

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 e-mail birding@forestparkforever.org.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

SHAW NATURE RESERVE
SATURDAY MAY 18TH AT 730A

BIRDS, BEER & BLUEGRASS

AUDUBON CENTER AT RIVERLANDS
SATURDAY MAY 18TH FROM 5P TO 9P
[HTTP://RIVERLANDS.AUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS/BIRDS-BEER-AND-BLUEGRASS-MAY-18](http://riverlands.audubon.org/events/birds-beer-and-bluegrass-may-18)

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BLUE GROSBEAK / LOST VALLEY
SATURDAY MAY 25TH AT 630 AM

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BLUE GROSBEAK / LOST VALLEY
SATURDAY JUNE 15TH AT 545 AM

BACKYARD SUSTAINABILITY TOUR

TAKE A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF A VARIETY OF HOMES AROUND ST. LOUIS CITY AND COUNTY AND LEARN ABOUT A HOST OF ECO-FRIENDLY AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.
SUNDAY JUNE 24TH ALL DAY
[HTTP://WWW.SUSTAINABLEBACKYARDTOUR.COM/GRASSROOTSGREENSTL.COM/HOME.HTML](http://www.sustainablebackyardtour.com/grassrootsgreenstl.com/home.html)

RAINScape REBATE PROGRAM

ELIGIBLE COMMUNITIES IN THE DEER CREEK WATERSHED
ROUND TWO DETAILS AVAILABLE MAY 15TH
APPLICATIONS DUE JULY 15TH
[HTTP://DEERCREEKALLIANCE.ORG/RAINSCAPEREBATES.ASPX](http://deercreekalliance.org/rainscaperebates.aspx)

OPERATION CLEAN STREAM

MERAMEC RIVER CLEANUP
SATURDAY AUGUST 24TH
[HTTP://OPENSACESTL.ORG/PROGRAMS/OPERATION-CLEAN-STREAM](http://openspacestl.org/programs/operation-clean-stream)

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Observation Blind at Little Creve Coeur Lake Wetlands

By Karen Isbell

It's hard not to write a clever remark about an Eagle Scout project that's "for the birds" so we'll just get that out of the way now!

Thanks to the leadership of Boy Scout Andrew Bonnett, an observation bird blind now exists in Creve Coeur Park in wetlands at Little Creve Coeur Lake. Andrew took on the project in August of 2012 to fulfill a requirement for the Eagle Scout designation.

Andrew decided on the bird blind after meeting with Dennis Hogan, a 30-year employee with the St. Louis County Parks Department. The bird blind was on the department's "Wish List". (Articles on Creve Coeur Park by Dennis, who is the Parks Department environmental specialist, appeared in the December 2011 and January 2012 issues of *TaleFeathers*.)

"Dennis marched us out to the spot," said Andrew's father Dave Bonnett. "It was hard to imagine it as wetlands after the prolonged drought of the summer." Ironically, the plentiful rain this spring has more than filled the area; in fact, it has partially washed out the dirt and gravel shoveled and spread by the Andrew's hard-working crew.

St. Louis Audubon Society board member Karen Meyer observed three species of swallow swooping over the water during a May outing. "We are thrilled to have it and see Bird Blind on page 4

Board Meetings

Open to All. 2nd Tuesday of Every Month 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.

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Newsletter

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

Tree Planting at Castlewood State Park

On April 20th, 75 volunteers helped Randy Becknell, Castlewood State Park Superintendent, and staff plant 250 trees along Kiefer Creek. The trees will help re-create a broad bottomland forest community formerly present in that location.

The effort was the first major milestone in a multi-year partnership project that includes the Park, the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, the Missouri Master Naturalist chapters and St. Louis Audubon. The trees were provided by Missouri Forest ReLeaf and purchased by STL Audubon with grant funds from REI and National Audubon's TogetherGreen program.

Besides the partner groups, volunteers also represented several Scout troops, Parkway West Honors Society and Wells Fargo. ♦



St. Louis Audubon Photos

President's Message

By Rixey Ruffin

The end of April brings to a close another fiscal year for the Society, and I am pleased to say that it has been a very successful one. On the programmatic front, we have continued to expand Bring Conservation Home while maintaining the long traditions of educational outings, field trips and other programs for which Audubon has long been known.

Our Conservation Committee has become a crucial part of St. Louis Audubon's positioning as one of the key players in environmentalism in St. Louis, for which great thanks go out to Jean and the others on that committee. The Education Team continues to fascinate and teach thousands of kids each year, and it was a great pleasure to watch Marty enthrall a crowd of children with his vast knowledge and gentle style. Meanwhile, Pat Lueders and Mike Grant have my deep gratitude for all the time and expertise they contribute to the wonderful field trips. Behind the scenes, as Treasurer, Linda has taken on finances and all that go with it, as she shepherds our financial operations into a new phase, and Katy Manar has spearheaded our efforts to draft a strategic plan that will take the Chapter into 2018 and beyond. It's hard to single out just some Directors, when everyone is a committed and talented, and with them the organization is in good hands. Of special importance is the one person most of you know best, and to whom great credit is due. Mitch is our Executive Director but so much more; he is the face and radio voice of the Society, and he works tirelessly at every aspect of this organization to manifest the visions that you, the membership, have for it. He deserves special thanks from all of us.

The end of the year brings the end of terms, though, and this month we say goodbye to Lynne Breakstone, who is completing a term as a Director. She has been a member of the Board for a long time, and she has added grace and kindness to every step. Join me in thanking her for her dedicated service, particularly with our granting of scholarships; we will miss her wisdom and steady hand. We are pleased to announce, though, that Michael Meredith has joined the Board. Among other things, Michael is a Missouri Master Naturalist, and we are grateful that he is willing to share some of his knowledge and leadership skills with us. Welcome, Michael!

Have a great spring and hope you find some time to go birding! ◆

Field Trips, Etc.

May 11th at Tower Grove Park: Pat Lueders leads this half day trip at 7:30 am. From I-44, take Kingshighway south to Magnolia. Turn left and proceed to entrance on right. Right again on Northwest Dr and follow to Gaddy Bird Garden on right. Meet at Garden entrance.

May 18th to Shaw Nature Reserve: Connie Alwood leads this all day trip that includes moderate hiking over some rough terrain and is good for beginners. Meet at 7:30 am in the lot inside the main entrance. Take I-44 west to Hwy 100 (Gray Summit exit). Cross the highway and turn right. Entrance is on the left.

May 25th at Blue Grosbeak & Lost Valley: Mike Grant leads the half day trip that includes moderate hiking over some rough terrain. *Meet at 6:30 am.* From Hwy 40, take Hwy 94 south ~ ¾ mile to the Lot on left.

June 15th at Blue Grosbeak & Lost Valley: Mike Grant leads this half day trip that *meets at 5:45 am.* Take directions from May 25th trip.

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

Observation Blind at Little Creve Coeur

Continued from Page 1

proud of Andrew for doing it.”

Andrew doesn't call himself a birder, but it is in his genes. “It made my great grandmother proud,” said Andrew. “She's very much a birder and a donor to the Audubon Society.”

Still, Andrew's opinion is that “birds are very cool animals. I would certainly put them in my Top Ten.” (Birds share that honor with sea turtles and dogs.) The project made him more aware of the birds he saw during spring break in Florida.

Ever since he joined the Scouts five years ago, Andrew set his sights on becoming an Eagle Scout. In addition to earning a total of 21 merit badges, Scouts must complete a service project that benefits the community. Andrew says his mother Amy pushes him to get the badges.

His project required 50 hours of his own time for planning, pre-construction and leadership. Twenty volunteers, including members of his Troop and the Parks Department, completed the blind during two weekends in October.

Though it took a lot of time, Andrew clearly enjoyed his research, planning and preparation. The first work weekend was devoted to assembling the blind from the composite lumber and wooden posts that Andrew had already cut. He was less enthusiastic about the second weekend.

“The Parks Department brought dirt and gravel and we spread the dirt and topped it with gravel for a pathway.” The total time for the project, from planning to completion, was 230 hours. He has submitted his report and can barely wait to learn if he has qualified.

Now 15 years old, Andrew quipped, “Look out for me on the road!” Readers, you have been warned! ◆

The blind is in the southwest corner of the park off River Valley Drive and looks over the Maryland Heights Wetland Basin. Current access is via an unmarked $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk from the Eileen Pfeiffer Shelter and Katy Trail Connector parking lot. Direct access and parking is under development by County Parks.



Clockwise from left: A recent view through the blind (STL Audubon Photo); Andrew Bonnett with the completed blind and his Scout troop at work (Bonnett Family Photos)

Peregrine Falcon Steals the Show at April Meeting

By Karen Isbell

The April meeting of the St. Louis Audubon Society featured Jeff Meshach of the World Bird Sanctuary. Jeff's passion for the Peregrine falcon was evident by his knowledge, his photographs and his enthusiasm for the bird that was once on the Endangered Species list.

Peregrine falcons are the fastest-flying birds in the world, able to dive at 200 miles per hour when they compact their bodies into a bullet shape and dive. They catch prey in mid-air.

Peregrine falcons mate for life and breed in the same territory each year. The male courts the female for about a month, using aerial displays. They seek high places on ledges or small cliff caves to make their nests, or "scrapes", to which they return annually. Peregrines have adapted to living in cities and at power plants, making good use of tall structures that provide suitable ledges for nesting and plentiful prey.

Jeff was on board from Day One of the restoration project some 35 years ago. At the time, he was a volunteer who helped place nesting boxes in downtown St. Louis and power plants throughout the state. As he still does today, he also tracked the breeding pairs using the nest boxes, banded chicks and developed expertise in "hacking" young birds.

"Hacked" chicks are usually fed through a chute or with a hand puppet mimicking a Peregrine's head, so they do not imprint on humans. When they are old enough, the rearing box is opened, allowing the bird to train its wings. As the fledgling gets stronger, feeding is reduced forcing the bird to learn to hunt.

Although falconry has been a sport since about 2,000 B.C., the term "hacking" was coined in Elizabethan England. Falconers brought a "hack," a type of wagon, to a hilltop and placed young falcons upon it for exercise and experience. "Hacking," an essential part of the successful recovery of the Peregrine Falcon, is still being used today. ◆

The World Bird Sanctuary is one of North America's largest facilities for the conservation of birds. WBS is on the leading edge of public awareness regarding the plight of bird species worldwide.



Jeff Meshach

Aaron Jungbluth Photo



Peregrine Falcon

Al Smith Photo

Field Trip Report

By Mike Grant

Saturday April 20th at Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park.

A beautiful day was enjoyed by 17 birders who walked the 2.6 mile Mallard Lake Trail at Creve Coeur Lake County Park. Arriving before the start time I checked the leased soccer fields west of the main lake and found Cattle Egret and a Franklin's Gull with a full black hood in with a few Ring-billed Gulls. After the group gathered together by the Lake House we drove to the soccer fields but were unable to relocate the Franklin's, although the egrets were still there.

Returning to the Lake House we started our slow walk around the lake. Purple Martins were noisily inhabiting the houses in the yard at the Lake House. The lake had Canada Geese, Blue Winged Teal, and American Coots. A single Great Blue Heron stood vigil at the back corner of the lake. A couple of sandpipers on the back side of a sand bar puzzled us at first but were identified as Solitary. A Common Yellow-throat called for some time and made a brief appearance. All around the lake Red-winged Blackbirds were singing for joy of a sunny day.

From the pedestrian bridge a pair of Eastern Phoebe's were watched for some time. Along the path by the creek we found Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a Yellow Warbler and a Broad-winged Hawk soared overhead.

On the long walk through the shaded woods we searched the flooded forest floor for Waterthrush. It was well past the halfway point before we found one and then another one. Based on appearance and songs, we decided that we had both species. Many Yellow-rumped Warblers were in the trees and a Summer Tanager sat for good looks. There were several Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a Blue-headed Vireo.

On the paved path that is nearly under the Page Avenue Extension, a Prothonotary Warbler was discovered in a bush in the main lake. Continuing on that path another came in very close to the trail. A Pileated WP flew under the overpass and landed back in the woods but good looks were had through the scope for the group that lagged behind. The faster walking group got an Eastern Kingbird.

It was a great day to be out and I thank Jeannie Moe, Dick Palmer and John Solodar and everybody else for pitching in and finding and identifying birds. ◆



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (left—not taken on the April 20th trip); Northern Waterthrush

Al Smith Photos

Field Trip Report

By Pat Lueders

St. Louis Audubon hosted a birding trip to Tower Grove Park Saturday morning, 5/11; but, unfortunately, most of the warblers seem to have been at Forest Park. We did start the morning off well with close looks at both Bay-breasted and Chestnut-sided Warblers at the entrance to the Gaddy Bird Garden. During the morning we also had Magnolia Warbler, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped, many male & female American Redstarts, heard a Yellow-throated, Ovenbird, Blackpoll, Nashville & Tennessee.

There were some highlights of the morning. Our visitor from Detroit found a sleeping Common Nighthawk. Mick Richardson showed us the two adult Great Horned Owls. Bernie Favara found a Red-breasted Nuthatch near the Jack Von B. Pond, and there was a Eurasian Collared Dove near Cypress Circle. Many Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen as were a few Eastern Bluebirds. Two Red-shouldered Hawks were vocalizing in the air above us, and the Great-crested Flycatchers were easy to see and hear.

The large crowd of new and experienced birders enjoyed the beautiful morning and the birds we did see. Hopefully the area around the bubbler will improve in the next few weeks.

Our next trip will be to Shaw Nature Reserve Saturday, May 18. See Page 3 for details.



Photos by #7

Clockwise from left: Rose-breasted Grosbeak; American Redstart (Male); American Redstart (Female)

Al Smith Photos

Name:

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5/13

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**

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