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

### Hidden Creek Savanna Shows Results from Great Rivers Chapter Efforts

In the year and a half since Great Rivers MMNs adopted an area in the northeast corner of Forest Park as a capstone project, a great deal has been accomplished. We named the area Hidden Creek Savanna and a sign will be placed soon identifying the area and its sponsors -- Forest Park Forever and the Great Rivers Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists.

The plants from our first planting (spring of '10) are flourishing, and many are blooming this year. A long list of native plants is growing on the site; an indication of the health of the site is the proliferation of rattlesnake master, which is a very conservative plant.

Sherri Schmidt and her groups of volunteers have conducted plant, bird, mammal, and butterfly surveys last year and this, and Sue Schoening and her helpers have conducted water quality and invertebrate surveys in the spring and fall of last year and the spring of this year. Sherri reports that the last bird survey (Oct. 7) saw few birds, possibly because of a red-tailed hawk circling the area. But the group, including Pam Fournier, Jen Grable, Bill Hoss and Sherri, noted a wide variety of plants, much in bloom, bees and butterflies, and an arboreal orb weaver spider. These surveys are ongoing, and future surveys can be found on the calendar. (The results of all surveys can be found on the chapter's website.)

A group of GR MMNs led by Michael Wohlstadter completed a planting on Oct. 13 and 15. Claire Beaudoin, Kathleen Evans, Glen Horton, Beth Lewandowski, Margaret Lilly, John Powers, Sue Schoening, and Pam Wilcox joined Michael to plant wild ginger, Solomon's seal, Ozark blue star, pink milkweed, false dragonhead and culver's root in the stream corridor and wetland portion of the site.

Other efforts include removal of maples and other woody plants, and seed collection.  
(Seed collection dates are Nov. 4 and 12 at 9a.m.)

In addition, an Eagle Scout as his community service project rebuilt the stone bridge.

**PICTURES – Lovely Pictures From The Capstone Site**



**The stone bridge over the creek taken on a rainy day last April**



**A general view of the site looking towards the Central Fields**



**Royal catchfly (reddish- the tall growths in the background are maples)**



**A cluster of Bee balm**

## **Notes On The Joplin Conference** from **President Michael Meredith**

By any measure, the Joplin Conference was a solid success and well worth the drive down I-44! We sent sixteen Master Naturalists from the Great Rivers Chapter and no one was disappointed. From the preconference to the largest variety of advanced training sessions that has ever been offered, the learning opportunities were all top notch, with something of interest for all MMNs; from outdoor activities like muzzle loading, to in-depth conservation and biosphere topics, and even personal interpretation skills. There was also an Ozark Float trip for a select few. As a decided improvement over previous conferences (yes... even ours) the Friday night presentation of all the chapters' activities and accomplishments was fast paced and skillfully presented by Syd Hime.

Throughout the conference, members of the Chert Glades chapter were everywhere as hosts and guides, committed to making our experience as valuable as can be. All in all, the conference featured almost 200 registered participants.

One notable highlight had to be the Saturday evening keynote entertainment, a performance by Native American flutist John Two Hawks. Many of us purchased his CDs if you decide that you'd like to hear some of his work.

Lastly, the \*elephant in the room\*, the tornado that claimed at least two members' homes and leveled 7000 others, was acknowledged without diving into a pity party. A large satellite photo of the devastation was prominently displayed in the lobby of the Holiday Inn that hosted the main gatherings and many educational sessions. It offered silent testimony both to the extent of the disaster, as well as directions to the devastation zone. Many of our numbers saw fit to drive through the area on their own, just

to get a personal look at the havoc that nature can unleash.

Thank you Joplin! Thank you for putting on a wonderful conference! And thank you for showing the rest of the country how Missouriians survive!

The responsibility for following this year's event with an equally enjoyable one falls to the Lake Ozark Chapter. The date is tentatively set for the weekend of September 22nd, so try to keep that weekend free. Something tells me that while this will be a hard act to follow, next year will be an equally impressive success.

### **Audubon, MMNs and Honeysuckle**

This marks the third year that St. Louis Audubon has benefited from a grant by Toyota's Together Green Foundation, that funds a number of habitat restoration projects at St. Louis County's Creve Coeur Park and Cuivre River State Park. Saturday, October 22nd, found some of us at Creve Coeur Park removing honeysuckle, planting native trees and shrubs, and protecting the new plants (hopefully) with deer repellent.

The plantings came from Forrest Keeling Nursery near Elsberry, but the labor was all local. A number of Great Rivers Master Naturalists worked with St. Louis Audubon, students from Parkway North and Pattonville high schools; with supervision and guidance from Dennis Hogan (St. Louis County Parks' lone naturalist) and Mitch Leachman (executive director of St. Louis Audubon).

The deer repellent is an interesting concept. Dried pig blood is housed in a plastic, ventilated container. The hypothesis is that the smell of a dead animal will offend the herbivore deer. Interested in trying it out yourself? Get it at the nearby Ace Hardware.  
*(submitted by Michael Meredith)*

## Comment on the Keystone Pipeline

A recently issued 1000 page report by the State Department regarding the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry tar sands oil from the fields in Alberta Canada, to refineries in Port Arthur, Texas, states that the pipeline, in traveling across six states, would have “no significant environmental impacts on most natural resources”.

A monster pipeline of 1700 miles carrying heavy toxic tar sands oil would cross the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers in Montana, the Platte River and the Ogallala aquifer in Nebraska, not to mention the fragile wetlands and ecosystems of Nebraska’s Sandhills. A spill on the Platte could impact drinking water as far south as Kansas City. The Ogallala aquifer not only provides drinking water for more than 2 million, it provides nearly 1/3 of the groundwater used to irrigate US crops. Tar sands oil is projected to result in an 80% increase in CO2 emissions during the refining process.

Oil extraction in the tar sands in Alberta has already destroyed huge areas of the boreal forest and native lands as vegetation is scraped away to dig down to the sands below. So far only 3% of the oil has been recovered, but already more soil has been removed than was removed for the Great Wall of China, the Suez Canal, the Aswan Dam and the Pyramid of Cheops combined.

As to the safety and reliability of the pipeline itself, TransCanada, a group that already operates one tar sands line, the Keystone I, will build it. Keystone I has leaked at least 14 times in its first year of operation. A University of Nebraska research report estimates that there will be 91 significant spills from the XL pipeline in the next fifty years. That is two significant spills every

year. Remember how we felt when BP’s Deepwater Horizon exploded in the Gulf?

Opposition to this pipeline includes native populations near Alberta, landowners along the route in the Nebraskan high plains, Nebraska’s Governor Dave Heineman and Senator, Mike Johanns as well as nine Nobel Prize Laureates, The New York Times and Robert Redford. James Hansen, world climate expert, states that opening up the tar sands to heavy exploitation would mean “it’s essentially game over” for the climate

The State Department has spoken, although their result now appears tainted by recent information in the news that a former campaign manager for Hillary Clinton is the chief lobbyist for TransCanada, and that the company hired for the environmental impact study also works for TransCanada.

Final say will rest entirely with the President, since this matter requires his signature and his alone. He has until the end of the year to make his decision. It would be good to remind him of his campaign commitment to a cleaner environment and how saying no to the pipeline could begin the realization of his inaugural promise, that the onset of his administration would mark the moment “when the rise of the oceans begins to slow and our planet begins to heal”.

*(submitted by Toni Vafi)*

*Environmentalist Bill McKibben is organizing a “ring around the White House” formation rally on Nov. 6 in DC. If you have a minute, join him.*



## **Cora Island Tree Planting**

Cora Island is the newest and easternmost unit of the Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge, which stretches across the state from St. Louis to Kansas City. The refuge consists of 10 units and began as a response to the great flood of 1993 when the federal government started buying appropriate floodplain land from willing sellers. Formerly farmland, the 1,000-acre island was added to the system three years ago.

Dennis Honkomp and Sue Schoening took part in the Fish & Wildlife-sponsored planting of 1000 trees on Saturday, Oct. 15, along the dike between the Missouri River and Cora Island. The dike will now be opened in a few areas so natural flooding of Cora Island can take place during high water.

Dennis volunteered to be the point man for our chapter and Tim Haller, the park ranger for the unit will contact him when help is needed.

## **In Case You Missed It.....**

Our August meeting featured a presentation on "Insect Songs" by Bob Bailey. He recommends the following website for more information:

<http://www.musicofnature.org/songsofinsects/>  
Several showings of a new film, "**Green Fire, The Aldo Leopold Story**" were announced; it is a fascinating film and, if you missed it, don't miss any opportunity to see it in the future. It was also announced that, if you have MMN photos to add to the chapter website's photo gallery, you can do it easily through Flickr. If you don't have a Flickr account, go to the following website <http://www.flickr.com/welcome/45907243/0881cfa484/> - it's free!

In September, it was announced that, for \$25, St. Louis Audubon will come to assess your

yard as part of their "Bring Conservation Home" pilot project. To get certified, they look for what native/non-native plants you have, wildlife habitat, etc.

There were 54 MMNs in attendance at our October meeting to hear MDC's **Resource Scientist and Wildlife Ecologist Tony Elliot** speak on "**White Nose Syndrome** in bats; background and impact to Missouri".



## **Endangered Indiana Bat showing symptoms of White Nose Syndrome**

## **Welcome New GR Members!!**

Six new members from the MMN class of '11 joined our Great Rivers chapter in October.

They are:

Joanne Johnson

Richard Lesage

Bonnie Lorenz

John Lorenz

Cynthia Lueder

Ann Russell

Be sure to say hello and help our new members with any questions they may have.

## **Two More GR Members Tell How They Earned Their 250-hour Pins**

### **Gina Staehle**

Most of my work at the World Bird Sanctuary is at the ETC (Educational Training Centre). I also take a turn at least once a month in the OWL (Nature Centre), to keep familiar with all the birds & personnel there. I am/was an original member of World Bird Sanctuary – over 20 years ago! My high school Biology class was invited (for extra credit) to help build the original site for the Sanctuary, off of Creve Coeur Mill Rd., next to the Tyson Wolf Sanctuary. We built most of the original buildings, stalls, flight cages, mews & weathering areas. I've returned to the nest! & loving every minute of it! (*Ed. note: Ask Gina about her family background with raptors in Germany.*)

Now, though, I mostly help with the day-to-day duties, such as cleaning the Raptor Room, cages & mews (outdoor cages that allow for some free flight), preparing food for the raptors for the next day, which involves skinning & gutting rats, mice, chickens, rabbits & fish), chopping them up into the proper sizes for each species, dosing the food with medicine (if needed), and cleaning & filling water bowls, tubs &/or outside pools, to free up the staff & interns so that they can concentrate on other matters relating to their Internship. We also measure the animals' food, keeping track of their scraps, and put them through their "paces" so they don't forget their "routines" for the various shows. We also get to teach some of the birds new behaviors for fun & stimulation.

I also help making & mounting the anklets, jesses & lead-lines for the Raptors, as well as help with trimming their talons & "coping" (trimming) their beaks when they get too long. I also help move the various birds from one cage/mew to another (to allow for cleaning, or simply because just about

everything enjoys a different view every now & then...) & also take them for walks so they get used to different settings, people & just for the plain ol' fun of it! We also do simple maintenance around the site – pulling weeds, tightening screws, & putting up/switching out screens/storm windows are just some of things we do to help.

It's not all work though! Socialization is VERY important for these animals, so I get to interact with most of these birds & animals on a pretty regular basis. I also get to help train & fly the birds (called "Manning the Bird") in preparation for their roles in educational presentations, theme park appearances and other events to further our Mission to preserve & maintain the Earth's biodiversity for the future of threatened species in their NATURAL environments through education, propagation, fieldwork & rehabilitation.

I get to work with the Bald Eagles used in the various shows – (right now, only for practice – but it's coming!) The most recent were Lewis & Clark – the ones used before the Cardinal baseball games! Our other raptors are also fun & responsive to work with – & receive rapt attention from the audience. The Bald Eagle, being our National Symbol trumps them all – but they have stiff competition from the Barn Owls – who actually are truly SILENT when they fly! It's AWESOME!

I also participate in the local Renaissance Faires as one of the "Kings' Falconers". We do presentations & flight demonstrations for the crowd – dressed in period costume. GREAT FUN! The next one is in Kansas City, KS during the month of October.

Another thing I get to do is help band Peregrine Falcons & other birds, so that we can track them & keep tabs on their progress. When a banded bird dies or is killed (usually by traffic or another animal), whoever finds the bird can call a toll-free

number on the band, & read off the banding numbers. This lets us know what happened to the bird & where it was when it met its demise. This information helps us learn more about the species & how far it's wandered during its life.

We recently were contacted by the Missouri Highway Patrol -- a dead hawk with a band had been found by the highway in Warrenton. From the information we had on the database, we were able to determine that the hawk had been hatched and released by World Bird Sanctuary last year, and that he'd "wandered" much farther than a first-year bird would normally do!

Through the efforts of World Bird, the Peregrine Falcon is no longer on the Missouri Endangered Species list..!! Right now we are also working on bringing back the Barn Owl. So far over the last two years, the Sanctuary has successfully bred & released over 80 Barn Owls into the wild in Missouri & has helped bring this species back from the brink of extinction in our state!!

Other than my work at the WBS, I have participated in prescribed burns with Dr. James Trager and am looking forward to more.

My cousin Cori has a Stream Team, of which I am a member. I've only participated in one event so far, but found it fascinating & am looking forward to doing more! I also did some bird banding with Cori & Linda Tossings' team.

### **Cori Wescott**

I work regularly at Shaw Nature Reserve. I collect seeds as plants flower and produce throughout the warm months and take them to the Quonset hut to dry. When ready to process, I'll "stomp" them through a screen, then shake them through the round, copper "sifters" soil scientists use. I store the seeds

in a plastic zip-lock and mark the bag and weigh them. Eventually, we'll sow them.

When I am not collecting or processing seed, I wear the "ant curator" hat for Dr. James Trager, the ecology restoration manager at SNR. As an entomologist, he's been working for 20 years on a paper that, if/when accepted in the science community, will scrap the classification of the ant kingdom and start over with different adaptation criteria.

Dr. Trager has had the use of a room in the Bascom House to store and study his ant specimens for several years. SNR would like to use the room for other purposes. I've been cleaning ant specimen trays/boxes, packaging them and addressing them in order to return to libraries and personal collectors around the country and some internationally.

One tiny box in particular was striking to me. It required special treatment because these specimens were used for the original classification 300 years ago! The specimens had the same teeny, tiny labels as the contemporary ones have with four lines of information that would take a magnifying glass to read. All were written with a quill pen!

Eventually, Dr. Trager is going to teach me how to mount the specimens. There are hundreds of vials of ants to be dry-mounted.

I've also participated in honeysuckle eradication and prescribed burns at SNR. I really enjoy my thirty-minute weekly drive out there and the work is very satisfying. You get to observe incredible things when you're quietly working away - for example, I've witnessed a male black widow spider plucking the strings of a female's web to win her favor. Sometimes, my husband and I go for walks in the woodland, prairie and glade communities that I help maintain.



I have participated in the bird banding team at World Bird Sanctuary. The data collected there is sent to a national database and aids ornithologists in monitoring shifts in populations and migratory habits. It was fun to see the warblers and thrushes who really only pass through Missouri during migration. And I can better distinguish a Downey from a Hairy Woodpecker now.

Nets used in bird banding are 40' x 8', and are made of all-purpose sewing thread. They get torn by large birds and animals but cost \$150 to replace. Linda Tossing, who directs the operation, was thrilled when I found I had a knack for net repair and agreed to take a net home to repair.

SNR donated 150 woodland plants to WBS's bird banding research cabin called the Roost. I helped with preparing the beds, planting and watering, and made dozens of signs, reading "Courtesy of Shaw Nature Reserve". Hopefully, the signs will inspire some folks to visit SNR and purchase more Native Missouri plants for their own gardens!

I have a Stream Team. My 300-foot section is on the Grand Glaize Creek. It's where the creek runs under Manchester Road at the intersection of Sulphur Springs. I sent in my first biomonitoring report last month. We found midge and mayfly larvae and one flatworm. The City of Manchester welcomed my work on the Grand Glaize Creek AND gave permission for me to eradicate the honeysuckle from the park that's part of the riparian corridor there. So, this fall, if any of you are interested, please let me know.

We made a great start at eradicating honeysuckle on the grounds behind a Parkway Middle School on Wren Ave. last spring. It will be fun to see the native grasses and woodland plants rebound there.

## Upcoming Events

**Nov. 3** - The 2011 Whitney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum, titled **Giants in the Conservation Movement**, will be held Thursday, Nov. 3, 5:30-9pm at the Living World, Saint Louis Zoo. Field guide and author David Allen Sibley (of the Sibley Guides) will speak. There will also be presentations on Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. Event is free (and counts as advanced training and/or volunteer hours - MMN will have an information table). Registration is required. Call 314-516-6203 or e-mail [hintonpa@umsl.edu](mailto:hintonpa@umsl.edu).

**Nov. 4** - **The St. Louis Audubon Society** is hosting a Trivia Night on Friday, Nov. 4 at Kirkwood Community Center (111 S. Geyer in Kirkwood, MO). Cost is \$25/pp or \$160/table. Contact Pam Wilcox if you would like to join a Great Rivers Chapter table.

**Nov. 5** - **Fall Fire Festival** at the Green Center Sat. Nov. 5, 5:30-8:30. Entertainment, art exhibit, bonfire, food & beverage. Cost is \$5 for children; \$10 for adults in advance, or \$15 at the door. Call 314-725-8314 or e-mail [info@thegreencenter.org](mailto:info@thegreencenter.org) for info.

**Nov. 15** - **Chapter meeting and potluck** at 6pm at Powder Valley. Please bring a dish to share! Officers will also be elected at the November meeting. Mike Walsh from Forest Releaf will be presenting about "**Forest Ecology**".

**Dec. 16** - **Chapter Holiday Party at The Green Center**, including our first silent auction. Further details to come. Contact Sue Schoening with questions.

Check the website calendar for volunteer opportunities!!

## **Trash Clean Up At The Savanna**

Being responsible caregivers of Hidden Creek Savanna means occasionally stepping up for litter crew. Some members pick up trash as part of their time after surveys as a group or individually. Others, namely John Powers and Marypat Ehlmann, meet every so often for clean-up detail. We walk the perimeter, the creek bed and the interior of the savannah in search of manmade undesirables.

Our venture on October 27 produced 5 bags of litter including a hubcap, an insulator from an electric line, and a reflector in addition to many chip bags, broken bottles, and other food packaging discards. Of course the bonus is walking through this beautiful spot of Forest Park with meandering stream, healthy plants, and now a bridge to somewhere.

-photos by John, words by Marypat

## **Another Beautiful Photo from the Savanna**



## **Classified**

Cori Wescott has a once-read copy of **Noah's Garden** that she offers *free* to any Great Rivers member.

**Candidates for chapter office** are:  
Vice President - **Mark Katich**; Secretary - **Pam Wilcox**. There will no longer be State Advisory Committee Representatives.

## **From Faith:**

Next issue is planned for **Feb. 1, 2012**. I will be on vacation in Thailand Jan. 16-Feb. 1, so please send all contributions for the Feb. issue directly to Co-Editor Toni Vafi at [tonva@swbell.net](mailto:tonva@swbell.net). Toni will be working alone for that edition, so it would be helpful if you could plan to get your contributions in early.

## **Info from Pam Wilcox on Hunting Licenses**

The November 11-day firearms deer hunt starts Nov. 12. This year is the first time that Missouri hunters can buy deer and other hunting permits online, print them and use them immediately. Hunters can use this new e-Permits system to buy permits online or purchase them in person at MDC regional offices, nature centers and other vendors statewide. The new format does not include separate tags for deer or turkeys as in the past. Under this new e-Permits format, deer and turkey permits are permit-and-tag in one. For more information -[mdc.mo.gov/node/3656](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/3656) or [mdc.mo.gov/node/3891](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/3891))

