

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

CONSERVATION FORUM

LIVING WORLD AT THE ST. LOUIS ZOO
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 3RD FROM 530P TO 900P
[HTTP://ICTE.UMSL.EDU/ASSETS/PDFS/FORUM/FLIER2011FINAL.PDF](http://icte.umsl.edu/assets/pdfs/forum/flier2011final.pdf)

TRIVIA NIGHT

KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER
FRIDAY NOVEMBER 4TH FROM 7P TO 10P
SEE [HTTP://WWW.STLOUISAUDUBON.ORG/NEWS/TRIVIA.PHP](http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/news/trivia.php)

BIRDING SOCIAL

RIVERLANDS MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 6TH FROM 8A TO 4P
THE COOLER AND BBQ GRILL WILL BE AT THE NEW PAVILION ON RIVERLANDS WAY, ON THE LEFT PAST THE OFFICE AND NEW VISITOR CENTER.
COME EARLY, STAY LATE OR JUST DROP BY WHENEVER.
BRING YOUR OWN FOOD/BEVERAGE.
WE MAY SEE THE FIRST TRUMPETER SWANS OF THE SEASON!
FOR A MAP OF THE SANCTUARY, VISIT
[HTTP://WWW.MVS.USACE.ARMY.MIL/RIVERS/RMBSMAP.HTM](http://www.mvs.usace.army.mil/rivers/rmbsmap.htm)

HABITAT RESTORATION WORKDAY—PAGE 7

CREVE COEUR LAKE MEMORIAL HONEYSUCKLE REMOVAL
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 12TH FROM 9A TO 1P

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 19TH AT 9A
TAKE A WALK AND THEN TOUR THE NEW AUDUBON CENTER
SEE [HTTP://RIVERLANDS.AUDUBON.ORG/EVENTS/2671](http://riverlands.audubon.org/events/2671) FOR ALL THE DETAILS.

BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS BIRD SANCTUARY
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 26TH AT 8A

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Habitat Project Update	1, 4
Trumpeter Swan Report	2
From the Director	3
October Birding	5-6
Fall Workday Details	7
Forest Park Workday	7

Hands-on Habitat Report

By Mitch Leachman

On Saturday October 1st we began our third straight year of hands-on habitat restoration through volunteer workdays. The program targets the Important Bird Areas in our region and involves the community in their maintenance and improvement. Initial efforts were solely focused at Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park in west St. Louis County. This fall, efforts were expanded to include two projects at Cuivre River State Park in Lincoln County. The long-term goal is to have active projects in every IBA with significant unmet needs.

Needs for the natural areas were varied and included savanna and glade restoration, seed collecting, tree planting and bush honeysuckle removal. The totals are

See Habitat on Page 4



Cuivre River SP Work Crew on Oct 1st

STL Audubon 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

Dave Rogles, President

(636) 541-1069

president@stlouisaudubon.org

Lisa Nansteel, VP Education

(636) 391-4898

Conservation Issues

(314) 599-7390

conservation@stlouisaudubon.org

Jim Wilson, VP Finance

(314) 367-7275, ext 20

wilsonjh@umsl.edu

John Solodar, Treasurer

(314) 862-5294

Solodar@sbcglobal.net

Sharon Nickl, Secretary

(636) 391-8751

nicklone@swbell.net

Mitch Leachman, Executive Director

(314) 599-7390

director@stlouisaudubon.org

Newsletter

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



Trumpeter Watch Update for Missouri

Preliminary Results for Winters 1990/91–2010/11

Missouri observers have recorded the highest number of Trumpeter Swans wintering in states south of the 40th parallel with sightings in 41 of 114 counties. The Trumpeter Swan Society recognizes Mega Areas in three counties and Focal Areas in ten additional counties. Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, along the Mississippi River in St. Charles County, is the single most important wintering site of the southern states with counts of 500+ individuals in the past few years.

Marked birds from most of the northern restoration flocks have been sighted, indicating a high degree of mixing at this site. Adjacent public land areas such as Columbia Bottom Conservation Area (CA) and Confluence Point State Park (SP) are nearby, important satellite Focal Areas. A second Mega Area lies across the state in Holt County on the Missouri River. Biologists and observers at Squaw Creek NWR have achieved counts of 100+ birds in winter 2010–11, and in a similar pattern to Riverlands, Squaw Creek NWR has satellite sites in adjacent areas reporting good numbers. The third Mega Area complex is in the center of the state, in Howard and Boone Counties, near Eagle Bluffs Wildlife Management Area. Trumpeters are being observed throughout the state, with 7 of the 8 eBird Regions now listing Trumpeter Swans on public lands checklists. In addition to Mega and Focal Areas, we see a number of Potential Areas, some where family groups linger from January to March. A complete list of public land areas and large lakes (public and private) will be posted on the Society's website after review at the annual conference in October.

One of the most powerful tools for Citizen Science is to find access to skilled individual's field notes. Several people have stepped forward to share sightings, some of marked birds and some for general Trumpeter Swan records over a period of many years. When Trumpeter Watch expanded in year two, Larry Lade sent in records from 1995 onwards for Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, and other locations in Missouri. He noted age class on many occasions and reported collars from several sources. Dave Rogles, President of St. Louis Audubon Society, sent in a very thorough report, including a number of collared individuals from various sources for Riverlands and surrounding areas.

TTSS is seeking this type of field notes for any of our states of interest (those south of the 40th parallel, east and west), from those who wish to contribute to the program. Please contact Peg Abbott, Outreach Coordinator peg@trumpeterswansociety.org. For other information, visit <http://www.swansociety.org/>. ◆

From the Director

By Mitch Leachman

I have used this space several times in the last year to share my thoughts and Audubon programs about native plants. I hope you will indulge me for one more anecdote on that subject. This one, however, is a bit more personal than previous.

Early in the process of making my 60-year old house my own, I decided to add some color and interest to the backyard. The previous owners had outdoor dogs and with little exception had kept it open turf grass. With the assistance of handy reference tables in Dave Tylka's *Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People*, I selected several native Missouri shrubs for the sunny area at the foot of the retaining wall at the very back of the yard. The American Beautyberry, Leadplant and New Jersey Tea I planted in 2006 have done quite well and I enjoy them all. Yet, I have become especially attached to the Beautyberry.

American Beautyberry is largely a southern plant near the limit of its range in St. Louis. It is very late to leaf out and offers only small white flowers to flies and small bees. Its spreading, arcing branches are quite attractive and maintain an almost manicured appearance. However, the fruit that appears in late summer and ripens in early fall is the true highlight. Clusters of the small, bright violet berries encircle the stems and provide food to songbirds and squirrels. I had seen Mockingbirds and Robins feast on the fruit in previous years, but this was my first fall to experience migration through a native plant.

Upon returning from vacation in mid-September, I heard what sounded like a Catbird "mew" in or near my backyard. With a little patience, I confirmed my initial suspicion and discovered several were eating the fruit of the Beautyberry. Ever secretive, they would not stay in the open long. Eventually, I counted at least six birds that were fueling up for the next leg of their journey south. During that same period, at least two Brown Thrashers also fed on the bushes. The group (or the migration) lasted about a week, and I was sad when they all moved on. Yet, I took great satisfaction in having plants that offered energy for their trip.

That, then, is my point. It's great fun to watch and learn about birds and other animals, and it's also very rewarding to grow things. When you put the two together, magic happens! When a few more Catbirds came thru in early October, I was excited all over again! My plants were still there for them. In the last two weeks, I've planted Golden Currant and Fragrant Sumac—native shrubs that provide summer fruit for birds. I'm absolutely hooked. Bird **feeding** and bird **watching** through native landscaping, amazing! ◆



Field Trips, Etc.

Nov 26th to Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary:

Josh Uffman will lead this half day trip that starts at 8:00 am. 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.

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

Hands-on Habitat

Continued from Page 1

impressive, even though the October 29th figures are not yet available. At Cuivre River State Park, over 5 pounds of native prairie seed was collected, a half acre glade was cleared of aggressive invaders, and 10 truckloads of cut trees were removed from a savanna project for delivery to a food bank. At Creve Coeur Park, 200 native trees and shrubs were planted, the same number of deer repellent capsules were installed (thanks to a huge discount from Senoret Chemical in Kirkwood) and a half acre of bush honeysuckle was cleared.

Nearly 75 volunteers supported the three workdays, representing diverse groups and including:

- Bodine Aluminum in Troy, Missouri
- Key Clubs from Fort Zumwalt West, Parkway North and Pattonville High Schools
- Missouri Master Naturalists, Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters
- REI, Brentwood Store
- Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

Initially made possible by, and still supported with, a very generous grant from National Audubon's TogetherGreen program (fully funded by Toyota), other funders have included the Conservation Federation of Missouri, Fred Weber, Inc., the Missouri Department of Conservation, Monsanto Fund, and REI. As always, many thanks go to Dennis Hogan and Joe Strasser (and his crew) at St. Louis County Parks.

The work continues November 12th at Creve Coeur Park (see page 7). Hope to see you there! ◆



Clockwise from top left: David Meyer, Rich Williams and Karen Meyer break from tree planting; Pattonville High School Key Club members pause for the camera; Gary Schneider on the prairie at Cuivre; and Fort Zumwalt West High School Key Club at Cuivre River SP

Birds of October

By Josh Uffman

What a beautiful day! On October 8th, 17 birders enjoyed stomping through the marshes at **B.K. Leach Conservation Area** (Lincoln County) as part of the SLAS Yellow Rail walk. Only one casualty this year, but we will not mention names (casualty = fell in water or stuck and could not move in the mud). The habitat this year was exceptional even though we did not find our sought after species, the elusive Yellow Rail, possibly a result of the beautiful weather we had the entire week. We birded from 8 am to noon and split our time across the King's Lake Unit and the Bittern Basin Unit. I am not exactly sure of the final species count (I only had 32), however here are the highlights:

3+ Northern Harrier and at least 2 Merlin, both seen along Hatfield Road (the Elsberry sewage lagoon is on this road). 12+ Sora, 15+ Wilson's Snipe, 2+ Sedge Wren, 9+ Marsh Wren. Swallows included; Tree, Barn, and Northern Rough-winged. 2 - Common Yellowthroat. 6+ Nelson's Sparrows (6+), I think all of these were found in cattails at both the King's Lake Unit and Bittern Basin Unit. 14+ LeConte's Sparrows. All of these (and there were likely many, many more) were found in one field at the Bittern Basin Unit. To reach the location, park at the lot to the Bittern Basin Unit that is on the left hand side of Hwy P, directly opposite the Prairie Slough CA entrance road. Walk the levee, and the grass is cut, west to where the pool on the left side of you just about ends. A grassy field is here on the south side of the levee—might have to walk across a bit of shallow water. The only other sparrows included multiple Swamps and only one Savannah.

Prior to the fieldtrip and for a short while after I visited Winfield Lock and Dam. The habitat was prime for late shorebirds. Shorebirds included (100+) Killdeer, (100+) Least, (6) Semipalmated, (14) Pectoral, (8) Long-billed Dowitchers, a late Spotted Sandpiper and an even later Solitary Sandpiper. Other than those birds, one Great Egret was in the slough too. Thanks all for a great day – I had a lot of fun! ♦



Clockwise from above left: Merlin, Marsh Wren, Solitary Sandpiper, Birders on the Marsh

Al Smith Photos

Birds of October II

By Mike Thelen

On October 15th, nine of us started birding the **Great Rivers Confluence** area on what was one of my personal favorite kinds of day-of-the-year: high barometer, cool temp, bright sun, sky a crisp, clear blue and multi-color foliage. Two new birding friends from Jerseyville, Illinois, joined the group. Sites visited included Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge (Gilbert Lake, Swan Lake, the headquarters and Volcano), Pere Marquette SP overlook and Stump Lake, Calhoun Wetlands and Riverlands (with a stop at the open house of the brand new Audubon Center, a class act).

I estimated 5,000 birds on Swan Lake, including 2,000 American Coot and the rest very roughly divided in half between Gadwall and Northern Pintail. Blackbirds were massing, with the largest flock, in the low 1000s, at Calhoun Wetlands. Ducks for the day included Gadwall, American Wigeon (6), Mallard, Blue-winged Teal (360), Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal (15), Redhead (3 in Ellis Bay), Ring-necked Duck (4), and Ruddy Duck (200). Seven raptors were seen, including Bald Eagle (7), Northern Harrier (3), Cooper's Hawk (2), Accipiter species, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel (3), Merlin (spotted by Pat and Bernie at Calhoun Wetlands) and one Peregrine Falcon on a close fly-by with prey in its talons.

Shorebirds included 1 Black-bellied Plover, 2 Spotted Sandpiper, 35 Least Sandpiper, 2 Greater Yellowlegs, 1 adult non-breeding Long-billed Dowitcher and 3 Dunlin in Heron Pond. Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows were still flying. Pat and Bernie also found a Brown Creeper at Pere Marquette. In addition, we saw Carolina House and Marsh Wrens and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. A little mixed flock on the Pere Marquette overlook trail gave us nice looks at 4 Hermit Thrush congregated in a leafless tree!

Also 24 Pied-billed Grebe, 300 American White Pelican, 1 Belted Kingfisher, 2 Eastern Phoebe and 500 more American Coot on Ellis Bay. Finally, nine different sparrows were seen, including Field, Vesper, Savannah, Fox, Song, Lincoln's, Swamp, White-crowned and Dark-eyed Junco. Thanks to all for coming out! ◆



Clockwise from top left: Ring-necked Ducks, Redhead & American Coots, Lincoln's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow

13TH ANNUAL HONEYSUCKLE REMOVAL PROJECT

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH, 2011

FOREST PARK – GRAND DRIVE NEAR WEST PINE BLVD.

9 A.M. TO NOON

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

This year's project location is the same as 2010; the northeastern section of Forest Park near the intersection of West Pine Blvd. & Grand Drive. See map below for arrival and parking instructions. Volunteers should bring work gloves, a pair of loppers & hand saw (if you have access to tools). Forest Park Forever will provide beverages, snacks and a small assortment of gloves and hand tools.

This *Park Project Day* is appropriate for individuals, small volunteer groups and families. Children under the age of 18 must have parental / adult supervision at all times. To sign up to volunteer, please RSVP to Rosanne at honeysuckle@forestparkforever.org or call (314) 367-7275, Ext. 10.

For additional details about the project history and a co-sponsor, the Kennedy Woods Advisory Group visit, <http://www.treeswallow.com/honeysuckle/>. ◆

St. Louis Audubon Society Final Fall Workday

Saturday, November 12th at Creve Coeur Park. Honeysuckle Removal.

All ages welcome, but those under 18 must have parental/adult supervision at all times. Bring your favorite lopper or saw. Meet in the upper park—west of I-270 and north of Dorsett. Take I-270 Exit 17 for Dorsett Rd and go west about 1.5 miles. Enter Park on right, just before light at Marine and take Streetcar Drive north. Continue past park office, ball field and tennis court to gravel parking lot on right. Parking is somewhat limited, so please carpool if possible. Rain date Nov 19.

These projects continue efforts begun by Audubon in 2009 to improve critical habitat for birds and other wildlife. In just two years, over 700 volunteers contributed nearly 3,000 hours to plant 900 trees, remove over 20 tons of trash and restore several acres of wetland and forest. We hope you can join us!

Volunteers are requested to register for all projects by providing their name, contact information and number attending at director@stlouisaudubon.org or (314) 599-7390.

All projects begin at 9 am, are half-day and include lunch. Gloves and other supplies/materials are provided. For general Audubon info, visit www.stlouisaudubon.org.

*These projects made possible by support
from a National Audubon/Toyota
TogetherGreen grant. For more info, visit
www.togethergreen.org.*



St. Louis Audubon Society Donation Form

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St. Louis Audubon Society

Mail Checks to:
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P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, MO 63122-0227

11/11

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

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!

\$20 \$30 \$50** \$100 Other_____

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If you prefer credit card, visit our online donation page at

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