

The Chat



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Columbia Audubon Society

late October 2012

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

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

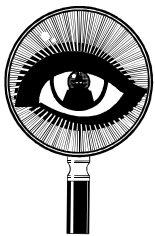
The mission of Columbia Audubon Society is to preserve the natural world and its ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and the earth's biological diversity, through education, environmental study, and habitat restoration and protection.

BOARD'S EYE VIEW

Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows have been spotted in Mid-Missouri. Although winter can't be far behind, things are still HOT with activity for Columbia Audubon Society (CAS).

"Read all About It". It was front page news for CAS in the Friday-Saturday September 21-22 Columbia Missourian newspaper. Reporter Liz Stratman tells readers about the 2nd grade field trip at Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary (CANS)

Thursday September 27, seven students and two teachers from the AP Science class at Heritage Academy gathered at Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary. Into the woods they went to select forest plots, identify trees, measure trunks, and judge each tree's overall health. See page 5 for photos



John Besser and a crew including six Boone's Lick Master Naturalists gave nature a helping hand by clearing encroaching trees and other woody species invading a small meadow at Wild Haven. The area is now ready for a controlled burn later this winter. Preservation and restoration of habitat is ongoing at Wild Haven. Full article on page 8.

On Saturday October 6, four Girl Scouts and two of their leaders met at CANS to begin the process of setting numbered posts in the ground. These will serve as markers for Courtney Grimes' educational project which will fulfill one of the requirements for Girl Scouting's highest achievement, the Gold Award. This is the first Gold Award project for CANS.

On Friday October 26, Songbird Station is hosting an "Evening with Audubon." This 6:00-8:00 p.m. social time for wine, cheese, and conversation is an opportunity to meet others who share a common interest in birds, nature and Audubon. Please join fellow CAS members for an event that can increase awareness and membership in CAS and to have some fun!

Columbia Audubon Society continues to move forward!

Backyard birder,
Bill Mees, CAS President

General meeting

PLEASE NOTE:

Date Change

Wednesday, November 14, 2012
7:00 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Church
2615 Shepard Boulevard

Program:

Hog Island Audubon Camp

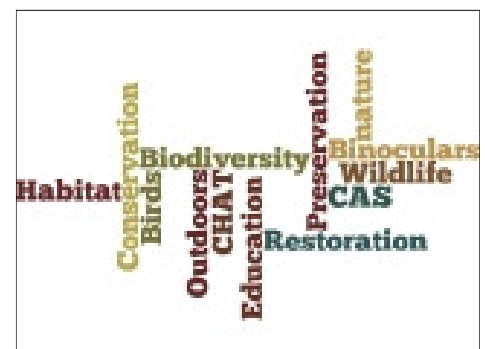
Presented by Becky Elder,

Lottie Bushmann and

Lisa Schenker

Hospitality provided by
Bonnie Heidy and Eric Wood

Columbia Audubon is....



NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING-WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Join local educators Lottie Bushmann, Becky Elder and Lisa Schenker as they recount their experiences at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine. Come hear what they “lived and learned” about nature and the outdoors and how they integrate nature in their curriculum to encourage a lifelong awareness and love of nature to their students.

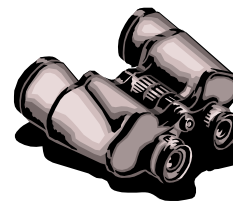
The audience will learn about National Audubon’s fabulous Hog Island Camp, and will leave with nature related materials and ideas to share with children and grandchildren.

Editor's note: In promoting our mission of education, CAS has sponsored the tuition for Hog Island attendees

FIELD TRIPS 2012-2013

Oct. 27, 2012—Saturday

Leader: John Besser 874-5675
Destination: Twin Lakes and Hinkson Creek CA
Songbird Station Anniversary field trip.
Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m.



Oct. 27, 2012—Saturday All Day Field Trip

Leader: Edge Wade edgew@mchsi.com or 268-3714
Destination: Knob Noster State Park & Perry Memorial CA
Departure at 6:30 a.m. sharp. Return to Columbia between 5 and 6 p.m.
Meeting place: Columbia Mall parking lot near Wendy’s on Stadium (restroom & coffee available)
R.S.V.P. Please email Edge edgew@mchsi.com or call 268-3714 by Tuesday, October 23

November 2, 2012—Saturday

Leaders: Lottie Bushmann (445-3942) and Lori Hagglund (445-8025)
Destination: Forum Wetlands
Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m.

December 15, 2012—Saturday (rain or shine, sleet or snow)

Christmas Bird Count

CAS 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 who have demonstrated an active interest in birds. Few children under age nine will benefit from these walking trips. Children should be accompanied by an adult.

FALL EVENTS



October 26, 2012 (Friday): Songbird Station, as part of its Anniversary Celebration, is sponsoring an “Evening with Audubon” with wine and cheese and friends from 6:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. at Songbird Station, 2010 Chapel Plaza Court, Suite C

November 14, 2012 (Wednesday) CAS Monthly meeting, 7:00 p.m. **Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, please note date change for November meeting!**

December 15, 2012 (Saturday) Christmas Bird Count: Count all day and then tally the count right before your eyes at the 6:00 p.m. Chili Supper at Community of Christ Church, 1111 Fairview Road. Start getting your teams ready. Team leaders will be contacted soon. New participants who need to get on a team can contact Laura Hillman at 442-3703 or hillmanl@missouri.edu. Hope the good weather holds!

MEET SOME MORE OF THE 2012-2013 BOARD MEMBERS



Name: Douglas Miller

Board position: Membership Chair & webmaster

Family: Allison Vaughn

Profession: Graphic Designer

Pets: Dart frog & 2 foster dogs

Hobbies: Found-wood carpentry, Goldbach's Conjecture, cooking and then eating.

How long have you lived in Columbia? 5 years

How long have you been a member of CAS? 2010

What do you like best about CAS: Since its very beginning the CAS has looked beyond the immediate enjoyment of birdwatching, towards active and principled protection of birds and the natural world.

How did you get interested in birding? Seeing who shows up from year to year as we restore our back yard to its natural, historic state.

Most exciting bird ever seen: Raven! Allison says it was just a crow, and that my native Oregon crows are smaller than Missouri crows. But I suppose in theory it's still possible that I actually saw a raven...

Most recent "lifer": OK, crow

Name: Dolores Clark

Board Position: Hospitality Chair

Family: Husband, Bill; 5 children; 5 grandchildren

Profession: retired

Pets: Cats and Dogs

Hobbies: Gardening and sewing

How long have you lived in Columbia? Since 1955

How long have you been a member of CAS? Since 1971

What do you like best about CAS? People that care about our world

How did you get interested in birding? I am a generalist, my concern is for the whole of the environment. Birds are always the "canary in the mine"

Most exciting bird ever seen: Family Wren in Australia

Scariest bird experience: When an emu stuck it's head in our car



Nature facts for November from Missouri Department of Conservation *Natural Events Calendar 2012*

- Put up bird-feeding stations *
- Scaup and Ringneck Duck populations peak
- Look for old bird nests while walking through woods
- Birds begin gathering at feeders

**editor's note: li they aren't up year-round*



MEET SOME MORE OF THE 2012-2013 BOARD MEMBERS



Name: Lottie Bushmann

Board position: Co-chair of the Education Committee

Family: husband Mike (29 years); Emily, 26; Melissa, 23; Greg, 19

Profession: 1st grade teacher Lee Elementary School in Columbia

Pets: 2 Cavalier King Charles Spaniels - Gracie & Rosie

Hobbies: Birding ! (of course), weaving and knitting

How long have you lived in Columbia: 21 years

How long have you been a member of CAS: 2 years

What do you like best about CAS: Camaraderie of birders—getting to know and share with like minded folks

How did you get interested in birding? We moved into our home (9 years ago) near the Forum Wetlands. I had Cedar Waxwings—that was my “spark” bird. I was hooked. Birded for 6 years on my own and then Bill Clark’s column caught my interest and I went on a field trip with Edge Wade. That was 2 years ago and I haven’t looked back.

My best birding experiences have been attending Audubon Camp on Hog Island in Maine. 2 summers ago I attend Field Ornithology Camp and this past summer I went back as a volunteer worker for Educator’s Week.

Name: Lisa Schenker

Board position: Co-chair of Education Committee

Family: Husband-David, son-Fritz, who is married to daughter-in-law Grace, and daughter-Julie

Profession: Teacher (I’ve been with CPS since 1992.)

Pets: Two dogs, one cat, and fish

Hobbies: Swimming (I’ve been a member of US Masters almost 30 years!), photography, bridge, reading, birding

How long have you lived in Columbia? More than 20 years!

How long have you been a member of CAS? Eek... I don’t know the answer to that-- I’ll bet it’s been somewhere around 15 years.

What do you like best about CAS? The answer to that is obvious: I admire the fun, dedicated, and young-at-heart group of members!

How did you get interested in birding? When we lived in Pennsylvania we had friends who were big birders. Their enthusiasm was contagious and I was hooked.

This is in response to the last two questions: Most exciting bird ever seen AND Most recent “lifer”
I am not much of a “lister.” My most dramatic birding experience in recent years was going to see the Sandhill Cranes along the Platt River in Nebraska. That was a memorable and moving spectacle.



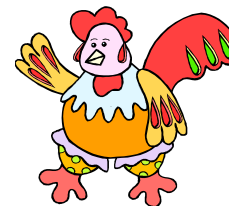
Just for fun.....

What do you call a baby bird that rides motorcycles? *A biker chick!*

What kind of bird comes to every meal? *The swallow!*

Why did the hen jump over the road? *She was a spring chicken!*

Excerpted from: Fur Feathers & Fun, A book of Animal Jokes by Mark Ziegler



HERITAGE ACADEMY AT CANS



Betsy Blake from MDC helped lead the students.

Columbia Audubon Society Gift Membership

If you would like to give the gift of a membership to Columbia Audubon Society, please complete the form below and return it along with the dues. A postcard will be sent to the new member informing them of the gift and identifying the giver.



In addition, Songbird Station will offer a one time 10% discount on purchases (excluding bird feed) as their gift to the new CAS member.

P.S. It's never too early to start your holiday shopping!

✂

Name of gift giver

Name of individual receiving gift

Email (required to receive THE CHAT newsletter)

Street address

City State Zip

Membership level

_____ \$ 10 Student

_____ \$ 15 Individual

_____ \$ 25 Family

_____ \$ 50 Donor

Please make your check payable to:
Columbia Audubon Society and
return with this form to:

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

FOCUS ON FALL BIRDS

Birding is fun. Birding can be frustrating. Frustration reduces fun. One aspect of birding frustration is the inability to identify a bird, especially a bird seen well. Let's explore one way to reduce that kind of frustration by focusing on birds we may see this season--new ones and "the usual suspects."

To identify anything, one must know what to look for. That is especially true of birds. To know what to look for when looking at an unfamiliar bird is made a whole lot easier the more we know about the familiar (usual suspects) birds.

This season brings Red-breasted Nuthatches, Winter Wrens, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows to backyards and favorite birding haunts. We'll have many opportunities to seek and see these birds. To make the most of those opportunities, we need to prepare before we see the newcomers.

Preparation means studying a field guide and studying the familiar birds. To make the best use of preparation time and to have the greatest effect, we must focus. Just as having a fuzzy focus or too wide a view are a poor uses of binoculars, lack of focus in preparation reduces its value.

Let's focus in two ways. First, we won't thumb through the field guide looking at whatever pretty picture hits our eye; and, we will really focus those binoculars on the birds we see year-round so we will be more attuned to the differences among the newcomers.

For the first task, have a pencil and paper ready for notes.

NUTHATCHES. Really look at the illustrations of White-breasted Nuthatch. Read the description for that species. Look at the illustrations again and concentrate on seeing each element in the written description.

Now, look at Red-breasted Nuthatch in your book. Several differences should pop out at you. Write down the differences you see. Now read the species description. Did you see all the differences between the descriptions? Did you note the difference in size? Did a shape difference catch your eye?

Take a long look at both birds' illustration and description. Really concentrate on each species. Train your eye to note the differences as you move back and forth between them. Now and then look back at your notes and add anything new that occurs to you.

Now, you're ready to look at a White-breasted Nuthatch out your window or on your next birding adventure. As you watch the live bird, mentally review your observations in the book study exercise. Focus on the differences between this bird and illustration and description of the Red-breasted Nuthatch. Chances are, you will never confuse the two; the first Red-breasted Nuthatch you see will catch your eye, immediately and with no doubt as to what it is.

WRENS. Repeat this process with the wrens. Compare Carolina, House and Winter Wren. Most House Wrens have left mid-Missouri by late October, so you are unlikely to see one in late fall, but they are more like the Winter Wren than the Carolina, so do your book homework with all three species, then watch that backyard Carolina Wren carefully and note the differences from House and Winter Wren. When the differences are set in your mind, make a special effort to find a Winter Wren along a mud-banked creek.

FINCHES. Purple Finches appear at our feeders, sometimes along with the now ubiquitous House Finches. These species often cause beginning birders great fits of frustration. Look at the field guide. Focus on the House Finch illustrations for males and females. Look at the crown; look at face; look the tail; look at the flank streaks; look at the color. Make your notes of what you see.

Read the description. Add any piece you missed to your notes.

Now, look at the illustrations for Purple Finch. Make your notes. Read the description. Add the pieces you missed to your notes.

Carefully observe both male and female House Finches when they come to a feeder. You'll be ready (and delighted) to see that first Purple Finch when it shows.

SISKINS. Pine Siskins may be overlooked by beginning birders who dismiss them as streaky little goldfinches. To be prepared for Pine Siskins at your feeders, study your field guide illustrations and description of American Goldfinch. Make your notes, then follow up with the Pine Siskin illustration and description. Watch goldfinches.

SPARROWS. First, really study House Sparrow in your field guide (did you know that female House Sparrow is one of the most commonly mis or unidentified birds?). You must be familiar with the House Sparrow if you want the newly arriving species to "jump out at you" as different.

Do the field guide study/note-taking/comparison exercise with White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows. Really pay attention to crown pattern, bill size, and the differences between the brown phase of adult White-throats and the immature White-crowns.

Get into your field guide with a focus on these few species. Get out your binoculars and find some birds. Identification will be easier and the fun of discovery will be greater. That is bodacious birding!

NEST BOX TRAILS

by **Mary Todd Williamson**
Missouri Master Naturalist & CAS Volunteer

All of the Columbia Audubon Society properties have nest box trails. In 2010, Kathleen and Harold Anderson trained Jane Fore and me to monitor nest box activity at Wild Haven Nature Area and Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary. We took on a third site in 2012 when we received a Nest Box Grant from Missouri Bluebird Society to initiate a trail at 3M Urban Ecological Restoration Project.

Tools of the monitoring trade include a multipurpose “Leatherman”, paint scraper, brush, and clippers to open boxes, clean them out after fledging, make minor repairs, and prune encroaching vegetation. A mirror and flashlight help with nest observations, and a ladder allows us to peek in tall boxes.

In the 2012 nesting season, Jane and I made 22 visits to Wild Haven to monitor the 23 boxes dispersed over 103 acres. I estimate that, between the two of us, we spent at least 90 hours on site and hiked more than 55 miles. We made off-season visits to check on the condition of the trail. Seriously ailing boxes were admitted to the “nest box hospital” in my husband’s shop.

Nest box trails have contributed to Eastern Bluebird (EABL) population recovery. In 2010, 2011, 2012, Wild Haven boxes, in order of year, had 3, 4, 4 EABL nesting pairs. There were 7, 8, 11 nesting attempts; some pairs had two clutches. 18+, 38, 52 eggs were laid; and 18+, 33, 21 young fledged.



2012 was a tough year. While there were more nesting attempts and eggs than prior years, the heat and drought took their toll. Some eggs did not hatch during the hottest period. Some eggs disappeared. We attributed disappearances to a clever, hungry snake finding its way around predator guards.

Tufted Titmice and Chickadees have also nested in the Wild Haven boxes. House Wrens have staked claims with incomplete nests, but found other places to complete their work.

Jane and I are grateful to CAS for an enjoyable and sometimes hilarious opportunity. Birding treats have included the song of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet in April, the sight of the Magnolia Warbler in May, flushing Turkey and Woodcock, and watching Downy Woodpeckers fledge from the Wild Haven sign post. Current funniest experience is a failed attempt in 2011 to evict a frog and a mouse co-habiting in box 6. Perhaps a similar observation prompted the song “Froggy Went a Courting.”



CAS is seeking a volunteer to monitor the nest box trail at Albert Children’s Wildlife Area on Zaring Road.

Contact Bill Mees (445-7781 or jandbmees@mchsi.com) for more information!

NATURALISTS JOIN AUDUBON TO CLEAR WOODIES FROM NATIVE MEADOW

by John Besser, Nature Area Chair

Near the west boundary of the Wild Haven nature area is a small treasure: a meadow full of native wildflowers. Unlike the open areas near the picnic shelter, the west meadow is not filled with non-native fescue, nor has it been replanted with mail-order prairie seed mixes. The plant community in the meadow seems to be a remnant of the native prairie/savanna that occurred naturally in the area. We don't know much about human use of the meadow, but aerial photos from around 1980 show a large open field extending from near O'Rear Road south to the Hinkson Creek floodplain.



When I first saw the area in the mid-1990s, cedars were rapidly invading the few remaining acres of meadow, but many native prairie plants were still evident. Over the following years, Audubon volunteers removed many cedars and other woody invaders and conducted a couple of controlled burns. The meadow has responded with displays of wildflowers including rough blazingstar, butterfly weed, tall thistle, slender mountain-mint and sensitive briar. But the area has been neglected in recent years, and the woodies have come back in force! Both native species, like cedar, shingle oak, and sassafras, and exotics like autumn olive and multiflora rose threatened to undo our restoration efforts.

This woody invasion was noticed by Jane Fore, a member of the Boone's Lick chapter of Master Naturalists. (Master Naturalists have helped with several previous projects at Wild Haven, including the bluebird trail, hummingbird garden, and chimney swift tower.) Jane organized a workday for Saturday



October 6, which was attended by 6 Naturalists (Janice Albers, David Frech, Emily Wilson, Laura Sweets, Lori Turner, and Mary Williamson) and two Auduboners (Bill Mees and myself.) Armed with loppers, a chain saw, and herbicide, we broke into teams and got to work. In a little over two hours, we covered virtually the whole area before we ran out of gas -- literally and figuratively! In the process of scouring the meadow, we got to enjoy late-blooming wildflowers like the rough blazingstar (smaller than usual in this drought year) and ladies-tresses orchids, which we found both in the meadow and in the surrounding woodlands.

Thanks to all the volunteers! We made a lot of progress during the workday, but more work will be needed to continue the restoration of the meadow. The cleared area is overdue for another burn, hopefully this winter. I'd also like to expand the meadow further by killing the rest of the cedars and some of the larger deciduous trees in and around the open area.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

by Doug Miller

Earlier in the year, the Columbia Audubon Society was the beneficiary of a very generous bequest from the late Dr. Joseph Koster that substantially increased the possibilities of what we might achieve as a group. On the one hand, we might employ our endowment as a stable, long-term funding source to support the same level of activities we carry out today. Or our new resources might be used to undertake bold, large projects that would increase public awareness of CAS and lead to increased membership and participation. Given these different choices in direction, the board decided that now would be the perfect time to revisit our long-range plan, last updated in 2004. The purpose of the long-range plan is both to set out what the regular activities of the CAS should be, and also to suggest significant, achievable projects to be accomplished in the following few years. (For those interested in looking at the earlier 1968, 1971 and 2004 plans, visit <http://columbia-audubon.org/planning>.)



If anyone has ideas for projects that the CAS ought to accomplish, or would like to help develop the future direction of our group, please contact me at: the.douglas.miller@gmail.com or 442-5550. Your participation could either be in the form of getting together a few times as a committee to draft a plan -- or just informally sharing your thoughts and suggestions with us. Either way, your help would be welcomed and appreciated. Thanks!



Did you know.... Columbia Audubon Society began in the late 1950s when Bob Eastman wanted to give his wife Kay a birthday gift? She asked for the formation of an Audubon Society. As they say, "and the rest is history..."



Columbia Audubon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

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