

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 AT 5595 GRAND DRIVE
FIRST SATURDAY OF MOST MONTHS
WALK FROM 830 AM TO 10 AM, MEET AT 815 AM
For info contact Amy at birding@forestparkforever.org.

BIRDS OF WINTER

AUDUBON CENTER AT RIVERLANDS
SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS IN JANUARY
[HTTP://RIVERLANDS.AUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS/BIRDS-WINTER-3](http://riverlands.audubon.org/events/birds-winter-3)

BEGINNER BIRD WALK—PAGE 3

MALLARD LAKE AT CREVE COEUR PARK
SATURDAY JANUARY 16TH AT 8 AM

EAGLE DAYS

OLD CHAIN OF ROCKS BRIDGE
SATURDAY/SUNDAY JANUARY 16/17 FROM 9A TO 3P
[HTTP://MDC.MO.GOV/EVENTS/EAGLEDAYS](http://MDC.MO.GOV/EVENTS/EAGLEDAYS)

MEET THE NATIVE PLANT PROFESSIONALS—PAGE 5

SCHLAFLY BOTTLEWORKS IN MAPLEWOOD
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 27TH AT 5 PM

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS BIRD SANCTUARY & COLUMBIA BOTTOM
SATURDAY JANUARY 30TH AT 8A

AUDUBON SOCIAL—THIS PAGE

AUDUBON CENTER AT RIVERLANDS
SUNDAY JANUARY 31ST FROM 3P TO 6P
[HTTP://RIVERLANDS.AUDUBON.ORG/](http://riverlands.audubon.org/)

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BALDWIN LAKE, ILLINOIS
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6TH AT 9A

FEBRUARY PROGRAM—PAGE 2

WEBSTER GROVES LIBRARY
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 10TH AT 7P

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

THE AUDUBON CENTER AT RIVERLANDS CAN ALWAYS USE MORE FOLKS TO HELP OUT. FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT JULIE WATSON AT (636) 899-0090 OR jwatson@audubon.org.
[HTTP://RIVERLANDS.AUDUBON.ORG/VOLUNTEER-AUDUBON-CENTER-RIVERLANDS](http://riverlands.audubon.org/volunteer-audubon-center-riverlands)

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Mid-Winter Open House

Come One, Come All!

*St. Louis Audubon Society
Webster Groves Nature Study Society*

**Sunday, January 31st
3:00 pm to 6:00 pm**

Bring a dish. Beverages will be provided.
Door prizes, too!

**Audubon Center at Riverlands
301 Riverlands Way
West Alton, MO 63386**

Come early and check out the Eagles and Trumpeter Swans. The Center and its exhibits will be open during the social. For Center info, including volunteer needs <http://riverlands.audubon.org/>.

Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. Turn right on the last road before the Alton Bridge (at the gas station). Continue $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to Center on your left.

Board Meetings

Open to All. 2nd Tuesday of Even Months at 7 pm at the Sunset Hills Community Center at 3915 S. Lindbergh Boulevard.

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**Linda Tossing, President**

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Newsletter

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

From Maine to Missouri: Declining Bird Populations and Restoration Efforts

February 10 at 7 p.m.
 Webster Groves Library

Brenda Hente will share her recent experiences at Maine's Audubon Camp on Hog Island and her knowledge of "Project Puffin," a labor of love in bringing back these once extirpated species from the lowest region of their range off the coast of Maine. She will also discuss bird species that are declining in the state of Missouri along with restoration efforts being conducted to help these populations succeed.

Brenda Hente is a certified Missouri master naturalist who has been observing and documenting the behavior of two pairs of Great Horned Owls in the St. Louis area since the winter of 2010. She is an active member of the World Bird Sanctuary's banding team and helps monitor bluebird boxes in Forest Park and Creve Coeur Park. She recently studied under world-renowned ornithologists at Maine's Audubon Camp on Hog Island, off the coast of Bremen, Maine. Brenda has a Master's degree in school leadership/administration and is a middle school educator in the St. Louis area.

This is our annual joint program with the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS). The library is at 301 E. Lockwood Avenue, Webster Groves, MO 63119. For questions about this event, contact Mitch at (314) 599-7390 or mitch@stlouisaudubon.org. ♦



Atlantic Puffin

Brenda Hente Photo

Proud Member of the



From the Director

By Mitch Leachman

Eagle Days is next weekend, January 16 and 17, at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, just south of the I-270 bridge across the Mississippi River (see the calendar listing and link on page 1 for more info); it is without a doubt my favorite event of the year! Thousands of folks, including lots of families, walk the bridge and are very thankful for the warming tent near the center. In addition to heaters and a break from the wind, they find tables inside filled with specimens of dozens of St. Louis area birds and helpful St. Louis Audubon volunteers eager to share their knowledge about them. We call it a touch table since the entire collection of birds (and feet) is reserved just for that purpose—to touch and feel—experience the heft of an egret, the points of a hawk talon, the downy fluff on an owl's feathers.

In our human-centered world, it can be very difficult to appreciate the wonder of the natural world which we inhabit. This is especially true for the many who have never gone camping, fishing, birding or such and whose outdoor experience is that of a soccer field, manicured suburban lawn or such. True appreciation often starts with awe and wonder, reactions easily garnered through direct experience. And hence the importance of a touch table, a bird feeder, a butterfly garden or any other of the countless ways one can gain direct contact with nature, especially for children.

If you can't make Eagle Days, see mdc.mo.gov, click "discover nature" or visit any of their nature centers around the region. For info on our Junior Audubon program, see the education tab on our website: www.stlouisaudubon.org. Also, the Audubon Center at Riverlands, riverlands.audubon.org, is open 7 days a week. Of course there are many more places and opportunities to help you or your children experience nature. The key is to DO it—plant that flower, hug that tree, hear that sparrow sing—soak it all up and feel the awe! ◆



Field Trips, Etc.

Jan 16th Beginner Walk at Mallard Lake: This easy walk starts at 8:00 am from the south parking lot at the Creve Coeur Lakehouse, 2160 Creve Coeur Mill Rd. Bring your binoculars, if you have them; loaners are available. We should finish about 10. Watch our Facebook page for last-minute updates.

Jan 30th to Riverlands & Columbia Bottom: All day trip led by Bill Rowe that meets at 8 am. A very good trip for beginners. 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 6th to Baldwin Lake, Illinois: All day trip led by Pat Lueders 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.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required, unless noted—consult our website for details. For questions, contact Mike Grant at mikecurlew@att.net.

In Memory of Jim D. Wilson (1943–2015)

By Rick Thom

I knew Jim D. Wilson well, having worked with him for many years in the Department of Conservation (MDC). We were both early employees of the Natural History Section, a unit of MDC that was created after the public approved the Conservation Sales Tax in 1976. Natural History Section was created to expand MDC's emphasis on plants, animals, natural areas, endangered species, wildlife diversity, and interpretation of our natural world to the public.

Jim was hired in 1978 as our first MDC ornithologist. His talent, enthusiasm, and showmanship quickly earned him a public following. Jim recognized what interested people and then provided that information in programs, articles in the *Missouri Conservationist*, and radio and television interviews. Jim quickly displayed this ability in a *Conservationist* article on winter birds which featured his own art in a two-page spread of birds that come to feeders. This art was later reprinted as a poster which has helped thousands of people identify their feeder birds. Many *Conservationist* articles followed. Jim also



wrote *An Introduction to Bird Study in Missouri* which he later revised and updated as *Enjoying Missouri Birds*. After retiring from MDC, Jim wrote two bird books that he personally illustrated.

Jim was instrumental in organizing MDC's first Eagle Days at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, and the second one at Clarksville. This turned into an event that is still celebrated in the town of Clarksville, at Squaw Creek, and at other locations. The success of Eagle Days inspired a number of public special days to introduce people to nature, including Prairie Days, Days on the River, and Day on the Glade. Jim organized the reintroduction of bald eagles as a breeding species in Missouri and worked on restoration of several other species including ospreys, barn owls and peregrine falcons. He headed research on American kestrels, great-blue herons, and other species. He initiated and supervised the Missouri Breeding Bird Atlas. This ambitious project involved coordinating over 400 volunteers to survey 1207 atlas blocks for evidence of breeding species throughout the state. The results, published in 1997, gave us a snapshot in time of which species were breeding, and where.

Jim helped me survey one of my atlas blocks. As we tried to locate birds and determine evidence of breeding, a tufted titmouse hopped down from a tree and landed on Jim's head. It started grabbing and pulling at his hair. As I watched the attack, I recorded the titmouse as a "confirmed" breeder for my block. It satisfied the atlas code of "gathering nest material."

Jim organized the Breeding Bird Survey routes for Missouri in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and he again recruited many qualified volunteers to run these survey routes. The data from this project provided general trends in bird abundance and distribution throughout the United States. The routes established by Jim and his volunteers continue to be run and to increase and update our knowledge of bird distribution.

Jim's greatest conservation legacy is helping Missourians to enjoy nature and sharing his natural history knowledge. Bird-lovers and conservationists across the state will miss Jim D. Wilson. ◆

Riverlands Field Trip Report

By Mike Thelen

I was headed up highway 367 on the way to Riverlands watching the sky and encouraged by the sun and pretty good visibility. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted a big, large-headed bird perched on a road sign next to the highway, around Parker Rd, and figured it wasn't a red-tailed. I threw the birding anchor out the window, stopped hard on the shoulder, backed up and found this nice BARRED OWL who hadn't gone to bed yet and didn't seem to mind the traffic. It was about 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 12th.

From recent reports I knew morning fog at Riverlands was a possibility but wasn't expecting what I found. All of Riverlands was buried under a thick layer of bumpy, opaque clouds, up and downriver. Most of the Clark Bridge was shrouded. Teal Pond was literally invisible from the highway. But we all managed to

find each other at the parking lot and the fog started to burn off rather quickly, although visibility never fully recovered during the entire morning.

By my tally we had 17 species of waterfowl, including 245 GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE, fly-bys in two separate flocks; well more than 100 TRUMPETER SWAN, almost all in Ellis Bay; 9 TUNDRA SWAN, showing minimum yellow lore spots; at least 1 AMERICAN WIGEON and 2 RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.

There was a decent variety of raptors including 3 BALD EAGLE, 2 NORTHERN HARRIER, 1 SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, 1 COOPER'S HAWK, 2 RED-TAILED HAWK, 2 AMERICAN KESTREL; and 2 PEREGRINE FALCON perched on top of the Clark Bridge, silhouetted in the fog yet identifiable. The sharpie was a fast fly-by near the end of the trip, at the entrance to the Confluence Rd. Surely hunting the few small birds around the hawk was no more than 40 feet away from us and, even without bins up, identified by size -- about like a Blue Jay -- and by the obviously short, squared-off tail.

By midday I estimated up to 3,000 gulls stretched out on a long line in Ellis Bay. We made a good effort to find something different but identified only RING-BILLED and HERRING GULL; the ring bills far outnumbering the herrings with an age mix of both species.

Passerines were few but we did not search hard for them and purposefully spent all of our time looking at the water birds from vantage points along Ellis Bay. Scout reports indicated sparse sparrows but our group pulled out AMERICAN TREE, SAVANNAH, SONG, SWAMP, WHITE-CROWNED and EURASIAN TREE SPARROW.

There were 21 of us, in aggregate, and I counted an even 40 species total for our birding morning which started promptly at 8 a.m. and finished right at 12 p.m. ◆



Barred Owl

Mike Thelen Photo

St. Louis Audubon Society
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ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY YEAR-END FUNDRAISING APPEAL

We are proud of everyone who helps us achieve our goals, including passionate volunteers, dedicated members and enthusiastic donors.

Your past support has made our success possible, and we need your help to sustain our programs. Help us continue to connect our community to the nature that surrounds us all. Please send in your gift today!

\$250 \$100 \$60 \$30 Other_____

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