



The Chat

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

JANUARY 19 CAS MEETING: Charles Schwartz, Missouri's Audubon: An Artist in Nature

- 7:30 – questions for board members about recent activity (see below); 8:00 sharp – program begins
- Unitarian-Universalist Church, 2615 Shepard Blvd
- Joan Stack, Curator of Art Collections, The State Historical Society of Missouri. Joan holds a PhD from Washington University in St. Louis. Among her areas of expertise are George Caleb Bingham, Thomas Hart Benton, and art in Missouri. The exhibit she will be discussing can be viewed in the Main Gallery of The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1020 Lowry Street on the MU campus.

The Web Page of The State Historical Society of Missouri says this of Charles Schwartz and the exhibit: "Artist and biologist Charles Schwartz worked for forty years at the Missouri Department of Conversation and his wildlife drawings are celebrated for their scientific accuracy and aesthetic beauty. This exhibition showcases highlights of the Society's collection of over 500 of Schwartz's drawings." (Many of us may have read Aldo Leopold's Sand County Almanac in an edition illustrated by Charles Schwartz.) Main Gallery hours for visiting the exhibition are Tuesdays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. throughout January.

Summary of Board's Recent Activities

1. Board accepted Bill Mees' offer to build a sign to be placed near the entrance to Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary. (Sign is now in place.)
2. Board accepted Tim James' (MDC) offer to spray a large area of fescue in the Sanctuary. This, too, has been done and the results are quite obvious. We have followed Tim James' advice not to plant in the Spring but to give a growth season to native weeds so that we can see what emerges and then to plant next Fall if to do so seems desirable. This project is an attempt to provide better habitat and seeds for wildlife.
3. Encouraged Edge Wade to explore the possibility of having bird species observed on CAS properties entered, in CACHE-like fashion, onto the ASM website. Edge will keep us informed of the likelihood of this coming about.
4. The Nature Areas committee has reported that the Wild Haven residence has a roof, moisture, and mold problem that needs attention. We have received four estimates for addressing the problem and are arranging for an independent evaluation of the likely long-term condition of the house before bringing a recommendation to the greater membership for a vote.
5. Doug Miller has been upgrading the CAS website; I encourage you to visit it. The

Board has voted that further development should include a link where Audubon members could post bird photos.

6. Allison Vaughn is working with Hillary Carter, an AmeriCorps member serving with Columbia Parks and Rec as part of the Missouri Clean Water Americorps Program. Hillary has sought CAS help in planning informational signs to accompany the restoration of wetland and bottomland woods areas at the former site of Sewer Treatment Plant #2; a 3M grant funds this effort. A trail will be built through the area, with signs placed along the trail giving information about wetlands, native plants and wildlife, including resident and migratory birds.

7. The Board agreed to fund the CAS Feeder Watch Program, overseen by Lisa Schenker, for the school year. Eleven classrooms are participating. We also agreed to send Lottie Bushmann, a primary teacher at Benton Elementary, to the Audubon Field Ornithology Camp at Hog Island, ME, during summer 2011.

8. David Schenker and Howard Hinkel agreed to represent CAS at the Columbia Civic Orchestra concert entitled "A Pastoral Evening." Dolores Clark provided helpful Audubon materials which we passed out before the concert and during intermission. We hope to have attracted several new members by so doing.

PRELIMINARY CBC REPORT – Look for Full Details After the Reports are Finalized

by Susan Hazelwood & Laura Hillman

Laura Hillman, the new co-compiler for the Columbia Audubon Christmas Bird Count, did an outstanding job rounding up participants. 68 people in 16 teams traveled over 600 miles by car and foot. This count circle has 13 territories and each territory ran at least one but sometimes two or three parties (= 3-12 people/territory). The large number of participants, many of whom walked miles and miles, and the low wind contributed to a preliminary record high count of 108 species!! (Assuming no errors in our spreadsheet's formulas.) If this record high number stands it will be a record high CBC count for the entire state and far outshines the target of reaching 100 species we've had for years and years.

We didn't find any real unusual bird species but we found almost all possible species for this time of year. Although that written we missed seeing any swans, pelicans, or shrikes, all of which have been seen irregularly in years past. Some of the better birds for this count circle were a heard-only Northern Saw-whet Owl, several Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, Eastern Towhee, Brewer's and Rusty Blackbirds, a Baltimore Oriole, Virginia Rail, Sora, and two Great-tailed Grackles. It was noteworthy that 43 Eastern Screech-owls were heard or seen in just one of our 13 territories. Twenty of them were along the Katy Trail and 23 were on near-by Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area. We think this year's count of Eastern Screech-owls will also set another record for the entire state. Also noteworthy were the 30,000+ ducks, including nine American Black Ducks, that settled into a field near the turn from Route K to Star School Rd (entrance area to Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area) at the end of the day. Then there was the roost of 55 Turkey Vultures located at 7:30 am based on directions provided by Dick Luecke.

Needless to say everyone arrived at the compiling session and chili dinner with smiles on their faces reporting on their respective "good days." Several teams reported they had gotten a record high species count for their individual territories. I guess it just all added up. Yup, fun was had by all and the warm chili was a delightful conclusion to our day of birding and fellowship. About 50 people attended the Chili supper. Edge and Jerry Wade, Glen Pickett, and Nicholas March provided wonderful chili made of buffalo, venison, and vegetables. Desserts were abundant and everyone was well fed.

But it's not over: Allison Vaughn will put miles and hours and people into the computer and send them to Audubon who will generate an official report for our circle. Our data will then be combined with all the other circles in the country and all the previous Christmas Bird Counts to tell us the state of our birds. We can all rest happy knowing that we have contributed to bird science. Then we can start getting ready for next year's Christmas Bird Count.

**COLUMBIA AUDUBON SOCIETY FIELD TRIPS – January, 2011**

Field trips are to find, enjoy and learn about wild birds. These free trips are appropriate for adults and children 9 years old and above who have shown an interest in birds. Children aged 9 through 11 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

January 11, Tuesday morning: COLUMBIA AUDUBON NATURE SANCTUARY

Leaders: Bill Mees & Howard Hinkel 445-7781

Meet: 8:30 a.m. at the CANS entrance at the stub of Cunningham Dr., off Bray. Bray goes west from Fairview Rd. between Rollins and Chapel Hill.

We will walk the new trail, learn about the nature sanctuary, and identify and count the birds seen to add to the developing CANS checklist. Beginners are especially welcome. Experienced birders will help with i.d., binocular use, and offer birding tips.

We anticipate finishing the walk about 10:00.

January 22, Saturday: WHETSTONE CREEK CA, Callaway Co.

Leader: Edge Wade 445-6697

Leaving at 8:30 from Patricia's Supermarket lot on I-70 Drive SE and Keene St.

Lunch will be at Marlene's in Williamsburg before our return to Columbia by 2:00.

This is another attempt to find a wintering Northern Shrike and to see what this large area hosts in the winter.

January 27, Thursday: ROCKY FORK LAKES CA

Leader: Edge Wade 445-6697

Leaving at 8:30 from Patricia's Supermarket lot on I-70 Drive SE and Keene St.

We will drive and walk a portion of the area, searching for wintering species and looking hard for rarities such as redpolls and crossbills.

We'll be done before lunch. The group may opt to have lunch together at a local eatery.

February 15, Thursday morning**COLUMBIA AUDUBON NATURE SANCTUARY**

Leaders: Bill Mees & Howard Hinkel 445-7781

Meet: 8:30 a.m. at the CANS entrance at the stub of Cunningham Dr., off Bray. Bray goes west from Fairview Rd. between Rollins and Chapel Hill.

We will walk the new trail, learn about the nature sanctuary, and identify and count the birds seen to add to the developing CANS checklist. Beginners are especially welcome. Experienced birders will help with i.d., binocular use, and offer birding tips.

We anticipate finishing the walk about 10:00.

**STATEWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT**

The 9th Annual Summit, sponsored by the Missouri Votes Conservation Education Fund (MVCEF), will be in Columbia at the MU Natural Resources Building on Sat, Jan. 22nd, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For details and to register for the conference go to: <http://movotesconservation.org/MVCEFsummit.aspx>.

Contact David Bedan (573-445-9834) or Executive Director, Liz Forrestal info@movotesconservation.org, (314-725-9494) if you have any questions.

SANCTUARY BRIDGES ARE IN!!

Jordan Asher, Eagle Scout candidate from Troop #52, along with his father, Ken, and a number of other members of the troop have constructed two bridges on the Spring Creek Nature Trail at our Audubon Nature Sanctuary. Troop #52 is sponsored by Grace Bible Church.

Construction of the bridges consists of used utility poles across the waterway and 2" x 6" treated boards across the poles. The poles are resting on large rocks at each end. Crushed rock provides a ramp-like smooth walkway from the trail surface to the bridges.

Bill Mees and Cleo Kottwitz have provided supervision from Audubon.

TIPS FOR TYROS: Your Field Guide: Read It and Don't Leave Home Without It
Edge Wade

Exhaustive research has confirmed that all field guides suffer the same deficiency: their contents are not absorbed via osmosis.

A multitude of beginning birders have participated in a decades-long experiment. One group read their field guides; a second group sat on their guides in a car or carried them in a shoulder bag on all field trips. Only members of the first group demonstrated increased long-term useful birding knowledge. In short, if you want to be a better birder, read your guide.

It doesn't matter which guide you have, as long as it's for eastern or all of North America, as long as it isn't more than five years old, and as long as you're familiar with the contents.

For birds, "eastern" means everything from the east coast to the Rocky Mountains. You'll soon realize that a field guide "just for Missouri" is inadequate, because this type of booklet does not have the full set of species you'll encounter and does not provide the full range of information you will soon want to know about the birds you find.

Why not use the old guide picked up at a garage sale? "Official" bird names change; changes in taxonomy have given us two or three species that were considered one species in older editions; and now and then, a bird flies

into North America for the first time and takes its place in the checklist and in the field guides in hopes of more to be seen.

Don't sit down with the idea of reading your field guide cover to cover like a best-selling novel. And don't try butterfly flitting from section to section in an effort to skim the most useful facts. Unless you have a special gift, there is too much information in there to absorb even by attentive reading in several short sessions.

Some suggestions to get the most useful material from your field guide:

1. Read the material in the front of the book, the not-so-interesting stuff before the species descriptions begin. This will tell you how to use your guide most effectively.
2. If the front section of your field guide has one or more diagrams of the parts of a bird, study them. Take it easy, working first with the head, then further down the body. Work to memorize the names of the parts and become familiar with where those parts are found. This is valuable information to have in your brain's toolbox when you see a live bird because it alerts you to what to look for to distinguish similar species.
3. Choose a family of birds to study. Example: Thrushes. You'll find several members of the thrush family are resident in Missouri (Eastern Bluebird, American Robin) or pass through in migration (Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Hermit Thrush, Veery). Concentrate on these species. Look for their similarities as well as their differences. Get to know this family of birds well, then begin studying another family, but remember to review these now and then to keep the knowledge fresh.
4. BEFORE you go out on a birding adventure, even if it is just to a park down the street, think about what birds you expect to see and some species that may be present that you hope to see, then look through your field guide to refresh your mind with these birds' field marks and behavior.
5. Take your field guide with you. Carry it with you. It doesn't do you any good in the field if it is at home or on the car seat.

CAS BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

* indicates a voting member

*President : Howard Hinkel
(Acting)

*Vice-President: Alice Reese

*Secretary: Bonnie Heidy

*Treasurer: Eric Seaman

Directors: *Jean Graebner

*Laura Hillman

*Bill Mees

Membership: *Eric Seaman (see above)

Communication: *Allison Vaughn

Chat Editor: David Schenker

Website: Douglas Miller

E-mail List: Jim Gast

Outreach & Education: Lisa Schenker

Conservation: *Dave Bedan

Field Trips: *Edge Wade

Natural Areas: *John Besser (Wild Haven)

Harold Anderson (Albert Area)

Cleo Kottwitz (CANS)

Hospitality: Dolores Clark

Bird Counts: Laura Hillman (see above)
Allison Vaughn (see above)

Past President: *Vanessa Melton

THE 14th ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

With a very successful and enjoyable Christmas Bird Count behind us, we can look forward to the 14th annual GBBC. The Great Backyard Bird Count will take place from February 18 – 21. To learn more about the GBBC, including information about how to participate therein, how to enter data, and even how to enter the photo contest you may visit www.birdcount.org. This event has always

provided a good way to get family, community groups, and schools involved in providing helpful information about birds in specific areas. “Backyard” is flexible enough to include the literal backyard but also local parks and nature areas. The time commitment may be anywhere from 15 minutes to all day, for one day or for all four days. The purpose: “counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent”; the GBBC takes place in Canada as well.

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Columbia Audubon Society Membership and Dues Form

Local annual dues are voluntary. Dues support Columbia Audubon Society Functions such as *The Chat* and Christmas Bird Count. The membership is for 12 months. Make checks payable to the Columbia Audubon Society and mail this form to P. O. Box

1331, Columbia, MO 65205. Check a category: Student (\$10.00) Individual (\$15.00) Family (\$25.00) Donor (\$50.00) Friend/Business sponsor (\$300.00)

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