

TALE FEATHERS

St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122-0227
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Calendar

BEGINNER BIRD WALK FIELD TRIPS

FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTER

FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 815 AM

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

Reservations not required, but for further info contact Chris at birding@forestparkforever.org.

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

AUDUBON AND WEBSTER GROVES NATURE STUDY SOCIETY
SUNDAY DECEMBER 6TH FROM 130P TO 4P

BRING A DISH. BEVERAGES AND DOOR PRIZES PROVIDED!

THE GREEN CENTER AT 8025 BLACKBERRY IN UNIVERSITY CITY
FROM I-170, TAKE DELMAR EAST 4 STOP LIGHTS TO NORTH AND
SOUTH ROAD. TURN LEFT AND LEFT AGAIN ON BLACKBERRY.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

WHERE THE BIRDS ARE

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12TH AT 9A

HALF DAY TRIP TO THE BEST WINTERING BIRD LOCATIONS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY

SATURDAY JANUARY 9TH AT 9A

HALF DAY TRIP LOOKING FOR WINTERING BIRDS.

EAGLE DAYS AT CHAIN OF ROCKS BRIDGE

MDC-SPONSORED PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE AT THE CHAIN OF ROCKS
BRIDGE JUST SOUTH OF I-270 AT THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
SPOTTING SCOPES, HANDS-ON BIRD EXHIBITS, LIVE EAGLE

PROGRAM, AND MORE

SAT/SUN JANUARY 16TH AND 17TH FROM 9A TO 3P

WATCH OUR WEBSITE AND JAN NEWSLETTER FOR MORE INFO

JANUARY MONTHLY PROGRAM—PAGE 6

DOUG LADD FROM TNC-MISSOURI ON BIRD CONSERVATION
TUESDAY JANUARY 19TH AT 7P

GRAND GLAIZE BRANCH OF STL COUNTY LIBRARY AT 1010
MERAMEC STATION ROAD.

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Three Down, Three to Go

By Mitch Leachman

Wow! It is hard to believe, but three habitat restoration workdays have already been completed at Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park. We are now halfway to our six workday commitment as required by the National Audubon/Toyota TogetherGreen grant that is funding most of the project expenses. Our October project was postponed into November, resulting in two workdays just two weeks apart. By month-end we had planted 450 native Missouri trees on 4 acres to extend a wildlife corridor along the Park's western boundary, and we had checked the encroachment of willows and cottonwoods by clearing them from several acres of a wetland basin in the northwest corner of the Park.

These projects are fueled by volunteers and we have had plenty. Over 80 different people have helped out at these three projects, with a few even having volunteered for all three. The interest in Creve Coeur Park is diverse and so has been the background of our volunteers: Cub Scouts, County Park Trail Watchers, St. Louis Rowing Club members, MDC Master Naturalists, Parkway North High School students, Missouri Stream Team members, Maryland Heights Residents for Responsible Growth, Lafayette High School Key Club, AmeriCorps, St. Louis Audubon and others. Many thanks to all who gave their time to support these hands-on conservation projects, and a special mention to Karen Meyer, Tom Ball, Susan

See Three Down 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.

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Newsletter

TaleFeathers is published monthly. For submissions, comments or corrections, contact Mitch Leachman as noted above.

Conservation Issue Update

By Karen Meyer

As you may already know, the St. Louis County Council voted in favor of rezoning the 377 acre parcel near Columbia Bottom Conservation Area for the eventual development of the Riverview Casino project. However, the project is far from a done deal. Multiple steps, including several involving permits, must now be taken and many of them will include, or have the potential to include, public comment. Please continue to voice your opinion directly to your St. Louis County government officials and through letters to the editor or blog postings regarding this unwise use of our region's floodplain. (See other postings on our website.) Your opinion and involvement is critical. Please watch our website and this newsletter where we will keep you abreast of the next steps by the Common Sense Coalition regarding this issue.

At the November 12th "Sustainable Agriculture: From Field to Market" Whitney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum we were again reminded of the importance of our land resources. I was encouraged to hear that a large number of farmers are using more sustainable practices such as no-till crops and borders of native vegetation to encourage biodiversity on their land. Prime agricultural lands are not something to take for granted in light of our ever-growing world population needs and unpredictable trends related to climate change. Wise land use in places like Columbia Bottom requires maintaining agricultural and conservation lands in the floodplains of our Great Rivers, including the Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois and Meramec.

The Missouri Votes Conservation Education Foundation Environmental Summit was held on Saturday, November 7th in Fulton, Missouri. Over 125 people attended, representing 40 different groups and covering a range of topics expected in the upcoming state legislative session. A summary of those issues and the fact sheets distributed can be found at www.movotesconservation.org/MVCEFsummit.aspx.

Most importantly, in between your year-end projects, please take a few minutes to contact your Senators and U.S. Representatives and demand they support a strong climate change bill.

As always, thanks for what you do to make a difference! ♦



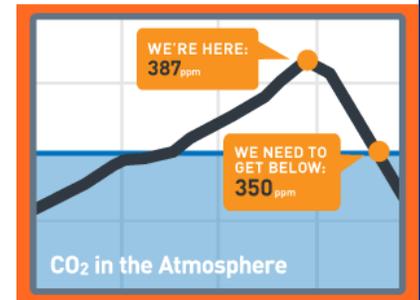
www.earthsharemo.org for more info.

From the Director

By Mitch Leachman

On November 16, I attended a lecture by Bill McKibben, author of a dozen books, including the *End of Nature* and *Deep Economy*. The former was first published in 1989 and considered the first book for general audiences on the subject of climate change. In recent years, Mr. McKibben has spent his efforts inspiring citizen activism across the globe for international solutions to climate change. That effort was encapsulated in the 350.org movement that culminated with an international day of climate action on October 24th, in which over 5,200 events were held in 181 countries, including at the Arch here in St. Louis.

The name of the movement is based on the 350 parts per million that scientists have identified as the safe upper limit of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Currently, we are at 387 and rising approximately 2 ppm every year! In short, this is why the scientific panels presenting climate change strategies urge that CO₂ emissions be cut drastically BELOW current levels. Simply curbing the growth in our CO₂ emissions cannot possibly stop the rise in atmospheric CO₂, let alone reduce it. This fact has been recognized by the UN and many other international organizations and has driven the planning for the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark that begins next week.



350.org Graphic

However, the expectations for reaching a binding agreement in Copenhagen have been muted openly and very directly by our own President in recent weeks. That is not acceptable. In Bill McKibben's own words:

That's sad and it's dangerous—the planet is running out of “next years.” But it does give all of us more time to organize a movement to make them respect the science. So it's time for the next big steps. The world needs your help once more.

There's a global mobilization—organized by many different groups—coming together for the weekend in the middle of the Copenhagen conference—Dec. 11–13. Our collective message? “The World Wants a Real Deal”—that people all over the plane are demanding a binding global climate agreement guided by the latest science and built upon principles of justice and equity.

I urge you to add your voice to this effort. Consult www.350.org, select “Next Steps” or “Weekend of Action” and find a way to contribute. There is one “vigil” already scheduled for the St. Louis area and others are being planned. Global climate change is happening here and now, and can only be reversed by collective, urgent responses the world-over. Your voice is needed. Let your leaders here you! ◆

Field Trips, Etc.

Dec 12th “Where the Birds Are” Trip: Pat Lueders will lead this half-day trip beginning at 9 a.m. to whatever area location has the best birding. Check the SLAS website, www.birdingonthe.net “regional specialties—Missouri” section or the MoBirds list serve a few days in advance for details.

Jan 9th to Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary: Mike Thelen will lead this half day trip starting at 9 a.m. Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. Turn right on last road before the Alton Bridge. Turn right on the next road to the Teal Pond lot.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required, unless noted—consult our website for details. Contact Pat Lueders with general questions at (314) 359-9364.

Three Down, Three to Go

Continued from Page 1

Florek, Bryan Prather and Mervis William for helping coordinate the workdays!

Thanks also to the organizations and companies that supplied valuable resources to support the projects. Food and beverages were given by 7-Eleven and Frito Lay. St. Louis County Parks loaned shovels, saws and other materials for all three workdays. Forest Park Forever did the same for the tree planting project. Missouri Forest ReLeaf provided all the native trees for planting, free of charge, through their Communitree grant program. Finally, Dennis Hogan, St. Louis County Parks, has been instrumental in planning the projects and providing essential on-site expertise.

Please watch this newsletter and our website for details of the remaining projects in early 2010, and consider marking your calendar for Saturday, February 20th. We will be reducing the woody species encroachment on the largest wetland basin in the Park—Little Creve Coeur Lake (LCCL). Also, look for information on other projects as they develop, including a possible blue bird nest box trail within the prairie west of LCCL. ♦



*The "crew" just before starting the Nov 7th tree planting project
Mitch Leachman Photo*



*Martin Zenk, Joey Kindig and Corey Waller (l to r) from Parkway
North High School
Karen Meyer Photo*



*Jerry & Lynne Breakstone from St. Louis Audubon installing a
weed mat
Mitch Leachman Photo*



*The completed project, facing south
Mitch Leachman Photo*



*Volunteers on November 21st removing willows from the wetland basin.
Mitch Leachman Photo*



Open water in the wetlands

Mitch Leachman Photo

IN MEMORIAM

David Faintich, one of the original, mainstay members of the Wagtail Senior Birding Club passed away on Oct. 16, 2009. He was our primary trip planner and always took great pride in working out all the details of our out-of-state and in-state bird finding adventures. He would spend hours before trips researching the internet and various birding journals to make sure that we went to the best hotspots to find new species.

Dave was there in Southeast Arizona to see the Elegant Trogon, and along the Rio Grande River in South Texas to watch the Brown Jay. In Florida, it was the rare White Wagtail and the last five (5) Smooth Billed Anis left in the U.S.

He was a wonderful family man, sports fan, and a very talented birder and photographer. He will certainly be missed but will never be forgotten. To view some of Dave's wonderful pictures, please visit: david.faintich.com. ♦

Photo and Text by David Pierce



David Faintich

BK Leach Rail Walk

By Josh Uffman

On October 3, ~30 people made a very tough trek through BK Leach CA (Lincoln Co.) searching for the elusive Yellow Rail on the (now) annual SLAS Yellow Rail walk. I will be upfront from the beginning – NO Yellow Rails were found. Which makes the first BK Leach Yellow Rail walk, three years ago (when we did see a Yellow Rail), that much more special. But, today certainly had its special birds too. We ended the day with 69 species; a few those birds recorded by Bill Rowe and myself before the start of the trip. For Al Smith's excellent photos of the day, visit www.photosbyat.com/Birds/Birding-2009-October and select 2009-10-3 BK Leach. Selected highlights of the day follow.

BK Leach – Bittern Basin Unit. At least 2 separate AMERICAN BITTERNs. Raptors were on the move today – A MERLIN was observed harassing Red-winged Blackbirds, but quickly got out of the area before most were able to observe it. However, it was quickly followed up with a PEREGRINE FALCON circling over the whole group. Sparrows did not seem to be in any large numbers yet, well, except for NELSON'S SPARROWS, by the end of the day we had observed no fewer than 6!! Other than that, ~20 Savanna Sparrows were observed and maybe 10 Swamp Sparrows.

BK Leach – King's Lake Unit. Among the more numerous of the waterfowl species observed were ~150 Northern Pintail. A Cooper's Hawk entertained us as it gave chase to a blackbird, shortly after a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew through the same area. Sparrows again included Savanna's, (at least 3) NELSON'S, Swamps, and our only WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW of the day.

BK Leach – Sherman Tract. Here we also added one of our most interesting sightings of the day (not a bird, but a highlight for all that saw it). A very, very large Honey Bee hive completely exposed on the branch of a tree (thanks for that find Alicia!). The bees on the hive certainly looked cold. It was certainly very cool to see. ♦

Missouri Bird Conservation via the Nature Conservancy

Tuesday, January 19, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Doug Ladd, Missouri Director of Conservation Science for the Nature Conservancy, will provide an overview of his organization's current efforts and future plans across the state in restoring habitat for Missouri's birds. The presentation will take place at the Grand Glaize Branch of the St. Louis County Library at 1010 Meramec Station Road, just east of Hwy 141 and just north of Big Bend.

Doug Ladd has been involved with conservation planning and natural area assessment, management, restoration and research for more than 30 years, with particular emphasis on vegetation, ecological restoration and fire ecology. Doug is a research associate at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis and the Morton Arboretum in Chicago. He has written two plant field guides: North Woods Wildflowers and Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers, and is a co-author of Discover Natural Missouri and Distribution of Illinois Vascular Plants.

Registration is not required and the program is free. Questions, contact Mitch at (314) 599-7390.



October Birding Trip along the Mississippi

By Mike Thelen

GILBERT LAKE, Jersey County, Illinois

On Saturday, October 17th, 23 birders began the day on a cool, clear-blue-skied fall morning. Lake level was high, but there was a small flock of waterfowl including 2 American Wigeon and a handsome male Wood Duck. Also, 40 BLUE Jays and 15 Northern Flickers were quite active. A few Tree, Northern Rough-Winged and Barn Swallows worked the Illinois River and lake, back and forth over the levee, with 3 of the latter, puffed up, looking cold and tired on their perch overhanging the river.

We headed up to Pere Marquette State Park for a short break, then watched Stump Lake for more swallows, Double-Crested Cormorants, a 3rd-year Bald Eagle with osprey-like eye stripe, and the first Dark-Eyed Junco many had seen this season. On the Brussels Ferry crossing the first of the day's many American White Pelican appeared on the river and in the sky, plus Ring-Billed and Herring Gulls.

SWAN LAKE, Calhoun County, Illinois

The Swan Lake/Illinois River levee was open its entire length to auto traffic and, presented with this unique opportunity, the group decided to adjust the trip plan and drive the levee the full ten miles to its terminal at the Fuller Lake Wildlife Management Area, east of Batchtown. Along this route we watched thousands of birds, with the highest concentrations toward the downriver end of the refuge. We took our picnic lunch on the levee while watching more pelicans and a flock of 20 large-bodied, medium-sized Canada Goose, possibly of the lesser population. Also along the levee, five of the common sparrows, plus Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Belted Kingfisher, Pied-Billed Grebe, Ring-Necked Duck, Northern Harriers and, thanks to hawk-eyed Bob Pitzer, American Avocet and Mute Swan. The swan was floating, appropriately, on Swan Lake. Connie Alwood's car added Red-Breasted Nuthatch, Palm Warbler and Yellow-Billed Cuckoo to the day's list.

In total, we saw large numbers of American Coot, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Pintail and Mallard. In smaller numbers, we observed Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, and Bald Eagle.

Extra thanks to the staff of the Two Rivers NWR for special access, and also to members of the Great Rivers Audubon Society for their hospitality and help on the levee.

RIVERLANDS MBS, St. Charles County, Missouri

The group headed back the Great River Road and, per an earlier tip from Joe Eades, made a beeline to Heron Pond in time to see the 5 Plegadis IBIS, along with a small, mixed flock of shorebirds including Killdeer, both Yellowlegs, Least, Pectoral and Stilt Sandpipers, Dunlin, Long-Billed Dowitcher, and dowitcher, sp. 5 Bonaparte's Gulls over Ellis Bay moved around the vicinity of the tern barge.

A few single Great Egrets, five of the woodpeckers, small, scattered concentrations of Yellow-Rumped Warblers and several large flocks of American Goldfinch also for the day, with a trip total of 75 species. ◆

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!

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Conservation Only

General Fund--Unrestricted

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