, four White-rumped Sandpipers were found at Harbor Point (CA). A flock of about 100 peeps were seen in flight near Dwiggin Rd. on 5/23 (J Mo). Also on 5/23, 19 Long-billed Dowitchers were at Harbor Point (J Mo) and on 5/9, 9 Short-billed Dowitchers were seen across St. Charles Co. (T Be, m. ob.). A Bonaparte's Gull was a good find on Big Day at Riverlands (A Mc). An adult Laughing Gull was seen at Riverlands on 5/11 (CA, m. ob.). A first year Glaucous Gull was seen at Melvin Price Dam on 5/8 (FH). A high count of 12 Caspian Terns was reported at Riverlands on 5/11 (CA, m. ob.). Thirty Common Terns were also seen that day. Fourteen Black Terns were observed at Horseshoe Lake on 5/8 (FH, m. ob.) and 12 were seen at Kidd Lake on 5/22 (T Be).

A Great Horned Owl was located at Katy Trail Access on Hwy. 94 on 5/8 (A Mc). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found in Tower Grove Park on 5/2 (G&TB). A Black-billed Cuckoo was first reported on 5/4 in TGP (JZ), on 5/11 at Tower Grove Park (G&TB), and also at Lost Valley Trail on 5/9 (DC, JM). Chuck-will's-widow and Whip-poor-wills are steadily declining in the area; very few were reported this spring. A very good spring total of 100 Nighthawks were seen on 5/9 at Mo. Botanical Gardens (P&BJ). An Anna's Hummingbird visited a feeder in Caseyville, Ill. for a few minutes only on 5/9 (Mark LaCombe). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen on 5/9 at Tower Grove Park (G&TB), at Busch on 5/15 (JZ, YH), and 2 were observed near Layton Rd. on 5/17 (T Be). Very good numbers of Least Flycatchers, which migrated late this year, included 7 in Madison Co. on 5/8 (FH) and 4 in TGP on 5/10 (T Be). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers

were decidedly down in numbers this year. Alder Flycatchers seen included 1 on 5/15 at Lost Valley Trail (KR, m. ob.) and 1 on 5/23 in Madison Co. (FH). Willow Flycatcher was reported on 5/15 at Busch (JZ, YH) 5/25 at MTC (CA). The first Western Kingbird was found on 5/6 at the Katy Access (CM) and 1 was also found on 5/31 on Rte. 3 (DB). Up to 30 Bank Swallows were found nesting on Island Road on 5/5 (JM). A late Winter Wren was found in TGP on 5/7 (BW). On 5/2, 2 Gray-cheeked Thrush were located in TGP (DC). Swainson's Thrush were fairly numerous but not singing as much as usual. Wood Thrush, a local breeder, continues to decline in numbers. The first Veery was found on 5/5 in TGP (JM).

Bell's Vireos, a rare but local breeder, were found in 5 places in Ill. and 1 in Mo. Philadelphia Vireos were numerous in migration this year. The very rare Lawrence's Warbler was found at the Arboretum on 5/6 (Jerry McLaughlin). An equally rare Black-throated Blue was found in Forest Park on 5/6 (RK). Canadas were scarce but 1 was found in Busch on 5/9 (RK, BR) and 2 were seen on 5/16 in Carondelet Park (KL). Cape Mays had a spectacular year, with up to 13 seen on 5/31 in TGP (m. ob.). There are 3 territoried male Cerulean Warblers at Pere Marquette Park (LH). Two Blackburnians were reported on 5/13 in TGP (CA, KL) and 3 on 5/16 (DG, BB). On 5/9 a Worm-eating Warbler was heard at Lost Valley Trail and also at Dardenne Creek/Busch (YH, m. ob.). Hooded Warblers also had a very good year, with sightings from Busch, Rockwoods, Carondelet Park & Forest Park (m. ob.). One was photographed by Paul Bauer on 5/10. The first Mourning Warbler was reported on 5/4 at Carondelet Park (Stephen & Melanie Garcia) and on 5/9 at Busch (BR, RK). The first Connecticut Warbler was found on 5/16 at TGP (JC) and a total

of 3 were seen on 5/21 (R. Silverman, D. Johnson, J. Mohrmann, JZ). Twenty-five Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen on 5/4 in TGP (T Be). Bobolinks were seen on 5/1 along Powers Road (J&CM), on 5/8 on the Levee Roads (BM), at Horseshoe Lake on 5/13 (FH), and the high count was 45 on 5/20 along the Mississippi River Rd. in Ill. (LH). Orchard Orioles were reported in good numbers in Calhoun Co., Ill. (LH). Blue Grosbeaks were found at the Arboretum on 5/3 (DC), in TGP on 5/4 (DG), at the Katy Trail Access on 5/13 (CM), on Plummer Hall Rd. on 5/15 (LH), at the Borrow Pit on 5/17 (T Be), and 4 were observed on 5/9 at Weldon Springs (JZ, YH). As many as 25 White-throated Sparrows were still present at Point DuSable Park in St. Charles Co. on 5/3 (J Mo). A Clay-colored Sparrow was seen at Weldon Springs on 5/9 (BR, RK). A Lark Sparrow was found at Schoolhouse Rd. on 5/7 (T Be). Grasshopper Sparrows were found at Riverlands on 5/8 (DB, LB) and in Madison Co. on 5/9 (FH). A large number of Lincoln's Sparrows were reported from Weldon Springs on 5/9 (BR, RK, YH).

Dan Kassebaum Spring Highlights: 8 Least Bittern, Kidd Lake, 5/2; 150 Great Blue Herons, Carlyle, 3/27; 1,000 Snow Geese, Carlyle, 3/27; 600 Shovelers, Carlyle, 3/27; 450 Green-winged Teal, Carlyle, 3/27; 8 Surf Scoters, Carlyle Sewage Pond, 4/17; adult N. Goshawk, Carlyle, 3/27; 4 Rough-legged Hawks, Carlyle, 3/27; 10 Kestrels, Carlyle, 3/27; Yellow Rail, Kidd Lake, 5/10; 2 Purple Gallinules, Carlyle, 5/16-18; 5 Moorhens, Kidd Lake, 5/2; 500 Am. Golden Plover, Carlyle, 4/10; Upland Sandpiper, Carlyle, 4/17; 150 Mourning Doves, Carlyle, 3/27; 15 Downy Woodpeckers, Carlyle, 3/27; 7 Alder Flycatchers, Carlyle, 5/15; Gray Kingbird, Carlyle, 5/15; Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, Wartburg, Ill., 6/3; 6 Marsh Wren, Kidd Lake, 5/2; 11 E. Bluebirds,

Carlyle, 3/27; 15 Swainson's Thrush, Carlyle, 5/1; 150 Am. Pipits, Carlyle, 3/27; 45 Yellow Warblers, Carlyle, 5/8; 30 Yellow-rumped Warblers, Carlyle, 5/8; 27 Palm Warblers, Carlyle, 5/8; Cerulean Warbler, Pomona, Ill., 5/27; 8 Worm-eating Warblers, Fults Hill Prairie, Monroe Co., Ill., 5/2; 12 N. Waterthrush, Carlyle, 5/8; 44 Yellowthroats, Carlyle, 5/8; 2 Clay-colored Sparrows, Carlyle, 5/1 & 5/8; 33 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Carlyle, 5/8; 50 Bobolinks, Carlyle, 5/8; 500 Rusty Blackbirds, Carlyle, 3/27; 500 Brewer's Blackbirds, Carlyle, 3/27; 3,000 Grackles, Carlyle, 3/27; 33 Baltimore Orioles, Carlyle, 5/8. The Gray Kingbird and Tropical/Couch's Kingbird are amazing records for this area.

Comments: Paul Bauer reported 2 Cape Mays and 4 Blackpolls in his Florissant backyard on 5/12. Wilma Kennell reported these in her U. City backyard 5/8-11: Black-throated Green, Wilson's, 2 Blackpolls, Indigo, N. Waterthrush, Swainson's Thrush, Lincoln Sparrow. Four species that were low in numbers last year regained their presence this year (Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Redstart, Swainson's Thrush).

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Mary Anne Auer, Bob Bailey, Loy Barber, George & Terry Barker, Paul Bauer, Dave Becher, Dianne Benjamin, Rose Ann Bodman, Torrey Berger, Tom Borman, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Viola Buchholtz, Doug Corbett, Ken Cohen, Dick Coles, Jean Cook, Cheryl & Don Delashmit, Joe Eades, David Garcia, Lou Hanes, Frank Holmes, Jim & Margot Holsen, Yvonne Homeyer, Paul & Barbara Johnson, Dan Kassebaum, Randy Korotev, Kent Lannert, Peggy Leonard, Jim & Charlene Malone, Anne McCormack, Bob McFall, Keith McMullen, Jeannie Moe, Mark Peters, Kevin Renick, Bill Rowe, Bruce Wetteroth, Helen Wuestenfeld, Jim Ziebol, many observers.

June Bird Report

Early June produced a few late spring migrants but nothing out of the ordinary. The Western Grebe at Riverlands (MAA) was joined by something equally as unusual, a Greater Scaup on 6/5 (CM). An American Bittern was found at Heron Pond/Riverlands on 6/22 (J&CM). A Least Bittern was reported from Marais Temps Clair (KL, CA, m. ob.) and at Heron Pond on 6/27 (RW). A small nesting colony of Yellow-crowned Night Herons on the East side had 4 active nests by 6/21 (FH). By the end of June, the first nest had fledged young and the 4th nest was on eggs. A post-breeding dispersal Glossy Ibis was found on 6/22 at Heron Pond (KL, CA, m. ob.). On 6/27, there were 160 herons and egrets on Heron Pond (m. ob.). A pair of Green-winged Teal was reported on 6/23 at Two Pecans (CM). The first King Rail of the season was seen at Clarence Cannon on 6/20 (T Bo et al.). Another King Rail was seen by many observers on 6/26 at Heron Pond (Darrell Shambaugh, m. ob.). On 6/3, the Common Moorhens at Kidd Lake were re-located (CM). An adult Purple Gallinule was spotted walking on Wise Road on 6/27 (CM). The Sunday afternoon hotline drew many birders to Riverlands, which allowed them to see the King Rail and the Least Bittern, but not the Purple Gallinule. (This is the 4th Purple Gallinule reported in the 50 mile radius in the last 2 years). A Mississippi Kite was seen on 6/20 at his property (MP) but was otherwise poorly reported. The Forest Park Cooper's Hawks were still at the nest on 6/15 and 2 nestlings were observed on 6/26 (KC, DB). Palmer states that only about 34% of first year Cooper's Hawks even attempt nesting. A recently fledged Red-tailed Hawk was seen at Castlewood on 6/26 (DC).

A good find on 6/20 was a Black-bellied Plover at Riverlands (G&TB). Ruddy Turnstones seen at Riverlands on 6/23 were

either very late spring migrants or very early fall arrivals (Edge Wade). An equally early fall migrant was a Solitary Sandpiper at Riverlands on 6/27 (JZ, YH). Both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs were reported from 6/28-30 on Red School Road (FH, J&CM). A Barred Owl flew in front of her car at Busch on 6/23 (J Mo). Jim and Margot Holsen were serenaded by Whip-poor-wills while celebrating his birthday on 6/19 at Archery/Busch. Three Black-billed Cuckoos were observed/heard at Gateway Int'l. Golf Course during June (EB). Yellow-billed Cuckoos were sparingly reported from their usual areas, with 2 seen on 6/4 at Lost Valley Trail (DC). Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to be poorly reported from former areas, but have been observed in Forest Park (LW) and TGP (m. ob.). While bicycling, Kraig Paradise located a Western Kingbird nest near Humboldt and Riverview. Of the 2 Western Kingbird nests found south of Granite City, by the end of June one had fledged 4 young and the other pair was still attending the nest (FH + photos). Two late spring migrant Alder Flycatchers were reported, one at Riverlands on 6/4 (Mike Thelan) and one at Busch on 6/5 (JZ). Cliff Swallows were noted nesting at Winfield Dam (DB). Bluebirds are described as "decidedly down in numbers" near Union, Mo. (D&CD). Elsewhere in the area, numbers were also down.

A Black-and-white Warbler seen in Busch on 6/19 is a very good find in this area (YH, J Mo). A small colony of Redstarts (6-8) was reported from Castlewood (MB). Two tardy Mourning Warblers were reported on 6/4 at Lost Valley Trail (DC) and on 6/5 at Busch (JZ). Several Worm-eating Warblers were seen at Lost Valley Trail on 6/12 (DR). Summer Tanagers were reported in numbers from Lost Valley Trail on 6/4 (DC) and on 6/26 at Greensfelder Park (DR). Breeding Lark

Sparrows were present along Hopewell Road (BK) and at Busch (DB). Grasshopper Sparrows, although sparsely reported, were found nesting at Clarence Cannon (DB).

Dan Kassebaum's June Highlights: 4 Least Bitterns, Kidd Lake, 6/24; Gadwall drake, Kidd Lake, 6/18-24; Am. Wigeon drake, Kidd Lake, 6/18; Cooper's Hawk w/5 young, Belleville, 6/11 (photographed by Al Seppi 6/28); 2 Common Moorhens, Kidd Lake, 6/24; Least Sandpiper, Carlyle, 6/19; 46 Ring-billed Gulls, Carlyle, 6/28; 3 Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Carlyle, 6/8; 3 Red-headed Woodpecker, Carlyle, 6/19; Willow Flycatcher, Carlyle, 6/8; Tropical/Couch's Kingbird, Maeystown Road, Monroe County, Ill.; 2 Western Kingbirds, Granite City, 6/7; 2 Bell's Vireos, Carlyle, 6/19; a small colony of Sedge Wrens, Mississippi River levee, 6/3; 7 Worm-eating Warblers, Pomona, 6/27.

Comments: On 5/20, 2 Mississippi Kites were seen copulating in Warson Woods (L&MW). A Great-crested Flycatcher is nesting in a backyard in Rock Hill (L & MW). On a sadder note, baby cowbirds were seen being fed by: a Yellow-throated Warbler on 6/19 at Lost Valley Trail (CA, KL); by a Common Yellowthroat and by two White-eyed Vireos, both at Busch on 6/24 (J Mo).

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Mary Anne Auer, George & Terry Barker, Ed Barresi, Dave Becher, Tom Borman, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Ken Cohen, Doug Corbett, Don & Cheryl Delashmit, Frank Holmes, Jim & Margot Holsen, Yvonne Homeyer, Dan Kassebaum, Randy Korotev, Kent Lannert, Jim & Charlene Malone, Jeannie Moe, Mark Peters, David Rabenau, Larry & Michelle Wells, Rad Widmer, Helen Wuestenfeld, Jim Ziebol, many observers.

July Bird Report

A Western Grebe, perhaps the same bird from early June, was still present at Riverlands on 7/5 (CM). By 7/17, 18 White Pelicans had returned to Stump Lake (LH).

Two Yellow-Crowned Night Herons were located at Parks Air College on 7/1 (CM). Of the four Yellow-Crowned nesting on the east side (see June report), the last nest, which still had eggs in it, was destroyed by a storm in mid-July (FH). Many Mississippi Kites were reported in the area, including Glendale (SM), St. Luke's Hospital (MB), an adult feeding young at a nest in Webster Groves (KR—see below), and an adult with an immature near Kirkwood High (MR). On 7/7, on the South Levee Roads, an adult Bald Eagle was located (MH). Two Broad-winged Hawks' nests were successful at Castlewood (MB) and a pair of Broadwings were seen on 7/20 in Forest Park (JZ). A nice count of 8 Kestrels was reported on 7/13 on Bruns/Bischoff Roads (T Be). A Merlin was observed at Riverlands on 7/6 (G&TB).

The shorebird migration was in full swing by the first week of July and 1,000+ were present at Riverlands and Stump Lake on 7/17 (m. ob.). On 7/7, Gina Deddens observed a Black-necked Stilt at Riverlands. Two Greater Yellowlegs and 2 Lessers were found on Schoolhouse Road/Horseshoe Lake on 7/1 (J&CM). The highlight of early July was a Willet at Riverlands on 7/16 (CM). On 7/24, 2 Avocets were present at the boat launch of Horseshoe Lake (FH). Baird's Sandpiper was observed at Horseshoe Lake, 111 side, on 7/27 (FH) and 7/31 (YH). An Upland Sandpiper was seen at Mark Twain NWR on 7/31 (HW et al.) Buff-breasted Sandpipers also appeared on 7/31 at Riverlands and Horseshoe Lake (T Bo, CA, C&JM). High counts for July were at Horseshoe Lake (111 side) with 100+ Killdeer, 1,000+ Pectoral Sandpipers, 50-75 Least Sandpipers, and 2 Westerns on 7/26 (T Be). Two Laughing Gulls seen on 7/4 at Riverlands were a good find for summertime (CM). A Franklin's Gull on 7/13 at Riverlands was an equally good find

at this time (KL). On 7/4, a Least Tern was located at Riverlands (DB, CM) and on 7/6, two were found there (KL). Six Black Terns, 6 Common Terns and a Least Tern were seen at Riverlands on 7/18 (CA, m. ob.). On 7/31, a Least Tern was seen at Lincoln Shields (CA, T Bo) and 2 Least Terns and 2 Black Terns were seen at Horseshoe Lake/Causeway (C&JM).

Dan Kassebaum's best flycatcher for July was the Scissor-tailed at Fort Chartres, Ill. on 7/6. Willow Flycatchers were seen at Teal Pond/Riverlands on 7/8 (LH). A Sedge Wren was found on Chubb Trail/Castlewood on 7/10 (MB). A Loggerhead Shrike was seen on Bend Road on 7/13 (T Be). Loggerhead Shrikes are holding their own in Illinois but are now so rare in Missouri that they are considered an endangered species. A new location for Cerulean Warblers in southwest St. Louis County was found by David Rabenau. Several Redstarts bred at Castlewood (MB). A family of Worm-eating Warblers was found at Castlewood on 7/10 (SG). Blue Grosbeaks were apparently feeding young near the Borrow Pit on 7/16 (FH & T Be).

Dan Kassebaum July Highlights: An apparently injured White Pelican from 7/13-18, Carlyle; 18 Snowy Egrets on 7/14, Mississippi River Levee; 39 Little Blue Herons on 7/5, MRL; 39 Turkey Vultures, 7/3, Carlyle; 4 Blue-winged Teal, 7/13, Carlyle; Pintail, eclipse drake, 7/15, Carlyle; Green-winged Teal, hen, 7/27, Carlyle; Bald Eagle, adult and juvenile, 7/16, Carlyle; Cooper's Hawk, 7/15, Carlyle; Willet, 7/15, Carlyle; 35 Short-billed Dowitchers, 7/15, Carlyle; 212 M. Doves, 7/5, MRL; Willow Flycatcher, 7/13 & 18, Carlyle; 11 E. Bluebirds, 7/5, Prairie DuRocher; 14 Yellowthroats, 7/5, MRL; 5 Chats, 7/13, Carlyle.

Comments: Bewick's Wrens that used to nest on the Delashmit's property in Franklin County arrived as usual but did

not breed there this year. The deep-woods nesting songbirds are in low numbers at Busch Wildlife, according to data gathered in June by WGNSS members. The third edition of the National Geographic field guide has many improvements including the illustration of the latest bird splits. The Empidonax flycatchers are especially well represented, especially the coloring. Many of the shorebird plates have been redone. See Bill Rowe's article, p. 7 this issue.

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Dave Becher, Torrey Berger, Tom Borman, Mike Brady, Don & Cheryl Delashmit, Sue Gustafson, Lou Hanes, Frank Holmes, Jim & Margot Holsen, Yvonne Homeyer, Dan Kassebaum, Kent Lannert, Jim & Charlene Malone, Scott Marshall, David Rabenau, Kevin Renick, Margie Richardson, Helen Wuestenfeld, Jim Ziebol, many observers. ~

Mississippi Kites do Lunch

Kevin Renick

Mary Anne Auer and I were treated to an amazing spectacle in July. From my cousin's back porch in Webster Groves, we had an excellent scope view of the nest of a Mississippi Kite family. As we watched the female at the nest, a downy young came into view. Next, the male flew in, landed on the large nest and passed a rodent to the female. He then flew to a nearby perch where he remained for 30 minutes, while the female shredded the meat and fed it to the youngster. ~

our website

<http://levee.wustl.edu/~rlk/wgnss/>

Sty **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 Connie Alwood, 524-8111. ~



Next Deadline: Sept. 10

Here's a case where we have *five weeks* between deadlines! Submissions—handwritten, typed, PC or Mac: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122.

Computer wizards: Thanks for sending a printout along with your disk. Or e-mail: finearts@mail.stjosephacad.com

Last minute change? Short article? Call me at 965-8091, voice mail 965-7205 ~

Last Chance to Join Exceptional Wildlife Adventure to South Africa in November

Paul Bauer

Bird South Africa, Oct. 29–Nov. 11, 1999. We are escorted by Ken Newman, the best known birding expert, field guide author and artist in southern Africa. Note: This trip is a “go”—we have more than the minimum needed. A few spaces are still available.

Journey from cosmopolitan Cape Town to the wildlife of the award-winning Mala Mala Game Reserve. Discover one of the world's most beautiful cities, graced with Dutch architecture and the geological signature of Cape Town: Table Mountain. Your birding includes the scenic drive to the Cape of Good Hope, with dramatic landscapes that lead to where Atlantic and Indian Ocean meet. we explore along Boulders Beach in the midst of flightless Jackass Penguins, found nowhere else except off the coast of southern Africa. Wing your way to Hlulhuwe and Ndumo Game Reserves and Mala Mala Private Game Reserve, home of lion, leopard, elephant and the best team of safari guides on the planet. Lastly, we visit Krueger Nation Park and Bongani Private Reserve. These reserves allow you to see nature as it was meant to be seen and enjoyed, far from any crowd. Did I mention the excellent wines

and delicious cuisine? Throughout, your accommodations are not just superior, but some of the best hotels, lodges and tented camps around. An optional extension is also available to majestic Victoria Falls.

For reservations, more information or a detailed itinerary, please phone or fax Paul Bauer at 314-921-3972. Write to St. Louis Audubon Tours: PO Box 2085, Florissant MO 63032. ☺

Bird TV

Watch Attenborough's *Life of Birds* on Channel 9, PBS, 8 PM Tuesdays. Awesome!

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Member at Large: Ginnie Young, 1306 S. Geyer, St. Louis MO 63122, 822-9006. ☺

need directions?

Busch Wildlife Area

- Take 40 west toward St. Charles Co., left on 94, right on D, follow signs

Tower Grove Park

- Take 44 to Kingshighway south, east (left) on Magnolia, 1st right into park.
- In park, 1st right (west), past tennis courts & stable to 1st picnic area on right (Gus Foyt Site).

WGNSS's internet address

<http://levee.wustl.edu/~rlk/wgnss/>

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meetings

Wednesday, Sept. 1

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

Friday Sept. 10

8:00 PM General meeting at St. Louis County Library HQ, Lindbergh just south of Clayton Road, in the West Meeting Rm: "A Birding Visit to Trinidad & Tobago," by Paul Bauer.

conservation

Tuesday, September 14

7:00 PM at Yvonne Homeyer's, 1508 Oriole Ln. in Brentwd, 963-7750. Any member welcome.

entomology

Saturday, August 28 & September 18

10:00 AM Butterfly walks at Busch Wildlife HQ parking lot. Yvonne Homeyer or Kraig Paradise as leader. For more information, call 963-7750.

Sunday, September 26

7:00 PM at Magner's, 516 Bacon Ave. Webster Groves, 961-4588. "Show and Tell" Members share observations, collecting and travel experiences of the summer. Bring specimens, photos, slides, etc. Projector and screen will be available.

Nature Notes *deadline Sept. 10*

Send articles, event, announcements to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews Ave, St. Louis MO 63122 (965-8091) or: finearts@mail.stjosephacad.com

botany

Beginners welcome. Bring lunch, weather gear.

Thursdays in August & 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.

birding

Open to all. Bring binoculars. Call David Becher 576-1146.

Thursdays in August & Sept.

8:00 AM West County shopping center, south lower lot behind Penney's, lamp post #1.

Saturday August 21 & 28

7:30 AM West County, see above.

Saturday Sept. 4 & 18

7:30 AM Riverlands; meet at Teal Pond parking lot.

Saturday Sept. 11 & 25


7:30 AM Tower Grove Park, meet at first picnic area west of tennis courts & stable.

Join wgnss!

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

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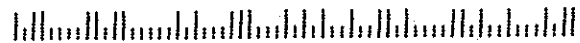
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The objectives of the society are: To stimulate interest in nature study on the part of adults and children; to cooperate with other organizations in nature study; to encourage amateur research in the natural sciences; to promote conservation of wildlife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

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