

# The Gnat

Volume 55 Number 6

**Columbia Audubon Society**

February 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.



## **FEBRUARY 2013 GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, February 20, 2013  
Unitarian Universalist Church  
2615 Shepard Blvd.  
Columbia, Missouri**

**Program and Meeting 7 p.m.  
Dr Patricia Hagen,  
Executive Director  
Audubon Center at Riverlands**

**Hosts:  
Lisa Schenker and Eric Seaman**

## **BOARD'S EYE VIEW**

Columbia Audubon Society really is "more than birds." Our mission statement makes this perfectly clear, although it remains a common misconception. Regardless, the Board of Directors and the membership present at the January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting were unanimous in their desire to speak out on a proposed residential development adjacent to Rockbridge Memorial State Park. Board Member Laura Hillman delivered our objections (see page 8) to Columbia's Planning and Zoning Commission on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Laura will also speak on February 18<sup>th</sup> when this proposed development is considered by Columbia's City Council.

CAS volunteers are busy repairing the Eastern Bluebird nest boxes at Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary (CANS). Woodpeckers' destructive interest in bluebird boxes and years of exposure necessitate repairs. There are 8 nest boxes that make up the "Bluebird Trail" at CANS. This trail is registered with the Missouri Bluebird Society for data collection purposes. Since February begins the Eastern Bluebird's search for a perfect nest site to satisfy the finicky female, repairs can't wait. Jane Fore and Mary Williamson are beginning their preparations for another spring and summer of recording bluebird success. After all, look at your car's license plate. It is Missouri's state bird.

This spring, CANS will again host a field trip for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students from Columbia Public Schools. The program will mirror the September 19, 2012, program but will require 2 days (April 23 and April 25) to accommodate the remaining 800 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. **VOLUNTEERS WILL BE NEEDED TO ESCORT CLASSES TO EACH OF THE 4 ACTIVITY STATIONS.** Volunteers at last fall's event enjoyed and learned as much as the students. Don't miss your opportunity to participate and help make the Spring event a success.

Happy bird watching,  
Bill Mees, President



## FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday, February 16, 2013**

**Location:** Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area

**Leader:** Vic Bogosian, Wildlife Biologist

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. meet at the Eagle Bluffs headquarters. Walking will be involved. Questions contact Bill Mees at 445-7781



**Wednesday, March 13, 2013**

**Location:** Diana Bend Conservation Area

**Leader:** Eric Wood for questions call 443-1137

**Time:** Participants will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Diana Bend CA parking lot.

People driving from Columbia on I-70 will travel west to the Midway/US 40 exit. Travel 10.5 miles on US 40. As you cross the bridge down to the flood plain farm fields, turn left onto the first gravel road (at the grain bin). There is an MDC sign for Diana Bend CA. The parking lot is at the end of the gravel road about 1 mile. This is a walking field trip so wear your hiking boots.

**Band With Nature** (2nd grade field trip to Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary)

**Tuesday April 23 and Thursday April 25**

**Location:** Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary (3607 Bray Ave)

**Time:** half day sessions 9:00-12:30 and 12:15-3:15

**Many volunteers are needed to escort teachers and classes to activity stations**

## FEBRUARY PROGRAM

The Missouri River has recently been named one of the most endangered rivers in the United States by American Rivers. This great river—once wide and meandering, with broad floodplains and wetland areas—has been contained in enormous reservoirs in its upper reaches, and a narrow, deep channel on the lower river. As a result of this channelization, flood damages have become worse and clean water, wildlife, recreation and overall river health have deteriorated. Audubon Missouri is working with the Corps of Engineers to advance Missouri River restoration and to help save this great river, and its birds and other wildlife.

**Join us on Wednesday, February 20 at 7:00 p.m. to hear Dr. Patricia Hagen from Audubon Missouri speak on this topic.**

## TWO TERRIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

by Julie Fisher, Vice President

Our January program by Dana Ripper and Ethan Duke, founders and co-directors of the Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO), gave us an overview of their many important research projects. Dana and Ethan, and their part-time interns, not only conduct important research but also develop ways in which teachers, students, and citizens may share in the science of bird research.

As part of their citizen science and community outreach efforts, MRBO is offering two exciting opportunities to volunteer and participate in excellent training in marsh birds, "the most enigmatic birds in North America".

Partnering with Audubon Society of Missouri, the first MRBO opportunity is "March Marshbird Madness", March 22-24, at Wappapello State Park and Duck Creek Conservation Area, with field trips to Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Duck Creek CA, and other premier area wetlands. For lodging, meals and more information go to [www.mrbo.org](http://www.mrbo.org) and scroll down to the March Marshbird Madness link.

Next is the "Missouri Marsh Bird Workshop Series", April 10-11, at Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, Columbia. Ethan Duke will begin the workshop with basic life history and conservation status of marsh birds, followed by Eagle Bluffs CA management for marsh birds by the area's wildlife biologist, Vic Bogosian. The two day workshop includes classroom and field training. For more information, please email Ethan at: [ethan.duke@mrbo.org](mailto:ethan.duke@mrbo.org)

As Dana says, "There is no way we will ever be able to conserve anything if people don't know or care about it." So if you'd like to learn more about marsh birds, assist in the monitoring efforts, and have a lot of fun doing it, go to [www.mrbo.org](http://www.mrbo.org) to learn more.

**MORE INFORMATION ON THESE OPPORTUNITIES IS AVAILABLE ON THE CAS WEBSITE:  
COLUMBIA-AUDUBON.ORG**

## RAPTOR AND SPARROW ID WORKSHOP AT SWAN LAKE NWR

All birders and beginning birders welcome: bring binoculars and bird books.

A Raptor and Sparrow Identification Workshop, hosted by Refuge Manager Steve Whitson, will take place on **February 22-23, 2013** at Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Sumner, Chariton County, Missouri. Workshop organizers are Steve Whitson, Paul McKenzie, Bill Rowe, Steve Kinder, and Brad Jacobs. If you would like to attend, please call or email Steve Whitson at 660-856-3323 ext. 13 or [steve\\_whitson@fws.gov](mailto:steve_whitson@fws.gov).

### SCHEDULE OF WORKSHOPS

Friday, 22 February 2013 - meet at Refuge Headquarters at 1 pm

1 pm to 4 pm Field Trip to search for Raptors, Sparrow and other birds in the area.

4:30 pm to 5:00 pm Meeting to plan Saturday field trips and assign trip leaders.

5:30 pm to 6:30 pm First Classroom ID instruction - limit 30 persons in Headquarters Nature Center.

6:30 pm to 7:00 pm Meals provided at Headquarters

7:00 pm to 8:00 pm Second Classroom ID instruction - limit 30 persons in Headquarters Nature Center

MEAL Saturday Breakfast is on your own.

Saturday 23 February 2013 - meet at Refuge Headquarters at 8 am. Field Trips will be organized into small groups to ensure that everyone has a chance to see most of the species.

8:00 am - Multiple field trips depart in small groups with assigned leaders.

12:00 pm (noon) Meet back at Headquarters for tally and workshop closure.

MEAL Saturday Lunch is on your own.

### LODGING

Lodging in Chillicothe (25.5 miles): from Sumner go west on H Hwy to US 65, then north to Chillicothe. Comfort Inn (660-646-9900) and Super 8 (660-646-7888) are among the seven hotels in town. **or**

Lodging in Brookfield (23 miles): from Sumner go east and north on MO 139 to US 36, then east on US 36 to Brookfield, then south on Hwy 11 to the Best Western (660-258-4900). There are five hotels in town.

### CLOTHING

Be sure to dress appropriately for the weather. Layers of clothing and warm footwear will facilitate adjusting for temperature. We will be outside for about 4 hours on Friday and 4 hours on Saturday.

## AMERICAN KESTREL BOXES

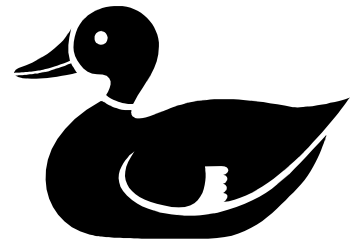
The previous issue of the CHAT highlighted a project directed toward reversing the declining population of American Kestrels. For participating in the event, CAS was the recipient of 5 nest boxes. A meeting with Brett O'Brien, Park Natural Resources Supervisor with Columbia's Parks and Recreation Department, identified 2 locations for Kestrel nest boxes. One is now located at Forum Nature Area and another is located within Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary. CAS members Boyd & Carolyn Terry have installed one on their farm. Lottie Bushmann will be monitoring the box at Forum Nature Area and Bill Mees will monitor the box at CANS. These nest boxes not only offer an opportunity to collect nesting data on this beautiful bird but they also offer a "teachable moment" for visitors.



**DUCKING THE ISSUE CAN BE CHALLENGING AND FUN**

Bird identification skills are built on becoming familiar with the most common species. If you know the common expected species well, the “odd duck” will jump out at you.

This is a primer for working out identification of diving ducks we are most likely to encounter in mid-Missouri.



Determine that it is a diving duck (not a dabbler/tipping feeder)

Get a feel for the size. Compare it to something nearby: Pied-billed Grebe 13.5”, American Coot 15”, Mallard 23”  
If it is one of the “drab females” is it keeping company with a bright male?

Use these eye-catching tips to narrow the possibilities, then STUDY the bird!

**Ruddy Duck:** 15” (coot size). Long STIFF TAIL, often cocked up. Chunky duck. The bright blue bill, white face and deep ruddy body make breeding males easy. The small size, tail, white cheeks under dark caps help with females and young males.

**Bufflehead:** 13.5” (Pied-billed Grebe size). REALLY SMALL DUCK. Flanks and entire back of head white on male; female and first-year male have white gash/streak on side of face. The male is a striking duck; his head bobbing breeding display actions are attention-getters for people as well as female Buffleheads.

**Common Goldeneye:** 18.5” (medium size). Head peaks in front, slopes steeply but smoothly to the rear. Male has Large white oval between eye and bill, white flanks, and (of course) a yellow eye; female has same head shape, but head is brown, bill has yellow tip, flanks “scaly” gray.

**Hooded Merganser:** 18”. White on head framed in black can change shape as it raises crest. “Racing stripes” on sides of breast on male; female has “frizzy hair” out back of head. Note the thin, dark bill

**Common Merganser:** 25” (a bit bigger than a Mallard). Male has white flanks and sleek green head; female has distinctive white chin and red frizzy hair in single bunch scraggling out the back of the head. Note the long, thin red bill.

**Red-Breasted Merganser:** 23” (Mallard size). Male, scruffy/shaggy green head, white neck band, gray vermiculated flank; female, “bad hair day” look has two pointed clumps extending from rear of head, chin and throat not clearly distinguishable. Long thin red bill.

**Redhead:** 19” (medium size duck) ROUND HEAD, short, medium length, tri-colored bill.

**Canvasback:** 21” (medium/large duck). FOREHEAD LONG, SLOPING INTO LONG BLACK SLOPING BILL. Red eye.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 17” (medium size duck). Forget the ring on the neck, look for the ring on the bill. The head peaks at the rear. The white flank of the male (and the brown pattern on the female) comes to a point in front (a “Nike logo swoosh”).

**Lesser Scaup:** 16.5” and **Greater Scaup:** 18”. Much like a Ring-necked Duck, but without the “Nike swoosh” point. Don’t put much faith in head color--the purple/green sheen can depend on lighting. Don’t depend totally on head shape--when a Lesser Scaup is actively diving, the feathers can make the head appear to peak in front. In our area, Lessers typically outnumber Greaters about 10 to 1--or more.

The best way to learn the difference is to spend a lot of time watching scaup. Look at the bills. How big is that nail (the dark tip)? How big is the bill on this one compared to that one? Does this scaup appear larger than that one? Is the head shape consistently peaked in front, diving and at rest?

**DEFINITIONS FOR JANUARY’S TIPS FOR TYROS “WORDS FOR WISING” ARE AVAILABLE AT THE CAS WEBSITE: [COLUMBIA-AUDUBON.ORG](http://COLUMBIA-AUDUBON.ORG)**

# MEET OUR MEMBERS....

**Name:** Harold Anderson

**Board Position:** Harold is not currently on the Board, but served as Co-Chair of the Nature Areas first with Vernon Barr and then with John Besser for a total of 15 years. (We are not sure of exact number of years, but think 15 is close.)

**Family:** Son and Daughter-in-law living in Peoria, IL, Daughter in Chicago, IL.

**Profession:** Chemistry and Physics Instructor at Stephens College for 22 years. Retired at that time because of Parkinson's Disease.

**Pets:** 1 cat

**Hobbies:** Woodworking

**How long have you lived in Columbia:** 42 1/2 years

**How long have you been a member of CAS:** We are not sure when we joined, but we remember the first year we moved to Columbia (1970), CAS sponsored a Film Series. The Film maker would come and narrate the film. These were shown at Stephens College in the old auditorium. We lived in a college house across from the Science Building and could walk to the auditorium. We took our kids, age 3 and 6, and we all really enjoyed the nature programs. After that, I think we didn't become active in CAS until our kids graduated from high school.

**What do you like best about CAS:** the friends we have made

**How did you get interested in birding?** Harold is not a birder, but a designated "SOB" as defined by Edge and Jerry Wade as "spouse of birder".



**Most exciting bird ever seen:** The Calliope Hummingbird that came to our feeder in November, 2002.

**Most recent lifer:** Harold doesn't list!



**Name:** Kathleen Anderson

**Board Position:** not currently on the Board, served as Secretary for 7 years

**Family:** Son and daughter-in-law living in Peoria, IL; Daughter living in Chicago

**Profession:** Library Clerk at Blue Ridge Elementary for 9 years, Library Assistant at University of Missouri Engineering Library for 4 years, Library Assistant at University of Missouri Veterinary Library for 8 years

**Pets:** 1 cat

**Hobbies:** Gardening, especially daylilies, daffodils and native plants; I used to sew a lot; birding has taken over everything else, so now my garden is greatly neglected and I rarely sew.

**How long have you lived in Columbia:** 42 1/2 yrs

**How long have you been a member of CAS:** see Harold's form

**What do you like best about CAS:** friends, field trips, programs

**How did you get interested in birding?** My parents weren't birders but knew the common birds and were interested in birds. I collected some of the Arm and Hammer bird cards when I was about 10 yrs old, and I had a simple bird book. Then when we moved to Columbia, my interest grew through CAS film series, field trips and the enthusiastic birders here.

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** Usually any "life bird", but to name a few: I find the woodcock's courtship display fascinating, love any hummingbird and seeing the Resplendent Quetzal in Costa Rica was really special.

**Most recent lifer:** I had Flammulated Owl on my life list as "heard only" from Arizona in June of 2004. We planned a trip to the Rio Grande Valley this year in January. I was amazed to see a Flam Owl reported before we left home. I was even more amazed when it was still there when we got to Texas, across the road from our motel (South Padre Island) and "in scope" when I made it to the location!!



(Forgot to mention that we have monitored the birdhouses at Albert Area since 2004.)

## MEET OUR MEMBERS....

**Name:** Eric Wood

**Board position:** NA

**Family:** In Columbia my mother Bonnie Heidy, Stan my brother, Marigene my sister and her husband Rudy. Dad is Raymond Wood and wife is Carolee.

**Profession:** Cook

**Pets:** Sysco and Skunk my two cats.

**Hobbies:** Crocheting

**How long have you lived in Columbia?** 50 years

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

**What do you like best about CAS?** It is good for meeting new local birders and staying in touch with the ones I already know. It also sponsors some good programs.

**How did you get interested in birding?** On family vacations I was the only one willing to go birding with my mom. Then in 2008 I started going birding locally with her. It didn't take too long before I was out birding on my own.

**Most exciting bird ever seen:** Baby Sandhill Cranes →

**Most recent "lifer":** Sharp-tailed Grouse – Cross Ranch ND



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



- Cedar waxwings flock to feed on cedar berries and other fleshy fruits.
- Great horned owls are incubating eggs.
- Watch for pintails and mallards migrating north.
- Screech owls search for mates this month.
- Turkey vultures begin arriving.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

Friday February 15 through Monday February 18

It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome...from beginning bird watchers to experts. **Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC.** You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day for each new location or even from the same location. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.

**Enter your results on the GBBC website (or eBird).** You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the GBBC website home page beginning at 7:00 AM Eastern time (U.S.)

### Great Backyard Bird Count Data Form February 15-18, 2013

The information below will be needed when you enter your checklist online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

#### Where did you make your observations?

You will name this birding site on a map online.

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number (in case we need to contact you with any questions): \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

#### Observation date and details

Use a separate form for each day and location that you count. Do not add counts from different days or locations together.

(Circle one) Friday 2/15      Saturday 2/16      Sunday 2/17      Monday 2/18

**Count start time:** \_\_\_\_\_ A.M./P.M. **Total time:** \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

I **AM** reporting every species I saw \_\_\_\_\_ I am **NOT** reporting every species I saw \_\_\_\_\_

How many people participated in collecting the information you are reporting? \_\_\_\_\_

**Bird Counts:** Please write your best estimate of the number of birds of each species that you saw. You may write the bird species names and counts on a separate sheet of paper attached to this form. Be sure to use the species name (example: "White-crowned Sparrow," not "Sparrow.") Check a field guide if you need help with identification. If you still cannot identify the species, do not report it. **Thank you for participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count!**

**For participants in the GBBC who would like assistance to submit data, Songbird Station will have their computer set up to help with the process. Songbird Station will also have a photo contest for GBBC participant photos. Customers will vote on the best photo. Talk to Holly Seaver, store manager, for more information.**

## HILLMAN PRESENTATION TO COLUMBIA PLANNING AND ZONING

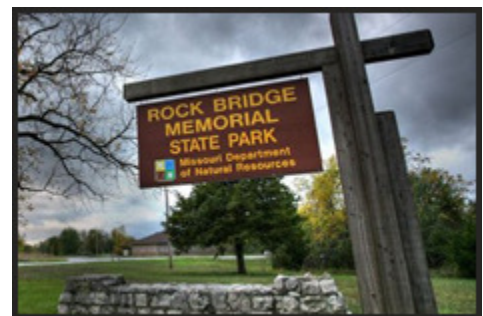
My name is Laura Hillman. I am here on behalf of the membership of Columbia Audubon Society.

Columbia Audubon Society promotes the preservation of the natural world, its ecosystems, biological diversity and habitat. These interests compel Columbia Audubon Society to speak-up in regards to the proposed Parkside Estates development.

The location of the proposed development, and the geology and topography of the property all cause serious concerns that must be addressed if Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is to be protected.

- 1) Surface water flows directly from the proposed Parkside Estates development into the park. Changing the property from natural cover to impervious surface will create stormwater runoff issues for the park's portion of the Little Bonne Femme Creek and the tributary leading to it. Bank erosion and water quality problems are to be expected.
- 2) The park streams that carry the runoff from Parkside Estate are listed by the state as "Losing Streams." Thus surface runoff into and through these streams also enters the groundwater system. Any water quality concerns associated with this development will affect both surface water and groundwater.
- 3) Wetlands and at least one spring exist in the Bonne Femme floodplain and are also downstream from the development. These ecosystems contribute to and support the park's biodiversity.
- 4) Depending on the location of this development's housing and its density, the lights and noise could easily be within 1/10<sup>th</sup> mile (528 feet) and in direct line of sight of the park's main facilities as well as a popular park trail.
- 5) Urban landscaping invariably brings invasive exotic species problems to natural parklands. These are expensive to contain and damaging to native flora and wildlife.
- 6) Housing immediately adjacent to the park will create an impediment to the park's ability to manage deer over population. Over population is devastating to habitat and ecosystems necessary for wildlife diversity.
- 7) Housing immediately adjacent to the park also impairs the park's ability to conduct prescribed fires which are essential to maintain quality woodlands and wildlife habitat.

It is left to you to establish the level of development that will be permitted. The membership of Columbia Audubon Society asks you to approve a development strategy that protects our precious resources like Rock Bridge Memorial State Park.







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**