



## Director's Message

Amy Weeks

The summer of record-breaking heat is coming to a close, and cooler temperatures are on the way. It's the perfect time to get outdoors and enjoy one of the many activities St. Louis Audubon Society (SLAS) has planned.

Our beginner bird walks and field trips visit a wealth of parks, refuges, and conservation areas, all within 50 miles of the St. Louis City limits. You can learn more about these great birding sites by visiting our website- [St. Louis Area Birding](#)

[Hotspots](#). Upcoming bird walks and field trips are listed at the end of this newsletter along with a link to register. No need to worry about registering for one far in advance, we'll send you a pre-trip reminder with important information the day before your event.

Gather all your friends because [The Birds and the Beers](#) event is back and will take place on Sunday, September 17. The walk begins at 10 am at the Gaddy Bird Garden in Tower Grove Park, followed by a trip to 2<sup>nd</sup> Shift Brewing to enjoy a refreshing beverage and a discussion on any and all things bird related. There is still time to register, but space is limited, so register soon!

The Bring Conservation Home [Native Plant Sale](#) is a fall favorite so mark your calendars for Sunday, October 1 from 10 am to 2 pm. You don't want to miss this opportunity to visit with our knowledgeable staff, Dan and Shannon, learn about new resources and opportunities, and shop with our vendors!

Fall migration has begun and that means our dedicated [BirdSafeSTL](#) volunteers are busy conducting surveys in downtown St. Louis. You can learn more about the program, or join the effort, by contacting [Nina](#). If you don't have time to assist with the surveys, that's okay. You can still help migrating birds by taking a few simple actions at your own home! See the "Lights Out in September" article below.

Keep an eagle eye out for us at the Celebrate Wildwood event on Saturday, September 23 and the Astronomy Festival at Tower Grove Park on Saturday, September 30. We'll have an interactive table at each event with information, displays, and volunteers to keep you updated on what's going on with SLAS.



It's a fun time of year! I think Mary Ann Evans, known by her pen name George Eliot, was on to something when she said, "If I were a bird, I would fly about the Earth seeking the successive autumns."

We hope to see you out and about very soon!

*Photo Credit: Prothonotary warbler in a heart-shaped hole; Mark Musselman/USFWS*

## **Ornithological Forecast, September 2023**

Bill Rowe



Fall migration is a long process: it stretches from July to December as various birds follow different schedules in moving across North America, aiming toward their eventual wintering grounds. For the small passerines (land birds) that winter south of the border—the neotropical migrants like warblers, vireos, thrushes, orioles, tanagers, and so on—September is the peak month. Some of our summer residents began moving in July, and some from farther north began arriving in August, but now is the time to see the main movement, especially of warblers, some of which are now in less obvious immature or non-breeding plumages (although many remain the same as in spring and summer). Unlike spring, however, the fall migration of passerines is quiet. All over the woods and fields, most species are vocalizing with their call notes rather than their songs, presenting a challenge that can really focus your attention and hone your skills. Besides the flow of passerines, many other migrant groups are readily found in September too. Shorebirds, which began appearing in early July and increased in August, are still at their peak if good habitat exists; early ducks continue to come through, though the main flight of waterfowl will arrive later; herons and egrets are still around in numbers; and terns may show up on lakes and rivers, along with early gulls. Raptors are now on the move, with a vanguard of falcons, accipiters, and harriers, and—perhaps the most impressive spectacle of the month—the flocks of Broad-winged Hawks, sometimes in the hundreds, that pass overhead during the last two weeks, usually following cold fronts. All in all, this month offers the second-best chances of the year for a really good list of species recorded in one day (next to May, of course).

*Photo above: Blue-headed Vireo*

*Photo below: Broad-winged Hawk Migration*



## At Home Ecology, Curated Conservation

September 2023

Shannon Callahan

Leaving the dog days of summer behind, we forge on to welcome autumn weather in just a few short weeks!

By now, the cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is in full swing, as well as the aptly named white and rose turtle heads (*Chelone glabra* and *Chelone oblique*). Many of our late-season bloomers are warming up for their show. Keep an eye out for asters (*Symphyotrichum spp.*) and goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*) as their flower buds swell and start to open.

As night-time temperatures begin to drop, hope for clear sunny days to trigger brilliant fall color next month. Now, before leaves drop en masse, is the time to talk to your neighbors about your plan to leave the leaves! Maybe, if you are lucky, you can convince some to join you in providing overwintering habitat for native insects. You may notice birds dining on the dried seed heads of your coneflowers (*Echinacea spp.* and *Ratibida spp.*) and black-eyed susans (*Rudbeckia spp.*), among others.

Keeping a diverse selection of seedheads overwinter is better than any bird feeder from a store. Early September is the perfect time to finalize those fall planting plans so you can attend all the upcoming local native plant sales! Planting in the fall gives plants time to focus on root growth before pushing resources toward flowering.

September is a transitional month; plants slow down as they prepare for dormancy. Take this time to reflect on what needs dividing or thinning, and congratulate yourself on another summer of supporting wildlife!

## **Bird Box Monitoring: Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens and Purple Martins**

Karen Meyer

This year's bird monitoring was interesting as usual. The 10 nest boxes are in the area on the western edge of Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park off River Valley Drive. This portion of the park is now labeled "Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area". We monitor and record the results in Cornell's [Nestwatch](#) application, which adds to the scientific data available for ornithological research.



Half the fun of checking on the boxes is the 2 1/2 mile round trip walk while also observing the many other varieties of song birds, raptors, ducks and grassland birds. A nice surprise this year was to again hear, and sometimes see, Northern Bobwhite that had been absent for a few years. It's always a treat to spot the gorgeously bright Prothonotary Warblers that nest in the wetland areas. A rare find this year was a male Western Tanager that showed up for a few days in July. In several trees we came across active Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Eastern Pewee nests.

A total of 19 Eastern Bluebirds fledged from 3 of the 10 boxes, which included a second nesting in 2 of the 3 boxes. The challenge for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, was that we had House Wrens competing for the boxes. They are quite a persistent and aggressive species. The wrens occupied 5 of the 10 boxes and had three times the fledge rate of the bluebirds. I'm sure there was more stress on the bluebirds with the house wrens nearby. Despite the competition, the bluebirds had an average rate of fledging success.

The Purple Martins scouts arrived around March 23 this year. Most of the 32 units at Mallard Lake began to be claimed not long after that. Later, when most of the pairs began nesting in early June there was drama in the south house. During the checks we noticed that a few of the units would have eggs one week and then they were gone or found broken the next time we checked. Sadly, we found a dead female inside one unit. It's likely that at least one first-year male may have been causing the damage.

At the very end of June, just before all the other units' nestlings had fledged (a 28-day maturation process), there were 2 pairs of adults that began laying eggs in 2 of the units that hadn't yet had successful nesting in the disrupted house. Fortunately, the nestlings survived that very hot spell the first part of August. We tried helping by applying wet towels to the roof and porch during the afternoons of 2 particularly hot days. On August 16 we observed the two families and their fledglings still flying and vocalizing near the houses. One of the fledglings was still being fed while perched on nearby utility wires. We're reporting that an estimated 118 birds fledged this season from the three houses and gourds.

As the martins migrate, they gather at roosts in various locations along the way. We made a point to stop and see one of these roosts in a line of trees in Nashville TN on August 6 on our way to see family. It was a raucous roost right in downtown Nashville! Their calls competed with the live music streaming out of the many downtown bars and restaurants. Some of the birds appeared to be trying to rest while the other half were flying around the nearby streetlights catching insects. It makes sense that they'd be feeding whenever possible to be nourished enough to get them to South America where they spend the winter. It sure was an amazing combination of sight and sound in that very busy location. As the last 2 families of martins were preparing to leave Mallard Lake I wondered what route they'd take and how many would make it safely to their wintering grounds with all the challenges to come.

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with this season's various monitoring duties of these St. Louis Audubon sponsored houses - Mary Dueren, Cathy Wilhelmi, Anne Kirkpatrick, Mary Mierkowski, Jerry Castillon and Glenn Meyer.

If you're interested in encouraging some of our native bird species to nest in your own yard, here are some sites with information on how to be good stewards.

- [North American Bluebird Society \(nabluebirdsociety.org\)](http://nabluebirdsociety.org)
- [Sialis Home - Helping Bluebirds and Other Small Cavity Nesters Survive and Thrive](http://SialisHome.org)
- <http://www.purplemartin.org/>

If you want to help with these monitoring projects, fill out the volunteer application found [here](#). To learn about other projects that enhance public parks' capability to support birds and other wildlife, reach out on the Community Stewardship Alliance site. [Open Space STL Upcoming CSA Volunteer Opportunities - Open Space STL](#)

*Photo credit above: Karen Meyer; Purple Martin Nestlings*



*Photo credit: Karen Meyer; Glenn Meyer lowering Purple Martin house*



*Photo Credit: Karen Meyer; Bluebird Hatchlings- May 2023*

## Lights Out in September: Turn off lights to provide birds safe passage as they migrate through the St. Louis region.

Jean Favara



Scientists estimate that 600 million birds are killed annually by building collisions. St. Louis Audubon Society, through the [BirdSafeSTL](#) project, is partnering with [Lights Out Heartland](#) to protect birds from bright lights as they migrate at night through our region. Bright lights and sky glow can cause birds to become confused and attracted to our urban and suburban areas as they migrate at night using the stars, the moon, and the earth's magnetic field to navigate. This can cause birds to collide with buildings or land in dangerous areas. This September is our Lights Out campaign, and we urge residents and businesses to eliminate or reduce both outdoor lighting and indoor lighting that spills out from windows. Buildings/businesses can enroll in the upcoming Lights Out campaign through this [Lights Out Heartland webpage](#). Homeowners can learn how to reduce their lighting footprint by [self-certifying their home as dark-sky friendly](#). These simple steps will help save birds, energy, and money!

The Gateway National Park and the Central Library of St. Louis are enrolled in the Lights Out campaign. We applaud them for their efforts to protect migrating birds. Here is why they chose to participate:

### **Gateway Arch National Park:**

Gateway Arch National Park is pleased to collaborate with the St. Louis Audubon Society in protecting migrating birds. As part of our mission, the National Park Service protects birds and other wildlife, plant life, and scenic places. This park participates in initiatives such as BirdSafeSTL and Lights Out Heartland to educate the public on how they can protect birds. During bird migration season each May and September, the floodlights that illuminate the Gateway Arch each evening are dimmed to mitigate the threats of disorientation and collision.

### **Central Library of St. Louis Public Library:**

"The sight of St. Louis' great Central Library shining in the darkness is both beautiful and meaningful. But the Library's mission is to help spread enlightenment of all kinds, and if by dimming our lights during the migratory season we can help not only directly, but also by showing others how this simple action can help birds in their astonishing and vital journeys, we are glad to be part of *Lights Out*." ~ Waller McGuire, CEO St. Louis Public Library

Your participation in the September Lights Out campaign can make a difference for the millions of birds that migrate through our region!!!

*Photo Credit: Gateway Arch, via Facebook*



# BRING CONSERVATION HOME™

St. Louis Audubon Society

## native plant sale

October 1, 2023  
10am to 2pm

### Location:

Tower Grove Park – Roman Pavilion  
4378 Northwest Dr  
St. Louis, MO 63110

### Vendors:

River City Natives\*  
Missouri Wildflowers Nursery\*  
Forrest Keeling\*  
Papillon Perennials\*  
Forest ReLeaf of Missouri

*\*Pre-orders available through individual vendors*



Presented in partnership with



TOWER GROVE  
— PARK —

*A portion of the proceeds benefit the  
Bring Conservation Home program*

### PRE-ORDER INFORMATION



Contact vendors directly for  
pre-order sales:

[River City Natives](#)

[Missouri Wildflowers Nursery](#)

[Forrest Keeling](#)

[Papillon Perennials](#)

### THE BIRDS AND THE BEERS

Sunday, September 17

The bird walk begins at 10 am and will conclude around noon, followed by a trip to 2nd Shift Brewing.



Registration is limited, so sign up fast! The cost is \$20 per person and includes:

- Guided bird walk
- St. Louis Audubon Society Coaster
- Free beverage (beer or soda) post-event at 2nd Shift Brewery

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Must be 21 years of age or older to register.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Join others who share your interests in nature, birds and wildlife!

[September 9 - Field Trip- Forest Park](#)

[September 9 - Beginner Bird Walk - Mississippi Greenway](#)

[September 16 - Field Trip - Tower Grove Park](#)

[September 17 - The Birds and the Beers](#)

[September 18 - Field Trip - Little Creve Coeur](#)

[September 23 - Field Trip - Carlyle Lake](#)

[September 23 - Beginner Bird Walk - Meramec Greenway](#)

[September 24 - Field Trip - Bellefontaine Cemetery](#)

[September 27 - Field Trip - Al Foster Trail](#)

[October 1 - Field Trip - Riverlands](#)

[October 7 - Beginner Bird Walk - Forest Park](#)

[October 7 - Field Trip - BK Leach CA](#)

[October 14 - Field Trip - Little Creve Coeur Lake Area](#)

[October 28 - Beginner Bird Walk - Dardenne Greenway](#)

[October 28 - Field Trip - Carlyle Lake](#)

[November 4 - Beginner Bird Walk - Forest Park](#)

[November 4 - Field Trip - Busch CA](#)





Full Calendar

## ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD MEETINGS

Next meeting: Tuesday, October 10

Please Note: Board meetings will be held by Zoom and will not meet in person until further notice. If you have an interest in joining our volunteer Board, please contact one of the officers or staff members.

### Officers & Staff

Bill Rowe, President  
[president@stlouisaudubon.org](mailto:president@stlouisaudubon.org)

Michael Meredith, VP Conservation  
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