

# The Chat

Volume 55 Number 4

**Columbia Audubon Society**

December 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.

## DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

**Christmas Bird Count  
and Chili Supper**

**Saturday  
December 15, 2012**

**Community of Christ Church  
1111 South Fairview Road  
Columbia MO**

**Dinner: 6 p.m.**

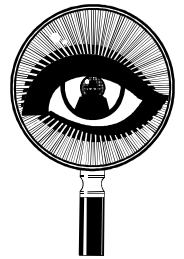
**Everyone is invited, even if you did not  
participate in CBC**

## BOARD'S EYE VIEW

"It's an ill wind that blows no good." I am sure everyone has heard this time worn adage. Well, it's true.

This past summer set many records and most are not the kind any of us wish to repeat any time soon: the hottest summer, a summer with the least rain fall, most days over 100, poorest farm harvest, I could go on. But remember, it's an ill wind etc etc, and this fall and winter backyard bird watchers are enjoying the benefits of the "ill wind."

Watch your backyard feeders. Those sparrows might not be sparrows or even finches. Think Pine Siskin. What about that nuthatch that acts like a nuthatch but isn't our usual year round friend? Red-breasted Nuthatches are here and now most recently Red Crossbills have been spotted. These birds are usually relegated to more northern states but are now available for us to see without leaving home. Backyard bird watching is great this year and watching our feeders is especially rewarding.



Perhaps there are other unusual visitors. On December 15<sup>th</sup> Columbia Audubon Society will conduct its 50th consecutive Christmas Bird Count. If there are other unusual visitors, the eyes and ears of the citizen scientists in CAS are likely to find them. If you aren't able to participate in the count please join us for the Chili supper that evening. After enjoying the company of friends, wonderful food and conversation, listen as each team reports their sightings.

Tis the season of gift giving. Why not consider giving the gift of a membership to Columbia Audubon Society. It's a gift that keeps on giving all year long and has the added benefit of acquainting more people with Columbia Audubon Society and all it does in our community to educate, preserve and restore all to the benefit of nature and of course us as members of mankind. (see page 7)

**The CHAT** is seeking contributing "editors"

- Have you experienced fabulous birding?
- Seen a breath taking bird site?
- Read a memorable book about birding, other wildlife, the earth's biological diversity, environmental study, or habitat restoration and protection?

Write up a story **not to exceed 500 words** for possible inclusion in upcoming CHATs. Email your work to [jandbmees@mchsi.com](mailto:jandbmees@mchsi.com)



Happy holidays,  
Bill Mees, President

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT! SATURDAY DECEMBER 15, 2012

by Laura Hillman

The Christmas Bird Count will be held all day Saturday December 15. Twelve different teams will cover 12 different areas which together make up a circle 7.5 miles in radius centered at the stoplight next to Rock Bridge Elementary School in Columbia. The same 12 leaders from last year (and often many years) will again lead their teams. If you haven't heard from your last year's leader, give them a call. If you haven't done the count before or want to try a different area or just have questions, call Laura Hillman at 442-3707 or cell 573-397-1010 or e-mail to [hillmanl@missouri.edu](mailto:hillmanl@missouri.edu). We need birders of all levels to find the birds and record the birds so don't be scared if you are not an expert at identification. Hopefully, your leader will be able to identify the bird you find if you can't. That's how you learn.

After the count at 6:00 PM we will have a Chili Supper as we have had for many, many years. It will be at Community of Christ Church at 1111 Fairview road. Many people signed up at the November meeting to bring food but if you missed the meeting feel free to bring your favorite contribution especially if it's Chili. At the supper all of the 12 teams will report their finds, bird by bird, and they will be entered into the computer and tallied. By the end we will know how many species we collectively found. Probably thanks to global warming, we have been over 100 species for the last few years. We'll see how we do this year. Come and help and have fun.



## FIELD TRIPS 2012-2013

### SATURDAY DECEMBER 8, 2012

Leader: Bill Mees 445-7781

Destination: Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary

Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m.



## SPECIAL EAGLE BLUFFS TRIPS

by Edge Wade

### TUESDAY EAGLE BLUFFS TRIPS WITH VIC

An Opportunity for Columbia Bird Watchers

Vic Bogosian, manager of Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, is once more conducting a weekly water-fowl census on Tuesdays at 1 p.m.. He has again offered to have birders join him on these trips into portions of the area not normally open to birders at this time of year. These trips will run through January, 2013.

Birders who have been privileged to accompany Vic on these trips give the experience high marks. Vic is a pleasant, informative host and there are thousands of birds to observe.

If you would like to join Vic, please **reserve your space** (he can take two, or three if you squeeze) by responding to Edge Wade by email: [edgew@mchsi.com](mailto:edgew@mchsi.com). Include your name, your email address, and the date you want to accompany Vic.

Edge will confirm your desired date and set it up with Vic. This method is to eliminate overbooking and to relieve Vic of the necessity to respond to requests.

There will be no trips on Christmas and New Year's Day.

## MEET THE BOARD MEMBERS:

**Name:** Laura Hillman

**Board position:** Board Representative  
Past President and past Vice President (twice!)

**Family:** My husband is Dr. Richard Hillman, a pediatric metabolic Geneticist  
I have 6 children ages 32-41 and 7 grandchildren ages 6 months-7 years



**Profession:** I'm a neonatologist. I ran a newborn intensive care unit for 33 years (Wash U and MU) but don't see patients now. My research is in Infant nutrition and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and I'm the Associate Chair for Research in the Department of Child Health.

**Pets:** I'm down to a 16 year old cat and a 28 year old 5 gaited Saddlebred.

**Hobbies:** Watching birds of course and growing wildflowers and trees for the birds. MY husband and I do a lot of walking all over the area esp. the Katy. I love to travel and have been able to do a lot with research meetings and visiting kids.

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** 25 years

**How long have you been a member of CAS?** 15+ years.

**What do you like best about CAS** The friendship of other birders and I learn a lot.

**How did you get interested in birding?** By moving to Columbia and having 8 acres of birds.

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** Blue Footed Boobies



**Most recent "lifer"** About eight new hummingbirds in SE Arizona in August.

**Name:** Allison J. Vaughn

**Board position:** Communications Chair

**Family:** Douglas Miller

**Profession:** Natural Community Ecologist

**Pets:** Spots (13 year old dart frog), Jenny and Brian (foster dogs)



**Hobbies:** Hand embroidery of natural history images, hiking in nice restored Ozark woodlands, and searching Missouri wineries for the best examples of Norton and then hoarding it until it's at least three to five years old before I drink it.

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** 5 years

**How long have you been a member of CAS?** 5 years

**What do you like best about CAS:** Our mission statement that is not restricted to protecting and conserving bird populations, but all of biodiversity

**How did you get interested in birding?** Growing up in Louisiana on the Mississippi Flyway, I was entranced as an 8 year old by the spring migration of the incredibly diverse and colorful warblers as they passed through the Gulf Coast. Thousands of birds landed in Grand Isle every year, rambling about in the shrub layer and wind-whipped scrubby oaks that exist there before making their way north.

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** My first Greater Prairie Chicken on a Missouri prairie at 5:30 am on a very cold March morning. They've since been extirpated from the site due to a change in landscape management.



**Most recent "lifer"** Those poor Snowy Owls who ended up in Missouri last winter

**NOVEMBER PROGRAM—HOG ISLAND AUDUBON NATURE CAMP**



Presenters Becky Elder, 4th grade teacher at West Boulevard Elementary (left) and Lottie Bushmann, 1st grade teacher at Lee Elementary (right) in Columbia.



The presenters displayed children's books about birds that are used in their classrooms.

**SOME UNIQUE THANK YOU CARDS FROM 2ND GRADERS WHO ATTENDED BAND WITH NATURE DAY AT COLUMBIA AUDUBON NATURE SANCTUARY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012**



October 2, 2012  
 Dear Mr Mees,  
 Thank you for  
 setting up a field  
 trip for us. I feel  
 my favorite bird  
 was the Black-  
 capped Chickadee.  
 Thank you for letting us  
 come.  
 Sincerely,  
 y.c.c.



Black-capped Chickadee



Red-tailed Hawk

On January 16, 2013, we'll enjoy a program by two notable individuals in the birding and conservation communities, Dana Ripper and Ethan Duke, founders of Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO).

When I first became aware of MRBO, I was curious about who they were and what role they fulfilled here in Missouri. It wasn't long before I was amazed as I learned just how much this organization accomplishes.

But the fun really began when I watched as Dana, Ethan, and their intern, Joanna, worked with second-graders during the "Band with Nature" program with Columbia Public Schools and CAS this fall. Not only were the MRBO folk comfortable handling tiny little birds, but they were comfortable talking about those birds on a level conducive to learning by little kids.

So, who is The Missouri River Bird Observatory and what do they do when they aren't working with school children? MRBO is currently operated by Dana Ripper and Ethan Duke, long and short-term research assistants and interns, and several committed volunteers. As a non-profit, they are served by a six person board of directors, hailing from various part of the U.S.

MRBO partners with many important conservation and birding organizations including US Fish and Wildlife, Missouri Dept. of Conservation, Inland Bird Banding Association, and Audubon Society of Missouri, to name a few. Consequently, MRBO projects are diverse and plentiful.

For example, the organization conducts statewide surveys for both prairie and marsh birds, two of the most imperiled guilds of birds in North America. MRBO also studies the migratory stopover patterns of passerines in several different habitat types ranging from prairie to Missouri River forest bottoms to agricultural-suburban interface. All of these projects are focused on providing solid information to land managers for conservation purposes.

The MRBO mission statement reads:

- To contribute to the conservation of Missouri's migratory and resident birds through scientific research, community outreach, and education.
- To gather information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement habitat conservation programs.
- To provide opportunities for Missouri students to learn about native species and habitat conservation.



If you want to learn more about MRBO, please join us for their presentation on January 16, 2013. Meanwhile, I think you'll find their website informative and fun. MRBO also welcomes you to join them at one of their field stations. For more info: [www.mrbo.org](http://www.mrbo.org)

## Nature facts for December from Missouri Department of Conservation

### *Natural Events Calendar 2012*

- ◇ Great horned owls courting: listen for "hoo, hoo-oo, hoo-oo"
- ◇ Barred Owls courting: listen for "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you?"
- ◇ Bald Eagles arrive in Northern Missouri
- ◇ Look for Pine Siskins and Purple Finches at bird feeders
- ◇ Snow Goose population at wetland areas is at its peak
- ◇ Look for goldfinches, cardinals, titmice, chickadees and nuthatches
- ◇ Canada Goose population in Missouri is at its peak
- ◇ Look for woodpeckers at suet feeders, downy, hairy, pileated and red-bellied



**THE WHEN OF IT**

Journalists are taught to ask and report Who, What, Where, When (and sometimes, Why). These “Ws” apply well to birding and learning how to be a better birder. This month let’s look at how the “When” is an important element.

As birders, knowing when a bird species is expected to be present where we are observing birds is important in two ways: we know what should be there, and we know what shouldn’t. Only really raw beginning birders would think that statement too simplistic to be worth further discussion.

Birds can be enjoyed by anyone at any time. But, most of us have a need to try to identify the bird we are observing, and identification is a process of elimination of possibilities until (hopefully) only one candidate remains to clinch the i.d.

Our life experiences have taught us to observe and sort all sorts of things, including birds, by color and size. We immediately know that Blue Jay is not one of the species we think about when seeing a black bird, or that when we see a 3-to-5 inch bird we don’t consider it as possibly a hawk or crow or robin. Our brain has sorted out these options as inappropriate, so we don’t waste effort looking at highly unlikely possibilities.

The When of our observation is just as useful in weeding out unlikely candidates. Unlike color or size, other life experiences aren’t so helpful in implanting this tool in our brain. We learn the basics of when to expect some birds from our own experiences, but to be really useful, the arrival and departure dates for species to an area must be recorded over many years. This recording of arrival/departure dates is an aspect of the study known as phenology [no, not head bumps--that is phRenology].

The arrival and departure dates recorded in the course of many years allows us to determine the average expected dates. Changes in these dates can be indicators of climate change; but for the birder, the usefulness is knowing when to look for a species, and if a species is found outside the expected date range, a prompt to take special note and report it to others.

Studying (or at least referring to) bar graphs and occurrence data synopses can be a big help. In Columbia, MO, most birders know not to expect a Winter Wren in August, but when should we expect it to arrive and leave--that is, when would be the earliest and latest dates to expect it? The usefulness of that is, WHEN should we look for it?

You can find the answers to those questions for the Winter Wren and other species, yourself. Here are some sources to check. I keep the first one on my desk and in my car visor, just in case I encounter a bird that seems early or late. I can look it up and, if appropriate, start taking notes!

ENJOYING MISSOURI’S BIRDS. This is a free booklet published by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), updated about every two years. In addition to many other kinds of information essential to Missouri birders, it includes an excellent section of color-coded bar graphs depicting the dates and relative commonality of species in Missouri.

A GUIDE TO BIRDING IN MISSOURI. Kay and Bill Palmer, editors, 2001. This 264 page Audubon Society of Missouri (ASM) spiral bound book is out of print, but many copies are alive and well around the state (new members of ASM receive one as a “welcome aboard” gift. Primarily a fine set of birding site descriptions and directions to good sites, other sections include one of bar graphs headed “Bird Frequency in Missouri.” This is another book to keep handy in the car.

BIRDS OF MISSOURI. Mark Robbins and David Easterla, 1992 [see the next reference for the online/updated extension of this work]. 1984, University of Missouri Press. Out of print. This is the basic reference of occurrence of birds in Missouri. If you see a copy, grab it. Time and greater numbers of birders out and about and recording early and late birds have reduced the value of the information--somewhat. It remains the fullest treatment of phenological information for Missouri.

SHOWME-BIRDS A COMPILATION OF MISSOURI’S BIRD RECORDS. Josh Uffman.

This is a work in progress. Josh is transferring material from the Robbins/Easterla book and updating records, using the seasonal records reports printed in ASM’s quarterly journal, The Bluebird. Show-me Birds is online on the ASM website under Birder Tools, Species Records at <http://showme-birds.com/>

ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF MISSOURI BIRDS. Missouri Bird Records Committee of ASM. Updated frequently, available in its most recent form online (and printable) on the ASM webpage under <http://www.mobirds.org/RecordsCommittee/MOChecklist.aspx>, the annotated aspect of this checklist is coded occurrence and abundance information for all Missouri species.

BIRDS IN MISSOURI. Brad Jacobs, 2001. This 375 page MDC publication(hardback or softcover) is available from MDC. It includes small bar graphs under the range map for each species. Every Missouri birder should have this book for the wealth of information (and outstanding artwork). It’s not a field guide; it is a solidly useful reference book. Don’t have it? Put it on your Christmas list!

## Storm-Tossed Birds

Birds made the news recently after Hurricane Sandy and a fierce nor'easter blasted parts of the East Coast. A lot of people wanted to know: What happens to birds during a hurricane? Birds can be negatively affected by large storms, especially landbirds that are caught migrating over open water and have nowhere to land. Often seabirds can be blown far off course. However, birds have also developed strategies to deal with stormy weather.

- Birds may avoid a hurricane's devastating winds either by flying away from the storm or making their way into the eye of the storm.
- As hurricanes approach, coastal birds like gulls and some terns will tend to get pushed northward and take shelter along the coast, sometimes in large concentrations.
- Ocean-going seabirds such as petrels and frigatebirds can get trapped in the eye of the storm. As hurricanes push inland they'll start to drop down onto lakes.
- Seabirds that get stranded on inland lakes must return to the ocean in order to survive, so they will depart as soon as the weather clears. They may do this by following large rivers, ridgelines, or other inland bodies of water back to the sea.



...from Great Backyard Bird Count  
eNews, a project of Cornell Lab of  
Ornithology and National Audubon  
Society

## 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



Did you know?

The owl is the only bird to drop its upper eyelid to wink. All other birds raise their lower eyelid.....



Columbia Audubon Society wants to  
thank our corporate sponsor:

**Songbird Station**

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)

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