

# The Chat

Volume 55 Number 5

**Columbia Audubon Society**

January 2013

<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.

## JANUARY 2013 GENERAL MEETING

Dana Ripper and Ethan Duke,  
founders of  
Missouri River Bird Observatory  
will present our first  
program of 2013

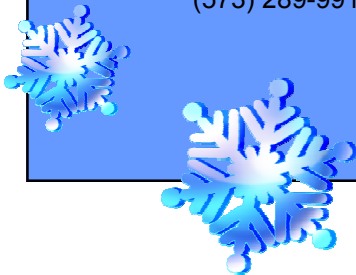
**Wednesday, January 16, 2013**  
**Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**2615 Shepard Blvd.**  
**Columbia, Missouri**

**Program and Meeting 7 p.m.**

**Hostess: Carolyn Terry**

## Weather cancellations

Cancellation notification will be  
via CAS website, KOMU-TV,  
or you can phone:  
(573) 445-3488 or  
(573) 445-7781 or  
(573) 289-9917



## BOARD'S EYE VIEW

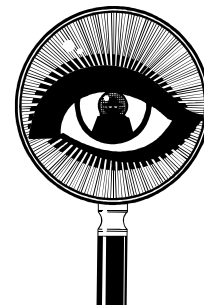
It's snowing. The birds are scrambling for food. I need more bird food! Where to go?

Have you ever thought about all the places you can purchase bird supplies? I go to Songbird Station since they are a CAS corporate sponsor but there are other options: MFA Agri Services, Bourn Feed, Westlake Hardware, Orscheln Farm & Home, Lowe's Home Improvement, Home Depot, Menards, Wal-Mart (of course) and don't forget all the grocery stores. Why do so many businesses sell bird supplies? Because they all have customers (think backyard bird watchers) who buy these products. We should consider all the people purchasing bird supplies as potential members. CAS can make backyard bird watching more fun for them and they can help make CAS goals a reality.

CAS has a lot to offer to backyard bird watchers. As I said in the previous newsletter, this is an unusual year with Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Red-breasted Nuthatches being reported. In the past four weeks I have seen two additional species while sitting at our kitchen table, both "lifers" for me: White-winged Crossbill and a Redpoll (Hoary?). Yes, I am a backyard birdwatcher but going on field trips with knowledgeable CAS birders has helped me recognize and identify more species. Turns out, some of those "little brown jobs" aren't sparrows. CAS deserves credit for making my backyard bird watching more fun than ever.

If you missed the Chili Supper following the Christmas Bird Count, be sure to read Laura Hillman's wrap up article on page 3 - a great time was had by all. Thanks, Laura!

Question: What Christmas gift does a 4 year old give her bird watching grandfather who has everything? I only thought I had everything. I was mistaken. Now I do (photo page 2 ). Thank you, Hannah!



Happy New Year and happy bird watching to everyone,  
Bill Mees, President

## JANUARY 2013 MEETING

by Julie Fisher, Vice President



The Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO) conducts on-going studies of grassland, marsh, and forest birds throughout the state. The organization also reaches over 1,000 people of all ages each year through their education and outreach work. Join us, January 16, 7 p.m., as MRBO founders Ethan Duke and Dana Ripper discuss their avian conservation projects and education programs. Also learn how **you** can be an important part of the Missouri Secretive Marsh Bird Monitoring Program!

## FIELD TRIP

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 2013

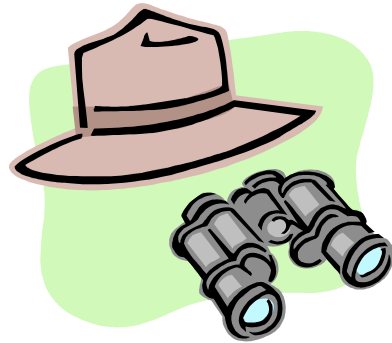
Leader: Allison Vaughan

Contact number: 573-703-6448

Destination: Rock Bridge State Park

Meet at the Devil's Ice Box parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

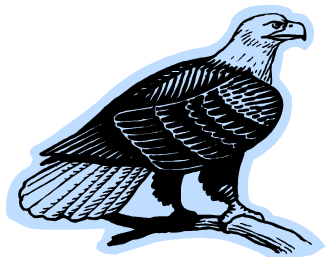
The group will go to Songbird Station following the field trip for coffee and doughnuts.



## NATURAL EVENTS

### Nature facts for January from Missouri Department of Conservation *Natural Events Calendar 2013*

- Observe Red-tailed Hawks perched along highways.
- Horned Larks flock in open fields
- Peak numbers of Bald Eagles gather this month near lakes, big rivers and wetland areas.
- Watch for Chickadees feeding on insects in bark crevices.



A bird feeder with a Painted Bunting motif.

88 birders of all ages (11 to 80+ yrs) and levels of expertise participated in the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Columbia Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 2012. All 12 teams had seasoned leaders who have canvassed their areas many times in the past. Great publicity by Allison Vaughan brought in a dozen first time participants, many of whom are on the “younger” side.

Of the 88 bird watchers who did the count, over half attended the chili supper. Circular tables were filled with 12 teams doing their last minute count tallies. Six brimming crock pots of chili highlighted the culinary skills of CAS members: Doug Miller-vegetarian, Eric Wood-turkey, Lori Hagglund-beef, Lottie Bushmann-beef, Alice Robinson-vegetarian, and Nancy Bedan-cashew. (If you remember others please let us know so we can amend this list to not only thank them but place our orders for next year!) Rounding out the meal were contributions of salads, corn bread, vegetables, crackers and lots of good desserts (even a birthday cake for a bird watcher who celebrated his special day in the field.) There was plenty to eat. Thankfully, all of my emergency supplies never had to leave the car.

Then came the count. Allison Vaughn read off the bird species and each leader shouted out the number of birds in their area. Doug Miller punched the numbers into the computer for posterity. No one expected to exceed last year's high number of species or individual birds given the extreme clouds, early morning fog, and the wind. By the afternoon it was lovely for the humans but the birds continued to lay low.

When it was over we had spotted 95 species, a far cry from last years 105 but similar to what was usually seen prior to our recent heat waves. During count week Tony Elliot saw and reported a Common Redpoll at the Columbia MDC office. It was dutifully added to the count to give a final total of 96 different bird species.

79 of these species were found in **Area 5** which includes Eagle Bluffs. That area's 12 observers divided into 5 parties and walked a total of 20 miles. Paul McKenzie, the leader of

**Area 5** felt the best finds were an American Pipit, a Merlin, a Harris's Sparrow, an American Black Duck, 3 Lincoln Sparrows, Virginia Rail and 8 Lapland Longspurs. **Area 4** produced a Grey Catbird which no longer needs to be documented thanks to global warming. **Area 1 North** found the only Greater White-fronted Geese and a Cackling Goose. **Area 2 South** found the only Northern Bobwhite Quail.

“Impressive” and surprising were the birds that were not found: Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Common Merganser, Rough-legged Hawk, Sora, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Brown Thrasher, and Snow Bunting.

However, once again CAS proved that if you put a large bunch of dedicated, seasoned and beginning birder watchers out in the field, they will find a lot of birds, have fun, and learn a lot. Hopefully, we will be able to hang on to the day's enthusiasm, and the new participants will join in other CAS activities.

**Editor's note:** A huge thank you goes to Laura Hillman for her long, capable and enthusiastic dedication to ensure the success of this event.



In an attempt to highlight CAS field trip activity, the CHAT will report on species seen on CAS Field Trips. So here goes - - -

December 8, 2012

CAS Field Trip  
To  
Columbia Audubon Nature  
Sanctuary  
3607 Bray Avenue

- American Robin---40
- White-breasted Nuthatch---6
- Red-bellied Woodpecker---3
- Eastern Bluebird---3
- Tufted Titmouse---12
- Carolina Wren---3
- Blue Jay---5
- Black-capped Chickadee---9
- Northern Cardinal---4
- Pileated Woodpecker---1
- American Crow---6
- Northern Flicker---4
- Dark-eyed Junco---1
- Mourning Dove---1
- House Finch---1

Total species---19

All field trips are open to the public.  
Backyard bird watchers are especially  
welcome.

**More Eyes Looking =  
More Birds Seen**

**A HISTORY LESSON FOR COLUMBIA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

by Bill Mees

It was on January 23, 2001 that Columbia Audubon Society received title to the 23 acres we know as Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary. The recorded ownership history of the property begins much earlier but was scarcely known to CAS. I asked Garland Russell, Jr. if he would sit for an interview to help enlighten us. The interviewer, CAS member Bill Clark, translated the luncheon conversation and some outside research into 2 separate columns in the Columbia Daily Tribune. I bring these columns to the attention of those who do not subscribe to the Columbia Daily Tribune. If you have missed them, the columns are available online.

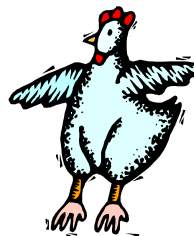
The first column appeared on Friday December 7, 2012 **“Six-generation family tree grown in local park”**  
<http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2012/dec/07/six-generation-family-tree-grown-in-local-park/>



The second column appeared Friday December 14, 2012 **“Columbia owes a lot to Francis Russell.”**  
<http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2012/dec/14/columbia-owes-a-lot-to-francis-russell/>

Columbia Audubon Society intends to continue the Russell family’s long stewardship of the property. Thank you Garland Russell, Jr. for providing some much appreciated historical background.

Did you know.....



The chicken is the most common species of bird found in the world.

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/animals/bird.html>



## MEET OUR MEMBERS

**Name:** Aleshia Fremgen

**Family:** Parents and a twin sister (all in Colorado)

**Profession:** Master's student in Fisheries and Wildlife Science at the University of Missouri

**Pets:** L.C. ("Little Cutie" is our yellow lab in Colorado). Unfortunately I do not have any here with me.

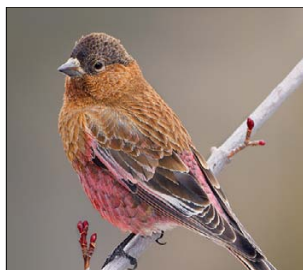
**Hobbies:** Hiking, backpacking, camping, fishing, crafts, cooking, sewing

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** Just over 1 year

**How long have you been a member of CAS?** 1 year

**What do you like best about CAS:** I really enjoy the field trips. Since I had lived my whole life in Colorado the first 4 months I was here I was seeing at least 1 new bird every field trip, and often times more than that.

**How did you get interested in birding?** I took an ornithology class at my undergraduate college and loved how I could apply what I was learning every day, everywhere. I love mammals too, but you just do not see them as often. Several of my friends and my sister also got into birding by taking that class.



**Most exciting bird ever seen:** I love seeing the Pileated Woodpeckers! They are so beautiful. At home, probably my favorite sighting was a Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (pictured) at about 13,000 feet when I was climbing

Mt. Uncompahgre because I had not seen them in summer habitat. I also worked doing peregrine falcon nest surveys and had some really neat encounters with them, like getting to see a fledgling's first flight along the rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison from about 10 yards away.

**Most recent "lifer":** Hmmmm... I do not keep a list, so I cannot say for sure but I think it was a rose-breasted grosbeak.



**Name:** Reed Gerdes

**Family:** Mom (Becky), dad (David), brother (Noah), and sister (Claire)

**Profession:** Still in high school, potential summer employment at University of Missouri and/or USGS Columbia Environmental Research Center

**Pets:** Four cats, two fish

**Hobbies:** Birding, sleeping, video games, listening to music, modeling and drawing, walking and hiking, being lazy, watching TV, and reading

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** Entire life

**How long have you been a member of CAS?** About 4 years

**What do you like best about CAS:** Meeting other people with helpful or interesting birding information or stories.

**How did you get interested in birding?** Adopted interest of birds from grandparents on both sides of family, overall liking of wildlife and outdoors

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** First prolonged sighting American Woodcock (pictured)



**Most recent "lifer":** Roseate Spoonbill



## MEET OUR MEMBERS

**Name:** David and Nancy Bedan

**Board positions:** David served on the Columbia Audubon Society board as Conservation Chair from 2000 to 2010. He also was a member of the Audubon Missouri Board from 1999 to 2008 and was the Conservation Editor of the Audubon Society of Missouri's *Bluebird* for several years.

**Family:** Daughter Kristin Schinzing lives in Chesterfield with husband Gregg and son Kyle. Our son, Mike, and partner, Shirley Fu, live in Littleton, CO, where both work as environmental scientists.

**Profession:** David taught philosophy and biology at St. Louis University 1967-1975 and headed up SLU's Institute of Environmental Studies 1970-1975. He later worked for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in the parks, policy planning, waste management, and energy areas before retiring in 1997.



Nancy retired in 2002 after 30 years in the communication and strategic planning business. She has worked as a newspaper reporter and editor in the St. Louis area, director of public information for the Kirkwood School District, and in communication and planning positions for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Pets:** Cat owners (does anyone really "own" a cat?), the Bedans are currently catless, having lost the last of their "herd" in 2011.

**Hobbies:** Birding, of course. We also both enjoy walking, biking and hiking; photography; our book clubs; and travel. We enjoy Columbia's film and visual arts and attend lots of area musical and theatrical events (where we always seem to see Bill Clark). This year, David is training to be a docent at the Museum of Art and Archaeology. Nancy loves gardening, and David does, too, if he'd just admit it.

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** Since 1998. (Nancy was a resident earlier as a MU student.)

**How long have you been a member of CAS?** Since we moved here in 1998. We were members of the River Bluffs Audubon in Jefferson City for about 15 years before that.

**What do you like best about CAS?** We are very excited about the trail system at the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary and seeing the property's potential for nature education realized.

**How did you get interested in birding?** By hanging out with excellent birders. We've learned so much from the likes of Jim D. Wilson, Brad Jacobs, Bill and Kay Palmer, Edge Wade, Jim and Julie Lusted, to name a few. Nancy grew up in rural Missouri with parents who enjoyed birds, especially the generations of House Wrens that lived in the backyard. David remembers having "bird feeders everywhere" in the yard of the southern Indiana home where he grew up—and lots of goldfinches.

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** For Nancy, seeing a Brown Creeper is always exciting, but Vermilion Flycatchers "in quantity" are a close second. For David, it was the pair of Great Horned Owlets that were fledged in the spring of 2008 in the top of a tall sycamore along Scott's Branch in the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary.



**Most recent "lifer":** Horned and Tufted Puffins in Alaska for Nancy. Eurasian Coots in Kew Botanical Gardens in London for David.



## WORDS FOR THE WISING

Brrr! Many of the coming days will not offer weather that puts a birding foray high on the agenda. There are many ways to learn about birds when we can't be outside, learning first-hand. A bad weather day is a good excuse to learn more about birds while curled up in a favorite chair with a good hot cuppa.

One principle of learning is that something researched by the learner is more likely to be retained and used than facts or definitions read and reviewed on a list.

Bird watchers who understand the meaning and implications of the terms below are likely to find their encounters and observations of birds and bird behavior to be better understood, better recalled, and more richly enjoyed at the time and in reminiscing.

Here is a baker's dozen of bird-related terms/pairs of terms. Look these up. You can google online, you can search your field guide (you can always learn something new in there), you can thumb through one of the many birding reference books. However you approach this, savor each new bit of knowledge. Roll it around in your mind; apply it to birding experiences you've had...or hope to have. Think of each as a new tool to use to improve your birding. Place them, one by one, into your mental birding tool box, to bring out as a part of a great "AHA!" moment.

Use the term in conversation (email or real) with another birder to set it in your mind and perhaps expand the potential of its usefulness in making you a better birder.

Remember, we're looking for how these terms are applied to birds, birding, and bird watchers. If you think you already know one of these, check it out anyway--you may be surprised to find your definition is broader or more restrictive than that used by most birders.

- Irruption/Irruptive
- Invasion (as different from above)
- Radiation
- Brood Patch
- Distraction
- Ethology
- Cryptic
- Accidental
- Split/Lump
- Brood Parasitism
- Diving Duck/Bay Duck
- Juvenal/Juvenile
- Piracy



**Editor's question:** Will there be a quiz at the next meeting? Just wondering...

## The Golden Feathers of a Prothonotary Warbler

The golden feathers of the Prothonotary Warbler,  
This golden bird,  
glistens in the sunlight.  
his yellow glows like the sun.  
Oh, the Prothonotary Warbler,  
Definitely, the world's most beautiful Warbler.  
The defiant feathers of the Varied Thrush.  
A beautiful Thrush.  
Very varied indeed,  
it also glows in the night.  
The intense feathers of a Scarlet Tanager,  
a very red, superb, bird.  
North America's most beautiful Tanager.  
The sour feathers of the European Starling  
with big, ugly spots of color,  
its long ugly song,  
making fun of thousands of other birds.  
The swirling feathers of the Indigo Bunting,  
this blue indigo bird,  
glows intently.  
Their swirling feathers,  
remind me of the blue sky,  
their swirling feathers,  
remind me of the blue sky.

Tommy McGrath



Editor's note: This poem was written by a 4th grade student in Lisa Schenker's class at Grant School. Tommy was on a recent field trip. Lisa notes: "He and his identical twin brother are certain they are going to be ornithologists. Perhaps he could be a poet, too?" (Lisa did no editing of the poem)



## AMERICAN KESTREL

The population of American Kestrels is in decline. Why? Fifteen people came together in Jefferson City on January 4th to find out about this from Matt Giovanni, Ph.D., Research Biologist with World Center for Birds of Prey. The participants then built 20 Kestrel nest boxes which they will install and monitor. This is a project being conducted by the Kestrel Partnership, a branch of the World Center for Birds of Prey. The World Center is to raptors what Ducks Unlimited is to ducks.

Although the World Center directs most of its efforts toward international projects, it has been intimately involved with restoring the populations of the California Condor and Aplomado Falcons in the U.S. through its breeding and release programs

Although not yet endangered, the decline in Kestrel populations is causing concern. This research is being conducted to determine the cause and develop strategies to reverse the decline. Some Eastern states have seen declines approaching 88% while at the same time Cooper's Hawks seem to be on the increase. Is there a correlation? Researchers want to know.

The 20 nest boxes will be installed and then monitored during the nesting season. Results will be reported to the Kestrel Partnership on its website. The reports will gather data on nest box outcomes (success, predation, foreign occupancy, etc.), surrounding habitat, nest box design and location, and more. Computers will then do "their thing" analyzing the data.

Giovanni indicates the American Kestrel is the only kestrel species in the Western hemisphere and is one of only two raptors in the U.S. that are bimorphic (the male and female have different plumage). The other bimorphic raptor is the Northern Harrier. Kestrels are obligate cavity nesters but are not able to excavate a cavity themselves. They depend on preexisting cavities and have been found to use nest boxes if they are available. Thus this project.



Female

Columbia Audubon Society now has 5 nest boxes for placement on its property or available to members with an interest in participating in this important project. Construction plans are available for the woodworkers among you who want to participate and build your own nest boxes.



Male

**For further info: <http://kestrel.peregrinefund.org/>**



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)

**Columbia Audubon Society**  
**PO Box 1331**  
**Columbia MO 65205**