



Missouri Master Naturalist



Our mission is to engage Missourians in the stewardship of our state's natural resources through science-based education and volunteer community service.

February 2011

Vol. 1

Issue 1

A message from Faith!.....

Greetings, Great Rivers members! New year, newsletter! Here's the first issue of the Great Rivers Gazette - a forum for sharing info about chapter activities and interests. Toni Vafi and I are your editing/production team, but we rely on you members to report on your activities (and we love pictures!) Please send brief articles to me at faithw@charter.net. Or send me the e-mail or phone number of a contact that I can 'interview'. Toni will put it all together in an attractive format and we'll send it out on a quarterly basis - Feb, May, Aug, Nov.

We hope the newsletter will promote participation within the chapter and serve as a record of our activities. (The calendar is still the best way to promote upcoming events because it is updated more frequently.) This is very much a work in progress and hopefully our methods and product will evolve as we go along.

Master Naturalists Turn Out in Force for Eagle Days- January 13-16



Among the many Missouri Master Naturalists who volunteered (and attended) the Eagle Days event at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge are Jennifer Formation, Cori Westcott and Gina Staehle, pictured here. Eagle sadly is unidentified. Much fun was had by all! (Thanks to Cori for the photos!)

New members join veterans in Bird and Mammal Surveys at Forest Park Capstone Site on November 20, 2010

Great Rivers chapter members met for an orientation session of the Capstone site for new members, followed by bird and mammal surveys at the site. It was a mostly sunny morning, with high clouds. The temperature was in the mid 40s with a slight breeze.

Observations were made at the three sites chosen for the initial bird survey:

Site 1: Wetland area - triangle-shaped piece of ground near the intersection of Union & Theater streets.

Site 2: Bridge area by the stream in the middle of the prairie restoration area. Observations taken from the bridge.

Site 3: Edge of the site opposite the intersection of Summit & Union streets. Observations taken near the small tree.

At each site, observations were made for 10 minutes. Only birds seen and/or heard within the Project site were recorded. As with the initial survey, birds flying over the site were included.

Observations made by multiple team members were consolidated at the end of each observation period. If one team member observed a bird, it was recorded along with the number. If more than one team member observed a bird, the highest count was recorded.

At the Wetland site, the group witnessed a flyover of about 100 snow geese, including both blue and white morphs. A robin was identified by sound.

At the Bridge site, the most varied sightings were made, including hairy woodpeckers, tree sparrows, and cardinal, chickadee, Cooper's hawk, junco, robin and crow individuals.

At the Woodland site the group saw juncos and sparrows, including one song sparrow.

While performing the bird survey, team members also looked for presence of mammals on the site, including tracks and nests, but saw only squirrels and squirrel nests.

Detailed survey results, including observations made by Bill Hoss on various dates from July 18 to September 21, 2010, are available on the Chapter website under the Capstone tab.

Information provided by Sherri Schmidt

Great Rivers members will participate in **The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** this year on **Friday, Feb. 18 and Saturday, Feb. 19** at our Capstone project site (weather permitting). Starting at 10 am each day, we will count birds for at least 15 minutes at each of the three bird survey locations. Sherri Schmidt will send the information to the GBBC website (www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) and compile the survey information for our Chapter website. For more information, contact Sherri at sgschmidt@prodigy.net.

Volunteers Needed for Rain Garden Project

Dates: Tuesday, March 1, 11am-3pm and Friday, April 1, 11am to 3pm

Location: Firehouse #2 at Shaftesbury and North & South Road in University City

Contact: Eric Karch 314-603-8834

Two work parties are scheduled as part of a Rain Garden Installation and Mentoring Project planned by the River des Peres Watershed Coalition. The mentoring project with upper class students (9th-12th grades) from Crossroads College Preparatory School is an extension of ongoing habitat restoration along the River des Peres and a Firehouse Beautification. The experiential learning project will teach students about storm water pollution by designing and building a rain garden to address an erosion problem.

The first two meetings involved learning about combined sewer overflows, conducting soil percolation tests, meeting with landscaping professionals, and identifying utilities. The group decided to build two rain gardens in series - one shallow shade garden and one deeper sunny garden - that will allow a full range of conditions and a nice diversity of plants.



On March 1, the group will excavate the gardens and firm up the planting plan. As the excavation will be done with hand shovels, 10 to 15 people are needed to complete the work within the time frame. There are currently 8 students participating so volunteers are especially needed on this date. On April 1, we will plant the gardens and celebrate completion of the project.

There will also be an educational **Rain Garden Block Party** that is open to the public on Sunday, May 15 from noon to 3pm at Oakbrook Park in University City to promote rain garden installation as a way to reduce pollution in creeks and to create habitat. The event will feature a garden tour, information booths and on-site master gardeners, as well as food, entertainment and native plant giveaways.

Info provided by Eric Karch 314-603-8834

Of Interest to Teachers

The **St. Louis Audubon Society** (SLAS) offers scholarships to middle school and high school science teachers for professional development workshops in ecology and outdoor learning through local organizations such as Forest Park Forever, Missouri Botanical Garden, and others. SLAS also offers scholarships to Educator's Week at **Hog Island Audubon Camp** in Maine, which will be held July 14-19, 2011. Go to www.stlouisaudubon.org or contact Sue Schoening at 314-569-2870,

Chapter Updates

*Congratulations and thanks to **Michael Meredith** and **Sue Schoening** for serving as chapter president and treasurer, respectively, after their election at our Nov. 16 meeting. It was also announced that **Pam Wilcox** was named by the Board to be an At-Large board member. Check the website for the names of other officers and committee chairs and for the chapter directory.

*A festive group of around 25 chapter members shared delicious potluck dishes and a fun gift exchange at our Dec. 10 Christmas party at the **Green Center**.

*If you haven't paid 2011 Chapter dues, you can still send a check for \$10, made out to the University of Missouri Extension, to Sue Schoening, Treasurer, 2 Mosley Acres, St. Louis, MO 63141.

***Great Rivers Chapter** welcomes 8 new members from the 2010 MMN graduating class! They are Claire Beaudoin, Pamela Fournier, Jennifer Grable, Chris Kalter, Ray Kirkman, Margaret Lilly, Mary Stevens and Cori Westcott. Be sure to get to know them!

***Glen Horton** proposed a new honeysuckle removal project at Southwest Middle School in the Parkway District. He plans an initial workday in late February or early March.

*Thanks to **James Traeger** for his presentation on **The Secret Life of Ants** at our January meeting. Programs for the next few months are: February - Art Journaling/Sketching, Mary Nichols; March - Insects of St. Louis, Yvonne Homeyer; and April - Lichens of Missouri - Maxine Stone.

All 2011 meetings will be at the Powder Valley Nature Center at 6:30pm on the 3rd Tuesday of the month unless otherwise noted. Next meeting is February 15.

Upcoming Events

A **trivia night** to benefit Ozark Trails Association will be held **Saturday Feb. 12** at 7pm at the Elks Lodge in Affton, 6330 Heege Road. Tickets are \$20, and you will need cash to participate in a silent auction, 50/50 cash drawings, raffle tickets, etc. Contact Renee Benage at rbenage@sbcglobal.net if you would like to be part of her table(s).

Eastern MO Beekeepers Association Workshop will be held at Maritz in Fenton on **Feb. 12, 8am-5pm**. Cost is \$75. For information and to register, go to <http://www.easternmobeekkeepers.com/>. Yvonne Von Der Ahe will be having a 2-hour beekeeping class at Meramec Community College. Contact her for more information.

Meramec Community College is offering a two-session **Spring Butterflies class** including a classroom session from 6pm-8pm on **April 12** and a field trip to Busch Conservation Area pm Saturday, **April 16**, 10am-noon. Cost is \$19.

(Upcoming Events cont.)

***The Nature Institute** is hosting a presentation by Dr. Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in our Gardens* on Saturday, **February 19th at 11:00 a.m.** at The Nature Institute, Talahi Lodge, 2213 S. Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL. The event is free and open to the public. Dr. Tallamy's book will be available for purchase and signing. For more information about him and his work, visit <http://bringingnaturehome.net>



Don't eat that cRAWdad

Who would have thought eating raw crayfish would be hazardous to your health? In Missouri the past year, five cases of a parasitic infection caused by the parasite *paragonimus kellicotti* have been diagnosed. Found in some species of crayfish in Missouri such as the spothanded crayfish (*orconecte spunctimanu*), this parasite causes a dangerous infection, if ingested by mammals, such as dogs, cats, and humans.

Cooking destroys the parasite. But when mammals consume raw crayfish, the illness *paragonimiasis* is the result. It can cause fever, cough, chest pain, shortness of breath

and extreme fatigue.

Once inside the human intestine, the infectious-stage larva leave their protective cysts and migrate to the lungs where it takes about two weeks for them to develop into sexually mature adult worms, or flukes. The larva can also migrate to the brain, causing severe headaches or vision problems, or under the skin, appearing as small, moving nodules.

The infection is generally not fatal and easily treated, if it is recognized..

Excerpts from article in Winter 2010 Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine Outlook Magazine. Go to outlook.wustl.edu for full article and downloadable poster.

Mark Katich

And finally....

Happy Valentine's Day!



The next issue of the newsletter is planned for early May. Please send news items to faithw@charter.net by April 30

