

The Chat

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Columbia Audubon Society

May 2012

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

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

The mission of Columbia Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity

NEW LEADERS

by almost immediate Past President Howard Hinkel



At the April 18 meeting our members overwhelmingly endorsed the nominees recommended by the Nominating Committee. On June 1, Bill Mees (President) and Eric Seaman (Treasurer) will begin two-year terms, and Lori Hagglund will begin a three-year term as Director.

Thank you to the twenty-eight members who came to the meeting and voted. I am confident that the election of Bill, Eric, and Lori assures the continued growth and

CAS ANNUAL PICNIC - MAY 16

by John Besser

This year, the CAS spring picnic will return to its traditional home, the picnic shelter at Wild Haven. As always, this will be a pot-luck dinner, with CAS providing soft drinks and place settings (or you can bring your own.) Dinner will start at 6 PM.

Mid-May is prime time for migrant birds at Wild Haven, and the spring wildflower display should be outstanding this year, due to the recent controlled burn. For those who'd like to see more of the area – and work up an appetite -- there will be a bird and wildflower walk starting from the shelter at 4 PM.



The easiest route to Wild Haven: take Route B north from US 63 to the stop light at Brown Station Road. Turn right on Brown Station, continue past the stop sign (at Route HH), then take the next right turn onto O'Rear Road. Follow O'Rear Road as it turns to gravel, go past Sheridan Road, then look for a gate, a large 'Wild Haven' sign, and a picnic shelter on the right. Park on the grass inside the gate.

For more information, contact John Besser (jbesser1@gmail.com or 874-5675).



Mark your calendar for the 1st meeting of 2012-2013.....

**Wednesday
September 19, 2012**

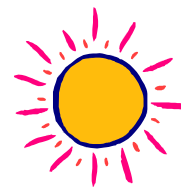
**The Chat will
resume publication in
August**

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SURPRISED BY JOY

by Howard Hinkel



“Surprised by Joy” is not just the name of a William Wordsworth sonnet, but is an apt description of what the Board, and as of the April 18 general meeting, CAS members are beginning to experience.

Quite unexpectedly, Columbia Audubon Society has received a substantial gift from a donor who included us in his Trust. Although there are no stipulations regarding how the funds may be used, there is evidence that the donor was interested in habitat preservation and restoration and that family heirs close to him are inclined toward nature education.

At this time, the Board is seeking professional advice regarding how best to manage the funds. The next step will likely be to begin a discussion of how to use the funds wisely. Of course, the membership will be included in that discussion.

Once we know for certain the amount of this gift we will share that information with Chapter members. The donor had no known direct ties to Columbia Audubon. It is gratifying that, over the years, someone unknown to us believed in what Columbia Audubon Society has done.

BACK TO NATURE CLEANUP DAY

by Bill Mees



April 21, 2012 was a busy day for 14 CAS members, the TreeKeepers, and Parks & Recreation Department personnel. 45 people skipped their Saturday morning quiet time to converge on **Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary** and continue the process to restore a former farm to Columbia's future Nature Sanctuary.

Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary got a face lift that morning. Over 300 yards of old farm fencing, barbed wire, and steel fence stakes were removed and stacked ready for recycling. All the while, the TreeKeepers were planting a variety of saplings on the hillside next to the soon to be planted prairie. The saplings supplied by Missouri Department of Conservation are all native to Missouri, of course.

Soon the concrete will be poured for the ADA accessible paved trail around this first section that will be restored to native prairie. Stakes tied with day glow ribbon mark the future location of the toilet facilities and the shelter. These are scheduled to be completed this summer.

CAS is proud to be a partner and neighbor with Columbia's Parks and Reaction Department as we all move from the planning stage to the implementation stage. Things are beginning to take shape on the ground and CAS is ready to help. Parks & Recreation staff have also begun to lay out their natural surface foot trails. Trails within Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary are already cleared for the planned connection of “Ours” and “Theirs.”

The following members attended: Eric Seaman, Dave Bedan, Glenn Pickett, John Besser, Doug Miller, Allison Vaughn, Lottie and Mike Bushman, Julie and Ted Fisher, Marge Merideth, Bill Mees and Becky Gerdes and son, Reed Gerdes. Well done to you all!

TRAILS ARE FOR MORE THAN HIKING

by Bill Mees

Trails can be for more than hiking - just ask an Eastern Bluebird. And so it was that Mary Williamson, Jane Fore, Howard Hinkel, and Bill Mees, CAS members all, met with Brett O'Brien, the Parks & Recreation Department's Park Natural Resources Supervisor, to talk about a Bluebird Trail. Brett is the project manager for the 3M Urban Ecology Restoration Project. Accompanying this group was Steve Garr, President of Missouri Bluebird Society.

The goal of this project is to restore the area that was once a sewage treatment plant. It is located east of Forum Blvd along the MKT Trail. Started with a \$40,000 grant from 3M, this project is again providing a home for nature again and is an opportunity to combine the talents of other interested groups (see the picture) including Columbia Audubon Society.

This meeting of interested birders discussed the establishment of a Bluebird Trail and the placement of Wood Duck nesting boxes. The positive reception given by Brett to providing nesting boxes is encouraging to us birders. It was decided that nesting boxes need to be placed immediately for the Tree Swallows, many of whom were swooping over the water. Five nest boxes provided by Birds-I-View of Jefferson City will be placed as soon as possible, with a grant from Missouri Bluebird Society to provide 5 more. The plan is to install Wood Duck boxes later this summer once water levels have been defined.

The project is not done but work is well along toward completion, perhaps by summer's end. You are encouraged to walk this trail extension from the MKT. Mallards, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, shore birds and swallows can be seen and enjoyed even by the casual observer.

It should be noted that Mary Williamson and Jane Fore have been monitoring the Bluebird boxes at Wild Haven and Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary for several years. They are committed to monitoring this new trail also. If you see them, ask how their hatchlings are coming along. They have stories to tell!

This is another example of a partnership between CAS and the Parks and Recreation Department with the initial suggestion for a Bluebird Trail coming from Missouri Bluebird Society.



Jane Fore (left) and Mary Williamson (right)
Bluebird nesting box (center) (you knew that!)



**CAS TO HOLD NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATORY BIRD
COUNT IN BOONE COUNTY SATURDAY MAY 12TH**
by Laura Hillman

Columbia Audubon has counted birds in Boone County on the second Saturday in May since the North American Migratory Bird Count started in the early nineties and we plan to continue for many more years. The county is divided into 13 areas with 13 leaders. This year's count will have the same leaders as last year except for area 6 which will be lead by Susan Hazelwood. So, if you haven't been contacted and want to count, contact your last year's leader. If you want to count but have never done it or have no idea where you went last year or with whom, contact **Laura Hillman at 442-3703 or 397-1010** and she will try to figure it out.

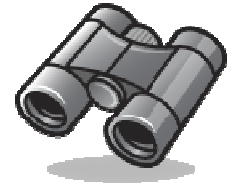
The count was established to try to assess how birds that migrate from the southern hemisphere are doing with the challenges to habitat that are occurring in their winter and summer habitats and the crucial migratory pathways. Add to that global warming and a crazy winter/spring like this year and who knows what may happen. Thus, data like this count can be very important especially if it is as complete as our Boone County data. We will store the data electronically and are working on the best way to get it to the experts who will analyze it.

This year we would like to offer the chance to compare notes and tell stories (and turn in data if it is ready) similar to what happens at the Chili Supper after the Christmas Bird Count. Laura Hillman will host a wine, cheese, and deserts gathering at her house for all counters from 7 to 10 PM Saturday night May 12 (same day as count). Her address is 7900 Cave Creek Rd. Columbia. Call 442-3703 if you get lost.

With the strange weather and massive leaf cover it should be an interesting count. Just hope it doesn't snow.



FIELD TRIPS
by Edge Wade



Date: SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2012

Location: Wild Haven Nature Sanctuary

Leader: John Besser

Departure point: Patricia's Supermarket parking lot

Departure Time: 7:30 a.m. (Or meet the group at Wild Haven at 8:00 a.m.)

Take Route B north of US 63. After crossing RR tracks (about 1 mile), turn right on Brown Station Road. Stay on this road through stop sign, then take first right turn onto O'Rear Road. Follow O'Rear until it turns to gravel, then look for the Wild Haven sign and gate on the right (about a mile from Brown Station).

Contact Person: John Besser at jbesser1@gmail.com

Date: SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2012

Location: Rock Bridge Memorial State Park, Devil's Ice Box parking lot

Trip co-sponsored with Songbird Station. Beginners especially welcome.

Details: Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m. to caravan to the park. Devil's Ice Box parking lot is on the west side of Hwy. 163 just beyond (south of) the Gans Creek and Clear Creek bridges. We'll return to Songbird Station between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m. for coffee and donuts.

Contact Person: Edge Wade 268-3714

Date: MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012

Location: Rock Bridge Memorial State Park

Details: Meet at Devil's Ice Box parking lot on Hwy. 163 in the park.

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Contact Person: Edge Wade 268-3714

TIPS FOR TYROS
by Edge Wade



This may seem like strange advice coming from someone who just got back from a sixteen hour, 850 mile marathon round trip to Chicago to watch a bird bounce around in a tree for less than two minutes. Maybe it is a yin-yang thing. Perhaps it's a matter of coming full circle in thoughts about birding techniques and practices (lots of hours to think on that trip).

Whatever the reason, here's the advice: **SIT!**...It's not just a command for dogs.

Sit? Where? It doesn't matter too much where. You can watch the activity at your home feeders. You can pick a bench along a trail. You can **sit** in your car in a conservation area or park parking lot. Sooner or later, something will fly, hop or walk in. Ask Bill Clark how often he sees a special bird or fascinating interaction from the car while his companions are running around seeking birds and finding ticks.

Sometimes birders get so intent on looking for birds that our very activity causes birds to hide or freeze, and we miss what may be looking at us, waiting for us to pass. **Sit** and the bird may consider you an object of curiosity, rather than a threat. One of my most memorable birding experiences came when, tired on a long hike, I plopped down under a tree. A Kentucky Warbler I didn't know was near came out on a limb two feet from me, looked me over carefully, then searched for food within arm's length for several minutes. What a treat!

Successful birding while **sitting** requires patience and a little concentration. If the mind wanders to daydreams or the cares of the day, the bird of the moment may be lost. Keep the eyes, ears and mind open, and be ready to observe--that is, to really watch what is going on around you, and to see the details of the birds that appear.

By details, think not only of plumage, but also behavior. Birds going about their business as you **sit** still will act a little differently than when they are keeping an eye on you as you move around.

So, either by design or opportunity, spend some time just **sitting**. Wait and watch and...ENJOY the birds that come to you.

Bodacious birding!

AFTER THE FIRE: WILD HAVEN NATURE SANCTUARY

by Allison Vaughn

Stepping out into the brisk, bright morning of Easter Sunday, the Eastern bluebird perched on the old snag looked electric in the sunlight. We hadn't been to Wild Haven in many months, actually, and I was curious to see the impacts of the late winter prescribed fire that occurred there. The annual flush of spring warblers was still a few weeks away, but spring wildflower season was in full swing that day.

Step onto the trail and you can see the burn unit, too, the open canopy woodlands with scattered white oaks, dappled light throughout the understory, the virtual carpet of sedges and wildflowers that show up following a fire event, woodland flora now released from dense leaf litter. The positive impact of the prescribed fire can be seen throughout the unit; first order fire effects in the early stages of ecological restoration include topkilling fire-tolerant shrubs and vines to allow more light to the understory, and setting back fire intolerant species like maples and that grew up in the past as an artifact of fire suppression. The dry woodlands at Wild Haven are distinctive, with a floristic composition more closely resembling the fire-mediated woodlands of the Ozark Highlands than other Columbia-area woodlands and forests. Furthermore, unlike so many urban nature sanctuaries, the wave of bush honeysuckle hasn't consumed the woodlands at Wild Haven.

Biodiversity is high here, with long-lived perennial wildflowers and delicate spring ephemerals poking through the blackened soil, a canopy composition aligned with the historic records from the 1840s. Unlike thousands of acres in the Columbia area, Wild Haven seems to have been spared the detrimental impacts of intensive domestic livestock grazing in past 200 years. Also, the area's ever-burgeoning deer herd hasn't impacted Wild Haven as intensely as it has other, more urban, areas.

In the mid-1990's, Terry Callahan, a Master's candidate under Dr. Ernie Wiggers at the University of Missouri, conducted a research project investigating the differences in bird populations between burned and unburned woodlands. He determined that species richness and abundance was greater at the sites under fire management and ecological restoration. Vegetation in restored woodlands attracts a suite of invertebrates upon which songbirds depend for their life history. Seed production is also greater in woodlands treated with prescribed fire. With a rich floristic component, so too comes a diverse array of avifauna.

Today, the burn unit at Wild Haven best represents the early stages of ecological restoration. With the continuation and expansion of the prescribed fire program, coupled with a concerted effort to manage the existing exotic species and to make the woodlands more resilient in order that other exotics won't have a place to thrive, Wild Haven Nature Sanctuary will stand as a representative site for the area's historic landscape.



Following a late winter prescribed fire, the woodlands at Wild Haven Nature Sanctuary are alive with a rich array of sedges and wildflowers. As the warm spring rains fall, native flora grows, a reminder of the benefits of fire, the ancient natural process that gave rise to these majestic landscapes.



Wild sweet William grows along the creekbed among soft ferns in April following a fire. The open understory following a fire allows for a proliferation of native wildflowers in the woodlands.

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<p>*Vice-President Julie Fisher <i>julie8401@tranquility.net</i></p>	<p>Communication *Allison Vaughn <i>allisonjv@yahoo.com</i></p>	<p>Natural Areas *John Besser (Wild Haven) <i>jbesser1@gmail.com</i> Nicholas March (Albert Area) Bill Mees (Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary)</p>
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	<p>Outreach & Education Lottie Bushman & Lisa Schenker <i>lbushman@columbia.k12.mo.us</i></p>	<p>Past President *Vanessa Melton <i>vanndawn@hotmail.com</i></p>

May nature facts—from the Missouri Department of Conservation 2012 Natural Events Calendar

- Meadowlarks begin nesting
 - Wood ducks hatch
 - Bobolinks migrate from Argentina, and some nest in northern Missouri
 - Most purple finches have left Missouri
 - Young bald eagles begin to fledge in southern Missouri
 - Bird nesting peaks

Membership dues and donations are used to fulfill Columbia Audubon Society's mission. Encourage friends to become members of Columbia Audubon Society!

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 _____



Upcoming events

April 27-29: ASM Spring Meeting
May 5: Wild Haven Field Trip
May 5: Songbird Station Field Trip
May 12: Spring Migratory Bird Count
May 16: CAS Annual picnic @ Wild Haven
June 20: Board Meeting
September 19: Regular Meeting

Columbia Audubon Society wants to thank
our corporate sponsor

Songbird Station

Songbird Station invites everyone to “Café Songbird”
on Thursday, May 10 at 10:30 a.m. to share bird
stories and photos and to hear what other backyard
birders are seeing in their yards.

Coffee and refreshments will be provided as fellow
birders swap stories. 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



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