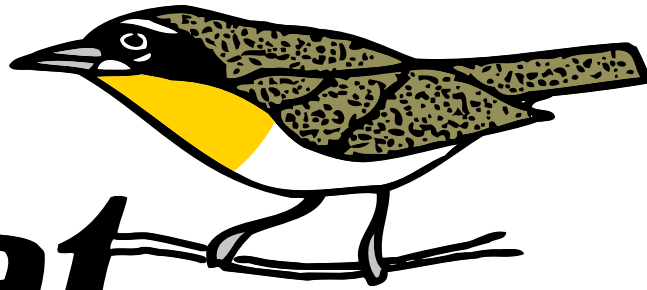


The Chat



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<http://columbia-audubon.org>

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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

I spent a Saturday with Bill Mees and Eric Wood as part of a larger group learning how to kill exotics, i.e. Bush Honeysuckle, on adopted sections of Columbia trails (our is the stretch of city trail in front of the Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary). Our leader commented that, unlike the other teams doing quarter-mile stretches of invasive removal, our job would be easy because of all the work already done on the property. Indeed, none of us needed to learn why to kill Bush Honeysuckle. Clearly birds eat it, which is how it gets spread everywhere, but there are better native berries and plants that can also support and feed birds. I was really glad to find a room full of people who were going to take on other areas, but when I checked the maps I found that there were a lot of spots left. When I had suggested to the board that we could take on another spot, they reminded me that the Columbia Audubon Society already owns three very large properties that are always in need of maintenance (including invasive removal) and that the response to work requests is always from the same small group. If you are inspired, go out and assemble a group to adopt a section of trail, but also please remember that one of CAS's missions is maintaining natural areas for birds; when we call for help, please come! And give your yard another check, too.

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-by Laura Hillman

BRAD JACOBS HONORED WITH THREE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



Brad Jacobs, a past president and dynamic member of CAS, retired from the Missouri Department of Conservation in the autumn of 2016. In recent months he has been honored with lifetime achievement awards for his work in bird conservation in Missouri and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

PARTNERS IN FLIGHT AWARD

Brad has been selected to receive an individual 2016 Partners in Flight Award in the category of Lifetime Achievement. Brad's vision, his work in international avian ecology and conservation, and his organization skills and determination were critical contributions to the founding of Partners in Flight (PIF) in 1990. PIF has more than 150 partner Western Hemisphere organizations engaged in all aspects of landbird conservation, from science, research, planning, and policy development to land management, monitoring, education, and outreach. Brad plans to be at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Spokane, Washington to receive the award on Wednesday evening, March 8th, 2017.

USFWS AWARD

On September 2, 2016, the USFWS Missouri Ecological Services Field Office in Columbia presented Brad with a Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Award in recognition of his dedication, commitment, and contributions to the conservation of Neotropical Migratory Birds in Mexico and Central America and his recognized leadership on the identification, distribution, ecology, and habitat protection of Missouri's avifauna.

ASM AWARD

ASM presented Brad with the organization's highest honor, the Rudolf Bennitt Distinguished Service Award, at the 2016 ASM Fall Meeting. The accomplishments cited and details of the presentation event appeared in the December 2016 BLUE-BIRD, VOLUME 83, No. 4, p. 121, and may be read on the ASM website at <http://www.mobirds.org/ASM/Bluebird.aspx> - *story and photo from Edge Wade*

HOW YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT THE COLUMBIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Carrying out our mission through education, conservation, and outreach takes a wide variety of resources, from the valued time of dedicated volunteers to the financial support of members and donors. We welcome and appreciate all participants and supporters of our work through their generous donations of time, money, or other resources. Learn more at <http://columbia-audubon.org/>

A NEW (AND AMUSING) BIRD-SAFE CAT COLLAR

Kris Hagglund passed along an interesting story in the March/April issue of The Pacific Standard (www.psmag.org), regarding a creative new approach to restricting outdoor cats' ability to hunt birds. While traditional collars rely on bells or other noisemakers, the collars made by Birdsbesafe (www.birdsbesafe.com) rely on color instead, which songbirds' eyes are quite sensitive to even under the low-light conditions in which cats often hunt.

The founder, Nancy Brennan, is a Vermont resident who wanted to find a better way for cats and birds to co-exist, so she had the idea to sew a brightly-colored collar for her skilled-hunter cat; the results were so encouraging that she launched a business making and selling the collars, which are now available in Europe, Canada, and the US. For skeptics, the website also links to a field study conducted by the St. Lawrence University biology department:

"Dr. Willson reports that of the spring 12-week trial period involving 19 pet cats that wore the Birdsbesafe cat collar cover half the time, 'We had almost no bird deaths at all when the cats were collared [with Birdsbesafe covers on], versus 19 times more likely to kill a bird without a [wearing a Birdsbesafe] collar.'"

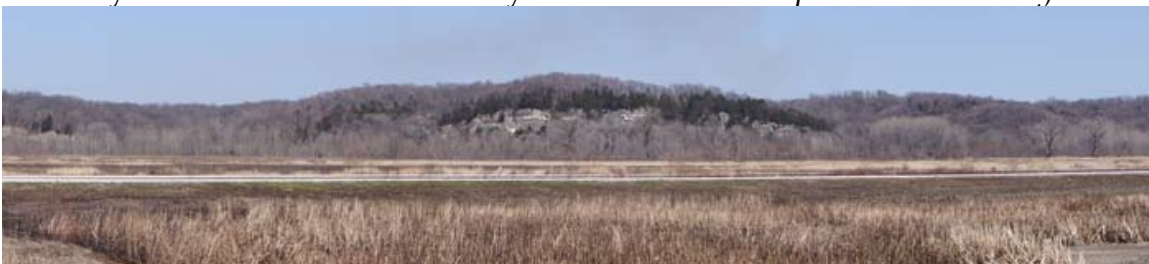
It's certainly a creative idea, though one that, in the words of the Pacific Standard, makes the cats look "a little bit like an Elizabethan court jester who favored flashy 1980s-era neons". It's worth a visit to the website even if you don't have a cat, just to read more about this creative bird-loving entrepreneur (and, of course, to fulfill your daily need for amusing internet cat photos).

- by Eric Reuter

BASIC BIRDING SKILLS CLASS IN APRIL

On Saturday, April 8 2017, Joanna and I will be teaching a Basic Birding Skills class at Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area. This is the third year we've offered this class through the Columbia Area Career Center; past attendees have quite enjoyed it. We focus more on skills than strict ID; how to look at and listen to birds, how to describe bird locations and behaviors to others, binocular choices and use, and so on. April at Eagle Bluffs is a great time to interact with birds, as there tend to be a wide variety of waterfowl, songbirds, and more for us to explore and practice birding skills on. If you or someone you know might be interested, check it out and register at <https://cacc.asapconnected.com/> (look under Games & Hobbies). As of 2/28, there were only three slots left for this year's class.

- photo and text by Eric Reuter



DISTINGUISHING PURPLE FINCHES FROM HOUSE FINCHES

To expand our ease and expertise in distinguishing between similar species, the best approach is to spend a lot of time really looking at, that is **studying**, those “boring” common ones. Learning to automatically note the field marks of the commonly-seen bird trains the eye and brain to be alert to one that is different.

Although Purple Finches have notched tails while House Finch tails are squared at the end, that is often difficult to see, especially on short visits to feeders. Below are the field marks I find most helpful. With a little practice (and much close observation of the more often-seen House Finches) the differences will catch your eye and invite closer looks at potential Purple Finches.



Male and female House Finch

COLOR:

Male Purple Finches are closer to pink, not the red/orange (or even yellowish) tones of House Finches. In fact, I think a better name for Purple Finch is Magenta Finch, both for their color and because it sounds better and it reminds me what color I’m looking for.

The rather plain, **light to medium brown** of the female House Finch gives it an overall “plain jane” look. The female Purple finch is darker overall. This effect is accentuated by the face markings and streaking (see below).

FACE:

Male House Finches have a broad reddish area running from the forehead, over the eye and onto the nape. Purple Finches have a dark pink area between the eyes, but not extending to the side of the head. This dark pink area extends and blends with the crown of the same color. Although the House Finch male has a brown area running back from eye and down to cheek, this is a medium/light brown. The male Purple Finch’s similar area is a heavy and **dark** brown. - continued on next page

DISTINGUISHING PURPLE FINCHES FROM HOUSE FINCHES, CONT.



FACE (Continued):

Female House Finches have little or no obvious darker brown area on a rather plain, light brown face. The female Purple Finch has a **very noticeable** dark brown area with white above and below.

At left, male and female Purple Finch

CROWN:

The male House Finch has a light/medium brown/gray crown (about the same color as that brown face area). The Purple Finch has bright dark pink/magenta crown that is an eye-catcher.

The female House Finch has a crown that blends with the overall plain light/medium brown of the face. The Purple Finch has a dark, somewhat streaky brown crown that is emphasized by that white facial area just below.

BIB: (Males only)

The House Finch has a distinct bib from chin to mid-breast. The bib's red to reddish-orange color matches the color of the face. The Purple Finch bib area is lighter, pinkish, and blends into the belly area without a clear bottom to the bib.

STREAKS:

The male House Finch has **strong brown** streaks (sometimes looking like half spots/half streaks) on flanks and belly, beginning at the bottom of the bib. The male Purple Finch has pink spotty streaks the same color as the bib area, continuing onto flanks, and very few on the belly area.

House Finch females have plain, virtually unstreaked crowns. Purple Finch females have clearly visible dark brown streaks on the crown. Female House Finch flanks and belly streaks are **light/medium brown**, matching the color of the head, upper mantle, and throat. Female Purple Finches have **prominent dark brown** streaking on flanks and upper belly, matching (or even darker than) the brown of the crown, cheek and malar area.

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DISTINGUISHING PURPLE FINCHES FROM HOUSE FINCHES, CONT.



LEFT: Male House Finch. RIGHT: Male Purple Finch

CULMEN:

I put this last, because although it is a “clincher” field mark, it is more challenging for the beginning/intermediate birder to catch and appreciate than the features noted above. The House Finch has a distinctly convex (curved) culmen (upper bill). The Purple Finch’s culmen is almost a straight line from face to tip.

- story and photos provided by Edge Wade; photos are in the public domain

CAS BOARD MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 18, 2017

Attendees: Bill Mees, Kris Hagglund, Lori Turner, John Besser, Lori Hagglund, Nancy Bedan, Eric Reuter, Lottie Bushmann, Laura Hillman, Eric Wood, Allison Vaughn

The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed. Nancy B moved they be approved and Kris H seconded. They were approved by voice vote.

COMO Gives Campaign Final Report: CAS raised about 33% more funds this year over last year. The number of participants also increased from 49 to 66. The campaign was a success and we favor participating again next year. Nancy B suggested that the committee meet one more time for a post-campaign evaluation.

Field Trips: Rocky Forks is the destination for 1/21/17. A Missourian reporter is coming along on that one. We’re joining St. Louis Audubon and going to Riverlands on 1/28/17. Then we go to Whetstone CA on 2/4/17. After that, we have the Great Backyard Bird Count Crawl on 2/18/17.

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CAS BOARD MEETING MINUTES, CONTINUED

CHAT: Eric R proposed streamlining our communications with membership by developing a new website using a program such as Wordpress. This could centralize access to all CAS information, allow for immediate dissemination and easy linking to and sharing of content, and enable viewing on mobile platforms. He will provide a written summary of his suggestions to the board for further discussion.

Four board members met with Danielle Fox, the new Community Conservationist for Columbia. She plans to bring St. Louis Audubon's program on Backyard Bird Habitats to Columbia and asked for 5-10 CAS volunteers to help when she's ready. She wants to create management plans for city properties and asked for info regarding our management plan for CANS, which Bill M produced. The city is starting an Adopt-a-Trail program and is having a training session on the removal of invasive plants and planting of natives. They're starting on the MKT and we're approved to work on the section of trail along Scott's Branch Creek.

John B reports trouble accessing the Albert Children's Area. He's working to resolve it. Also that the bridge at Wild Haven has collapsed.

The Christmas Bird Count had 35 participants who recorded 95 species, which is a good result for a count that had to be rescheduled due to bad weather.

About 24 people attended the general meeting, where they enjoyed a presentation by Lori McCurdy of the Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture.

Respectfully Submitted, Lori Hagglund (Secretary)

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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

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.

2017 FIELD TRIPS

Return of the Twilight Timberdoodle Trek

Date & Time: Saturday, March 4th, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

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

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

Meet at Songbird Station's parking lot at 5:30 pm. The goal for this evening field trip is to hear and see (hopefully!) the twilight mating ritual of the American Woodcock (A.K.A. Timberdoodle). Please bring a flashlight; we'll return to Songbird Station around 7:00 pm. Here's a description of the Timberdoodle's mating behavior from http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Woodcock/id

"American Woodcock spend most of their time hidden in fields and on the forest floor, where they probe for earthworms. On spring nights, males perform very conspicuous displays, giving a buzzy peent call, and then launching into the air. Their erratic display flight includes a distinctive, twittering flight sound and ends with a steep dive back to the ground."

For more tips, check out 'Looking for Mr. Woodcock': <http://goo.gl/ExNoj1>

Moniteau Creek Conservation Area

Date & Time: Saturday, March 11th, 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Departure Point: Northwest corner of the Target wing of the Columbia Mall, 2400 Bernadette Dr., Columbia, MO 65203.

Leader: Lori Turner, loricatrips@gmail.com

Moniteau Creek CA is 844 acres comprised of forest, old fields, cropland, pasture, wetlands, and prairies. We will be walking in from the east entrance. This entrance has the best chance at seeing waterfowl but it is uneven terrain and water-proof boots are recommended.

Gans Creek Recreation Area, Columbia, MO

Date & Time: Saturday, March 18th, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. or noon.

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

Leader: Louise Flenner, (573) 268-7468 or lflenner@hotmail.com

Meet at Songbird Station's parking lot at 8 a.m. We'll carpool to Gans Creek Recreation Area where we'll go on a 3/4-mile walk to see two Great Blue Heron rookeries. There's lots of other land we can ramble on, or we may walk down Gans Creek Road that borders the recreation area where there are lots of birds in the trees along the road. The trip will be 3-4 hours long and will return to Songbird Station for coffee and donuts.

2017 FIELD TRIPS

Three Creeks Conservation Area, Columbia, MO

Date & Time: Saturday, March 25th, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or later.

Departure Point: AC commuter lot (on SE corner of US 63 and Grindstone/New Haven) at 8:00 a.m. or trailhead parking lot off Myers Lane (SE side of Three Creeks CA) at 8:30 a.m.

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

We'll hike a loop through the southeastern part of Three Creeks CA, following Bass and Turkey Creeks while looking and listening for spring arrivals (an early Louisiana Waterthrush, perhaps?) in the area's diverse habitats. In addition to birding, we'll explore the area's spring wildflowers, interesting karst geology, and landscape use history. This trip will likely include some off-trail hiking, particularly in the event of high spring flows along Bass Creek. Also, some interesting features are not along the official trails.

Expect about 3 miles of hiking with elevation changes and possible creek crossings (though not wading); we'll take it slow. We suggest packing snacks or a lunch, as there are several excellent scenic spots for taking refreshments and this hike is worth taking enough time to do right.



Bass Creek; insets show a brachiopod fossil and False Rue Anemone - photos by Joanna Reuter



Columbia Audobon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

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