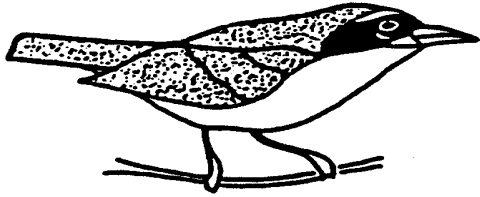


# HAPPY NEW YEAR



## The Chat

Volume 54 Number 4

Columbia Audubon Society

January 2012

<http://columbia-audubon.missouri.org/>

Serving Audrain, Boone, Cooper, Howard, Monroe and Randolph Counties



The saga of Columbia's Snowy Owl sighting  
See stories on page 4

### Biodiversity in Missouri

Please join us for an insightful program, "Biodiversity in Missouri" by Paul Nelson.

Paul, who is the author of Terrestrial Natural Communities of Missouri, served as the Natural History Department Chief for Missouri Department of Natural Resources, State Park Division for thirty years and is now the forest ecologist for the Mark Twain National Forest. Paul will share important information about the threats to biodiversity in Missouri.

Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2012

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Unitarian-Universalist Church,  
2615 Shepard Boulevard, Columbia

Hosts: Kate and Bear Kelly and Jan Mees

### Inside this issue:

Field Trips	2
Tips for Tyros	3
Snowy Owl	4
Membership form	5



## FIELD TRIPS--JANUARY to mid FEBRUARY

Information about these trips is posted on the Audubon Society of Missouri website Event Calendar: <http://www.mobirds.org/ASM/Calendar.aspx>

Columbia Audubon Society field trips are free and open to anyone interested in birds. All trips are probably “a go” even in light rain. If in doubt, contact a trip leader the evening before or one hour before the scheduled meeting time.

These trips are appropriate for adults, teens, and children (accompanied by an adult) who have demonstrated an active interest in birds. Few children under age nine will benefit from these walking trips.

For a winter field trip, bring: Binoculars, field guide, water, layered clothing (remember hat and gloves).

**Date: SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2012**

**Location:** Forum Wetlands

**Details:** Trip co-sponsored with Songbird Station. Beginners especially welcome. Meet at Songbird Station at 8:30 a.m. to caravan to the wetlands. We'll return to the store between 10:00 and 10:30 for coffee and donuts.

**Contact Person:** Laura Hillman, 573-442-3703

**Date : TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012**

**Location :** Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary

**Details :** Meet at the sanctuary entrance at the Cunningham stub off Bray at 8:30 a.m.

**Contact Persons :** Leader Bill Mees 445-7781 and Howard Hinkel

**Date : TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012**

**Location :** Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary

**Details :** Trip co-sponsored with Songbird Station. Beginners especially welcome. Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m. to caravan to the sanctuary or join us at the sanctuary at the Cunningham stub entrance off Bray at 8:30 a.m.

We'll return to the store about 10:00 for coffee and donuts

**Contact Person :** Leader Bill Mees 445-7781 and Howard Hinkel

MDC Natural Events Calendar 2012 suggests in January...

- Watch for chickadees feeding on insects in bark crevices
- Horned larks flock in open fields



Columbia Audubon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor: **Songbird Station**—selected by the Columbia Chamber of Commerce as the **2011 Small Business of the Year**. Songbird Station is located at 2010 Chapel Plaza Court, Suite C, Columbia MO 65203. Phone 573-446-5941, or on the web at [www.songbirdstation.com](http://www.songbirdstation.com)

## TIPS FOR TYROS by Edge Wade



This column is written for beginning birders and for all who want to become better birders. We all need reminding of some basics and, occasionally, a nudge to expand horizons to improve our birding techniques.

Every birder hopes to find "something special" now and then. Sometimes our hopes are so high that our minds interpret what we are seeing more as to what we hope to see, rather than what is there. That is, our brain fills in the blanks. Our mind can turn a poorly seen Common Grackle into a Brewer's Blackbird. The possibilities are endless.

Among the outcomes of this type of encounter is alerting others to what you think is something special, only to be a bit chagrined when someone points out that what you thought was an Anhinga was really an immature Double-crested Cormorant.

That's not too big a deal if those alerted were nearby, perhaps on the same field trip with you. It becomes more serious if people have dropped everything and come several miles to see your wonderful find.

So, what to do? Never reporting an unusual bird, never calling another birder to come see a find might seem like a safe option, but few of us would want to be skulking birders. Sharing finds is a great deal of the fun of birding.

### **What to do when you think you've found a special bird**

- 1. Study the bird.** Take notes of field marks and behavior. Watch the bird as long as you can to get the fullest information you can. Check your field guide after taking notes.
- 2. Call other birders.** Call, text, email. Get the word out. If you don't have access to Mobirds-L, the Missouri birding listerv, do your best to contact someone who can get it on the listserv. Ask others you call to help spread the word. Be sure to give clear directions to the site and the specific location and activities of the bird.
- 3. STAY WITH THE BIRD.** Unless you absolutely must go, don't leave the site until another birder has come to confirm your sighting and can be there to help others find it. This is important! The bird may wander right or left of your sighting. If you leave, others arriving in a very short time may have difficulty re-finding it--a frustration and perhaps even failure that could be avoided if you just stick around for a few minutes.
- 4. Document your sighting.** Even if your find does not require documentation by the Missouri Bird Records Committee (MBRC), it is good practice to complete a documentation form and become comfortable with the process. Who knows, the next special bird you find may be a mega-rarity. You'll find the documentation form on the ASM website, [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org) under BIRD RECORDS on the home page.

Going birding is essential to becoming a better birder. Sharing birding experiences is an important part of the process. Bodacious birding to you, and share the joys of your finds.

## SNOWY OWL IN COLUMBIA by Edge Wade

This winter of 2011-2012 has seen what even long-term birders and senior ornithologists consider to be an astounding number of Snowy Owls appearing far south of their normal range.

Snowy Owl southerly invasions occur when the owl population has outstripped the food supply on their regular hunting grounds. This may be due to a severe drop in the lemming population and/or a spike in Snowy Owl successful fledging in a year of unusually high food availability.

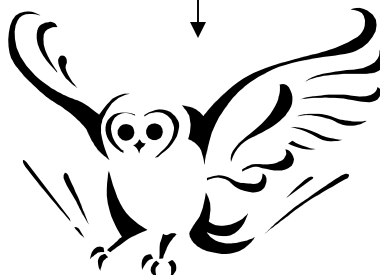
It is not the appearance of Snowy Owls in Missouri that is the big story, but the number of owls being seen this year that has our attention. Rather than a dozen or so in Iowa and Nebraska, there are upwards of 300. Rather than two to four in Missouri, we have had reports of perhaps 20. These have been in northern counties, where we would expect them, but also as far south as the Bootheel and the southwest corner of the state.

Columbians were treated to a young male Snowy Owl at the I-70 Lake of the Woods exit on December 23. Bill Clark got a phone call from long-time Hickman track coach, Steve Kissane, reporting the owl sitting on the guardrail. Bill called birding buddy, Bill Mees. Bill Mees called CAS president, Howard Hinkel, and Edge Wade.

Then the phones started ringing all over town and the internet lit up with the report on Mobirds-L. Birders began arriving at the site and searching for the owl on the ground, where it had been last reported. The frowns of serious searching turned to broad smiles when their attention was drawn to the top of a utility pole, where the owl sat observing all around him.

About three dozen birders, motel staff and visitors watched and photographed the Columbia Snowy Owl on the afternoon of the 23rd. More than one noted it was an exciting addition to the holiday weekend. People wondered at the beauty and worried about its survival. Hope was high as several saw it make hunting swoops into tall grass. The owl was gone on the 24th.

University of Missouri raptor rehabilitators captured a young male Snowy Owl on Smiley Lane. It is likely that this was the same bird. Efforts to save the severely undernourished owl failed. It died in captivity.



## SNOWY OWL Part II by Bill Mees

Missouri and even Columbia has had lots of Snowy Owl excitement, some fun some not so much. What with all the articles, Columbia Missourian, January 6-7 2012 pg. 3A; Columbia Daily Tribune, January 6, 2012, front page picture, pg 10A AP article, and Bill Clark column pg 2A, and Edge Wade's article above, what more can be said?

However, the curious might be interested in more of the story. Having seen the owl, Bill Clark felt it appeared lethargic. He called the university's Raptor Rehabilitation Project, a part of the School of Veterinary Medicine. The vet students were able to capture the owl. What follows are emails received by Lottie Bushmann a K-1 teacher & birder at Lee Elementary School:

Vet email to Bushmann: 12/28/11 6:24 PM  
"Look what I got to radiograph this evening." (Editor's note: see photo on page 1.) "Found down near Smiley Lane and now safely with the raptor club. Absolutely GORGEOUS!!!"

Bushmann email: 12/30/11 7:12 AM  
"Glad to hear it is in safe hands. ... Do you know his prognosis? Do they anticipate being able to release him at some point?"

Vet email to Bushmann: 12/30/11 7:39:41 AM CST  
"Sadly it was doing really well at midnight when the students left, but when they came back at 7 it had died during the night. It was SO starved that even though the students did everything right just the tiny bit of food they gave it set off a "re-feeding" syndrome that caused it to expire. There is little known about this problem but it happens in all species including man and for obvious reasons can't really be studied in quantity. With birds they don't have the blood volume to do frequent electrolyte tests and the very handling would likely stress them to death. We were all very, very sad. Of course, to be able to walk up and catch a raptor with no physical injuries speaks to the gravity of their situation."

So there you have it. This time, it wasn't a happy ending...maybe next time. If you spot an injured raptor or other bird you feel needs help, the following are phone numbers for the Raptor Rehabilitation Project: 573-882-7821 or after 5:00 PM and weekends: 573-882-4589.

## CAS BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

\* indicates a voting member

<p><b>*President</b> Howard Hinkel <i>hinkelh@missouri.edu</i></p>	<p><b>Membership</b> *Doug Miller <i>the@bigthe.com</i></p>	<p><b>Field Trips</b> *Edge Wade <i>edgew@mchsi.com</i></p>
<p><b>*Vice-President</b> Julie Fisher <i>julie8401@tranquility.net</i></p>	<p><b>Communication</b> *Allison Vaughn <i>allisonjv@yahoo.com</i></p>	<p><b>Natural Areas</b> *John Besser (Wild Haven) <i>jbesser1@gmail.com</i> Nicholas March (Albert Area) Bill Mees (Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary)</p>
<p><b>*Secretary</b> Alice Robinson <i>RobinsonR@missouri.edu</i></p>	<p><b>Chat Editor</b> Jan Mees <i>jandbmees@mchsi.com</i></p>	
<p><b>*Treasurer</b> Eric Seaman <i>eseaman68@yahoo.com</i></p>	<p><b>Website</b> Douglas Miller <i>the@bigthe.com</i></p>	<p><b>Hospitality</b> Dolores Clark 474-4510</p>
<p><b>Directors</b> *Bonnie Heidy <i>bheidy@earthlink.com</i> *Laura Hillman <i>HillmanL@health.missouri.edu</i> *Bill Mees <i>jandbmees@mchsi.com</i></p>	<p><b>E-mail List</b> Jim Gast <i>kgast@centurytel.net</i></p>	<p><b>Bird Counts</b> Laura Hillman (see above) Allison Vaughn (see above)</p>
	<p><b>Outreach &amp; Education</b> Lottie Bushman <i>lbushman@columbia.k12.mo.us</i></p>	<p><b>Past President</b> *Vanessa Melton <i>vanndawn@hotmail.com</i></p>

### Columbia Audubon Society Membership

Dues support Columbia Audubon Society functions such as the nine issues of our newsletter (The Chat \*), the Christmas Bird Count, educational initiatives with schools, and property maintenance. The membership is for 12 months. Make checks payable to the Columbia Audubon Society. Mail the check with this form to: Columbia Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1331, Columbia, MO 65205.

Check membership category: \_\_\_ Student (\$10.00) \_\_\_ Individual (\$15.00) \_\_\_ Family (\$25.00) \_\_\_ Donor (\$50.00)  
 \_\_\_ Friend/Business sponsor (\$300.00) \_\_\_ Accept my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\*Email address: The Chat is only delivered via email \_\_\_\_\_

**Columbia Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1331  
Columbia MO 65205**