

The Chat

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Columbia Audubon Society

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<http://columbia-audubon.org/>

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

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

by Howard Hinkel

The Snowy Owl phenomenon in Missouri has inspired wonderful descriptive responses, both immediately on seeing and in retrospect. Although not about our SNOWs, this passage from Mary Oliver's "White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field" conveys a sense of the beauty, grace, and power of the species. It popped into my mind when a Columbia group was admiring the Owl perched on a utility pole near the eastern Holiday Inn; after nearly 30 minutes it left its perch, spread those magnificent wings, and flew perhaps 30 yards, landing in a ditch where it stayed for about 10 minutes, snacking I suppose. Soon it perched on another utility pole, looking "like a little lighthouse."

Coming down
out of the freezing sky
with its depths of light,
like an angel,
or a buddha with wings,
it was beautiful
and accurate,

striking the snow and whatever was there
with a force that left the imprint
of the tips of its wings—
five feet apart—and the grabbing
thrust of its feet,
and the indentation of what had been running
through the white valleys
of the snow—

and then it rose, gracefully,
and flew back to the frozen marshes,
to lurk there,
like a little lighthouse,
in the blue shadows--

Monthly meeting

Wednesday—February 15, 2012—7:00 pm.
Unitarian Universalist Church

by Julie Fisher

On February 15th, Columbia Audubon Society will host Brad Jacobs who will speak about his bird conservation work in Mexico and Central America.

Although his efforts south of the border may seem far removed from Missouri's birds, we need to keep in mind many of our birds go south for the winter.

Therefore, conservation in Missouri and North America is only half the story. Brad will tell us about the other half.

Brad received his B.S from Cornell University in 1969; He then spent 3 years in the U.S. Peace Corps, teaching conservation to park wardens in South America. He began his career with Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) in 1987 while attending graduate school at Mizzou. In 1997 he co-authored Missouri Breeding Bird Atlas, and in 2001 he authored Birds in Missouri.

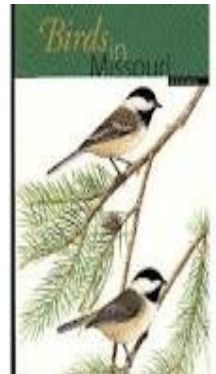
Brad has served as both President and a board member of Columbia Audubon Society.

Please join us for an informative discussion of bird conservation in Mexico and Central American and how it impacts us here in Missouri.

Hosts for the meeting are Nancy Bedan and Lottie Bushmann.



Brad will sign copies of your books at the February meeting



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TIPS FOR TYROS

by Edge Wade

Becoming a Better Birder in Lousy Weather

There are many ways we can improve our birding skills. This time of the year, we are faced with many days of rain, snow, ice, wind...days in which birding beyond the feeders can be difficult. These are the days we can use improving skills in other ways. Here are some suggestions.

Study ducks in your field guide. Look at those "ducks in flight" pages. Work on learning the keys to separating similar species. For example, what separates a Greater Scaup from a Lesser Scaup? What are the features of the three scoter species? How can we separate a Common Merganser from a Red-breasted Merganser?

Think spring. Think warblers. Pick two or three species to study...no more, just two or three. Learn the field marks, learn when in migration to expect them. Listen to and learn their vocalizations. Another week, pick another two or three and repeat the process.

Explore internet resources. Select a species you might see in winter or early spring, then google it. Read several accounts about the same species--its occurrence in Missouri, its overall range, its life history, etc.

Read a book about birding adventures. There are several birder biographies, big year tales, and grand yarns to choose from. In addition to the enjoyment of it, you'll pick up birding information for future use. This may include where to bird, identification techniques, logistical information, and many details of how to make the most of your field time.

Use the really bad weather days learning things to improve your skills and increase the fun on the days you can get out.

One more tip: Really lousy weather often brings in special birds. As soon as a front passes, if you can, get out and check what came in on the wind!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

by Laura Hillman

On Saturday, December 17, 2011, 76 energetic birders hit a seven mile radius circle around Columbia and found 103 species and 5,072,767 birds.

Of course 3,500,530 were Common Grackles and 1,508,534 were Red-winged Blackbirds who formed rivers of blackbirds.

Owls were also plentiful. After finding lots of Screech Owls in area five last year, especially along the Katy Trail, Paul McKenzie made it a point to find them again this year.

Starting a 3:00 a.m. his team found 50 (count total 52) Screech Owls. They also found 19 Great Horn Owls for a count total of 33. Red shouldered Hawks

were also out in abundance with a total of 47, a full third that of the Red Tailed hawks (159). Susan Hazelwood noted that it wasn't that long ago that their presence had to be documented.

We were missing some of the usual northern species - no Red Breasted Nuthatches and only two Pine Siskin. Nor were there many of our friends who go south still hanging around, like Sora or Wood Ducks. So, is global warming having an effect? Who knows? All we know is that 76 birders worked hard and provided lots of data to put into the CBC computers with all the other counts' data to see what patterns emerge. The weather was good, the chili at the chili supper was great, and the company was **exceptional**.

Editor's note: A long time member tells me CAS has participated in the Christmas Bird Count every year since 1963!



FIELD TRIPS

Information about these trips is posted on the Audubon Society of Missouri website Event Calendar: <http://www.mobirds.org/ASM/Calendar.aspx>

Columbia Audubon Society field trips are free and open to anyone interested in birds. All trips are probably "a go" even in light rain. If in doubt, contact a trip leader the evening before or one hour before the scheduled meeting time.

These trips are appropriate for adults, teens, and children (accompanied by an adult) who have demonstrated an active interest in birds. Few children under age nine will benefit from these walking trips.



For a winter field trip, bring: Binoculars, field guide, water, layered clothing (remember hat and gloves).

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012 - 8 a.m.

Location : Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary

Details : Trip co-sponsored with Songbird Station. Beginners especially welcome. Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m. to caravan to the sanctuary or join us at the sanctuary at the Cunningham stub entrance off Bray at 8:30 a.m. We'll return to the store about 10:00 for coffee and donuts

Contact Person : Leader Bill Mees 445-7781 and Howard Hinkel

SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2012 - 8 a.m.

Location : Hinkson Woods Conservation Area (meet at Songbird Station)

Details : Trip co-sponsored with Songbird Station. Beginners especially welcome. Meet at Songbird Station at 8:00 a.m. to caravan over to the Twin Lakes parking lot. We'll walk around Twin Lakes and then a short distance west on the MKT trail to Hinkson Woods CA. Wear sturdy shoes and dress for the weather. Return to the store about 10:00 for coffee and donuts.

Contact persons: Lottie Bushmann 573-808-0661 bushmann5@mchsi.com or Laura Pintel 446-0920 lpintel@hotmail.com

Columbia Audubon Society wants to thank our corporate sponsor:

Songbird Station

Songbird Station invites everyone to "Café Songbird" on Thursday February 9th at 10:30 a.m. to share bird stories and photos and to hear what other backyard birders are seeing in their yards. Coffee and refreshments will be provided as fellow birders swap stories. Songbird Station is located at 2010 Chapel Plaza Court, Suite C, Columbia MO 65203. Phone 573-446-5941 or on the web at www.songbirdstation.com

**Hog Island, Maine
June 2011
by Lottie Bushmann**



Hog Island Audubon Center, a property of National Audubon, has been a landmark of environmental education since 1936.

Last summer I had the privilege of attending the Field Ornithology camp on Hog Island. It was an incredible opportunity, and I enjoyed every moment of it. After arriving on the ferry, I moved my gear into the Queen Mary loft, where I shared a room with 5 other women.

Each day would start with a 5:45 a.m. bird hike. The day was filled with field trips and dinner was followed each evening by a presentation by one of the birding experts that served as our counselors. Field trips went to a variety of habitats, such as islands, savanna, marsh, forest, a heron rookery, and blueberry fields. Presentations covered bird banding, ornithology 101 (greatly condensed), audio bird recordings, holistic birding, landscaping for birds, optics, flora and fauna of all our hikes, and avian flight calling behavior during migration.

One message we received loud and clear that week was to drink “shade-grown coffee” and to look for coffee with the “bird-friendly” label. By doing this we support the industry that doesn’t cut down the trees that “our” birds need each winter. It is a way coffee drinkers can contribute to the well-being of migratory birds that winter south of us in coffee growing countries. Buying shade grown coffee discourages the destruction of rain forest where our birds winter. It is a simple step, yet it can have a big payback.

It was a very educationally rich experience for me and helped increase my skills in all areas. I met with groups of educators to share ideas about bringing the wonder of birds (and nature) to children. We shared tips for games on bird identification as well as teaching binocular skills to all ages. We also shared literature and sources for finding materials.

I came home invigorated and driven to help my students find and enjoy the wonder of nature. In my classroom, I work with my students to learn at least 10 different bird calls. We set up a feeder outside our room to collect data for Project Feederwatch and make our contribution to citizen science. I use high-quality children’s literature to teach about different birds. We also notice birds that we can see from our playground, and on every walking field trip we pay attention to the birds around us. Ultimately, my goal is to have my students be curious about the world around them. Birds are just so perfect for engaging children in their natural world.

This summer I will be returning to Hog Island to attend the Educator’s Week as a camp volunteer. I look forward to networking with teachers from across the U.S. about further ideas about how to connect students with nature.

Editor’s note: Over the years, Columbia Audubon Society has sponsored several educators who have attended National Audubon programs in Wyoming, Wisconsin and most recently Hog Island in Maine. Lottie is the latest educator to receive CAS support. What a wonderful investment in the education of our youth.

MISSION STATEMENT
THE COLUMBIA AUDUBON SOCIETY WAS ORGANIZED IN 1958 AND SERVES SIX MID-MISSOURI COUNTIES: AUDRAIN, BOONE, COOPER, HOWARD, MONROE AND RANDOLPH. OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE AND RESTORE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS, FOCUSING ON BIRDS, AND OTHER WILDLIFE, AND THEIR HABITATS FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY AND THE EARTH'S BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.

Our name, Columbia Audubon Society, infers a membership composed of bird watchers. But the mission statement above doesn't even mention bird watching. How then, does CAS measure up to the mission statement? Be assured, there is more to CAS than "Bird Watching."

On October 22, 2011 *Stream Team 4330*, organized by John Holmes in cooperation with CAS had its first Scott's Branch Creek event. Twenty intrepid cleaners, mostly CAS members, swept not only the portion of the creek within Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary (CANS), but also that portion within City owned Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary. Future *Stream Team 4330* activities will focus on the health of the creek and improving watershed runoff.

CAS makes an impact toward fulfilling its mission statement through various educational initiatives. The past quarter century, CAS has sponsored numerous school teachers who attended National Audubon programs. These educators were then able to share their knowledge with students who are the future of nature conservation (see Lottie Bushmann's article on page 4.)

CAS educates its members and guests through timely and thought provoking programs, coordinated this year by Vice President Julie Fisher. This year's monthly programs focus on the conservation portion of our mission.

CAS is partnering with Betsy Blake (Conservation Education Coordinator with MDC), Mike Szydlowski (Science Curriculum Coordinator for Columbia Public Schools) and Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO) for a series of programs. This summer, CANS will serve as the site for a teacher in-service program focused on the school district's science curriculum. These attendees will then be among the leaders for a fall program, also at CANS, for students in second grade. Eleven schools have already expressed excited interest in participating. This has always been the CAS vision for CANS to serve as our community's hub for nature education.

Coming even sooner, on April 21, 2012 (rain date April 28th) CAS is partnering with Columbia Parks and Recreation for a **Back to Nature Spring Cleanup** at the two adjoining nature sanctuaries. Habitat restoration, removing old farm fencing, and autumn olive and bush honeysuckle, will be among the day's goals. Anyone and everyone interested in the out-of-doors and nature is encourage to participate. This clean up and open house will also introduce the community to Columbia's only nature sanctuaries.

These events demonstrate CAS is more than "bird watching." Our members are planning and participating in activities designed to identify wildlife trends, restore and preserve habitat and ecosystems, and provide nature education. CAS encourages you to join us as we plan the next "mission" adventure.

Article submitted by Bill Mees

Mini-book Review



Editor's note: as a former school librarian, I am still charmed by children's books. This children's book, which caught my eye at Songbird Station, is especially endearing because of my bird watching friends and the squirrels that frustrate them so!

Those Darn Squirrels by Adam Rubin

Old Man Fookwire is a grump. The only thing he likes to do is paint pictures of the birds that visit his backyard. The problem is, they fly south every winter, leaving him sad and lonely. So he decides to get them to stay by putting up beautiful birdfeeders filled with seeds and berries. Unfortunately, the squirrels like the treats, too, and make a daring raid on the feeders. The conflict escalates—until the birds depart (as usual), and the squirrels come up with a plan that completely charms the old grump.

Synopsis from: www.barnesandnoble.com



Mark your calendars for these upcoming events of interest

February 9: Café Songbird

February 15: CAS Monthly Meeting

February 21: Field Trip

March 3: Field Trip

April 18: CAS Monthly Meeting

April 21: Back to Nature Spring Clean up

April 27-29: ASM Spring Meeting, Joplin MO

**MDC
Natural Events Calendar 2012
suggests in February...**

Great Horned Owls are incubating eggs.

Screech owls search for mates this month



CAS BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

* indicates a voting member

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<p>*Vice-President Julie Fisher <i>julie8401@tranquility.net</i></p>	<p>Communication *Allison Vaughn <i>allisonjv@yahoo.com</i></p>	<p>Natural Areas *John Besser (Wild Haven) <i>jbesser1@gmail.com</i> Nicholas March (Albert Area) Bill Mees (Columbia Audubon Nature Sanctuary)</p>
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