

# The Chat

Volume 56 Number 4

**Columbia Audubon Society**

January 2014

<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 MEETING

**Wednesday**

**January 15, 2014**

**Unitarian Universalist Church  
2615 Shepard Boulevard  
7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:**

**Gene Gardner  
Missouri Bird  
Conservation  
Initiative  
(MOBCI)**

**Hosts:**

**Bonnie Heidy and  
Eric Wood**

**If the weather outside  
is frightful....**

CAS meeting  
cancellations will be  
announced via  
KOMU-TV or  
CAS website,  
or call

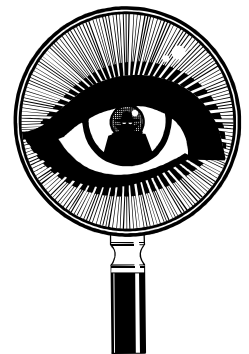
445-7781 (Bill)  
or  
445-3942 (Lottie)

## BOARD'S EYE VIEW

Happy New Year!

There is good news and bad news. First for the bad news: if you keep an annual bird list, you have to start all over again. The good news is CAS member Jim Gast lead the year's first field trip on January 1, 2014. If you were one of the 33 who attended, you already have a good start on this year's list. Thanks, Jim. Could this be the start of a new tradition?

As many of you know, Columbia Audubon Society had a successful Christmas Bird Count (see page 3) and a scrumptious Chili Supper. This success is attributable to all the volunteers who birded, to Laura Hillman who organized the teams, to Lori Hagglund and Jan Mees who helped coordinate the chili supper and to Doug Miller, the CAS data compiler and web master. After 51 years it should be no surprise that CAS can, to quote Larry the Cable guy, "Git-R-Done." Thank you everyone.



Columbia Audubon Society continues to move along. Kevin Wehner has scheduled more field trips (see page 2.)

You are encouraged to invite friends to join us on these adventures.

A Boy Scout has expressed interest in constructing a kiosk at Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary (CANS) for an Eagle project. There have been several donations of "wild seed" to continue the restoration of native flora to the fields at CANS. The Outreach and Education Committee will shortly be reviewing teacher applications for National Audubon's Hog Island summer program. And, there is no telling how CAS will be able to step forward as a Partner Friend of Columbia Public School's science department to help on some special project.

Yes, Columbia Audubon Society likes birds but it is and does much more. Feel free to join us on Wednesday, January 15, 2014.

Happy birding,  
Bill Mees



## JANUARY MEETING

by Lottie Bushmann, Vice President



Gene Gardner of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative will share information about this organization and their award winning partnerships.

## FIELD TRIPS

by Kevin Wehner, Field Trip Chair

### SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

**Destination:** 3M Flat Branch-Hinkson Creek Wetlands

**Departure Point:** Songbird Station, 2010 Chapel Plaza Court #C, Columbia, MO

**Leader:** Bill Mees

**Contact Phone:** (573) 445-7781

Meet at Songbird Station's parking lot at 8 a.m. The trip will be 1.5-2 hours long and will return to Songbird Station's parking lot.



### SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

**Destination:** Long Branch SP Lake & Macon City Lake, Macon, MO

**Departure Point:** Patricia's Foods, 900 N. Keene Street, Columbia, MO. Carpool leaves at 8 a.m.

**Leaders:** Kevin Wehner & Edge Wade

**Contact Phone/Email:** Kevin Wehner - (573) 815-0352 or kevinwehner@gmail.com

Please note this is a Sunday field trip. Depending on the temperature, we'll mostly "car-bird" the two lakes. If you have them, bring a spotting scope and FRS radios. Long Branch has a reputation for attracting unusual gulls in the winter. The campgrounds and other areas along the park road at Long Branch may turn up anything from Brown Creepers to Wild Turkeys. Macon City Lake often has geese and mergansers in open water or on the ice. After birding, we'll have lunch at the Don Julio Mexican Restaurant in Macon. For more info on these two lakes, see the Birder's Guides to Missouri Public Lands at <http://www.mobirds.org/BirdersGuides/GuideList.aspx>.

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 – JOINT FIELD TRIP WITH BURROUGHS AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

**Destination:** Burroughs Audubon Nature Center in Fleming Park, Blue Springs, MO

**Departure Point:** Northwest corner of the Columbia Mall parking lot (Target end, near the corner of Bernadette and Fairview Road). Carpool leaves at 7:30 a.m. Blue Springs ETA around 9 a.m.

**Leader:** Sherry Leonardo

**Contact Phone/Email:** Kevin Wehner - (573) 815-0352 or kevinwehner@gmail.com

The Burroughs Audubon Nature Center has a comfortable viewing room with a large picture window overlooking a variety of feeders. If it's freezing cold outside, we'll bird from the inside! Burroughs Audubon will provide donuts, bagels and hot beverages. The center also has an extensive nature library, gift shop and Wi-Fi access! More info about the Burroughs Audubon Nature Center: <http://burroughs.org/library.html>.

Depending on the weather, we might also bird the Fleming Park/Lake Jacomo area that morning. Afterwards, we'll have lunch at a Blue Springs restaurant and then play it by ear for the afternoon and possibly bird Burr Oak Woods or Lake Remembrance. We'll hit the road for the return trip to Columbia around 3 p.m. Please RSVP to Kevin by Wednesday, February 5, so we can let Burroughs Audubon know how many to expect: (573) 815-0352 or kevinwehner@gmail.com

### SATURDAY, MARCH 8 – JOINT FIELD TRIP WITH BURROUGHS AUDUBON SOCIETY OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

**Destination:** Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, 6700 W. Route K, Columbia

**Departure Point:** Meet at 9 a.m. at the Katy Trail parking lot in McBaine.

**Leader:** Vic Bogosian, Eagle Bluffs Wildlife Biologist

**Contact Phone:** Kevin Wehner - (573) 815-0352 or kevinwehner@gmail.com

Lunch afterwards at G & D Pizzeria/Steakhouse.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 22 – JOINT FIELD TRIP WITH ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

**Destination:** Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, 6700 W. Route K, Columbia

**Departure Point:** Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Katy Trail parking lot in McBaine.

**Leader:** Edge Wade

**Contact Phone:** (573) 268-3714

Lunch afterwards. Option to bird another Columbia site after lunch.

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

by Allison Vaughn

On December 14, 2013, 55 birders of all levels of expertise fanned out to participate in the 51st Annual Columbia Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. The 12 teams had veteran leaders who were familiar with their assigned areas. Weather conditions were not optimum for the count, with the skies socked in with heavy clouds, frozen ponds and early morning snow and sleet. Nevertheless, the seasoned birders documented 95 species of birds that day, only one shy of 2012's 96 species.

Approximately 50 folks descended on the church for the traditional post-count chili supper. Here they compared experiences and watched each team's tally add to the day's final total. Everyone feasted on a wide array of vegetarian and meat-based chili, vegetable sides and snacks, followed by selections from the over stocked dessert table, all contributed by chapter members.

There were quite a few differences between the 2012 and 2013 counts, including the absence this year of Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Cedar Waxwings were not as commonly sighted with only 230 total this year compared to last year's 1,490 individuals. The 2012 count didn't find any Ruby-crowned Kinglets or Golden-crowned Kinglets. They were back this year with Areas 5 and 2N finding the 6 Golden-crowned Kinglets and Area 5 reporting 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Coots were also not as prevalent this year with only 10 seen compared to 140 in 2012. However, 2013 was a great year for sparrows! We doubled the number of White-crowned Sparrows from 55 in 2012 to 106 in 2013. Swamp Sparrow occurrences also increased from 64 last year to 229 in 2013, and 356 American Tree Sparrows were seen this December, compared to 117 in 2012.

Area 5, which includes part of the KATY Trail State Park and Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, sighted the year's only Golden Eagle, a new record for Katy Trail State Park and a rightful cause of much excitement during the tally. Eight of the twelve count areas saw Bald Eagles. Area 1S was responsible for the only Northern Bobwhites this year, with 9 reported. 1S also documented 198 Horned Larks. Area 7E found the only 2 Canvasbacks for the whole count, and Area 6 discovered the only Virginia Rail this year. Area 5 was responsible for bolstering the numbers of Swamp Sparrows with 117 individuals counted. Unfortunately, the 2013 Christmas Bird Count may be one of the first counts in many years in which no feeder watchers participated.

As in years' past, all of the data will be housed on the official Christmas Bird Count website for all to see at:

[http:// birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count](http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count)



The crowd



The food



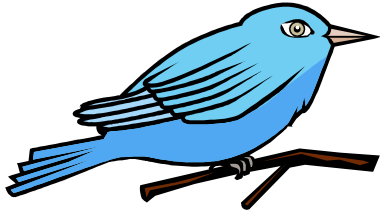
The work



The final compilation

## NOVEMBER'S CAS SPEAKERS

### The Place of Abundance by Kimberly DeVorss



Daily he comes to the place of abundance,  
Certain of what he will find.  
What a beautiful song,  
What glorious color.  
I could watch him the whole day long!

I'm so happy I found this place of abundance  
I like all the things I can find.  
What a handy space,  
What an easy meal.  
A real help with the hardships I face.

He trusts that the food will be there.  
He thrives with the ease of supply.  
And I...  
I delight in the nearness  
Of this musical friend from the sky.

All of my needs have been met.  
My workload of gathering is eased.  
"This world that I love loves me back!"  
I sing from the tops of the trees.

This mutually pleasing arrangement  
Suits us both right down to the ground.  
I provide, he comes  
He eats, I watch.  
A more satisfied pair can't be found.

Daily he comes to the place of abundance,  
Certain of what he will find.  
What a beautiful song,  
What glorious color.  
I could watch him the whole day long!  
I could watch him the whole day long.



Reed Gerdes and Kim DeVorss

Reed is the 2013 recipient of a CAS grant to attend the American Birding Association's summer camp at Estes Park, Colorado.

Kim, a first grade teacher at Paxton Keeley Elementary School, is the 2013 recipient of a CAS grant to attend National Audubon's summer program at Hog Island, Maine

# **BLUEBIRD MONITORING AT WILD HAVEN, COLUMBIA AUDUBON NATURE SANCTUARY, AND 3M WETLANDS**

**By Jane Fore**

Mary Williamson and I have monitored bluebird nest boxes at Wild Haven and Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary since 2010. As members of the Missouri Bluebird Society (MOBS), we follow their monitoring guidelines and submit annual data for bluebirds and other species using the nest boxes. We visit the boxes weekly from late February to sometime in August when nesting is completed. Our records include nesting attempts, number of eggs laid and number of fledges. Missouri data is compiled and submitted to the North American Bluebird Society. In 2012 we received a MOBS nest box grant to establish a bluebird trail at the 3M Flat Branch-Hinkson Creek Wetlands along the MKT Trail near Forum Blvd. Columbia Audubon is one of several wetlands partners. Our nest box monitoring at these three locations is an example of citizen science by Audubon members. The following is a summary of our data.

2013 Wild Haven – 21 nest boxes

11 EABL fledges, 18 BCCH, 7+ HOWR, and 4 TRES

Our bluebird numbers greatly decreased this year. We had 21 EABL fledges in 2012 and 33 fledges in 2011. This was our first year at Wild Haven to have Tree Swallows in one of our nest boxes. We were quite surprised since the ponds are small and our experience with TRES has been over water. The nest box they used is on the north edge of the Wild Haven property along the agricultural field. Highlights from Wild Haven include American Woodcocks on several occasions and the profusion of blazing star on the western side of the property, a result of last winter's burn.

2013 CANS – 8 nest boxes

13 EABL fledges, 32 HOWR

We had 23 EABL, 12 BCCH, and an unknown number of HOWR in 2012. HOWR completely fill a nest box with sticks so it is difficult to get an accurate count of eggs and young. We think our bluebirds got a late nesting start in 2013 and when the House Wrens arrived, they dominated the boxes.

2013 3M Wetlands site – 8 boxes

15 EABL fledges, 11 TRES

We had 4 nest boxes in 2012 with 3 EABL fledges and 2 TRES.

We added 4 boxes this year. The diversity of bird species around the ponds and marshy habitat make this an interesting site to monitor. We counted 73 species in 2013, including Sora rail, American Bittern, and Mississippi Kite. We had a Wood Duck with 11 ducklings in the spring and a Green Heron sighting almost every week during the summer. Late summer, when we finally saw an entire family perched in a tree, we realized Green Herons had nested at this site.



Image from  
National Audubon Society.org

Editors Note:

EABL = Eastern Bluebird BCCH = Black-capped Chickadee HOWR = House Wren TRES = Tree Swallow

This month's app, **birdJam Twitch**, is a bird ID puzzle game. It's a great app to have on those days when it's just too cold, or rainy (or snowy!) to go birding. So, if the weather outside is frightful, you can still practice identifying birds and have fun at the same time! **birdJam Twitch** is available for Apple iOS only (iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch). The app costs \$4.99 in the iTunes App Store.

The game begins with a black screen. To begin play, you just shake your device and squares turn over randomly on the screen to gradually reveal a photograph of a bird (while cheesy game show music plays in the background). You select your answer using the buttons at the bottom of the screen. See Figures 1 and 2 below.



Figure 1



Figure 2

If you try to outsmart the game by guessing, you will be assessed penalty points! After several birds are shown, the round ends, and you can swipe through the photographs to review all the birds you identified correctly, or just the ones you misidentified.

**birdJam Twitch** includes over 660 North American bird species that are organized into 31 "Flocks" such as urban birds, sparrows, shorebirds, warblers, etc. You can select which "Flock" to play (see Figure 3) and each has a numerical difficulty level. The app keeps track of your scores and you can optionally choose to register, upload your scores, and compare them against other players (see Figure 4).

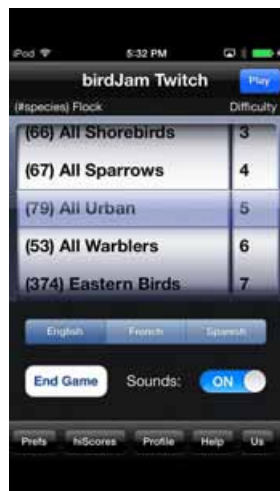


Figure 3



Figure 4

This is a visual ID game only, so no bird songs are included. **birdJam Twitch** is lots of fun and I must warn you that it's very addictive! I created a brief YouTube video of me, the Bird Geek, playing the game. You can view it here: <http://goo.gl/2QJYKG> (sorry, no cheesy music in the video).

# POINT COUNT SURVEYS AT EAGLE BLUFFS: PILOT YEAR

by Vic Bogosian III, Wildlife Biologist, Eagle Bluffs CA

Resource managers are faced with a dilemma: too much to do and not enough time to do it. This is particularly true if we wish to monitor the impacts our actions have on animal populations in a repeated, study-like way. During 2013, volunteers from the Boone's Lick Master Naturalist training session took part in a point count survey project to help address this. There were eight groups of 1-2 people who visited Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area once per week. Each group was assigned 5-10 points at which they were responsible for observing birds. There were some rules to keep everyone's observations comparable (i.e., observed for a specific period of time, when to count birds that were in flight, what direction to face, etc.). The observations were made during March – September.

The benefit of this project was that it gave managers information at a scale not available anywhere else. The CACHE database provides similar information: what birds were observed on a specific day. However CACHE is scaled to the entire area and it is difficult for a manager to know how small-scale management actions are impacting birds without knowing exactly where they were (or where not) seen. This project sought to address that by having volunteers focus on a few specific locations instead of the entire area.

Over 2,000 observations were recorded at 63 points. We are still in the process of importing all the data into a single database to compare bird observations against natural and human-induced landscape changes. So far, the data have given managers interesting insights into the habitat changes birds faced on the area in 2013. A good example will be the general lack of secretive marsh birds during the 2013 year compared with other years. The flood event of May-June effectively reduced dense vegetation such as cattails by as much as 95%. This reduction of preferred habitat for things like rails and bitterns should show up in our dataset as an obvious lack. Over multiple years we will be able to compare how birds respond to these natural habitat setback events against their response to reduction in cattails via methods like spraying or mowing.

The point-count project was a definite success. We intend to continue it indefinitely but with some modifications. The data reporting process was time-consuming and clunky and will be revamped to make it easier on the user. Some of the rules will be relaxed as well to make it a simpler process for everyone involved. If anyone is interested in taking part in this project they can contact Vic Bogosian ( email: Vic.Bogosian@mdc.gov ) to get more information.

## MORE FIELD TRIPS....

### **Saturday, April 12**

**Destination:** Grindstone Nature Area, 2011 Old 63 South, Columbia, MO

**Departure Point:** Songbird Station, 2010 Chapel Plaza Court #C, Columbia, MO

**Leader:** Greg Leonard

**Contact Phone:** (573) 823-4759

Meet at Songbird Station's parking lot at 8 a.m. The trip will be 3 hours long and will return to Songbird Station's parking lot.

### **Saturday, April 26 – Joint Field Trip With St. Louis Audubon Society**

**Destination:** Forest Park, St. Louis, MO

**Departure Point:** Patricia's Foods, 900 N. Keene Street, Columbia, MO

**Leaders:** Dave Garcia & Bob Bailey

**Contact Phone:** Kevin Wehner - (573) 815-0352

We'll carpool from Patricia's Foods at 5:30 a.m. If you're not joining the carpool, meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Forest Park parking lot that is accessed off Wells Drive where the MCD sign can be seen at the entrance.

Directions: From Clayton Rd./ Hwy 64 and Skinker enter the park just north of that intersection. Stay on Wells Drive, going east past Government Drive. The entrance is on the north side of Wells, west of Tamm. We'll start in Forest Park and play it by ear as to whether we stay there or move on to Tower Grove 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)

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