Missouri Botanical Garden Invites Bird Watchers

Lydia Toth

In an effort to promote bird watching, the Missouri Botanical Garden will open at 7:00 AM on Thursday mornings, April 23 through May 14, for members of invited nature study/bird watching organizations. We are inviting members of WGNSS and St. Louis Audubon for these special mornings, allowing them access to the Garden before it opens to the general public at 9:00. This early opening will not be publicized to the public.

For WGNSS members to take advantage of this opportunity, they need only show proof of current membership to WGNSS and they will be given free admission between 7 and 9:00 on these Thursdays. The diversity of habitats at the Missouri Botanical Garden attracts a wide variety of birds, especially in the English Woodland Garden and areas with water features. We hope that WGNSS members will enjoy this unusual opportunity to visit the Garden during this special time. If you have any questions about this opportunity, please feel free to call me at 451-5312. ¬

Forest Park Savannah/Prairie Project

Sue Gustafson

“The first five miles of our route laid through a beautiful high level and fertile prairie which incircles the town of St. Louis.” Meriwether Lewis, from his journal of May 20, 1804.

Imagine strolling though seemingly endless acres of prairie and savanna which surrounded St. Louis in the early 1800’s. You’d see tall and short grasses, sedges, and wildflowers blending in a complex matrix of native plants. It’s an ecosystem that flourished in places like the west and north edges of what is now Kennedy Woods in Forest Park.

This vision of a habitat that was once so common here is now part of the Forest Park master plan. The boundaries are drawn, an implementation schedule is ready, the budget is prepared, and Citizens to Protect Forest Park, working with park staff, continued on page 2

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Forest Park Savannah cont.

are in the process of raising the needed funds to restore ten acres of savanna/prairie. They are seeking help from environmental groups and individuals throughout the St. Louis area.

The WGNSS board has authorized making a contribution of $200 to support this project. We would like to invite other interested members to make additional donations. The sooner the needed funds are raised, the sooner we all can enjoy a rarely seen ecosystem with a large botanical diversity, attractive to a variety of insect and bird species. Volunteer help will also be needed to help plant seeds, remove invasive non-native plants, etc. Future Nature Notes articles will announce the dates for the volunteer help days.

If you would like to make a donation to this project, please make out your check to WGNSS and mail to:
Forest Park Savannah Project
c/o Randy Korotev, WGNSS Treasurer
800 Oakbrook Lane
St. Louis, MO 63132

We'd like to receive all donations by April 15, 1998. Thanks for your help! ∞

Ornithological Conference in St. Louis April 6-12

The 1998 North American ornithological Conference will take place April 6–12 in St. Louis. The conference will include the annual meetings of the American Ornithologists’ Unions, the Association of Field Ornithologists, the Colonial Waterbird Society, the Cooper Ornithological Society, and the Wilson Ornithological Society, as well as a special symposium of the Raptor Research Foundation. For information, contact the Committee on Local Arrangements, Bette A. Loiselle, 314-516-6224, or John G. Blake, 314-516-6578.

Bette Loiselle has also requested that we provide local volunteers to help with registration during the conventions. Call her at the number above. Help is also needed to escort local field trips. Call Paul Bauer at 314-921-3972. Volunteers may get free passes to the convention sessions and social events. ∞

Lillian Nagel ★

Pat Diener

The Lilliput world of mosses belonged to Lillian, and she could guide us through the labyrinth of Latin terminology with grace and a light sense of humor. Her delightful pen and ink drawings illustrated the strange life cycles of lower plants with scientific accuracy.

Every month she and her partner, Peg Feigley, hosted the meeting of Lower Plants and tried to teach the very fine art of identifying these small flowerless plants with a hand lens. At the end of the lesson, Lillian prepared tea and served her delicious homemade cookies. We tried to absorb all this knowledge which she had gained in her study for her doctor’s degree. The all-day field trips were a revelation as she quickly identified the many varieties and delineated the appropriate microhabitat. Lillian and Peg also devoted time to helping establish an inventory of mosses at Tyson, Cuivre River State Park and other localities. She was so generous with her vast knowledge and so willing to teach. She gave much time to WGNSS and was respected by all who knew her.

Lillian was born in St. Louis on October 25, 1903 and passed away February 10, 1998 after an illness of more than two years. Before her retirement, she was Dean of Women at Harris Teacher College. A memorial service was held Sunday, February 15 at 3 PM at Friendship Village South. ∞
Audubon Society Of Missouri
Spring Meeting at Mingo NWR
April 24–26, 1998

Paul Bauer

The word has gotten around; the ideal place
to bird in late April is in southeastern
Missouri centered on Mingo National
Wildlife Refuge, Duck Creek Conservation
Area, and Lake Wappapello. April 24–26
will put us near the peak of spring migra-
tion for the returning migrants, since the
Mingo area is one week ahead of our St.
Louis area farther north.

All details for this trip are available in a
mail out package that you can request from
Paul Bauer at 314-921-3972, or:
PO Box 2085, Florissant, MO 63032.

Lodging: This year ASM will use a pri-
ivate Group Camp, SEMO, on Lake
Wappapello which offers much lower cost
than two nearby available motels. The camp
cabin has bunk beds, and tent camping is
permitted. They can accommodate 4 RV’s.

Food: The Saturday evening dinner and
Sunday lunch meals will be catered so we
can all be together. All other meals are on
your own: The Fisherman’s Net and Puxico
Restaurants are suggested since they are the
largest available.

Field Trips: Birding trips to all areas of
Mingo NWR, and to Otter Slough and Duck
Creek for shorebirds. Plant trips are also
offered to visit swamps and the unique
plants on Holly Ridge. Canoes may also be
available at the camp.

Make plans now to join the fun in this
unique region of Missouri in prime time!
Request your package of information
mentioned above.

Welcome to new members...
Dorothy Metzger ..................... Alton, IL
Sam & Connie Harrison............. St. Louis

January Birding In St. Louis Area

Rose Ann Bodman

On New Year’s Day many birders made a
point of looking for the Rufous
Hummingbird in East Alton and the
Sandhill Crane at Creve Coeur Lake. Both
of these rare winter visitors were still being
seen, but sometimes it took much patience
to accomplish the feat.

The Orchard Farm Christmas Bird
Count (CBC) on Jan. 3 had 22 participants
who logged 67 species, about average for
this count. An Eastern Phoebe and a
Peregrine Falcon seen by Paul Bauer, and
five Brewer’s Blackbirds—seen by Jim
Ziebol, Sue Gustafson and Jim Malone—
were the day’s best birds. The Phoebe and
the Brewer’s were documented. Randy
Korotev said because of the warm winter,
the group obtained the highest numbers in
more than 25 years for several species.
Included in this category were Northern
Pintail, 230; American Kestrel, 42; Eastern
Bluebird, 27; Cedar Waxwing, 273; White-
crowned Sparrow, 239, and Eurasian Tree
Sparrow, 343. However, he added, they
missed some of the usually common cold-
weather species such as Common Goldeneye
and Common Merganser.

At the Elsah CBC also on Jan. 3, Helen
Wuestenfeld’s group had Pine Siskins and a
Glaucous Gull.

Remaining at Riverlands in early
January were three Surf Scoters which
were usually hard to see in the rafts of
Common Goldeneye, Canvasbacks and
Lesser Scaup. Northern Harrier and Short-
eared Owl were also seen at Riverlands.
The owl, as always, was an elusive bird. On
Jan. 9th almost 200 Snow and White-
fronted Geese were seen there.

Many birders who went to Baldwin Lake
found a couple of Ross’ Geese among the
large flocks of Snow Geese.

Participants on the Saturday field trip,
led by Dave Becher on Jan. 10, were pos-
sibly the last birders to see the Rufous Hummingbird at East Alton. The bird appeared at the feeder after the group waited 45 minutes in mid afternoon. Earlier the birders failed to find the Sandhill, but at Portage des Sioux a startled Great Horned Owl flew out of a brush pile near the parking area and flew to a perch in a grove of trees. At Riverlands there were Bufflehead, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, amid the Canvasbacks and Common Goldeneye.

On Jan. 11, Steve Dilks found the Sandhill Crane in a field along the western lake trail in Creve Coeur Park.

Perhaps the largest influx of Purple Finches in recent years was reported on Jan. 16 from Busch Conservation Area (BCA) by Jim Ziebol. He found hundreds of the colorful finches as well as Pine Siskins at Fallen Oak Trail and the headquarters. Near Lake 19, Jim had a Northern Goshawk. This seems to be a good winter for Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher and Ruby-crowned Kinglets which have been reported by several birders at BCA, Baldwin Lake and Shaw Arboretum.

By the afternoon of the 16th, there was a third-year Lesser Black-backed, first-winter Great Black-backed, and two Thayer’s among the large flocks of gulls on the ice along Bend Road.

On Jan. 17, Jim Ziebol found interesting gulls, both Lesser and Great Black-backed, Glaucous, Iceland, Thayer’s amid thousands of Ring-billed and Herring gulls at the borrow pit, near Horseshoe Lake. The gulls roam around, feeding at the landfill and resting at the borrow pit, the fishing pond across from the salvage yard, or along Bend Road and at the end of Layton.

Another exciting bird, a Long-eared Owl, was hotlined by Dan Kassabaum on the 17th. The owl was in a cedar tree at Eldon Hazlet Park, Carlyle Lake. Dan also reported an Oldsquaw at the Carlyle Sewage Pond.

Jackie Chain found several Lesser Black-backed, a Glaucous, and one Great Black-backed Gull at Horseshoe Lake in mid-afternoon on the 18th. On Jan. 22, the Thursday birders found a full adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, several Black-crowned Night Herons and a Common Merganser at Horseshoe.

Nine Trumpeter Swans were on Creve Coeur Lake early on Jan. 24 when Dave Becher checked on his way to West County Center to lead the Saturday field trip. He found the Sandhill Crane at Sailboat Cove with the large flock of Canadas. Later that morning as Charlene Malone watched, 10 Trumpeters took off and flew away. The birding group had adult Lesser Black-backed and Thayer’s Gulls at the Horseshoe Fishing pond and at Mel Price Dam. There were dozens of Bald Eagles and many eagle watchers at Horseshoe. Three Killdeer were on ice near the shore. In the afternoon the group went to BCA where they found a few Purple Finches, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Jackie Chain spotted a Hermit Thrush.

Randy Korotev saw about 100 Greater White-fronted Geese at Riverlands on Jan. 25. Apparently they had spent the night and were leaving when Randy arrived about 9:30 AM.

Red-headed Woodpeckers, which seem to be wintering in good numbers this year, were seen by Thursday group at Shaw Arboretum on Jan. 29. They also had good numbers of Cedar Waxwings. A Red-shouldered Hawk was heard as well as seen.

**Correction:**
The Anna’s Hummingbird that frequented a feeder in Des Peres in Nov. and December was originally identified by David Becher and Jim Malone who were the first of many
birders who saw the first of its species to be documented in St. Louis. ♤

**We Plum Forgot!**

Charlene Malone

Yes, yes, we should be whipped with
binocular straps. Much to our chagrin—
actually, I’m blaming Jim—we forgot to
acknowledge Jack Van Benthuysen’s help in
compiling the composite bird list for
1997—and past years also—printed in last
month’s issue of *Nature Notes*. Without him
keeping such meticulous records off all the
birds seen, our job would be much harder.
Thanks, Jack! ♤

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

Sponsors: This will be the third native plant
conference organized by Shaw Arboretum
of the Missouri Botanical Garden. This year
we are pleased to announce that the
Missouri Department of Conservation is co-
sponsoring the event.

Location: Powder Valley Nature Center
in St. Louis (Kirkwood), Mo.

Purpose: The Shaw Arboretum Native Plant Conference is designed to increase
awareness and interest in the use of native
plants in the landscape. The goal of the con-
ference is to develop an understanding of
natural landscaping through a balance of
classroom lectures and hands-on, outdoor
workshops. Gardeners, horticulturists, en-
vironmental educators, landscape designers,
plant nuts, and the like can all benefit from
the lectures and workshops.

**Speakers:**

Sara Stein is a gardener, amateur ecolo-
gist and writer in the natural sciences. Her
books include *My Weeds*, a gardeners
botany, and *Noah’s Garden*, which relates
the ecological restoration of her property in
suburban New York. A sequel, *Planting Noah’s Garden*, describes her further ad-
ventures in backyard ecology, and explains
how to transform the traditional, lawn-
bound home garden to natural habitat.

Bret Rappaport is an attorney from
Chicago, a dedicated proponent of the natu-
ral landscape movement, and an avid home
gardener of native plants. His speaking en-
gagements and publications abound and
cover topics from backyard wildlife and
gardening with native plants, to the history
of the natural landscape movement and ur-
ban weed ordinances. Also, Bret is presi-
dent and a columnist of *The Wild Ones
Journal*, and field editor for *Wildflower*
magazine.

Steven Foster is an herbalist, photog-
raper, conservationist and researcher.
Steven Foster is the author of *Echinacea: Nature’s Immune Enhancer, Herbal Bounty: The Gentle Art of Herb Culture*, co-author of the *Peterson Field Guide to Medicinal Plants*. He is the leading authority in the
United States on the subject of *Echinacea*
and has lectured world-wide on medicinal
has become the standard reference on this
important herb.

Guy Stemberg has grown and studied
hundreds of different types of trees for
nearly 40 years. He is co-author (with Jim
Wilson of *The Victory Garden*) and pho-
tographer of *Landscaping with Native
Trees*, a reference book for natural land-
scape design and management. He has also
contributed to many other publications, in-
cluding Jim Wilson’s award-winning book
*Landscaping with Wildflowers, Taylor’s
Master Guide to Gardening*, and several
horticultural journals and popular maga-
azines.

Registration: The conference will be limited
to the first 300 registrants. Registration is
required; please contact: Shaw Arboretum,
PO Box 38, Gray Summit MO 63039—
314-451-3512 ♤
Our Bald Eagle, Bird of Renown
J. Earl Comfort

I'm sure few, if any, interpret our national emblem, the Bald Eagle, as a bald-headed bird such as a vulture. In fact, the head and neck of a fully adult-plumaged Bald Eagle are adorned by many snow-white feathers that stand out against the dark body. The entirely white tail, also quite prominent, makes identification of this big majestic bird easy. In the old days white and bald were interchangeable descriptions of colors. I'll bet you can figure out how it applies the "bald-faced lie."

While this bird appears around Bourbon, it is much more numerous in the St. Louis area, especially along the 3 big rivers, the Mississippi, the Illinois and the Missouri, all of which attract birds of many species throughout the entire year to our delight.

Annually, one day in February, is designated as eagle count day when the Bald and Golden Eagles are listed by many groups who cover the St. Louis area northward. The ages are designated as adult or immature. All eagles lacking the white heads and tails are classed as young birds, with the exception of the very few area Goldens. The total list is compiled and filed as a research project. Other areas also engage in this highly important count. The number of immatures determines the status of the balds. Without successful nesting, this endangered species is in further trouble.

The majestic Bald Eagle generally inspires awe, especially when seen for the first time. I recall an interesting event that took place several years ago when a local St. Louis radio station announced eagles had gathered in unusual numbers in Illinois along the Mississippi River between Alton and Grafton. On the following day, which was Sunday, our large birding group had set up telescopes in this area to check the ducks. Many sightseers got out of their cars excitedly asking where the eagles were, in spite of the fact many trees along the river were decorated with them. We switched our scopes to focus on adult eagles and invited look-sees. Soon there was a line at each scope eagerly awaiting a turn at an eagle. But for the radio announcement most of the pleasure drivers would never have suspected an eagle within miles.

Being noted fish eaters, the eagles are drawn to the river when pot holes cast up a ready meal. The birds take turns at resting in the trees or on the ice when not engaged in feasting on the fish.

In the Bourbon vicinity, look for your eagles along the Meramec River, but they may be encountered away from the river perched in trees or flying overhead. Wherever you find one it is likely to result in a marvelous thrill. I shall never forget spotting my first eagle many years ago. Adults will be easy to identify, but the young with their various plumage patterns are something else. Some of the dark birds may be mistaken for a large hawk. Adult Golden Eagles sport golden heads instead of the white of their cousins. The legs of the former are feathered to the toes; the legs of the Balds—bare. This shows up well in our scopes. The normal range of the golden-headed bird is west of us.
A bad mark against the Bald Eagle occurs occasionally when one robs a fish hawk (Osprey) of its fair catch. The bigger bird forces the osprey to relinquish its prey in a bullying fashion, which puts our national representative in a bad light.

While our eagle doesn’t nest in our region, its interesting nests call for a description. Because they use the same nest year after year and add sticks to the huge affair each season, the bulky home for the young may weigh a half a ton or more, with gigantic dimensions. Two white eggs are laid. The nest is usually placed in a tall tree or on the ledge of a bluff. The 34 inch bird appears black at a distance, although the body is actually brown. Four or more years are required for the birds to acquire the white heads and tails. In the mean time they wear various mixtures of mottled dark and white body plumage.

One of their worst enemies is the trigger happy person who can’t resist taking a pot shot at the bird of prey in spite of the stiff penalty he risks if caught. Pesticides have resulted in thin egg shells—a casualty.

Old-time stories of eagles carrying off human babies have never been substantiated and have been relegated to the tall story department. Around St. Louis we enjoy our eagles from November into April. They are well represented on our Christmas bird count lists. Were this endangered species to become extinct we would all be losers. It has a definite place in Nature’s world.

This article & drawing by Marjorie Richardson, first appeared in the Bourbon Beacon, March 3, 1977.

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 Benthuyesen, 961-3390.

Journey To East Africa
With St. Louis Audubon
This 14 day birding, wildlife & photo safari to Kenya is June 8-21, 1998—our 5th year offering tours to East Africa.

The cost is $3,950 per person—double occupancy—including airfare from New York. Your tour price includes:

- visits to 7 national parks & game reserves in Kenya
- naturalist guide with 30+ years birding in East Africa
- expect over 300 bird species and 40+ animal species often in huge numbers at “point blank” range for photos
- superior accommodations throughout; 5 different lodges
- 3 exceptional meals daily while on safari
- private minivans for game viewing with pop-up roof
- everyone has a window seat; can stand in aisle for photos
- vans chauffeured by professional driver/guide
- includes all gratuities for baggage handling, hotel tips, taxes, and all park entrance fees
- escorted by Paul Bauer, past St. Louis Audubon president

Optional extension trips
7-day Tanzania pre-trip departs June 1
- 2-days each at 3 national parks
- Ngorongoro Crater
- same birding guide
7-day western Kenya post-extension returns June 28, visiting 4 birding regions:
- Kakamega rain forest, Lake Baringo in the Rift Valley, Saiwa Swamp NP, and Delamere’s Camp on Lake Elmenteita
- same birding guide will continue

Request a detailed color itinerary; call: Paul Bauer 314-921-3972 or write: St. Louis Audubon Trips, PO Box 2085, Florissant MO 63032.
Join Audubon Adventure Trips

Paul Bauer

For September St. Louis Audubon will visit the Galapagos Islands and we have the option to explore several national parks in the highland Andes of Ecuador.

In November we will search for the Mountain Gorillas and other primates, as well as birds in Uganda, plus an optional visit to Murchison Falls. Call me at 314-921-3972 to obtain detailed itineraries for any of these trips.

Entomology Book Night

Sunday, March 22 from 7:00–9 PM is book night for the Entomology Group! Bring your favorite books about insects of other arthropods to show, sell or trade. Meeting will be held at the home of George Diehl, 1005 S. 18th St., St. L 63104; 843-5874.

Need directions?

Powder Valley Nature Center

- 11715 Cragwold Road in Kirkwood
- 270 south to Big Bend east, south (right) on Geyer, west (right) on Cragwold
- or, south of 44, take 270 north to Watson (366) east, immediate left on Geyer, left on Cragwold
- approx. 1 mile to nature center, on right

1997-8 WGNSS Board

President: Sue Gustafson, 9007 N. Swan Circle, St. Louis MO 63144, 968-8128.
1st Vice Pres: Doug Corbet, 702 C Outlook Cir. Dr., Manchester MO 63021, 861-2829.
2nd Vice Pres: Vicki Flier, 18 Algonquin Wood, St. Louis MO 63122, 968-9166
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Secretary: Dora Giaoulakis, 44 Clearview Park, St. Louis MO 63138, 741-8425.
Editor: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122-5722, 965-8091.
Membership: Linda Virga, 9734 Antonia Dr., St. Louis MO 63123, 344-3313.

Conservation: John Molyneaux, 7822 Garden Ave., St. Louis MO 63119, 961-5181.
Ornithology: David Becher, 12829 Mariners Pt Ct., St. Louis MO 63141, 576-1146.
Ornithology: Kevin Renick PO Box 31785, St. Louis MO 63131, 918-1085.
Entomology: Marshall Magner, 516 Bacon Ave, Webster Groves MO 63119, 961-4588.
Environmental Education: Dick Coles, 11 Hickory Ln., Eureka MO 63025, 938-5271.
Member at Large: Ginnie Young, 1306 S. Geyer, St. Louis MO 63122, 822-9006.
Member at Large: Tom O’Gorman, 465 N. Geyer, St. Louis MO 63122, 821-8079.
Member at Large: Jim Ziebol, 3900 Berger Ave., St. Louis MO 63109 781-7372.

deadline: March 6

Submissions—handwritten, typed, IBM or Mac to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122

Sigma Xi Seminars

Sigma Xi Science Seminars are Wed. evenings, 7:30–9 PM, at the Living World, on the north side of the zoo. All events are free. More info, call 768-5466/ 533-8083.
Feb. 18: Dr. Lonnie Hansen: “Urban Wildlife—Pleasure or Plague?”
March 25: River Engineering in the 21st Century

Copyright Statement

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Meetings

Wednesday, March 4:
7:00-8:30 PM Board meeting, Kirkwood Public Library. All members welcome.

Friday, March 13:
8:00 at St. Louis County Library Headquarters; Tammy Yegge, Director of Powder Valley will speak about the nature center.

Birding

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

Thursdays Feb. 19 & 26, and March 5, 12, 19, 26:
8:30 AM meet at West County shopping center, south lower lot behind Penney’s, lamp post #1.

Saturdays Feb. 28 & March 14, 21, 28:
8:00 AM West County. Destination: Where the Birds Are! Bring lunch.

Sunday, March 8:
9:00 AM Busch Conservation Area.

Saturday, March 28:
8:00 AM Riverlands. Meet at Teal Pond parking lot. Call Paul Bauer 314-921-3972 for further information.

Entomology

Sunday, Feb. 22:
7:00–9 PM at Magners: 516 Bacon Ave, Webster Groves MO 961-4588.
“ Butterfly Count—Recounted.” Joe Smentowski has recalculated the data from our various census area and will present data based on number of individual specimens collected per hour and number collected per person/hour.

Sunday, March 22:
7:00–9 PM Book night! Bring your favorite books about insects to show, sell or trade. Meeting will be held at the home of George Diehl, 1005 South 18th Street, St. Louis 63104; 843-5874.

Deadline

Deadline for submissions to April “Nature Notes Events” is March 6.

Join WGNSS

Send $15 yearly dues to Randy Korotev, 800 Oakbrook Ln., St. Louis MO 63132.
# March 1998

**Webster Groves Nature Study Society**

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

established in 1920