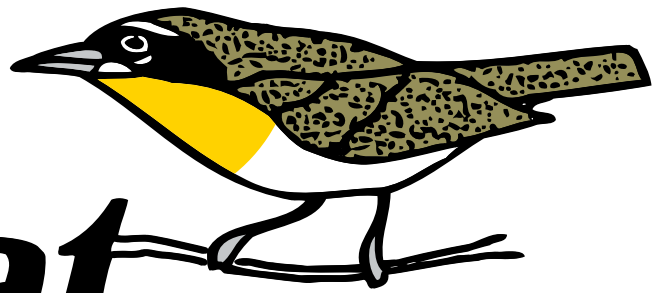


The Chat



Volume 58
Number 8

Columbia Audubon Society
<http://columbia-audubon.org>

April 2016

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

The mission of the 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 ELECTION AT APRIL MEETING

The CAS board will be changing as some current officers step down, including President Kris Hagglund, and others step up. The following slate of officers will be voted on at the April meeting, though other nominations from the floor are welcome. Please come & vote.

President: Laura Hillman
Vice President: Lottie Bushman
Secretary: Lori Hagglund
Treasurer: Eric Seaman
Board Member: Eric Wood
Board member: Nancy Bedan
Board member: Lori Turner

Note: not all positions are voted on every year.

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REMEMBERING MARIEL STEPHENSON

This past February, Mariel Stephenson died. As many of you know, Mariel was a long time member and past board member of CAS. Her family has requested that those interested in making donations in Mariel's memory consider Columbia Audubon Society as one of several suggested options. It is a tribute to Mariel's memory that her family, at this time of grief, is thinking of others.

On May 15, 2014, Columbia's Parks and Recreation Department celebrated the dedication of the 3M Flat Branch-Hinkson Creek Wetlands. The acreage surrounding an abandoned sewage treatment building was returned to its original state as a wetland with native vegetation. A painting was commissioned to commemorate the area's restoration. Mariel Stephenson was selected for her talent and for her love of nature: "When I moved to Columbia, I particularly enjoyed the Mid-Missouri landscapes . . . My love of nature leads me to the creeks and rivers of Columbia and nearby communities. Life abounds in these quiet riparian zones and is often overlooked . . . I find myself drawn to the woods and the water."

It isn't hard to see that Mariel was a logical and natural fit for this commission; her love of nature guided her brush for everyone to enjoy. Mariel's painting was presented to Columbia's 3M Company and 11 prints of the original painting were presented to project partners. Columbia Audubon Society was one of the recipients as a result of work volunteered by Allison Vaughn. Mariel's life and love of nature lives on in her paintings. *- by Bill Mees*



Mariel was nine when she first saw America. With her came memories of war-time Oxford: her mother teaching her birdsongs and the names of wildflowers along a brick wall; a house always harboring English refugees; POWs in work gangs. She had begun to look to nature when ponderings of man's inhumanity toward man became too heavy.

Mariel entered Bennington College and immersed herself in art, history, and music. The cultural achievements of the world were before her; she imbibed and built the foundations of a life-sustaining perspective and vocation. She later attended Columbia College to earn a second bachelor's degree and Missouri teaching certification, and taught art in Columbia from 1992 to 2001.

Her quiet voice often championed maintaining the integrity of "places people can feel at peace and be of one with nature." She was proud of her involvement in the Green Belt Land Trust and in the designation of Rock Quarry Road as a Scenic Road. Mariel's car bore a motto that summed up her life's credo: "We belong to the earth; the earth does not belong to us." *- adapted from a submission by Edge Wade*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

All meetings are held at the Unitarian-Universalist Church, 2615 Shepard Blvd, Columbia.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

Presenter: Mark Glenshaw, Forest Park Owls: Hiding In Plain Sight

Mark H.X. Glenshaw is an award-winning naturalist who has closely observed and documented the lives of Great Horned Owls in Forest Park in St. Louis, Missouri since December 2005. During this time, he has observed and documented a vast range of behaviors including hunting, mating, nest-site selection and rearing of young. He shares his work on his blog, www.forestparkowls.blogspot.com

The owls and his work with them have received regular attention from regional media outlets including The St. Louis-Post Dispatch, Missouri Life, St. Louis Magazine, The Belleville News-Democrat, The Edwardsville Intelligencer, KWMU St. Louis Public Radio, KBIA, Mid-Missouri Public Radio, KMOV St. Louis, and KTVI St. Louis Fox 2.

Mark does extensive outreach work with the owls. He leads dozens of owl prowls each year in Forest Park. He also gives scores of talks each year across Missouri and Illinois to different groups ranging from natural history/conservation organizations to schools to public libraries. He was awarded the Citizen Scientist Award by the Academy of Science-St. Louis for the 2006 St. Louis Bioblitz. Mark is a certified Missouri Master Naturalist and a volunteer for Forest Park Forever. A native of Washington, D.C. and a dual citizen of the United States and South Africa, Mark has his bachelor's degree in history with a minor in communications and journalism from Washington University in St. Louis. When not studying owls, Mark works at Fontbonne University where he is the Daytime Services Manager at the Taylor Library.

Mark's talk, Forest Park Owls: Hiding In Plain Sight, will cover how he found these owls, basic facts about the species, and the different behaviors he has been able to see and document with photos and videos to illustrate these behaviors.

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Spring Picnic at Wild Haven Nature Area on O'Rear Road (map and directions are on the CAS website). There will be a bird walk at 5 p.m. followed by a potluck at 6 p.m. Disposable tableware and soft drinks will be provided for those who don't bring their own.

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF MISSOURI SPRING MEETING

April 29 - May 1, Bunker Hill Retreat (Mountain View)

Enjoy birding in the Ozarks with speakers, field trips, and more. Details and registration online: <http://www.mobirds.org/ASM/NextMeeting.aspx>

ARE DEER BAD FOR SONGBIRDS?

While deer are a natural part of many North American ecosystems, there is concern that some populations have grown beyond the carrying capacity of their environment. Studies using enclosure fences have documented more biodiversity and lush growth in areas from which deer are restricted, and the reverse in areas where deer are abundant. While this has direct consequences on botanical diversity, it also has disturbing implications for birds which share this disturbed habitat. Al Cambronne wrote about this in his fascinating 2013 book *Deerland*:

“Deer reduce the total density of plants in the understory, but they also alter species composition and diversity. Scientists don’t understand (the) indirect effects of overabundant deer as clearly as they do the more simple, direct ones . . . If the forest understory is gone completely, it stands to reason that ground-nesting birds will be more exposed to predators and the elements . . . As plants in the midstory die or graduate into the canopy, birds that nest and forage there will be homeless too.”

Cambronne cites a study by biologist David deCalesta in which deer enclosures (rather than exclosures) were used to study the effects of different population densities on forest health. These enclosures simulated deer densities of 10, 20, 40, and 65 deer per square mile; for reference, Cambronne states that many suburban areas are over 100. After ten years, the researcher counted birds in each area. “The pens with the most deer had 37% fewer birds and 27% less species diversity. Some species disappeared as soon as deer reached densities of twenty per square mile. Even phoebes and robins had gone missing at sixty-five deer per square mile.”

A followup study on the same landscape by Dr. Timothy Nuttle, twenty years later, suggested that these effects could linger for many years. As Cambronne quotes Nuttle, “. . . we found that one simple relationship seems key. Both deer and caterpillars like to eat leaves from the same trees, and for the same reasons. They’re more delicious and digestible than the leaves on other trees. If deer eat those leaves first, before the seedling or saplings can even turn into trees, then caterpillars don’t get them. Fewer caterpillars in the canopy, fewer birds . . . this browsing legacy persists long after . . . trees have escaped browsing by growing into the canopy.”

All this reminded me of a talk Frank Thompson gave at the January 2015 CAS meeting, discussing how sufficient shrubby cover improved the fledgling survival rates of songbirds, even species that nested high in the forest canopy (see the March 2015 Chat). Could abundant deer affect this need as well? - continued on next page



Dramatic deer-exclosure study in Wisconsin; image courtesy of Dr. Thomas Rooney, Wright State University.

ARE DEER BAD FOR SONGBIRDS? (continued from previous page)

Joanna and I started thinking about trying an exclosure experiment on our own diversified farm, where abundant deer have long been a source of damage and frustration in our fields, pastures, and woods. Hunting never seems to make a dent in the overall population, and a whole-farm deer fence has seemed impractical and unaffordable. So we decided to use the field trip and work day we'd scheduled for early March to help implement our own experiment.

After enjoying two hours of birding with 28 species recorded, attendees helped us work on our low-tech, low-cost deer exclosure: a fence made of stacked brush,

the natural result of our winter forest-improvement work. Combined with a higher electric line, we hope to exclude deer entirely from this ~1/2 acre test area, which lies directly across known deer trails. We're interested to see how the forest responds this summer and in future years.



Trialing a brush & electric line fence as a low-cost deer barrier; photo by Eric Reuter.

- by Eric Reuter

BIRD DOCUMENTARY "THE MESSENGER" COMING TO COLUMBIA

CAS is working with Ragtag Cinema to host a showing of "The Messenger", a new documentary about songbirds. This event is sponsored by CAS with funds received during the CoMoGives campaign. The film's director, Su Rynard, says:

Songbirds are disappearing, and their absence is a message to us all. To understand why this is happening, and what can be done, we embarked on a journey. Over the course of a year, following the seasons and the birds, our team filmed on three different continents. We discovered that the causes are many, and the solutions are few. Yet around the world, we met people who are concerned and are working for change – as this is not just about the future of birds, it's about us too.

When: Tuesday, April 26th, at 5:30 p.m.

Where: Ragtag Cinema, downtown Columbia www.ragtagcinema.org

Tickets: The showing is free; Ragtag's policy is to make tickets for free shows available starting at 10:00 a.m. the morning of the show, until all are claimed. Anyone attending the April CAS meeting the week before may also sign up for tickets.

Read more and view a beautiful trailer at: <http://messengerfilm.com/>

2016 FIELD TRIPS
Lori Turner, Field Trip Chair

Bradford Farms

Date & Time: Saturday, April 9th, 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Departure Point: Bradford Farms Visitor's Center, 4968 Rangeline Rd, Columbia

Leader: Brad Jacobs, contact Lori Turner, loricatrips@gmail.com

Brad Jacobs is leading a 7-10 a.m. bird watching walk at Bradford Farms on the Native Plant Day Sale, April 9th. We should find Smith's Longspurs, Le Conte's Sparrows, and other grassland specialists. We will be walking in the fields so wear comfortable boots. There could be water in the marshy areas so wear rubber boots if you want to walk and wade.

Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary

Date & Time: Saturday, April 23rd, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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

Leader: Bill Mees, 573-445-7781

Meet at Songbird Station's parking lot at 8:00 a.m. or 8:10 a.m. at the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary parking lot (3607 Bray Ave., Columbia). The trip will be 2 to 3 hours long and will return to Songbird Station for coffee and donuts.

Happy Hollow Farm

Date & Time: Sunday, April 24, 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Departure Point: Columbia Mall parking lot near Wendy's, meet at 7:00 a.m.

Leader: Eric & Joanna Reuter, eric@cherthollowfarm.com, (573) 474-0989

We'll travel 45 minutes south to this beautiful diversified farm nestled in the hills south of the Missouri River near Lupus. We hope to find many interesting birds taking advantage of the wide range of habitats from bottomland to hilltop. Trip is held on Sunday so that Farmer Liz can join us (no conflict with the Saturday farmers market). Read more at <http://www.happyhollowfarm-mo.com>

Prairie Garden Trust: Joint Field Trip with River Bluffs A.S.

Date & Time: Saturday, May 7th, 7:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Departure Point: Moser's Foods (née Patricia's), 900 Keene St, Columbia, MO

Leader: Lori Turner, loricatrips@gmail.com

Lorna and Henry Domke will guide us through the many native habitats that are maintained in this private nature area outside of New Bloomfield. We will explore the savanna area overlooking miles of forests, walk along Hillers Creek, explore the native prairies that are sustained by prescribed burns, and walk along the lotus ponds. If meeting at PGT be there by 8 a.m. For directions or to learn more about PGT please visit their website at <http://prairiegardentrust.org/>

2016 FIELD TRIPS, CONTINUED

Lori Turner, Field Trip Chair

Wild Haven Nature Area & Albert Children's Wildlife Area

Date & Time: Saturday, May 21st, 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Departure Point: Moser's Foods (née Patricia's), 900 Keene St, Columbia, MO.

Leader: John Besser, cell (573) 639-2211 or jbesser1@gmail.com

We will leave Moser's parking lot at 7:00 a.m., arriving at the picnic shelter at 7:30. The Wild Haven nature area (103 acres) consists mostly of open woodlands and riparian forest along Hinkson Creek, with smaller areas of savannah, sandstone glades, and ponds making this a diverse birding spot. Check out the CAS website for more information on this area at <http://columbia-audubon.org/> Birding will be mostly on foot, on and off trails, so come prepared for wet ground. The group should be back at Moser's by 12:30 p.m.

RECENT SCIENCE STORIES OF INTEREST TO BIRDERS

The impacts of climate change upon birds

In the March/April 2016 issue of American Scientist magazine, biologists Richard B. Primack and Amanda S. Gallinat discuss their research into changes in the relative timing of leaf-out and flowering in trees, and migratory bird arrivals. They used the journals of Henry David Thoreau as a reference for the 1850s timing of these events in Massachusetts, and compared these to modern-day patterns. They found that as compared to bird migration arrivals, leaf-out and flowering events had changed significantly, and more quickly, since Thoreau's time. For example, on average migratory birds arrived in Massachusetts only four days earlier in the 2010s than the 1850s, yet both average leaf-out and flowering occurred more than two weeks earlier. This disparity potentially removes necessary food sources along migration routes, as birds don't respond as quickly to regional climate changes as local flora do. At the February 2016 CAS meeting, John Faaborg discussed similar observations made during his decades of research.

Studying bird populations with historic photography

Another creative way to study bird populations over time was discussed in a recent issue of The Economist (3/26-4/1, 2016). Jonas Hentati-Sundberg and Olof Olsson of Stockholm University delved into an archive of tourist photos from an island in the Baltic Sea which hosts nesting colonies of seabirds. Using images dating back to 1918, they were able to document cycles in the birds' population and relate them to human influences from DDT to conservation practices. Could your own albums contribute to science someday? *- by Eric Reuter*



Columbia Audobon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

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