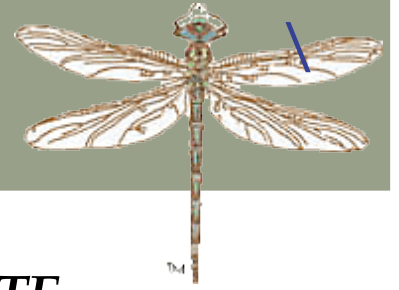




Missouri Master Naturalist



THE GREAT RIVERS GAZETTE

August 2013

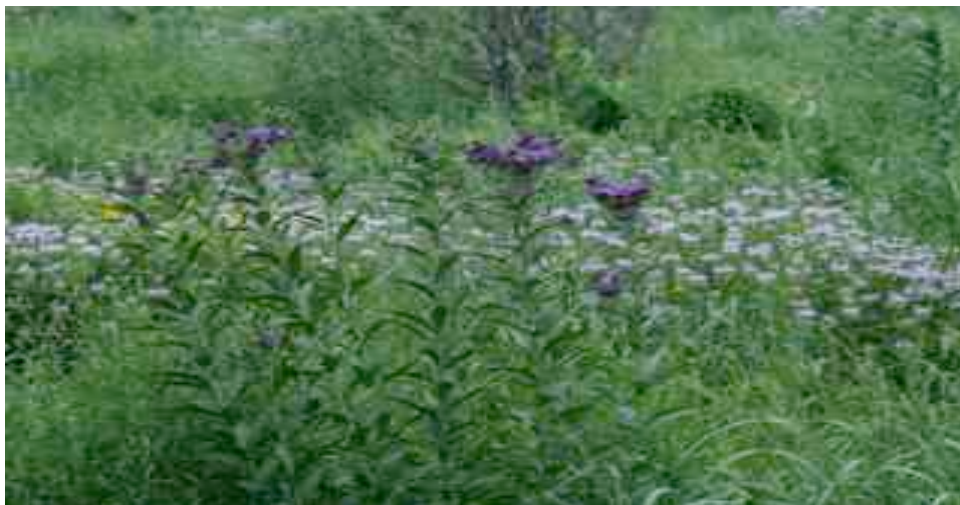
Volume 3 Issue 3

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

SUMMER IN THE SAVANNA



WILD BERGAMOT



IRONWEED

(thanks John Powers)

HIDDEN CREEK SAVANNA SURVEYS

Surveys at Hidden Creek Savanna continued through the summer under the dedicated leadership of Sherri Schmidt. All surveys have been blessed with outstanding weather during this unusual summer.

The June 6 spring pollinator survey was especially informative with the addition of an insect specialist from the St. Louis Zoo. Glenn Frei, zookeeper at the Insectarium, joined the group at the invitation of Jen Grable and was very helpful in locating and identifying many insects. Others in the group included Mary Mierkowski, John Powers, Lori Purk, Susan Orr and Sherri Schmidt.

Pollinators observed in all three observation sites in the area were carpenter bees, hover flies and skippers. Other pollinators included bumblebees, honeybees, leaf cutter bees, a green viriscent and tiger and rolled wing moths. Glenn said that the bee house on site has been occupied.

Many other insects were seen, including a variety of flies, spiders, beetles, grasshoppers and native ladybugs. Invasive Asiatic ladybugs were also observed.

Sherri Schmidt was the sole observer on the July 13 summer bird survey – thanks again Sherri for your dedication! Most numerous birds seen throughout the area were robins, starlings and red-winged blackbirds, but Sherri also saw barn swallows, grackles, and cardinal, chimney swift and great crested flycatcher individuals. She also identified blue jay, mourning dove, woodpecker and house wren calls.

A sizeable group gathered for the summer plant survey: John Powers, Beth Lewandowski, Lorraine Schraut, Nancy Burgess, Shawn Thomason, Faith Williams, Beth Skelton, Ed Schafer and Sherri Schmidt assisted with observation and identification. Perhaps due to a cooler and wetter summer than usual, plant growth is thick and healthy. The group observed a wide variety of native plants and noted that a number of species that were intentionally planted within the three years of the project are thriving. Among those were bulrush, lizard tail, Illinois bundleflower, swamp milkweed, creek oats, grayheaded coneflower, white wild indigo, blazing star, crownbeard, ironweed, rattlesnake master, rose mallow, royal catchfly (with hummingbird!), wild bergamot, and wheat. The group also identified various grasses, chicory, hedge bindweed, fog fruit and sedge.



Photo of a rabbit seen at Hidden Creek Savanna during the 07-13-2013 Bird Survey (in the wetland area).

Since we rarely see mammals, we don't have regularly scheduled mammal surveys.

We just note any mammals seen while we are at the site. *(Submitted by Sherri Schmidt)*

ANOTHER HONEYSUCKLE PROJECT.

At our January meeting our President, Cori Wescott, encouraged us to take on a project of our own. I have been working regularly at Forest ReLeaf, and really enjoying my MMN service, but thought about what she said. I also do a walking group twice a week at the Webster Groves YMCA and have found a great community in that group. Something started growing in my head.

At the back of the Y property we found a honeysuckle thicket that kids from the neighboring school play in. I started dreaming of a more natural area with natives and variety Who knew what might happen?

I spoke to the people at the YMCA, my MMN neighbors from Webster Groves and my YMCA walking group and got support to clear out the invasive honeysuckle and then make that area nicer. This also provided an opportunity to share with the YMCA participant's lessons on Invasive Species and Planting Natives. Colleen helped me get some handouts from MDC on both topics.

For five Mondays starting June 3rd, a group from both the Webster MMNs and the Y Walking group met and labored in the honeysuckle. Thanks to our chain saw wielders, Bill Hoss and John VanDover, and pullers and painters, Cindy Leuter, Toni Vafi, and Ann Russell, we Missouri Master Naturalists were well represented. Members of the Y Walking Group, Eileen Franke, Carol Carr, Don Salniker, Winnie Wooten, Carolyn Friese, Rich Hibbs, Adrienne Johnson, and Marty Leisman enjoyed working with us and learning more about

what we can do for Mother Nature. With each of us giving a few hours, Phase 1, removal of the Honeysuckle monster, is now complete.

Over the summer a few of us will stop by periodically to assure that the monster is not trying to return. We will map what we have left in the area and plan what we want to request from Forest Releaf. Phase 3 in the fall will be planting day(s).

It's been especially fun to merge these two groups of folks that I really enjoy, on a local project. I'm glad Cori was so encouraging and appreciate the help of all. *(Submitted by Vaughn Meister)*

"TEACHING CHILDREN about the natural world should be seen as one of the most important events in their lives". Thomas Berry

On the week of July 9-12, Great Rivers MMN members assisted MDC staff and other volunteers during Child vs. Wild, an outdoor day camp for young explorers. During the camp, volunteers assisted with hikes, fishing, paddle boating and survival skills to help young outdoor adventurers become more acquainted with the resources and ecosystems in their natural environment.

The camp, which was held at Forest Park also included many other activities designed to cultivate the next generation of nature lovers including, fire building, helpful and harmful plant identification, knot tying and more. Students at the camp also got to experience several different habitats at Forest Park. Gina Staehle and Brandy Ray were the two Great Rivers Missouri Master Naturalists who volunteered with the camp.

(Submitted by Brandy Ray)

BIRD BANDING AT FORT MORGAN

At the beginning of April, I traveled to Alabama to visit a friend and was fortunate to observe and learn about the process of banding migrating birds. A variety of hummingbirds and neo-tropical migrants were just arriving from Central and South America after flying across the Gulf of Mexico. Dozens of species of birds were caught in mist nets and then identified, measured, recorded, banded, weighed, photographed and then released.

We were lucky that we arrived on the first landfall site just after a major storm and right as Bob and Martha Sargent of the Hummer/Bird Study Group were setting up their camp at Ft. Morgan just outside of Gulf Shores. The storm caused a larger than normal amount of birds to stop over at this wooded location. Since the general public had not yet arrived for the event and because my friend had been attending for years, we were allowed a very up-close and personal experience. We were able to walk the nets with the team, assist in bringing birds to the banding station, learn about species and age identification and to even hold and release birds. We saw many rare and beautiful birds. The dedicated team of volunteers banded over 800 birds during the three days we were allowed to observe.

I was amazed by the process and came away with a strong desire to learn more about migration and how to band birds. Feeling the beating heart of the exhausted Kentucky Warbler who sat in my cupped hand for several minutes before flying off was definitely the highlight of my vacation. I was very impressed with how patient and willing

the team was to share their extensive knowledge to educate the public.

For more info about the non- profit organization founded in 1993 visit www.hummingbirdsplus.org.
(Submitted by Jim and Lori Purk)

Pictures below by Lori Purk



Prothonotary warbler with remnants of a plant he was feeding on before the journey still on his forehead.



Bob Sargent holding the one Painted Bunting that was captured in the first 3 days of the study.



Indigo and Painted Buntings. 2 birds in handare worth more than 2 in the bush!

OVERVIEW OF MEETINGS

Great Rivers chapter recently received a nice compliment from MDC's Colleen Scott when she sent an email to say how much she enjoys reading the minutes of our meetings, since we get so much done. But if you have missed a meeting or two, here's a brief recap.

In May, our speaker was Peter Hoch from the Missouri Botanical Garden, whose topic was "What Plants at Shaw Tell Us about Climate Change." Records from Shaw Nature Reserve are giving researchers insight into changes in the interaction of plants and insects as environmental conditions change.

In the business portion of the meeting, various upcoming events and projects were discussed, including an information table at the Operation Brightside Open House, and a new project at the Webster Groves YMCA. Michael Wohlstadter was the contact for the Brightside event and Vaughn Meister is coordinating work for the Webster 'Y'. It was announced that Bill Hoss will temporarily take over the lead on the Claire Gempp project in Sunset Hills, until Mark Katich' work schedule returns to normal.

Shawn Thomason is researching two additional projects that the chapter may take on: one is with Earth Dance Farm in Ferguson and the other would be in partnership with the Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

The chapter picnic took the place of the June meeting and was declared a great success. The picnic feast was preceded by a tour of the Forest ReLeaf Nursery at Creve Coeur Park, led by Mike Walsh (who also noted that there are trees and shrubs available to Missouri Master Naturalists through Forest ReLeaf.)

The July meeting was held at the

Kirkwood Community Center and featured a presentation by Amy Bleisch of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Services at the University of Missouri. Amy provided an excellent overview of the elk restoration program at the MDC Peck Ranch Conservation Area. More information is available at mdc.mo.gov – search "Peck Ranch".

Chapter business included a brief report from the Missouri Master Naturalist teleconference in June. Vaughn Meister said that MMN state advisors reminded us to use 'Missouri Master Naturalist' rather than just 'Master Naturalist' to avoid confusion with the Meramec Community College-sponsored training.

Cori noted that an account has been established as a memorial fund with \$170 left over from that collected for the memorial to Colleen Scott's son.

Cori also announced that Lorie Purk will serve as the Great Rivers Chapter Photographer and that John Vandover is the official Chapter Historian.

Reports were given on the status of a number of ongoing projects. Cori reported that Seibert Park is showing great improvement, as wood fern, jewelweed and mullein are thriving after the chapter's extensive honeysuckle removal work.

The Boys Hope/Girls Hope project started by Confluence chapter is on hold due to storm damage. Because several Great Rivers members had worked on the project, and because of serious health problems of the Confluence member who was leading the project, we will investigate the possibility of taking over the project.

Activities at Hidden Creek Savanna and Webster Groves YMCA are described elsewhere in the newsletter.

(Submitted by Faith Williams)

**MOVING FORWARD, a message
from our President**

I had a thought that perhaps we could find projects that might be of special interest to us in our own sections of St. Louis. It seemed to me that as Missouri Master Naturalists, it would be wise of us to practice conservation by finding projects close to home and conserving our gas. Not to mention that I wanted all of us to realize that each of these projects originates with a thought, an idea. It could come from any one of us.

And, did you ever deliver! Michael Wohlstadter's brain child-Southampton Naturescaping Project. Vaughn Meister has spearheaded Webster Groves Y property and the first phase of clearing the honeysuckle has been completed. Shawn Thomason rallied our help at the Firehouse in U City. Mary Mierkowski is taking contact person responsibilities for our future work at Bridgeton's Boys Hope Girls Hope. She lives close by. Unbelievable!

We are moving forward. Now, we have a chapter photographer in Lori Purk! Already we're benefiting from her talents. Her work will greatly enhance our new chapter historian, John Vandover. Contact people, be ready to talk to John or email him of progress.

And, we're actively supporting our partners. Some of us out at Shaw Nature Reserve. Others at Forest ReLeaf. I'm interested in hearing from any of you that regularly do service hours of some capacity for our partner organizations. Why don't you email me with a brief description of the help that you provide?

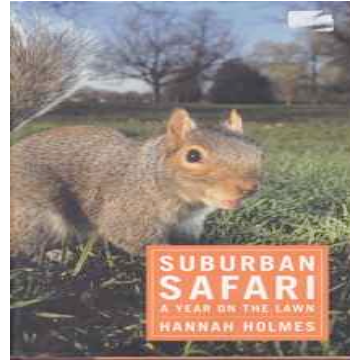
It's exciting to witness the development

in our chapter, both in ideas and our work.

Cori Westcott

BOOK REVIEW, from Cori Westcott

Suburban Safari: A Year on the Lawn by
Hannah Holmes



Suburban Safari is the culmination of a year's intensive study in all living creatures who make her suburban lot in Maine a home. She reports on the habits of all residents from the crows, spiders and chipmunks to the insects, fungi and microbes. "...a graceful and forceful reminder that the natural world is everywhere all around us, to be savored and to be protected."--Bill McKibben, author of *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age* and *The End of Nature*.

Ms Holmes devoted a year to observing the habits of creatures that depend on her tiny spot on earth. She invited biologists, botanists and energy conservationists to fully inform her of questions both within and outside her home.

A fun read! I got my copy at Shaw Nature Reserve's visitor center. It's available at the St. Louis County Library too.

BEFORE AND AFTER SHOTS OF THE SEIBERT PROJECT



Before project



"After" shot-taken mid-June.
Covered in Jewelweed, Pokeweed and Mullein



Close-up of Mullein bloom

COMING EVENTS

Don't miss the exhibit of Chapter Photographer Lori Purk's work at the Columbia Bottoms Visitors' Center. The solo exhibit will run from Aug. 3 to Sept. 4 and will feature numerous images of Missouri birds, plants, insects and landscapes. Although the Conservation Area has been closed to the public due to flooding, the Visitors' Center is open Wed.-Fri. 8-5 and Sat.-Sun. 8-4. It is located at 801 Strodtman Road, 63138; phone is 314-877-6014.

The Native Plant School is sponsoring a Native Plant Bake-Off on Sept. 6 from 4-7:30 at Shaw Nature Reserve. If you have a favorite recipe that includes at least one Missouri native plant species among the ingredients, bring your creation to the bake-off to be judged by attendees of the event and the concurrent Shaw Wildflower Market. Proceeds will benefit the Whitmire Wildflower Garden. For more information, please contact besa.schweitzer@mobot.org. If you would like to participate, include your recipe and contact information.

Save the Date! Most of us received a postcard announcing that Boone's Lick Missouri Master Naturalists are planning a day of discovering nature on October 5 in Columbia, MO. Astronomy, Big River ecology, caves and karst systems, native prairie restoration, nature photography, pollinators, raptor rehabilitation, and working wetlands are among the topics offered. Further details will be forthcoming.

The annual conference returns next year. You can check our calendar for other activities.

www.greatrivers.org/events/calendar.

(Submitted by Faith Williams)

**SCENES FROM THE JUNE
PICNIC**



Eating

The Great Rivers annual picnic was held on June 18 at Creve Coeur Park. The evening began with an advanced training opportunity at Forest Releaf: CommuniTree Gardens. Mike Walsh, Forestry Programs Manager, gave members a tour of the facility and shared lots of great information about trees! Forest Releaf is one of the sites where our members volunteer each year to plant and help take care of trees that will be planted in our community. If you are looking to find a place for service hours, they have a volunteer day every Wednesday and some Saturday's throughout the year. It is a great place to volunteer and learn about trees at the same time! Thank you Vaughn for organizing the tour!

After the tour, members gathered at a pavilion in the park for a buffet of pulled pork sandwiches, thanks to chef John Vandover!, along with many other

wonderful dishes that members created. It was a great evening of learning, eating and socializing! *Fun Fact:* The site of our picnic is also the site where the STL Audubon Society meets on their scheduled workdays to do restoration work in that area of the park. Many of our chapter members have spent hours pulling honeysuckle and planting natives as part of the joint partnership effort of the STL County Parks and the STL Audubon Society.

Special thanks to Vaughn, Cindy and Michael M. for organizing the site and picnic! And for those members that attended the picnic! It was a wonderful evening!



Advanced Training



The Food

(Article and photo submitted by Kathleen Evans)

Examples of work of Chapter Photographer Lori Purk



Bumblebee on Grayheaded Coneflower



Metallic Green Bee Pollinator



South Hampton Neighborhood Project

Deadline for submissions to the Nov. 1 issue will be Oct. 29, 2013.

Faith Williams will be "retiring" as editor after that issue. Toni Vafi will continue as co-editor/layout artist.

Please contact Toni if you would like to work with her to continue publishing our quarterly newsletter. tonva@swbell.net or ph 314 963 9384.