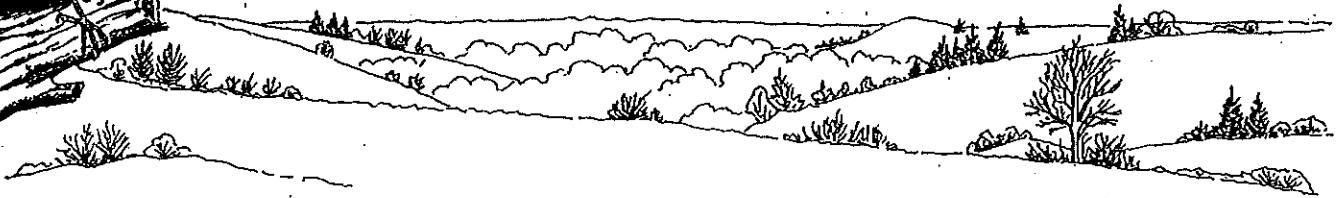




Nature Notes



Call the Nature Line (314) 935-8432 for meeting times & bird sightings

Journal of the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, December 2005, Vol. 77, No. 10

PRESIDENT'S CORNER - Yvonne Homeyer

A donation of \$4,000 in honor of Marshall and Ernestine Magnier has been made by WGNSS to the Open Space Council. This money was contributed by WGNSS members as well as by friends and family of the Magniers. At the request of the Magniers' children, WGNSS used the money to reimburse the Open Space Council for a loan that it made to acquire the last parcel of the Shady Creek Nature Sanctuary in Webster Groves. That parcel now bears the name of The Magnier Woods. The Open Space Council will use the donation to replenish its land acquisition fund. Marshall served as WGNSS president from 1947-49 and Ernestine served as WGNSS president from 1950-51. Thanks to all our members who generously made a contribution in honor of Ernestine and Marshall.

The Jim Ziebol Butterfly Garden at Busch Wildlife looked better than ever this summer. The Garden, a joint project of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA-St. Louis), WGNSS, and the Mo. Dept. of Conservation, was started in 2000. This summer Jeannie Moe, our Botany Co-Chair, and Kathy Thiele worked tirelessly to improve the garden by planting, weeding, mulching, thinning the beds, and clearing the paths. Last summer, Dennis Bozzay, a WGNSS member and NABA Butterfly Gardening Chair, built and installed a wooden arbor with the help of two other NABA members, Dave Berry and Terry Kelley. The arbor now bears a sign that says "In Memory of Bill Brandhorst". Dr. Brandhorst was a member of both WGNSS and NABA and headed up the annual Dept. of Conservation butterfly survey at Busch until he turned it over to Jim Ziebol in 1997. There (Cont'd, next column)

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT THE GREEN CENTER, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1-4 pm

The St. Louis Audubon Society and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society are invited to gather again at the Green Center in University City to celebrate the holidays together.

Please bring an appetizer, dessert or casserole to share. Beverages will be provided.

So popular last year, we will again have the free drawing of a lovely group of nature-related gift items donated by our members and friends. Be sure to 'sign in' when you arrive.

The Center has agreed to allow limited parking in its driveway for our senior members. Others, please park in the Kaufman Park lot next to the center.

For DIRECTIONS, see p. 21, Col. 2, bottom

PRESIDENT'S CORNER (Cont'd from Col. 1)

are now over 40 species of native plants in the Garden, many of which are host (food) plants for butterfly caterpillars. In September, Dennis Bozzay counted a dozen Monarch caterpillars on Common Milkweed. If you haven't had a chance to visit the Garden, please stop by soon! It is located at the bottom of the parking lot in front of Visitor's Center.

In addition to his duties as Editor of Nature Notes, Jim Adams is continuing with his project of indexing every issue of Nature Notes, which has been published continuously since its inception in 1929. Jim Adams and Randy Korotev, our webmaster, are collaborating to get these indices into our website so that everyone can read these capsules of WGNSS history. As you can imagine, (Cont'd, p. 2)



PRESIDENT'S CORNER (Cont'd)

there have been many changes to WGNSS over the years, but reading a newsletter from 1936 or 1957 is not really very different from reading a newsletter today. Every WGNSS member would feel right at home at home reading a report about a botany field trip, or a bird census, that took place long ago by people whom we have never met. WGNSS has stayed remarkably true to its original purpose, which is to bring together like-minded individuals who share a love of nature. One of our most passionate WGNSS conservationists, Dorothy Boyer Heinze, who lived as a teenager with WGNSS founders Alfred and Elizabeth Satterthwait, had this to say in June, 1957: "For more than 20 years, this writer has talked and written on conservation of natural resources in America--and watched rare and unusual species dwindle to the vanishing point. However, in the past half dozen years, there is an upsurge of activity and interest in movements to preserve some remnants of what was once mighty and vast riches, unrecognized as such by our fathers and, yes, ourselves. It is good, therefore to see such agencies as Nature Conservancy actively engaged in preservation measures.... The recent meeting of that group at the University of Missouri in Columbia on May 4th was a case in point. Among the speakers was our old friend, botanical scientist Dr. Julian A. Steyermark of the Chicago Natural History Museum, who called attention to the fact that many of our rarest and most valuable and beautiful plants are facing extinction in this state if protective measures are not taken immediately." Since Dorothy wrote those words in 1957, we have experienced a steady and well-documented loss of habitat, decline in plant diversity, and decline in bird, insect, amphibian, reptile and other wildlife populations. Much good work has been done since Dorothy attended that Nature Conservancy conference in 1957 but much work remains to be done. Let us heed her words of encouragement to WGNSS members to remain active in conservation efforts.

The End

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint on broken glass.

Anton Chekhov

BOARD NEWS

At its monthly meeting on Nov. 2, the Board

- 1) Approved plans for the joint WGNSS-St. Louis Audubon Holiday Party on Dec. 4
- 2) Confirmed Jim Ziebol's appointment as Co-Chair of the Ornithology Group.
- 3) Approved expenditure of \$4,000 from Magner memorial funds to the Open Space Council. (See the President's Corner for more details.)

REPORT ON NOV. 4 GENERAL MEETING

The attendance was quite good. Extra chairs had to be brought in. The subject was well presented; the Q/A period was longer than usual, suggestive of good audience interest. Our thanks to Dr. Mendelson and the speaker, Mr. William Davit.

Important Notice: There will be no general meeting in January because historically we've so often had weather problems in early January. The meetings will resume in February. Watch for the schedule in the January issue. And if there's ever a question in your mind about whether a general meeting has been canceled because of adverse weather, call the County Library or other meeting site before you start out! It will be impossible to inform such a large membership of a last minute cancellation. But we will inform the Library or other meeting site.

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Indexing has proceeded quite well. Only three annual volumes, 1962-1964, remain to be indexed. Hopefully these will be indexed next month.

CORRECTION

To the 50th and 75th anniversary booklets. The name of President Richard Wason is incorrectly given as Richard Wasson.

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS

1. Bryophytes and Lichens of Beckham County, Oklahoma, by Carl Darigo and Nels Holmberg, *Evanasia*, June 2005, vol. 22(2): 46-50
(Cont'd, next page)

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS (Cont'd)

- 1. (Cont'd) *Evansia* is a publication of the American Bryological and Lichenological Society
- 2. Distributional and biological notes on Buprestidae (Coleoptera) in North and Central America and the West Indies, with validation of one species, by Ted MacRae of WGNSS and Gayle H. Nelson. *The Coleopterists Bulletin*, 57(1):57-70 (2003)
- 3. *Mastogenius guallyabambensis* MacRae, a new species from Ecuador (Coleoptera: Buprestidae: Haplostethini) by Ted C. MacRae of WGNSS. *The Coleopterists Bulletin*, 57(2):149-153 (2003)
- 4. *Agrilus* (s. str.) *betulanigrae* MacRae (Coleoptera: Buprestidae: Arilini), a new species from North America, with comments on subgeneric placement and a key to the otiosus species-group in North America, by Ted C. MacRae of WGNSS. *Zootaxa*, 380: 1-9 (2003)
- 5. Notes on host associations of *Taphrocerus gracilis* (Say) (Coleoptera: Buprestidae) and its life history in Missouri, by Ted C. MacRae of WGNSS. *The Coleopterists Bulletin*, 58(3):388-390 (2004)

ANNOUNCEMENTS - OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

1. St. Louis Zoo/Academy of Science of St. Louis

Wednesday, January 18, 7:30-9 PM

Preventive Molecular Medicine is Here - Dr. David Moskowitz, Chairman, CEO and Chief Medical Officer, GenoMed Inc. Come and hear how this St. Louis-based biotech company is working to turn medical genomics into clinical practice. Free admission. Held in the Living World, North side of the zoo. Free parking in the North lots.

2. The Green Center

The Green Center, a not-for-profit arts and environmental organization in University City, Mo. Is seeking a Director to provide leadership and direction to a small staff. This individual will have overall responsibility for the Green Center, including general, fund raising, and fiscal management. To apply, send a letter and resume to The Green Center, Attn. Jane Schaefer, 8025 Blackberry Ave., University City, MO 63130, or E-mail to (Cont'd, next column)

December 2005

www.WGNSS.org

greencenterdirectorjob@earthlink.net by Dec. 15, 2005. A complete job description is posted on our website: www.TheGreenCenter.org.

3. National Parks Academy of Arts

The top 100 paintings from the Academy's annual competition will be on display at the Old Court House, 8 AM to 4:30 PM, Nov. 10-Jan. 10, except holidays. Admission is free.

4. Missouri Wildlife Art Festival

Saturday, November 19, 9 AM-5 PM
Sunday, November 20, 12 Noon-4 PM

Jim Rathert, MDC photographer, will have his first showing of new and exciting works.

Michael Van Houzen will present his Songbirds of Wood. (Those who attended our Spring Banquet saw Michael's Rufous Hummingbird Sculpture!)

Foundry Arts Centre
520 North Main Center
St. Charles, MO.
For details, call 1-800-575-2322

DECEMBER DATES

- WGNSS/Audubon Xmas Party - Dec. 4, p. 1
- WGNSS Board Meeting - Dec. 7, p. 20, col. 2
- Entomology Group Meeting - Dec. 18, p. 12
- N.N. Deadline - Dec. 9, p. 20
- Bird/Botany Walks/CBC's - p. 11-13

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- Historian's Corner - p. 2
- Christmas Bird Counts - p. 13
- Nov. 2 Board Meeting News - p. 2
- Bugs & Birds - Ted MacRae - p.4
- Announcements - Other Orgs. - p. 3
- Publications by Members - p. 2
- Field Report - Birds - p. 14
- Field Report - Botany - p. 17
- Nature Notes - Deadlines/Mailing Dates - p. 20
- Need Directions? - p. 21

BUGS & BIRDS: A NEXUS IN TEXAS (part 2)

- A Feature Article by Ted C. MacRae & Christopher R. Brown
(Continued from the Dec. 2004 issue of *Nature Notes*)



Continuing upriver from Bentsen-Rio Grande River State Park, the Rio Grande floodplain narrows considerably and turns northwest. The subtropical woodland communities that characterize (or used to) the broad lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) give way to narrow corridors of riparian habitat along the river bordered by arid, upland chaparral habitats. It is here we find Falcon Lake, the first in a series of several man-made impoundments along the Rio Grande River. These impoundments are an important tool for managing water resources in this arid land and also provide recreation. However, as mentioned previously, they have also altered the natural cycles of flooding in the LRGV, leading to chronic decline in what little remains of the subtropical woodland habitats found in that area. Much of the upland chaparral is utilized for grazing and exhibits little diversity in plant life due to overuse. However, splendid examples of the original plant diversity can be seen at Falcon Lake State Park on the north side of the lake. This was our next destination. .

Just before arriving at the state park, we stopped at an abandoned county park in Falcon Heights. This "town" is little more than a junction leading to the park in one direction and the Falcon Dam crossing into Mexico in another. The abandoned park appears to offer little in the way of natural history study—broken, crumbling, concrete picnic tables, waist high weeds, and declining, half dead trees...Did I say "half-dead trees?" I suppose you've now figured out why we stopped there. In fact, I found this spot several years ago on a tip from an entomologist who lives in Houston. He had told me of dying ebony trees (*Ebanopsis ebano*, formerly called *Pithecellobium flexicaule*) at this spot from which he had reared two species of *Paratyndaris* buprestids. Few species in this genus are commonly encountered, and no larval hosts had been determined previously for either of these species. In fact, one of them had not been recollected since it was described in 1885 based on a single female! I found one of them myself on my first visit to the spot and hoped to collect wood to rear more. This was not to be (the ebony wood was just too old now), but several batches from other types of plants were collected. The most interesting of these were living stems of *Lycium berlandieri*—I noticed beetle emergence holes at the base of the stems, and as I began cutting the stems to collect them I found an adult cerambycid beetle running rapidly on the stem. It was not one I had seen before, but its size matched that of the emergence holes and led me to believe it was the beetle causing the holes. This was confirmed later in the season when additional adults of this beetle emerged from the stems inside their rearing container. They proved to be *Neoclytus augusti*, a Mexican species known in the U.S. only from the LRGV. The record not only represented a new larval host, but it also extended the known distribution of the beetle further up the Rio Grande River.

The area also produced a few new birds for the trip, including a couple of southwestern U.S. specialties; the cousin of the familiar cardinal, the pyrrhuloxia. Easterners accustomed to only a single species of thrasher, the brown thrasher, are always interested in catching glimpses of some of the seven thrasher species found in the West.

Here we spotted one of them, the curve-billed thrasher. Two overwintering or possibly migrating species of sparrows (depending on the time of year) were present, the vesper and clay-colored sparrows, and a single, wayward palm warbler was present. This latter species is typically found further to the east. A few Swainson's hawks and a separate group of 40 American pelicans leisurely headed north soaring on thermals. As we loaded the wood batches in the vehicle and prepared to leave, we noticed a dead horned lizard on the ground nearby. It was a large beautiful specimen in perfect shape except for slight crushing of the left hindquarter—possibly the lizard was run over by a vehicle and died *in situ*, or the damage could have occurred post mortem. At any rate, it was a treat to examine up close this classic example of southwestern fauna.

At the park itself, we hiked along a nature trail that courses through beautiful upland chaparral habitat along the north side of the lake. Signs along the trail give names for many of the plants, helping the observer to truly appreciate the floral diversity that once existed across the overgrazed plains surrounding the park. Insect activity was much less than we had seen in the LRGV, although tiger beetles (later identified as *Cicindela ocellata rectilatera*) were encountered commonly along the road near the trailhead. This species proved to be rather challenging to collect—the rocky ground made it difficult to get a good “seal” around the rim of the insect net after slamming it over the specimen, creating openings under the net rim to which the adults would dart and then fly to safety. One specimen of a rare buprestid, *Chrysobothris ephedrae vogti*, was encountered sitting on a dead branch of palo verde (*Parkinsonia texana*). No hosts have been recorded yet for this subspecies, but since the nominate form occurring further west is known to breed in ephedra (*Ephedra* spp.) this likely represents only an incidental association. Nevertheless, I collected the wood to see what would emerge and added it to the now sizeable pile of dead wood growing inside the vehicle. The heat of the afternoon stifled most bird activity, although an Altamira oriole braved the heat to sing atop one of the taller trees.

We left the park around 4:00 pm, and it would take the rest of the day and well into the evening to arrive in Del Rio some 260 miles to the northwest. Little public land exists between Falcon Lake and Del Rio, but access to the river and a variety of habitats can be found just west of Del Rio. The largest public area is nearby Amistad Lake, a national recreational area, but we set our sights on a small state park further west called Seminole Canyon. The park borders the Pecos River and is primarily of historical interest—Native American hieroglyphics can be found on the steep canyon walls rising far above the river. Public access to the main canyon is prohibited in the interest of protecting the hieroglyphics; however, the deep cut ravines leading into the canyon are not off limits. These ravines were of particular interest because of the woody plants occurring in them, primarily vasey oak (*Quercus pungens* var. *vaseyana*), blackbrush acacia (*Acacia rigidula*) and texas persimmon (*Diospyros texana*). This is in stark contrast to the vast treeless plains above the canyon. We hiked close to a mile before reaching the upper limits of one of these ravines. As we began descending into the ravine, I noticed clumps of sotol (*Dasylirion wheeleri*—Family Liliaceae), the only host plant for a beautiful genus of buprestids called *Thrincopyge*. Two species occur in west Texas—*T. alacris* is bright yellow with brilliant blue or blue-green blotches on top,

while *T. ambiens* is brilliant green with yellow around the margin of the body. Looking for the adult beetles is a challenge as they secrete themselves within the basal rosette between the tightly appressed bases of the long, strap-like leaves. To find them one must separate the leaves, taking care to avoid the sharp, recurved spines along their edges, and peer down into the rosette. Long forceps for reaching down into the rosette are a must if one wishes to collect the adults, and even then the collector is almost always rewarded also with cuts to the hands. I had seen both species previously in the Big Bend area but didn't know if they occurred this far east or if the adults would be out this early in the season. We began peering into the plants and soon found one adult *T. ambiens* sitting within the rosette. This would be the only adult seen on the day—probably we were at the beginning of the emergence period—but we now knew that at least one of the species occurs here.

As I worked my way further into the ravine, I began to see the wood plants I had hoped to encounter. Of course, finding trees is one thing—finding recently dead wood infested with beetles is another! Dead wood abounds in the arid southwest, with its unpredictable moisture availability and consequent dieback and regrowth, and the prolonged dry periods slow the breakdown of dead wood. I chopped into a few miscellaneous dead branches I found but didn't see much. Eventually I found a vasey oak clump with a mixture of live and dead trunks and branches—perfect conditions for wood borers. As I chopped into one of the dead trunk sections I began to find evidence of fresh larval galleries. I followed the galleries, chipping away carefully and deliberately, and soon encountered a freshly-transformed adult of *Spectralia ruburella*. Like its congener that we encountered in the LRGV (*S. prosternalis*), this attractive species is very uncommonly collected, and larval hosts were completely unknown—until now. I had looked for this species many times before in west Texas without success, so it was gratifying to not only find it, but to also discover the larval host. More chopping into the wood turned up a large larva of what I presumed also to be this species, so I bundled up a healthy sampling of the wood and carried it back to the vehicle. Only one additional adult has emerged from this wood so far, but more could possibly emerge over the next year or two.

Despite the desolation of the habitat, there was quite a bit of bird activity before thick clouds moved in and the winds picked up, causing everything (including us) to look for cover. We were into the range of the ash-throated flycatcher—the most widespread *Myiarchus* of the West, where it is typical of open, arid habitats in contrast to our forest-dwelling great crested flycatcher. A resident Cassin's Sparrow sang in flight as a black-tailed gnatcatcher worked its way through the scrub. There were more overwintering sparrows here in addition to the previously mentioned clay-colored and vesper sparrows, including white-crowned and lark sparrows. As we climbed down into a well-vegetated canyon we had our first encounters with the canyon wren and Bell's vireo.

The drive to Big Bend National Park takes one through some of the most desolate parts of west Texas. We made it west into Marathon—a charming little “old west” town where we enjoyed a home-cooked meal—and then turned south for the 100+ mile drive to the park office. We would be staying in researchers bunk housing, and I had made

arrangements with park officials to leave the key in the mailbox for our late arrival. When we got there, however, there was no key—and nobody there! We had brought our sleeping bags, but it was a cold blustery evening and the thought of going up in elevation to the campground in the Chisos Mountains Basin was almost out of the question. We ended up finding the security office and knocking on the window to get the attention of the dispatcher, who was able to locate a ranger that could unlock the bunk house for us. The forty-mile drive to the bunk house took another hour or so on park roads. As we drove, the car lights illuminated desert shrubs whipping violently in the gusty winds, creating an almost surreal experience. We were pleasantly surprised, however, upon arriving at the bunk house to find that it was actually a small house—formerly an officer's quarters, and it was ours alone for only \$7.20 per night!

Big Bend National Park is the largest national park in the contiguous 48 states. Its Nearly 1 million acres encompass an incredible diversity of landforms, ranging from desert scrub at lower elevations to sotol grasslands in the Chisos mountains foothill, oak/juniper woodland in middle elevations, and pine forest at the highest elevations. Riparian habitats border the Rio Grande River, which are most easily accessed at Rio Grande Village to the east and Castolon to the west. At the center of the park, the Chisos Mountains rise nearly 8,000 feet out of the Chihuahuan desert below, dominating the landscape and providing spectacular vistas from numerous vantage points around its rim. Even in the middle of summer, a quick drive up into the central basin provides cool and welcome respite from the searing desert heat below. I first visited big Bend in 1994 and had made several trips there since then as part of a long term study to more fully characterize its wood boring beetle fauna. New species of insects, including wood boring beetles, continue to be described from the park on a regular basis, and my studies alone had turned up a number of species not previously recorded from the park. This was my first visit to Big Bend during the early part of the season, and I looked forward to the idea of collecting in the park during a time of that season not well sampled by insect collectors.

We spent the first day on the east side of the park (vicinity Rio Grande Village), where several trails would allow us to visit both riparian as well as low desert habitats. But first, we hiked the short trail to Boquillas Canyon, a spectacular narrow-walled gorge cut by the Rio Grande River as it turns back north. Almost immediately I located several dead retama (*Parkinsonia aculeate*) trees—chopping into the wood revealed several buprestid larvae and one adult in the genus *Acmaeodera*. Success already! A few other batches of wood were collected, but this hike was mostly a sight-seeing trip into the canyon—eventually we could go no further as the river converged against the towering canyon wall. It was here that we heard the song of Bell's vireo, which we continued to hear anytime we neared clumps of Gooding willow (*Salix gooddingii*) along the river. Afterwards, we spent some time in the campground at Rio Grande Village before hiking a trail into low desert. A brilliant vermilion flycatcher was seen sallying for insects, as a family of peccaries lumbered along the edge of the campground. A few warblers, including Wilson's warbler, darted among the thickets indicating that warbler migration was under way. As we hiked over a ridge and into the low desert, we heard the descending trickle of song notes that so typically graces the walls of western canyons—

the song of the canyon wren. Coming out onto a low outcrop above the river, we had a chance to see one of the little birds as it flitted among some nearby shrubs and then perched on the rocks of the adjacent outcropping. Few adult beetles were seen on plants, however, and infested wood was equally scarce—with the significant exception of a large, uprooted Goodding willow tree lying on the river bank. Wilting leaves were present on some of its branches, suggesting it had recently been washed to its current location by the river during a flood. At the base of the trunk where the main roots projected, I noticed what appeared to be frass (the sawdust that wood boring beetle larvae eject after eating it) under the edge of bark at the live/dead wood interface. I used my knife to cut away some of the bark and immediately encountered a huge buprestid larvae. Its enormous size meant that it could only be one of a few species, such as *Polycesta deserticola*, *Gyascutus planicosta*, or two species of *Lampetis*. The first breeds commonly in oak but is also known from willow—but only in dead branches. Larvae of *G. planicosta* are apparently restricted to the living roots of *Atriplex* and a few other asteraceous shrubs, making it also an unlikely choice. The larva of the two *Lampetis* species, on the other hand, have never been found. As I continued digging into the wood, I noticed fragments of a dead adult beetle within the galleries. The largest fragment, the base of an elytron (wing cover), was brilliant blue/green in color, identical to those of *Lampetis*! I removed the larvae from their galleries and placed them individually in vials with pieces of the host wood, knowing there was little chance either would complete its development. Both did eventually die, but they were preserved and photographs have been sent to Mark Volkovitsh (Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg) who is perhaps the world's leading expert in larval buprestid taxonomy. He reported back that the larvae do appear to represent *Lampetis*, based on their resemblance to larvae of a Eurasian species in the genus, and the fragments I found with them provide further evidence of such. If true, the fact that the larvae apparently feed under the bark of living trees below the soil line would certainly explain why such a large, conspicuous and commonly encountered species has never before been reared.

The morning of Day 2 was spent in the lower elevations of Lone Pine Canyon outside the eastern flank of the Chisos Mountains. The opening into the canyon features high desert scrub and a dry wash along the north side dominated by woody plants such as Texas persimmon, whitethorn acacia (*Acacia constricta*), and ephedra. Dead, apparently infected branches of each of these plants were found and collected, but the most exciting find were dead stems of shrubby coldenia (*Tiquilia canescens*). A colleague in California had recently reared a new species in the very rare and unusual buprestid genus *Trichinorhipis* from dead stems of this plant he had collected in the nearby town of Terlingua. I bundled up a rather substantial batch of dead stems from this plant, and although nothing has yet emerged, I am willing to wait—it took seven years for the beetles to emerge from the original batch of wood!. We considered going further up into Lone Pine Canyon, where sotol grassland transitioning to oak/juniper woodland can be found. These areas, however, are only accessible after several miles of rough 2-track and another mile or so of foot trails (I learned this hard lesson during my 2003 trip). We knew we would find similar habitats tomorrow when we visited the much more accessible Green Gulch Canyon, so we decided to explore the higher elevations in the

Chisos Mountains. As we made our way back to the main road, we had our only rattlesnake experience of the trip—a Mojave rattler stopped in the middle of the road.

The Chisos mountains were formed as a result of magma intrusion below the surface—35 million years ago followed by subsequent cooling and exposure through erosion. The peaks of the outer rim, reaching upwards of 7,000 feet in elevation, tower above a large central basin lying at 5,400 feet. Oak/juniper woodland dominates the central basin and lower flanks, with several species of oak (vasey oak, gray oak—*Quercus grisea*, emory oak—*Q. emoryi*), evergreen sumac (*Rhus choriophylla*), alligator and weeping junipers (*Juniperus deppeana* and *J. flaccida*), pinyon pine (*Pinus cembroides*), and mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *montanus*) being the dominant woody plants. Elements of the desert below (e.g., whitehorn acacia) can also be found within the basin, while more boreal species such as ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) occur near the peaks. A well developed trail system provides access to many areas within the basin and around the rim, and the scenery found here is some of the most spectacular that I have encountered in all of my travels! Despite the many trails within the basin that I have not yet hiked, I always return to the Window Trail. Unlike the other trails, which ascend various peaks around the rim, the Window Trail descends to the lowest part of the basin, where a “window” through towering granite cliffs provides a spectacular vista of the vast desert lying several thousand feet below on the west side of the Chisos Mountains. I had previously collected wood for rearing along this trail in 2001 (resulting in several new host records), so on this trip I concentrated on sampling plant species not previously collected. We were entertained for a while by a huge, black darkling beetle (*Eleodes* sp., family Tenebrionidae) as it walked across the trail—beetles in this genus characteristically hold their “butt” up in the air as they walk, and disturbing them causes them to pause with their butt held even higher as they discharge a noxious smelling liquid from glands on their body. We also found some cactus beetles (*Moneilema armatum*, family Cerambycidae) clinging to the spiny stems of cholla cactus (*Opuntia lindheimeri*) – the shiny, black adults are easily overlooked despite their large size because of their resemblance to the black lumpy masses of hardened exudates that accumulate at any wound site on the cactus.

The varied habitat also gave us the opportunity to spot many different species of birds, including rufous-crowned sparrows, Say’s phoebe, spotted and canyon towhees, an overwintering Lincoln’s sparrow, hermit thrush, and a pair of bushtits building a nest. Varied buntings, a bird that just barely ranges into the U. S. in Texas and Arizona, were also spotted. The most memorable avian encounter was a pair of Mexican jays, another southwestern U. S. specialty that, in Texas, occurs only in Big Bend. Watching them sitting on a low branch not more than 15 feet away from us through the binoculars provided stunning close up views as they looked about, chirping ever so softly. The moment provided a beautiful contrast to the raucous, shrieking encounters we had experienced with the same species earlier in the day.

The following day we returned to the Basin Road to explore the sotol grasslands and oak/juniper transition in Green Gulch Canyon. Almost immediately we encountered both species of *Thrinopyge*. Unlike at Seminole Canyon State Park, however, the beetles were out in numbers, so Chris was able to collect some for the first time while I cut a few

of the dead flowering stalks in which the larvæ feed. A half-dead gray oak also caught my attention, so I started working it over with my hatchet while Chris hiked deeper into the canyon. He approached a nearby ravine and soon heard the song of a bird that he knew must be the black-capped vireo. This endangered species was high on Chris's 'wish list' of birds to see on the trip, so he was delighted when it continued to work its way down the ravine until it was directly in front of him, offering lovely looks. The endangered status of the black-capped vireo is due to its requirement of mid-successional habitat which has become more scarce as a result of fire suppression. It has also suffered from nest parasitism by the brown-headed cowbird. Meanwhile I was working over the dead branches on the gray oak and encountered buprestid larvae of what surely represent *Dicerca roburella*—the same species I first found in vasey oak a Seminole Canyon. No adults emerged from the wood during summer; however, I will be keeping all of the wood batches through this next summer in the hopes of rearing additional species that may require more time to complete their development.

Afterward we returned to the Chisos Basin and hiked the Lost Mine Trail. This spectacular trail ascends the face of Lost Mine Peak, one of three peaks along the eastern portion of the Basin Rim. Little infested wood was found during the ascent, but a nice diversity of birds was seen, including a black-chinned sparrow and a Carolina wren. A spotted towhee rustled obliviously through the leaf litter under a bush while we watched with binoculars. At the summit we found a standing dead pinyon pine infested with larvae of the buprestid *Buprestis parmaculativentris*. This species is known only from the Chisos Basin, and I had confirmed it as breeding in pinyon pine on my first visit to the park by chopping out a single, dead adult from a fallen log. I envisioned rearing a nice series as we cut up some of the branches, but so far only a single adult has emerged from the wood. Like *Dicerca roburella* in oak, I will have another chance to rear more during the upcoming summer, since some individuals may take several years to complete their development. The harsh, exposed habitat at the summit was hospitable to only the hardiest of bird species, such as the rock wren on the boulders below us. White throated swifts and violet-green swallows twittered overhead.

As we sat on the granite boulders we began to admire the stunning landscape before us. To the west in front of us was a precipitous drop into a deep canyon that rose on the other side to the 7,825 ft. Emory Peak (the park's highest). Behind us to the east the terrain dropped down into the upper reaches of Pine Canyon (the lower portion of which we had explored the previous morning). To the northwest we could look down not only into the Basin, but through the "Window" and out onto the western desert far below. Finally, to the south, the vast low desert extending all the way to the Rio Grande River where it flowed along the bottom of a massive mountain range on the Mexican side. On the west side of that range, we could see the towering, narrow walls of Santa Elena Canyon, carved over the millennia by the scouring action of the river as the mountains slowly lifted beneath it. The moment was surreal—quiet, yet bursting with the sounds of nature and wind. A common raven circled high overhead, too distant to hear but at the same time seemingly a part of the sounds around us. I've been awed by nature's majesty on many occasions, but few moments have come close to the perfection of this one. As I sat there, I made a conscious effort to etch every detail of the experience in my mind--I

Webster Groves Nature Study Society
GROUP ACTIVITY/WALK SCHEDULES
December 2005 Update

Ornithology – Saturday Bird Walks – David Becher (314-576-1146)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Place</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Leader</u>
Nov. 26, 2005	North Parking Lot, County Library, 1640 S. Lindbergh	8 AM	Becher
Dec. 3, 2005	Riverlands Teal Pond	8 AM	Becher
Dec. 10, 2005	North Parking Lot, County Library, 1640 S. Lindbergh	8 AM	Becher

For Directions, consult current issue of *Nature Notes* or call the Walk Leader

Ornithology – Thursday Bird Walks – Jackie Chain – Leader (314-644-5998)

Meeting time is 8:30 AM on Thursdays at Des Peres Park. Call Jackie for more information. See p. 21 for directions to the park.

Ornithology – Sunday Bird Walks

Nov. 27, 2005	Entrance, Fallen Oak Nature Trail, Busch Wildlife Area	8:30 AM (Will end before noon)	Chain
(For more information, call Jackie Chain at 314-644-5998.)			
Dec. 4, 2005	Hdqrs. Parking Lot, Busch Wildlife Area	8 AM	Parmeter
For more information, call Tom Parmeter, (314-921-6017)			
Dec. 18, 2005	Causeway, Horseshoe Lake Hwy. 111	8 AM	McCowan & Homeyer
For more information, call Sherry McCowan (314-772-3133) or Yvonne Homeyer, (314-963-7750)			
Jan. 29, 2006	McDonalds in Carylyle, Ill. (for Carlyle Lake Walk)	8 AM*	Rowe

*8 AM departure time. If you want breakfast, arrive by 7:30 AM. Lunch will be at McDonalds or some other restaurant, not in the field. Walk will continue in the afternoon, but those wishing to depart earlier may do so. For more information, call Jim Ziebol at 314-781-7372.

Feb. 12, 2006	Riverlands Hdqtrs.	8 AM	Thelen
For a more information, call Mike Thelen at 314-862-6642 (Cont'd, next page)			

Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's)

Dec. 31, Saturday, Busch Wildlife Area, 8 AM to 5 PM. Tom Parmeter will be in charge. Meet at Headquarters Parking Lot. Bring lunch and the \$5 participation fee. If questions, call Tom at 314-921-6017.

Dec. 14, Wednesday, Carlyle Lake. \$5 fee. Call Dan Kassebaum, 618-233-5451 for additional details.

Dec. 17, Sunday, Pere Marquette. \$5 fee. Meet at lodge 7-7:30 AM. Dinner in Brussels, IL, at 4 PM. For more information, contact Joe Walsh at 636-343-6875

Jan. 1, Sunday, Orchard Farm. \$5 fee. The Orchard Farm is one of about 25 CBC's done in Missouri each year. The count area is a 15-mile diameter circle centered at the small town of Orchard Farm on highway 94 in St. Charles County. If you would like to participate in the count, please contact Randy Korotev by Dec. 15 at the following: [rlkorote@artsci.wustl.edu or (314) 993-0055]. Come for the whole day or just half a day. Alternatively, if you live in the count circle, which includes some of eastern St. Charles, please consider being a "feeder watcher" and counting birds at your bird feeder. Results of Christmas Bird Counts are tabulated and published by the National Audubon Society, which requires a \$5 participation fee for all field observers (not feeder watchers) over the age 18. Visit the website <http://audubon.org/bird/.cbc/>

Dec. 29, Clarence Cannon NWR. \$5 fee. Contact Bruce Schuette at 636-528-6544 or Baessch@nothnbut.net for more details.

Dec. 17?, Mingo NWR. \$5 fee. Contact Bill Eddleman of SE Mo. State University at Cape Girardeau to confirm date and for details. Tel. 573-335-1507 (Home)

THE BOARD MEMBERS OF WGNSS WISH FOR ALL
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS A MOST JOYOUS HOLIDAY
SEASON!



BIRDS & BUGS: A NEXUS IN TEXAS (part 2) – Cont'd from p. 10

enjoy at least some of what I felt every time I recall the moment. Such moments cannot last forever, though—the day was slipping away, and we knew we had to start back down the mountain if we were to make it to the lodge while dinner was still being served. We did see a few more interesting birds, most notably a black-chinned sparrow, on the hike back down the mountain—made all the more difficult from carrying the load of ponderosa pine cut at the summit.

The next day we were to leave the park and travel north towards the Davis Mountains. Before we left, however, we wanted to see Santa Elena Canyon up close. A narrow, rocky trail went about half a mile into the canyon before stopping where the river met the sheer canyon walls. A Carolina wren was seen flitting through the introduced salt-cedar (*Tamarisk* sp.) growing along the river's edge. I even managed to identify another call as that of a vireo—moments later the Bell's vireo was spotted in a mesquite tree next to the canyon wall. Not bad for a veteran, focused beetle collector! We added a few more interesting birds to our park tally in a small interpretive trail next to the park headquarters as we dropped off the key to our bunk house—ladder-backed woodpecker, black-throated sparrow, and lesser goldfinch visited the feeders nearby, while a cactus wren flitted through the trees along the trail.

(Cont'd and concluded next month)

BLUEBIRD BOXES NEEDED – Jim Ziebol

Attention WGNSS members who are woodworkers, and all others who are interested in our Missouri State Bird. Shaw Nature Reserve is seeking nesting boxes (with either a side or top that opens) for an ongoing Bluebird breeding project. If you can build or buy a box, or make a monetary contribution (make checks payable to WGNSS/Bluebird Project and mail to Randy Korotev, 800 Oakbrook, St. Louis, MO 63132), we would appreciate your support of this project. A collection site for the boxes will be announced at a later time.

We are all well aware of the thousands of Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows and Chickadees fledged in the 200+ boxes on Pete Winter's 2,600-acre ranch. His project, "Bluebirds Forever," began in 1994. In his book *Dawn Chorus: the Adventures of a Bird watcher*, Pete Winter stated that the Eastern Bluebird is his favorite bird. Pete Winter, a long-time WGNSS member, is renowned for having seen 7,700 bird species over the world.

OCTOBER BIRD REPORT - Jim Ziebol & Yvonne Homeyer

Introduction: Hurricane Wilma held together as a storm all the way into the Maritime provinces of Canada. Reportedly, many seabirds (Frigatebirds, gulls and terns) and some landbirds (including thousands of Chimney Swifts, hundreds of Yellow-billed Cuckoos and other swallow species) got swept up and were pushed into Nova Scotia. The seabirds will easily make it back to their home territories but the outlook for the landbirds is dire. Since there are no flying insects at this time of year, most of the swifts and swallows will perish and it will be very difficult for the cuckoos. Chimney Swifts were also found at

(Cont'd, next page)

OCTOBER BIRD REPORT (Cont'd)

the Azores, islands half-way across the Atlantic, and some were seen in France.

For those who like reading natural history, you will certainly enjoy the work of Bernd Heinrich, a professor of biology at Vermont University who does field research in Maine. His books include *The Trees in My Forest*, *The Mind of the Raven*, *Ravens in Winter* and *Winter World: the Ingenuity of Animal Survival*. Regarding Ravens, Heinrich quipped, "It's very hard to study a species that is smarter than you are." Heinrich is also a superb illustrator and at one time, he was a champion ultra-marathoner.

Sightings: Three Horned Grebes were seen at CL on 10/22 (DB, Saturday Group) and on 10/23, 7 were seen at HL along the north shore (FH, SM, JZ). David Rogles counted 46 Pied-billed Grebes at REDA on 10/16. A Western Grebe was a good find at REDA on 10/28 (JE, CA, J&CM). As many as 2,500 Pelicans were seen in the HL area on 10/3 (FH) and on 10/16, 500 were seen at REDA (DR). On 10/22, Josh Uffman flushed an American Bittern at REDA. Sherry McCowan reported that she last saw Great Egrets (6 of them) in FP on 10/6. Late dates for other herons and egrets include: Little Blue on 10/11 (FH), Cattle Egret in St. Charles County on 10/23 (DB), and Snowy Egret at HL on 10/23 (SM, JZ). Six Mute Swans remained at HL for several weeks (FH). Mike Thelen found 2 Snow Geese and an American Black Duck at 2 Rivers NWR on 10/15. Also on 10/15, Debbie Wesselmann found a remarkable flock of 35 Surf Scoters at CL and 3 were seen at the Rieder Sewage Lagoon (DK). The Barkers found a Surf Scoter at the lagoon on 10/22 and Jackie Chain found 1 on 10/23. The last Moorhen reported in the area was seen at HL on 10/2 (FH). Late shorebirds included a Greater Yellowlegs and several Pectoral Sandpipers at Chouteau Island on 10/12 (FH). A Solitary Sandpiper was seen at BCA on 10/7 (MT). On 10/5, Dan Kassebaum located 2 Red and 5 Red-necked Phalaropes at CL. A Long-billed Dowitcher was seen at 2 Rivers on 10/15 (MT). Dennis Jacobson found 2 Wilson's Snipes for the Thursday Group at REDA on 10/20. Frank Holmes reported 14 Snipe, Lesser Yellowlegs and a Least Sandpiper near Alton Barge on 10/27. Frank also found 2 Bonaparte's and 1 Franklin's Gull at HL on 10/11. On the weekend of Oct. 8 & 9, Dan Kassebaum reported Lesser Black-backed and Laughing Gull at CL. On 10/16, 17 Franklin's, 35 Bonaparte's and a possible Laughing Gull were seen at REDA (DR). David Becher found hundreds of Bonaparte's and one Laughing Gull at CL on 10/23. A Sabine's Gull and a juvenile Laughing Gull were found at CL on 10/15. A Common Tern was seen at REDA on 10/26 (NB).

On 10/6, a N. Harrier was seen at REDA (J Chain, Thursday Group), 2 N. Harriers were seen at HL on 10/9 (FH, SM), and 1 was seen at REDA on 10/23 (YH). Jeannie Moe reported a Sharp-shinned Hawk on the Gov. Bates Trail on 10/17. A Northern Goshawk was a good find at REDA on 10/27 (MM, Stacia Novy). A Krider's Red-tailed Hawk was seen soaring over the Gaddy Bird Garden in TGP on 10/15 (J Cowan, YH). Two Western Red-tails, a light-phase and a dark-phase, were seen along the Levee Road on 10/22 (JZ). The SLAS group found a Merlin at 2Rivers on 10/15 (PL,
(Cont'd, next page)

OCTOBER BIRD REPORT (Cont'd)

MT). On 10/20, a Merlin, a LeConte's Sparrow and 2 Sharp-tailed Sparrows were seen at REDA (J Chain, Thursday Group). On 10/7 at Mark Peters' prairie, Jim Ziebol observed 3 Red-tails, 6 Cooper's Hawks, 1 Sharp-shin, 1 Northern Goshawk, and 200 Pelicans. Later that day, Mark Peters saw 200 more Pelicans. On 10/13, Jackie Chain noted the absence of any swallows at BCA. About 100 Tree and a few Barn Swallows were observed at REDA on 10/16 (SM, YH). The numbers of migrating swallows were down this year, possibly storm-related. Red-breasted Nuthatches were found on 10/20 at WBS (PL) and on 10/7 at BCA (MT). On 10/4, in FP, Sherry McCowan found 2 Sedge Wrens, 2 Marsh Wrens, and 2 Swamp Sparrows. A House Wren seen in Lafayette Park on 10/9 was somewhat late (SM, JZ). Surely the best bird of the month was a Varied Thrush found by Sherry McCowan in TGP on 10/15; the bird was in a flock of Robins feeding in cherry trees at the west end of the Gaddy Bird Garden. Sherry's quick action allowed Nick Barber, Yvonne Homeyer, Jim Ziebol and Jack Cowan to see this unusual bird. The bird was not re-found the next morning. Several Hermit Thrush and a Wood Thrush were also present in the bird garden that day. Jackie Chain and the Thursday Group reported the following birds at BCA on 10/15: a tree full of Cedar Waxwings, many Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Vireo sightings included a Yellow-throated bathing in TGP on 10/1 (LJ), Blue-headed in FP on 10/12 and 10/14 (SM), and Blue-headed in TGP on 10/15 (YH). Black-throated Blues were observed at Columbia Bottoms on 10/8 (JE) and a female in TGP was present in TGP on 10/15 (TK, DJ). 2 Blackburnian Warblers were observed in TGP on 10/8 (NB) and 1 was seen at Stump Lake on 10/16 (DR). Blackpolls were seen in TGP on 10/3 (JE) and at CL on 10/8 (DK). The unusual eastern race of Palm Warbler (with entirely yellow underparts) was found at BCA on 10/1 (JZ, SM). Sherry also found 4 Palm Warblers in Lafayette Park on 10/6.

On 10/1 in FP, Mike Thelen found a Clay-colored Sparrow. A Grasshopper Sparrow seen at BK Leach on 10/28 was extremely late (T Berger). On 10/1, Connie Alwood, David Rogles and Tom Bormann found 3 Sharp-tailed Sparrows, LeConte's Sparrows, and 4 Marsh Wrens at REDA. Jackie Chain and the Thursday Group located Sharp-tailed and LeConte's there on 10/13 and they were re-found on 10/16 (SM, YH). Also on 10/16, Bill Rowe found Sharp-tailed, LeConte's and about 50 Savannah Sparrows near the Borrow Pit at HL. The Barkers located both Sharp-tailed and LeConte's Sparrows at Columbia Bottoms on 10/27. On 10/13, a Vesper Sparrow was observed at BK Leach by Don Hayes. On 10/30, 3 Vesper Sparrows, 4 LeConte's, and over 100 Savannah Sparrows were present near the Borrow Pit (FH, SM, JZ). On 10/9, the following sparrows were seen on Walker Island: 12 Savannah, 10 Song, 2 White-throated, 3 White-crowned, 50 Swamp, and a Lincoln's (FH, SM, JZ). An immature Harris's Sparrow was found, along with several Vesper, in Lincoln County on 10/20

(ES). An apparent immature Painted Bunting was found at REDA on 10/18 (Judy Bergman).

(Cont'd, next page)

OCTOBER BIRD REPORT (Cont'd)

Backyard Birds: Dennis Bozzay reported a Ruby-throated Hummingbird on 10/4 and Connie Alwood's last hummingbird was 10/6. On 10/8, Kraig Paradise saw both Red-breasted Nuthatch and Winter Wren in his north county yard. Good birds for Margy Terpstra were Black-throated Green, Blackburnian and Golden-crowned Kinglet on 10/5, Blue-headed Vireo and Tennessee on 10/10, Ruby-throated Hummingbird on 10/12, a Cooper's Hawk on 10/13 (a regular visitor), and a resident pair of Great Horned Owls. Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen in Connie's yard on 10/22 and in Mike Thelen's yard on 10/23. A Hermit Thrush was a very good back yard bird for Sherry McCowan in Soulard on 10/23. Clarence Zacher found a dead hummingbird on 10/3 and reported White-throated Sparrows and Juncos at his home. Two Pine Siskins were seen at Les Jenkin's home.

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Nick Barber, George & Terry Barker, David Becher, Torrey Berger, Rose Ann Bodman, Tom Bormann, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Jackie Chain, Jack Cowan, Joe Eades, Frank Holmes, Yvonne Homeyer, Dennis Jacobson, Les Jenkins, Tom Kennedy, Pat Lueders, Jim & Charlene Malone, Sherry McCowan, Mark Mittelman, Jeannie Moe, Mark Peters, David Rogles, Eric Schuette, Margy Terpstra, Mike Thelen, Josh Uffman, Clarence Zacher, and Jim Ziebol. An asterisk means "documented". Please submit sightings by the last day of the month to Jim Ziebol (314-781-7372) or Yvonne Homeyer (homeyer@earthlink.net).

Abbreviations: Busch Conservation/Wildlife Area, BCA; Carlyle Lake, CL; Clarence Cannon, CC; Forest Park, FP; Horseshoe Lake, HL; Little Creve Coeur Lake, LCCL, Lost Valley Trail, LVT; Marais Temps Clair, MTC; Riverlands, REDA; Shaw Nature Reserve, SNR; Tower Grove Park, TGP; World Bird Sanctuary, WBS.

SEPTEMBER BOTANIZING - George Van Brunt

September 5, 2005 Botany Field Trip

Even though it was Labor Day and a very warm and sunny summer day, the botanists were out hunting plants. Is this a dedicated group or what? Accompanying Father Sullivan at the Busch Conservation Area were Carl Darigo, Nels Holmberg, Jeannie Moe, Wayne Clark, Larry Morrison, Dennis Bozzay, Jeanne Clauson, Yvonne Homeyer, Jim Ziebol, and George Van Brunt. We took two walks. The first was at Lake 26, a small pond. We circumambulated the pond identifying many species including: *Bidens aristosa* swamp marigold, *Lespedeza cuneata sericea* lespedeza (the infamous invasive species), *Persicaria punctata* - dotted smartweed, *Eupatorium serotinum* late boneset, *Ambrosia bidentata* toothed ragweed, *Alisma triviale* water plantain, *Rotala ramosior* tooth-cup, *Carex frankii* Frank's sedge, *Agalinis tenuifolia* narrow-leaved false foxglove, *Bidens connata* swamp beggar's-tick, *Bidens frondosa* common beggar's-tick, *Cirsium discolor* pasture thistle, and *Ludwigia alternifolia* seedbox. The second walk was the Busch Hiking/Biking Trail just south of Lake 33. On this trip some of the identified plants were: *Lactuca floridana* woodland lettuce, and *Ageratina altissima* (formerly *Eupatorium rugosum*) white snakeroot, the plant that killed Abraham Lincoln's mother by "milk sickness".

(Cont'd, next page)

SEPTEMBER BOTANIZING (Cont'd)

September 12, 2005 Botany Field Trip

This morning, we met at 9:30 at St. Francois State Park in St. Francois County. It was a beautiful morning, warm and sunny. Present were Father Sullivan, Rex Hill, Jack Harris, Pat Harris, Tom O'Gorman, Nancy Clark, Wayne Clark, Jeannie Moe, Jeanne Clauson, Nels Holmberg, and George Van Brunt. We explored the western part of the Mooner's Hollow Trail, a 2.7 mile loop around Coonville Creek, and identified many of the usual as well as some unusual plants. Included were: *Tradescantia subaspera* broad-leaved spiderwort, *Conoclinium coelestinum* mistflower, *Verbesina virginica* frostweed, *Packera aurea* golden ragwort, *Pedicularis lanceolata* swamp lousewort (a rare fen plant), *Cirsium muticum* swamp thistle, *Cirsium altissimum* tall thistle, *Oxypolis rigidior* cowbane, *Plantago cordata* the rare heartleaf plantain, and *Cunila organoides* dittany. We also identified 4 species of *Symphotrichum*, formerly members of *Aster*. They were *S. patens* spreading aster, *S. anomalum* aster, *S. drummondii* Drummond aster, and *S. oblongifolium* aromatic aster. Jack Harris brought his copy of David Wagner's new book on caterpillars, and we were excited to discover a specimen of the species on the book's cover. It was *Cucullia convexipennis*, the brown-headed owlet moth. The book stated that this caterpillar feeds on goldenrods and asters, and supporting this, we found it on *Solidago petiolaris* (goldenrod). We were wondering why the goldenrod didn't have flowers, and then we realized the evidence was right in front of us. This caterpillar feeds on flowers!

September 19, 2005 Botany Field Trip

A small, but dedicated group met at 9:00 this morning at Marais Temps Claire Conservation Area in St. Charles County. The day was warm, sunny, and humid. Present were Father Sullivan, Jack Harris, Jeannie Moe, Wayne Clark, Nancy Clark, and George Van Brunt. On our walk we identified *Persicaria pensylvanica* pink smartweed, *Cardiospermum halicacabum* balloon vine, *Stachys palustris* hedge nettle, *Scrophularia marilandica* late figwort, *Lactuca saligna* willow lettuce, *Helianthus tuberosus* Jerusalem artichoke, *Dalea leporina* foxtail dalea, *Boltonia asteroides* false aster, *Persicaria hydropiperoides* mild water pepper, *Persicaria hydropiper* water pepper, *Persicaria lapathifolia* pale smartweed, *Persicaria punctata* dotted smartweed, and the very fragrant *Mentha arvensis* field mint. The balloon vines were fruiting and the fruits look like Japanese lanterns. Inside each lantern are 3 seeds which are round, black, and have a white heartshaped pattern on them. This accounts for the genus name *Cardiospermum* (*Cardio* - heart, *spermum* - seed). We also saw three *Acrionicta oblonga*, the smartweed caterpillar, on *Persicaria pensylvanica*, the common smartweed.

September 26, 2005 Botany Field Trip

This morning we met at Young Conservation Area in Jefferson County. It was cloudy and mild at the beginning of our walk and by the end it was sunny and warm. Present were Father Sullivan, Rex Hill, Nels Holmberg, Jeanne Clauson, Kathy Thiele, Jack Harris, Pat Harris, and George Van Brunt. *Conoclinium coelestinum*, blue mist flower, was in bloom and abundant. We also identified *Erechtites hieracifolia* fireweed, *Symphotrichum pilosum* white heath aster, *Symphotrichum ontarione* Ontario aster, *Elaeagnus umbellata* autumn olive, *Sideroxylon lanuginosa* woolly buckthorn, *Acalypha rhomboidea* rhombic copperleaf, *Acalypha virginica* Virginia copperleaf, *Tracaulon sagittatum* arrow-leaved tear-thumb, *Persicaria lapathifolium* pale smartweed, *Silphium perfoliatum* cup plant, *Croton glandulosus* sand croton, *Bidens bipinnata* Spanish needles, *Agastache nepetoides* yellow giant hyssop, *Zanthoxylum americanum* prickly ash, *Cuphea viscosissima* clammy cuphea, *Poinsettia cyathophora* wild poinsettia, and many others. In keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of our field trips, we also identified a caterpillar of the honey locust moth, *Sphingicampa bicolor*. The caterpillar was on a sycamore leaf and had probably fallen from its host tree, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, the branches of which were directly above.

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George Van Brunt - Botany Report Compiler
Sherry McCowan - Nature Line Coordinator

Call The Nature Line!

Call (314) 935-8432 for a summary of the latest bird sightings in the St. Louis Area and dates and times of bird and botany walks; there are occasional schedule changes. Please report any unusual birds to Sherry McCowan (314) 664-2381 and press "3" or wait for the prompt. You can also leave a message at the end of the Nature Line recording.

Nature Notes Deadline and Mailing Info.

The mailing party meets at the Oak Bend Library, 842 S. Holmes, Kirkwood, 10 AM-1 AM to prepare N.N. mailings. We could use your help! Call Marjorie Richardson (314) 965-8974 to volunteer. Deadline and mailing party dates for future months are given below.

NN Deadline	Mailing Party
Fri. 12/9	Mon. 12/19
Fri. 1/6	Wed. 1/18
Fri. 2/10	Tues. 2/21, 1:30-5 PM
Fri. 3/10	Mon. 3/20
Fri. 4/7	Mon. 4/17
Fri. 5/5	Mon. 5/15

Next Board Meeting

Wednesday, Dec. 7, in the 15th floor conference room at the University Club Tower (near the elevator) 1034 S. Brentwood Blvd., at 7 PM. The Board ENCOURAGES attendance by WGNSS members. Come see your Board in action!

Publication Policy

Notices/Proposed Articles/Letters to the Editor must be signed to be considered. They will be considered for publication based on content and availability of space. Some editing may be done. Communications from non-member individuals or organizations must include the name and title (if any) of the sender along with a mailing address and telephone number. Send communications to the Editor, 35 Tulip Drive, Webster Groves, MO 63119. (Tel. 314-961-2494, E-mail dadams5084@charter.net.

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Society Objectives

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.

Making Nature Notes Useful - S. L. O'Byrne

Nature Notes, the Journal of the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, has long been published because of its utility in furthering the work of the Society. Its most important function is bringing the monthly program of the Society to the members....from June, 1948 issue of Nature Notes

NEED DIRECTIONS?

Busch Wildlife Area

- 1) Take 40 west toward St. Charles Co., left on 94, right on D, follow signs. Hampton Lake, usual meeting spot, is the first lake beyond Hdqtrs.

Castlewood State Park

- 1) Take Manchester west, south (left) on New Ballwin Rd., east (left) on Kiefer Creek Rd., follow signs.

Clarence Cannon NWR

- 1) from I-270, take I-70 west to Mo. 79, then go north 35 miles to Annada, Mo.
- 2) Just past the city limit sign there will be the sign for the refuge. Turn right and follow the road all the way to the refuge parking lot, the usual meeting spot.

Des Peres Park

- 1) On Ballas Rd., one block north of Manchester Rd. in Des Peres
- 2) Turn right (east) at the Des Peres Park sign; park in the first lot on the right

Eden Seminary (WGNSS Banquet)

- 1) At intersection of Lockwood and Bompert in Webster Groves.
- 2a) From 40, east to Hanley Rd.; south on Hanley (which becomes Laclede Station Rd.); right on Big Bend; right on E. Lockwood; left on Bompert; enter from Bompert
- 2b) From I-44, east on 44; Exit 220, Elm Ave.; left on S. Elm; right on Big Bend; left on; Bompert; enter from Bompert

Forest Park, Kennedy Forest

- 1) Highway 40 to Hampton north; follow signs to St. Louis Zoo's Living World; Kennedy Forest is about 1/4 mile west on the way to the Living World

Horseshoe Lake State Park

- 1) Take I-55/70 east to Hwy. 111 exit.
- 2) Turn left on to Hwy. 111 and follow road to the entrance to the park on the left.
- 3) Meet at the first parking lot to the right, just past the entrance.

Riverlands Environmental Dem. Area

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

Shaw Nature Reserve (Arboretum)

- 1) Take I-44 west to Gray Summit (Hwy. 100) exit, left over highway, right into service road and immediately left into Arboretum
- 2) Meet at Brushy Creek Trailhead

Tower Grove Park

- 1) Take I-44 to Kingshighway; south on Kingshighway; east (left) on Magnolia; first right into park.

Wildwood Trail, Al Foster Trail

- 1) I-44 west to north 109
 - 2) right on Old State Road
 - 3) quick right on Washington Ave. (becomes Grand)
 - 4) Parking lot on left
- From Manchester Road:
- 1) take Old State Road south
 - 2) Left on Washington at intersection with 109
 - 3) Proceed as above

Green Center, University Center (Xmas Party)

- Directions from I-64/Hwy. 40:
- 1) Take the I-170 North exit; take I-170 north to the Delmar Blvd. exit.
 - 2) Go east on Delmar Blvd. three stoplights to North and South Road.
 - 3) Turn left and go north on North and South Rd.
 - 4) Turn left (west) on Blackberry to the Center, 8025 Blackberry (on right). Park in small Kaufman Park to east of the Center, in the driveway if handicapped, or park on Blackberry.

**webster groves nature
study society *****

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Dec. 2005 issue

Please mail this form with check to:

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