



nature notes

Journal of Webster Groves Nature Study Society

January 1998 Vol. 70, No. 1

January Meeting

Doug Corbett

The January meeting will take place on Friday, Jan. 9, at 8:00 PM at the St. Louis County Library. Our speaker will be Steve Best from the Three Dimension Club of St. Louis. This club specializes in 3-D photographs and requires a special projector, screen and glasses to view the photographs. Steve and Ed Emery will bring all these for our view pleasure. Join us for unique view of plant life and the natural world!

I would like to extend a special thanks to Mike Arduser, November's speaker. His presentation on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan was exceptionally given, with slides and his experiences. The after-show discussions brought about an interested exchange of information. ~

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Fall Botanizing

Carl Darigo

Botany Group Thursday outings continued throughout the fall season, with the following members attending one or more times, Father James Sullivan, Leonard Blake, Marvin Boisseau, David Bruns, Jeanne Clauson, Carl Darigo, Paul Dunbar, Catherine Filla, Karen Haller, Pat and Jack Harris, Louise Langbein, Jim Lightfoot, Karen Meldrum, Harold Meyer, John Molyneaux, Betty and Bob Nellums, Tom O'Gorman, Mark Peters, Marge and Jim Ruschill, Suzy and Dick Russell, and Lila Traeger.

September 4, Howell Island Conservation Area, St. Charles County—11 people turned out on a pleasant, 70°, early fall day to find a variety of interesting plants, although rebuffed several times by luxurious, jungle-type growth and steep river banks. As hikers threaded their way through tree-like stands of *Conyza canadensis* (horseweed) and pollen-laden *Ambrosia trifida* (giant ragweed), a scenario which Father Sullivan recommended as good training for an Ecuador trip, some potential hay-fever sufferers were understandably anxious. Regardless, some nice plants were seen
continued on p. 3

Welcome to new members...

Doyle BanksManchester
Paul & Emily Dunbar.....Maplewood
Marge Chappuis..... St. Louis
MO Botanical Garden Library..... St. Louis
Ron & Sandy Charles Town & Country
Gretchen Berland..... University City

Publications of Interest:

Jack Harris

Missouri Department of Conservation Wildlife Diversity Report

July 1996–June 1997, prepared by Dennis E. Figg and Carol Davit. Size: 8.5" x 11" x 76 pages. MDC's report on its many natural history activities (i.e., other than the education, hunting, fishing, and forestry functions). Report subject areas include: Restoration & Recovery, Research, Surveys, Monitoring, Wildlife Diversity Planning, Natural Areas, Natural Heritage Data Base, Rare & Endangered Species summary, etc. Those who wish to be informed about the status of the native flora and fauna of Missouri will find much of interest here. MDC is the steward of about 900 thousand acres of select public lands in the State, so there is ample subject matter. Copy available by writing to Missouri Department of Conservation, Natural History Programs, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO, 65102-0180. ∞

Big River Flood Plains, Sloughs, Backwaters—a threatened living space for many of our native floral and faunal communities.

The Missouri River once meandered 544 miles from Rulo, Nebraska to its mouth just north of St. Louis. It now courses less than 500 miles to the same point. Between 1879 and 1972, 50% of the original water surface area was lost and 98% of the land surface area of river islands was eliminated. (*Changes in the Channel of the Lower*

Missouri River and Effects on the Fish & Wildlife, by John L. Funk and John W. Robinson, Aquatic Series No. 11, MO Department of Conservation, 1974.) The channelizing and levee proliferation that produced this phenomenon was paid for by the US taxpayer and executed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The '93 floods abruptly reversed various parameters of these trends and produced an opportunity to try to salvage some Missouri's most threatened plant and animal natural communities. Hence the Big Muddy Wildlife Refuge was established in 1994 with authority to purchase 16,628 acres from willing sellers. ∞

Towards a Further Remedy

The US Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS) is now proposing to increase the authorized acreage of the Big Muddy Wildlife Refuge to 60,000 acres. The details of the proposal are contained in *The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)*—size: 8.5" x 11" ≈ 200 p. Readers may prefer to review the *DEIS-Summary*, 27 p.

The public is invited to send comments on the proposal to Ms. Judy McClendon, EIS Project Manager, US Fish & Wildlife Service, 24385 State Highway 51, Puxico, MO, 63960; or call 1-800-686-8339.

Ask the USF&WS to restore the threatened natural communities of our native flora and fauna and add 60,000 acres to the Big Muddy Wildlife Refuge. Comments must be received by January 7, 1998.

Missouri Natural Resources Conference—MO Natural Areas

Mark your calendar! The 1998 Missouri Natural Resources Conference—formerly called the Missouri Forest, Fish and Wildlife Conference—will be held February 18–20, 1998 at the Tan-Tar-A Resort on the Lake of the Ozarks.

On Friday, February 20, 1998, 8:00–12:30 PM a Missouri Natural Areas Session is scheduled to take place. This session includes 11 technical papers on the areas of scientific studies and management issues related to the Natural Areas of Missouri. For example there are 5 papers on prairies, 2 on insect distribution and response to seasonal burn events, one paper on the deer impact on native flora species, and one on the composition of understory vegetation in oak savannas, etc., etc. Registration is required to attend the various functions over the three day conference. For more info: Mike Currier (573) 526-2990, or: mcurrier@mail.state.mo.us

This annual event is attended by several hundred professional and academic stewards and students of Missouri's public and private natural resources—forest, fish, wildlife & other natural communities. Members interested in the “state of our national heritage” will find the proceedings of interest.

Fall Botanizing, cont.

including *Bidens cernua* (nodding bur marigold), *Mimulus ringens* (Allegheny monkey flower), *Ammannia coccinea* (long leaved toothcup), *Artemisia annua* (sweet wormwood), *Scutellaria lateriflora* (mad dog skullcap), *Lindernia dubia* (false pimpernel), *Penthorum sedoides* (ditch stonecrop) and *Ipomoea lacunosa* (small white morning glory). Along the river bank were found abundant growths of fall panic grass (*Panicum dichotomiflorum*), as well as creeping love grass (*Eragrostis hypnoides*) and the aptly named horsetail paspalum (*Paspalum fluitans*). Suzy Russell spotted showy blue cardinal flower (*Lobelia siphilitica*), but Jack Harris came up with the slightly-less-showy *Cuscuta gronovii* (Gronovius' dodder) and a tiny species nominated as “plant of the day,” awned cyperus (*Cyperus aristatus*). Father Sullivan

found cottonwood leaf beetles (*Chrysomela scripta*) feeding on cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and black willow (*Salix nigra*) leaves, and then 3 lady beetles of a species (*Neoharmonia venusta*) that specializes in eating *Chrysomela* larvae. Black lines on the cottonwood leaf beetle's back somewhat resemble writing, accounting for the species name.

September 11, Young Conservation Area, Jefferson County—another fine 70° fall day greeted 11 persons who covered trails adjacent to LaBarque Creek and surrounding forest. Suzy Russell spotted the “plant of the day,” slender ladies' tresses orchid (*Spiranthes lacera*). Other good finds were the bright orange *Euphorbia cyathophora* (painted leaf), *Gnaphalium obtusifolium* (sweet everlasting), *Agalinis tenuifolia* (slender gerardia) and *Cuphea viscosissima* (clammy cuphea). Father Sullivan's absence again led to some detailed field keying with *Bidens aristosa* (tickseed sunflower) being identified, but later studying was needed for *Solidago ulmifolia* (elm leaved goldenrod), *Diodia teres* (rough buttonweed) and *Liatris scariosa* (northern blazing star), the latter a fairly recent addition to Missouri's flora. A praying mantis was observed eating a monarch butterfly larva which in turn had been dining on common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) leaves. Capping the day, guide Jack Harris led the troops back to the cars via a bushwhack through the overgrown LaBarque Creek bottomland.

September 18, Shaw Arboretum, Franklin County—good fall weather continued as 12 persons toured the Prairie Trail, before naturalist James Trager led the group to a wetlands meadow. The prairie was resplendent with many colors, including bright yellow *Solidago altissima* (tall goldenrod), large white flowers of *Hibiscus lasiocarpus* (rose mallow), yellow *Helianthus maximilianii* (Maximilian sun-

flower), pinkish *Physostegia virginiana* (obedient plant) and the delicate sky-blue *Salvia azurea* (blue sage). Several other goldenrods with unique appearances were flat-topped *Solidago rigida* (stiff goldenrod), *S. speciosa* (prairie goldenrod) with oval shaped inflorescence and *S. riddellii* (Riddell's goldenrod) having clasping, decurrent leaves resembling a corn stalk. This week's honor for spotting the first slender ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes lacera*) orchid went to Jack Harris. In the wetlands meadow, James showed the group extensive stands of endangered *Boltonia decurrens* (decurrent false aster), as well as *Lobelia cardinalis* (cardinal flower), *Vernonia fasciculata* (western ironweed), *Aster puniceus* (glossy leaved aster), *Chelone glabra* (white turtlehead) and *Epilobium coloratum* (purple leaved willow herb).

September 25, Meramec Conservation Area, Franklin County—excellent weather continued with 12 participants enjoying a sunny, 75° day while touring the Woodland Trail in the Meramec River bottomland. Father Sullivan found the “plant of the day,” three bird orchid (*Triphora trianthophora*); several plants of this tiny orchid, which favors buried wood, were found below pine trees in a moist, shaded area. Luckily, this discovery was made near the trip's end, otherwise everything else would have seemed a big letdown. Nevertheless, some other plants seen included *Aster drummondii* (Drummond aster), a late-blooming *Tradescantia ohioense* (Ohio spiderwort), *Samolus parviflorus* (water pimpernel) and *Blephilia hirsuta* (wood mint). While observing the miniscule flowers of *Erechtites hieracifolia*, frequently called fireweed, Father Sullivan used an alternate common name, pilewort, much more descriptive because of the downy-like pappus. Mark Peters commented on several fruiting pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) trees as well as abundant red spicebush (*Lindera*

benzoin) berries, while Jeanne Clauson spotted the aptly-named fruits of doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*). Although not as spectacular as the orchids, grasses noted were forked panic grass (*Dichanthelium dichotomum*), hair grass (*Agrostis hyemalis*) and American beakgrass (*Diarrhena americana*), the latter with large, beaked spikelets. A *Laportea canadensis* (wood nettle) plant with only male flowers led to a spirited discussion defining monoecous (male and female flowers on same plant) vs. dioecous (male and female flowers on separate plants); apparently this species can be either, but the stinging of the nettles deferred any volunteers from pursuing further research into the matter.

October 2, Victoria Glades Conservation Area, Jefferson County—10 people enjoyed another good, 80° fall day, while touring the glade area. Again late in the trip, Father Sullivan again the “plant of the day,” this time *Buchnera americana* (blue hearts). Great Plain's ladies' tresses orchids (*Spiranthes magnicamporum*) were so plentiful that care was needed not to step on the plants. Some other plants of note were *Hypericum sphaerocarpum* (round fruited St. John's wort), *Sabatia angularis* (rose pink), *Solidago gattingeri* (Gattinger's goldenrod), seven aster species including *Aster sericeus* (silky aster), and *Sporobolus heterolepis* (prairie dropseed) which was very abundant over the glade. The group failed on two “tests,” *Heliotropium tenellum* (slender heliotrope) and *Helianthus rigidus* (stiff sunflower), but Pat Harris did answer the call on *Prenanthes aspera* (rough white lettuce). Large red-bottomed plant hoppers (*Poblicia fuliginosa*) were again found on *Brickellia eupatorioides* (false boneset) and the summer grapes (*Vitis aestivalis*) were much sweeter than last year, this year's trip being three weeks later.

October 9, Katy Trail State Park and Weldon Spring Conservation Area, St.

Charles County—although the day was warm enough at 75°, threatening rain reduced the group to six. The original idea was to go on the Katy Trail, and a short walk did find numerous, colorful *Solidago drummondii* (Drummond's goldenrod) hanging high on the limestone ledges. However, edges of the trail had been mowed, reducing plant diversity, so a switch was made to the nearby Lost Valley Trail. Among plants seen here were *Helenium autumnale* (autumn sneezeweed), *Perilla frutescens* (beefsteak plant) with very strong mint aroma, abundant *Leonurus sibiricus* (Siberian motherwort), *Agastache nepetoides* (yellow giant hyssop), *Aster lanceolatus* (tall white aster), and *A. drummondii* (Drummond aster), the last proving that Drummond crossed to both sides of Highway 94. The black, disk-like fruits of *Laportea canadensis* (wood nettle) were cautiously examined, as discussion again centered on the sexual configuration of this species. One hiker resembled a walking herbarium, with many plant parts clinging to her slacks, including members of four different families, hedge parsley (*Torilis arvensis*), beggar ticks (*Bidens sp.*), tick clover (*Desmodium sp.*) and stickseed (*Hackelia virginiana*). Jeanne Clauson identified a midland brown snake (*Storeria dekayi*); this snake's diet consists of earthworms and slugs perhaps contributing to the obvious offensive aroma, making the species name, after the early herpetologist DeKay, easier to remember.

October 16, Zahorsky Woods, Crawford County—the first chilly fall day, cloudy and 55°, greeted 13 participants who toured the hills and lowlands of this Nature Conservancy preserve. Prior to starting the walk, Father Sullivan exhibited a new exotic, *Fatoua villosa*, which he found in a restaurant parking lot and which has been invading Missouri. The plant, which somewhat resembles a nettle, but in the

Moraceae (mulberry) family, is spreading via bedding plants. Two highlights were again finding the unusual alternate-leaved dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) and arrow wood (*Viburnum molle*). Seven asters were seen, including *Aster linariifolius* (stiff aster) and *A. laevis* (smooth aster). While Jack Harris spotted the “plant of the day,” *Gentiana puberulenta* (downy gentian), on the glade, Father Sullivan successfully foiled Dick Russell's ruse, who alleged that *Quercus prinoides* (dwarf chinquapin oak) acorns collected in Arkansas, had fallen from a *Q. muehlenbergii* (chinquapin oak) tree. The group adjourned to the Nellums' cottage overlooking the Meramec River west of Steelville and enjoyed lunches in front of Betty and Bob's toasty fireplace.

October 23, Robertsville State Park, Franklin County—a cloudy, chilly day which eventually did warm to 60°, greeted 11 people, who checked areas near the boat access parking lot, then a section of the Meramec River Trail. Before beginning, Father Sullivan described the showy *Aster praealtus* (willow leaved aster) which was spotted along the railroad just outside the park. *Pyrrhopappus carolinanus* (leafy stemmed false dandelion) was found along the park road, then an open meadow normally under water in spring yielded several fruiting plants, including *Lycopus americanus* (American bugleweed), *Penthorum sedoides* (ditch stonecrop), *Ludwigia palustris* (water purslane), *Rorippa sessiliflora* (sessile-flowered cress) and non-native *Eragrostis cilianensis* (stink grass). Along the river trail, Father Sullivan continued his recent orchid spree by finding oval ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes ovalis*); this species is considered Rare on Missouri's Rare and Endangered list. Also near the river were seen *Carex grayii* (spaceship sedge) and several very large *Carya laciniosa* (shellbark hickory) trees, whose nut is considered very tasty, assuming one could get

through the outer shell. The group thought a "champion limb designation," should be accorded to a chinquapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) tree sporting a huge, horizontal, 75 foot long lower limb. During lunch on the river bank an osprey was seen flying down river.

October 30, Onondaga Cave State Park, Crawford County—flowering plants were becoming fewer, as seven persons covered the Blue Heron Trail, several park roads and a Meramec River gravel bar, on a typical 65° fall day. Some plants still showing flowers were *Aster lanceolatus* (tall white aster), *A. cordifolius* (blue wood aster), *Phlox paniculata* (perennial phlox) and *Helenium flexuosum* (purple headed sneezeweed). Two trees with distinctive fruits, American bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) and common hop tree (*Ptelea trifoliata*), caused confusion until Betty Nellums assigned the correct names. Two unusual finds were *Panicum gattingeri* (Gattinger's panic grass) on the gravel bar and *Usnea mutabilis* (red beard lichen), growing on a honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) tree. This fruticose lichen is at the north edge of the Missouri range, normally being found south central nearer to Arkansas. David Bruns spotted fruits of blackberry lily (*Belacanda chinensis*) and southern blue flag (*Iris virginica*), then called attention to a pileated woodpecker perched overhead. Numerous milkweed bugs seen devouring *Asclepias syriaca* (common milkweed) seeds were identified by Father Sullivan as *Oncopeltus fasciatus* (larger) and *Lygaeus kalmii* (smaller); Karen Haller felt that their orange and black coloring was appropriate for the Halloween season. The group was fortunate to find a heavily-fruiting *Vitis vulpina* (winter grape) vine, but cautiously field keyed the plant before sampling the delicacies, as Bob Nellums pointed out adjacent, look-a-like, but poisonous *Smilax hispida* (bristly greenbrier) berries.

November 6, Katy Trail State Park, St. Charles County—45° and a cold drizzle did not deter three adventurers from checking out the trail, west of Augusta. The miserable weather did have some advantage as speeding bikers were no problem. A small, fairly uncommon moss, *Bryum dichotomum* (two color thread moss) was found along the trail edge near the trail-head; this genus, with nodding capsules when fertile, has several species throughout Missouri. Beginning the winter bud season, 21 trees were identified, including Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*); Father Sullivan pointed out the recessed leaf bud craters separate from leaf scars, as compared to non-native tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) which has similar leaf scars, but adjacent buds. Bud identification proved valuable when an otherwise anonymous, large, leafless shrub showed the tell-tale large, white buds of poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*); hopefully, some poetic botanist will adapt the warning verse "leaves of three, let it be" to include "large white buds." Father Sullivan also demonstrated the rough ridges of very abundant *Equisetum hyemale* (winter scouring rush) used by pioneers for cleaning pots, then found the "plant of the day," *Geranium dissectum* (cut leaved cranesbill). This non-native plant with small bright purple flowers has so far only been found in a few Missouri locations. A stand of the gigantic grass, *Arundo donax* (giant reed), was seen along an Augusta street en route to Gonzo's Restaurant, where nice lunches of cabbage soup and bratwurst with sauerkraut were enjoyed.

November 13, Busch Conservation Area, St. Charles County—four people barely beat an oncoming snowstorm, while touring the north loop of Busch Hiking Trail, under 35°, cloudy skies. Many green leaves, plus one Adam & Eve orchid (*Aplectrum hyemale*) plant with seed pods,

were seen in a low, moist area off the trail. A multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), missing the characteristic rose hips, had the typical pectinate (comb-like) fringed stipules at base of leaf stalks. Father Sullivan pointed out several tree identification clues, including reddish bud, hairy tipped bud scales and scarcely indented leaves of *Quercus rubra* (red oak), darkened acorn cap scale tips of the black oak group, and the five, ciliate-edged leaflets of *Carya ovata* (shagbark hickory). Tom O'Gorman successfully responded to a Carolina buckthorn (*Rhamnus caroliniana*) test, while Karen Haller scored on two leafless tree tests, eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and American elm (*Ulmus americana*). One small *Rudbeckia triloba* (brown eyed Susan) flower was surviving the cold weather, but another tiny flower was found on *Cuscuta gronovii* (Gronovius' dodder). The parasitic dodder was attempting to strangle obnoxious, non-native *Lespedeza cuneata* (sericea lespedeza), our highway department's favorite plant.

November 20, Greensfelder County Park, St. Louis County—balmy 55° weather attracted a large assembly of 14, including new member Paul Dunbar, who toured parts of the Otis Brown trail. Father Sullivan demonstrated the grayish, “dusty” twig and stellate hairs of *Quercus stellata* (post oak) which account for the species name, the appressed buds of *Celtis tenuifolia* (dwarf hackberry), and cut a *Monarda fistulosa* (wild bergamot) stem to show the hollow interior. “fistulosa” means “hollow from top to bottom” which certainly describes the plant. Father Sullivan also explained that acorns of the black oak group require two years to develop, while debunking the myth that these tree fruit only every two years. Bob Nellums spotted a large hornet nest (luckily abandoned) overhead in a tree, while a menacing *Rubus phoenicolasius* (wineberry) plant with

abundant prickles was being tentatively keyed; flowers or fruit would be needed to confirm the identity of this exotic invader. Paul celebrated his first outing by finding *Peltigera rufescens* (curly dog tooth lichen) below a tree; the common name is thought to originate when used at one time for rabies cure, but the upturned white margins do resemble dog teeth. ∞

November Birding in St. Louis

Rose Ann Bodman

Bill Rowe and his class discovered a Red-throated Loon at Winfield Dam on Nov. 1. The Saturday field trip had the Pacific Loon (*JVB) at Riverlands where there were 2 Eared Grebes. At Horseshoe they found 25 Franklin's Gulls among the Ring-bills. The next day, Barbara Johnson had a Vesper Sparrow and a White-winged Scoter at Riverlands.

Barbara Elfman and Debbie Littmann discovered an American Bittern at the Busch Conservation Area's shorebird area on Jim Malone's bird walk on Nov. 2. At Fallen Oak Trail, the group had a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

A few tardy shorebirds were seen on the road to Winfield Dam on Nov. 4. Four Greater Yellowlegs, 7 Dunlin, 3 Common Snipe and a single Least Sandpiper were along the edge of the inlet.

Jack Van Benthuisen found an immature Surf Scoter at Riverlands on Nov. 6. That day Charlene Malone spotted a Black-legged Kittiwake among about 100 Bonaparte's Gulls at Creve Coeur Lake. Two Common Loons, and a few Common Mergansers and a Red-breasted Merganser were on the Lake. A few hours later when John Solodar searched unsuccessfully for the Kittiwake, he saw 2 White Pelicans. Jim Ziebol reported an additional 100 or more Bonaparte's Gulls at Horseshoe Lake on the 6th. By the 8th there were more than 50

Horned Grebes on Creve Coeur Lake with a few Bonaparte's remaining.

An adult male Rufous Hummingbird—an exciting first sighting for our area—had been present for a week at feeders at the Van Horn's residence in Kendall Hills, East Alton, when area birders investigated on the 7th and 8th. Birders flocked to see this tiny visitor which was still present on Dec. 4th. After seeing the hummer, Dave Bohlen found three Surf Scoters at Riverlands.

The third scoter of this winter, a Black, was observed on the 11th at Riverlands by Kent Lanert, Connie Alwood and Jack Van Benthuisen. They had a female Oldsquaw, another good winter sighting. A Peregrine Falcon perched on the concrete dam footing and devoured a gull. At Royal Landing, Mark Twain NWR, the trio had a Golden Eagle. Meanwhile at Hickory Hollow, Lake Carlyle, Dan Kassabaum had a winter adult Red-necked Grebe. On the 12th George and Terry Barker, Al Seppi and Dan Kassabaum found a Red-throated Loon at Carlyle.

Peter Hoell had a female White-winged Crossbill (*PH) at his home near Eureka on Nov. 13. The bird checked out the feeders, paused on a windowsill and was gone.

Five or six White-winged Crossbills were spotted in large hemlock trees at Elsay by Helen Wuestenfeld and Irene Mondhink on Nov. 14. When birders on the Saturday trip, led by Dave Becher, searched the next day, a single crossbill, was glimpsed by Jeannie Moe but disappeared before others arrived. At Riverlands they found the Black Scoter, Bald Eagles and Scaup. The group visited the Van Horn's yard for another look at the Rufous Hummingbird.

A flock of Lapland Longspurs were seen on Nov. 14 on Rd. #405 north of Keyesport, Ill.

At Riverlands on Nov. 16 a Laughing Gull was observed flying below the dam

and Short-eared Owls were at Clarence Cannon NWR.

A single female Common Redpoll was seen near the lake edge at Hazlet State Park, Carlyle Lake, on Nov. 18. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was near the dam.

Four Trumpeter Swans were seen in Ellis Bay across from the service station on Nov. 20.

On the 22nd the Saturday field trip went to Winfield Dam where they had a distant Oldsquaw, and a large flock of White Pelicans. There was a Loggerhead Shrike on a utility wire on the road to the dam.

John Solodar discovered a Red-necked Grebe at Creve Coeur Lake on Nov. 25. This obliging bird was still being seen at the end of the month.

Dave Becher found a Tundra Swan with 10 Trumpeter Swans at the pond along Hwy. 67 near Riverlands on Nov. 29th. At Carlyle Lake, Connie Alwood discovered a Clark's Grebe. The bird was straight out from the dam on the 29th. On Sunday the 30th, Steve Williams, Jackie Chain and Rad Widmer found 2 Tundras and 11 Trumpeters in the shallow water of the pond near Riverlands.

At the Arboretum, Gray's Summit, on the 29th, Paul Dunbar had 2 White-winged Crossbills in evergreens near beyond the turn off for Wolf Run Trail. The adult male and female or young male were found again the next day in the same tree. ♪

Year List

If you wish to be included in the list of birders who saw 200 species in the St. Louis area in 1997, please send your totals to Rose Ann Bodman, 1931 St. Clair Ave., St. Louis, MO 63144, by Jan. 5, 1998. ♪

Fall Birding Trips Were a Great Success—What's Next?

Jim Malone

The combined St. Louis Audubon Society (SLAS)/Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS) bird outings have been well attended this fall—by birders and birds. On October 5th, we met Dan Kassebaum and Al Seppi at Hazlet State Park on the west side of Carlyle Lake. We briefly birded some of the woods in the park, then moved over to the east side of the lake where most of us got decent views of a group of Sabine's gulls from Crappie Cove. In addition to this unusual gull, we also got to watch an Osprey fishing off the cove. Back on the west side of the lake, we moved to parking lot #3 north of Tamalco. This location is nearly always good for shorebirds, gulls, and waterfowl during migration, and today was no exception. Shortly after we began walking into the area, we saw Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, herons, egrets, Pectoral Sandpipers, and a number of peeps. A pair of American Avocets, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Plovers, American Golden Plovers, Stilt Sandpipers, and American Pipits rounded out a wonderful day at Carlyle.

Our next trip was to Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge on the Illinois River. See the details of this great trip in the following article.

On November 2, we met at Busch Conservation Area in St. Charles County, MO. Although recent construction and clearing activities at Busch have affected several premier birding locations, the group had a good day, identifying 55 species including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwings, several sparrow and duck species, and multiple raptors—including Bald Eagle and Osprey. The highlight of the day occurred at the shorebird area,

where a small group of birders flushed an American Bittern which flew a short distance into the shorebird enclosure where we were unable to re-locate it.

The most recent birding trip was November 22 at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area. We had a great turn-out for this walk as well, with good coverage by Audubon and WGNSS members. The variety of duck species this day was nearly as good as it gets in this area, with species highlights including several Redheads, Buffleheads, Ruddy Ducks, Greater Scaup, a Black Scoter and a Surf Scoter. The group saw hovering American Kestrels along the road at Riverlands, as well as Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, and Red-tailed Hawks. Ten Trumpeter Swans—including two which were very young—landed in Ellis Bay as we were leaving, allowing us to stop and study them for several minutes. Following the regular walk, several of us went to a private home in Wood River where an adult male Rufous Hummingbird has been appearing for a couple of weeks. The home owners graciously allowed us into their backyard to see this beautiful little bird. This was a good life bird day for many attendees.

On December 7th at 9:00 AM, we will be returning to Horseshoe Lake in southern Illinois. The group will meet at the first parking lot on the right after you enter the park. This time of year, Horseshoe Lake is typically good for waterfowl—often containing unusual grebes—and gulls, but the site can be good for raptor activity as well. We will likely inspect both sides of the lake, and some additional areas nearby.

In January—9:00 AM on the 10th to be exact—we will return to Riverlands for our first walk of the new year. By January, Riverlands is usually packed with Bald Eagles, Short-eared Owls, raptors (possibly Rough-legged Hawks), waterfowl, and

gulls. If the weather is especially cold, we may see some of the more unusual gulls—like Glaucous or Iceland—or perhaps a jaeger out on the ice.

As you can see, we are having a great deal of fun and success finding birds this fall, so come out and join us. The scheduled trips are typically led by two or more experienced birders who are ready and willing to help you find all the birds identified by the group. As always, our aim is to allow each participant a chance to see each bird, so we may move at a bit slower pace than some are used to. ~

Chautauqua NWR Trip Report:

Jim Malone

Near the end of October, 27 of us traveled to central Illinois for a week-end at the Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge—part of the Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge—and other sites along the Illinois River. The weather could have been a bit more cooperative, but this enthusiastic group of hearty souls was not about to let a little cold, or wind, or rain—did I mention snow?—stop them from having a great week-end! After breakfast on Saturday morning, we went to Sand Ridge State Forest near Chautauqua to see if we could find any irrupting winter finches. Although we did not find the Pine Siskins we had hoped for, we got great views of a number of wintering sparrow species, Red and White-breasted Nuthatches, woodpeckers, and finches. The highlight of this location had to be the lengthy spotting scope views we had of a group of 10 Red Crossbills—a life bird for many on the trip. The Crossbills would have made the whole trip worthwhile, but we were just getting started!

Next, we moved to a cross-dike which separates the two lakes at Chautauqua. The road atop this dike is an excellent vantage point from which to view both lakes. On

the road leading to the dike, some were lucky enough to see a small group of Brewer's Blackbirds, a Hairy Woodpecker, and chattering groups of American Goldfinches. The shallow water south of the dike contained thousands of ducks, geese, raptors, and some late shorebirds. To the north, diving ducks, more shorebirds, gulls, and waders made up most of the bird life. One little spit of sand on the north side held Ring-billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, American White Pelicans, and a lone Franklin's gull. Nearby, a Double-crested Cormorant and Horned Grebes took frequent dives for food while American Avocets, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Pectoral Sandpipers probed the sand and shallow waters. A small shorebird was also seen flying in a zigzag pattern common to phalaropes, but it was too far away to positively identify. The lake south of the cross-dike was covered with dabbling ducks of all kinds. There were also huge groups of Canada Geese, Snow Geese, and even a few Greater White-fronted Geese. Immature Bald Eagles cruising over the shallow waters of this lake often caused the air to fill with huge swirling masses of ducks and geese, but usually the eagles kept on flying, looking for easier prey—more on this later.

After a pleasant lunch out of the wind, we moved on to the Chautauqua headquarters where we ventured out along the 0.5 mile nature trail. Along this trail, there are 3 openings in the heavy woods where the trail meets the edge of the lake. At each of these locations, wooden platforms with built-in benches afford a panoramic view of the lower lake. From this vantage point, we were able to identify Blue and Green-winged Teal, American Black Ducks, Northern Pintails, American Widgeons, and Common Snipe—moving stealthily through the grass at the edge of the lake. Even though it was rather cold this Saturday, there were still some late Tree Swallows, a

Barn Swallow, and even a Purple Martin flying over the water looking for a bit of food on-the-wing. At one of the observation sites, a Tundra Swan was present at the edge of the lake, within easy spotting scope (and binocular) range. The last observation area along this trail held more of the same great numbers and variety of waterfowl, and something we hadn't expected. We watched a life-and-death struggle unfold immediately in front of us when an injured American Coot was repeatedly attacked by a third-year Bald Eagle. Although the Coot tried to hide in the nearby weeds, there simply wasn't anywhere to hide from the hungry eagle who finally carried off the Coot.

Sunday morning we had a hearty breakfast at one of the local hotspots, and started down the road back to St. Louis. The weather had gotten a bit worse overnight, with increased wind, more rain, and lowering temperatures. So, after breakfast, we spent some time at nearby Dixon Mounds inside their nice warm museum. The museum was an interesting change of pace which everyone seemed to appreciate. There were relatively few birds on grounds outside, but some of us were fortunate enough to see the resident white squirrel as he scampered up a tree near the parking lot.

On the way back down the Illinois River, we stopped briefly at Anderson Lake. Although the wind was getting colder by the minute, and there were only 3 birds visible on the water, the stop was worth it. One bird diving in the lake was a Common Loon, and flying above that was a Bonaparte's Gull. Further down the river, we entered the Meredosia portion of the Illinois River National Wildlife Refuge. As the wind remained steady, the rain began turning to snow, but not before we were able to find a nice pocket of various birds along the shallow bank of Lake Meredosia. Once again we saw a rather late American

Avocet, a nice group of Long-billed Dowitchers, and another good assortment of dabbling ducks including Wood Ducks. Although we decided to finish the trip with this stop, several birders went on to Riverlands for one last look before calling it a weekend. They were rewarded with another great collection of waterfowl including about a dozen Horned Grebes, and three Forster's Terns. In all, the weekend tally for bird species was 80, and everyone seemed to have a great time. Anyone wishing to get a copy of the accumulated birdlist for this trip or the Spring 1997 Mingo trip, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Jim Malone, 15424 Elk Ridge Lane, Chesterfield, MO 63017. ~

Pere Marquette Xmas Count

Helen Wuestenfeld

The Pere Marquette Xmas Count will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20. Some areas pre-assigned; others meet at Marquette Lodge by 7:45 AM. For more info. please call Irene Mondhink, 618-885-5233 or me at 618-498-5335. \$5 fee. ~

Busch Wildlife Area Count

Sun., Dec. 21 is the date for the Busch Count. Meet in the parking lot of headquarters at 8:00 AM. Be prepared for the weather and bring lunch. \$5 fee. Call Tom Parmeter: 921-6017. ~

Orchard Farm Xmas Count

Randy Korotev

The Orchard Farm Xmas Count will be Saturday, January 3, 1997. Call 935-5637 and leave a message. \$5 fee. ~



Deadline for Feb. issue is Jan. 9. Submissions, handwritten, typed, or 3" disk, IBM or Mac to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122

The Feisty Pine Siskin

J. Earl Comfort

The Pine Siskin is not only one of the smallest of the many kinds of birds that make up the finch family, we might say, it's in a class by itself because it is the only kind of siskin found in the entire USA.

As is the case with many of the winter visitors of the finch tribe found around Bourbon, it is a nomad, showing up in great numbers during some winters, while we experience difficulty listing even one in St. Louis in other years. Last winter, Pine Siskins were a drag on the market. Rest assured when, if they do show up, they are likely to find your feeder and take over, and may even out bully your much larger mockingbird.

In recent years, birders around St. Louis have been pampering siskins and goldfinches by filling special feeders with commercial thistle seed, which is right down the alley for these birds, which ordinarily feed on wild sunflower seeds until the supply is exhausted.

Your siskins may be plentiful or scarce as a direct result of the crop of seeds in the sweet gum trees. In the St. Louis region these popular trees decorate many lawns and are favorite trees in our many parks, favorites of the citizens and of the siskins. Another wild food supply is gleaned from sycamore trees, which grow seed-filled "balls" similar to those of the sweet gum. Suddenly a mixed flock of siskins and goldfinches may swoop down onto one of these trees to feed in a lively fashion, only to disappear as suddenly as they arrived. The goldfinches are no longer garbed in their bright yellow and black plumage that attracted us during the summer. Their siskin cousins, which can never boast of bright colors in any season, are easily separated from the finches by their heavy streaking. Many of these birds will drop to the ground



to feed on the fallen seeds. The siskins may be hard to locate because they usually match the grass beneath the trees.

While the Pine Siskins show little, if any, preference for pines in Missouri, it was evidently named for its love for evergreens in its nesting habitat, which is in the northern half of the US and all of Canada. The 4 1/2" siskin is brown streaked heavily above and below. Males and females are dressed alike except for a bit of yellow in the upper tail and in the wing bars of the males. This yellow is reserved for the adults, the immatures resembling the adult females. The yellow is more prominent in flight. The very short tail is notched. The thin pointed bill is far from the typical conical thick bill of the other finches. It has the ear marks of a warbler bill.

Around St. Louis, we await the arrival of this popular species during the fall migration. Will these seed eaters be plentiful or will they be scarce? Only time will tell. I hope you will have your full quota at Bourbon.

This article & drawing by Marjorie Richardson, first appeared in the *Bourbon Beacon*, Sept. 30, 1976. ~

Tyson Nature Line

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

Sigma Xi Seminars

Sigma Xi Science Seminars are co-sponsored by the St. Louis Zoo and the Academy of Science, on Wed. evenings, 7:30-9 PM, at the Living World, on the north side of the zoo. Free parking is available in the zoo's north lot. All events are free. For further information, call 768-5466 or 533-8083.

Jan. 28: How Animals See

Feb. 18: Urban Wildlife ~

Workshop On Gulls:

February 6-8, 1998

Bill Rowe

A workshop on gull identification will be offered February 6-8, headquartered at the Ramada Inn in Alton, ten minutes from Riverlands. Schedule and more details were published in Nov. *Nature Notes*.

Send registration and \$30 fee to:

Jean Graebner, Treasurer
1800 S. Roby Farm Rd.
Rocheport, MO 65279

Make checks payable to Audubon Society of Missouri. The deadline is January 5, 1998.

If you have questions, please call Bill Rowe at 314-962-0544 (evenings and weekends) or e-mail him at wr@tjs.org



Need directions?

Kirkwood Library, Board meeting

- The board usually meets on the first Wed. of the month, at 7:00 PM.
- 140 E. Jefferson, corner of Taylor & Jefferson.
- Take Lindbergh (Kirkwood Rd.), turn east on Jefferson—one block north of train station.

Tower Grove Park

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

West Co. Shopping Center

- Located at 270 & Manchester.
- Meet at the south (lower) parking lot, near Penney's, at lamp post #1. ~

1997-8 WGNSS Board

President: Sue Gustafson, 9007 N. Swan Circle, St. Louis MO 63144, 968-8128.

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Meetings

Wednesday Jan. 7:

7:00-8:30 PM Board meeting, Kirkwood Public Library. All members welcome.

Friday Jan. 9:

8:00 at St. Louis County Library Headquarters, Steve Best will present 3-D photos of the natural world.

Botany

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

Thurs. Dec. 18, Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26:

Field trips usually meet at 9:30 AM; trip is normally 3-5 hr. plus travel time. Led by Fr. James Sullivan. Call Catherine Filla, 481-5298, after 5 PM Wed. for location. No trip on 11/27 or 12/25.

Wednesday January 14:

7:30 PM Powder Valley Nature Center. This program will help you take your mind off of the dark and dreary days of winter. See and hear about the "incredible abundance and diversity" of wildflowers in southwestern Colorado. Presented by Dr. Larry Morrison, Pres. MO Native Plant Society.

Entomology

Sunday, January 25:

7:00-9 PM at Magner's, 516 Bacon Ave., Webster Groves. We continue our "Safari to Ecuador." Dave Vizintaner will discuss his collecting experience and display his insect specimens. Call 961-4588 for directions.

Birding

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

Thurs. Dec. 18, Jan. 8, 15, 22 & 29:

8:30 AM meet at West County shopping center, south lower lot behind Penney's, lamp post #1.

Saturday Dec. 20:

Pere Marquette Xmas Count! Fee \$5. Call Helen Wuestenfeld, 618-498-5335 or Irene Mondhink, 618-885-5233.

Sunday Dec. 21:

Busch Xmas Count! Meet at HQ at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch. Call Tom Parmeter 921-6017. Fee \$5.

Saturday Jan. 3:

Orchard Farm Xmas Count! Call Randy Korotev, 935-5637, and leave message. Fee \$5.

Saturday Jan. 10 & 24:

8:00 AM West County. Bring lunch.

Deadline

Deadline for submissions to Feb. "Nature Notes Events" is Jan. 9.

join WGNSS


















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

All events are free, except where noted. Bring a friend!

January 1998

Webster Groves Nature Study Society

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat


					1 bird West Co 8:30 	2	3 Orchard Farm Xmas Count 
4	5	6	7 7:00 PM board meet Kirkwood Library	8 bird West Co 8:30 botany 9am  	9 8:00 PM gen meet- Library HQ Nature N deadline 	10 bird West Co 8:00 	
11	12	13	14 botany 7:30pm Powder Valley 	15 bird West Co 8:30 botany 9am  	16	17	
18	19 M L King, Jr. Day Nature N mailing 10am 	20	21	22 bird West Co 8:30 botany 9am  	23	24 bird West Co 8:00 	
25  entomology Magners 7-9pm	26	27	28 Chinese/Japanese New Year 	29 bird West Co 8:30 botany 9am  	30	31	

December 1997

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February 1998

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Membership: Linda Virga, 9734 Antonia Dr., St. Louis MO 63123

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

established in 1920