

TALE FEATHERS

St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122-0227
www.stlouisaudubon.org director@stlouisaudubon.org (314) 599-7390

Calendar

BEGINNER BIRD WALK FIELD TRIPS

FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTER

FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 830 AM

Special walk just for the new and/or casual watchers.

www.stlouisaudubon.org or (314) 367-7275

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3—BEGINNER FRIENDLY

MALLARD LAKE TRAIL AT CREVE COEUR LAKE PARK

SATURDAY APR 4TH AT 8A

HALF DAY TRIP IN SEARCH OF EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BK LEACH CONSERVATION AREA

SATURDAY APR 11TH AT 8A, LED BY JOHN SOLODAR

ALL DAY TRIP W/CARPOOL OPTION IN SEARCH OF WATERFOWL.

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

ORLANDO GARDENS, MARYLAND HEIGHTS

SATURDAY, APRIL 11--\$25 PER PERSON

M. LEACHMAN AT (314) 599-7390 FOR LAST-MINUTE RSVP.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BABLER STATE PARK

SATURDAY APR 18TH AT 8A, LED BY JIM MALONE

HALF DAY TRIP LOOKING FOR SPRING MIGRANTS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

SHAW NATURE RESERVE IN GRAY SUMMIT

SATURDAY APR 25TH AT 730A

ALL DAY TRIP IN SEARCH OF SPRING MIGRANTS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

COLUMBIA BOTTOMS CA AND RIVERLANDS MBS

SATURDAY MAY 2ND AT 730A

ALL DAY TRIP IN SEARCH OF SPRING MIGRANTS AND SHOREBIRDS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

EMMENEGGER PARK IN KIRKWOOD

WEDNESDAY MAY 6TH AT 730A

HALF DAY TRIP IN SEARCH OF SPRING MIGRANTS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

FOREST PARK

SATURDAY MAY 9TH AT 730A

HALF DAY TRIP IN SEARCH OF SPRING MIGRANTS.

MARCH PROGRAM—PAGE 5

POWDER VALLEY NATURE CENTER

TUESDAY MAY 19TH AT 7P

CONTENT IN PROGRESS. CHECK MAY TALEFEATHERS.

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The Birds of Riverlands A Photo Essay

by Paul Bauer

[Editor's note: Paul Bauer, past President of St. Louis Audubon, has worked directly with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for nearly 30 years on improvements to the Riverlands Area. Recently, he made a major donation, matched by SLAS from the Catherine Creley Memorial Fund, to help fund the Heron Pond Project. Paul comments on this project and other aspects of Riverlands in the essay below.]

Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS) has exceptional birding opportunities almost every month of the year. In the winter, the public is drawn to the area to view our National Symbol, the Bald Eagle, which gathers in large numbers for the winter. Trumpeter Swans and American White Pelicans compete for the prize of most photographed bird, but the "laraphile," the gull watchers, are entranced by the large flocks of gulls and possibilities of a rare find. Included among the 18 species of gull that have been found at RMBS are the Slaty-backed Gull, Ross's Gull, and the Glaucous-winged gull, all considered 'accidental' by the Missouri Bird Records Committee.

In the spring and fall, migration pushes large flocks of ducks and geese through the area. In all, 28 species of

Please see *Photo Essay* on page 4

Board Meetings

Open to All. 1st Tuesday of Every Month at 7 pm. Powder Valley Nature Center at 11715 Cragwold.

Board recruitment is an ongoing process and requires your interest and our need. If you have thought of serving in such a way, stop by or call one of us.

Officers

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Newsletter

TaleFeathers is published monthly.

For submissions, comments or corrections, contact Mitch Leachman as noted above.

St. Louis Audubon Birdathon

Join us for the first-ever St. Louis Audubon Birdathon on Saturday, May 9, 2009. The Birdathon is an event in which teams try to see and hear the most species of birds in a 24-hour period.

Teams can search for birds throughout the region in St. Louis, St. Charles, Jefferson, Lincoln and Warren counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair, Monroe, Clinton, Washington, Jersey and Calhoun counties in Illinois. They will encounter habitats ranging from wetlands and bottomland forests to upland woods, grasslands, farm fields and backyards. Forest Park, Tower Grove Park, August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area, Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area, Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Horseshoe Lake State Park and Carlyle Lake will be just some of the stops teams will make during this competition. The only limitation is that birds counted must be within the established 50-mile radius of St. Louis that birders call "the sacred circle."

The American Birding Association's Big Day Count rules will apply. St. Louis Audubon Society will supply a copy of these rules upon registration. Go to <http://americanbirding.org/bigday/index.html> to view the rules. Teams may begin observations at 12:01 a.m. May 9 and continue until midnight.

There will be three categories:

- Big Day – Birders may count species seen anywhere in the 50-mile radius.
- One County – Teams bird in only one county within the 50-mile radius. St. Louis city counts as a county in this category.
- Green Team – Teams must use only their own feet, bicycles and public transportation to travel during their count.

Teams must raise a minimum of \$100 in pledges to be eligible for prizes. Funds raised through the Birdathon will be used to support St. Louis Audubon's conservation, education and outreach efforts.

Winning teams will be announced on Monday, May 11, on the St. Louis Audubon Society website www.stlouisaudubon.org.

Please see *Birdathon* on page 6

President's Message

By Dave Rogles

Spring is the traditional time of movement and change, for birds and for the St. Louis Audubon Society. Our annual dinner will honor our retiring board members, our volunteers and our scholarship and award winners, and welcome our incoming Board of Directors. We increase the frequency of our bird walks in April and May, and this year we will assist the St. Charles County Parks Department with three bird walks in the County. The education team makes their spring push, giving programs in our schools two and three times a week all spring. Our annual fund drives continue, and we will disburse over \$20,000 for habitat improvement and scholarships in the next couple of months. The Heron Pond project, a long-term goal of the organization, will start construction this month. These projects are your projects, the results of donations and volunteer work of the members of the St. Louis Audubon Society. I encourage everyone to become involved with some of the many ongoing projects, even if you can only volunteer for a couple of hours on one day, or if you attend only one event. Our calendar is full, and there are many opportunities for your participation.

One of the new events that we are sponsoring is a Birdathon, a competitive bird watching big day, on May 9. This is a fundraising event, and birders will be seeking a donation for each species they find on their Big Day. We are seeking corporate sponsors for this event and hope to raise enough money to offer prizes to the winning team. Look for details on Page 2 and on our website.

It is a fun time for us, an exciting time. Birders await the arrival of the Marbled Godwit, Upland Sandpiper, Cape May Warbler and others with the anticipation a child reserves for Christmas. Birds are flying miracles and I invite you to participate in the wonder and beauty of spring. Volunteer! ♦

Field Trips, Etc.

April 4th at Mallard Lake Trail at Creve Coeur Park:

Mary Dueren will lead this half day drip. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Lakehouse Café parking lot on Creve Coeur Mill Rd, just south of Hwy 364.

April 11th at BK Leach Conservation Area in Lincoln County:

John Solodar will lead this all day trip. Meet at 8 a.m. in St. Charles County at the intersection of I-70 and Hwy 79. Carpooling will be offered there. On the southwest side of the interchange is a Dierberg's. Please collect in the southeast corner of the parking lot.

April 18th at Babler State Park: Jim Malone and Josh Uffman will lead this half day trip. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Visitor Center parking lot.

April 25th at Shaw Nature Reserve: Connie Alwood will lead this all day trip. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the I-44 and Hwy 141 commuter parking lot in Fenton. Carpooling will be arranged from there. The lot is in the northwest corner of the interchange off the north outer road.

May 2nd at Columbia Bottoms and Riverlands: Bill Rowe will lead this all day trip. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Columbia Bottoms Visitor Center parking lot.

May 6th at Emmenegger Park in Kirkwood: John Solodar will lead this half day trip. Meet at 7:30 a.m. From Watson and Lindbergh, go west to Geyer. Turn right, cross over I-44 and take the first left on Craigwold Rd. Follow the road over I-270 and turn left. Road dead-ends into Park entrance.

May 9th at Forest Park: Bob Bailey will lead this half day trip. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Kennedy Forest parking lot. From the Wells Dr park entrance in the SW corner, the lot is on your left just after Govt. Dr.

May 13th at Tower Grove Park: Bill Rudden & Pat Lueders will lead this half day trip. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Gaddy Bird Garden in NW corner of the Park.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required, unless noted. Contact Pat Lueders with questions at (314) 359-9364.

Photo Essay from page 1

ducks have been recorded; accidentals include the Smew, Barrow's Goldeneye and Harlequin Duck.

Spring and fall are also a time of shorebird migration. Historically, shorebird habitat was unpredictable from year to year, subject to the variables of rainfall, flood, and seasonal habitat. If a large volume of water is expected from upstream, often Ellis Bay is emptied 3 to 5 feet below the reference level of 419 feet. This action exposes the mud at the bottom of Ellis for a week or more and makes the area attractive for shorebirds. Since 1969, when National Audubon held their convention in St. Louis, I have expressed a desire to have dependable shorebird habitat, where the water level could be correctly managed. The construction of water control structures at Heron Pond will make this 40 year dream a reality. In the next few years we will have managed shorebird habitat that everyone can enjoy. ♦



Bald Eagle. An adult Bald eagle defends its meal from an immature (2nd year). "Not this time junior."

Paul Bauer Photo



Trumpeter Swan—in-flight over Teal Pond. The Swans have been reintroduced into the Midwest and now that population numbers near 2,500. About 250 winter at RMBS.

Paul Bauer Photo



American White Pelican landing at Lincoln Shields. Paul Bauer Photo



Ring-billed Gulls on ice.

Allen Smith Photo

Please see *Photo Essay* on page 5



Glaucous Gull. A rare Glaucous Gull contests the lock wall with a Herring Gull (1st winter). "It's my space." Allen Smith Photo



Greater White-fronted Geese displaying their legs and feet. Notice the bellies; hunters call them "speckled bellies." Paul Bauer Photo

Presentation of Alaskan or South American Adventure

Tuesday, May 19, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Powder Valley Nature Center

Please mark your calendar for this date. Speakers have been invited, but not confirmed. The final details will be included in the May issue of TaleFeathers. You won't want to miss it!

From the intersection of Interstates 44 & 270, take Watson Rd. to Geyer Rd. Turn north on Geyer and cross the bridge to Cragwold Road on your left. Go west on Cragwold for 1 mile to nature center entrance on right. Follow drive to parking lot. Enter building through left entrance. Questions, call Mitch Leachman at (314)-599-7390. ♦

FAA Agrees to Study Lighting Requirements for Bird-Killing Towers

Excerpts from ABC Press Release

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has announced plans to conduct a study that will examine whether steady-burning sidelights on tall communications towers, which attract birds and cause them to collide with the towers during night migration, can be safely eliminated without endangering air traffic. Unlike many waterfowl and birds of prey, most songbirds migrate during the night, with up to several billion birds having to navigate a landscape littered with as many as 100,000 lighted towers each spring and fall. American Bird Conservancy and its conservation partners have been working together with the communications industry in seeking this important study, which will help determine whether the safety of pilots can be maintained while also reducing the impact of lights on migrating birds.

FAA guidelines on towers over 200 feet tall, currently require towers utilizing red or dual-type lighting systems to use steady-burning sidelights mounted at various intermediate levels depending on the height of the tower. These requirements date back more than three decades, and may no longer be applicable based on current lighting technology. It has also since been shown that blinking lights cause far fewer bird deaths. It is also noteworthy that traffic signals on major roads often have white strobes in addition to red lights to notify drivers, indicating that many motor vehicle departments consider strobe lights to be more obvious to people than steady lights.

"Should the FAA determine the use of side-mounted steady red lights can be eliminated for communications towers without harm to air safety, American Bird Conservancy will push for the FAA to amend their guidelines to reduce avian fatalities while still preserving air safety," said Darin Schroeder, American Bird Conservancy's Vice President of Conservation Advocacy.

Birdathon from page 2

Birdathon Registration

Basic registration for the event is free. The Chapter also offers a paid registration of \$20 per person, which includes a SLAS Birdathon t-shirt. For registration and pledge forms, go to www.stlouisaudubon.org. Registrations must be received by April 25, 2009, in order for t-shirts to be delivered before the event.

Registration forms should be sent to:

SLAS Birdathon Registration, in c/o Dave Rogles, 60 Shadowridge Drive, St. Peters, MO 63376.

For more information on the event, contact Dave Rogles by calling (636) 541-1069 or emailing president@stlouisaudubon.org. ♦



Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 25. Festival runs from 10a to 4p at Riverlands MBS in Alton, IL. For all the details, checkout their website at www.wingsofspring.org!

More Field Trips...

April 18th at Klondike Park in St. Charles County:

Dave Rogles will lead this walk co-sponsored by the St. Charles County Parks Dept. Meet at 8 a.m. at Shelter #1. From Hwy 40/94, go west on 94 approx 14 miles, past Defiance/Matson. Entrance on left.

May 2nd at Quail Ridge Park in St. Charles County:

Dave Rogles will lead this St. Charles County Parks walk. Meet at 8 a.m. at Shelter #6. From I-70/Hwy 40, take 40 East to 1st light. Turn right on Callahan and take immediate right onto Quail Ridge Parkway. Follow to park entrance.

May 2nd at Fort Zumwalt Park in O'Fallon, Missouri:

Two walks are planned at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. as part of the O'Fallon Founder's Day Celebration. Free shuttle from Civic Park to Festival. From I-70, take

Exit 217 (Hwy K/M). Go north on Hwy M to Civic Park Dr and turn left. Civic Park is on the right.

May 8th at Calvary Cemetery Prairie in N. St. Louis:

Pat Lueders will lead this short walk co-sponsored by The Green Center. Meet at 8:00 a.m. Calvary is host to the largest original prairie in Metro St. Louis and recent restoration efforts have been led by The Green Center. Please register by calling (314) 725-8314 or events@thegreencenter.org.

May 16th at Klondike Park in St. Charles County:

Mike Thelen will lead. See April 18th trip for details.

All field trips are FREE. For Klondike and Quail Ridge walks, please register with the St. Charles County Parks Dept at (636) 949-7535. Contact Pat Lueders with other questions at (314) 359-9364.

Riverlands—Birding Habitat Gets a Boost

By Charlie Deutsch

For many around St. Louis, Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary is a known hotspot for birds. The Chapter's field trip schedule bears this out with almost one in three trips involving the West Alton, Missouri location. The Sanctuary's steward, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is working hard to create even more opportunities for birds and bird watching. Just since last fall, they have added a chimney swift tower and nesting platforms for osprey and are working on an artificial island for least terns and an expanded, actively managed pool for shorebirds. What follows is a short description of each of these projects and the volunteer involvement integral to their success.

The chimney swift tower was installed by volunteers during National Public Lands Day last September. The tower was placed along a trail near the Environmental Learning Facility and the Visitor Center for easy incorporation into classroom and visitor experiences. The osprey structures were installed this past January and made possible by the Ameren Corporation, the Illinois DNR and Gene Sands with Great Rivers Audubon, who initiated the entire project. One structure is on Ellis Bay, visible from the Visitor Center, and the second was placed on Ellis Island adjacent to the Mississippi River.

The interior least tern, smallest member of the gull and tern family and federally endangered since 1988, has been the subject of previous activity at Riverlands. In 2002, St. Louis Audubon and the Corps collaborated on a constructed island and viewing blind on the downstream point of Ellis Island. However, high water events and predators from the Island are believed to be major factors in the total absence of nesting activity. Now, the Corps is implementing a creative artificial sandbar solution via floating barges that addresses both water and predators. The barges, filled with a sand/gravel mix, will provide a 1500 square foot "island" anchored in Ellis Bay and will be partially covered with a lattice rope to help prevent avian predation. Chapter volunteers will be involved in monitoring the barges once installed in early April and during the subsequent nesting seasons of the multi-year project.

Lastly, the Corps is about to start construction on a water management structure for Heron Pond that will eventually yield a three-fold expansion of this pool and provide vital stopover habitat for shorebirds. Paul Bauer, past-president of St. Louis Audubon, has championed this project for many years and together with the Chapter has contributed \$20,000 to insure its completion. A trail and multiple viewing blinds will offer a great birding opportunity to the public, and when finished, the Pond will be one of just a handful of actively managed shorebird ponds in this part of the country.

For more information about Riverlands, in general, <http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/Rivers/RMBS.html>. For more information about these projects, visit the Chapter's Riverlands project page at <http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/conservation.htm>. Perhaps most importantly, if you find your way to Riverlands and observe significant avian activity around any of these projects, please note it and share with the Rivers Project Office staff as soon as possible! ♦



Left: Interior Least Tern with Eggs.

Right: Ameren UE staff install one of two nest structures intended for osprey adjacent to Ellis Bay.

Both photos courtesy of Rivers Project Office staff of the USACE.



Master Naturalist Certificate Graduates Recognized



Recent graduates of the St. Louis Community College Master Naturalist Certificate program include (left to right) Marty Smigell, Claudia Joyce, Daniel Cravens, Carol Cravens, Dianne Benjamin, Karen Meyer and Francis Cook. Graduates not pictured include Larry Bergland, Scott George, Maryann Kolnik, Jill Norton and Maxine Stone. Shawn Clubb Photo

Recent graduates of the St. Louis Community College Master Naturalist Certificate program were recognized at the March 26 joint program at the Creve Coeur Community Center. Vicki Flier, VP of Education, acknowledged the hard work of each graduate and encouraged them to put their new knowledge to work in service of the Environment around St. Louis.

The Master Naturalist Program is a cooperative offering of the St. Louis Community College at Meramec Biology Department, the St. Louis Community College at Meramec Office of Continuing Education, and the St. Louis Audubon Society. The Master

Naturalist Program provides an opportunity for people in the community interested in learning about nature to get a diverse background of programming so they may share this information with others in the urban environment. The Master Naturalist Certificate is not a college degree program, however, credit classes successfully completed may be applied toward other degree programs available through St. Louis Community College. For more information, visit <http://www.stlcc.edu/Libraries/Research/Recommended/nature.html> or call the Office of Continuing Education direct (314) 984-7353.

National Volunteer Week 2009, April 19-25

National Volunteer Week was initiated in 1974 and is coordinated today by the Points of Light Institute and the HandsOn Network. Volunteer Week 2009 is about inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities. It's about demonstrating to the nation that by working together, we have the fortitude to meet our challenges and accomplish our goals. For more information about the National event, see <http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/>.

Many thanks to all our volunteers that help us make the St. Louis Region a better place for birds, other wildlife and our communities! It is also fitting that we have a number of opportunities around National Volunteer Week in which new folks can get involved. The events listed below are "outreach" events where we will be sharing with the public who we are, what we do and what THEY can do to make their homes bird and wildlife friendly. Experience is not required to assist at these events, but please call Mitch Leachman in advance at (314) 599-7390 if you are interested.

Tuesday, April 14th, 5p-9p at the STL Science Center. Talk by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

Saturday, April 18th, 10a-3p at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Earth Day Festival.

Sunday, April 19th, 930a-530p at the St. Louis Science Center. Eco Expo.

Tuesday, April 21st, 11a-1p at Monsanto HQ in Creve Coeur. Corporate Earth Day Festival.

Sat, April 25th, 10a-4p at Riverlands in West Alton, MO. Wings of Spring Festival.

Sat, May 2nd, 10a-4p at Fort Zumwalt Park in O'Fallon, MO. Founder's Day Festival.

Thanks to All Our Donors in 2008—Well Done!

Please help us extend a very warm THANK YOU to all our donors from 2008! Volunteers are essential, membership is critical yet supplemental contributions make it all work. Whether in memory of a loved one, response to our November 2008 Annual Appeal or simply an unsolicited donation, all of you have many options for giving and we are so pleased you selected St. Louis Audubon!

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 Barlow, Lea
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 Berger, Torrey
 Bilheimer, Leonard & Terry
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Earth is a Disney film opening on Earth Day, April 22nd in St. Louis. This first film in the Disney Nature series is narrated by James Earl Jones and tells the remarkable story of three animal families and their amazing journey across the planet we call home. *Earth* combines rare action, unimaginable scale and impossible locations by capturing the most intimate moments of our planet's wildest and elusive creatures. For more info visit <http://disney.go.com/disneynature/earth/>.

St. Louis Audubon Society Donation Form

Mission: to create a community connection to nature through conservation and education.

Your support will allow us to maintain and expand our efforts in the St. Louis Metro Area. All our programs are free to the public. Thank you very much for your past support!

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

E-Mail or Phone (if desired):

Make checks payable to:
St. Louis Audubon Society
Mail Checks to:
St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, MO 63122-0227

Education Only

Conservation Only

International Efforts Only

General Fund--Unrestricted

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