



Nature Notes

Journal of the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, April 2008, Vol. 80, No. 4
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER – Ann Earley

In spite of the wintry weather of late February and early March, WGNSS members came out of hibernation to enjoy two general meeting programs that made everyone more ready for spring and outdoor nature adventures. In late February, Don Corrigan spoke about his book featuring natural wonders around Missouri. Many thanks to Lynn and Larry Bozzay for hosting this presentation at their Grafica Fine Art Gallery, where many nature-themed pieces of art were on display, and thanks also to Dennis Bozzay for making this event possible.

At our March general meeting, Tim Vogt, Park Scientist with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources-State Parks, presented a program on the ecological distribution of dragonflies and damselflies in Missouri's various eco-regions and habitats around the state. He also discussed conservation of these fascinating creatures, and the need for more surveys and research about them. Thank you, Tim, for sharing your program, and some great photography, with us!

WGNSS members **Paul and Barbara Johnson** will be featured at our April general meeting, when they will present a program on their **birding adventures in Mongolia**. This program will be held on **Thursday, April 3 at 7:00 p.m.** at the St. Louis County Library Headquarters on Lindbergh. Mark your calendar, and don't miss it!

Also at the April program meeting, members will vote to elect Society officers and Board members. If you are interested in serving on the Board, please let me know. Nominations from the floor will be accepted at the meeting. Please plan to attend to participate in the election, as well as to hear that evening's program!

The Environmental Education Committee, chaired by Rich Thoma, has been busy in recent weeks accepting and reviewing applications for the Menke and Scudder scholarships. Many thanks to the volunteers serving on this committee. We look forward to the announcement of the 2008 scholarship recipients!

Enjoy the spring, and I hope to see you at our upcoming activities in April and May!

HISTORIAN'S CORNER – Jim Adams

A naturalist interested in weather forecasting should read:

Defining the Wind – The Beaufort Scale and How a Nineteenth-Century Admiral Turned Science Into Poetry – Scott Huler – Crown Publishers, New York, 2004.

The author of this wind scale, Francis Beaufort (1774-1857), was a British admiral, a hydrographer, and man of science. Huler describes Beaufort's 110-word wind scale as "the best, clearest, and most vigorous piece of descriptive writing that he's seen". In his writings Beaufort embodies the passion for scientific observation and categorization characteristic of the age in which he lived. Described as the greatest scientific networker of his time, it was Beaufort who was tapped to lead the search for a naturalist in the 1830's to accompany the HMS *Beagle* on its history making voyage. He recommended a young man named Charles Darwin.

ON EAGLE'S WINGS

By Anne McCormack

On Feb. 12, I witnessed a strange event following the funeral of Connie Karr, the councilwoman killed in the tragic shootings at the Kirkwood City Hall. As the funeral service ended and the crowd left St. Gerard Majella Church, the parking lot was packed with people and cars. The Kirkwood Fire Department attended, bringing their ladder truck. An enormous flag hung from the top of the extended ladder. As a teacher at the parish school, I help produce video announcements every morning, and I was just hurrying to my classroom to grab the video camera and shoot some footage of the flag in the breeze. Just then I heard someone call out, "A bald eagle!" Circling above the flag was a beautiful adult Bald Eagle. Everyone stopped and stared and I was able to get about a minute of video. It was hard to call this sighting a coincidence, especially because I have lived in Kirkwood since 1984 and this is only the second Bald Eagle I ever seen in the area. One survivor of the massacre wrote a letter to the Webster-Kirkwood Times called this event a "transforming moment."

BLUE JAY

By Bill Davit

Yesterday I found
A blue jay feather
Lying on the ground
I wondered whether
He noticed his loss
While flying around
Scolding his neighbors
Just to show who's boss.

APRIL MEETING – BIRDING IN MAGNOLIA – Jane Walker

The speakers for our April general meeting are WGNSS members Paul and Barbara Johnson. The meeting will take place on Thursday, April 3, 2008 at 7:00 PM at the St. Louis County Library-Main Branch. They will be speaking about their birding trip to Mongolia. This should be an exciting program, so mark your calendars.

JANUARY BIRD REPORT – Jim Ziebol and Yvonne Homeyer

Introduction: The large winter gulls (Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Thayer's, Iceland) were in low numbers this year, except for Iceland Gull. Global warming and mild winters have decreased the number of large gulls that used to be regular winter visitors in the St. Louis area. There were fair numbers of Herring Gulls this year but the Ring-billed Gulls have spent the entire winter in the St. Louis area; in the past, the Ring-billed Gulls usually cleared out by Christmas, replaced by Herring Gulls and the other large gulls.

Sightings: A Red-necked Grebe, found at Baldwin Lake by Tim Deaver on 1/26, was an exceptionally good find. Charlene & Jim Malone estimated as many 100 Horned Grebes at Baldwin Lake on 1/27. A Black-crowned Night Heron, seen in flight at HL on 1/6, and a Great Egret seen at Canteen Lake on 1/21, were unusual winter sightings (JZ). [Back in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Black-crowned Night Heron was a year-round resident.] Paul Bauer counted 236 Trumpeter Swans, along with 1 Greater White-fronted Goose and a Peregrine Falcon, in the Riverlands area on 1/4. On 1/6, 4 Trumpeter Swans and a Pintail were present at HL (SM). Josh Uffman found 5 Tundra Swans, 4 Cackling Geese, a Wigeon, and a Thayer's/Iceland Gull at Riverlands on 1/6. In *Advanced Birding*, Kenn Kaufman refers to the Thayer's Gull complex, commenting that a light Thayer's Gull and a dark Iceland Gull are generally inseparable in the field. A Ross's Goose was observed at BCA on 1/6 (P&BJ). Charlene Malone found 3 Pintails at Creve Coeur Lake on 1/4. On 1/22, as many as 60 Hooded Mergansers were present at HL (FH). In the past 5+ years, Common Merganser has not been seen at HL, but this year, as many as 100 were present on 1/26 (YH, JZ, FH). The SLAS visited Riverlands on 1/13 and recorded 16 species of ducks, 6 Cackling Geese, and 5 Bobwhite (MT). Twelve Bonaparte's Gulls were present at HL on 1/12, along with Bufflehead and Pintail (FH). On 1/4, a first or second winter Glaucous Gull, 2 adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and a first winter Great Black-backed Gull were found at Riverlands, along with as many as 250 Pelicans (CM). A first winter Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen at Nichols Pond, HL, on 1/6 (FH, JZ). Iceland Gulls were reported in good numbers, with a first winter at Riverlands on 1/5 (DB), 2 first winters at CL on 1/20 (J&CM), and an adult at Riverlands on 1/26 (BRowe).

The Harlan's Hawk that has been a winter visitor for several years near HL was filmed by Jim Ziebol and Yvonne Homeyer at Sand Prairie Lane & Bischoff Road on 1/26. A Prairie Falcon was photographed at Confluence SP on 1/1 (JU). On 1/27, a Peregrine Falcon, apparently an immature *tundrius*, was seen perched on Layton Road, HL (FH, JZ). Karen Van Berkel reported a Barred Owl near her office at Manchester & 141 on 1/8. Two Barred Owls were seen at Emmenegger Park on 1/14 (JMoe, WGNSS Botany Group). A Great Horned Owl was observed on its nest in TGP on 1/11 (JChain, SM). Mike Brady found 2 Long-eared Owls in Chesterfield Valley on 1/5. Frank Holmes heard 2 Screech Owls at HL on 1/6. A Screech Owl and a Great Horned Owl were observed at Spanish Lake Park on 1/15 (KP). A Short-eared Owl and a Barred Owl were present at Confluence Park on 1/13 (KP, SC). On 1/12, on an IOS field trip to CL, the group saw a

Saw-whet Owl and a Long-eared Owl (KM, YH). On 1/2, David Becher found several Eurasian Collared Doves on the road to Lock & Dam 27 Visitor's Center. On 1/8, Dick Coles reported a Sapsucker at BCA, a Screech Owl at Weldon Springs Katy Access, and 3 Brewer's Blackbirds at Church & Seeburger. On 1/10, the Thursday Group located 12 Collared Doves on Payne Road and a Rusty Blackbird at Church & Seeburger (JChain, DC). A flock of 4 E. Towhees were found at BCA on 1/5 (KT, JZ) and on 1/20, 4 were also seen at Columbia Bottoms (JU). Twelve American Tree Sparrows, 12 Song Sparrows, and a few Juncos were seen in FP on 1/23 (SM) and on 1/31, she saw 4 Swamp Sparrows there. A flock of 40+ Cardinals was seen on the road to the Borrow Pit, HL, on 1/26 (JZ, YH). Jeannie Moe counted 50 Rusty Blackbirds at the farm at Church & Seeburger on 1/3. The ASM field trip to Riverlands on 1/19 yielded Green-winged Teal, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Thayer's Gull, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk (MT). Good birds seen by the Thursday Group on 1/24 included a first-winter Thayer's, Black Duck, and Great-tailed Grackle (JChain). A typical day at Riverlands on 1/27 included an adult Kumlein's Gull, a first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull, 255 Trumpeter Swans, 6 Tundra Swans, hundreds of Canada Geese, 4 Cackling Geese, 200+ Greater White-fronted Geese, hundreds of Mallards, a few Gadwall, 20 Green-winged Teal, 5-10 Canvasbacks, 50+ Goldeneyes, 5 Greater Scaup, 20+ Hooded Mergansers, and 30+ Common Mergansers (BRowe, Brad Jacobs, Andy Forbes, Joe Eades).

Back Yard Birds: Since early December, Jane Allen has been seeing a Spotted Towhee near her yard by Grant's Trail. Margy Terpstra reported a Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 13 Pine Siskins, and the occasional pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches on 1/20. Three Red Crossbills were heard, then seen, in the yard of Jerry Engels on 1/25 in Worden, IL. Within a period of one week, an adult Red-tailed Hawk and an immature Red-tailed Hawk were seen perched along Lindenwood near Jim Ziebol's home. A Red-tailed Hawk wintering in the Brentwood Forest condos has been seen checking out Yvonne Homeyer's feeders.

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Paul Bauer, David Becher, Mike Brady, Jackie Chain, Shawn Clubb, Dick Coles, Frank Holmes, Yvonne Homeyer, Paul & Barbara Johnson, Dan Kassebaum, Jim & Charlene Malone, Sherry McCowan, Keith McMullen, Jeannie Moe, Kraig Paradise, David Rogles, Bill Rowe, Bill Rudden, Mark Seiffert, Margy Terpstra, Mike Thelen, Kathy Thiele, Josh Uffman, Karen Van Berkel, Clarence Zacher, Jim Ziebol.

Abbreviations: BCA, Busch Conservation Area; CC, Clarence Cannon NWR; CL, Carlyle Lake; CSP, Castlewood State Park; CB, Columbia Bottoms; FP, Forest Park; HL, Horseshoe Lake; LP, Lafayette Park; LCCL, Little Creve Coeur Lake; MTC, Marais Temps Clair; RMBS, Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary; SNR, Shaw Nature Reserve; TGP, Tower Grove Park.

FEBRUARY BIRD REPORT – Jim Ziebol and Yvonne Homeyer

Introduction: The two best birds in February were a Gyrfalcon, first seen on 2/12, and the Siberian race of Mew Gull, present at Carlyle Lake on 2/23 & 2/24. The Gyrfalcon is a first for the St. Louis area and the gull subspecies is either the first or second.

Sightings: (Some late January sightings are included). On 2/24, Jeannie Moe and Kraig Paradise observed about 1,000 White Pelicans at Lincoln Shields, and 40 Bald Eagles and a Peregrine Falcon in the Riverlands area. Twenty Black-crowned Night Herons have been roosting in the same tree in Granite City and were first seen there on 2/14 (FH). A Great Egret was seen in the Hwy. 111 side of HL on 2/27 (J Cowan). The bird was re-found by the Thursday Group on 2/28 (JChain). Connie Alwood reported 250 Pelicans and 250 White-fronted Geese at Riverlands on 2/24. Eight Killdeer were seen at CC on 2/10 (DR) and on 2/18, two were seen near HL on 2/18 (FH). Woodcocks were first reported by Mike Brady on 2/28, with 2 present at CSP, and on 2/29, he had a personal high of 11 on the Chubb Trail. Seven Black Ducks and 240 White-fronted Geese were found at Riverlands on 2/3 (MT). On 2/13, David Rogles estimated 75 Ruddy Ducks and 125 Canvasbacks on Riverlands. On 2/10, Frank Holmes counted 500 Canvasbacks, 100 Common Mergansers, and 50 Ring-necked Ducks at HL. About 750 Common Mergansers – a high number – were present at HL on 2/25 (FH). On 2/16, 3 White-winged Scoters were seen at Riverlands (CA) and on 2/23, one was seen at Baldwin Lake (JE). A first-winter Glaucous Gull, seen at Riverlands on 2/29, was a year bird for many in the Thursday Group. In early February, Lesser Black-backed sightings included a second-winter at HL (BRudden), a third-winter at HL (JZ), and an adult which was last seen at HL on 2/17. Mike Thelen saw a Lesser Black-backed at Riverlands on 2/16. A trip to Baldwin Lake on 2/16 produced 14 ducks species, a Red-necked Grebe, and a Loggerhead Shrike at Peabody Coal (PL). On 2/23, 5 Loggerhead Shrikes and a Short-eared Owl were reported at Peabody Coal (CA, JE).

An Osprey seen over Hwy. 70 east of Hwy. 203 on 2/15 was an early arrival (JZ). Mark Seiffert observed a Prairie Falcon north of CL on 1/30. On 2/7, Sherry McCowan spotted a Peregrine Falcon in downtown St. Louis. A Merlin was seen in Carondelet Park on 1/31 (BRudden). Edna Alexander and Carol Brown observed Cooper's Hawk, Merlin, and a Gyrfalcon at HL on 2/16. The Gyrfalcon was first seen on 2/12; it was observed in flight at close range and filmed while sitting on ice, at a distance, while eating a duck (JZ). By 1/29, both Sherry McCowan and Jackie Chain had observed the female Great Horned Owl at its nest in TGP, presumably sitting on eggs. On 2/28, Shawn Clubb found Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, and a Field Sparrow at LCCL. Eleven Bluebirds appeared at HL on 2/7 (FH). A Northern Shrike was seen at Confluence State Park on 2/24 (DRogles) and on 2/25 (CA). An Orange-crowned Warbler, not of the eastern race, was seen at FP on 2/22 (SM). On 2/10, 75 American Tree Sparrows, 30 White-throated, and 12 Song Sparrows were observed at HL on the Hwy. 203 side (FH, JZ). On 2/17, several Fox Sparrows, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were observed in BCA (SC). On 2/3, 100+ Horned Larks, 3 Lapland Longspurs and 20 Savannah Sparrows were seen near HL (FH, JZ). Also on 2/3, 12 Western Meadowlarks and 4 Lapland Longspurs were found at CB (DRogles, TB). Mike Thelen reported Rusty Blackbird and 40 Great-tailed Grackles at Church & Seeburger on 2/11. On 2/28, as

many as 15,000 gulls, including only a few Herring Gulls, 700+ Common Mergansers, 50 Red-breasted Mergansers, and 5 Hooded Mergansers were present at HL (SM, JZ).

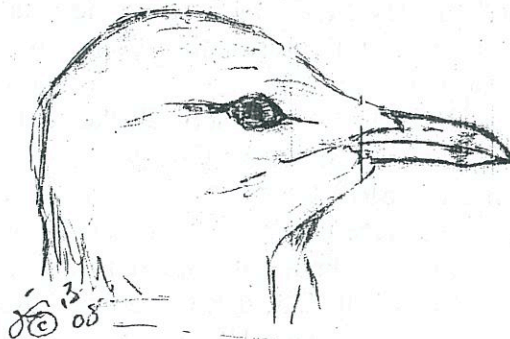
A typical day at Margy Terpstra's yard in Kirkwood on 2/21 included 2 Robins, 4 Juncos, 4 Goldfinch, 9+ House Finch, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Tufted Titmice, 1 White-breasted Nuthatch, 8 Cardinals, 12 Pine Siskins, 2 Chickadees, 5 Bluejays, 2 Downy Woodpeckers, 6 Starlings, 2 White-throated Sparrows, 2 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, American Crow, 2 Northern Flickers, 2 Carolina Wrens, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Back Yard Birds: Linda Virga saw Tufted Titmice, Brown Creeper, both species of Nuthatch, White-crowned Sparrows, and Eurasian Tree Sparrows in her yard in February. Anne McCormack had a flyover of 8 Ring-billed Gulls at her Kirkwood home on 2/2. On 2/24, Frank Holmes observed a leucistic Eurasian Collared Dove near his home. Other leucistic birds were: a Mallard at HL and a Canada Goose at Eagle Park (FH). Barred Owls were present at Margy Terpstra's home on 2/16, and Clarence Zacher heard one at his home on 2/20. In early February, a Brown Thrasher was seen in Connie Alwood's Ferguson yard, along with 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches. Jane Walker has had a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches at her home all winter. The Spotted Towhee was still being seen in Jane Allen's yard in February. A Clay-colored Sparrow and 2 Pine Siskins were seen in Wally George's yard in Cedar Hill on 2/29.

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Mike Brady, Jackie Chain, Shawn Clubb, Joe Eades, Wally George, Frank Holmes, Yvonne Homeyer, Dan Kassebaum, Pat Lueders, Sherry McCowan, Jeannie Moe, Kraig Paradise, David Rogles, Bill Rudden, Mark Seiffert, Margy Terpstra, Mike Thelen, Linda Virga, Clarence Zacher, Jim Ziebol.

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KAMCHATKA GULL – Pt. 1 – Bill Rudden
(Likely first record for interior states)



top: ring-billed, mew, kamchatka
sketch: Jim Ziebol

KAMCHATKA GULL – Pt. 1 (Continued)

On Sat. Feb. 23, 2008 about 10a.m. Dan Kassebaum had just called Charlene Malone, the St. Louis go-to bird lady. He was reporting a adult Mew gull, he had found at the sailboat marina, Carlyle Lake. Clinton county Illinois.

I happened upon Dan and he related the story. But of course the bird had just flown from the ice, main lake side of the harbor. He proceeded to re-find the gull, when it came back into the marina. My first comment after getting binos on the gull was "*it's huge*". We both got back in our vehicles for warmth and to steady the scopes for pics.

The **near adult bird (white tail but dark marks on primary coverts)** seemed surprisingly **large, darker-backed and long-billed** than expected for Mew gull.

The gull was close and very co-operative. Flying on/off the ice and dock and chiseling fish from the ice at leisure. The marina was active with 200 plus gulls, mostly ring-billed, that were occasionally spooked. They would circle high in the air and resettle again to the raucous feeding routine, among the cove full of tarped sailboats.

With the Mew scared off again, We regrouped and began to discuss and eliminate other possibilities. Dan carried "Gulls of the Americas"(Howell, Dunn) and "Gulls" (Olsen, Larsson) in his blue pick-up. Common, Kamchatka and Russian types were mentioned.

Dan didn't like it when I asked "*This isn't a small California gull?*"
dark back; dark eye; blue/green legs and long thin bill with almost no gony.

Dan quickly put that scare to rest. Pointing out the **white tongue tips on the inner primaries (P5,6,7)** That and the bill: too thin, lacking red/black gony spot.

Then the hunters begin to arrive. Disguised as listers, these guys come to observe the prey and learn what tactics the successful hunter used.

Oddly, the first two show up driving similar Subaru SUV. Joey, then Dave with Tom riding shotgun. Travis drives in from Decatur. (Eads, Rogles, Bormann and Mahan)

The search and find, show and tell birding continues through the afternoon. Five more birders view the gull. Charley Marbut; Charlene, Jim Malone; Mark and Mike Seiffert.

Tom and Travis secure great pics. We joking call it a mini slaty-backed. Remember the slaty-backed gulls beginning. First found near St. Louis, MO. Fifty miles east of Carlyle IL. (winter of 1983,84) Then started to turn-up on California beaches.

The discussion closes with the loss of daylight. All the field marks fit Kamchatka, but we can't eliminate 3rd cycle Mew. We are down to a single primary feather. P8.

PART 2

Web birding begins: What did the experts say.

What the heck is a Kamchatka gull: Range and probably other records.

(Editor's Note – Pt. 2 had not been received by press time. Check the next issue for the rest of this interesting story.)

BOTANY FIELD REPORTS – George van Brunt

January 7, 2008 Botany Field Trip

Twelve botanists met at Lower Meramec County Park on an unseasonably warm (60's), windy, partly cloudy day. We walked the paved path, botanizing in this rich Meramec River bottomland. A few species were actively growing including *Lysimachia nummularia* (moneywort), *Glechoma hederacea* (ground ivy), *Stellaria media* (common chickweed), and *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle). All of the foregoing species are introduced species in North America. We also noted many dormant species including *Ilex decidua* (deciduous holly) with a very few of its red fruits remaining, and *Celtis occidentalis* (hackberry) with its characteristically bumpy bark and tightly appressed buds. Father Sullivan identified an American elm (*Ulmus americana*) by its reddish-brown, smooth buds with large leaf scars. *Gleditsia triacanthos* (honey locust) was identified by its characteristic branched spines. *Acer saccharinum* (silver maple) had opposite leaf scars which either touched each other around the twig or were connected by a stipular groove, like the leaf scars of its close relative, *Acer negundo* (box elder). *Solanum carolinense* (horse nettle), a member of the nightshade family, was identified by its yellow, tomato-like fruits on the senescent stems. In an open field, we identified the senescent plants of *Spermacoce glabra* (smooth buttonweed) with button-like, round seedheads. *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus* (coral berry) was seen with its characteristically coral-colored fruits, which are drupes. Female *Dioscorea villosa* (wild yam), a dioecious species, had fruits which were 3-winged capsules with very wide winged seeds.

January 14, 2008

Thirteen botanists met at Emmenegger Nature Park in Kirkwood on a cloudy, breezy day with temperatures in the 30's. We walked part of the paved path and then left it to walk the entire unpaved trail. This park was heavily infested with invasive exotics especially *Lonicera maackii* (bush honeysuckle), *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), and *Euonymus hederaceus* (wintercreeper), but also some *Alliaria petiolata* (garlic mustard). As in recent weeks, we identified active plants, dormant plants, and senescent plants.

Menispermum canadense (moonseed), a dormant perennial vine, was identified by its bright yellow twigs and leaf scars, each with a line partially bisecting it. *Vitis aestivalis* (summer grape) vines were identified by their fibrous bark, while *Ampelopsis cordata* (raccoon grape) vines were identified by their deeply incised bark. We identified *Viburnum rufidulum* (southern black haw) by its rust-colored buds, and *Diospyros virginiana* (persimmon) by its smiling leaf scar under a small black bud. *Ptelea trifoliata* (wafer ash) had recessed buds, flush with the stem surface; each squarish bud was bordered on three sides by a leaf scar. *Amelanchier arborea* (serviceberry) had very slender, sharply pointed, reddish buds. Considerable study and discussion revolved around winter identification of *Ulmus americana* (American elm) and *Ulmus rubra* (slippery elm). We observed that the twigs of the American elm were reddish-brown while those of slippery elm were more grayish. The American elm buds were reddish-brown, smaller, and had more noticeable bud scales than slippery elm buds which were somewhat larger, darker, and with less noticeable scales.

Father Sullivan found several small galls on *Celtis occidentalis* (hackberry) caused by psyllid insects. Psyllids, sucking insects also called jumping plant lice, usually are monophagous or oligophagous, feeding on only one or a few species of plants. Several species of *Pachypsylla* form galls on different parts of hackberry trees. One monophagous hackberry psyllid,

Pachypsylla celtidisvesicula, looks like a miniature cicada, so tiny that it could crawl through the openings in most screens. The adults, which overwinter in bark crevices of various tree species, lay eggs in the hackberry leaf buds in early spring. The nymphs that hatch stimulate the abnormal growth of leaf cells causing the formation of galls in which they live and feed during the spring and summer. The nymphs leave the galls in fall and molt to become adults. *Pachypsylla celtidisvesicula* produces only one generation per year. An infestation of these insects has little or no effect on the health of the hackberry tree.

January 21, 2008 Botany Field Trip

Four warmly dressed botanists met on a cold, clear, breezy morning at Hunters Ford County Park on the Meramec River near Allenton Access. We walked a dirt road that formerly served summer houses on the river. The houses are gone and in their place is an interesting variety of plants growing in sandy, floodplain soil.

Dormant trees we identified included *Maclura pomifera* (Osage orange), *Betula nigra* (river birch), *Juglans nigra* (black walnut), *Carya cordiformis* (bitternut hickory), *Quercus imbricaria* (shingle oak), *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw), *Platanus occidentalis* (American sycamore), *Gleditsia triacanthos* (honey locust), *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (green ash), and *Quercus velutina* (black oak).

We also found *Aristolochia tomentosa* (Dutchman's pipevine) and *Campsis radicans* (trumpet creeper), both dormant and fruiting. There were large numbers of *Opuntia humifusa* (prickly pear cactus) as well as *Heterotheca camporum* (prairie golden aster) and *Vernonia arkansana* (Ozark ironweed). Grasses included *Elymus virginicus* (Virginia wild rye), *Sorghum halepense* (Johnson grass), *Chasmanthium latifolium* (inland oats), and *Panicum virgatum* (switch grass).

Finally, we found *Amsonia illustris* (Ozark bluestar). This species is found only in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri. In Missouri, it grows in a scattering of counties south of the Missouri River. It is a member of the Apocynaceae, the same family as Indian hemp or dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*). Ozark bluestar prefers streamside habitat and can be recognized other times of year by its lustrous upper leaf surfaces, referred to by its species name. We found the plant senescent and fruiting. The thin tubular fruits are easily broken open revealing small, very dark, tubular seeds stacked end to end.

January 28, 2008 Botany Field Trip

Twelve WGNSS botanists met at the Visitor Center in Forest Park where we met our hosts, Steve Buback and Chris Ferree, employees of Forest Park Forever. Steve and Chris guided us on a tour of the Steinberg Prairie, a 17 acre site near the Steinberg Skating Rink that 8 years ago was lawn interspersed with trees and shrubs. Forest Park Forever is slowly transforming this area into native prairie. As we toured this area, we identified many native and exotic plants.

We found 2 species of witch hazel, the native *Hamamelis vernalis* (Ozark witch hazel) and *Hamamelis mollis* (Chinese witch hazel) a native of central China. The Ozark witch hazel was just beginning to bloom, while the Chinese witch hazel had just finished blooming. Grasses growing on the prairie, most still with fruits, included *Elymus canadensis* (nodding wild rye), *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass), *Panicum virgatum* (switch grass), *Elymus virginicus* (Virginia wild rye), and *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem). Other herbaceous plants were *Desmanthus illinoensis* (bundle flower) and *Rudbeckia hirta* (black-eyed Susan).

Many trees and shrubs were also growing in this area. They included *Corylus americana* (hazelnut), *Rhus glabra* (smooth sumac), *Magnolia virginiana* (sweetbay), *Salix matsudana* (corkscrew willow), *Gymnocladus dioica* (Kentucky coffee tree), *Quercus bicolor* (swamp white oak), *Hypericum prolificum* (shrubby St. John's wort), and *Ulmus pumila* (Siberian elm).

SNAIL SURVEY OF LaBARQUE CREEK WATERSHED – Nels Holmberg

A snail survey of the LaBarque Creek Watershed is important to supplement fish, plant, and bryophyte surveys' showing the watershed is a jewel of biodiversity. Missouri has 106 land snails and we hope to find many of them in the watershed.

Ron Oesch will direct a team of volunteers assembled by Bob Coffing & Nels Holmberg from the MDC Master Naturalists program, Webster Groves Nature Study Society, LaBarque Creek Stream Team, local residents, and other interested individuals.

Time frame: February 2008 to June 2009.

Spring dates:

March 1, Saturday:	Don Robinson property
March 13, Thursday:	LaBarque Creek CA
March 29, Saturday:	LaBarque Creek CA
April 8, Tuesday	LaBarque Creek CA
April 19, Saturday	Hilda Young CA, LaBarque Creek Festival
May 5, Monday	LaBarque Creek CA
June 8, Sunday	Hilda Young CA, for net sweeping vegetation.

Meet at the LaBarque Creek Conservation Area parking lot at 9 AM, except for the 2 dates when we will meet at the Hilda Young CA.

Snail identifications will be done by Ron Oesch, co-author of :

Missouri Aquatic Snails (1995)

Missouri Land Snails (in press, hopefully 2008)

Larry Watrous website for Missouri land snails:

http://www.lwatrous.com/missouri_mollusks/landsnails/data/MO_landsnails.php

From the British Snail Survey:

“Scientists also use certain types of snail as an indicator of the health of an environment, like a "canary in a coal mine". The health and diversity of these more sensitive snail populations provide a window into the quality of the air, soil and water. Because they move extremely slowly and are vulnerable to environmental changes, such as temperature, water, soil chemistry and weather, they respond quickly when their environment is changed. Understanding the health of these indicator snail populations is a good indication of the health of other species in the environment.”

BIRDINGFEST OF SOUTHERNMOST ILLINOIS – Joe Merkelbach

>Hi,

- > Would like to have your help in publicizing the Birdingfest of
- > southernmost Illinois - April 25, 26, and 27, 2008. The website
- > is: <<http://www.birdingblitz.org/>>www.birdingblitz.org. On
- > Saturday and Sunday there will be field trips and events based from
- > the Barkhausen center, an Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- > interpretative site. There will be a nominal fee for some events,
- > but all are open to public participation. The International Crane
- > Foundation will present two programs on sandhill and whooping
- > cranes on Sunday afternoon.
- > Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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>Southern Illinois Audubon Society

Joe Merkelbach
President

NEW MEMBERS – Paul Brockland

James S. Koene, PO Box 1274, Maryland Heights, IL 63043

Kelly Smith, 316 Atalanta, Webster Groves, MO 63119

Justin Shew, 104 Bell Canyon Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679

Eliot Porter, 341 Westgate Ave., St. Louis, MO 63130

WGNSS BIRDING – Jackie Chain

Birds of note:

A year bird for all of us: first cycle GLAUCOUS GULL first reported 2/27 at Riverlands.

Great Egret at ILL 203 Bend/Layton Rd, possibly same as reported near 111 on 2-27.

2 Am Black Ducks across from Alton Barge.

Northern Shrike NOT found.

We began our birding at Horseshoe Lake Bend/Layton Road off ILL 203. No Gyrfalcon nor the Peregrine Falcon two of us had seen there 2-25 were found. The Peregrine with dark helmet we identified as an immature female because of size and streaked rather than barred breast; pointed crossed falcon wings extended almost to the end of the tail which was not overly long. Thursday a few Bald Eagles peppered the trees along the road or terrorized the big Ring-billed Gull flocks sitting on the ice of the big lake. A Red-tailed Hawk with belly band was sitting in a distant tree that had a makeshift undisguised stand and flimsy ladder on the far side of a field before the railroad tracks.

On the first small pond on the right just past the gate near the end of Layton, we refound the

same cast that had been there Monday: Gadwall, Mallards, N Shovelers, 2 Green-winged Teal, a single Canvasback, Ring-necked, 2 Lesser Scaup, Ruddys, Am Coots. The Teal and the Gadwall particularly displayed their beauty in the soft light. The ducks were swimming back and forth in the small area of open water, splashing around bathing or standing or feeding bottoms up, sitting or walking on the ice, ...a very peaceful scene. One of the group spotted a single Great Egret on the far side of the pond, head pulled in, hunched shoulders. None of the birds paid any attention to twelve birders "hiding" in four cars who were enjoying the morning with them. On the way in and back from 203 in the limited areas of open water in the lake, Common Mergansers were plentiful, a few Red-breasted and a few Hooded Mergs, several sizable flotillas of Ruddy Ducks, more Mallards, more Scaup,

Several Great Blue Herons flushed as we drove along the lake road; each had been watched carefully by its own gull, eager to try to steal any spoils of a successful fishing attempt. We saw two Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a N Flicker and a Downy as we came back down Layton Road. Near the houses on Bend Rd we saw White-throated, White-Crowned and Song Sparrows.

A lunch stop at the Horseshoe Lake causeway off Hwy 111 brought more of the same ducks and herons. Two swans were seen flying off to the north, possibly the Mute Swans that had been sighted there earlier in the year and for the last two or three years.

Three cars went on to Riverlands. Several Wild Turkeys were beside Hwy 143 along with three or four deer. A Bald Eagle was sitting near the old 143 roadside nest where two had been the day before, apparently a pair from the size difference. Two Am Black Ducks were refound in the marshy area across from Alton Barge. After briefly checking Lincoln Shields and circling back under the bridge we found the GLAUCOUS GULL with Ring Bills and Herrings very close to the road just beyond the Ellis Bay parking lot.

We saw many Bald Eagles of various ages and plumages standing on the ice or sitting in the bigger trees on the Missouri side of the Clark Bridge. At least half the flock of 150+ White-fronted Geese seen in Ellis Bay the day before across from Teal Pond seemed to have overwintered there. There were fewer Trumpeter Swans in that mix and no Tundras were identified. There were several small Canada type geese with tiny bills. The big flock of Eurasian Tree Sparrows popped up to the top of the grasses by HQ. Plenty of Am White Pelicans remained below the dam. A Cooper's Hawk, a possible Sharp-shinned, an Am Kestrel and one or two N Harriers were seen as we headed down the Confluence Rd in search of the elusive Northern Shrike...no luck once again. A few scattered Horned Larks, but no flocks of small birds with or without black tails crossed the road.

It was a cool but beautiful day to be out birding.

Webster Groves Nature Study Society
Founded 1920

GROUP ACTIVITY/WALK SCHEDULES

March 2008 Update

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Place</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Leader</u>
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ORNITHOLOGY – SATURDAY BIRD WALKS – David Becher (314-576-1146)
(If destination not given, it's "Where the Birds Are". Always bring lunch.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Place</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Leader</u>
March 15	Riverlands Teal Pond Pkg. Lot	8 AM	Becher
March 22	Des Pere Park	8 AM	Becher
March 29	Des Peres Park	8 AM	Becher
April 5	Des Peres Park	8 AM	Becher
April 12	Tower Grove Park	8 AM	Becher
	(Gaddy Bird Garden) April		
April 19	Busch Wildlife Area	8 AM	Becher
	(Alden Knight Hampton Lake)		
(Exit from US 40 at first exit after crossing Missouri on Rte. 94 and follow signs)			
April 26	Tower Grove Park	8 AM	Becher
	(Gaddy Bird Garden)		
May 3	Des Peres Park	8 AM	Becher
May 10	WGNSS Birdng, BIG DAY		
May 17	Castlewood State Park	8 AM	Becher
	(Meet near Boat Launch)		
May 24	Des Peres Park	8 AM	Becher

*On Ballas Rd, just north of Manchester)

**From I-70 go north on Route 367 toward Alton. Turn right into Riverlands at gasoline station just before bridge over Mississippi River.

ORNITHOLOGY – THURSDAY BIRD WALKS – Jackie Chain – Leader (314-644-5998)

The group will continue to meet at 8:30 AM at Des Peres Park parking lot north of City Hall and the Lutheran Church and School at the northeast corner of Manchester and Ballas. This is northeast of West County Mall and is accessible from the Park entrance off Manchester and from two entrances off Ballas. We will decide on our destinations each Thursday depending on weather and where desired birds have been reported. We carpool from there and take lunch in the field. For best results, bring binoculars.

For questions on birding days you may reach me at my home phone above and my email: chainjac@sbcglobal.net.

On birding days, my cell phone should be turned on at 314-497-1628. Possible changes will be advised as necessary. Our group looks forward to seeing you out there!

ORNITHOLOGY - SUNDAY BIRD WALKS – Jim Ziebol (314-781-7372)

(New birders are **cautioned** to dress for the weather. Bring binoculars if you have them.)

Date	Meeting Place	Time	Leader
March 30	Busch CA Visitor Center	8 AM	T. Parmeter
April 6	Horseshoe Lake Causeway	8 AM	F. Holmes, J. Ziebol
April 20	Castlewood S. P. Hqtrs.	8 AM	M. Terpstra
April 27	T.G. Park, Gaddy Bird Gdn.	8 AM	S. Clubb
May 4	T.G. Park, Gaddy Bird Gdn.	8 AM	B. Bailey, D. Garcia
June 1	Busch CA Visitor Center	8 AM	T. Parmeter

*Riverlands MBS – Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary

BOTANY WALKS – Jeannie Moe – Co-Chair , Co-Leader (636-946-9802)

**George Yatskievych – Co-Chair (314-577-9522) – Work Phone
Leader – Fr. James Sullivan (starting his 42nd yr. in January, 2008)**

Botany walks are on Monday. The Botany group visits many of the same locations as the Bird and Butterfly Groups: Busch Conservation Area, Shaw Nature Preserve, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Babler State Park and Cuivre River State Park. Learning plants will help you learn butterfly host plants. Sign up for Botany Group E-mails from Jack Harris (jahar@mac.com) or 314-368-0655 and receive an E-mail every Sunday, sometimes earlier, about the next Monday's trip.

ENTOMOLOGY GROUP ACTIVITIES – Rich Thoma, Chair (314-965-6744)

Sunday, March 30 at 7 PM - Mike Arduser, from the Missouri Department of Conservation will give a talk entitled, "Missouri's Natural Heritage Database". Mike will be talking about the Department's efforts to gather data about all the plants and animals found on Conservation lands. We will be meeting at the regional MDC office at Busch Wildlife Area. Directions to Busch Wildlife area are as follows: From St. Louis, take highway 64/40 west. Cross the Missouri River. Take the first exit, highway 94 in St. Charles county. Make a left turn on 94 going southwest and drive approximately 1 mile. Make a right turn on highway D going west approximately 1 mile. Go in the main entrance to Busch Wildlife Area and drive to the main visitors building. Someone will be at the building entrance to guide you to the meeting room. Should you lose your way, call 314-541-4199 for additional help.

Sunday, April 27 at 7PM - Chris Brown, expert natural history photographer will give a

talk entitled, "The New World of Digital Insect Photography". Look for Chris to offer lots of useful tips on how to take expert photos of insects and other small creatures. Chris will also be showing his photos of many different varieties of insects he has found. Expect great photos of beetles and butterflies. We will be meeting in room 142, Biology Department, MacElwane Hall on the campus of St. Louis university. For directions to this event, feel free to contact Richard Thoma at (314-965-6744) or thomarkas4@sbcglobal.net .

Sunday, May 18 at 7PM – Two to three experts will each give a demonstration on how to "Properly Preserve Insects". This will be a great opportunity to learn how best to preserve the insects you collect so that they last a long time and are scientifically valuable. We will be meeting in room 142, Biology Department, MacElwane Hall on the campus of St. Louis university. For directions to this event, feel free to contact Richard Thoma at (314-965-6744) or thomarkas4@sbcglobal.net .