



Nature Notes



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President's Corner

Rich Thoma

In a celebration of the 150th anniversary since the publication of *On the various contrivances by which British and foreign orchids are fertilized by insects, and on the good effects of intercrossing* by Charles Darwin, the December meeting featured **Drs. Peter Bernhardt** and **Retha Meier** from St. Louis University. Drs. Bernhardt and Meier use flowers as model systems to study the evolution of reproduction that began with the experimental and interpretive work of Charles Darwin. The title of the evening's talk was "Darwin's Orchids: The Flowering of Evolutionary Theory, 1862 to Present Day. Dr Bernhardt started the talk by casting Charles Darwin as the quintessential scientist of his time. After the publication of *On the origin of species* in 1859, Darwin was looking for model organisms to add more evidence that evolution was driven by natural selection. It was the Victorian age and housing orchids in terrariums and greenhouses was all the rage. It seemed only natural for Darwin to settle on orchids for study. As with *Origin*, Charles Darwin's orchid book began with the familiar, those species of orchids commonly found in the woods around his home, and then expanded to the exotic and complicated. Dr. Bernhardt explained how Darwin very meticulously dissected and drew the reproductive parts orchids to gain an understanding of how the plant reproduced. At

some point Darwin was given a specimen of Lady Slipper, *Cypripedium* to study. Initially, Darwin was stumped as to how this orchid reproduced. With suggestions from the American naturalist Asa Gray and through experimentation, Darwin finally understood how bees pollinate the Lady Slipper. Today, research continues on how the Lady Slipper reproduces. Dr. Meier described the field work that she and Dr. Bernhardt are conducting on the Lady Slipper Orchid, *Cypripedium reginae*. In Missouri, this orchid is believed to be declining. When found, *C. reginae* have abundant flowers, but few seeds are produced. In order to understand why so few seeds are produced, Drs. Meier and Bernhardt have spent the last three years studying the insects that pollinate the flowers and understanding how pollination occurs. What they have found is that only a select few species of bees (e.g. *Apis mellifera*, *Anthophora abrupta*, *Hoplis* sp. and *Megachile* sp.) pollinate Lady Slippers. These bees are just the right size. Dr. Meier described Lady Slipper flowers as attractive to a large variety of insects, but the design of the flower is very selective on which insects actually perform the pollination. Dr. Meier and Bernhardt speculated that loss of the right size pollinators could be a factor in the decline of Lady Slippers.

The 2012 year starts off with the annual joint WGNSS-Audubon Society winter party on Sunday, January 22, from 3:00–6:00 p.m. at the Audubon Center in Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary near Alton. Some of America's most spectacular birds such as Bald Eagles, Trumpeter

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Swans, Pelicans, ducks, geese and seagulls can all be easily found at Riverlands. Arrive early and explore around the area. When you get cold, come on over to the party. This is a great chance to spend an afternoon with your fellow naturalists, enjoying great stories about your adventures in the field. If you plan to attend, we ask that you bring a dish for all to enjoy. See the winter party announcement in this issue of *Nature Notes* for further details [Ed. – see flyer on pg. 18].

In late November, St. Louis County Executive **Charlie Dooley** proposed closing 22 St. Louis County parks on January 1, 2012 due to projected budgetary shortfalls. Some of the most popular parks used by WGNSS members, including Greensfelder, Lone Elk and West Tyson, were on the list of those slated to be closed to the public if money was not found. The WGNSS board unanimously approved that a letter be sent to

Charlie Dooley, expressing our objections to closing any of the St. Louis County parks. A copy of this letter can be found in this issue of *Nature Notes*. In early December, Charlie Dooley and the St. Louis County Council have compromised and will be keeping the St. Louis County parks open for 2012. However, over 40 county employees, many of whom work for the St. Louis County Parks Department will be losing their jobs. In addition, this compromise should be considered a short term fix. Unless more money can be found, the county parks will once again be under severe budgetary shortfalls for 2013. All is not lost. No one wants our parks to close. The compromise gives the people of St. Louis County time to come up with a solution to protect our parks. Over the coming year, expect to hear about a wide variety of plans to protect our parks. It is up to us to stay informed and to get involved if we want these efforts to succeed.



October Bird Report

David Becher

October was a fairly normal month this year. The usual transition from the land bird to the early water bird migration occurred during the month. Dabbling ducks appeared in the area on schedule although not in large numbers. A Canvasback observed by Bryan Prather on the 30th was early for this usually late arriving species. Loons and Grebes began to appear. There were the usual numerous reports of Horned and Pied-billed Grebes around the area. Bryan Prather found 12 Horned Grebes and 20 Pied Billed Grebes on Creve Coeur Lake on the 14th.

Carlyle Lake hosted most of the action including a Western Grebe found on the 22nd by Dan Kassebaum that remained through the end of the month. On the 30th he also reported both a Red-necked Grebe and Pacific Loon, but neither apparently stayed to the next day. Common Loon counts of over 40 individuals were reported on some days from Carlyle Lake, a good number for this declining species.

Most heron species have departed the area by October so a Snowy Egret reported by Frank



American Bittern in a Bald Cypress, Tower Grove Park, 13 Oct. Photo by David Becher.

Holmes on the 11th at Horseshoe Lake is notable. The oddest observation of the month was undoubtedly the American Bittern spotted by Leon sitting in the top of a bald cypress at the east end of Tower Grove Park on the 13th. Despite being high up in a tree instead of in a marsh full of reeds it repeatedly pointed its bill at the sky. This was a life bird for several observers, who had been looking for this species in marshes and wetlands rather than tree tops.

There were two reports of juvenile Ibis species this month by the Saturday group on the 1st at Heron Pond and on the 18th by Mike Thelan and Al Smith near B.K. Leach. Neither bird remained for long, and in both cases the species could not be certainly determined. Bryan Prather reported a Osprey over at Creve Coeur Lake on the 14th and Bill Rowe was fortunate enough to find a Golden Eagle at Cuirve River State Park on the Rail reports were limited but Dan Hays found a Yellow Rail at Voelkerding Slough on the 31st. There were still a fair number of shorebirds moving south at the start of the month. The Saturday group had Golden Plover at Heron Pond on the 1st and Dave



Long Billed Dowitcher, Heron Pond. Photo by David Becher.



Franklin's Gull, 5 Oct. Photo by Bill Rudden.

Rogles had five juvenile Black-bellied Plovers on the 2nd. Bill Rudden photographed both species there on the 5th.

There were still numbers of the common species such as Least and Pectoral Sandpipers and Yellowlegs at Heron Pond. On the second two Long-billed Dowitchers were seen such stayed for some time. James Hickner reported that number had risen to four on the 10th. There were also variable number of Dunlin, always a late fall migrant at Heron Pond the first half of the month.

Bonaparte's Gull reports were scattered away from Carlyle Lake, but the Saturday group had two in Ellis Bay at Riverlands on the first and Bryan Prather had two more at Horseshoe Lake on the 19th. Franklin's Gull numbers were also low, but Frank Holmes had a remarkable 62 on Horseshoe Lake on the 2nd.

Most of the rare gull reports were from Carlyle Lake. Dan Kassebaum reported a California Gull



Sedge Wren, Heron Pond, 2 Oct. Photo by David Becher.

the weekend of 1st, on the 8th he photographed what appeared to be a Great Black-backed Gull, he found a Thayer's/Iceland Gull on the 21st, and a very late Sabine's Gull on the 22nd. Unfortunately, none of these birds were apparently repeatable as is so often the case at Carlyle.

Marsh Wrens continued to be found around Heron Pond and were present all summer until at least the 10th. Elsewhere Frank Holmes reported one on the 2nd at Horseshoe Lake. The peak number which undoubtedly included migrants from further north was about the 2nd. At the same time a few Sedge Wrens, which apparently failed to attempt their usual late summer second nesting in the area, were found in the fields near Heron Pond by Dave Rogles and others. The first Winter Wren report appeared to be one that Sherry McCowan found in her yard on the 15th.

A small group American Pipits was found by Kent Lannert and the Saturday group at Heron Pond on the 1st. The warbler migrant continued for the first part of the month and there were still 10 species of warblers including Cape May and Canada and a wide variety of other migrants reported at Tower Grove Park on the first and Chrissy McClarren reported twelve species on twelfth including Bay-breasted and an Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler (still not split, but save it up). Chrissy also reported an immature Blackpoll Warbler at Tower Grove on 17th. This species is extremely rare in the Midwest in fall and tricky to identify.

Sherry McCowan reported the only Harris Sparrow a 1st-winter in her yard on the first. Also on the first the Saturday Group had a Nelson's



Nelson's Sparrow, Heron Pond. Photo by David Becher.

and two Vesper Sparrows in front of Heron Pond. The next day Dave Rogles and others had multiple Nelson's Sparrows and some LeConte's and Vesper Sparrows among the hordes of Swamp and Savannah Sparrows in the fields near Heron Pond at Riverlands. Dave also reported a Lincoln Sparrow and a possible Henslow's. David Becher found a Clay-colored Sparrow in the same area. The second appeared to be the peak bird day, but there were still some Nelson's present (along with the Marsh Wrens noted above) on the fourth. Frank Holmes had an early White-crowned Sparrow on the second at Horseshoe Lake. Don Hays reported Vesper and Lark Sparrows among the commoner species in the fields at the Shaw Nature Reserve on the 5th.

A small group of Bobolinks was also found in the Orton Road area near Heron Pond on the second and they remained for some time. There were only a few scattered Pine Siskin reports. Sherry McCowan had one at her house on the 15th and two more in Forest Park on the 20th. Charlene Malone reported one from her house on the 29th. A few Purple Finches were also reported at the end of the month, but large numbers of winter finches did not appear.



August Botany Report (part 2)

Compiled by George Van Brunt

August 29, 2011 — Meramec State Park,
Franklin County, Missouri (contributed by Wayne



Actaea pachypoda (white baneberry, doll's eyes), Hamilton Branch Cave. Photo by John Oliver.

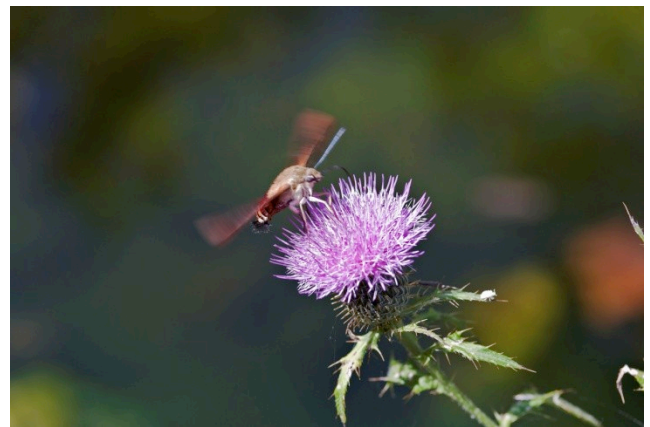


Asplenium rhizophyllum (walking fern), Hamilton Branch Cave. Photo by John Oliver.

Clark with additional contributions by John Oliver, Burt Noll, Dave Tylka, and George Van Brunt).

The weather was clear and in the high 70s at the start of the field work. Those in attendance were Fr. Jim Sullivan, George Van Brunt, Bob Coffing, Wayne Clark, Nancy Clark, Burt Noll, Ed Haun, Darlene Haun, Dave Tylka, John Oliver, and Louise Langbein.

Our area of interest was Hamilton Hollow and Hamilton Creek by the Old Hamilton Ironworks in the southeast corner of the Park. The first area explored was the loop trail in the woods behind the iron furnace. Some of the plants we saw were *Scrophularia marilandica* (figwort), *Elymus hystrix* (bottlebrush grass), *Triosteum perfoliatum* (common horse gentian), *Solidago rugosa* (rough-leaved goldenrod), *Elephantopus carolinianus* (Carolina elephants foot), *Cirsium altissimum* (tall thistle), *Campanula americana* (tall bellflower), and *Perilla frutescens* (beefsteak plant). *P. frutescens* is an



Cirsium altissimum (tall thistle) with hummingbird clearwing moth (probably *Hemaris thysbe*), Hamilton Branch trail. Photo by John Oliver.

introduced plant that was rarely seen thirty years ago, now it is fairly common.

After completing the loop trail at the iron furnace we crossed the creek to the floodplain area. A couple of the party explored the creek while the others headed downstream on a former earthen road. The road has been reduced to an overgrown foot path. The only clue to the road's existence is

its depiction on the USGS topographic map. *Chamaecrista fasciculata* (showy partridge-pea) and *Chamaecrista nictitans* (small-flowered partridge-pea), were on a gravel area in the stream. Near the creek and on the floodplain were *Packera aurea* (golden ragwort), *Chasmanthium latifolium* (river oats), *Verbesina virginica* (white crown beard), *Euphorbia cyathophora* (painted leaf) and *Polygala senega* (Seneca snakeroot). Several members of the group proceeded to the Hamilton Cave area. A few of the species found there were *Hydrangea arborescens* (wild hydrangea), *Impatiens capensis* (spotted jewelweed), *Menispermum canadense* (moonseed), *Asplenium rhizophyllum* (walking fern), *Cystopteris bulbifera* (bulblet fern), and *Veratrum woodii* (false hellebore). The last stop was at Pratt Spring. *Vallisneria americana* (American eelgrass) was there growing underwater. All together there were 76 species recorded.



November Entomology Meeting

Jane Walker

Phil Koenig presented the talk "Searches for the Swamp Metalmark (*Calephelis muticum*) 2011" to the Entomology Group on November 17. Phil updated members on his searches for the swamp metalmark in Missouri. The day after he retired, Phil was asked by U.S. Fish & Wildlife to look for populations of the swamp metalmark in Missouri. Northern populations of this butterfly were rapidly decreasing throughout their range. It was felt that the greatest known numbers were in Missouri based on collection records. Using these records, Phil started in August of 2010 looking at as many known sites as possible to determine if the swamp metalmark was still at these sites and how many. In 2010 six new sites were discovered with the swamp metalmark.

In 2011 began searching more known sites for the swamp metalmark. This butterfly is known to be double brooded in Missouri; one brood reaches adulthood in June and the other in August. It also feeds on two different food plants in Missouri and Illinois, the swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*) and tall thistle (*Cirsium altissimum*). The northern populations feed primarily on swamp thistle. No matter which food plant is used, the butterfly is

associated with wetlands and has to have a nearby water source.

This summer Phil set out on a 10 day whirlwind tour of the southern Ozarks. Accompanying him on this adventure was WGNSS member Mark Peters. They visited a total of 19 different sites. Phil visited an additional 10 sites in northern Missouri and around the St. Louis area in August. Again, Phil used old collection records to plot his trips. One of the difficulties Phil faces in using old records is the vagueness of the location descriptions. Some location descriptions can state "near Willard" but not say much more. One then has to look for potential areas with suitable habitat to survey in the vicinity of that location. Another difficulty that Phil runs into is the behavior of this butterfly. Unlike most butterflies, this butterfly will rest with its wings open, like a moth, on the underside of a leaf. One site Phil and Mark visited had the closely related northern metalmark (*Calephelis borealis*) but no swamp metalmark. To date, Phil has six new sites and four old sites with swamp metalmark. Next summer will bring more new searches and new adventures.



The Strawberry Tree

Fr. Jim Sullivan

I was walking the Smith Spring Trail at Guadalupe Mountains National Park in West Texas. A young couple caught up with me. (People are always catching up with me. It's easy to do. I always walk very deliberately!)

As they passed, I asked "Do you know the madrone tree?" He answered "I was just reading about it at the Visitor's Center. Anything you want to know about it is at the Visitor's Center." And then he disappeared.

That's nice. But I had something to say, too. But my audience had just moved on. I knew about the madrone tree (*Arbutus xalapensis*). I had read a lot about it. People are fascinated by it. But my news for the day was: I had just seen one—for the first time in my life, on this trail. In fact, I had seen many in that arroyo we had just passed through: red branches, reddish trunks, bark peeling from the wood, and the peeled branches were still very

healthy. They had leaves, flowers, and fruit. A strange tree, to be sure!

Most madrones have branches that look like my Caucasian arm, with a little bit of sunburn. Sometimes they do get more deeply red or red-brown. Whatever color they may have, after they peel the new bark is pale with a touch of pink. Some of the trees seem altogether pale now. I think they may have peeled in the past.

Madrone trees are not tall, but they are heavy. And the tree has a tiny flower, a lot like our low-bush blueberry back home (*Vaccinium pallidum*). The heavy tree and the tiny low bush are related. But the fruit of the tree is a red berry with a granular surface. "Madrono" in Spanish means "strawberry tree."

My brief visitors that day had been over the same trail. But they seem to have missed the tree. Thank heavens for the Visitor's Center!



The Very Very Late Hummingbird

Anne McCormack

I strolled around the turrets of [Hogwarts Castle](#) enjoying the sweeping views of tropical foliage. From the ravine below, a hummingbird came into view. It was large—something along the lines of a [Violet Sabrewing](#). I reached out and held the bird. It seemed to be in some kind of transitional plumage: purple, mixed with buff and green. Then I was startled by sounds of an uproar coming from Hogwarts. A group of boys rode some kind of magical escalator, screaming with laughter. The bird vanished. Beautiful singing of [pygmies \(or Solomon Islanders\)](#) woke me. That's because my alarm plays CDs; this morning, it's [Deep Forest](#)'s controversial 1993 album, *Deep Forest*.

Wondering what I had eaten the night before to produce such a vivid dream, I finished up my morning chores and headed to work without a moment to spare. As I headed for the gate Tuesday, Nov.15, an unmistakable silhouette popped up into the sweet gum tree—a hummingbird! I ran back to the house for my binoculars. Like my dream bird, the hummer had vanished and I headed for work.



I posted my report of the hummingbird on [MObirds](#), the listserve of the [Audubon Society of Missouri](#). I also contacted my friends [Lanny Chambers](#) and [Margy Terpstra](#), WGNSS member Margy lives nearby. She and her husband are wild bird photographers. They have a wealth of subjects in their beautiful, wildlife-friendly yard. Lanny is a hummingbird bander who has visited my yard many times chasing fall hummers. WGNSS birders might remember that he also holds the [record for the only Allen's Hummingbird in the state](#)—banded in his own yard in late Nov., 2008!

I didn't return till after dark on Tuesday. Wednesday morning the temperature on my back porch was 33 ° F. The birdbath had a skin of ice, but I caught a brief view of a dark bird at the nectar feeder. Surely this is some rare stray! Wed. evening that I saw the bird again, and was shocked to see that it looked exactly like a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird! Ruby-throats are the only hummer normally present in our area, but they should be gone by October 10 or so. Males migrate earlier than females and juveniles. I don't remember *ever* seeing one after mid-September.

I didn't get to study the bird long before the light was gone. That's when I checked my email to find Margy's wonderful photos of Lanny examining the bird in hand. It was indeed a male Ruby-throat. It may not be the latest Ruby-throat ever, but it's likely to be the latest confirmed adult male record. As you can see in the photos, he is a worn individual. His weight was good however, and Lanny saw no reason that the bird would have trouble migrating to his [winter home in southern Mexico or even Panama](#).

I spotted the bird again Thursday and Friday mornings and evenings, still visiting the last of my Big blue sage (*Salvia guaranitica*) and Mexican bush sage (*S. leucantha*). The sages and the bird had weathered near-freezing temperatures for 3 nights.

Saturday we warmed up to 60°, but I didn't see the bird again until Nov. 23. He remained until Nov. 26. Let's hope that soon he'll be rubbing shoulders with Violet Sabrewings. Thanks to Margy Terpstra for the use of her photos and to Lanny Chambers for enabling us to play a role in the study of hummingbird migration. You can see more of Margy's photos on my blog, [Gardening with Binoculars](#).



Isn't She Splendid?!

Ted C. MacRae

This gorgeous female *Cicindela splendida* emerged recently from one of my rearing containers. She was one of several 3rd instar larvae that I collected this past June from their burrows in a dolomite glade in southeastern Missouri. I had suspected



Cicindela splendida (Splendid Tiger Beetle), Bald Hill Glade Natural Area, Ripley Co., Missouri.

they might represent this species because of the bright, metallic sheen on their heads and decided to rear them out to find out for sure. Rearing tiger beetles is fun and easy—all you have to do is fill a container with native soil, make a “starter” burrow¹ and drop them in. In this case, I also partially sunk a native rock into the soil in the center of the container, something I have started doing recently as it gives the emerged adult an elevated and more visually appealing surface on which to perch than the soil should I desire to take photographs.

With tiger beetle rearing, feeding time is fun time! Our lab rears insects for testing in abundance, and there are always leftovers. Really just about any insect that can be pulled into the burrow will be acceptable as prey, but lepidopteran caterpillars are my favorite. I use mostly early instar tobacco hornworm larvae, choosing the size as appropriate for the size of the tiger beetle larva—the big ones (e.g. 3rd instar *Tetracha*) can handle caterpillars 35-40 mm in length and 6-8 mm in diameter, while neonates must be used for the smallest ones (e.g.

¹ Larvae will dig new burrows on their own, but starter burrows allow you to place the burrow where you want it. They are essential if more than one larva is introduced to the container, as wandering larvae will fight when they encounter each other. I like to start the burrow in a corner of the container (a pencil works great for this) and push down to the bottom of the container so I can see into the burrow from outside to monitor the larva as it develops. After introducing the larva to its burrow, I push the soil around the entrance to seal it lightly to keep the larva from immediately crawling back out. The larva will eventually reopen the burrow but generally accepts it, digging it out further to its liking and shaping the entrance to precisely fit the size and shape of its head.



Reared from 3rd instar larva, burrow in sparsely vegetated clay exposure of dolomite glade.

1st instar *Cylindera celeripes* and *C. cursitans*). I find it endlessly entertaining to sneak up on the larva sitting at the entrance of its burrow, slowly position a caterpillar above the burrow entrance with forceps, and dangle it to entice the tiger beetle larva to lurch out, grab the caterpillar, and drag it down into its burrow—all in a split second! If the larva drops down from the burrow entrance during my approach I just drop the caterpillar into the burrow (though this isn't nearly as much fun).

“Paint the Parks” Exhibit

George Yatskievych

The Paint America Association organizes two of the largest juried annual art competitions in the country. One of these is known as the “Paint the Parks” exhibit and is open to entries from painters in a variety of media, with the only restriction being that the subject matter must be based on a unit of the National Park Service. The top 100 paintings each year are displayed at various sites across the country. It is a well-kept secret that this traveling show has appeared in St. Louis during most years. The Old Courthouse downtown is part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, which includes the Gateway Arch. Its central rotunda is the place to see these amazing works of art. The show opened October 7 and runs through January 9, 2012. Admission is free and the Old Courthouse is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, please consult the following web page: <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/parknews/paint-the-parks-exhibit.htm>

Nature Walks at Emmenegger Park

Anne McCormack

Walks meet at the trailhead shelter by the creek. Sponsored by Kirwood Parks and Recreation.

- **Saturday, January 21.** “Cabin Fever” Bird Walk. Leader Sue Gustafson. Walk begins at 9:30 a.m.

Nature Classes at St. Louis Community College—Spring 2012

Nels Holmberg

Attached is a list of nature classes offered by St. Louis Community College for Spring 2012.

Grass Identification Workshop NATR 723 600J May 18 & 19, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Meramec campus.

This class will cover grass identification and the appreciation of grass diversity from one of Missouri's experts on grass identification, Paul McKenzie of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and will include both classroom and field instruction. Offered in cooperation with Missouri Native Plant Society. Text book required: Steyermark's Flora of Missouri, Vol. 1; George Yatskievych author.

Feeder Watch Program: Great Backyard Bird Count and Identification [NATR 709 650]

**January 24, 7:00–09:00 p.m., Meramec campus.
January 28, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., off campus.**

This class is a citizens' science course joining in cooperation with fellow bird enthusiasts across the country to help track the migration of birds across North America. This course includes bird identification, computer input and preparations for the February event run by Cornell University, and The Backyard Bird Count. Great for classroom teachers! Offered in cooperation with the St. Louis Audubon Society.

Warblers [NATR 709 651]

March 27, 7:00–09:00 p.m., Meramec campus.

Learn about the colorful spring migrant birds known as the warblers. Which are year-round residents in our area? Which breed in our area?

Which just are passing through in the spring and fall? Offered in cooperation with the St. Louis Audubon Society.

Spring Butterflies Lecture [NATR 720 650]

April 17, 6:00–08:00 p.m., Meramec campus.

April 21, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Location: TBA

Enjoy the beauty of butterflies both indoors and outdoors. In the classroom session, you will learn basic identification skills through a Power Point and video presentation. On the field trip, you will experience the magic of butterflies in their natural habitat while spring wildflowers are in full bloom. Field trip date Saturday 4/21. Provide own transportation. Although not required, binoculars and the field guide "Butterflies through Binoculars: The East" by Jeffrey Glassberg would be useful tools for the field trip walk. Offered in cooperation with the North American Butterfly Association.

Common Poisonous Mushrooms of Missouri Lecture [NATR 723 M01]

March 31, 12:00–2:00 p.m., Babler State Park.

Learn how to identify the most common poisonous mushrooms in Missouri. When you know what to avoid, it's a lot easier to figure out what you can eat! Class is a combination of lecture and field exploration, dress accordingly. Class held at Babler State Park Visitors Center. Provide own transportation. Bring sack lunch. Offered in cooperation with the Missouri Mycological Society.

Thunderstorms, Tornadoes, and Floods: Severe Weather Spotter [NATR 765 580]

April 14, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., Florissant Valley Campus, Social Sciences Bldg 101.

Are you interested in the weather and basic meteorology - like how storms form, how to find a tornado in a storm, what causes hail and much more? Would you like to join the local severe weather network and help officials identify severe weather in your area? Join Michael Redman, former Communications Coordinator for the St. Louis County Police Dept. and current Managing Director of the Traveling Weather Show as he shares his knowledge. Learn how to identify cloud formations and weather indicators that will make you an asset to the region in an emergency. You'll get your own spotter number to use when you call in your information, a training certificate, a CD of weather brochures and manuals, and handout material on severe weather.

Thunderstorms, Tornadoes, and Floods: Severe Weather Spotter [NATR 765 581]

April 14, 2012, 1:00 – 4:00PM, Flo Valley Campus, Social Sci Bldg 101

Improve the basic meteorological and severe weather skills you learned in the Level 1 class by taking the region's only Level 2 program. You'll discuss computer resources, convective outlooks, watch and warning messages, cloud definition, radar interpretation, severe weather safety, and more. You'll get lots of handouts and certification too. Prerequisite: Level 1 class.

Registration is at the St. Louis Community College website

<http://www.stlcc.cc.mo.us/conted>,

phone (314) 984-7500 and ask for Continuing Education, or use St. Louis Community College Spring Course Booklet



Lectures at St. Louis Zoo

Sandra Faneuff¹

The Academy of Science-St. Louis, in partnership with the Saint Louis Zoo, presents the 2011–2012 Science Seminar Series with *Science Seminars* and *Conservation Conversations*. Adults, teachers, middle and high school students, and the general public are invited to attend these no-cost lectures on topical issues in science. Lectures are from 7:30–9:00 p.m.

SCIENCE SEMINAR SERIES

- **Tuesday, March 6.** *Polar Bear Population Projections: Reliability in the Face of Uncertainty*, by Steven C. Amstrup, PhD.
- **Tuesday, March 13.** *Cheetah Conservation Botswana: Carnivore Conservation in the Kalahari*, by Rebecca Klein.
- **Tuesday, April 10.** *Reintroduction of the Island Fox*, by Cheryl Asa, PhD.

CONSERVATION CONVERSATIONS

- **Wednesday, February 1.** *Converting Photons to Electrons: Solar Photovoltaic Energy Around the World Today & Tomorrow*, by Greg Wilson, DSc.
- **Wednesday, March 7.** *Journey Through the Arctic*—lecture and book signing, by Debbie

¹ Office Manager, Education Department, St. Louis Zoo.

Miller. Special thanks to *Journey Through the Arctic* sponsor, the Alaska Wilderness League.

- **Tuesday, March 27.** *Bears of North America*—lecture and book signing, by James Halfpenny, PhD. Special thanks to *Bears of North America* sponsor & partner, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

For information on these and other events at the Academy of Science-St. Louis check their website www.academyofsciencestl.org or call (314) 533-8586.



Cougar Workshop and Public Classes

*Jim Jordan*¹

WGNSS members may be interested in know of special programs in March—in-depth cougar workshop and three free public lectures. Dr. Jim Halfpenny is teaming up with Jeff Beringer, Missouri Department of Conservation Cougar Task Force Biologist, to conduct a 2-day Cougar Workshop at Powder Valley Nature Center March 24–25. The flier [next page] provides information about the workshop. The online registration will start in 2012 so there is a placeholder web address, but my phone number is a good way for people to find out more information. Jim will also be doing three free public lectures during that same period [shown below].

Dr. Jim Halfpenny is a leading authority on Cougars and has been providing trainings throughout the US. He was the biologist that did the initial human cougar interaction research in Boulder CO sited in the book *The Beast in the Garden*.

There's Cougars in Missouri!
Friday, March 23, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
Powder Valley Nature Center

Secretive, elusive, the creature of myths and rumors, and capable of killing people, cougars stir our imagination, curiosity, and fear. Jim will cover cougar ecology, their lifestyle and past encounters with humans. Jim has investigated and analyzed over 300 interactions between people and cougars.

¹ Senior Coordinator Continuing Education, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Come learn about these amazing cats and how they have taken up residence in many states they were extirpated from in the past, including the Show Me State.

Yellowstone Wolves: Restoration, Science, Management, and the Future

Monday, March 26, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Belleville East High School, Belleville, Illinois
Wolves are the top carnivore in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. They have attracted millions of people to observe them in the wild or are loathed for the successful comeback they have made. Jim will share the wolves fascinating society, survival strategies, and how they bring balance to the ecosystem. You will hear how wolf research has revealed new understanding and Jim's personal encounters provide an intimate look into these fascinating creatures. Wolf management has changed over the years and the recent delisting has brought on new challenges. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about this magnificent carnivore.

Bears of North America
Tuesday, March 27, 7:30–9:00 p.m.
Saint Louis Zoo

Bears have played a mythic role for centuries in North America and epitomize wildlands. Jim will share his years of experience studying the largest carnivores of our continent. Grizzly and black bears have made the headlines this past year as human encounters increased. Come learn about their lifestyles, ecology, management, and how humans can co-exist with bears, even though they are very controversial.

Cosponsored by UMSL Continuing Education, Academy of Science of St. Louis, MDC, NABT BioClub, OASIS, Saint Louis Zoo. Registration not required. For more information visit <http://academyofsciencestl.org/events> or UMSL web page



COUGAR

ECOLOGY, BEHAVIOR & VERIFICATION WORKSHOP

2-Day Workshop for the Curious:
Home/Landowners, Educators, Naturalists,
Ecologists and Outdoor Enthusiasts

Secretive, elusive, the creature of myths and rumors, and capable of killing people, cougars stir our imagination, curiosity and fear. Improve your knowledge about cougars, their presence, dangers and management. Dr. Halfpenny and Mr. Beringer will also cover cougar ecology, cougars in Missouri, and how cougars interact at the human interface. If you are interested in cougars and want in-depth training in the topics below, then this is the workshop for you.

- + Population, biology, behavior and ecology
- + Cougar/human interactions
- + Cougar pet trade
- + Locating tracks and signs on the trail
- + Identifying footprints and verifying presence
- + Collecting quality evidence
- + Determining sex and size of animals
- + Reading gaits and tracking stories

March 24-25
Saturday – Sunday;
8:30 am – 4:30 pm



Dr. James Halfpenny,
Carnivore Ecologist/Professional Tracker

Jeff Beringer,
Chairman of Missouri Department of Conservation
Mountain Lion Response Team

For more information on registration and fees call Jim Jordan, Sr. Coordinator of Continuing Education, UMSL at (314) 516-7250.

ce.umsl.edu/catalog Keyword: cougar

Registration fee:

\$125 (plus \$12.50 for course workbook)



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Group Activity/Walk Schedules

BOTANY GROUP

Chair—George Van Brunt

Monday Botany Walks, Leader—Fr. James Sullivan; now in his **45th year!** The WGNSS Botany Group visits many of the same locations as the Bird group: Busch Conservation Area, Shaw Nature Preserve, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Babler State Park and Cuivre River State Park. Learning plants will help you learn butterfly host plants. Sign up for WGNSS Botany Group emails from Jack Harris by contacting him at jahar@mac.com or (314) 368-0655 and receive an email no later than Sunday about the following Monday's trip.

ENTOMOLOGY GROUP

Co-Chairs—Phil Koenig and Jane Walker

Monthly meetings are held September through May and normally occur on the third Monday of the month.

Monday, January 23, 7:00 p.m. Ted MacRae will give a presentation titled, "Nine days, ten states, and 4,300 miles." While Ted's primary group of insect study is the metallic wood-boring beetles (Buprestidae), he and Chris Brown have become passionate about tiger beetles (Cicindelidae) over the past several years. Their studies began and Missouri, documenting and photographing these fast and elusive beetles. Ted has now taken this interest further afield and traveled to surrounding states to search for other tiger beetles common and rare. Butterfly House (Faust Park), 15193 Olive Blvd., Chesterfield. Please note: this meeting is being held on the fourth Monday of the month rather than the third.

Monday, February 20, 7:00 p.m. Our guest this month will be Rich Thoma. The title of his talk is "Camouflage." Rich will share with us many examples of how insects use camouflage as a defense from would be predators. Butterfly House (Faust Park), 15193 Olive Blvd., Chesterfield.

NATURE BOOK CLUB

Chair—Lisa Nansteel

The Nature Book Club is a group of naturalists who meet once a month to discuss a book chosen for its general interest from botany to zoology. The group meets at the Evangelical United Church of Christ in Webster Groves on the second Tuesday of the month from 1:30-3:00 p.m. For more information and directions contact Lisa Nansteel at (636) 391-4898. All are welcome—especially newcomers!! Upcoming books:

- **Tuesday, January 10.** *Finding Beauty in a Broken World* by Terry Tempest Williams.
 - **Tuesday, February 14.** TBA
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ORNITHOLOGY GROUP

Chair—David Becher

Saturday Bird Walks, Leader—David Becher. All walks are at Des Peres Park. Walks normally go through early afternoon, so bring lunch if you wish to stay out. Everyone is welcome. The leader reserves the right to change the schedule if necessary. If you have questions, contact David at (314) 576-1146 or DavidBecher@msn.com

- January 7, 8 a.m.
- January 21, 8 a.m.
- February 4, 8 a.m.
- February 18, 8 a.m.
- March 3, 8 a.m.

Thursday Bird Walks, Leader—Jackie Chain. The WGNSS Birding Group meets at 8:30 a.m. at Des Peres Park parking lot off Ballas Road just north of Manchester Rd. and east of West County Mall. Please contact Jackie Chain at (314) 644-5998 or chainjac@sbcglobal.net if you have questions.

If there is a change in meeting time or place, we will advise by posting on MOBIRDS. No trip is planned for Thanksgiving Day, November 24.

For general information about WGNSS activities, contact Membership Chairman Joe Whittington at whittex@aol.com or (314) 645-3272.



Editor's Corner

Ted C. MacRae

NATURE NOTES BY EMAIL

Nature Notes is available by regular post or email; however, there are significant advantages to receiving it by the latter method. These include elimination of printing and mailing costs (reducing not only the cost of your subscription, but also decreasing its environmental impact) and the ability to view *Nature Notes* **in full color**. Embedded hyperlinks allow instant navigation to email addresses and websites. Of course, you can always print your electronic copy of *Nature Notes* if you wish (please use recycled paper and print on both sides). *Nature Notes* by email is sent as a PDF, which can be opened using Adobe Reader (download free at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>). Contact Joe Whittington, Assistant Treasurer, at whittex@aol.com to convert your subscription.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We welcome announcements of nature related events in the St. Louis area, notices of publications, and original nature oriented articles. Suggested topics include field trip accounts, information about local natural areas, interesting nature sightings, or reviews of nature related books. Articles reprinted from other sources must obtain permission from copyright holders.

Send submissions to ted.c.macrae@monsanto.com. Limit text formatting to bold for emphasis and italics for scientific names. Avoid tabs, extra spaces, multiple hard returns, underlining, etc. (these will be removed during final formatting). Photographs will be included on a space-available basis. Contributions are welcome from all—remember, this is your newsletter!



WGNSS -St. Louis Audubon Society Winter Party

Location: Audubon Center at
Riverlands Migratory Bird
Sanctuary

Date: Sunday, January 22, 2012

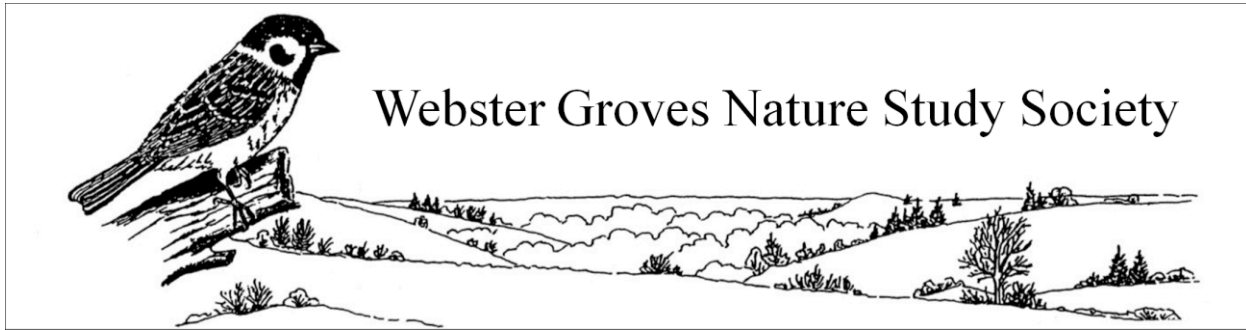
Time: 3:00-6:00

Bring a dish for all to enjoy.
Beverages will be provided, and
door prizes will be awarded!



Directions: From I-270 in north St. Louis county, take I-367 north. At Lindbergh Blvd. I-367 becomes I-67. Continue north crossing the Missouri river on the Lewis Bridge. Continue northeast across St. Charles county Missouri-Mississippi river floodplain. Just before I-67 reaches the Clark Bridge, make a right turn on Wise Rd. Drive approximately 0.25 miles to the Audubon Center





November 14, 2011

St. Louis County Executive – Charlie Dooley
41 South Central Avenue
Clayton, MO 63105

Mr. Dooley:

With over 350 active members, the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS) is one of the largest non-professional, natural history organizations in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Members of WGNSS have a diverse array of interests including botany, ornithology, entomology and conservation, all with a primary focus on Missouri's parks and natural communities. Many of the WGNSS field trips and other activities take place within St. Louis County Parks and as such, we take a lot of interest in what our political leaders are doing to protect the natural communities within those parks.

Recently, your proposal to eliminate 40% of the St. Louis County Parks as a means to balance the budget has caused a great deal of concern for those of us in WGNSS. WGNSS considers the St. Louis County Parks system a precious resource, one that should not be squandered away or used as a political ploy to obtain higher taxes from its citizens. The St. Louis County Parks system is owned by all in St. Louis County and should not be put up for sale unless we, the citizens of St. Louis County have a vote in this matter.

The parks that are part of St. Louis County provide vital greenspace for its citizens. Numerous studies have shown that greenspace increases nearby property value and with it, higher property taxes. Communities with greenspace attract more people than those without. It has also been shown that communities with greenspace have a lower crime rate and that people care more for their communities. In short, people want to live where parks, recreation centers, wildlife and other outdoor opportunities are nearby. WGNSS considers the St. Louis County Parks system one of the things that make the St. Louis Area a great place to live.

Many believe we should be increasing the amount of greenspace in St. Louis County. The traffic jams and crowds at most of the county parks attest to the fact that there is not enough greenspace in the St. Louis County area. Instead of closing, or selling several St. Louis County Parks, WGNSS would like to suggest that attempts be made to increase the amount of greenspace St. Louis County has to offer and improve current parks. Should a tax increase be on the ballot, people are far more likely to vote in favor of the proposal if they know they are going to get something for it in return?

Please remember that if a park is sold, it essentially is gone forever. WGNSS believes that selling a park for the short term gain of meeting a budget shortfall is irresponsible.

On behalf of all in WGNSS, we thank you for listening to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Thoma - WGNSS President
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Kirkwood, MO 63122
314-541-4199

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