



# Missouri Master Naturalist



## THE GREAT RIVERS GAZETTE

May 2012

Volume 2 Issue 2

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

### **PICTURES FROM HIDDEN CREEK SAVANNA**

Hi Everyone,

The sign and boulder are one and sit near the start of the trail leading to the stone bridge and the playing fields above the site. In addition a pair of mallards have moved in and are taking advantage of a full creek.

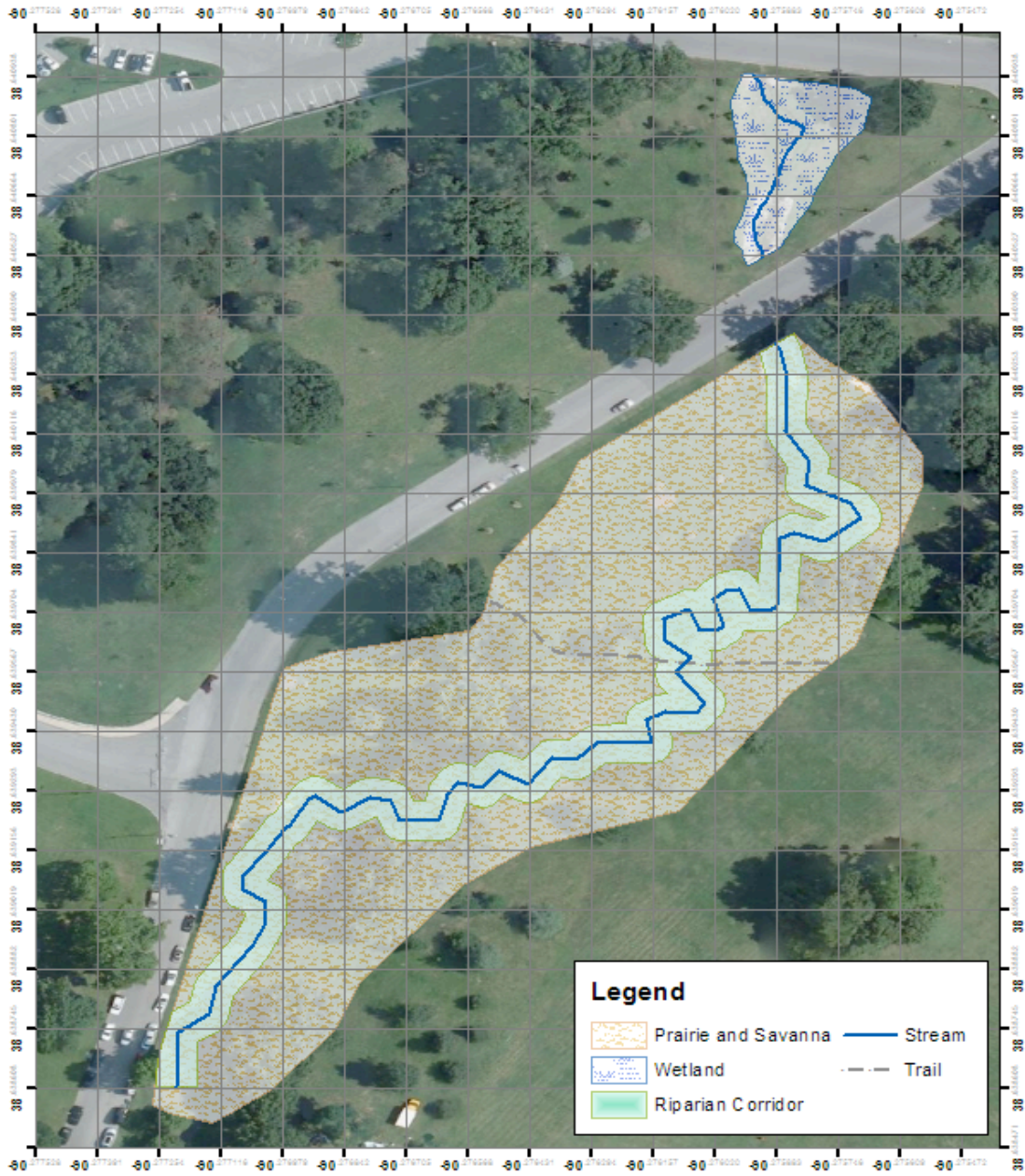
*(Submitted by John Powers)*



*Please see pages following for a grid of the site (thanks M. Wohlstadter) and for info and schedule for surveys*

# Hidden Creek Savanna Survey

Missouri Master Naturalist Great Rivers Chapter Habitat Reconstruction in Forest Park



Capstone outline and features derived from GPS coordinates taken while walking the site.  
Basemap from Bing.  
Map created by Michael Wohlstader.

## **Hidden Creek Savanna Surveys**

Ever since we adopted the Hidden Creek Savanna as an ongoing service project, chapter members have been conducting surveys to monitor wildlife in the area. Sherri Schmidt and Bill Hoss have been most consistent, but other members join them to observe birds, pollinators, vegetation and mammals, to track changes in wildlife on the site. On April 13, Steve Hoyt participated with Bill and Sherri in a spring bird survey, noting birds of well known varieties at each of three survey points, as well as some they couldn't ID. The group hopes that experts in our Chapter, or possibly in other organizations, will participate to help expand our knowledge and identify more birds.

The group has proposed to conduct vegetation surveys in a new way; instead of recording plants at the three sites used in the past, Michael Wohlstadter has created a grid map of the Hidden Creek Savanna, with grid lines at 50-foot intervals derived from GPS coordinates. Observations will be made from specified points in the grid, providing a larger overview of what plants are surviving and thriving. The team decided to establish the grid on Saturday, June 9, at 8 a.m., preceding the Pollinator survey scheduled for that day.

Spring and summer surveys are scheduled as follows:

Birds: Fri., July 13 at 9:30 a.m. and Sat., July 14 at 8:00 a.m.

Pollinators: Fri., June 8 and Sat. June 9, both at 10:00 a.m.

Vegetation: Fri., May 18 and Fri. July 27 both at 9:30 a.m.

*Late summer and fall surveys will be listed in the Aug. 1 issue of the Gazette.*

## **Message from Michael Meredith**

First off, our restoration effort at Hidden Creek Savanna has been formally commemorated with a bronze plaque on a Missouri limestone boulder (at no cost to us, I might add). Kudos to John Powers and Sherri Schmidt, and everyone that has pitched in to make this a most noteworthy project. Because of a clarification from MDC and MU Extension, we will no longer call Hidden Creek a capstone project, as a capstone project is defined as a short project that has a well-defined start and stop date. Therefore we have adopted the term 'focus project' to describe our ongoing work at Hidden Creek.

We learned of the more narrow view of a capstone during a recent conference call that Cori Westcott and I participated in, the MMN Mentors call. We spent two very productive hours on the phone with Syd Hime, Bob Pierce and reps from every other chapter in the state and exchanged many good ideas for the future.

In March we helped plant a record number of tree saplings at Forest ReLeaf's Communitree Gardens. And with St. Louis Audubon we attacked more bush honeysuckle in March and April in Creve Coeur Park. While there is much work that remains, we can see results of our previous work in the appearance of far more native wildflowers and a fantastic stand of new pawpaw trees.

St. Louis Audubon has also provided opportunities for us through their Bring Conservation Home program. If you weren't able to make it to the habitat technician training, don't worry, there

will be other opportunities within the year. Even if you can't volunteer for the program, I urge you to participate by having your property assessed (Meredith Manor only managed a silver certification, but I'm happy with that). I know that we have at least a couple gold certifiable yards and maybe even a platinum in our midst.

Finally, I must close this with a rather bittersweet piece of news. Our Treasurer, Sue Schoening is moving to California to be closer to family. Sue has been a tireless volunteer for the Missouri Master Naturalist program, Shaw Nature Reserve, St. Louis Audubon and Wild Ones through the years and her absence will be truly felt. Moreover, we are losing a dear friend. I've often felt enriched by her conversation and positive attitude; she is quite simply a joy to be around. Our loss is California's gain, as Sue is already reading up on California natives!  
***We will miss you Sue!***



## **Volunteer Hours and Partners**

Spring and summer are especially full of volunteer opportunities for Missouri Master Naturalists and everyone should be sure to record their hours for certification or recertification. As a reminder, these are the qualifications and requirements to get credit for your volunteer hours.

### *Requirements:*

Interns must complete 40 volunteer service hours within 15 months of the beginning of your Initial Core Training courses. To recertify, a MMN must complete a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service each year, plus a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training annually.

Volunteer service hours are those spent on chapter pre-approved service projects. All projects with our Partners (see website under FAQ for a list of our Partners) are automatically pre-approved, as are all projects appearing on the Chapter website. If you have a project that you think may qualify as a MMN service project, contact a member of the Partners and Programs committee, listed on the chapter website, or the chapter advisor.

Each hour spent preparing for and doing volunteer service work, including travel time, counts as one service hour. Time you spend on chapter committee work is also counted as service hours. Be sure to track and report your hours on the Chapter website.

## **Honeysuckle Eradication Project, Seibert Park**

I chose a Stream Team site that was near and dear to my heart and home, the southeast corner of Manchester and Sulphur Springs Roads. It's the Grand Glaize Creek that runs through Manchester's Seibert Park. The park is a tiny little green space that has a pre-Civil War time man-made cave there. It was used to chill beer and other sundry items. Folks on their way to the capital rested along what used to be called Jefferson Road. Manchester was the route St. Louisans took to get to Jefferson City. During the Civil War, the locals hid in the cave whenever an army passed. North or South, it didn't matter. They hid from both. Conscriptation was rampant at the time. While doing a macro-invertebrate survey last summer, I noticed that someone had removed the honeysuckle on the very steep southern bank of the creek. That inspired me. Why couldn't the Great Rivers chapter remove all the honeysuckle from this little park?

I looked up the site on Google Earth. I used its features to approximate the square area of the park, about 3-5 acres. I met with Eileen Collins, the director of Manchester Parks and Recreation. I explained about Missouri Master Naturalists. I asked her if I could approach my chapter with the possibility of making this a chapter project. I then asked her what specifics she would suggest for this to be approved. She wanted us to make brush piles. The City of Manchester has volunteer forms to fill out and sign with guidelines on the back that anyone interested in helping must fill out. The guidelines include such items as permission for the city to use your photograph and please refrain from swearing or use of drugs or alcohol. She

wanted us to gather the removed plants for shredding. Her staff would bring the equipment and do all the shredding. I asked if her department would provide the herbicide. She agreed.

The chapter has a Project Opportunity Form that easily guides a member through the details needed to propose such a project to the chapter. At the next chapter meeting, I asked Michael if I could make the proposal to the members. It was one of those "Oh-my-gosh-how-can everything fit-into-the-meeting nights." All the preparation I went through and all I had to do was speed-talk a couple of moments and BAM! Approved! It was put on the calendar.

That was last October. Sometime in early December, we determined that 29° was the minimum comfort zone to begin a morning's work. Since October, we've only had to miss three Fridays due to weather. I believe no one would argue that Bill Hoss (and his trusty chain-saw!) has been a major factor to our success. There's just so much loppers can do on well-established plants. Uh, correction, nothing loppers can do on older plants. It's so satisfying to feel the sun's warmth in what before had been a heavily shaded woodland community. That should give you an idea of how tall this honeysuckle population was. I've really liked the herbicide Manchester has provided. Turdon RTU is a gelatinous liquid. It lingers on the surface longer than other thinner herbicides. We've rescued a few trees from monster euonymus vines, too. Once again, chain saw. Bill has suggested I use his extra chain saw. I've declined the offer. I know that I get so focused on one thing, that I would be the person to lower a running saw and slice my own leg open. This last Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, we reached the eastern border! We still have a little

more to do, but soon, our work will be plucking out seedlings, inventorying native Missouri plants whose seeds have remained dormant under the dark shade of the honeysuckle canopy. We'll encourage Eileen Collins to bring in more native shrubs, sedges and understory trees that will help reclaim the disturbed soil.

I began this report with the details of starting this project because I wanted to emphasize if I could do this, any one of you can do this. When I first began my membership, I never dreamed of initiating a project. Our MMN program offers a smorgasbord of adventures! Each and every one of those listed opportunities started with an idea. Look around close to home. Is there an area near your home and your heart? Take your idea to the local officials. As Pam Fournier likes to say, "Ask. The worst thing that can happen is they'll say no." What better way to practice conservation than planning a local project near you? You'll conserve your gas to get there. And, guess what? Chances are good that other Great Rivers chapter members live near you and will welcome a close-by project, too.

*(Submitted by Cori Westcott)*

***And now we are going to show you some pictures of Cori's team hard at work...***



*Bill Hoss applying herbicide to stumps*

*More pictures from the Seibert Park site*



*Cori and the Monster Root*



*Claire catching a breath*

## **Earth Day 2012 in Forest Park**

Thanks to Michael Meredith, Joanne Johnson, Kathleen Evans, Sherri Schmidt, Claire Beaudoin, Pam Wilcox and Tom Nagle for helping in the MDC booth on Earth Day in Forest Park. The group handed out flowering dogwoods and assisted kids in making seed pillows to celebrate spring on a damp and chilly day.

## **Remembering Eagle Days**

Towards the end of our Eagle Days parking lot shift, Susan Orr and I met a very animated individual who seemed quite familiar with the area around the Chain of Rocks Bridge. When he mentioned he had kayaked over the low water river dam just north of the bridge the day before, we might have easily assumed he was some crazy person trying to impress a couple of naive MMN's. But his story seemed convincing.

Following you will find his story.

Mike Clark is an affiliate with the Quapaw Canoe Company and Big Muddy Adventures that specialize in river trips within the Mississippi River Basin. But his major interest seems to be working with young people and connecting them to our local river ecology.

One of his projects involves giving real time science and discovery to inner city children by connecting their classroom computers to the river explorers through a virtual classroom. The children suggest solutions to problems and the river team attempts to apply their ideas to a real situation. The success of these solutions, whether they work or not, is then sent back to the classroom where a team member, on another computer supplies the basis of this discovery. Cool!

*(Submitted by Rich Lesage)*

## **Cori's been reading again!**

*Relics: Travels in Nature's Time*

*Machine* by Piotr Naskrecki

Naskrecki, entomologist (main passion are katydids) and renowned photographer, takes the reader on a spectacular journey through remote places on the earth to introduce the

beauty and remarkable behaviors of living fossils. Living fossils are species that have evolved very little from their origins eons ago.

Stunning photography. Discoveries that can leave one breathless. His work will compel the reader to renew his/her individual efforts in conservation.

Mr. Naskrecki was treated for 5 diseases he contracted in his efforts to complete this book, including leishmaniasis, "which eats away at the skin and organs of its victims." Sand flies, *Lutzomyia*, carry this disease. Several bit him. (He even included photographs of a sand fly biting his arm!)

Did you know that mites and pseudoscorpions ride a beetle in Guyana knowing that the beetle will carry them to another fig tree? Using another animal strictly for transportation is called phoresy. I did not know that.

*Now available at St. Louis County Library.*

*(Submitted by Cori Westcott)*

## **Another Publication of Interest**

"Eat Your Weedies" is a Missouri cookbook of wild edibles. It is published by The Wild Ones, a small group of volunteers with the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Department. It is not an ID book but it has information about the physical features, nutrition, history and folklore of the edible plants. It also has great recipes that have been tried and enjoyed. The cost is \$13.00. If you should want one you can mail a check to Ruth Farrand at 4014 N. Perrin Rd. Indep. Mo. 64058. The check can be written out to "Eat Your Weedies". I have one and I am quite impressed.

*(Submitted by Toni Vafi)*

## **Gina and the Great Horned Owl**

Gina Staehle completed her first release of a rehabilitated bird from World Bird Sanctuary. We picked up the Great Horned Owl late Sunday afternoon. Gina was instructed on how to retrieve the animal from the crate, turn it around so its back was against her chest, tuck its feathers in (that needs a partner-my husband Al obliged while I snapped photos) and thrust him out and up. We then drove to a secluded section of Castlewood Park. I've got to tell you, she followed the steps well. And I was impressed by how focused she was for the bird's well being and of course, her own.

The launch itself was rather anti-climactic. He landed just a few feet away and just stood there until Gina shooed him away. Then, he took flight. She released him around 5:30. It was close to dusk. When he landed in a tree a little distance away, I heard several crows cawing. More and more crows gathered and I knew they were threatening the owl. Gina and I ran to the trees' edge just in time to see the owl dangling from one leg. I think with the approach of humans, the crows had no choice but to leave. I believe at that moment, they would have taken advantage of the owl's vulnerability and attacked.

We waited until the owl, righted itself and calmed down. We knew then that he would simply wait until dark to go about his exploring and hunting when the crows were roosted for the night.

You can see more photos and the video on Gina's Face book page.

To see a "photo book" of the photos telling the entire process go to this link:

<http://share.shutterfly.com/share/received/welcome.sfl?fid=f7838c8de87b2200&sid=0QcMWbZy4cs21r>

*(Submitted by Cori Westcott)*



***Congratulations Gina, you've made the Great Rivers Chapter very proud!***



## **No Child Left Inside Conference**

On March 31, 2012, I attended the “No Child Left Inside” conference, co-sponsored by UMSL-St. Louis and the Gateway Children’s Nature Connection. As a volunteer educator of young children and as a founding member of the GCNC I was thrilled to attend this conference. Years ago, after reading Richard Louvs’ “Last Child in the Woods”, I realized that the outdoor/nature related activities that I experienced as a child are fast becoming obsolete. Studies now show that school age children spend as much as 10 hours a day using electronic media. When I was a child, there wasn’t even 10 hours of TV available in one day.

The conference subtitled “It’s Time for Kids to Go Back Outside”, provided valuable information for formal educators, parents and volunteers. Many schools find there is less and less time for outdoor field experiences, often due to rigid curriculum standards, as well as the lack of any natural areas near the school. If we continue to allow children to learn about nature via textbooks and videos, they will never truly appreciate what nature has to offer. How will children learn the art of observation, the beauty and variations in nature if their childhood is spent indoors? Where will the future environmental stewards come from?

At the conference I learned dozens of new ways to engage my students in outdoor activities, as well as hands-on art projects, and excellent literature connections. I left feeling rejuvenated and feeling like I could make a difference in a child’s life.

Richard Louv says today’s children are “under house arrest”. As a teacher, parent or volunteer, we all need to do

our best to provide more opportunities to get children outdoors and release those electronic handcuffs.

Also in attendance were Brenda and Jim Christ.

*Note: The Gateway Children’s Nature Connection ([www.gatewaycnc.org](http://www.gatewaycnc.org)) is your one-stop children and nature “shop” for:*

*\*St Louis area nature events calendar*

*\*Links to numerous children and nature websites*

*\*Recommended reading lists for parents and teachers*

*\*Suggested children’s outdoor activities*

*\*Description of programs offered by GCNC members*

*\*News about local children and nature developments*

*(Submitted by Pam Wilcox)*

## **Meeting Highlights and Coming Events\***

In February, Sarah Wilson of the Miramiguoa Chapter suggested a joint project between our chapters: restoration of a small prairie at the Claire Gempp Davidson Memorial Conservation Area in Crestwood. The group was in favor of joining forces for the project. Our February speakers, Mitch Leachman of the Audubon Society and native plant expert Dave Tylka, gave an excellent presentation on the “Bring Conservation Home” program.

In March, Mark Jones, Secretary of the St. Louis Astronomical Society, spoke about the Society and its programs, noting there will be a partial solar eclipse on May 20 and a Transit of Venus on June 5. We congratulated Gina Staehle, Cori Westcott and Pam Wilcox on receiving their 500-hour

pins. Bonnie and John Lorenz have recertified for 2012 (already!) and Rich Lesage has certified and received his official MMN badge.

In April, Audubon's Lane Richter visited to let us know of upcoming projects that present volunteer service opportunities at Riverlands. One involves monitoring migratory songbirds at 60 sampling locations in the greater Alton area. The project will start this summer and be ongoing. Wings of Spring on May 12 is the other project he mentioned. St. Louis Audubon and Great Rivers MMN will have a table.

Cori Westcott reported that Kari Pratt of Lindbergh Schools needs volunteers to assist with a summer camp program for children ages 5-12 for morning sessions July 25-27 and Aug. 9-11. Nathan Brandt suggested that we might check the Great River Greenway organization for possible volunteer opportunities. The group is in charge of landscaping the Arch grounds.

Cori reported on the April 5 MMN Mentor conference call and we discussed ways to mentor our new graduates.

Jennifer McBride volunteered to create a chapter Facebook page as an additional communication and outreach tool, to supplement, not replace the website. The website would remain as the official source for event and training information.

The group finished the meeting with a brainstorming session to identify ideas for possible projects, programs/training and fun events for future consideration.

## **Upcoming Events**

May 11 First workday at Gempp Conservation Area

May 12 Wings of Spring at Riverland

May 15 Deadline for MDC Photo Contest submissions

May 26 Academy of Science Annual Citizen Bioblitz in Creve Coeur Park

\*If you are interested in any of the projects mentioned in this column, check chapter meeting minutes for contact information.

**Deadline for next issue of Great Rivers Gazette: July 28**

## **The Very Latest on the Facebook Project**

Jennifer reports that she is still working on the content, so there's not much to see, but she is hoping to make more progress this week. For now, the link is listed below.

<https://www.facebook.com/MMNGreatRiversChapter>