President’s Message
Keeping Connections Strong

August. Summer winding down, school year winding up, the fall season right around the corner. But as with much of the last several months, this August is like no other.

Is there a way for us to resume beginner and sponsored bird walks in the fall while protecting both our birding leaders and our participants as the pandemic continues? How can we establish new partnerships with schools to help educate our young people about nature and the joys of birding when schools are facing so many basic questions about how they will function? Will we be able to participate with partner organizations in such events as the native plant garden tour or the fall garden expo when it is not clear how public events such as these can be safely conducted?

The SLAS Board and staff are wrestling with these questions as we look ahead to the coming weeks and months. We will do our best to be responsible and innovative, as the times require. Meanwhile, birding, gardening, hiking and outdoor activities remain popular and more important than ever to our physical and mental well-being. Whether as solitary activities, or with family members or small groups practicing social distancing, appreciating our natural environment to the fullest is a release from the multiple stresses we all face. Practicing and supporting habitat restoration and conservation is good for the environment. Being in nature gives a broad perspective on the world and our place in it. This appreciation of nature is fundamental to what St. Louis Audubon is all about.

Our region benefits from great like-minded organizations with whom we partner to achieve our goals. We care about these communities; with them we help build a larger community. We are working with Great Rivers Greenway, Forest Park Forever, Tower Grove Park, the Open Space Council, the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, the Audubon Center at Riverlands and many others as we try to figure out ways to accomplish our mission in these challenging times.

This issue of Tale Feathers covers lots of ground. We are fortunate to have such great people dedicated to keeping SLAS vibrant and relevant in these times of uncertainty and change. Despite all we face, our community is strong and has ongoing, positive impact on the region, the environment and all of us. It’s great to be part of this.

Dennis Martin
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Tale Feathers

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

Please Note: Board meetings will be held by Zoom and will not meet in person until further notice.

Board recruitment is an ongoing process and combines your interest and our need. If you have considered serving in such a way, stop by or call one of us.

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Newsletter
Tale Feathers is published monthly. For submissions, comments or corrections, contact Amy Weeks as noted above.

Easy Steps to be a Citizen Scientist
Mary Dueren

Have you been watching birds during the pandemic? Have you been seeing more wildlife? Butterflies and Moths? Did you know that those observations could help scientists?

One of the first and oldest citizen science projects is the National Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count (CBC). It was started in 1900 by Frank Chapman, an early officer of the Audubon society to perform a bird census on Christmas Day to count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. This tradition continues to this day. Counts start December 15 and run through January 5.

If you have been keeping lists of birds that you see, on paper or even a spreadsheet, there’s a better way. eBird is an app that you can use whether you are watching your backyard feeder, walking a trail, or traveling. It’s a free and very easy tool to use. It can be downloaded from the Google play store for both IOS and Android. There’s even a free on-line class called eBird Essentials.

eBird is used by bird watchers all around the world. The data generated by users is helping ornithologists and other scientists understand bird populations, habitat status, and climate change. National Audubon Society also has an app that can be used to keep your list and a nice field guide as well.

There are other bird-related citizen science projects as well such as Project Feederwatch that collects data on birds visiting your backyard feeder in winter, Nestwatch which collects nesting birds and nestlings, and National Audubon Society’s Climate Watch surveys which are performed in the winter and summer that targets specific species depending on where you live in the country.

If you have been watching wildlife, butterflies, insects, birds and other wonders in the wild, you might use another app called iNaturalist. This app allows you to upload photos. The app may give a suggested identification of what you uploaded, but there are observers and scientists that review and confirm what you have found.

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Easy Steps to be a Citizen Scientist continued...

If you are a weather watcher, storm reports can be sent to the National Weather Service (weather.gov) from their webpage.

There are many ways that your own observations can be contributed to scientific efforts around the world. If you are interested in contributing as a citizen scientist, consider reading The Field Guide to Citizen Science: How You Can Contribute to Scientific Research and Make a Difference (Timber Press, ISBN 978-1-60469-847-3, $16.95). If you don’t want to buy the book, here’s a link to many other resources.

Now go outside, observe, and collect that data!

SUPPORT WHAT INSPIRES YOU

Your membership will make you a partner in St. Louis Audubon’s mission to connect the community to nature through education and conservation.

Become a friend to birds, wildlife, and nature!

When you join St. Louis Audubon Society, you help protect amazing birds, wildlife and habitat in the St. Louis region, and your membership helps you stay informed on conservation issues, birding hot spots, bird walks, and other nature-based activities!

We have recently created new membership levels that ensure our innovative and effective programs continue to impact the greater St. Louis region today, tomorrow, and in the future!

Become a member or upgrade your membership today!

JOIN THE FLOCK NOW

That's a wrap!

We are so proud of this year's St. Louis Birdathon results! We sincerely thank everyone who contributed their time, talents, and resources to make this event a success. We can’t do it without you! Read about the full details here.

21 Participating Teams / 137 Generous Donors / $9,000 + Funds Raised
Volunteer Spotlight: Mike Grant

Mike Grant has been volunteering with St. Louis Audubon Society since the late 1980's, serving as a field trip participant, leader, coordinator, and Board Member. With his decades of commitment and service, it is no surprise that Mike grew up in a family of outdoorsmen and nature enthusiasts. He has vivid memories of taking dedicated birding trips with his mother to several states, Guatemala, mainland Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, and Brazil. Not many people can say they kayaked with their mother in the Amazon basin the year they retired.

Mike attended the University of Missouri at Rolla and graduated with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. Upon graduation he moved to St. Louis in 1983 to work for the US Navy, then the Department of Defense as an engineer, then an IT Specialist. Needless to say Mike is a man of many talents!

When asked what his top birding experience has been he shared that it was his second trip (lucky guy!) to Africa. He was able to spend almost three weeks in Tanzania and Kenya with fabulous birds, mammals and scenery. "It is the expectations (excitement) of trips to new countries that give me something to look forward to," Mike says.

Being with his birding friends and meeting new birding friends is what keeps Mike going as a field trip leader. His favorite experience while leading a St. Louis Audubon field trip was in June of 2003 when he co-lead a trip through southern Missouri with Susan Eaton. "I really enjoyed showing those areas of our state to people that had never been down there."

Mike is really looking forward to offering weekend birding trips again and we hope he has the opportunity very soon! Mike’s passion and expertise (and some would say his wit), make him an invaluable member of the St. Louis Audubon team! We appreciate all that you do for St. Louis Audubon, for birds, and for the greater St. Louis community.
To see good in the world. Do good.

Mitch Leachman

Anxiety. Anger. Sadness. Frustration. Layoffs. Wage cuts. Sickness. Loss of loved ones. And so much more. Our world is very different than it was just a few short months ago. It can be very hard to stay positive, to see good in the world.

One surefire way to see good is to do good. And you can do good for Planet Earth right at home. All you have to do is get dirty. Yup. Gardening. You can garden for birds, or bees, or butterflies, or my favorite “all of Nature.” All you need are native plants, a little patience and some resources.

If you’re a real ‘do-it-yourselfer,’ you might start with National Audubon’s Plants for Birds or the National Wildlife Federation’s Native Plant Finder. Both provide a zip code search feature where you can query plant lists for your local area and for a variety of interests and plant type.

Should you prefer a little advice to help set you on the right path and explore just what might be possible for your space, St. Louis Audubon’s own Bring Conservation Home program provides detailed, written recommendations unique to your landscape and based on your goals and interests.

After a re-tooling in April due to COVID-19, the BCH staff and volunteers have been extra busy providing our consultation service by video call. While there are some limitations to meeting remotely, the flexibility of the technology has made our discussions even more insightful. Both the Habitat Advisors and landowners have given the process big thumbs up!

If you’re reading this, you may very well be one of the 86+ million Americans who participate in wildlife watching. Won’t you step up and ‘do good’ for the wildlife you already adore? Join the estimated 77% of American households that participate in gardening activities.

Digging in the dirt is exercise, 200-300 calories burned per hour. Gardening is outdoors, in the fresh air, and away from your phone and computer screen. It’s creative; you can design a space unique to you and your home. You need not be an expert to garden, and the whole family can join in – there is no age limit on getting dirty.

With gardening for wildlife, you will be creating your own sanctuary that will deliver priceless encounters with Nature, day after day, season after season that will always be new and forever inspiring. Most importantly, you will be doing good for Planet Earth, one garden and one plant at a time!

Photo Credit: Gray Catbird and American Beautyberry by Chris Kirmaier
St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, MO 63122-0227

St. Louis Audubon Society
Chapter-Supporting Membership Form

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

Choose your membership level-

- $25  - $50  - $100  - $250

Would you like to make an additional donation? $________

Benefits of Membership
Funds are used locally! Your tax-deductible gift will help protect native species, restore important natural habitats, and educate the public about birds and conservation.

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

Memberships are Tax Deductible