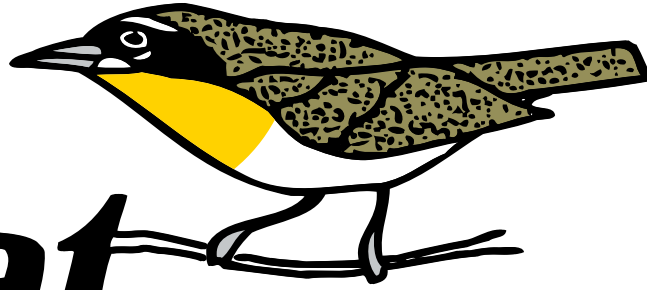


The

Chat



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Columbia Audubon Society
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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.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

There was a special Audubon field trip to St. Louis last Saturday, but I couldn't go: I had a bird-related conflict. The mid-Missouri chapter of Wild Ones and the Hawthorn chapter of the Missouri Native Plant Society were co-sponsoring a workshop that day to teach people how to collect native seed and propagate native plants on their properties. Although I am also the President of Wild Ones, I assure you that I was not teaching the workshop: I was arranging tables, signing people in, and trying to get them to join the two organizations. So what did this have to do with birds? As you all know, many birds eat seeds, but black-oiled sunflower seeds by the 40 lb bag is probably not the best diet overall; birds need culinary diversity just like people do. More importantly, birds feed their young on live prey like insects, spiders, and caterpillars: native plants and trees help provide habitat for these important species. This is one reason CAS is restoring a prairie at CANS and fighting invasive plants at Wild Haven. Along the same lines, the City of Columbia is initiating a program to encourage the removal of exotics and the planting of natives in both parks and peoples' yards, similar to what the Audubon chapter in St. Louis is already doing; CAS has agreed to try and help. Obviously, there is much to do, but we can be enthusiastic about these plans and their effect on birds. *-by Laura Hillman*

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CAS ON KBIA

On January 12, 2017, CAS board members Allison Vaughn and Bill Mees joined KBIA's Trevor Harris on the Thinking Out Loud radio program to discuss the Christmas Bird Count. If you missed their conversation, you can listen to the 20-minute piece at:

<http://kbia.org/post/thinking-out-loud-christmas-bird-count#stream/0>

2017 FIELD TRIPS

Whetstone Creek Conservation Area

Date & Time: Saturday, February 4th, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

Leader: Lori Turner, loricastrips@gmail.com

We will leave Patricia's parking lot at 8:00 am to explore this Conservation area located in Callaway County. After birding we will stop in at Crane's Country Store for a bite to eat and then return to Patricia's by 1:00.

3M Flat Branch-Hinkson Creek Wetlands

Date & Time: Saturday, February 11th, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 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 a.m. We'll walk the 3M Wetlands and then return to the store at 10 a.m.

Annual Great Backyard Bird Feeder Crawl

Date & Time: Saturday, February 18th, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

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

Leader: Eric Wood, ewood802@yahoo.com or 573-673-0215

This Feeder Crawl will start at Songbird Station at 8 a.m. From there we'll 'crawl' to various backyard bird feeders in and around the Columbia area and count birds for at least 15 minutes at each backyard, then submit each checklist to eBird. The trip will last about 2 hours and return to Songbird Station for coffee and donuts. Afterwards anyone who wishes may join me birding CANS.

More information: The 2017 Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will take place Friday, February 17th through Monday, February 20th. GBBC is an annual four-day citizen science event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. For more information on the GBBC, visit <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>.

COMOGIVES 2016 RECAP

As with Cinderella, the event ended at the stroke of midnight, but in this case there were smiles on everyone's faces. Let me explain.

This past fall, the CAS Board formed a committee charged with guiding our CoMoGives fundraising campaign. Its members (Nancy Bedan, Jim Gast, Kris Hagglund, Doug Miller, Lisa Schenker, Eric Seaman, Kevin Wehner, and Bill Mees) met three times and shared multiple emails in working to ensure a successful campaign.

This year's CoMoGives campaign, sponsored by the Community Foundation of Central Missouri, included 92 not-for-profit organizations. December 1st marked the beginning of this 31 day campaign and CAS commenced to implement its plan: email blasts to CAS members and friends, Facebook posts, advertising at Songbird Station, and personal letters mailed to last year's donors. Some committee members also made personal contacts with friends to encourage giving. As donations were posted on the CoMoGives website, Lisa Schenker mailed personal acknowledgements thanking the donors.

The 2016 CoMoGives campaign resulted in 66 donations totaling \$5,263, a 33% increase from the previous year's total of \$3,955 from 49 donations. That's not a bad showing from a volunteer committee of bird-watchers. The Columbia Audubon Society is grateful to everyone who expressed their support of the CAS mission by making donations and/or volunteering their time. The dollars donated will make a difference in pursuing our mission.

- by Bill Mees

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

Wednesday, February 15th, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Presenter: Brad and Suzanne Wright, Mussel Fork Legacy Marsh, LLC

Brad and Suzanne will talk about buying and managing land for recreational benefits, and the "Life of a Wetland Reserve Program" project (60 days of duck hunting, 305 days of birding).

Wednesday, March 15th, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Presenter: John Burk, Turkey Federation.

Turkey Federation activities and on-the-ground restoration efforts.

Wednesday, April 19th, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

Presenter: Danielle Fox, Community Conservationist for the City of Columbia.

Danielle will speak about this exciting new position and her plans to promote conservation in Columbia.

ONLINE TOOLS FOR EXPLORING BIRDING AREAS IN BOONE COUNTY

Have you ever wondered about the history of the areas you like to bird, or wanted to know more about their landscapes? The Boone County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department offers several internet-based tools that provide a fascinating collection of aerial photos (historic and modern), topographic data, and land-boundary information that can help birders understand more about our local area. These online systems are free for public use and serve a wide variety of needs. The most useful tools for birders are the Aerial Photo Viewer and the Parcel Viewer, both available through the County Assessor's Office, which I contacted for permission to use images in this story. To demonstrate these tools, let's look at how they portray different features of CAS's Wild Haven Nature Area. *-continued on next page*



Aerial Photo Viewer images showing part of Wild Haven in 2015 (left) and 1956 (right).



Parcel Viewer images showing property boundaries (left) and topography (right).

ONLINE TOOLS FOR EXPLORING BIRDING AREAS, CONTINUED

Both tools provide aerial imagery for Boone County in up to 12 different years (2015, 2011, 2007, 2002, 1994, 1992, 1980, 1977, 1968, 1962, 1956, and 1939), while the Parcel Viewer adds land boundary, ownership, and topographic information. Each year's imagery varies in quality and scope; some of the older years are of lower quality and/or don't cover the entire county. All years are overlain in each viewer, so that you can easily toggle between different years to study changes in land use.

At Wild Haven, you can clearly see how patterns of woodlands and farm fields 60 years ago shaped the modern habitats of the nature area. The nicer woodlands have been that way a long time, while the scrubrier areas are abandoned, re-grown agricultural lands. In addition, using the Parcel Viewer lets you explore how legal boundaries interact with topography and landscape features, so you can better plan an off-trail hike without getting lost or trespassing.

To further explore the value of these tools, let's look at Rocky Fork Lakes Conservation Area. The official MDC map for Rocky Fork doesn't include topography or many of the existing trails, making it of limited value for exploration. Given that parts of this area were highly disturbed by surface coal mining in the 1960s and 1970s, it's not a good place to plan on wandering around off-trail unless you've studied the landscape more thoroughly. For example, you might be tempted to try cutting cross-country between the two large trails at the upper and lower portions of the image below left, to make a nice loop hike. But a closer look at the topography between clearly shows that such a route is blocked for all but the most intrepid due to a series of steep cut-and-fill surface mining pits. *-continued on next page*

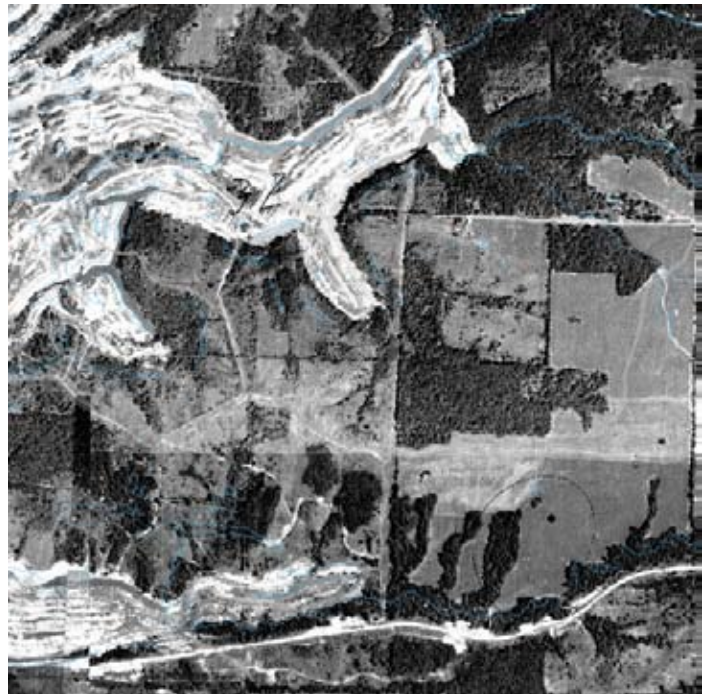


Aerial and topographic images of eastern Rocky Fork Lakes CA. Note the rugged mining-related topography between the established trails on the upper and lower portions of the images, which precludes easy cross-country hiking. Only one parcel can be selected at a time.

ONLINE TOOLS FOR EXPLORING BIRDING AREAS, CONTINUED

The Parcel Viewer allows you to select any given piece of land (parcel) and view its ownership, size, and other data, but it can only highlight one parcel at a time. In the previous images, the yellow-bordered polygon marks a plot of land within the conservation area, but it isn't the full boundary: the parcels on almost all sides of the highlighted one are also part of Rocky Fork Lakes CA, except for the narrow strips of private property at right-center.

Along with locating areas to avoid, you can use the same tools to find places you might want to visit. For example, in the images below, you can see several woodland areas that were never mined and haven't been logged for decades. We've explored some of these areas, which contain nice mature forest of a kind you wouldn't necessarily expect in this conservation area based on its mining history. In this case I used the Aerial Photo Viewer to avoid the visual distraction of property boundaries, but as the borders in this area are complex and don't follow the terrain, it would be worth checking the Parcel Viewer before exploring.



Aerial photos of eastern Rocky Fork Lakes CA from 2015 (left) and 1968 (right) showing the extent of mining and other land uses, suggesting the presence of mature forest in some areas.

Both viewers are amazing tools for exploring the history and land use of Boone County, and should be part of every local birder's toolbox. Try examining the history of development around the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary, the changes in Missouri River channels and land use around Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, or the karst landscapes of Rock Bridge State Park. - by Eric & Joanna Reuter

- Editor's note: see next page for tips on accessing and using the online viewers.

TIPS FOR ACCESSING AND USING THE ONLINE VIEWERS

Both tools can be found on the Boone County Assessor's website at:

<http://www.showmeboone.com/GIS/viewers/viewers.asp>

While the Aerial Photo Viewer can be freely used by anyone, the Parcel Viewer requires you to sign up for a free account with the county, because it contains property information. When you first load either viewer, it will present an outline of Boone County with no imagery; you need to zoom in a certain distance before it will start loading photos. Roads and streams are overlain on the map and images to help you navigate. In either viewer, you can search for an address; the Parcel Viewer will also let you search by owner (such as Columbia Audubon Society). Both viewers contain a basic measurement tool for estimating distance or area (useful for judging hike length); the Parcel Viewer also has an Identify tool for accessing ownership information of any land parcel. Note: this tool's default setting will automatically zoom your view into the parcel you clicked on; if you don't want it to do this, click "No" in the little buttons in the bottom-right corner of the window. Images and maps can be downloaded or printed from either viewer for use in the field.

COLUMBIA COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

The Columbia Office of Sustainability has launched a new webpage devoted to Community Conservation, where citizens can learn more about projects such as the 3M Monarch Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project and the CoMo Wild Yards Program, "A volunteer program created to help participating homeowners manage their backyards for conservation. Volunteer habitat advisors conduct on-site consultations and provide a land management plan for homeowners to improve their backyard habitat." The office is looking for more such habitat advisors; you can read more and get in touch (if you're interested) at:

<http://www.como.gov/sustainability/community-conservation/>

ROCKY FORK LAKES CA FIELD TRIP RECAP



Fourteen birders gathered on Saturday, January 21st to explore part of Rocky Fork Lakes Conservation Area on a gloriously warm and sunny winter's day. Although the birds seemed shy that morning, we found 18 species and several more taxa, investigated an interesting nest (at left), and enjoyed our several-mile walk through diverse habitats while discussing the area's land-use history. *-by Eric Reuter*

CAS BOARD MEETING MINUTES, NOVEMBER 16, 2016

*Archives of past meeting minutes may be found at <http://columbia-audubon.org/meetings.php>
These minutes were approved at the January CAS board meeting.*

Attendees: Laura Hillman, Allison Vaughn, Kris Hagglund, Nancy Bedan, Eric Reuter, Doug Miller, Bill Mees, Eric Seaman, Lori Turner, Lottie Bushmann, and Lori Hagglund

The minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. Nancy B moved we accept them as written. Doug M seconded and they were approved.

The treasurer's report was reviewed. Doug M moved that it be approved, Kris H seconded, and the motion passed.

Programs: Kris H proposed reducing the number of general meetings in order to improve attendance and provide a larger audience for our invited speakers. The board could have additional meetings outside of those times if necessary. Further discussion is planned.

Education Committee: No one has applied for the Hog Island scholarships. Delaying the application deadline seems unlikely to help. Eric R proposed we redirect the unused funds this year toward a local program designed to instruct teachers in beginning birding skills, perhaps in cooperation with a site such as the Columbia Area Career Center. Such an approach could reach a greater number of teachers and may not be very costly. This may also generate future interest in Hog Island.

CAS has \$250 budgeted to support Project Feederwatch participation by area teachers. It was agreed that we fund the participation fee and a year's supply of birdseed for the first two teachers who apply for the program.

Second-Grade Field Trip (Band With Nature): About 800 students participated in October 2016, as well as numerous parents and teachers. The total cost of roughly \$1900 for the event translates to a per-student cost of \$2.38. One of the three field trip days was canceled this year due to forecast rain. Next year the plan is to schedule the event for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which will allow for make-up days on Tuesday and Thursday in the event of inclement weather.

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CAS BOARD MEETING MINUTES, CONTINUED

COMO Gives: Bill M handed out the guide for this year and shared that distributions from IRAs can be donated up to \$100K without tax liability for people 70½ or older. The member surveys have gone out to the board and will go out to the general membership next week.* Nancy B has developed a letter that we can use to approach potential donors with a personal appeal for a donation. Jim Gast is attending the COMO Gives launch party tomorrow night on our behalf.

Natural Areas: We have a new trail extension at CANS that was recently completed by a Boy Scout. Bill M proposed that we begin to think about restoring the prairie on the west side of Scott's Branch creek there. Garland Russell would like us to include about 5 acres of his in the restoration also. Bill M suggested that we could start having work sessions to clear invasive plants and otherwise prepare the area, and then apply for another MoBCI grant to complete the process in 2 years.

CHAT: It was decided that the minutes published in the Chat should be delayed by a month in order to allow for review and approval by the board.

Christmas Bird Count: Laura H has everyone working their usual team, but still needs to contact Greg Leonard and Janice Gaston. The sign-up sheet for the chili supper will be passed around tonight and Lori H has sent Eric R a notice to include in the next Chat. Eric R would like to have a photo of this year's chili supper to put in next year's Chat.

Allison V noted that we should plan to bird Big Sky Preserve and Hinkson Woods for Greenbelt Trust next spring.

About twenty people attended the general meeting and enjoyed a presentation by Julianna Jenkins of MU about the postfledging ecology of neotropical migrant songbirds.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Hagglund
Secretary

**Editor's note: those surveys have been delayed.*



Columbia Audobon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

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