



# nature notes

Journal of Webster Groves Nature Study Society

October 1999 Vol. 71, No. 8

## A Colorado Birding Story (or, The Lifting Tale of Me and Lewis's Woodpecker)

Kevin Renick

It was not looking too good for me to take a vacation this summer, at first. I had very little money, an ailing automobile, and pressing concerns on both the job and home fronts. I especially couldn't see how I was going to have the opportunity to go anywhere with good birding potential; I didn't know anybody in any birding "hot spots," and a hotel-hopping journey was not possible. But quite unexpectedly, a close friend who had recently moved to Paonia, Colorado, talked me into coming out for a visit, offering to actually buy me a train ticket. I had no solid excuses for turning this down, and the idea of traveling by train intrigued me. A train trip through the mountains! I stammered and said, "W-well, okay. I'll come out."

"You'll love it out here," Ted promised. "It's beautiful."

The last time I had been to Colorado was in 1972. At that time, I had only been birding for a few years, and while I vividly remember seeing birds like Clark's Nutcracker, Pinyon Jay and Townsend's Solitaire, I cer-

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## Scudder Scholar Speaks at Oct. 8 General Meeting

Doug Corbett

Thomas Prinzie was our Scudder Scholar in 1998. He will speak about his research on flower diversity in Mexican Milkweed. Thomas is a graduate student at Washington University and works at Missouri Botanical Garden. Please join us for a lively lecture and slide show from this research collegian. The group meets at 8:00 PM on Oct. 8 at the St. Louis County Library on Lindbergh just south of Clayton Road. Please join us and witness the benefit of WGNSS's scholastic contribution toward continuing education.

### Attention: Nature Photographers

Doug Corbett

As Program Director, I am interested in presenting a slide and photograph display for our Winter meeting. All

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you birders, botanists, and entomologists with something special to share, new or old, please contact me. A slide show with St. Louis flavor should warm up a cold Winter night and get us excited about Spring. ~

### **Attention: WGNSS Membership**

Doug Corbett

In an effort to be self-reliant, the Board of Directors are asking members for assistance in obtaining a slide projector for membership use. We currently rely on the County Library to supply us with a projector for the general meeting. Would anyone like to donate a slide projector to WGNSS? It would be greatly appreciated and put to good use. Another alternative, would be for us to purchase a new slide projector from membership donations. Please let me know if you would like to donate equipment or make a contribution towards the purchase of a new one. ~

### **Welcome to new members...**

Helen Wood..... Clayton  
Torry Berger ..... Town & Country  
Jim Pierce ..... Belleville IL  
Jacqueline Lehman ..... Manchester  
Betty Schaefer ..... Mehlville  
Steve Roth..... Alexandria, VA  
Lisa Wansteel ..... Valley Park  
Leslie Lihou ..... University City  
Bill Brizzard ..... Crestwood  
Amy Haake..... Pacific, MO

### **Membership Renewals**

Linda Virga

If you haven't yet paid dues since receiving your renewal envelope in the June issue, please send your \$15 to:

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

Please do this at your earliest convenience, lest you miss any issues because of a tardy renewal. ~

### **Y2K Warning:**

### **WGNSS to Enter the 1990's Just in Time for Year 2000**

Randy Korotev

Sometime in the next few months WGNSS will switch its mailing list and label-printing operation for *Nature Notes* from an old Apple computer that has been doing the job for 12+ years to a modern PC. In making the transition we are trying to use the standardized address preferred by the post office, which includes the Zip+4 numbers and which affects other things such as the way apartment numbers are handled and which city is actually listed on the label. We are also going to include the expiration date of your membership. Presently, membership information exists on three different computers, and it's not all self consistent. We will be using the name(s) you submitted on your renewal envelope this past summer, if we've received the envelope. Putting this all together, there are lots of ways we can make mistakes. Although we have made much effort to insure a smooth transition, almost certainly there will be some problems. So, if sometime in January you realize that you haven't been getting *Nature Notes* for a while, the address label still contains the name of your divorced spouse, or we've moved you from O'Fallon, MO, to O'Fallon, IL, contact Randy Korotev at 993-0055.

Also, we will soon be contacting many life members as well as persons and organizations receiving complimentary copies of *Nature Notes* to determine if they still wish to receive it. Because life members do not pay dues, there are several life members from whom we have had no contact in years. We are uncertain of addresses for several. ~

## David Melindwr Jones 1910–1999

J. Marshall Magner

Members of the Webster Groves Nature Study Society and the many other friends of David Jones were saddened to learn of his death on January 27, 1999.

David was born October 3, 1910 in Forty Fort, Penn., a suburb of Wilkes-Barre. His grandfather had come from Wales and was employed as a foreman and accountant at a mine.

After high school, David encouraged by his high school chemistry teacher enrolled at Penn State where he majored in chemistry, and was elected to several social and honorary societies, and served on the Honor Society Council. Upon graduation he came to Mallinckrodt in St. Louis for the summer, at the encouragement of Dean Whitmore, head of chemistry at Penn State. His Ph.D. degree was earned in chemistry at Penn State University.

During summers in St. Louis, he lived at the YMCA where he met Preston Kampmeyer who had sent information about the Ethical Society to Robyn Spencer. Sometime later Preston had a party and invited David and Robin. Thus began the courtship leading to a wedding on June 9, 1940, and nearly fifty-nine years of happy marriage.

While David worked as a Research Chemist, he was eventually pressed into plant management. He made frequent trips to the Mallinckrodt operations in Mexico. At one point in his career, he and Robin spent several months there, over a period of years. After one assignment and after they had returned to St. Louis, a problem occurred in production—a baffling situation which memos and phone conferences could not correct. So off David went to solve the problem. Watching the process, David noted a small amount of platinum (as a catalyst) was omitted from the reaction. When this was called to the attention of the

operator, David was told “It was such a small amount it surely did not matter if they left it out.”

Stress from his work during the war years caused friends to suggest he pursue a relaxing hobby, such as bird watching and loaned him binoculars. This led David to the birders in the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. When I returned to the bird group after World War II, the Jones were living in Webster Groves and we began a friendship of more than fifty years.

David was quiet and to many he may have appeared shy. He was very thorough in his bird studies and had written about hummingbirds, gulls and swans. He had developed a fine ornithological library which he generously shared with all of us.

I savor the memories of our many phone conversations, visits and trips in the field, as well as conferences, hearings, and sessions on site to determine management and use-policy of designated or future conservation areas by federal, state and local governments.

David was the father of Deirdre, Michael and Lance. He was a wonderful husband, father, chemist and scientist at work and afterwards in his retirement, and he was my friend. I miss him greatly. ∞

## Your Yard List

Randy Korotev

How about sending us your list of the total number of bird—or butterfly—species seen in your yard? Mention a few of the rarest species. People—I—like to brag about this. Respondants should indicate how long they've lived at the address and categorize their yard—large or small; urban, suburban, or rural, etc... ∞



**Next Deadline: Oct.10**

## Annual Spring Botany Trip

Carl Darigo

This year's Spring Botany Trip was to southern Illinois, mainly centering in the Shawnee National Forest, during the week of May 3. Twelve members (Father James Sullivan, Jeanne Clauson, Carl Darigo, Jane & Rick Deschu, Pat & Jack Harris, Joy & Rick Moll, Suzy & Dick Russell and Jan Surbey) participated on one or more days. The weather was springlike in the 60°-70° range and cooperated by raining only at night. Headquarter city was Murphysboro, with the group split between the Super 8 and the more rowdy Apple Tree Inn. An easy "motel plant" decision was the ubiquitous butterweed (*Senecio glabellus*), whose yellow flowers were everywhere.

Monday, May 3—two Shawnee National Forest sites in Jackson County, Little Grand Canyon Natural Area and Pomona Natural Bridge, were on the agenda. The first involved a long trek down to the Big Muddy River bottomland, but was rewarded with *Valeriana pauciflora* (pink valerian), one of Father Sullivan's trip goals, as well as *Galearis spectabilis* (showy orchis). Other interesting plants were *Mitella diphylla* (miterwort), *Saxifraga pensylvanica* (Forbes' saxifrage), *Allium tricoccum* (wild leek), *Trillium flexipes* (white trillium), *Asplenium trichomanes* (maidenhair spleenwort) and *Huperzia lucidula* (shining clubmoss). Jack Harris spotted *Pohlia wahlenbergii* (Wahlenberg's red stem moss) and *Pellia sp.* (poreless ribbed liverwort), while Jeanne Clauson saw a five-lined skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*). The highlight at Pomona Natural Bridge was a nice display of coral root orchids (*Corallorhiza wisteriana*).

Tuesday, May 4—this day was devoted to Giant City State Park, which is in Jackson and Union counties. On the Trillium Trail in Fern Rock Nature Preserve, *Valeriana pauciflora* (pink vale-

rian) was again found, with Suzy Russell coming up with the even rarer *Synandra hispidula* (hairy synandra), another one of Father Sullivan's favorites. Other plants included *Hydrophyllum appendiculatum* (woolen breeches), *Dicentra canadensis* (squirrel corn), *Actaea pachypoda* (doll's eyes) and *Phacelia bipinnatifida* (leopard leaf); Jeanne Clauson found an interesting thalloid liverwort, *Jamesoniella autumnalis* (fringed umbrella liverwort) on the sandstone rock face. At the Giant City Nature Trail among gigantic boulders, a flowering black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) drew comments; meanwhile, Suzy Russell scored again, but this time meeting a friendly copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) crossing the trail. The day ended with a nice viewing of French's shooting star (*Dodecatheon frenchii*), the location provided by a very cooperative park superintendent.

Wednesday, May 5—several Union County sites near Jonesboro and the Larue-Pine Hills Natural Area along Highway 3 were the goals for the day. At Trail of Tears State Forest, a north-facing slope produced *Cynoglossum virginianum* (wild comfrey), *Arundinaria gigantea* (giant cane), bright red flowers of *Aesculus pavia* (red buckeye) and *Galearis spectabilis* (showy orchis), the latter two plants spotted by Father Sullivan. The steep Brown Barrens Nature Preserve Shale glade was dominated by yet-to-bloom woodland sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*). At Berryville Shale Glade, more like an old field than glade, after pacifying several annoyed dogs, *Krigia caespitosa* (dwarf dandelion), *Geranium carolinianum* (Carolina cranesbill) and *Carex leavenworthii* (Leavenworth's sedge) were found. In high water near the entrance to Larue-Pine Hills, Jack Harris discovered *Utricularia macrorhiza* (common bladderwort) complete with tiny bladders and *Spirodela polyrhiza* (duckmeat); then along an old

woods road, Pat Harris and Father Sullivan debated at some length before identifying *Lithospermum latifolium* (American gromwell). Regardless of no Hispanics being available, everyone assembled at the Apple Tree Inn's gazebo for an evening Cinco de Mayo celebration. With appropriate background music, Jan Surbey produced margaritas, Dick Russell provided Mexican beer, Joy & Rick Moll concocted a delicious taco-like dish and Pat Harris likewise with a refried bean-rice mixture. Later, blind-folded Father Sullivan and Dick had limited success in demolishing a Wal-Mart piñata furnished by Jeanne Clauson.

Thursday, May 6—the group returned to Larue-Pine Hills for a good look at the famous “snake crossing” road, as well as walking the old woods road to the Otter Lake terminus. *Smilax rotundifolia* (round leaf greenbrier) required detailed field keying plus some animated discussion among the participants. *Poa palustris* (fowl bluegrass) was abundant along the road margins, while attention was drawn to a nice flowering *Ilex decidua* (deciduous holly) and especially *Urtica chamaedryoides* (weak nettle); the latter plant is unusual and has S1 status in Missouri. Not a single snake was encountered, although Jeanne Clauson compensated with an American toad (*Bufo americanus*) and a bluff-dwelling cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuge*). Another confusing *Smilax* was found along the old woods road, *S. lasioneuron* (carrion flower), and all agreed that corncob sedge was a fitting common name for the unique fruiting spikes of *Carex shortiana*. A drive along the upper bluff overlooks revealed vast fields of yellow *Senecio glabellus* (butterweed) which could be seen in the distant bottomland towards the Mississippi River.

Friday, May 7—Some of the group opted to check out a Missouri site on way home, Ball Mill Resurgence Natural Area

in Perry County, not far from the Chester bridge. Several plants seen here included, *Myosotis verna* (scorpion grass), *Cynoglossum virginianum* (wild comfrey) and *Carex rosea* (convoluted sedge). The week ended with Pat Harris spotting a copious growth of bachelor's button (*Centaurea cyanus*) growing along a roadside. ~

## Publications Of Interest

Jack H. Harris

A copy of the following publications may be obtained by writing to the MO Dept. of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO, 65102-0180, or calling 573-751-4115, or perhaps by inquiring at an MDC Conservation Nature Center near you.

New Edition: *Public Prairies Of Missouri*. Published by the MDC; Carol Davit, editor; prairie maps, Michael Klein; Designer, Tracy Ritter; 1999; 48 pages. This is a completely renovated and upgraded edition of the previous issue of this very useful pamphlet. 4000 acres of prairie have been added since the last edition in 1994. The maps and illustrations are visually appealing and informative. In addition to a new individual locator map and descriptive narrative for each prairie, a brief prairie primer has been added. This will help the public to understand and appreciate the value of one of our most severely threatened natural resources.

*Missouri Species Of Conservation Concern Checklist*—June 1999. Published by the MDC, Natural History Section. 30 pages. This is the annual edition of the current status on the global and state condition of our flora and fauna. Species that are federally listed are so indicated. The recently adopted system of state listings (S1–S5) and global ranks (G1–G5) is used in these listings. The pamphlet introduction advises that “18 percent of the native vascular plants, 14 percent of the nonvascular plants, and 28 percent of the vertebrate animals in

Missouri" qualify for listing. For nature study enthusiasts who wish to learn more about the life forms that are, or may be, living on the edge, a two page list of references is included.

*Conservation Trails, A Guide to Missouri Department of Conservation Hiking Trails.* Published by the MDC; 97 pages. Compiled by Teresa Knight; Bernadette Dryden, editor; Russ Miller & Debbie Briedwell; maps; Tracy Ritter, designer; 1999; size 6.5 x 9.75 inches; spiral binding/paper. \$5.00 A new document that hikers, birders, botanizers, and nature study enthusiasts will want add to their map/reference stash for outdoor foray planning when visiting MDC lands. Describes 86 trails on 40 Conservation Areas. Lies flat—hooray!—and each map has its associated narrative on the facing page—hooray again!. Maps are neat, two colored, uncluttered, and planimetric—what?—no contours???. Each map has its own scale. Thus it's easy to read and use. The Key to Trails is nicely laid out—for a statewide trail location snapshot—but there is no organized link to the detailed map pages in the book. One has to use the old hunt and search by name method. Still, this guide is a practical companion/supplement to the MDC *Atlas*.

For Daily Bulletin of the XVI International Botanical Congress; news coverage, etc., we suggest :

<http://www.ibc99.org/>

<http://www.postnet.com/botanical>

<http://www.naturalstep.org/>



Watch Attenborough's *Life of Birds* on Channel 9, PBS, 7 PM Tuesdays. Awesome!

## ***Red-Tails In Love: A Wildlife Drama in Central Park***

Pantheon Books, New York, 1998

Reviewed by Ava Schaffer

This summer it was my good fortune to have a copy of Marie Winn's *Red-Tails In Love: A Wildlife Drama in Central Park*, mailed to me by an old friend. As you begin reading you will meet the "Regulars," a small, diverse group of nature lovers dedicated to Central Park's wildlife and plants and concerned with the preservation of its habitat. Their astute observations are entered in an informal journal, the "Central Park Bird Register and Nature Notes," which is located in a building on Rowboat Lake for the purpose of recording and sharing information. As the story unfolds you will be introduced to the myriad natural bounty that is nurtured or takes refuge in the urban oasis afforded by the park. Walk with these new friends as the seasons change and observe the shifting patterns of flora and fauna, both local and migratory. You can even find out where the "Missys" go when the ponds freeze over.

Pale Male, a young, light-colored Red-tailed Hawk, is the story's main animate character. His trials and tribulations spanning several years of mate attraction, nest building (high up on a ledge of a Fifth Avenue apartment building) and chick rearing together with Ms. Winn's skillful presentation help transform what could have been a strictly dry discourse on zoological and botanical listings into nothing short of a mystery story. The park, itself is also a central character. The people who hold it dear share the secrets of its biological wealth in an endearing narrative on the natural abundance still to be found in what most of us consider to be a desolate, concrete jungle—New York City.

Marie Winn writes a column on nature and bird watching for the *Wall Street Journal*. ∞

## August 1999 Bird Report

Jim Ziebol & Yvonne Homeyer

Jim Jackson reported a Henslow's Sparrow and 3 Sedge Wrens at the Arboretum in late July, but not Dickcissel or Prairie Warbler. Lou Hanes reported several Cerulean Warblers, Blue Grosbeaks, Lark Sparrows and Bell's Vireos in Calhoun Co., Ill., during July. This is very encouraging. Probably the best bird of the summer was a male Rufous Hummingbird, present for a few days around Aug. 8 in Festus. Kathy and Charles Fassler provided complete documentation, including photographs and a video. This is only the second Rufous Hummingbird for the St. Louis area and one of the few seen in Missouri in the summer.

On 8/5, 110 Snowy Egrets were counted at Riverlands (FH) and 140 were present on 8/29 (T Be). Frank Holmes counted 130 Cattle Egrets in St. Clair County on 8/8 (FH). The first fall duck was a Pintail on Collinsville Road on 8/8 (FH). On 8/19, 9 Pintails and 5 Shovelers were found at Stump Lake/Mark Twain NWR (J&CM). The Bald Eagles breeding at Clarence Cannon NWR apparently fledged one young. A perched Mississippi Kite was seen on 8/25 in Florissant (CA). A somewhat early fall migrant N. Harrier was seen on 8/15 in Calhoun Co. (LH). The 3 Cooper's Hawks from Forest Park had left the nest by 8/2 (KC). This is a very unusual urban breeding record for this species. On 8/17, an immature Cooper's Hawk was observed on a mudflat in Green Co., Ill. (LH). A recently fledged Red-shouldered Hawk was seen at Clarence Cannon on 8/7 (YH, JZ). Three Broad-winged Hawks were observed on 8/14 at Busch CA (KP, YH). An adult Red-tailed Hawk was observed several times

during the summer in Tower Grove Park. The first Osprey of the fall was seen on 8/14 at Riverlands (J&CM). Two immature pheasants were a good find on Cora Island Rd. on 8/2 (CM). Torrey Berger heard 2 Great Horned Owls at his home in west St. Louis County at the end of August. Great Horned, Barred and Screech Owls were all present at the home of Lou Hanes in Hamburg, Ill. in August. On 8/5, a King Rail was seen at Heron Pond (PB). According to Jim Rathert, Mo. Dept. of Conservation, up to 5 pairs of King Rails fledged young at Clarence Cannon this summer. Many area birders successfully made the trip to see them.

Shorebird habitat was scarce in August due to the drought. A Golden Plover at Stump Lake on 8/29 was the only one reported in August (LH). On 8/1, 2 Upland Sandpipers were found at Stump Lake (J&CM) and one was seen at Riverlands on 8/14 (G&TB). An Avocet appeared at Riverlands (Wood Stork Pond) on 8/28 (MB, m. ob.). A Willet was seen on 8/5 at Riverlands (PB) and another was found at Cora Island Rd. on 8/30 (T Be). A Wilson's Phalarope was seen at Riverlands on 8/2 (G&TB). A Red-necked Phalarope in basic plumage was a very good find on 8/27 on Cora Island Rd. (DB, MB, m. ob.). A Dunlin seen on Cora Island Rd. on 8/12 was somewhat early (T Be). A Baird's Sandpiper was observed at the Horseshoe Lake Causeway on 8/3 (GB et al.). On 8/28, 4 Buff-breasted were also seen at Cora Island Rd. (J Moe). A Bonaparte's Gull was present at the Causeway of Horseshoe Lake on 8/1 (JZ, YH). A juvenile Laughing Gull was seen at the Horseshoe Lake Causeway on 8/3 (DK, JZ). Two more juvenile Laughing Gulls were found on 8/29, one in a Granite City parking lot and the second at the Horseshoe Lake Dredge (FH; also photographed). On 8/8, 4 Forster's Terns were found at Riverlands (MT). Three Caspian

Terns were at Riverlands on 8/17 (T Be) and 21 Black Terns were seen at the Borrow Pit/Horseshoe Lake on 8/8 (FH). Great Horned, Barred and Screech Owls were present at Lou Hanes' house in Hamburg, Ill. throughout August. On 8/22, Whip-poor-wills were flushed at Castlewood (MB) and by 8/25, 40+ Nighthawks were observed in Florissant (CA). Red-headed Woodpeckers with young were observed at Clarence Cannon on 8/15 (SG et al.) A Willow Flycatcher was closely observed at Weldon Springs CA on 8/15 (YH). Olive-sided Flycatchers were seen on 8/9 and 8/27 in Tower Grove Park (RAB), on 8/21 in Tower Grove Park (BK), and on 8/15 in Forest Park (MT). Three Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen in Tower Grove Park on 8/28 (RAB). Many Sedge Wrens were seen at Riverlands and elsewhere throughout the month (G&TB). On 8/10, a Loggerhead Shrike along Wise Road was a very good find (CA). A Veery was seen at the bubbler in Tower Grove Park on 8/29 (JZ).

A very early fall migrant N. Waterthrush was carefully observed in Jefferson Co. on 8/1 (MP). Three Golden-winged Warblers were seen in Tower Grove Park on 8/28 (CA) and a Wilson's Warbler was found at Castlewood on 8/20 (MB). A Pine Warbler was a surprise at the Cypress Circle/Tower Grove Park on 8/28 (JC et al.) A Canada Warbler was a good find on 8/16 in Tower Grove Park (T Be). A mixed feeding flock at Stump Lake Access Rd. on 8/28 included Black & White, Redstart, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prothonotary, and Red-breasted Nuthatch (J&CM). The songbirds have been slow in arriving this fall. In late August, there were 2 cold fronts but neither produced many migrants. The Blue Grosbeaks' nest at the Borrow Pit/Horseshoe Lake apparently failed.

### **Busch Wildlife CA Breeding Survey:**

A special thanks to: David Becher, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Yvonne Homeyer, Jim & Charlene Malone, Anne McCormack, Jeannie Moe, Kevin Renick and David Rabenau for helping on the Busch CA Breeding Bird Survey conducted in June. Each participant had a separate territory, which was covered on at least 2 different days. One conclusion from the data is that woodland species have declined dramatically in the last 10-15 years. These species are important because they eat insects; fewer birds mean more insects. Other results from our survey:

### **Species That Were Not Found at All:**

The following birds used to nest at Busch but were not located this year: BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO (never numerous), RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (a declining species), BEWICK'S WREN (formerly bred at Archery Trail & Dardenne Creek); LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (not expected), CERULEAN WARBLER (a common nester in Busch 15 years ago—but 3 pairs found at nearby Lost Valley Trail), REDSTART (never found in large numbers), BLUE GROSBEAK (rare nester in Busch but nests nearby at Weldon Spring's Blue Grosbeak Trail), and DICKCISSEL (not a regular yearly nester). No Red-shouldered Hawk was reported; however, they were probably present and not noticed because they nest earlier. ONLY ONE FOUND: BELL'S VIREO (formerly an uncommon breeder—but 3 nests found at nearby Weldon Spring Trail), YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (former regular nester at Archery Trail and Dardenne Creek—but found at Lost Valley Trail), OVENBIRD (never numerous), LARK SPARROW (never numerous), CHIPPING SPARROW (formerly in small breeding flocks). ONLY TWO FOUND: Willow Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Black & White Warbler, Worm-

eating Warbler. **ONLY THREE FOUND:** Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo. **FOUR to TEN FOUND:** Yellow-billed Cuckoo (cyclical but very poor numbers for any year), Carolina Wren (low numbers, possibly due to winter storms), Wood Thrush (continuing to decline), Red-eyed Vireo (formerly one of the 3 most numerous woodland species in Eastern N. America).

*Comments:* Many hummingbirds have been reported at feeders area-wide in August. 47 species of breeding birds were found in Madison County this summer, including Wild Turkey and Western Kingbird (FH). A nice gathering of birds was found on Chouteau Island on 8/14, including 6-8 Green Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Little Blue Herons, Caspian Terns, flocks of gulls and Canada Geese, a N. Harrier, 3 Red-tailed Hawks (1 melanistic), Bobwhite, and more (Kenneth Thompson). When possible, include the number of each species reported. Thank you.

*Contributors:* Connie Alwood, George & Terry Barker, Paul Bauer, David Becher, Torrey Berger, Rose Ann Bodman, Torrey Berger, Mike Brady, Ken Cohen, Jean Cook, Sue Gustafson, Lou Hanes, Frank Holmes, Yvonne Homeyer, Dan Kassebaum, Bob Kleiger, Jim & Charlene Malone, Jeannie Moe, Kraig Paradise, Mark Peters, Mike Thelen, Jim Ziebol, many observers. ∞

## **WGNSS/St. Louis Audubon Bird Walks for Oct.**

Charlene Malone

*Saturday Oct. 2, 1999*

7:30 AM—late afternoon, **Carlyle Lake**, Clinton/Bond IL counties. This lake is the largest in IL and the surrounding area, therefore should produce many fall migrants along with a few surprises. Target birds will be migrating shorebirds, waterfowl, sparrows hopefully including LeConte's and Sharp-tailed, fall warblers, migrating raptors, gulls including Sabine's along with other "zooties" that may show

up this time of year. The trip will begin at Hazlet State Park to look for migrating passerines, so wear comfortable shoes. Secondly, this year we will attempt the mini pelagic again. With the boat and some popcorn "chumming," we should get up-close views of some of the gull species usually seen in the middle of the lake. Due to boat rental, **registration is required** for this trip by **September 24**. Please be prepared to share the boat rental/gas fee that should be \$10/person—depending on number of people on the boat trip/rental fee/gas prices. Finally, a trip to the NW side of the lake will include a walk along the levee at Parking Lot #3. This will involve a mile (+/-) walk, with one area possibly having shallow water or muddy terrain, so water-proof/comfortable boots are recommended. Some of the hiking could also include hiking through knee-high grass so long pants and bug spray will be a must. Bring enough food and water for all day—pack lunch to tentatively have on boat. Bring binoculars, scopes will be needed along with field guides. All levels of birders welcome. Carlyle Lake can be very windy, so take that into consideration when dressing for weather.

Contact Jim Malone (636/536-1119) to register and for more info. Turn left at the junction of Hwy. US 50 and IL-127 and go to the McDonald's restaurant parking lot to meet. We will leave from here at 7:30 AM sharp, so please be on time. Complete directions in "Need Directions?" p. 14, this issue.

We will leave from here at 7:30 AM sharp, so please be on time. See p. 73-75 in the *Birds of the St. Louis Area* by Alwood, Bauer et al for more info about Carlyle Lake.

*Saturday October 16, 1999*

8 AM—mid afternoon, **Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge**, Annada, Pike county MO. This all day trip will provide

looks at migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and sparrows. Most birding will be from the cars, but there will also be hikes along the levees and closed roads, so wear comfortable shoes. Dress for weather. Bring food and drink for all day. Bring binocs, scope and field guides. All levels of birders welcome. Contact Jim Malone (9636/536-1119) for more info.

We will meet at the refuge parking lot. Complete directions in "Need Directions?" p. 14, this issue. Please note that the restroom facilities may *not* be open—still working on that—therefore the closest facilities will be the town of Elsberry, 5 miles away.

See p. 51-52 in the *Birds of the St. Louis Area* by Alwood, Bauer et al for more info about Clarence Cannon NWR. ∞

## **Conservation Committee Report**

Yvonne Homeyer

We have a chance to have our voices heard on a critical issue of national importance: proposed revisions by the Army Corps of Engineers to a series of nationwide permits governing the destruction of wetlands. Please write to the Corps and urge them to *strengthen* the proposed rules. A sample letter that just needs your signature and address is enclosed as an insert to this newsletter; the deadline is October 7. Over half of all endangered species live in wetlands, which are disappearing rapidly. We need tight controls to ensure the survival of the remaining wetlands and the plants, insects, butterflies, birds and animals that live in wetlands. There will be lots of letters from developers and other land users who want to loosen the regulations on wetland destruction, so let's send our message loud and clear: SAVE OUR WETLANDS. Both the Audubon Society and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment have been active on this issue. For further information, those of you with Internet access can

check out the web site for the Audubon Society's Wetlands Campaign Action Alert at: HYPERLINK

<http://www.audubon.org/campaign/wetland/action.html>

*Please send in your letter today.* See p. 21.

Dianne Benjamin has agreed to head up our new Legislative Taskforce, a subcommittee that will monitor federal and state legislation of interest to our members. We will keep you informed of pending bills so you can contact your elected representatives. If you would like to volunteer to help with the Legislative Taskforce, you may contact Dianne at 997-2419.

Several weeks ago, some WGNSS members birding the Blue Grosbeak Trail at the Weldon Spring CA (along Hwy. 94 before the turnoff to Hwy. D) noticed that trees and shrubs along the gravel trail were being cut down. The Committee then alerted officials at the Dept. of Cons. that this trail is a sensitive area because of the presence of Bell's Vireos and Blue Grosbeaks. These two species have declined precipitously in number and Weldon Spring CA is one of the last places left in the St. Louis area where Bell's Vireos and Blue Grosbeaks still nest. WGNSS received the following courteous reply from Mr. Mark Flaspohler, Wildlife Management Biologist of the Dept. of Conservation, St. Louis Region: Thank you for your concern regarding various activities taking place on the Weldon Spring Conservation Area. I appreciate your sharing information regarding the Bell's Vireo and Blue Grosbeak nest sites in this area. The map you provided is a big help and we will certainly stop cutting trees in that area. Information regarding nest site locations, which you have provided, is helpful and very much appreciated. Again, I appreciate your interest and concern regarding the Weldon Spring CA. We are grateful that the Dept. of Conservation was able to respond to our concern so quickly. Thanks to

their prompt action, Bell's Vireo and Blue Grosbeak will find their breeding site intact when they return in the spring.

This summer, WGNSS members Dave Becher, Dennis Bozzay, Mike Brady, Yvonne Homeyer, Jim & Charlene Malone, Anne McCormack, Jeannie Moe, Kevin Renick and David Rabenau conducted a breeding bird survey at Busch Wildlife—see the end of the Bird Report for more information. This data will serve as a baseline to measure increases or decreases in numbers of each species in the future.

Woodland species such as Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ovenbird and Worm-eating Warbler were found in low numbers. Edge birds such as Chat, White-eyed Vireo and Indigo Bunting are doing very well. Bell's Vireo, formerly found in several places in Busch, was found in only one location.

The Conservation Committee has many projects in mind. The more volunteers we have, the more we can do. Even if you cannot attend a meeting, you can still be active. Please call Yvonne Homeyer (963-7750) for more information. Better yet, come to our next meeting on Wednesday, October 20, 7:00 p.m., 1508 Oriole Lane in Brentwood. ~

### **Colorado Birding cont.**

tainly hadn't been in a position, as a youngster, to maximize my birding options. *This* time would be different. I had 30 years of birding experience behind me, I had considerable knowledge of bird songs, and I was going to a region of Colorado that was brand new to me—the Western Plateau. I wasn't going to have my car, but I figured I could rent one, or perhaps borrow my friend's vehicle for a few outings. I was determined to set modest goals, since I had no idea what to expect. But like a dutiful birder, I prepared a short list of "target

birds" based on range maps in the *Nat. Geo* book and information in Harold Holt's *A Birder's Guide to Colorado*. My list included a bird long dreamt about, the Lewis's Woodpecker, as well as Lark Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, Green-tailed Towhee, Sage Thrasher, Poor Will, Band-tailed Pigeon, MacGillivray's Warbler, and any new sparrows I could find, such as Black-throated, Brewer's and Sage. These were just some of the life birds I needed, but there were plenty of other species I knew I'd be thrilled to see.

A good omen for the trip: the day I arrived in Paonia, a Broad-tailed Hummingbird appeared at my friend's hummingbird feeder. Ted and his wife had put the feeder up some weeks back, but no hummers had yet graced it. So my visit coincided with the Broad-tailed's debut—how fortuitous! The list was under way. After that, though, I became rather discouraged when I found out there were no car-rental agencies in Paonia. In fact, there were several things I took for granted that this little western town would force me to do without. I couldn't even purchase a copy of *USA Today* anywhere! A further complication was that Ted's car turned out to be a manual transmission. Now I had driven stick shifts in the past, sure, but I felt uneasy about driving one on the kind of winding mountain roads I wanted to explore to reach good birding sites. Also, I didn't feel right about depriving Ted and his wife of their only car while I went gallivanting down the roads out of Paonia, in an unfamiliar car to boot. Somehow, I just had to have faith that things would work out. Past experience had taught me that, when it comes to birds, where there's a (Poor)will, there's a way.

One such "way" turned out to be the hills above Paonia. A fabulous walking trail paralleled an intriguing irrigation canal—I learned that a unique system of these canals

allowed the area to flourish with lusher than expected vegetation and expansive fruit orchards—and I discovered the trail on my own the first morning I awoke in Paonia. The colorful, raucous Black-billed Magpies let me know that I was no longer in Missouri, as they squawked and flew on both sides of me. A gorgeous Bullock's Oriole came next, and I was thrown for a loop when a completely different-looking oriole, mostly yellow with a black chin, appeared nearly at the same time. Turned out to be a first-year male Bullock's—not a Scott's like I first hoped—the book and range map set me straight on that!

For the next couple of hours—and the following morning as well, unfamiliar birds such as Bushtit, Western Tanager—a truly gorgeous bird, Spotted Towhee and Scrub Jay vied for my attention along with familiar species from back home—Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Robin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the extremely numerous Yellow Warblers. I was happy to get flycatchers like Ash-throated and Western Wood Pewee, even though they were not life birds. But I had heard their soft, vaguely melancholy calls, and was able to track them down that way. My first real treat was a Poor-will, which I unexpectedly found perched on a tree branch over the gravel driveway of one of Ted's neighbors. I stared at it for ten minutes in disbelief. It was daytime! But the small size and short wings helped me rule out Nighthawk when I looked in my guide. A lifer! So was my first Lazuli Bunting, which popped up from a pile of brush as I was descending from the hill. Only a 3-second look, but in full sunlight, long enough to see that gorgeous turquoise head and throat contrasting with the brown breast. A male Lazuli has to be categorized as an "adrenaline-pumper." Sure was for me! A later treat was a tree containing both American and Lesser Goldfinches, the latter not a lifer, but fun to

see nevertheless. And I engaged in a unique flirtation with a Brewer's Blackbird on a telephone wire. He stared at me, squawked a bit, I stared at him, gazing into his beady yellow eyes, wanting to see how close he'd let me get, since I had never gotten this close to one in St. Louis. I kept coming. Closer. Closer still. Right under him! Cack! He never moved. I'm the one who finally moved. It's not polite to stare—even at a Brewer's!

I had expressed to Ted my hope that we could take a scenic overnight trip somewhere, if his work schedule allowed. He seconded the motion, and made the decision to take me to Ouray, a mountainous spot that he described as quaint and stunningly beautiful. Ouray was about a 3-hour drive from Paonia, on a gloriously scenic, winding road that paralleled the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in places. I suppose I should have been scanning the skies for raptors, but I was kind of busy hanging on for dear life as Ted negotiated some of those sharp turns next to sheer, precipitous drop-offs at a much brisker pace than I felt comfortable with. "Feel your fear," Ted admonished. "It's *supposed* to be scary here, but it's beautifully scary."

"Yes, it's beautiful," I agreed. "And I'd like to live to tell about it if you don't mind."

From a scary road perspective, the worst was yet to come. When we got to Ouray, Ted wanted me to experience part of the mountain pass between Ouray and Silverton, one of the highest, most sweat-inducing roads in the country, a road characterized by frequent avalanches and long closures in winter. Zigzag turns next to terrifying gorges—and no guard rails!—reduced me to a near-whimpering state, despite my awe at the overwhelming natural beauty. Ted gleefully explained how the good folks of Ouray had lobbied against guard rails because they wanted only good,

responsible drivers on these roads, people who respected the need to drive cautiously. No cocky tourists or hot-rodding teenagers here. Me, I just prayed I would live to see tomorrow. I had birds to see, damn it!

Back to the birds. The very moment we pulled into our chosen lodging spot, the Box Canyon Hotel, I spotted a series of bird feeders beyond the building, with lots of commotion taking place. Excitedly, I grabbed my binoculars. The feeders were covered with Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins. Over the next 24 hours, I would have the opportunity to observe these two species from every possible perspective, from the tops of conifers to feeders five feet away, learning their persistent calls and every detail of their plumage. To see dozens and dozens of Evening Grosbeaks raising a ruckus at one time is certainly the kind of birding moment that sticks in the memory.

I told Ted I wanted to get up really early in the morning to bird, which he encouraged me to do—he was happy to sleep later. So at 7:00 AM, on a sunny morning in the Rockies, I bounced out of bed ready to score whatever species I could. The first new one, obviously a vireo song but sounding a bit different to my ears, revealed itself to be a Gray Vireo, one I had to push my way into a clump of intersecting willows to locate. Next, as I wandered up the mountain trail, came Steller's Jay, a singing Black-headed Grosbeak, and several incredibly curious Western Tanagers. One male Western came so close to me I could barely focus my binoculars on him, but when I did, the stunning plumage—red head, black back and yellow underparts—almost took my breath away. For the most lingering looks I had at a western songbird, the tanager took the prize on this trip. My next life bird was a Mountain Chickadee. It was kind of a thrill to see a bird that in almost every way resembled the familiar

Black-Capped and Carolina back home, but whoa, this bird had a broad white eyebrow. This was definitely not my father's chickadee! I then found an Orange-crowned Warbler, singing, in good light, and I developed a new appreciation for this bird. Why, that lovely olive-green color, seen in clear light at the top of a conifer on its nesting ground—who said this was a dull warbler? No Orange-crowned I had ever strained to see in the treetops at Tower Grove Park ever impressed me as much as this little guy. *Vermivora celata*, I apologize for all disparaging remarks made previously by we wittle WGNSS members.

Moving on, I observed a Black-chinned Hummingbird perched in full sunlight, the "Gray-headed" form of the Dark-eyed Junco with its distinct rufous-colored back, and a Red-shafted Flicker, another regional subspecies. I may have muttered the phrase "Down with lumpers!" under my breath, I'm not sure. A Pine Grosbeak perched on a feeder as I returned down the trail was a nice treat, as was a close Hammond's Flycatcher. That was probably another lifer, but I couldn't be sure without digging up old records from previous western jaunts. Ted soon joined me for breakfast and a subsequent walk down to Box Canyon Falls, a local attraction. Above us as we walked, the White-throated Swifts and Violet-green Swallows were easy to pick out as they swooped and soared, swooped and soared. But I was after the less common Black Swift, and Box Canyon Falls was said to be the best place in Colorado for this species. When we were almost down to the falls, I did see a couple of dark swifts fluttering along the canyon rim that were almost surely Black Swifts. But I was not destined to get a better look than this, and had to take solace in the awesome grandeur of the falls. This natural wonder is notable for how *close* you can get to it; the explosive spray can get ya right in the face, and

the thunderous roar prevented me from hearing many of Ted's comments, one of which might very well have been "Oh look, another of those dark swifts seems to be nesting right up there." A place well worth visiting, for sure.

On the way home from Ouray, we made a stop near the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, where we hiked to a prominent overlook. With its jagged walls, the green ribbon of the river far below, and its desolate, foreboding beauty, this was easily one of the most unforgettable landscapes I had ever seen. The utter silence and the lack of tourists or development somehow made this vista more impressive to me than the Grand Canyon, where I had also spent time before. Ted borrowed my binoculars to watch a soaring Turkey Vulture and a Red-tailed Hawk, but I soon snatched them back to go pursue an odd song that suddenly reached my ears. Somewhere in the surrounding chaparral was a sparrow-like trill, somewhat variable, and definitely unfamiliar. I was sure it was something I needed. By scanning a row of little shrubs, I was eventually able to find the author of this distinctive song—a Green-tailed Towhee. Another life bird, and another great entry for my Colorado bird list.

Although I was enjoying the birds immensely so far, it quickly became a goal to try to hook up with some local birders. There were still many species I hadn't seen, including the mysterious Lewis's Woodpecker. Ted's wife suggested that I contact a woman she knew of only as "Andrea," whom a neighbor friend had apparently done some stucco work for. She was supposedly the contact person for local birding activities. Well, Andrea turned out to be Andrea Robinsong, no less than the president of the Black Canyon Audubon Society. I rang her up and asked if there was any way someone might be able to take me around to show me a few birds, since I had

no car. "What birds are you looking for?" she inquired. I read my now somewhat reduced list. Lewis's Woodpecker? "Oh, I think we can find that one for you," was the response. Lark Bunting? "No, probably not. They're rare around here—more common in the eastern part of the state." Sage Thrasher? "Possibly. I can't guarantee it, but possibly." MacGillivray's Warbler? "Oh, there's a chance. I know an area we can try for that one." Sparrows, such as Sage and Brewer's? Again, Andrea said there was a chance, but that it was far from a guarantee. Still, her overall response was good enough for me, and I was hyped. The fact that she was even willing to make birding time available for me was exciting. She later told me that two other local birders wanted to join us, Bill and Cheryl Day. Cheryl, I learned, was the editor of *Canyon Wrenderings*, the journal of Black Canyon Audubon. So here I was, a St. Louis birder lost in the unfamiliar wilds of Colorado's western plateau, and the gods of birding decreed that I would get to bird with officials of the Black Canyon Audubon Society! I could barely contain my excitement. My list stood at 56 species, and I decided I could reasonably upgrade the goal to 75 species, although the number was not as important as *what* we might find. I was certainly eager to find out.

It was a beautiful, clear morning as all of us met at 7:00, to get a good start on the day. As we headed down a back road toward the Black Canyon's north rim, I exchanged pleasantries with the Coloradoans, just comparing notes on some of our experiences. I happened to ask Andrea again about the Lark Bunting, and why it was so uncommon around here when the range map in *Geo* clearly showed the bird covering most of the state. I can't honestly say that I remember her response, because right as we were discussing it, a small, dark bird hopped up on the roadside fence, and

Andrea suddenly slowed down. A small, dark bird. White wing patches. A Lark Bunting! Andrea proclaimed it as such, the disbelief palpable in her voice. All four of us broke into excited giggles, with my pet phrase "Oh my God" being uttered for the first of many times that day. A life bird! And a sighting the timing of which gave also gave an adrenaline rush to my new friends, whose state was host to the species! As Cheryl would later remark, "That was a birding moment I'm always going to remember." Less than 10 minutes later, we stopped the car again when I thought I heard an odd call. We looked—perched at the top of a small bush was a Sage Thrasher! We hadn't even completed an hour of birding, and I had already seen two of my target birds. Things were going great! Then, down a sloping hill, another strange song reached our ears, a kind of harsh monotone. I said I thought it was a Cactus Wren, because it was the same song I had heard in Arizona some years earlier, one of the first distinctive desert birds I remember finding on a solo birding expedition. Andrea seemed quite interested, and I guess I hadn't realized that the Cactus Wren was not native to Colorado. In fact, she related, this would be a state record if true! Well, with many birds I would quickly have backed down, but geeze, I *knew* this darn song! What else could it be? Certainly not a Rock Wren, that one was much more variable. This song was a harsh monotone that grew louder in volume, but varied little in pitch. No other song I was aware of sounded like that, and the habitat was right. The state wasn't, that's all! Could it really be? Did I want to be responsible for a state record in Colorado? The bird would have to remain a mystery since we never caught a glimpse of it, but to this day I am reasonably sure that was what it was. Clearly, this day had started off in a way that *none* of us could have predicted, and all

bets were off. Said Cheryl, "We've entered the birding twilight zone." It became a joke, since conjuring was apparently working, that for the birds we actually wanted to see, we would say the opposite. Thus, comments like "We won't see a Golden Eagle. We won't see a Sage Sparrow. And we certainly won't see a Lewis's Woodpecker!" were prevalent throughout the day. It provided some hearty chuckles.

Also amusing were the number of stops we made to check out these odd sparrow-like songs, songs that mostly turned out to be either the Spotted Towhee or the Green-tailed Towhee. Whether giving an alarm call or some variation of an "official" song, these two species were responsible for an astonishing variety of sounds, and Andrea affirmed that the Spotted in particular was known for driving local birders nuts with its vocal repertoire. Just in my one week in Colorado, I heard it sing 3 or 4 very different songs and at least two totally different alarm calls. Ah, the wonder of nature...

One diverse, sparrow-like song that made us work for awhile turned out to be...an *actual* sparrow. In fact, it was a Brewer's Sparrow, a life bird not just for me, but for Andrea. The positive ID was confirmed when we got the bird in Andrea's excellent scope, and were able to observe it at length. This was a great one, definitely one of the birds of the day. Not long after, we were scoping a series of other sparrows which turned out to be...well...we just couldn't be sure with one of them. It looked at first like a Baird's, which would have been a spectacular rarity. But things got confusing with different sparrows flying in and out of view, perching in different places. Andrea finally pronounced one little bugger that we had been fixated on a Song Sparrow. I was stunned! There was no central breast spot, and the song was nothing like the Song Sparrows back home. Nevertheless, Andrea

explained how amazingly variable the western Song Sparrows were, and how easy it was to be thrown by them. And so my education as a birder continued, there amongst the sage and chaparral of western Colorado. At least there were no such doubts in later sightings of a beautiful Mountain Bluebird and a soaring Golden Eagle. *Some birds don't waste your time!*

In a campground at the Black Canyon's north rim, the setting was outrageously beautiful, but we worked for our birds. Rumors of a nesting Goshawk proved false—Andrea and Bill Day were able to ID it as a Cooper's Hawk. We saw more than one Virginia's Warbler also, which, though I think I had one in Arizona in 1982, seemed like a brand new bird because I saw it so well. And it was singing, too, always my favorite way to confirm a new bird sighting. Another warbler that made an impact was the Black-throated Gray. This species decided to annoy Cheryl, who needed it for *her* life list. First her husband Bill found the bird, but only when he wandered off on his own. When the three of us went to where he had it, it was gone. Later, Andrea saw the warbler, but only when she wandered off on *her* own. Again, Cheryl missed it. Then I saw the pesky little warbler, but only by making Andrea stop the car when I heard the song, jumping out, and—yes—wandering off on my own. If Cheryl was at all dismayed by being left out, it would be short-lived. All four of us finally got to see the lovely Black-throated Gray Warbler, which finally stopped its teasing and gave us all a great show, singing up a storm. What a bird! Our other sightings at the canyon included a very pale Hermit Thrush which threw us, a Chipping Sparrow, Western Kingbird, Plumbeous and Gray Vireos, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and, seemingly everywhere, House Finches and more Spotted Towhees. Also had a Kestrel, a nice

soaring Common Nighthawk and a Northern Harrier a bit later.

The trip took us from the north rim of Black Canyon along the north fork of the Gunnison River and across Redlands Mesa. We made a mid-day stop at Andrea's house, where she had told me she recently had a nesting Lewis's Woodpecker. I eagerly circled the tree where the nest hole was, but no bird. Andrea said there was another place we'd be checking later, and not to worry. For some reason, Lewis's Woodpecker had always been a bird I doubted I would see. It seemed unusual to me, and whenever I stared at it in the book (often!), I just couldn't imagine really seeing the bird in the flesh, er, feathers. I never saw one during my previous visit to Colorado. Never found one in northern Arizona in 1982, despite spending considerable time looking. Nor did I find one in trips to California in 1986 and 1994. Honestly, how could there be a woodpecker with that color scheme? Green, pink and gray? No way. Someone would have to *prove* the existence of this odd bird to me.

In the meantime, our birding trip continued towards an area known as Fruitgrowers' Reservoir, a place I had read about in Holt's book and that Andrea and Cheryl described as one of the best birding spots around. Before getting there, Bill directed us to a place known for having Band-tailed Pigeons, another of my target birds. We went up a dirt road to a fairly ordinary-looking farmhouse, and there, perched on top of some sort of antenna or pole was a pair of Band-tails. Through my binoculars, I could see the purplish head and back, the white band on the nape and the substantially larger size. Cool! Or should I say, coo-coo-cool!

Descending through sage and pinyon covered hills, we finally reached the reservoir, which extended to both sides of the road...quite a large expanse. The Colorado

folks told me this was a major stronghold of the Yellow-headed Blackbird. For them, that was no big deal. For me, it was da bomb! (That's slang for "big news.") Yellow-headededs were only occasional in St. Louis, and I had seen exactly five in 30 years. I couldn't imagine being at a marsh where Yellow-headededs were as numerous as Red-wings back home. It was the sound that reached my ears first, that clangorous, abrasive buzz... I nearly leaped out of the car before we even stopped. Yep, there were Yellow-heads a-plenty, and close by. I stared and stared, then I stared some more. Beautiful! Though Andrea and Cheryl were in agreement that it was way below an average number of Yellow-heads—"sometime this place is *filled* with them," they said—I was more than content. I counted about a dozen males, and had wonderful long looks, both through binoculars and scope. Took me awhile to get truly satiated! Then...a couple of other quick life birds. There were Cinnamon Teal here, a bird I had missed when it showed up in St. Louis last year. And Clark's Grebe—a bonus. Andrea picked the Clark's out of a huge group of Western Grebes, which were notable unto themselves. Fruitgrowers' Reservoir apparently had one of the largest nesting populations of Western Grebes in Colorado. They were literally everywhere we looked—some with young, which was a treat. Two adult Westerns actually sported baby grebes riding on their backs, a spectacle the likes of which I had never seen before. My companions were also delighted by this, especially when Papa or Mama Grebe tried to shake junior off at one point. A "Kodak moment" in the birding world. Followed rapidly by another—a large flock of feeding White-faced Ibises, in great view. Like, wow!

I was quickly adding to my Colorado list, for sure. There were new birds *in* the water—Snowy Egret, Eared and Pied-billed

Grebes, Green-winged Teal, Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck and Gadwall—*near* the water—the ibises, several Willets, a Spotted Sandpiper, a loud Marsh Wren—and *over* the water—several species of swallows. A humorous highlight occurred when I was trying to decide if I had seen a Bank Swallow or not. I thought I had, but did not want to write it down until I was sure, even though my list, incredibly, was close to 100 birds for the week now. As I was standing on the shore, scanning with my binoculars, I heard Andrea yell out "Here's a Bank Swallow." I was thinking, great, I'll just look where she is looking and reaffirm that I had indeed seen this species. But when Andrea said she had a Bank Swallow, she meant she literally *had* a Bank Swallow—in her hand! The poor bird had apparently just crashed into something, perhaps a car, and Andrea had scooped it off the ground, as it twitched its last twitch. I burst into laughter at the sheer improbability of this event. There I am wondering if I have seen a Bank Swallow or not, and the president of Black Canyon Audubon confirms it for me by producing the poor bird in her hands—maybe it was the same one I first saw flying, too! Well, this "bird in the hand" was worth, um, certainly at least two that were in the bush or anywhere else, and definitely some big laughs. A true moment of surreal humor, for sure...

My list had gotten up to 99 birds, and the others were sharing in my enthusiasm. But then, just like the appearance of the UFO mothership at the end of the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," something large and beautiful suddenly came into view, something totally unexpected. Out of the tall weeds by the water strode a pair of Sandhill Cranes. For the umpteenth time, I said "Oh my God," just like one of the UFO watchers in the movie. Silent, regal and spectacular, the two birds left us all in awe. The Black Canyon folks

were amazed because, although Sandhills occurred at Fruitgrowers' regularly, this was extremely late in spring for them (mid-June), maybe even the latest on record, Andrea said. But the whole day had been like that, full of wild, unexpected birding moments. My cup had already runneth over, when Andrea next found a trio of beautiful Wilson's Phalaropes, in great view. The lady was a champ, in my book; she knew I was thrilled, and I think she was tickled that so many birds had "produced."

By now it was 6:00, I had over 100 birds, and I could have ended the day quite happily at this point. But Andrea knew there was some unfinished business. We went down another winding road, away from the reservoir, to a plain-looking house with a large, dark tree in front of it. Nothing particularly distinguished about the setting.

"This is where we've had the Lewis's Woodpecker regularly," Andrea announced. The wind was blowing hard, and the place seemed so ordinary—I just couldn't bring myself to believe that some weird green, gray and pink woodpecker, my long-sought bird, would frequent *this* site. Yet the moment I hopped out of the car, wind whipping at my cheeks, I saw a dark shape fly from the house to the trunk of the dark tree. My heart pounded, I raised my glasses, and, gulp, there it was. "Oh my God, I've got it!" I yelled. There before my eyes, that unbelievable color scheme, an honest-to-God Lewis's Woodpecker, the final life bird of my trip. Even Cheryl was stunned; she had seen the bird before, though never this well, she said. We had the woodpecker on the trunk of the tree, on top of a telephone pole, and in Andrea's scope. Lewis's Woodpecker in a scope! That head, that plumage! We were all treated to long, lingering looks at the lovely Lewis—alliteration overload—sorry!. I was grateful to the birding Gods for this crowning

moment, and to the impressive experience and karma of Andrea Robinsong and her Black Canyon compadres. I'm a believer now!

By the time I went over my list carefully, and added a few more birds—non-lifers—the next day, the final tally for the week reached 112 species, including 16 life birds. Not bad for a guy who had no car, little money and very limited time. The trip had certainly exceeded my expectations. And now I had made friends with the good folks at Black Canyon Audubon, also. Well, there was plenty to look for on a return trip some day. I had no grouse on my list, no Rosy Finches, no Williamson's Sapsucker or MacGillivray's Warbler. But I had a truckload of great memories and wondrous, thrilling bird sightings. I was reminded, once again, of the glories of this hobby and the rewards that always come to one who keeps an open mind, a ready pair of binoculars, and maybe just one little mission when visiting a new area, like a quest to find some weird green, gray and pink woodpecker... ☺

### **Join University Of Mo—St. Louis Professor & Discover One of the Best Kept Secrets in Birding!**

Sue Gustafson  
Bird Guyana, South America, with CEIBA Biological Center Inc. and get a tax write-off while supporting its research, education, and conservation programs. Join ornithologist Dr. Godfrey R. Bourne on a 10-day (March 24–April 2, 2000; or May 19–28, 2000) expedition to coastal wetlands, white sand rainforests, inland savannas, Amazonian rainforests (Iwokrama International Rainforest Program), and tepui forests of Kaieteur Falls National Park. Small groups, of no more than 15 people, \$2,500 from Miami. Call Godfrey or Carol Bourne (314) 389-3347 or e-mail:

enruobgr@aol.com. Check out CEIBA's web page at—  
<http://www.umsl.edu/~biology/icte/TROPECO/index.html> (after 30 October 1999)

## **World Showcase Of Orchids in Cali, Columbia**

Peter Hoell

The Association Vallecaucana of Orchidology will present the "World Showcase Of Orchids In Cali" from Nov. 19 through 22, 1999 at the Orquideorama and the Orchid Park on the banks of the Cali River in Cali, Colombia. There will also be a Tropical Fruit Exhibition and events include field trips to Cali surroundings and to a cloud/rain forest.

For information:

Asociacion Vallecaucana de Orquideologia  
Avenida 2N No. 48N-10  
Cali, Colombia  
phone: 572-664-3256, 665-8358

## **Prospective Costa Rica Trippers**

Rick Thom

I have set up a natural history trip to Costa Rica that will emphasize the mountain cloud forest and lowland rain forest with a lot of opportunity for birding, botanizing and hiking. It will be somewhat of an "adventure" trip with quite a lot of hiking, a white water rafting trip, swimming in volcanic hot springs, a rain forest skywalk, a river motorboat tour, and a horseback trip to a remote waterfalls. Additionally, continued on p. 13

there will be an optional day hike that will give you a choice of hiking from Monteverde to Tabacon Resort, rather than riding in the tour bus. The bus ride takes about 8 hours, and the hike about 6, if weather and conditions are good. It will be mostly down hill, from near the continental divide to the base of Arenal Volcano, so this group will be outside a lot. But there

will also ample free time to explore, lounge, relax, shop or whatever. Lodging is in first rate motels and bed and breakfasts. The trip will be from Feb 19 to Feb 27. We will have a bilingual naturalist guide, a driver, and a bus as part of the package. The naturalist guide adds a lot to the trip, not only for the local knowledge of plants and animals, but also for insights into the culture of Costa Rica.

I set the trip up through Holbrook Travel, a company that specializes in natural history tours and one that is concerned about appropriate development in Costa Rica. I have been on two other Holbrook Costa Rica tours and have organized a third one. I have been impressed with this company and its subcontractors in Costa Rica. The trip will cost \$1,380 per person, double occupancy, for the in-country tour. I have reserved tickets for the group from St. Louis to San Jose on Delta Airlines. The flight will cost \$591.40, which is utilizing Holbrook's contracted discount. Meals and activities not included in the itinerary, tips, souvenirs, an airport departure tax (around \$17), and other incidental expenses are not included.

I have set this trip up for ten people, and the first ten people who sign up will fill the trip. To reserve a spot, you need to make a \$200 deposit to Holbrook Travel. This deposit is fully refundable until 60 days prior to departure. At this time, the balance is due in full to Holbrook.

You can make the deposit by calling Sandy Schmidt at 1-800-451-7111 and putting it on your charge card. Also, call Sandy or me for a detailed itinerary or if you have other questions.

I have set this trip up to be an exciting, somewhat adventurous introduction to Costa Rica and the rain forest. You can call Sandy Schmidt about Holbrook travel or how the reservations work. While Missouri

is in the depths of winter, you could be in the tropics. Join me in Costa Rica:

Rick Thom

616 Speer Drive

Jefferson City, MO 65109

573-893-5376 (home); thom@socket.net

fax: 572-665-8358

e-mail: orqvalle@colnet.com.co

www.orchidworks.com/cali

### *Ityson 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. ~



### **Next Deadline: Oct. 10**

We have exactly four weeks between deadlines this time. As you may know, *Nature Notes* is folded, labeled, etc. on the third Monday of each month, excluding June and July. The deadline for submissions is ten days prior to that. This allows time for typing, formatting and copying.

Submissions may be handwritten, typed, or on disk—PC or Mac. Computer wizards: Thanks for sending a printout along with your disk. Send yours to: Anne McCormack, 587 Andrews, St. Louis MO 63122. Or e-mail:

**finearts@mail.stjosephacad.com**

Last minute change? Short article? Call me: 965-8091; voice mail 965-7205, ext. 527 ~

### *need directions?*

#### **Clarence Cannon NWR**

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

#### **Tower Grove Park**

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

#### **Lake Carlyle**

- 50 miles east from downtown St. Louis, approx. an hour drive
- Cross the River on I-55/I-64/I-70.
- After a mile, the interstates split; take I-64 east. Past O'Fallon IL, take exit #19 & exit north on US-50/ IL 158.
- Within 1/2 mile turn right on US-50 and continue through Lebanon for 24 miles to stoplight at the junction of Hwy. US 50 and IL-127. Turn left
- Usual meeting spot is McDonald's restaurant

#### **1998-9 WGNSS Board**

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

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Pres: Doug Corbett, 702 C Overlook Cir. Dr., Manchester MO 63021, 861-2829.

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres: Vicki Flier, 18 Algonquin Wood, St. Louis MO 63122, 968-9166

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Ornithology: David Becher, 12829 Mariners Pt Ct., St. Louis MO 63141, 576-1146.

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Botany: Fr. James Sullivan, 124 Holy Family Church Rd., New Haven MO 63068, 573-459-6441.

Entomology: Marshall Magner, 516 Bacon Ave, Webster Groves MO 63119, 961-4588.

Environmental Education: Dick Coles, 11 Hickory Ln., Eureka MO 63025, 938-5271.

Conservation: Yvonne Homeyer, 1508 Oriole Ln., St. Louis MO 63144 963-7750.

Member at Large: John Molyneaux, 7822 Garden Ave., St. Louis MO 63119, 961-5181.

Member at Large: Tom O'Gorman, 465 N. Geyer, St. Louis MO 63122, 821-8079.

Member at Large: Ginnie Young, 1306 S. Geyer, St. Louis MO 63122, 822-9006. ~

Attn: CECW-OR  
20 Massachusetts Ave. N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20314-1000

Re: NWP 26 Replacement Permits Proposal

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a member of the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS), an organization of more than 500 members in the metropolitan St. Louis, Missouri area. Our members' interests include birds, butterflies, insects, wildflowers and the preservation and conservation of wild-life habitat.

The most recent Nationwide Permit proposal contained in the 7/21/99 Federal Register falls short of protecting our country's remaining wetlands, which are rapidly disappearing due to habitat destruction, primarily for development. The proposal will not allow the Administration to fulfill its policy of a net gain of 100,000 acres of wetlands per year.

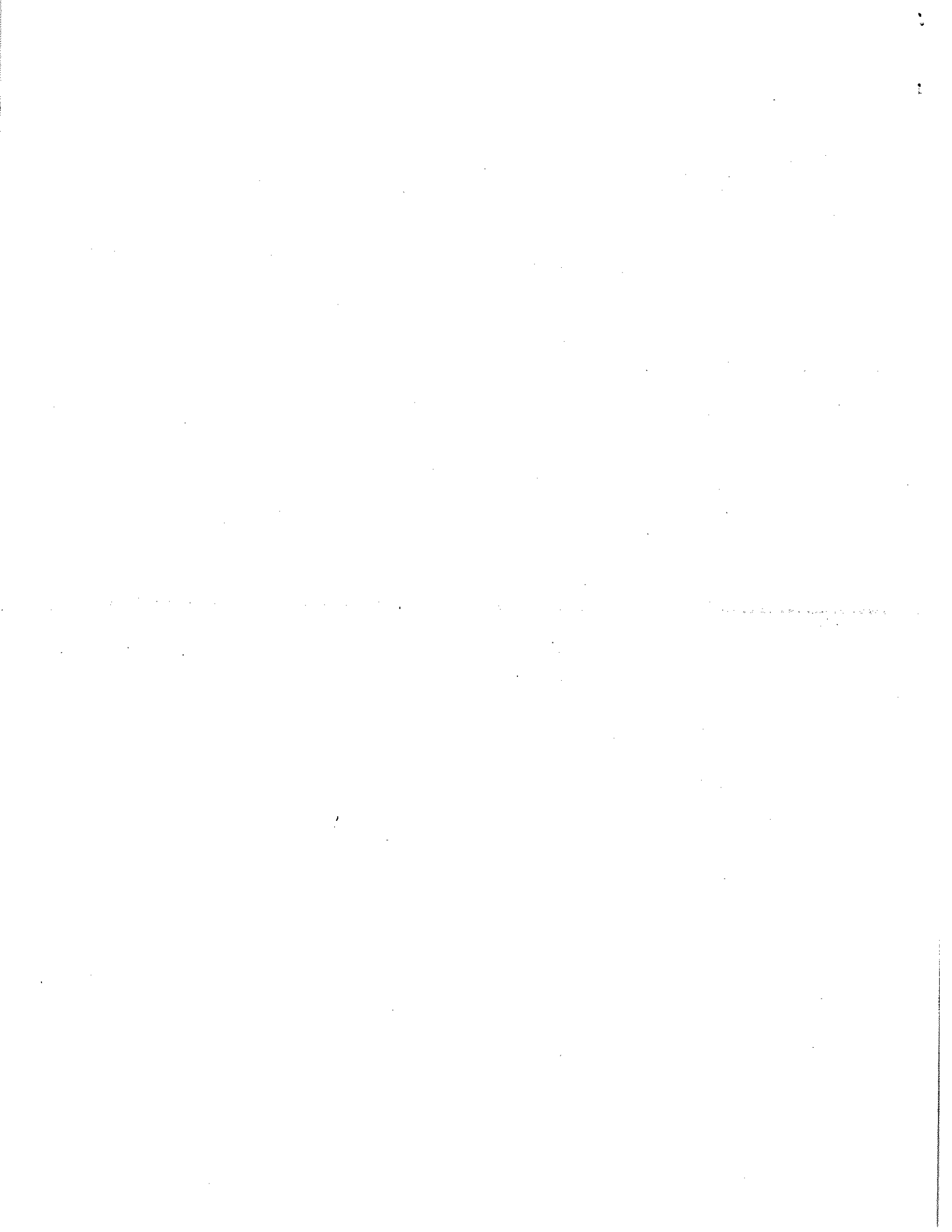
**Upland for Wetland Trades:** The current proposal promotes the establishment of stream and lake-side vegetated upland buffers as mitigation for wetlands destruction. Replacement of wetlands with trees is NOT mitigation. Moreover, the proposal allows the District Engineer the discretion to prefer this kind of non-wetland mitigation over true wetland restoration. The final rule should require an acre for acre replacement of wetlands through wetland restoration activities.

**Agricultural Drainage Permit:** The proposed NWP 40 would allow farmers to destroy up to 2 acres of wetlands on each farm tract that they own, without even having to notify the Corps of Engineers. This expanded NWP 40 permit would even allow the permit to be used in 100-year floodplains and would also allow the Corps to delegate responsibility to the Natural Resources Conservation Service for these permits. The final rules should not allow any impact to prairie potholes, playas or vernal pools.

**NWP 44:** This permit would allow wetlands destruction while conducting sand and gravel mining or hard rock mining in wetlands, is still unacceptable and does not protect wetlands. Mining should not occur in streams and wetlands, let alone without public review. The Corps should not issue a nationwide permit for aggregate mining.

Finally, I support the ban on using Nationwide Permits in floodplains, in and around critical resource waters, and in and around impaired waters or aquifers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my comments. I urge you to REVISE the 7/21/99 proposal for NWP 26 permit replacements in accordance with my comments in this letter.



# Webster Groves Nature Study Society

## *meetings*

### **Wednesday, Oct. 5**

7:00 PM Board meeting at Magner's:  
516 Bacon Ave., Webster Groves, 961-4588. All members welcome.

### **Friday, Oct. 8**

8:00 PM General meeting at St. Louis Co. Library HQ, Lindbergh just south of Clayton Road, in the West Meeting Rm: Thomas Prinzie, our '98 Scudder Scholar, will speak about his research on flower diversity in Mexican Milkweed.

## *conservation*

### **Tuesday, October 20**

7:00 PM at Yvonne Homeyer's, 1508 Oriole Ln. in Brentwood, 963-7750. Any member welcome.

## *entomology*

### **Saturday, August 28 &**

#### **September 18**

10:00 AM Butterfly walks at Busch Wildlife HQ parking lot. Yvonne Homeyer or Kraig Paradise as leader. For more information, call 963-7750.

### **Sunday, September 26**

7:00 PM at Magner's, 516 Bacon Ave. Webster Groves, 961-4588. "Show and Tell." Members share observations of the summer. Bring specimens, photos, slides, etc. Projector & screen available.

### **Sunday, October 24**

7:00 PM at Magner's, see above. Rich Thoma and Ted MacRae will discuss "The New Field of Biotechnology—Good or Bad?"

### **Nature Notes deadline Oct. 8**

Send articles, announcements to: A McCormack, 587 Andrews Ave, St. Louis MO 63122 (965-8091) or: finearts@mail.stjosephacad.com

## *botany*

### **Thursdays in Sept. & Oct.**

Beginners welcome. Bring lunch, weather gear. 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. Bring binoculars. Call David Becher 576-1146.

### **Thursdays in Sept. & Oct.**

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

### **Saturday, Sept. 25**

7:30 AM Tower Grove Pk, meet at first picnic area west of tennis courts & stable.

### **Saturday, Oct. 2 & 23**

8:00 AM Riverlands; meet at Teal Pond parking lot.

### **Saturday, Oct 2**

7:30 AM WGNSS/Audubon, all day trip Carlyle Lake. Meet at McDonald's Resturant, Carlyle, IL. See article for details (registration required/boat rental fee, directions, etc) or contact Jim Malone 636/536-1119 for more info.

### **Saturday, Oct. 9**

8:00 AM Tower Grove Park, see above.

### **Saturday, Oct. 16 & 30**

8:00 AM West County, see above.

### **Saturday, Oct 16**

8 AM WGNSS/Audubon, all day trip, Clarence Cannon NWR, Annada, MO. Contact Jim Malone (above) for info.

## *wgnss website!*

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

Afternoon Breakout Sessions: 5:00 to 6:10 p.m.

Evening Session: 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Dr. George Yatskievych,  
Missouri Department of Conservation and  
Missouri Botanical Garden  
"What do we know about plants of conservation  
concern in Missouri?"

Dr. Eric Miller,  
Saint Louis Zoo  
"Field research conservation programs at the  
Saint Louis Zoo"

Richard Thom,  
Missouri Department of Conservation  
"The role of the Natural History Section in  
conserving biodiversity"

Dr. Walter C. Crawford, Jr.,  
World Bird Sanctuary  
"Reintroduction programs for Peregrine Falcons,  
Barn Owls and Bald Eagles: Rebuilding the wild gene  
pools for the future"

Dr. Zuleyma Tang-Martinez,  
International Center for Tropical Ecology  
"Animal behavior? What does that have to do with  
conservation?"

(Please select 2 afternoon sessions)

Dinner and Displays: 6:15 to 7:15 p.m.

Dr. Jonathan Losos, Professor,  
Department of Biology and Genetics,  
Washington University and Trustee of the Missouri  
Chapter of The Nature Conservancy  
"What field experiments tell us about the processes of  
extinction and evolution, and the conservation of  
biodiversity: A case study from the Bahamas"

Dr. Meg Symington, Director  
Latin America and Caribbean,  
World Wildlife Fund  
"Andes to Amazon: Latin American conservation for the  
21st century"

Reception and Displays: 9:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Afternoon sessions will run simultaneously from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m.  
and be repeated from 5:40 to 6:10 p.m. in the first floor classrooms  
of The Living World. Participants are invited to choose two  
sessions. Evening presentations will be in the Anheuser-Busch  
Auditorium in The Living World. Each presentation will last about  
30 minutes and speakers will entertain questions following their  
presentations.



**SAVE THE DATE! Wednesday, October 6, 1999**

**Reservation Form**

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets in advance at \$7.50 per person (\$10.00 at the door, students \$5.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide dinner (sandwich, two side dishes, dessert and soda) for \_\_\_\_\_ at \$7.50 per person \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate with number required, meal choice: Ham and cheese  Turkey and cheese  Vegetarian sandwich

Please indicate two preferences for the afternoon breakout sessions:  
Missouri plants  Zoo/Field conservation  Conservation  Birds  ICTE

Name(s) and Affiliation (optional) for Name Tag: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Your check, made payable to The International Center for Tropical Ecology, is your reservation. Please mail, or fax, your reservation  
**BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1999** to Ms. Bernadette Dalton, International Center for Tropical Ecology, University of Missouri-St.  
Louis, Department of Biology, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121-4499. For more information, please contact Ms.  
Bernadette Dalton at (314) 516-6203, or fax (314) 516-6233, or e-mail at [bdalton@umsl.edu](mailto:bdalton@umsl.edu).

If you prefer, you can pay by bank card:  MasterCard  Visa Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_