



nature notes

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Warblers in the bank

Anne McCormack

No need to blame *El Niño* this year! Big Day on Saturday, May 8, 1999 was a great migration day—good weather and good birds. The top group, the Wrong Terns, recorded 163 total species! Since I began my database in 1992, there have been only two other years in which the top group surpassed the 160 mark, 1996 and '97. Last year many complained that warblers were hard to find, but not this year. Our group, the Nighthawks, had 28 warblers. It's nice to have some warblers in the bank before the temperature rises and the birds stop singing.

Of course, the shorebirds were hard to pull out of the hat. High water contributed to a lack of habitat. Still, Little Creve Coeur Lake (southwest of the big lake), Sauget and Riverlands produced a few. *continued on page 2*

Wrong Terns..... 163

- Jim Malone
- Loy Barber
- Tom Borman
- David Becher
- Joe Eads
- Bob Kleiger

Bobolinks..... 130

- Connie Alwood
- Kent Lannert

Composite total 190

'98	177
'97	195
'96	195
'95	188
'94	179
'93	164
'90	193
'86	180

The Nighthawks 150

- Kevin Renick
- Mary Anne Auer
- Paul Bauer
- Anne McCormack

Coles Group..... 140

- Dick Coles
- Emily Bever
- Rose Ann Bodman
- Jackie Chain
- Jean Cook
- Darlene Eyster
- Vivian Liddell

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The composite of all groups was 190. Seventeen species seen last year were absent in '99, but 28 were added that were missed in '98. Last year we missed 38 compared to '96.

On Sunday, Bill Rowe's group spotted a flock of Dunlin looking for a comfy spot on Bush's Lake 33. Dunlin haven't been seen on the Big Day Weekend since '97. Ditto for Canada Warbler, seen Sunday at Lost Valley, near Busch. Four species hadn't been seen on Big Day since '96: Hooded Merganser, Stilt Sandpiper, and—on Sunday—Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Mourning Warbler. Two hadn't been seen since '95: Willet and Surf Scoter. Bald Eagle hadn't made the Big Day list since '94. Bufflehead and Olive-sided Flycatcher made their first appearance since '92. And would you believe *three new records* for Big Day: Western Grebe, spotted at Riverlands by Mary Anne Auer, Baird's Sandpiper, identified at Sauget by the Wrong Terns, and the lowly Brown Creeper, found at Busch by the Nighthawks.

A complete list of species reported with comments can be found on pages 12-13. Following that is a list of species missed in comparison to '92-8. ∞

Nell Menke

Betty Nellums

We all lost a good friend when Nell Menke passed away on March 29. Nell and I shared that special relationship that comes from a mutual liking and shared interest.

We first met on the wildflower walks led by Father Sullivan and art Christ. We felt we were privileged to go to a different place every week. Some of our favorite places were Pickle Springs, Upper Aux Vasses, Lower Rock Creek and Pacific Palisades. Our constant companion was our volume of Julian Steyermark's *Flora of*

Missouri. We both struggled to learn the Latin names for all the plants.

Nell and I were guides at the Missouri Botanical Garden. One day in 1977 we said, "What are we doing in the city garden when there is the marvelous Arboretum with all kinds of wild flowers waiting to be noticed." We talked to Dave Goudy who was Superintendent of the Arboretum. Dave encouraged us and that was the beginning of the Tuesday Arboretum walks.

Nell and Don were active members of WGNSS for over 30 years. There was no greater love for WGNSS than that shown by the years and years they had the *Nature Notes* printed in the basement of 137 S. Elm. The neighbors grew used to seeing a flock of people descending on the Menkes every third Monday. It was like stepping into a newspaper office at the turn of the 19th Century; with the stencils, that bang-bang of the mimeograph, the compiling and stapling of the pages, sticking on the address labels with sponge, the dividing the zip codes and finally the mailing. The whole process took most of the day but was done with lots of laughter, fun and fellowship. Then in the spring Nell always invited the crew down to their cabin on the Meramec near Steelville for a picnic and float trip.

Nell was a loving and gentle person. She always saw the good in people. I was fortunate to have her for a friend. ∞

Memories of Nell Menke

Vivian Liddell

For those of us, who remember printing *Nature Notes*, for ten years or more, at the home of Nell Menke, we would like to bid a fond farewell to our lovely friend, who died on March 29, 1999. She was the wife of the late Don Menke, who preceded her in death on November 1, 1995. She is survived by six children and twelve grandchildren.

Her degree in journalism, from the University of Illinois, was evident in her

many botany articles for *Nature Notes*. As she wrote in January 1991 in an article titled "January Flower Fantasies," "I seem to be feeling that it has been a three-month-long January and as I was asked to write it, and as it is exactly the way I feel every year about this time I trust that I'm forgiven and that some of you kindred souls will venture out and have a beautiful day and find something lovely to convince you that spring is really just around the next bend in the path." This captures her eternal optimism toward life.

She will be remembered as a wonderful mother and grandmother, wildflower and bird enthusiast, an avid reader, and a generous and caring friend. Nell, we will miss you. ∞

Membership Renewals

Linda Virga

A renewal envelope has been included in this issue. Please answer questions, enclose check and return envelope as soon as convenient, lest you forget and then miss issues next fall before you make a tardy renewal. To renew your membership, please send a check for \$15 to:

Randy Korotev, Treasurer
800 Oakbrook Ln.
St. Louis 63132. ∞

1999 Scudder Scholar Selected

Dick Coles

Your diligent and thoughtful Scudder Scholarship Committee felt forced to arrive at a difficult choice as it reviewed five excellent proposals from graduate student at two local universities. The selection focused finally on the plan submitted by Deborah (Boege) Tobin: Ecology and the Social Role of Scent Marking of North American River Otters (*Lutra canadensis*) in Missouri." Ms. Tobin plans to submit a thesis based on this research to her graduate committee at the University of Missouri at St. Louis which is

co-chaired by her advisors Godfrey R. Bourne and Zulema Tang-Martinez.

Ms. Tobin's proposal included live trapping Missouri otters, collecting hair and blood and skin tissues, marking and release of the animals. Some will be asked to carry a small radio transmitter to enable further observation.

Like most carnivores, otters mark their territories using urine and feces deposited, in part on "scent mounds." Tobin's plans include placement of scent material from otters in the territories of free-roaming animals. Observing the responses will permit exploration of whether the odorants are individually distinctive, reveal the sex of the producer and so on.

These investigation of the North American River Otter, which is little studied, will enable comparison with the 1983 findings of B. J. Trobridge who investigated "Olfactory Communication in the European Otter (*Lutra lutra*)" as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. That other otter species was the subject of Gavin Maxwell's *Ring of Bright Water*, 1960.

Barbara Elftman, Dick Coles, Dottie Herwig, Marshall Magner, and Marjorie served on the selection committee. ∞

Butterfly Counts

Volunteers are needed to count butterflies at Busch Wildlife as part of the Annual Statewide Butterfly Count. The dates are June 19, and September 4. All start at 10:00 AM at the headquarters parking lot. In addition, WGNSS will again sponsor the NABA Butterfly Count (North American Butterfly Association) on the July 4th weekend. For more information, call Yvonne Homeyer, 963-7750, or Jim Ziebol, 781-7372. ∞

April Bird Report

Jim Ziebol and Yvonne Homeyer

There were no rare Loons or Grebes reported except for 2 alternate-plumaged Eared Grebes at Horseshoe on 4/19 (T Be). Sightings of Am. White Pelicans at Horseshoe increased during the month, from 300+ on 4/5 (T Be) to 500 on 4/10 (KL) to 750+ on 4/15 (JZ). Seven White Pelicans were seen flying over Tower Grove Park on 4/24 (m. ob.). Five hundred + Double-crested Cormorants were counted there on 4/19 (FH). Am. Bitterns were first found in the area at Sauget on 4/11 (JC) and two were seen there on 4/17 (CA, KL); another was found at Riverlands on 4/18 (J Mo). By 4/11, Green Herons had been sighted at Busch (RB et al.) and again on 4/13 (J Mo). Snowy Egrets arrived somewhat early, with 3-4 seen on the East side on 4/3 (m. ob.) The resident Yellow-crowned Night Heron was seen at Sauget on 4/22 (T Be). A migrant Black-crowned Night Heron was observed at Riverlands on 4/18 (PL). On 4/27, 12 Little Blue Herons were found at Hampton Lake/Busch (D Bz). As of 4/18, these duck species remained at Horseshoe: Mallard, Gadwall, Pintail, Shoveler, both Teals, Wood Duck, Ruddy Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser (FH). Several area-wide reports of Sora were made around 4/17, with one seen that date at the Shorebird Area/Busch (SG). The week of 4/23, up to 10 Soras were present daily at Little Creve Coeur Lake (JM).

An Osprey was seen near the Brussels Ferry for several days in early April (HW) and one was seen at Lake 33/Busch on 4/10 (BK et al.). Sharp-shinned Hawks were reported in above average numbers in April. Sightings of Cooper's Hawk occurred in Forest Park on 4/10 — apparently 2 immatures that are nesting (RK) and in Tower Grove Park on 4/13 (YH). An accipiter circling Hampton Lake/Busch on 4/7 proved to be an adult

Goshawk; it then dove on prey in an adjacent field and did not reappear (JZ). Another Gos was seen along Hwy. 94 near Busch on 4/10 (ML). Two Red-shouldered Hawks were observed feeding young at the Arboretum on 4/29 (G&TB). Red-shouldered Hawks are doing well all over the area. Broad-winged Hawks were seen in small numbers the week of 4/11 and only a few were seen during their migration peak around 4/21. An immature melanistic Western Red-tailed Hawk was observed at Horseshoe on 4/16 (D Bz). On 4/18, a local Peregrine Falcon (pealei) was observed at close range at Riverlands (PL). A likely tundrius Peregrine Falcon was seen at Tower Grove Park on 4/24 (P&BJ). Turkeys were reported from Forest Park on 4/6 — including one vigilant Turkey sitting on a stump at Clayton & Skinker (RB) and one was seen on Big Bend Rd in west St. L. Co. on 4/18 (G&TB). Several Eurasian Collared Doves were hotlined from Sunset Park/Florissant (Tom Parmeter, DC, m. ob.). The high count for Am. Golden Plover was 65, at Marais Temps Clair on 4/3 (CA). A lone Hudsonian Godwit was a fly-over at Riverlands on 4/17 (BR). Good counts of Lesser Yellowlegs included 100+ at Marais Temps Clair on 4/8 (KL) and 50 at Riverlands on 4/17 (J Mo). Twenty-five Greater Yellowlegs were also at Riverlands on 4/17 (J Mo). The first Spotted Sandpiper was found on 4/10 at Busch, along with a sizable flock of Least Sandpipers (ML). Two Long-billed Dowitchers were at Marais Temps Clair on 4/10 (T Bo), one with an 8 cm. bill. On 4/23, another Long-billed Dowitcher was reported along Bruns Road (T Be) and on 4/28, 8 were found at Schoolhouse Rd. & Bischoff Rd. (KR). Dunlin arrived early in basic plumage at the Collinsville Rd. Golf Course on 4/12 (BK, VB); they were also seen on 4/16 at Riverlands (CM). An Upland Sandpiper

along Bruns Road was somewhat early on 4/3 (YH, JZ). This is a USFWS species of special management concern due to drastically declining numbers; only one was seen in the St. Louis area last year. This species should be reported every time it is seen.

A few Bonaparte's Gulls were reported on 4/16 at Riverlands (CM) and at Horseshoe Lake (FH). Ring-billed Gulls had mostly left the area by the middle of April. Three Forster's Terns were seen at Riverlands on 4/17 (PL) and a Common Tern was reported there on the same day (JM). A very early Yellow-billed Cuckoo was heard at Busch on 4/17 (JM et al.) and one was seen at Tower Grove Park on 4/21 (BW). A lone Short-eared Owl was sitting in a field on Bischoff Rd. on 4/5 (T Be). The resident Great Horned Owl in Tower Grove Park continues to be mobbed by crows on a regular basis. Barred Owls were very vocal and visible in Busch starting in early April. Seven Barred Owls were heard in Town & Country on 4/5 (T Be). Several people observed a Chuck-will's-widow flying low across the Bird Garden/Tower Grove Park on 4/27 (JS, J Mo). A Common Nighthawk finally appeared on 4/27 over Granite City (FH). A red-phase adult Screech Owl and three branchlings were observed perched in a Bald Cypress at the Cypress Circle in Tower Grove Park on 4/25 (G&TB). Fifty-seven Flickers were counted migrating in Tower Grove Park on 4/8 (JZ). An early E. Kingbird was seen at Frank Holton SP on 4/11 (M Th). By 4/10, the remaining Swallow species had arrived, with Cliff and Bank seen at Horseshoe (FH). Fifty+ Bank Swallows were nesting at the Borrow Pit/Horseshoe on 4/24 (G&TB). Chimney Swifts arrived on time, with the first ones seen area-wide on 4/11 (MB, G&TB, T Be, FH). Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were first reported on 4/18 at the Coles' residence (DC). Wood Thrush

were first reported on 4/15 at Castlewood (MB) and 2 were seen at Tower Grove Park on 4/24 (YH). Veery were reported at Tower Grove Park on 4/24 (JM) and 4/26 (T Be). Thirty+ Hermit Thrush and the first Swainson's Thrush were present in Tower Grove Park on 4/19 (T Be). Gray-cheeked Thrush were observed on 4/24 (KR) and 4/26 at Tower Grove Park (BB). Many Catbirds arrived in Forest Park on 4/26 (RK, m. ob.). Ruby-crowned Kinglets peaked at 200+, with a few Golden-crowns, on 4/19 (T Be). A Loggerhead Shrike was reported from Bischoff Rd. on 4/16 (T Be) and at Busch on 4/27 (CM).

Yellow-throated Vireo was found on 4/10 at Lost Valley Trail (G&TB) and on 4/12 in Tower Grove Park (BK, JC, RB). Bell's Vireos arrived on 4/29 at Weldon Springs (CM) and at Tower Grove Park (BK). Twenty-five+ Warbling Vireos were counted in Busch on 4/25 (T Be). The season's first and slightly early White-eyed Vireo occurred on 4/8 in Jefferson County (MP). Prothonotary Warbler was a little early at Castlewood on 4/15 (MB). Two Prothonotaries were in Kennedy Forest on 4/27; these birds are rarely seen in migration (RK). On 4/25, a Golden-winged Warbler was located in Rockwoods (CM); this warbler was very hard to find last spring. A Brewster's Warbler was closely observed near the Bubbler/Tower Grove Park on 4/27 (Tom Bailey). Tennessee Warblers were first heard on 4/18 in Castlewood (T Be). Orange-crowned Warblers were first found on 4/18 in Forest Park (D Bz, KC) and on 4/19 at Tower Grove Park (BK, J Co). Northern Parula was first reported on 4/11 at Tyson and after that, in fair numbers throughout the area (m. ob.). A singing Cerulean Warbler was seen at Castlewood on 4/15 (MB) and on 4/27 one male Cerulean was singing in Tower Grove Park (BW). Male Ceruleans on territory have been reported in the

following places: as of 4/24, three in Castlewood (MB), one in the Arboretum (P&BJ), and as of 4/25, three on Lost Valley Trail (Doug Corbett). The first Magnolia Warbler was found in Tower Grove Park on 4/27 (D. Driemeyer). Very good numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers were encountered at Castlewood, with 100+ on 4/18 (T Be) and 30+ at Frank Holton SP on 4/10 (BE). Many territorial Yellow-throated Warblers were observed at Castlewood on 4/4 (MB), at Busch on 4/6 (BK), and at Frank Holton SP on 4/10 (BE). On 4/27, a Yellow-throated Warbler appeared in Forest Park where it is a rare migrant (RK). Prairie Warblers arrived at their nesting sites in Union in late April, but were not otherwise seen as migrants (C&DD). A Bay-breasted Warbler was seen in Tower Grove Park for several days beginning on 4/24 (RB, KR). Normal numbers of Pine Warblers have been reported from around the area and on 4/28 a Cowbird was observed near a Pine Warbler nest in Rockwoods (DC). Twenty-five Palm Warblers were counted in Tower Grove Park on 4/26 (T Be). A possible Mourning Warbler was heard singing in Whitecliff Park on 4/26 (D Bz). A Hooded Warbler first seen in Tower Grove Park on 4/21 stayed for several days (David Garcia, T Be); another was found at Rockwoods on 4/25 (CM). On 4/21 and 4/22, many new species of landbirds arrived in very good numbers. A cold front had been blocking movement for several days, and radar imagery from the Texas coast showed a large flight arriving at the Gulf on 4/19. These new species included: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Great-crested Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Solitary Vireo, Nashville, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green (very good numbers), Palm (low numbers), Yellow, Kentucky (MH), and Worm-eating Warblers (JS), Ovenbird, N. Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Rose-breasted

Grosbeak (very good numbers), Indigo Bunting (good numbers), Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, and Summer Tanager (m. ob.). Vesper Sparrows were noted from early April until the 18th, mostly on the East side, Riverlands and St. Ch. Co. (m. ob.). A high count of 12 Savannahs were seen along Bischoff Road on 4/3 (YH). Chipping Sparrows were first found on 4/4 at the Arboretum (KL) and 35 were seen at Tower Grove Park on 4/5 (T Be). One hundred + Am. Tree Sparrows were estimated along Layton Rd./Horseshoe on 4/9 (T Be). A high count of 150+ White-throated Sparrows were found in Tower Grove Park on 4/22 (CA, m. ob.). An immature White-crowned Sparrow spent several months at a U. City feeder (RK). A somewhat early Lincoln's Sparrow was observed at Tower Grove Park in early April (RB). The only LeConte's Sparrow reported this spring was observed at the Busch Prairie on 4/27 (D Bz). Many people observed a singing Clay-colored Sparrow near the Cypress Circle/Tower Grove Park on 4/25-27 (David Garcia, m. ob.). The only W. Meadowlark reported was seen on 4/17 at Riverlands (JM). A male Yellow-headed Blackbird at Riverlands was hotlined on 4/10 (T Bo et al.). On 4/24, 8 Summer Tanagers in varying plumages were found in Tower Grove Park (KR). The WGNSS/SLAS group found 6 Purple Finches at Hampton Lake/Busch on 4/17 (JM et al.) and a female was seen at Tower Grove Park on 4/19 (DC). These are very low numbers for what used to be a common winter/spring visitor. A Smith's Longspur, probably a young male, was seen on Bruns Rd. on 4/3 — a diagnostic identification point is the white outer tail feathers like those found on the Vesper Sparrow (JZ, YH). Rusty and Brewer's Blackbirds were reported sparingly — perhaps they have shifted their migration westward? Six Rusty Blackbirds were seen at Horseshoe on 4/4

(VB) and 6 Brewer's were seen on Bruns Rd. on 4/5 (T Be).

Carlyle Lake: During the week of 4/18, there were 8 Surf Scoters, a field full of Am. Golden Plover, and an Upland Sandpiper (DK).

Comments: Most wintering and migrant ducks had left the St. Louis area by the end of April. Breeding Bluebirds were down in numbers throughout the area. Red-headed Woodpeckers in migration are also down in numbers. Only one Bewick's Wren has been reported so far (Ed Karsh, 4/12) and no Lark Sparrows were reported in April. Whip-poor-wills are declining, with very few reports. Additional Carolina Wren reports include 2 at Spanish Lake Park on 4/19 (PB) and one at the Gaddy residence. Because these birds were only heard starting in March, it has been suggested that these males are new to the area and not survivors of our winter storms. An aberrant warbler was seen in Tower Grove Park from 4/24-4/26 (m. ob.), possibly a hybrid Tennessee x ?. It had a peachy/orange throat and a broken eye ring; otherwise, it was a typical Tennessee male and it sang an atypical Tennessee song.

Contributors: Connie Alwood, Bob Bailey, George and Terry Barker, Paul and Fran Bauer, Dave Becher, Dianne Benjamin, Rose Ann Bodman, Torrey Berger, Tom Borman, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Viola Buchholtz, Jackie Chain, Ken Cohen, Dick Coles, Jean Cook, Cheryl and Don Delashmit, Bob Engelbretsen, Sue Gustafson, Frank Holmes, Jim and Margot Holsen, Yvonne Homeyer, Paul and Barbara Johnson, Bob Kleiger, Randy Korotev, Kent Lannert, Peggy Leonard, Mark Lund, Jim and Charlene Malone, Keith McMullen, Jeannie Moe, Mark Peters, Kevin Renick, Bill Rowe, Lawrence Schriewer, John Solodar, Mike Thelan, Larry and Michelle Wells, Bruce

Wetteroth, Helen Wuestenfeld, Jim Ziebol, many observers. ∞

Conservation Committee Report

Yvonne Homeyer

Alert! Weldon Spring forest in danger! A large tract of oak/history forest that includes Lost Valley Trail (near Busch Conservation Area) is slated by the Dept. of Conservation for numerous patches of clearcutting—28 openings totaling 16 acres on a tract of land that is now unbroken canopy. This project necessarily entails miles of roads/paths leading to and from the 28 spaces that are to be clear-cut. Although each clearcut is small (most under 1/2 acre), the effect of all these openings and the roads that have to be put in add up to extensive FOREST FRAGMENTATION. The Dept. acknowledged that this is only the 2nd time they have ever had a timber cut/sale in the St. Louis area. They also acknowledged that other areas of the Weldon Spring tract will be slated for similar timber cuts in the future. On May 1, Dick Coles, Sue Gustafson, Jack Harris and I attended a lecture and site tour sponsored by the Dept. of Conservation to explain the project.

The Dept.'s reason for this plan (which also includes selective cutting and girdling of trees in addition to the clearcuts) is that this is an even-aged forest (second growth from the early 1900s) which needs to have patches opened up to the light so that young trees can get light and grow. However, as Leo and Kay Drey's Pioneer Forest in the Ozarks proves, there are effective forest management techniques that can accomplish the same thing but with less harm to the land. Moreover, all these roads and openings benefit hunters by giving them access to an otherwise difficult terrain and making it easier to spot and shoot deer and turkey on the edges of the openings.

All money from the timber sale will go directly to the Dept. of Conservation, not the State treasury. The project will be contracted out to a private company. The Dept. has no control over where the timber goes, so it could end up feeding the chip mills that are operating in southern Missouri.

Why should we be concerned about forest fragmentation? Because the more edges, the more cowbirds. Songbirds, already on the decline from habitat loss and pesticide poisoning, are also in danger from cowbird predation. In a project such as this, forest fragmentation occurs not only from the patches of clearcuts, but also from the miles of roads that are needed to get equipment in and out of the forest. These roads will remain in place long after the timber cutting is done.

At the WGNSS Board Meeting on May 1, the Board members present expressed their concerns about this plan. We have time to voice our opinion. Please write a letter to: Mr. Michael Schroer, Busch Conservation Area, 2360 Hwy. D, St. Charles, Mo. 63304. It would also be helpful if you could let Yvonne Homeyer know of your letter (963-7750 or mail a copy to 1508 Oriole Lane, St. Louis, Mo. 63144).

WGNSS wrote a letter to the Corps of Engineers opposing the Gateway Racetrack petition to drain and fill 150+ acres of wetlands near I-70 & Hwy. 203 for paved parking (see last month's report for details). We will keep you posted on the Corps' decision when it is made. We also wrote the Corps of Engineers a letter of inquiry concerning the draining of a tract of wetlands at the same intersection but on the south side of I-70 (on your right as you approach the Hwy. 203 exit). There is an abandoned building on that site. We received a reply from the Corps stating that it is not involved since there is no filling

taking place, only wetlands drainage, which a landowner can do lawfully. We will continue to monitor the site.

WGNSS' Wildflower Garden project at the North County Recreation Area is coming along nicely under Kraig Paradise's supervision. Planting will start in May. Our millet/milo food plot at Busch will be planted this month; Sue Gustafson is in charge of this project. David Rabenau is coordinating surveys of 4 new St. Louis County parks for birds, flowers and butterflies. Volunteers can call him at 343-9025. Dianne Benjamin and Jim Malone continue to work on the Little Creve Coeur Lake mitigation project (related to the Page Ave. Freeway). Plotting of breeding birds at Busch will start in a few weeks — many volunteers have been assigned areas to check and report on. Please report all sightings of Bell's Vireo, no matter where found, to Jim Ziebol (781-7372). Last year Bell's Vireo was not found on any of its former territories in Busch, probably due to the cutting of several fields where they had previously nested.

Our next Committee meeting is Wednesday, May 19 at 6:30 at Yvonne's house (963-7750 for directions). Any interested member is welcome. ☺

Origin of Species Pun on California Gull: A Parody

Dianne Benjamin

In the April issue, Bill Rowe gave some details about the 1998 "California Gull" that wasn't. May St. Louis area birders, including myself, saw it at the Borrow Pits, near Horseshoe Lake in mid-October and listed it. Thanks to Bill Rowe, Jim Ziebol, Frank Homes and several others who hotlined, documented and photographed this bird as a first-fall California gull. As faithful reader so *Nature Notes* know, the Illinois Records Committee completed its

review of the record and turned it down. What you do not know is the origin of the species pun in the headline “I wish they all could be California Gulls.”

With apologies to the Beach Boys, Charles Darwin, and Paul Harvey, here is the rest of the story: Since *I* was the one who originally asserted the pun, leading other astray to repeat it, it seems only that that I should provide a post-mortem discussion—RIP, Brian Wilson.

For starters, let’s go through a quick review of the California Gull pun. It is a medium-large pun, averaging between Joan Rivers and Henny Youngman in size, and it take four and a half years to mature—please. It is western and rare in this part of the country.

When I saw it it, this bird was the only gull in the neighborhood that was funnier than the Ring-bills. It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood yet no gull had a cardigan sweater scapulars eclipsing Mr. Rogers ala Eddie Murphy on *Saturday Night Live*.” It had one striking feature, shown in all the field guides as a mark for a California Gull pun: a beat that was light-hearted, not dull, in this case with a well-documented rock ‘n’ roll song lyric still popular to some extent with Baby Boomers and somewhat contrasty to Heavy Metal. As it stood around in the mud, I could see it had varying amounts of ability to make my companions laugh (DBz, YH, JZ). It was not lame enough for a laughing girls—and boys—pun. I attached a lot of significance to similar habitat where I originally made the pun . I know the pun was funny the first time and could become down right hilarious later on.

It was with BR, AMcC, KL and many observers that the California Gull pun originated on June 23, 1995, at the shoreline of Grand Lake near the western entrance of Rocky Mountain National Park. This species was a life bird for me so I was

quite excited. Bill had pointed out carefully the features and marks that must be looked for to distinguish it from other species. I was pretty sure I, too, had seen it and other observers agreed. So I relaxed at that point and joked, “Gee whiz, I wish they all could be California Gulls.”

When my fellow birders laughed uproariously a split second later, I felt a twinge of surprise at the enormity and creativity of my pun. I then I forgot about it until I was at the Borrow Pits in October, with a couple of urges to repeat the pun but was dubious about the timing. This made me laugh inside harder and more hopefully, haul out my timing books, and begin putting a lot of faith in the particulars and features of the pun.

As it turns out, my Horseshoe Lake birding friends laughed as much as the Grand Lake birders. So I was quite satisfied I had originated a good pun. The rock ‘n’ roll beat and the contrast with heavy metal music seemed right. The timing was sufficiently stretched-out but not too long-winded. I also noted the pun could now be at rest.

So there we are. I can think of at least four morals to this story: 1. Don’t focus on just one or two field marks to the detriment of examining and considering the rest of the story. 2. Timing is important. Here, although the actual birds was not corroborated, no one can dispute the pun is still funny. 3. Puns exist to provide clean, reliable relief from the solid facts about bird documentation. It’s a good thing there was a sense of humor to provide comic relief—even if some people have now lost a year bird of an area bird as a result. 4. If you make a pun, learn something from it. If the pun is a rarity and your reciting is accepted, then try to figure out what happened, and go away glad. Above all, don’t stop documenting your good puns.

To recap some of the specifics from this lesson, my real first winning California Gull pun was not messy and could appear in western or eastern habitats, its beat had nearly perfect comic timing. It was a bit larger than a play on words, but not as hefty as a *Tonight Show* monologue. Some of us saw several nice slides at the gull workshop in Alton two winters ago of lame Beach Boys puns, taken by All Seppi—not:

Surf Scoter, USA *Melanitta americana*,
California subspecies

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius melodi*
falsetto phase

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus*
californicus beachicus

Little Old Lady from Pasadena Audubon
Society

Daddy Took her T-Bird Away Wild
Bird Rehab ~

Meramec Greenway

David Rabenau

The Meramec Greenway is a vision for a renewed and revitalized Meramec River Valley along the 125-mile stretch from Meramec State Park to the Mississippi River. The St. Louis County Department of Parks & Recreation has asked WGNSS to assist them in gathering data on bird, plant, insect and other flora and fauna in some of the parks along the Meramec Greenway. Since many of the parks are not currently open to the public, WGNSS volunteers will have the opportunity to explore these areas while at the same time helping the County realize the full potential of these areas. Specifically, the County Parks Department has asked WGNSS to look at the Hunters Ford Park and A.P. Greensfelder Park near Allenton, the Rock Hollow Unit of Castlewood Park and the Packwood Park near Glencoe, and the Lower Meramec County Park in S. County. In addition, the City of Arnold has invited WGNSS to explore their newly purchased 120-acre

Strawberry Creek Nature Area that they are developing in conjunction with the Missouri Dept. of Conservation.

If interested, please contact the WGNSS Meramec Greenway Coordinator, David Rabenau, for more information. David can be reached via email

<mailto:drabenau@primary.netdrabenau@primary.net> by phone at 343-9025 (evenings), or at 633 Winter Hill Circle, Fenton, MO 63026. ~

WGNSS/St. Louis Audubon Trips

Jim Malone

We have planned a visit to Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms Conservation area in Kansas for late May. This trip will begin on Thursday May 20th lasting through Sunday, May 23rd, with Thursday and Sunday mostly dedicated to travel, leaving Friday and Saturday to Bird Quivira, Cheyenne Bottoms, and the areas around Great Bend Kansas. If this sounds like a trip you don't want to miss, send \$5 per person (to cover handling and mailing expenses) to Jim Malone at 15424 Elk Ridge Lane, Chesterfield, MO 63017. ~

our website

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

Revised St. Louis Area Bird Book Now Available

Paul Bauer

Birds of the St. Louis Area: Where and When to Find Them, has been revised and reprinted. Copies are now available in the St. Louis area from all local Wild Bird Centers, Wild Bird Unlimited, Wildbird Marketplace, the MO Botanical Garden Bookstore, and Shaw Arboretum Shop. By mail the book is available from the Am. Birding Association (ABA); call 1-800/634-7736. If you have questions, call Paul Bauer at 314/921-3972. ~

Tyson nature line

Call 935-8432 for a summary of the latest bird sightings in the St. Louis area. Please report any unusual birds to Connie Alwood, 524-8111. ~



Deadline: Aug. 6!

There's lots of time before our next deadline so let's put on those thinking-caps and submit an article to *Nature Notes*! We'd love to read your adventures with nature, reviews of books of nature lore, or an editorial on current environmental issues.

Submissions—handwritten, typed, IBM or Mac to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122. Computer wizards: It's safest to send a printout along with your disk. Sorry cyber-surfers! I have **no access to e-mail** over the summer since my address is my school. ~

Avian Biology u29-424

Washington University

On Thursday evenings (7–9:30 PM) next fall, Dr. Richard W. Coles will offer this class for the University College of Washington University. In addition to those enrolled for credit, there will be space for auditors. These pay a reduced fee (\$375), are not vulnerable to exams, papers, grades, or other pedagogical torture. The class will meet in the Tyson classroom using the collection of specimens there.

The first 4-5 meetings will review the orders of living birds and those families found in North America. Behavior, Natural History and relationship to man are discussed. Subsequent meetings will discuss the evolutionary history of birds and the process of evolution, especially as illustrated by avians.; anatomical structure will receive attention in relation to flight. feathers, flight migration, special senses—

non-visual light reception, magnetic sensitivity infrasound perception—will be discussed in early December, we will examine the plight of declining populations of neotropical migrant songbirds and waterfowl. Three field trips and a bird banding lab will be scheduled for Saturday at the first class meeting.

For further information about registration, call Robert Massa at the University College (314-935-6727). For more about content and references from birders who have audited this class, please call Richard Coles (636-938-5271). ~

need directions?

Arboretum, Gray Summit

- Take 44 west to Gray Summit (100) exit, left over highway, right onto service road and immediately left into Arboretum.
- Meet at Brushy Creek trail head.

Castlewood State Park

- Take Manchester west, south (left) on New Ballwin Rd., east (left) on Kiefer Creek Rd., follow signs. Meet at boat ramp.

Forest Park, Kennedy Forest

- Highway 40 to Hampton north, follow signs to St. Louis Zoo's Living World. Kennedy Forest is about 1/4 mi. West.

Tower Grove Park

- Take 44 to Kingshighway south, east (left) on Magnolia, 1st right into park.

Washington U Tyson Research Center

- Highway 44 west to Antire Rd., exit 269. Bear right, to the gate.

1998–9 WGNSS Board

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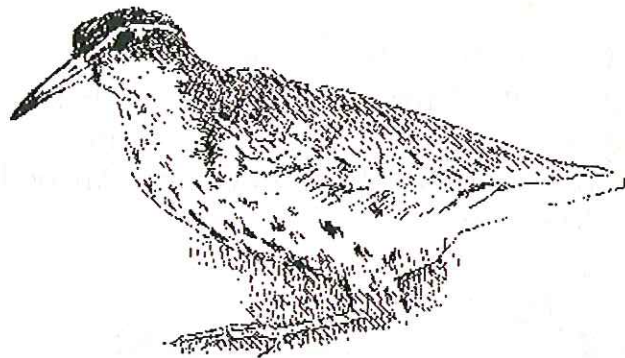
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spotted sandpiper Jim Ziebol

Big Day '99

name	remarks99
Pied-billed Grebe	Riverlands
Western Grebe	new record Riverlands
Double-crested Cormorant	Horseshoe
Am Bittern	Collinsvl-Alwd&Lannert
Great Blue Heron	
Great Egret	
Snowy Egret	
Little Blue Heron	
Cattle Egret	Sauget
Green Heron	Busch
Black-crown Nt-Heron	
Canada Goose	
Wood Duck	
Green-winged Teal	little cc-Wrong T
Mallard	
Blue-winged Teal	
Northern Shoveler	
Gadwall	
Canvasback	lake 33 Johnsons
Ring-necked Duck	
Lesser Scaup	
Surf Scoter	busch-Wrong T; seen 95
Bufflehead	not since 92
Hooded Merganser	little cc-Wrong T
Ruddy Duck	riverlands & f holten
Turkey Vulture	
Osprey	Weldon-Nthawks; seen 97
Bald Eagle	Katy T-Wrong T
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Busch-Wrong T
Red-tailed Hawk	
Am Kestrel	
Merlin	Katy T-Wrong T
Peregrine Falcon	Katy T
Ring-necked Pheasant	
Wild Turkey	Katy Trail & Lost V
N Bobwhite	
Sora	Little CC & Busch
Am Coot	

name	remarks99
Semipalmated Plover	Katy T-Wrong T
Killdeer	
Greater Yellowlegs	Little CC-Wrong T
Lesser Yellowlegs	Little CC-Nthawks
Solitary Sandpiper	Katy T-Wrong T
Willet	Riverld-seen 95
Spotted Sandpiper	
Semiplamated Sandpiper	Sauget & Katy T
Western Sandpiper	Sauget-Wrong T
Least Sandpiper	Little CC & Katy T
White-rumped Sandpiper	Sauget-Coles
Baird's Sandpiper	new record Sauget-Wrong
Pectoral Sandpiper	Little CC
Dunlin	Busch 33, Sunday
Stilt Sandpiper	Riverlands & Little CC
Short-billed Dowitcher	Riverlands & Little CC; se
Long-billed Dowitcher	Little CC-Wrong T
Common Snipe	
American Woodcock	Busch-Wrong T
Wilson's Phalarope	Sauget; mis in 98
Bonaparte's Gull	horseshoe
Ring-billed Gull	
Caspian Tern	Riverlands
Forster's Tern	Riverlands & Busch
Black Tern	horseshoe; mis in 98
Rock Dove	
Mourning Dove	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	
Great Horned Owl	
Barred Owl	
Common Nighthawk	
Whip-poor-will	
Chimney Swift	
Ruby-thr Hummingbird	
Belted Kingfisher	us near riverlands
Red-headed Woodpecker	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Tower Grove, Sunday

name	remarks99
Downy Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	Weldon & MTC
Northern Flicker	
Pileated Woodpecker	Creve Coeur-Nthawks
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Busch-not since 92
Eastern Wood-Pewee	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Tower G-Nthawks; mis 98
Acadian Flycatcher	
Alder Flycatcher	Coles Lost Valley
Least Flycatcher	Busch
Eastern Phoebe	
Great Crested Flycatcher	
Eastern Kingbird	
Horned Lark	
Purple Martin	
Tree Swallow	
N Rough-winged Swallow	
Bank Swallow	
Cliff Swallow	
Barn Swallow	
Blue Jay	
American Crow	
Fish Crow	Coles Katy Trail
Black-capped Chickadee	
Carolina Chickadee	
Tufted Titmouse	
White-breasted Nuthatch	
Brown Creeper	new record; Busch-Nthaw
Carolina Wren	scarce
House Wren	
Marsh Wren (Long-Billed)	Little CC-Wrong T
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Busch
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
Eastern Bluebird	
Veery	Lost V-Wrong T
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Busch & Lost V
Swainson's Thrush	Busch & Lost V
Hermit Thrush	Lost V-Wrong T

name	remarks99
Wood Thrush	Busch & Lost V
American Robin	
Gray Catbird	
Northern Mockingbird	
Brown Thrasher	
Cedar Waxwing	
European Starling	
White-eyed Vireo	
Bell's Vireo	Weldon S & Busch
Blue-headed (Solitary) Vireo	Busch & Tower Grove
Yellow-throated Vireo	
Warbling Vireo	
Philadelphia Vireo	Busch & Tower Grove
Red-eyed Vireo	
Blue-winged Warbler	
Golden-winged Warbler	Busch & Katy T
Tennessee Warbler	
Orange-crowned Warbler	
Nashville Warbler	
Northern Parula	
Yellow Warbler	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	
Magnolia Warbler	Tower Grove & Creve Co
Cape May Warbler	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Black-thr Green Warbler	
Blackburnian Warbler	Creve C & Tower G; mis i
Yellow-throated Warbler	
Prairie Warbler	Highway 94-Wrong T
Palm Warbler	
Bay-breasted Warbler	Busch & Tower Grove, mi
Blackpoll Warbler	
Cerulean Warbler	Lost Valley
Black & White Warbler	
American Redstart	
Prothonotary Warbler	
Worm-eating Warbler	
Ovenbird	

name	remarks99
Northern Waterthrush	
Louisiana Waterthrush	
Kentucky Warbler	
Mourning Warbler	Lost V Sunday
Common Yellowthroat	
Wilson's Warbler	Creve C & Tower G; mis i
Canada Warbler	Lost V, Sunday
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Summer Tanager	
Scarlet Tanager	
Northern Cardinal	
Rose-br Grosbeak	
Blue Grosbeak	Coles Katy Trail
Indigo Bunting	
Dickcissel	
Rufous-sided Towhee	
Chipping Sparrow	Busch
Clay-colored Sparrow	Weldon, Sunday
Field Sparrow	
Lark Sparrow	Highway 94-Wrong T
Savannah Sparrow	
Grasshopper Sparrow	Riverlands-Wrong T
Song Sparrow	
Lincoln's Sparrow	common
Swamp Sparrow	Weldon, Sunday
White-throated Sparrow	
White-crowned Sparrow	
Bobolink	H & Powers Rd
Red-winged Blackbird	
Eastern Meadowlark	
Common Grackle	
Brown-headed Cowbird	
Orchard Oriole	
Northern Oriole	
House Finch	
American Goldfinch	
House Sparrow	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	

name	remarks99
Eared Grebe	missed-seen 95, 98
Am Wt Pelican	missed-seen 98, 95-6
Least Bittern	not seen since 92-3
Yellow-crwn Nt-Heron	missed-seen 95-8
Northern Pintail	missed-seen 95-8
Redhead	missed-seen 98, 92-3
Red-breasted Merganser	missed-seen 97-8, 92-3
Mississippi Kite	missed-seen 96-8
Cooper's Hawk	missed-seen 96-8
Broad-winged Hawk	not seen since 97
King Rail	missed-seen 98,96
Virginia Rail	missed-seen 97-8
Common Moorhen	not seen since 97
Black-bellied Plover	not seen since 97
Am (Lesser) Golden-Plover	not seen since 97
Hudsonian Godwit	not seen since 97
Marbled Godwit	not seen since 97
Ruddy Turnstone	not seen since 97
Sanderling	not seen since 97
Red-necked Phalarope (Nor	not seen since 97
Franklin's Gull	not seen since 97
Herring Gull	missed-seen 95-8
Common Tern	not seen since 97
Least Tern	not seen since 97
Black-billed Cuckoo	not seen since 97
E Screech Owl	not seen since 97
Chuck-will's-widow	not seen since 97
Willow Flycatcher	not seen since 97
Western Kingbird	missed-seen 98, 96
Red-breasted Nuthatch	missed-seen 98, 96, 94
Bewick's Wren	not seen since 97
Sedge Wren (Short-Billed)	missed-seen 97-8
American Pipit	not seen since 97
Loggerhead Shrike	not seen since 92
Pine Warbler	not seen since 96
Henslow's Sparrow	missed-seen 97-8, 95
Yellow-headed Blackbird	missed-seen 98
Brewer's Blackbird	missed-seen 98



Webster Groves Nature Study Society



Meetings

Wednesday, Sept. 1

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

Conservation

Wednesday, May 19

6:30 PM at Yvonne Homeyer's, 1508 Oriole Ln. in Brentwd, 963-7750. Any member welcome.

Entomology

Sunday, May 23

8 PM sharp Meet at gate of Tyson Research Center. Black-light collecting. Canceled if raining. Call Marshall Magner, 961-4588.

Sunday, June 27

8 PM Black-lighting at Cuiver River State Park. Meet at Park headquarters. Naturalist Bruce Schuette suggests that we visit the museum and walk the trails during daylight hours. Bring picnic lunch and supper. There are many things to see in this state park! Phone Schuette 528-6544, or Magner, above.

Botany

Beginners welcome. Bring lunch, weather gear.

Thursdays May-September

Field trips usually meet at 9:30 AM; trip is normally 3-5 hr. plus travel time. Led by Fr. James Sullivan. Call Catherine Filla, 481-5298, after 5 PM Wed. for location.

Birding

Open to all; call David Becher 576-1146

Thursdays in May-August

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

Saturday May 22

7:30 AM Meet at West County. See above.

Saturday Aug 21 & 28


7:30 AM Meet at West County. See above.

NatureNotes deadline Aug. 6

join wgnss!

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

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

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Editor: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122
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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