

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 815 AM
Special walk just for the new and/or casual watchers.
For info contact Chris at birding@forestparkforever.org.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS & COLUMBIA BOTTOM
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 5TH

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BALDWIN LAKE, ILLINOIS
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12TH

FEBRUARY PROGRAM—URBAN BIRD SANCTUARY—PG 6

FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTER
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 15TH AT 7 PM

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 19TH

VOLUNTEER WORK DAY AT CREVE COEUR PARK

HONEYSUCKLE REMOVAL IN UPLAND FOREST
SATURDAY MARCH 5TH FROM 9A TO 1P
TO REGISTER, SEE THE DETAILS ON PAGE 7 OR CALL (314) 599-7390 WITH QUESTIONS.

2011 AWARDS DINNER & SILENT AUCTION—PAGE 9

ORLANDO GARDENS AT 8352 WATSON RD
SATURDAY, MARCH 5TH

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BUSCH WOODCOCK & OWL PROWL
SATURDAY MARCH 12TH
GOOD TRIP FOR BEGINNERS TO EXPERIENCE THESE BIRDS.

NATURE WALKS FOR KIDS—AGES 6 AND UP

CREVE COEUR LAKE MEMORIAL PARK—TACO BELL SHELTER
SUNDAY, MARCH 13TH FROM 10A TO 12P
RESERVATIONS NOT REQUIRED. IF QUESTIONS, CALL NIKKI AT (314) 566-3445 OR NIKIASTRO@ATT.NET.
FROM I-270, TAKE DORSETT RD WEST TO "T" AT MARINE AND TURN RIGHT. AT BASE OF BLUFF, TAKE FIRST LEFT AND FOLLOW LOT ALONG LAKE TO SHELTER AT TURN-AROUND.

MARCH PROGRAM—BATS—PG 6

LITZINGER SCHOOL IN LADUE
THURSDAY MARCH 24TH AT 730 PM

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Eagles Draw Crowds Again

Over 5,000 people experienced this year's Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge on the weekend of January 15-16. Produced by the Confluence Partnership, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Missouri Department of Conservation, this is the most accessible to St. Louisans of a number of similar events along the Mississippi River every year. For a complete photo slideshow, visit <http://www.confluencegreenway.org/eagledays>.

See Eagle Days on Page 2



Great Blue Heron and Visitor

Confluence Photo

Board Meetings

Open to All. 2nd 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.



Eagle Days

Continued from Page 1

St. Louis Audubon volunteers staffed a touch table in the warming tent at the center of the Bridge. Specimens were provided by the Society and the biology department of St. Louis Community College at Meramec. Please help us thank Jerry Castillon, Shawn Clubb, Charlie Deutsch, Mary Dueren, Polly Freshwater, Anne Horton, Alesi and Craig Lanham, Karen Meyer, Dave Rogles and Mike Thelen.

New this year, the Society's Education Team provided additional hands-on children's activities on Sunday. Thanks also to their team of volunteers including Maureen Conway, Lisa and Bob Nansteel, Julie Nicolai, Marty Smigell and Toni Vafi. If this looks or sounds interesting, watch for details next year. You're sure to have fun! ♦



At the Audubon Touch Table

Karen Meyer Photo

Eagle Walk in St. Charles on February 12th

If you did miss Eagle Days but don't want to wait until next year, consider the third annual *Eagle Viewing Passport Walk* at 9 am in Hideaway Harbor Park near Portage des Sioux in St. Charles County. Visitors can walk the perimeter of this 49-acre riverside park to view the birds and other active wildlife in their natural surroundings. Park staff will discuss the history of Hideaway Harbor Park, which has served as a popular recreation area for more than 100 years.

The Department will provide a spotting scope and binoculars during this program. Fire rings and hot cocoa will be offered to combat the winter chill. Advance registration for this free event is encouraged. Visit www.stccparks.org or call (636) 949-7535 for more info and directions. ♦

President's Message

By Dave Rogles

The response to our annual appeal exceeded all previous years and I wanted to thank everyone who took the time to give.

I wish I had a crystal ball and could see the future. Will the conservation movement survive the economic downturn? Can we make limited resources stretch to cover increasingly more dangerous situations? What do I mean?

Fifteen years ago tar sands and mountain top removal were not on the environmentalist's radar. Now, both are ecological nightmares that will shift the cost from business to an unknown future population. Every conservationist knew fifteen years ago that the wells in the Gulf of Mexico are a ticking bomb. We never imagined the systemic failure of common sense, corporate safety policy, governance and leadership that was exposed with last April's disaster.

Locally, a group of determined citizens spent most of a year in ultimately defeating a casino project. Not content to rest on their laurels, the group is staying active, getting ready for the next fire. St. Louis Audubon, and other like-minded organizations, has no idea where we will be needed next. Our members need to be ready, as the Spanish Lake citizens and the Maryland Heights citizens have been, ready to fight the good fight.

The Christmas season is over. The response to our appeal is gratifying and much appreciated. But events have shown we need your arm, your legs and your voices just as much as your contributions. You can help with a day or an hour. Contact me, any board member or our Executive Director and ask, "What do you need me to do to defend nature and its diversity for my kids and grandkids?" We have needs in education, work days, activism and governance—board leadership is critical too!

I thank you for your generous response to our appeal. Please stay involved. We hope to see you.

Good luck and Best Wishes! ◆

Field Trips, Etc.

Feb 5th to Riverlands & Columbia Bottom: All day trip led by Bill Rowe that meets at 8 am. A very good trip for beginners. Follow Jan 15th directions. Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. Turn right on the last road before the Alton Bridge (at the gas station). Turn right on the next road to the Teal Pond lot.

Feb 12th to Baldwin Lake, Illinois: All day trip led by Torrey Berger that meets at 9:00 am at the Hwy 270 and Hwy 30 west commuter lot. Caravan and carpool will be arranged there. Site can be reached via Hwy 3 south from I-255 in Illinois to Redbud. Then east on Hwy 154 to Baldwin. Follow signs to Lake Baldwin.

Feb 19th to Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary: All day trip led by Joe Eades that meets at 8 am. Follow directions for Jan 15th trip.

March 12th at Busch Memorial Conservation Area: Sue Gustafson and John Solodar will lead this evening Woodcock and Owl Prowl. Meet at 5 p.m. (note the time). Take Hwy 94 south from Hwy 40. At 1.3 miles, turn right at light for Hwy D. Go 2 miles to entrance on right. Turn left at T to Hampton Lake and meet in 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.

A Stunning Birding Adventure: First Sighting of a Smew in Missouri

By Paul Bauer

I was one of some 40 birders at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary in West Alton on Saturday, January 13, 2001. We were there to view a confirmed sighting of a Barrow's Goldeneye Duck, seen on the previous day. However, the involvement by an eight year-old girl in the chance discovery of a tiny Eurasian merganser-type duck, considered accidental except in the Aleutians, became one of those once-in-a-lifetime events for everyone present. Certainly this sighting of the Smew, a new bird record for Missouri, was the high event for that day! I hope to share the excitement of that "Stunning Birding Adventure."



Barrow's Goldeneye

Public Domain Photo

On Friday the 12th, I believe Charlene Malone had reported sighting a male Barrow's Goldeneye duck in the shallow west end of Ellis Bay at Riverlands. Along with many, I charged up to see this bird, since it would be a new state bird for me. (In June 1974, I had seen them as a life bird in Yellowstone National Park.) This Barrow's was easily found and identified by the odd shaped (not round) white patch on the head in front of, and below the eye.

Now that I had seen this bird, and could count it for my Missouri life list, my efforts focused on trying to get a photograph. (Today my priorities are completely reversed: get the photo first to document that unique instant, and at the same time you have also seen the bird! Now I call this thinking process "Photo-Birding.") It is only possible with the newest digital cameras that have very rapid autofocus and a viewfinder image quality almost as good as many binoculars—and most likely at a higher magnification!

This Goldeneye duck was too quick for me. Repeatedly it would quickly surface, and in less than a few seconds it would dive, and later resurface in a new location. (My guess is that it was hyper-hungry since it was about 800 miles east of where it was expected.) With my camera of that era, I could not find the bird and manually focus the lens before it would dive. Sadly, I must admit, I gave up my photo efforts that day. Maybe the light got poor, but everyone there made plans to try again the next day, since many birders from across the state were known to be planning to visit Riverlands in the morning.

On that Saturday January 13, 2001, a mob of birders assembled at Ellis Bay in Riverlands. At least 40 birders from four organizations were present. Audubon groups from Kansas City, and Columbia, Missouri joined sizable groups of local birders representing St. Louis Audubon, and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. But the Goldeneye had moved! Fortunately it was quickly re-found in the deeper water of the Mississippi River about 200 yards below the Clark Bridge spanning the River to Alton, IL. There was a mad dash and a stampede of cars descended on the limited road space below the bridge. Everyone was frantic to set up their telescopes. All I could hear was slamming car doors and trunk lids.

See Birding Adventure on Page 5

Birding Adventure

Continued from Page 4

Again the Barrow's Goldeneye was quickly found, and the tension to see it was more relaxed. Now the fun begins; the story is just starting, but the action is almost finished! Near where I was standing at my scope, I overheard 8-year old Anna Hendricks ask one of those innocent questions that only a child would be brave enough to ask, **"What's the name of that little white duck out there?"** With my binoculars, I looked at where she was pointing and realized that I didn't know its name. Anna's father had brought her on several birding trips during the fall, and I remember being impressed that Anna knew it was a duck and not a gull.



Smew, Male

Public Domain by Adrian Pingstone

Instantly pandemonium swept over the group. I don't know his name, but a very tall man from the Kansas City group looked at the bird and clearly shouted without any hesitation, **"IT'S A SMEW!"** Also, I believe Mike Grant was credited with the initial species identification. Checking our field guides, they were right—an adult male SMEW. For me, and I would guess for most people present, this was a New Life Bird, a new US-area bird, and a new Missouri and St. Louis area bird. No sooner had this thought crossed my mind, when I realized it might be an escaped bird, and it would not count for anything—wow!

Now the intense documentation started. Nearly everyone was taking photographs (I never did get photos of the Barrow's) and taking notes. After floating downstream, this little duck would fly back upstream almost to the bridge. When it was flying, the path was straight, and landings were well controlled (no clipped wings), and no leg bands or damaged feathers were observed. The consensus was that this bird was NOT a captive bird that had escaped from a private collection or gun club. With several previous rare waterfowl we had gone down this sad path before. Also, the Mute Swan is an example of this issue.

Then I remembered the St. Louis Zoo. Some years earlier Dick Anderson and I were involved in identifying an East African Superb Starling seen in nearby Godfrey, IL (that had escaped from the zoo). That evening I called Ron Goellner, who was then the General Curator at the St. Louis Zoo. Ron checked with his keepers and confirmed that "all seven of their Smews were present and accounted for." The last reported Smew sighting was on March 5, 2001. The documentation was submitted and accepted, and "everyone lived happily ever after!" I so enjoyed the experience the first time, and I hope that at least some of that excitement came through in sharing the memory.

As always have fun; go birding! ◆

The Fox Sparrow

By Donald R. Hays

He might be a military officer,
 More clever than the rest,
 With a sage's grey on his face
 And a scrawled badge upon his chest.
 He's larger than his mates
 Who defer to him and rest
 While he scratches deep
 And strives to keep
 The best from the hoard that surround the heap.
 His song is melodious but is winter harsh.
 He lingers here to flex and feed
 Til spring returns him to the northern marsh. ◆

Bats

Thursday, March 24th at 7:30 pm

Catherine Redfern, World Bird Sanctuary, will celebrate UNESCO's 2011 Year of the Bat with a multi-faceted presentation at Litzsinger School in Ladue. Join us and learn about their amazing abilities like echolocation that allows them to detect and avoid objects as fine as a single human hair.

In Missouri, bats are an important predator of flying insects; in other places, they eat fruit and pollinate many plants. 14 different species of bats are found in Missouri. Sadly, many of those may be threatened by the rapidly-spreading and still poorly-understood White-nose Syndrome. The fungal infection has killed over a million bats in just the five years since it was discovered.

Catherine grew up in Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana and became Secretary and Fundraiser for BirdLife Botswana, a BirdLife International Affiliate. Later, as Project Manager for Cayman Wildlife Rescue, she was responsible for rehabilitation of injured wildlife – mostly songbirds and seabirds. She also managed education programs for the Cayman Parrot, the Blue Iguana and the Cayman Islands Bat Program.

Litzsinger School is at 10094 Litzsinger Road in Ladue, right on Lindbergh south of Highway 40/64 and Plaza Frontenac. Park closest to Lindbergh and enter the gymnasium. Questions, call Mitch Leachman at (314) 599-7390. ◆



Little Brown Bat (left) and Indiana Bat

Photo by Adam Mann

The Rescue & Recovery of Injured Songbirds

Tuesday February 15th at 7 pm

Carol Kershner, founder and Executive Director of Wild Bird Rehabilitation in Overland, will present an informative and entertaining program about her organization's efforts with our small, native birds at the Forest Park Visitor Center on February 15th. Founded in 1992, WBR is the only organization in eastern Missouri that cares for small native birds. Since they began, over 40,000 injured and orphaned birds have been received by the group's volunteer staff.

Prior to setting out on her own, Carol was the Avian Director and Volunteer Coordinator at Missouri Wildlife Rescue. Carol is a member of the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and has been a speaker at its national convention. Carol received a bachelor of arts from Lewis & Clark College in Oregon and holds an associate degree in Non Profit Management from Washington University.

The Dennis & Judith Jones Visitor Center, at 5595 Grand Drive, is just east of the Missouri History Museum at Lindell and DeBaliviere. The program will be held in the Learning Lab. Questions, call Mitch Leachman at (314) 599-7390. ◆



Red-bellied Woodpecker in recovery

WBR Photo

Environmental Summit Recap

By Karen Meyer

How do we make our conservation voices heard? This year's Missouri Votes Conservation Environmental Summit in Columbia was attended by state representatives and state department heads such as the Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Many environmental groups attended, as well as private businesses and citizens concerned with environmental issues in our great State. Many issues were raised and lots of related questions with just a handful of solutions offered. How do we talk as one voice about the best feasible plans for each of our state's conservation issues?

We have to start with at least being aware of what is being discussed in our Missouri Capitol building.

- 2012 will bring a new Farm Bill. What could be more important than what we eat and assuring that our farming practices do not degrade the quality of our water table, creeks and rivers?
- Do we really need to double the number of lanes on Highway 70 and build truck-only lanes? Missouri already has the most roads per capita in the country. Would we be wiser and better served to maintain existing roadways, improve our cleaner energy rail transport and transit systems, and facilitate all modes of transport, including bicycles, wheel chairs and pedestrians?
- Do we need a state bond fund for our state parks? Shortfalls and diversions in the half of a one-tenth-of-one-cent state sales tax have left our state parks with a \$200 million backlog of infrastructure issues including decaying sewers, bridges, buildings and roads. A State capital improvements bond issue is being proposed. Wouldn't it be great to fix our parks now and not wait until the problems continue to unmanageable proportions?
- How are we doing on clean energy initiatives? The voters specified Renewable Energy Standards as wind, solar, biomass and existing hydroelectric power. Would using our forests as biomass really be sustainable and could we maintain their biological diversity?

Conservation Lobby Day (March 29th this year) is an opportunity to visit with our state senators and representatives and share our concerns about issues like these. Watch the next issue of TaleFeathers for more details about the event and how you can attend. Of course, we welcome your voice or your time on any of these issues or others. Just give us a shout—you will be heard. ◆

Honeysuckle Removal Project Saturday, March 5 at Creve Coeur Park

We return on Saturday, March 5th from 9a to 1p to continue our efforts to eradicate bush honeysuckle from Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park. The plant has no natural controls and is spreading rapidly throughout the Park, degrading the landscape for birds and our native plants. Volunteers will cut the bushes with loppers and saws and apply herbicide to the stump to kill the plant.

Volunteers should bring work gloves and loppers or a saw (if you have them). Audubon and County Parks will provide snacks, beverages, lunch and a limited supply of tools and gloves. Volunteers are requested to register for the project by providing their name, contact information and number attending at (314) 599-7390 or director@stlouisaudubon.org. Families and groups are especially encouraged, however those under the age of 18 must have parental/adult supervision at all times.

From I-270, take Dorsett Road west approximately 1.5 miles to the Park entrance on your right. Turn into the park and follow Streetcar Drive. Pass the park office, ball diamond and tennis court. Take the next right into the gravel parking lot. ◆

Calling All Science Teachers

St. Louis Audubon can help high school and middle school teachers who want to become better prepared to bring the excitement of ecology or sustainability to their classrooms. We provide financial aid to help pay for professional development CEU workshops and classes given by local institutions, such as Missouri Botanical Garden and Earthways Center, and by Maine Audubon's July 14–19 Hog Island Educator's Week.

Scholarship amounts will vary according to the number of applicants and programs. Contact Sue Schoening at (314) 569–2870 for an application form. ◆



University City Public Meetings on Sustainability

The University City Green Practices Committee will present its Sustainability Strategic Plan for University City at three public meetings in February. All University City residents are invited to attend:

Sun, Feb 6: 1 – 4 PM University City Library Auditorium, 6701 Delmar Blvd
 Wed, Feb 9: 6 – 9 PM University City Library Auditorium, 6701 Delmar Blvd,
 Sat, Feb 19: 9 AM – noon Heman Park Community Center, 975 Pennsylvania Ave

For more information, visit the U City web site: <http://www.ucitymo.org/index.aspx?nid=451> or e mail: NSRAPP@AOL.COM. ◆



GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The GBBC is a joint project of:



The Cornell Lab
of Ornithology



Audubon

Canadian partner:



BIRD STUDIES
ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX CANADA

The 2011 GBBC will take place Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21. Please join us!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Visit www.birdcount.org for all the details. ◆

St. Louis Audubon Society
2011 Awards Dinner & Silent Auction
 Saturday, March 5th

PEG ABBOTT, THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY



We are pleased to announce our 2011 Awards Dinner will take place at Orlando Gardens at 8352 Watson Road in Webster Groves on Saturday, March 5th. Awards will be presented for Conservation, Outstanding Educator, Outstanding Volunteer, and Lifetime Achievement. The evening will conclude with our keynote speaker, Peg Abbott, Outreach Coordinator for The Trumpeter Swan Society. Peg will lead a discussion and presentation on the conservation history and current status of the Trumpeter Swan—North America’s largest waterfowl and one of our rarest native birds.

After many decades of commercial and subsistence hunting, the Trumpeter Swan was nearly extinct in 1900. Only a few hundred individuals remained in the remote valleys of the northern Rockies, Alaska and western Canada. With complete protection and heroic intervention, 3,700 birds were counted in the 1968 rangewide survey—the same year The Trumpeter Swan Society was founded to unite public and private efforts to restore sustaining populations of the Swans.

Trumpeters today still suffer mortality due to the ingestion of lead, powerline collisions, loss of habitat and illegal shooting. While populations have increased dramatically, recovery is still in progress, and they are listed yellow on the 2007 Audubon Watchlist and extirpated in the state by the Missouri Department of Conservation. The Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary in West Alton harbors one of the largest wintering populations of the birds in the Midwest. The long-term future of this magnificent bird is dependent upon places like Riverlands, people like Peg and the collective will and determination of all of us.

Please join us for Peg’s engaging presentation of this amazing conservation success story in-progress.

6:00 p.m.—Registration / Open Bar / Silent Auction Begins

7:00 p.m.—Dinner Service and Award Presentations

8:30 p.m.—Keynote Presentation by Peg Abbott

The cost is just \$25 per person. Reservations are required—please use the form below.

Orlando Gardens is at 8352 Watson Road in the General Grant Shopping Center in Webster Groves, about one-half mile west of Laclede Station Road and one mile from I-44 and the Elm Avenue exit. ♦

Saturday, March 5th, 2011 Awards Dinner Registration Form

Please mail this form or a copy by February 20th with payment to: St. Louis Audubon at P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122. Make checks payable to **St. Louis Audubon Society**. If you would prefer to pay by credit card, visit our website to register online, www.stlouisaudubon.org.

_____	\$25.00 x _____ = _____
Name(s)	Fee No. Total Enclosed

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

2/11

St. Louis Audubon Society Chapter-Supporting Membership Form

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

Your Chapter-Supporting membership runs concurrently with your National Audubon membership, if you choose to maintain the latter. To continue to receive the *Audubon* magazine, you must maintain your National membership.

\$20
 \$30
 \$50**
 \$100
 Other _____

** Memberships of \$50, or above, will receive a copy of Dr. Stephen Kress' *North American Birdfeeder Guide*, a \$15 value, as our gift. This 220 page book covers feeding and observing tips and includes common species profiles.

100% of your dues stay in St. Louis supporting our local efforts. All our programs are free. Thank you very much!

If already a Chapter-Supporting member, you need do nothing but accept our thanks!

**Memberships are Tax Deductible
Less the \$15 Cost of the Book**

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



**Customer Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code**