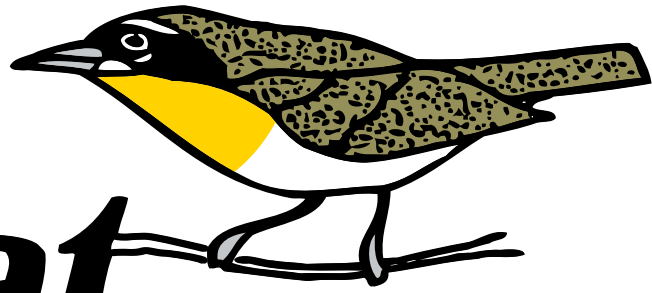


The Chat



Volume 58
Number 9

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

May 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.

CAS TAKES A SUMMER BREAK, BIRDING DOESN'T

After May, there will be no scheduled CAS events until September, but that doesn't mean birding has to end. Why not use this summer to help engage our community in your love of birds? For example, any of us could organize a morning or evening neighborhood bird walk, exploring the feathered residents just outside our windows. You may see cardinals or robins every day, but do you know where they prefer to nest and feed? Are there different yards in your neighborhood that seem to encourage or discourage birds? Encourage kids to come along and engage in the nature all around them.

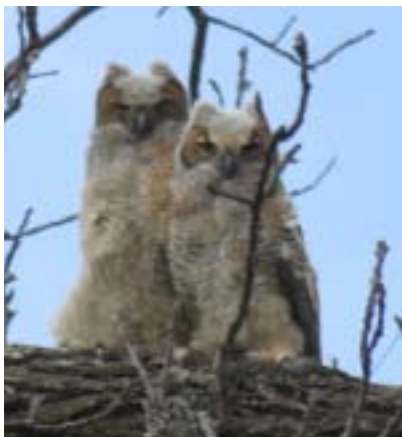


photo by David Fabacher

Or you could get to know one of CAS's nature areas, watching for nesting and fledging behavior. For example, David Fabacher found these delightful Great-Horned Owlets at the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary right in the heart of town. Create new birding memories this summer, for you and your neighbors! *-by Eric Reuter*

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Guest columns by Becky Erickson & Mike Szydowski

Edited by

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SPRING PICNIC AT WILD HAVEN

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Following tradition, the May “meeting” will be a potluck picnic instead, giving us all a chance to enjoy the springtime outdoors together. This year, we’ll gather at Wild Haven Nature Area on O’Rear Road (see CAS website for directions). 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. Scheduled meetings and field trips will resume in September.

CAS BUDGET REPORT

The new CAS fiscal year runs from June 1, 2016 through May 31, 2017. The Board has planned the following highlights for the new fiscal year:

- Sponsorship for students to attend nature study opportunities (such as Columbia Public Schools Grand Teton Trips)
- Sponsorship of science teachers to attend Audubon’s Hog Island teacher camp
- Sponsorship and hosting of “Banding With Nature” at CANS
- Stewardship and maintenance of CAS owned Nature Areas
- Participation in CoMoGives to raise additional funds

If you have any questions, please contact Eric Seaman at eseaman68@yahoo.com

WORK DAYS AT WILD HAVEN NATURE AREA

With the annual Columbia Audubon Society spring picnic planned for May 18 at the Wild Haven picnic shelter (see above), we’re planning two work days to get the picnic area and trails ready for visitors.

Sunday, May 8, 1 p.m. We’ll work on trail maintenance in two areas: (1) the former plantation area north of O’Rear road and (2) the tributary creek west of the picnic shelter. Both of these short loop trails have some blockages due to fallen trees and limbs and are overgrown with shrubs and vines. Volunteers with chainsaws, loppers, and weed trimmers will get these trails ready for hikers.

Sunday, May 15, 1 p.m. We’ll clean up the picnic area by sweeping and picking up fallen limbs and by removing some (mostly small) autumn olive. We’ll need chainsaws, pruning saws, or loppers. CAS will provide herbicide for treating cut stems.

RSVP if you can help out on either or both of these workdays. Remember to bring protective shoes, work gloves, sunscreen, and bug spray. I think we can be finished in 2-3 hours on both days. - By John Besser, Nature Areas Chair, jbesser1@gmail.com

REMEMBERING GENE AND JOANN RUHR

Gene and JoAnn Ruhr, devoted naturalists and Columbia residents, both passed away this spring. Happily married for over 60 years, they shared a passion for nature and the outdoors that underpinned their careers as a fisheries biologist and a biology teacher. Having lived and worked in various parts of the country, they moved to Columbia in 1986 and set down roots, enjoying bird-watching and gardening together. Gene served as president of the Columbia Audubon Society from 1993-1995, and as a board member from 1997-2001. Gene was the leader of Christmas Bird Count Area 4, centered on the diverse hills and valleys along the Missouri River southwest of Columbia, where Janice Gaston fondly remembers his group teaching her many birds and calls. The Columbia Daily Tribune published nice obituaries of both, which can be found on their website. - by Eric Reuter

MONITORING MIGRATION WITH RADAR IMAGERY

No matter how many migrating warblers appear in our treetops each morning, we're never able to directly appreciate the scale of spring and fall migrations. Millions of songbirds are on the move each night, with only the faintest hint of their transit. Yet there's a way we can use modern technology to better grasp the nightly movements of birds: radar images that capture their presence.

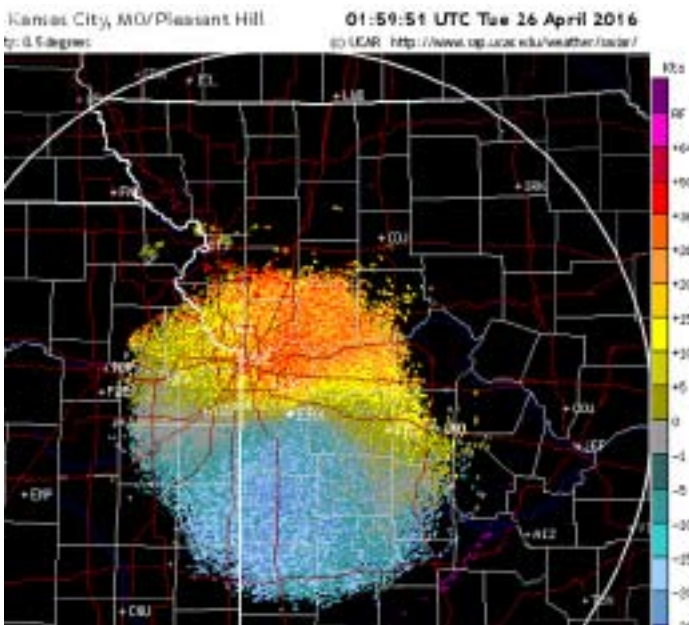
The image below shows returns from the NWS radar near Kansas City on the night of April 25-26, around 9 p.m. These are velocity data, showing the movement and speed of radar returns relative to the radar's site (in this case, just southeast of KC). Positive returns (yellow-red) indicate movement away from the radar, while negative returns (green-blue) indicate movement toward the radar. If you watch these patterns on loop, they grow dramatically around dusk and remain overnight, declining around dawn. You can also compare such imagery to data on wind speed

and direction at various elevations to help judge what conditions are affecting migration that night.

If this brief overview excites your interest, here are a few resources to help guide this new way of birding:

- "How to be a better birder", great book by Derek Lovitch, available at DBRL.
- "Radar and migration FAQ", a good summary at www.woodcreeper.com
- "Real-Time Weather Data", a source for radar, wind, and other maps at <http://weather.rap.ucar.edu>

- by Eric Reuter



2016 FIELD TRIPS
Lori Turner, Field Trip Chair

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/>

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 these areas 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.

Prairie Fork Conservation Area, Williamsburg MO

Date & Time: Saturday, May 28th, 7:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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

Leader: Amber Edwards, contact Lori Turner, loricatrips@gmail.com

Amber Edwards, Education Coordinator, is meeting the group at Prairie Fork at 8 a.m. Lori will be leading the group from Moser's.

Located in eastern Callaway County, Prairie Fork is used for educational experiences in topics including forestry and soils. It has been managed in close cooperation with the University of Missouri and Prairie Fork Trust and much effort has been made to restore parts of this 711 acre area to the natural prairie/savanna habitat that once graced this region of Missouri. This area is not open to the public so take advantage of this trip! For more information on Prairie Fork or directions visit <http://prairiefork.missouri.edu/about/index.asp>

MIGRATORY BIRD COUNT MAY 14

The North American Migratory Bird Count (NAMBC) has been happening on the second Saturday in May in Boone County for over twenty years and will happen again May 14. Nationwide the count has been taken over by Cornell and given a new name, Global Big Day Bird Count, however we will manage the data as in the past and continue to keep our own data while being able to share it nationally. Boone County is divided into 13 areas, each with its own leader. This year's leaders will fortunately be the same as last year's (see list in May 2015 Chat). Counting usually goes from dawn to late afternoon with multiple groups covering an area. If you want to count but have not been contacted by a leader you may contact Laura Hillman at 573-442-3703 or 573-397-1010. *- by Laura Hillman*

Editor's note: Joanna Reuter produced new digitized maps for the 2015 MBC; the current maps are hosted at the link below until they are put on the CAS website:

<http://cherthollowfarm.com/migratory-bird-count-maps-for-boone-county/>

2016 HOG ISLAND SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Columbia Audubon Society recently awarded scholarships to two Columbia Public School teachers, Whitney Adams and Anne Kome. Thanks to the generosity of CAS, they will attend a six-day program called "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week" at the Hog Island Audubon Camp in mid-coast Maine.

Whitney Adams is a 5th grade teacher at Lee Expressive Arts Elementary School. She is excited about learning new approaches, methods, and activities for engaging her students with nature. The 5th grade science curriculum already covers ecosystems, food chains, conservation, and the impact humans have on their environment. Whitney knows that her Hog Island experience will also deepen her own understanding of these important concepts.

Anne Kome is a 2nd grade teacher at Fairview Elementary. She is a member of several nature-oriented organizations, and has spent numerous summers at the Tetons Science School with CPS middle-schoolers. Anne has a passion for nature and teaching and motivates her students by tapping into their natural curiosity. She wants her students to learn to appreciate nature and what it means to take care of it.

Both teachers are grateful to CAS for this amazing opportunity to grow professionally, to learn from some of the most respected naturalists and conservation leaders in the nation, and ultimately to share new knowledge and experiences with their students. They are building the base for the Audubon Society of the future.

- by Lisa Schenker

GUEST COLUMN: A WHOLE ECOSYSTEM REPLACED

What do the birds eat? It is mid-April in Missouri. Night temperatures have been only to just freezing for two weeks. Why are the birds so hungry? I have my meager 2 acres of burned woodland and 1 acre of diverse prairie species. Why are they gobbling up my suet cakes and bird seed?

Look beyond my land parameters. There is a 2,700 acre woodland owned by the University of Missouri at my back yard. I have hiked most of the area over the last 15 years. The topography is steep and diverse. From 1870 to ~1930 there were about 34 homesteads on those 2,700 acres. Some of it is disturbed, but re-grown since that time. Maples and cedars have infiltrated the oak-hickory forest that was maintained with fire before it was homesteaded. Then nothing at all was done to it for the last 75 years. No trees were cut. None of the area was burned. It was left to benign neglect. The philosophy was that if nothing was done to the landscape, it will revert to its natural state. You would think it would harbor a large diversity of wildlife and wild vegetation, which should support the whole population because the native forest trees feed larva of about 450 Lepidoptera species which in turn feed the migrant birds who need to nest in our forests. I have walked here often and at all times of the year. The woods are silent and still except for me and my dog.

But now the forest is giving way to the invasion of alien multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, Bradford pear, burning bush, winter creeper, and oriental bittersweet because nearby small landholders planted home landscaping according to horticultural influences of the time. Nursery keepers sold our parents on this stuff as having benefits to wildlife and having "sterile seed". Our parents were promised these plants would not escape. Birds eat the berries of these plants because they have nothing native left to eat, then deposit the seeds elsewhere, spreading the alien species. Did the vegetation in Columbia register with you this spring? It was mostly escaped Bradford pears and bush honeysuckle. If left unchecked, these species will crowd out all the beautiful diversity of native plants. No native plants equals no native insects equals no food for birds.

Hopefully, now, we know better. Hopefully we know how to pull seedlings of these invasives and cut and treat the older specimens. Does anyone else reading this have the same sinking feeling I have? Like the feeling after you have seen the old movie "Invasion of the Body Snatchers"?

On the other side of my diverse postage stamp of landholding is the ancient prairie landscape. The high ridges were converted to fescue for livestock grazing many decades ago. With the latest 'gold-rush', a.k.a. grow corn for ethanol, these fields have been mostly converted to corn. GMO corn is sprayed with glyphosate herbicide to eliminate 'weeds'. Many of these "weeds" are the persistent native prairie plants: asters, goldenrods, sunflowers, milkweeds, silphiums, mints, and legumes that survived around the field edges & hedge-rows, for a hundred years.

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GUEST COLUMN: A WHOLE ECOSYTEM REPLACED

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Around 1985-90 hedge-rows were torn up, fields were made larger, as much as several square miles, to accommodate 60-foot wide equipment. More minute parcels of ancient prairie were plowed for larger and larger crop fields. Then, since this ancient prairie land was used for cattle feed and so close to an urban/suburban area, it was economically more attractive to be used as a tract-house site. Most of it is at least sterilized with fescue and heavy applications of fertilizer and herbicide, and at most hard-scaped with asphalt and roofs. There is nothing out there for the birds to eat so we must feed them with artificial food all year around.

This is where our native plants went (see wildones.org).

This is where our native pollinators went (see xerces.org).

This is where all of our other native invertebrates went.

This is where our birds went (read the work of Doug Tallamy).

It is up to us to convert whatever space we can spare.

It is up to us to convert whatever we can afford to native species.

It is up to us to talk to our neighbors to explain the total ecosystem dilemma.

It is up to us to talk to our friends about incorporating natives into gardens.

At least start at home. If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem.

- by *Becky Erickson, Missouri Native Plant Society*



Images show native plantings at the author's home

GUEST COLUMN: FIGHTING BUSH HONEYSUCKLE IN COLUMBIA

Our ease of travel and commerce has allowed plenty of invasive plants and animals to invade our once-native ecosystems. One of the most troublesome plants is bush honeysuckle, which is not from the United States. The species was brought over from Asia several decades ago for landscaping our yards. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Bush honeysuckle plants grow rapidly, have pretty flowers, and bear attractive red berries in the fall. While it seemed like a perfect plant to place in your yard, they are now causing big problems for us.

It turns out that birds love the bush honeysuckle berries even though they are not all that nutritious. The birds carry the berries from the landscaped yards and drop the seeds onto native forests, prairies, and other yards. These seeds grow very easily in many conditions. Once the new plants are established and producing seeds, more birds spread more seeds and the problem gets worse and worse.

These invasive plants grow very thick on the bottom of the forest floor, leaving little room for native plants to grow. To make matters worse, bush honeysuckle is the first plant to leaf out in the spring and the last plant to lose its leaves in the fall so that makes it even harder for any other plants to ever catch any of the sun's energy they need to grow. This is causing our forests to lack young native plants. Therefore as older trees die, they may not have as many replacements. This could change our forests to become more brush than trees.

The Solution & Students

One of the largest honeysuckle-removal efforts in local history has involved over 1,000 students who have learned about and become hooked on their desire to remove them. The Columbia Public Schools Science Department has worked with >40 classrooms who each spent at least an hour removing honeysuckle. To date, students alone have removed 138,000 of these invasive plants from Missouri. Very kind adults, including some members of the Columbia Audubon Society, have joined them. It is going to take more work and we need you! It is satisfying to work for an hour and see the destruction you just caused – good destruction. So far this project has concentrated on the following sites: Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary, Fairview Park, Smithton Park, Oakland Park, Cosmo-Bethel Park, and Bearfield Trail.

Removing Honeysuckle

1. Bush honeysuckle has shallow roots so the small plants can easily be pulled from the ground.
2. Larger plants must be cut and then an adult must treat the stump with a herbicide. If not treated, the plant quickly comes back.
3. In early spring or late fall bush honeysuckle may be the only woody plant with green leaves. During this period an adult can spray the leaves with herbicide.

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GUEST COLUMN: FIGHTING BUSH HONEYSUCKLE IN COLUMBIA

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Make a Difference!

Scientists and teachers have many lessons about how invasive organisms have negatively impacted an ecosystem. However, too often there is not much that can be done. Bush honeysuckle can be tackled if lots of people work together.

A special website has been set up at www.mohoneysuckleproject.com where you can learn to identify and remove these invasive plants. You can even log how many plants you remove to help the goal of removing a million of these plants from Missouri. This is your chance to make a difference in your community and ecosystem. Go out and take your forests back!

- story and photos by Mike Szydlowski,
K-12 Science Coordinator, CPS
President- Science Teachers of Missouri





Columbia Audobon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

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