



Missouri Master Naturalist

January-February-March 2022 Volume 12 Number 1



TM

*"If you go off into a forest and get very quiet,
you'll come to understand that you're
connected with everything."*

— Alan Watts



Eastern Screech Owl
Megascops asio

©2022 Miguel Acosta

Story on page 24



Great Rivers Gazette

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The President's Corner

Dear Chapter Members,

Well, this Spring looks to be more full of new life than we have experienced in a long time. New life in the form of opportunities for chapter members to do what we do best.

Volunteer sites that had limited access for the last 2 years are now re-opening. Gatherings are no longer being limited in the number of volunteers.

Our future is blooming.

We can also look forward to gathering for our chapter meetings once again. The Kirkwood Recreational Center is such a great place for our meetings. Lots of parking, a room that can accommodate our large brood, little traffic in a quiet community and across from a beautiful park. It has always been the goal of the Missouri Department of Conservation to have us meet in person. Zoom meetings are a workable alternative if there are conditions beyond our control, but we can really gain from our comradery when we can get together to catch-up in person to chat about our last walk in the park, our recent bird count, or a favorite planting event.

Our chapter and the Missouri Master Naturalist Program are about enjoying, improving, and learning about the nature in our neighborhoods. Nothing makes for a great neighborhood like gathering with good folks. We are ready to Spring into action together!



Bob Ochs
President, Great Rivers Chapter

Contents	<u>Page</u>
The Presidents Corner <i>Bob Ochs</i>	2
Stewardship	3
Education and Outreach	12
Citizen Science	15
Advanced Training	19
Member Milestones	21
Member Spotlight	22
Naturalist's Journal	24
Great Rivers LOGO WEAR ORDER FORM	27

Front Cover Photo

Eastern Screech Owl, *Megascops asio* - by Miguel Acosta

Back Cover Photo

Harbinger of Spring - by Renee' Benage

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Stewardship—Winter 2022

Restoration of Ruth Park Woods, University City

By Barbara Brain

I have been staying very close to home since the beginning of the pandemic, volunteering with UCity in Bloom and helping to maintain the Bird Garden at Centennial Commons, University City's recreation complex. The Bird Garden was designed by Cindy Gilberg and consists mainly of native plants. It's a beautiful but unfortunately little-known gem. We hope to change that.



The McKnight entrance to Ruth Park Woods

The most exciting project I have been involved in, though, is the restoration of Ruth Park Woods, a 26-acre tract of mixed woodland adjacent to the Ruth Park Golf Course and the Green Center in University City. It consists of a number of habitat types and, according to the Green Center, almost 100 species of resident and migratory birds have been spotted there.

Sadly though, the woodland today bears little resemblance to a "natural," healthy ecosystem. Highly invasive bush and vine honeysuckle, Euonymus, garlic mustard and Japanese hops have seriously degraded the woodland. Invasive species cover many of the trees as well as the forest floor, shading out spring ephemerals and preventing the regeneration of desirable native plants.

Over the years, attempts have been made to remove invasives, but these efforts have been sporadic and limited in scope. Concern that we were reaching the tipping point when the woods would be beyond hope of reclamation led my friend Kathy and I to approach UCity in Bloom with an idea to apply for Missouri Department of Conservation funds to reclaim the woods. Jesse Gilbertson, Director of Horticulture for UCity in Bloom was enthusiastic about the idea and took the lead on a successful application for MDC cost share grant funds to begin a comprehensive renovation and maintenance plan for the entire 26-acre woods.

This will be a forever project as we know that invasives don't give up easily. Since late August last year, we have concentrated on cutting and treating Wintercreeper vines growing on the trees. We also plan to remove weedy trees, plant new native trees, shrubs and perennials and extend the 1.2-mile trail through the woods to 1.75 miles in order to connect with the Green Center's Urban Bird Corridor and the



A Japanese hops infestation

golf course. Having an additional marked entrance at the golf course parking lot will make the trail through the woods much more accessible to visitors.

UCity in Bloom and Green Center staff work alongside groups of volunteers at regular work sessions from 9-11 on Monday and Thursday mornings. We also plan to offer Saturday afternoon sessions from 1-3 every other week starting January 15. New volunteers are always welcome!

To volunteer, go to <https://www.ucityinbloom.org/volunteers/>



A school group helping out in the woods!



Forest ReLeaf of Missouri Come Grow with Us! by Lee Phillion



For more than 27 years, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri has pursued its mission to plant trees and enrich communities. Great Rivers Chapter members support this important goal through volunteering at Forest ReLeaf’s CommuniTree Gardens nursery in Creve Coeur Park and by helping with plantings around the St. Louis region.

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri got its start when some local organizations got together to celebrate *Earth Day 1990* by planting ten thousand trees. By 1993, the organization had been incorporated, and by 1996, Forest ReLeaf had its first regional growing-out station for seedlings (located near the airport) and its first forester, Mark Gruber, who launched the free “TreeKeepers” training program. That same year saw the beginning of the Priority ReLeaf matching grant program for underserved communities in St. Louis.

By 2007, Forest ReLeaf had relocated its nursery to a more spacious location at its current home in Creve Coeur Park. In the spring of that year, volunteers potted 7,500 seedlings—*this* spring, they will pot more than 18,400 seedlings! The expansion continues with the help of a growing staff and volunteer force. In addition to Meredith Perkins, Executive Director, the full-time staff includes a Nursery Manager, Forestry manager, Volunteer Coordinator, and a Partnerships Coordinator.

The Gift of Trees —Trees grown at the CommuniTree Gardens Nursery are provided *at no cost* to grassroots community groups for planting on public and nonprofit properties. Currently, Forest ReLeaf is partnering with organizations such as Great Rivers Greenway and the Nature Conservancy—as well as Beyond Housing, Arbor Day Foundation, MDC,

countless neighborhood associations, SSM Health, and local municipal governments to name a few. The goal is to increase planting of urban trees to ensure a resilient community tree canopy for *all* neighborhoods.

The organization also provides trees to areas where the tree canopy has been destroyed; shipping free trees to Joplin began shortly after the town experienced the EF-5 tornado in 2011, and a shipment was sent to Jefferson City after their 2019 tornado.

Education Outreach—Addressing the growing disconnect between people and nature is a key element of the Forest ReLeaf mission. This is achieved through TreeKeepers classes as well as workshops and demonstrations that build confidence in tree planting and maintenance and activate citizens to become stewards of their community forest.



How Volunteers Help - Volunteer opportunities to work at the CommuniTree Gardens Nursery are available Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 am until noon. When you sign up to volunteer, you will also receive information about additional opportunities to plant trees in the community. Nursery activities include potting seedlings, pruning, filling orders for trees, weeding, caring for mature trees in the onsite arboretum, or assisting with fundraisers.

To learn more about Forest ReLeaf of Missouri, the free TreeKeepers class, or to sign up to volunteer or request trees for your not-for-profit planting project, go to <https://moreleaf.org/> .





Forest ReLeaf of Missouri Potting Day by Lee Phillion

*But wait!
There's more!*

March 19, 2022

A huge thank you to the MMNs from GR and Confluence who braved wind and cold to come to the CommuniTree Nursery on Saturday to help pot trees. While participation was low this year, achievement was high.



Information about Forest ReLeaf of Missouri along with how to become a regular volunteer is at moreleaf.org.



Scout Troop 648 Audubon Center at Riverlands



Audubon Center
at Riverlands

Trash Pick Up by Gerry Spitznagel

March 5, 2022

Our troop 648, as Missouri Stream Team 5899 "Scout4Streams", has adopted the Mississippi, Missouri, Meramec, and River Des Peres as our "4" streams. We need projects on the Meramec and Missouri rivers. If you know of or are conducting a project on either of those two rivers, please let me know!





Willow Staking in Lower Meramec Park



by Michael Meredith

March 5, 2022

The Open Space Council's [Community Stewardship Alliance](#) program and St. Louis County Parks sponsored a unique project on the Meramec River, willow staking. The goal of this project is to provide bank stabilization by inserting willow stakes along the riverbank. This isn't your typical tree planting, by a long shot!

Willows are remarkably resilient, so all that's necessary is to harvest two-to-three-foot stakes from existing young trees (not to worry, there are PLENTY of willows within the park that provide plenty of suitable stakes). After that, it's a simple exercise to just pound the stake into the mud with a hammer. Easy peasy!

From there, it's a simple matter of the stakes getting the appropriate amount of moisture and sunlight. I mention that because some of our previous staking efforts were drowned out by floodwaters. With that said, when conditions permit, a simple straight willow stake will eventually branch out and over time to become a fully grown willow tree along the banks.



The crew at work



A drone view of the area.



Future willow trees



Conserving Energy



National Museum of Transportation Restoration Field Trip

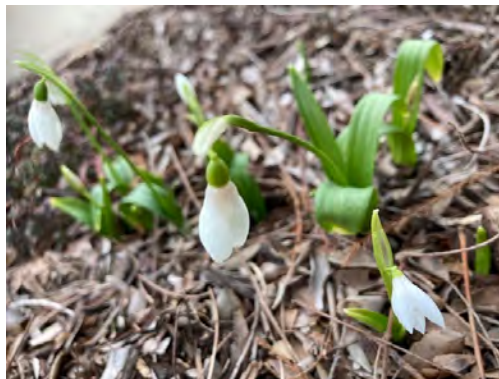
By Barb Cerutti

March 6, 2022

Who's All Aboard?

Today's field trip was a huge success. We cleaned up the creek and roadside, learned some history about the oldest tunnel west of the Mississippi, explored the pollinator garden and the 100-acre woods. Tessa was a wonderful guide.

Attendees included **Tessa Wasserman, Vaughn Meister, Annie Russell, Mary Kreppel, Brenda Switzer, Denise Davis, Christina Garhart, Kristin Monahan, Barbara Brain** and friend **Kathy Freese, Sherrri Turner, Connie Break, Jack Hambene, and Barb Cerutti.**





The Grass Isn't Always Greener

Restored Prairie at Former Sod Farm Engages Community in Native Habitat Stewardship

Bluebird Meadow on the Dardenne Greenway

by Elizabeth Simmons

If you had visited the area now known as **Bluebird Meadow on the Dardenne Greenway** as recently as 2016, you would have been surrounded by turf grass. Formerly a 34-acre sod farm,

This prairie is located next to the banks of the Dardenne Creek. While the former sod on site had shallow roots that did little to soak up water and hold soil in place, the roots of the prairie plants grow deep into the ground and play an important role in soaking up floodwaters from the creek. The prairie also provides vital food sources for pollinators and other local wildlife.



Great Rivers Greenway replaced the sod with native prairie flowering plants and grasses. The prairie is maintained with prescribed burns to remove invasive species and return nutrients to the soil. Watch a video of the February 2022 prescribed burn on the Dardenne Greenway at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DASX1ssccuY>.

The prairie is located next to a lake and near the wetlands along Dardenne Creek. A wide variety of birds and other wildlife visit these places, and some have made their permanent home here because of the diverse selection of food sources in the prairie, wetlands, woodlands, and along the creek. In addition to the human homes that have been built overlooking these habitats, homes have also been built by and for birds here. In the spring and summer, you can watch the purple martins visit the nests installed for them at the edge of the prairie and see the long row of nests built by the cliff swallows beneath the bridge between the prairie and lake.



Prairies of North America once covered more than 200 million acres including much of the St. Louis region, but less than 1% of prairie habitat remains today. Fortunately, community members are learning about prairies firsthand along the Dardenne Greenway at Bluebird Meadow.





Bluebird Meadow on the Dardenne Greenway (continued)

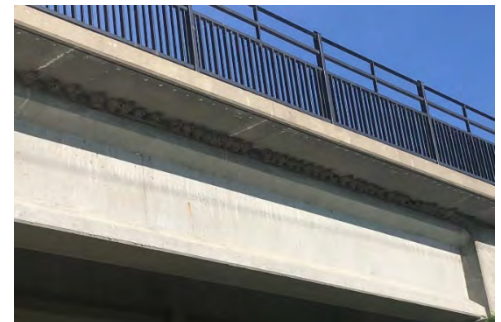
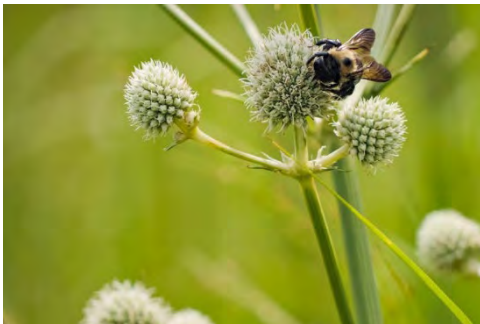
Over the last year, Missouri Master Naturalist **Mary Dueren** led beginner birdwatching walks along the Dardenne Greenway. Community members who are learning about birds in the area were able to see 56 different bird species here with Mary in 2021. You can join Mary for a birdwatching walk on the Dardenne Greenway later this fall.



Missouri Master Naturalist Intern **Elizabeth Simons**, who is also Community Program Manager at Great Rivers Greenway, led walking tours for community members to learn about the prairie habitat along with staff from the Missouri Botanical Garden who shared tips for replacing sod with native plants in your own yard.

If you want to learn about the Dardenne Greenway: Bluebird Meadow prairie habitat from the comfort of your own home, you can watch a video that Elizabeth created with the Missouri Humanities Council about the Native Lifeways on the Greenways that shows the important relationships between people, plants, animals, soil, air, and water in this prairie community. You can view the video at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXLtbz_8ktI.





Education and Outreach – Winter 2022



Audubon Center
at Riverlands

Eagle Ice Fest

by Karen Zelle

January 8, 2022

Bundled up for perfect eagle weather, guests, volunteers, and staff of the Audubon at Riverlands enjoyed the annual Eagle Ice Fest on Saturday, January 8th, 2022. The family-friendly activities included viewing eagles, Trumpeter swans and other birds through spotting scopes and an eagle meet and greet sponsored by World Bird Sanctuary Bird hikes around the sanctuary, building an eagle’s nest, making s’mores around a toasty fire, learning about eagles, warming up with hot drinks and snacks and crafts were some of the activity options offered for visitors.

Great Rivers Master Naturalists **Michael Meredith, Thomas Fasl, Lisa Picker, Don Knobbe and Karen Zelle** joined in the fun. The Audubon at Riverlands is unique and beautiful. Located on the Mississippi Flyway, it is one of the best places to view migratory birds. It is truly one of my favorite places to volunteer and/or visit for a hike with my camera!



Eagle Nest Building Bunch



Smores Girl



Lisa Picker and Don Knobbe answering a visitor's question.



Michael Meredith and Tom Fasl discover Eagles love Smores

Missouri Master Naturalists Help Judge the 55th Missouri Whitewater Championships St. Francis River at Millstream Gardens Conservation Area by Ann Eggebrecht

March 19, 2022

Brrr. We were dreading a windy cold day as we met in the 6am dark of the commuter parking lot at Gravois and 270. We then headed 1 hour and 45 minutes toward Millstream Gardens, the site of the 55th Annual Missouri Whitewater Championships on the Saint Francis River. We arrived in time for the 8am Judges Meeting, which was to clarify what we were going to be doing the rest of the day. It was still chilly and windy.



At the Judges' Meeting, Gate Judge Volunteer Coordinator, Johathan Lehmann, demonstrates how kayakers round the gates as Annie Russell, Ann Eggebrecht, Sue Forquer, and Station Captain, Patty Fiet, study the diagrams.

Our Missouri Master Naturalist group was assigned to Patty Feit, our experienced Station Captain. After we gathered additional warm clothing from the car, we headed to Station One, consisting of 7 gates through which boaters, mostly in kayaks, were to negotiate. These seven gates are almost 1/3 of the total gates of 22 on the river. Our group of eight volunteers had to spread out along the granite boulders of the river so we could see the gates which were also spread out along the river. This necessitated the use of three hand signals to indicate a penalty score for the boaters. Deb watched gates 1,2,3, Terry watched gate 4, **Sue Forquer** watched gate 5, and **Bob Virag** was assigned to gates 6 and 7, all of which were on the far side of the river and difficult to see.

During the day, the river rose and then fell, and the wind blew the gates, making boating and scoring a challenge. **Annie Russell** and **Connie Break** kept watching for the next

boater to leave the starting gate and announced the bib number of the boater. Patty Feit, our leader, was recording scores as hand signals came from the volunteers, one by one in a systematic method worked out during our setup. **Ann Eggebrecht** was then able to radio scores to the Scoring Tent on a walkie talkie. We scored over 120 boat runs during the course of the day, from 10am to 5pm.

Millstream Gardens is a Missouri Department of Conservation area, with part of it designated as a Missouri Natural Area. The Saint Francis River is "shut in" by the boulders surrounding the river.



St. Francis River at Millstream Gardens Conservation Area.
Photo by Annie Russell



Racer #2 slides downriver to paddle upriver through red Gate #4. His head and part of his boat must pass through the pole lines.



Boaters come down the river negotiating gates (2 poles) hung over the river. Some of the gates are downriver but others require the boater to position him or herself upriver to go against the current to pass through the gate in the proper direction. As judges, our job was to observe this activity and make a judgement as to how well the boater negotiated the gates. We could only apply three scores: a clean run was a zero, a touch of a gate as well as other situations

Bob Virag sends the hand signal that the kayaker cleared gates 6 and 7, scoring "safe", with no time penalty.

caused a penalty of 50 seconds. Since this was a timed race, the fewer penalties, the faster the time.

We watched all day long. When sun came out, we shed some layers. By 5pm we were tired but exhilarated that we had come together so well as a group and fulfilled our responsibilities.



Sue Forquer (right) gives the hand signal that another kayaker missed a gate with a 50-second penalty. This kayaker missed Terry's gate too.



Connie Break identified the racer bib numbers and relayed them in.



Missouri Whitewater Championship volunteer T-Shirts!

As we departed, we were given thanks and t-shirts.

Bob drove Sue and Ann back to St. Louis to end a successful Saturday in a beautiful part of Missouri. Connie planned to camp out and work again on Sunday. **Jack Barnett** also joined to judge on Sunday.

Another great Missouri Master Naturalists volunteer activity.



Annie Russell (left) relays scores to Ann Eggebrecht (center) who then radios in the score to the Score Tent. Station Leader #1 Patty Feit then tallies the scorecard (right).



Citizen Science-Winter 2022

Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch

2021-2022 Results

by Pat Lueders



January 11, 2022: **Collar 5P** sighted. First officially recorded GPS Collar on Swan Watch
Photo by Pat Lueders

Introduction:

The 2021-2022 Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch was the tenth watch conducted by community science volunteers at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS) under a partnership formed by the following local agencies: Audubon Center at Riverlands, Missouri Birding Society (MBS), St. Louis Audubon Society (SLAS), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, River Project Office (SLACE).

History: Trumpeter Swans began arriving at RMBS and the surrounding areas in good numbers during November 1991, returning each subsequent year to winter in the marshes and bay until late January. The Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch was created in 2012 to collect and share information regarding population numbers and the behavior of this successfully introduced species with the Trumpeter Swan Society and the general public.

Procedure:

Trained and experienced community service volunteers arrive at their assigned locations in the refuge ½ hour before dawn to count the swans and other waterfowl present. Counts are conducted in known roosting locations within the refuge every two weeks from November to February. The results are compiled and shared with the group after each watch by the volunteer coordinator.

Swan Collars:

During the reintroduction, in order to track the swans, cygnets were collared on their nesting grounds in Wisconsin by the Department of Natural Resources with a yellow neckband with black codes, a number followed by a letter. During the last 10 years, RMBS volunteers have sighted and reported 94 collars to the Federal Banding Lab, including the first sighting of a swan during the 2021-2022 watch fitted with a GPS tracking device in 2021.



RESULTS and SUMMARY 2021-2022

The watch dates for the 2021-2022 Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch:

November 16, 2021	December 28, 2021
November 30, 2021	January 11, 2022
December 14, 2021	January 25, 2022

Results:

Date	Temp (F)	Trumpeter	Adults	Cygnets	Tundra
11/16/2021	40°	109	94	15	
11/30/2021	39°	60	55	5	2
12/14/2021	42°	75	43	32	
12/28/2021	41°	55	44	11	
01/11/2022	22°	758	605	153	20
01/25/2022	12°	164	108	56 (52%)	

Summary:

The results of the 2021-2022 Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch were unique in many ways to the previous 10 years. Fewer swans were counted despite the fact that the habitat had recovered from the devastation caused by the Spring and Summer flooding of 2019. The surrounding agricultural fields were mixed, with some retaining the corn stubble preferred for daytime loafing and feeding. Temperatures were mild until the end of January providing additional open water along the Mississippi River for night roosting. Reports received during the season from the staff at Clarence Cannon/Delair National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) estimated that over 1,000 Trumpeter Swans used the refuge from November 2021-January 2022. Observers reported over 500 swans loafing during the day at the adjacent Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area at various times during the season. At the end of January, when temperatures resulted in the freezing of shallow marsh areas within the surrounding refuges, large numbers of swans congregated in Ellis Bay. On February 6, 2022, over 1,000 swans were unofficially counted in Ellis Bay, possibly staging for migration as in previous years.

During the last two seasons, the Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch has recorded a change in the use of RMBS and the

surrounding areas by the wintering swan populations. With available open water along the Mississippi River, the swans were recorded in many areas north of RMBS and in surrounding refuges as opposed to previous years when large numbers roosted together. This behavior is more prevalent since the devastation of the RMBS habitat in 2019. As in previous years, the first arriving swans in November were adults with few cygnets. Family groups began arriving near the end of December with cygnet percentages ranging from 20%, to a high of 52%, by the end of January 2022.

In conclusion, the results of the watch have shown that the number of wintering Trumpeter Swans in the RMBS area is dependent on the weather which determines the amount of available open water for roosting. When weather is temperate, the swans spread out throughout the area; and, as the water freezes, they congregate in the small available areas of open water. Staging for migration occurs at the end of January resulting in the largest number of swans for the season using the refuge.

Collars:

The following collars were recorded during the 2021-2022 season:

- 09F** (first recorded in 2012),
- 11U** (first recorded in 2016),
- 13F** (first recorded in 2013)
- 5P**---RMBS' and the watch's first GPS collar was recorded on 1/11/2022. **5P** was fitted with GPS on 7/22/2021, a female with a mate and three cygnets. The GPS track tells us that **5P** spent much of her wintering season in the RMBS area.

THANK-YOU!

The Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch had 28 volunteers during the 2021-2022 season, 10 of these new to the project. Without their efforts, the continued monitoring of the wintering population of Trumpeter Swans at RMBS would not be possible. The Audubon Center at Riverlands provided the volunteers with warmth and hot beverages throughout the season.

Pat Lueders, Volunteer Coordinator

*Special Thanks to Missouri Master Naturalist-Great River Chapter volunteers who helped make 2021-2022 Swan Watch a success: **Mary Dueren, Larry Conant, Diane Goulis, Jack Hambene, Michael Meredith, and Bob Virag***



The Owls of Forest Park

In the News!

by Mark Glenshaw

Two huge bits of owls' news!

After months of uncertainty, analysis, and discussion, I have made the call that the adult female is indeed Sophie, Charles's mate from last year.

Last, but not least, Charles and Sophie have two owlets. They are seven weeks old and cute as the Dickens. Please say hello to Betty and Sidney. They are named after Betty White and Sidney Poitier. If you come to Forest Park to see them, please keep a far, healthy, and respectful distance from them & Sophie. And Charles.

Enjoy and thank you.

Mark Glenshaw

But wait! There's more. St. Louis Post-Dispatch featured the newest owl family in the news:

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Signs of spring: Forest Park owlets attract fans, followers

Katie Kull Mar 15, 2022

ST. LOUIS — In a closely guarded location in Forest Park on Saturday, something miraculous was happening.

Betty and Sidney were preparing to fly.

The two great horned owlets, named after recently deceased actors, Betty White and Sidney Poitier, were inching toward nature's annual debut: spring.

Flowers were blooming. Trees were budding. Birds were singing. And Sidney and Betty were preparing for "fledging," or leaving the tree they've called home since hatching.

Self-described "owl man" Mark H.X. Glenshaw was awed and stressed.

He's been studying Sidney and Betty's father, Charles, for more than 16 years. That's when he first saw Charles or his mate at the time, Sarah, chase a Great Blue Heron twice its size.

"It took my love for Forest Park's wildlife and poured gasoline on the fire," he said. "It literally just changed my life."

Now, Glenshaw, a manager of university services at Fontbonne University, devotes much of his free time to observing and educating people about North America's most common owl. [He posts videos, gives lectures and leads](#)



A pair of baby great horned owls peer from a hollow in a tree in Forest Park on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. The space has served as an owl nesting spot for years, attracting camera and binocular-toting visitors. Photo by Robert Cohen, rcohen@post-dispatch.com

"owl prowls" for those interested in learning more about the majestic birds.

In the process, the owls have gained dozens of fans who flock near their tree and take photos of their big, round eyes and fluffy feathers. Glenshaw has developed a loyal band of owl mentees who help him observe and track the birds' progress.

On Saturday, a handful of owl devotees, some with hot chocolate in hand, braved below-freezing temperatures to check on Charles, his current mate, Sophie, and their owlets.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

They watched with bated breath as the babies took turns standing on the lip of their tree hollow and flapped their wings to gain strength — a behavior Glenshaw called “hitting the gym” — in preparation for fledging.

Fledging is a perilous time, Glenshaw explained, akin to a human baby taking their first steps in Times Square during rush hour when their parents are across the street. Owlets must deal with the innumerable dangers of the wild, with bodies the size equivalent to a human teenager but the mental and physical capabilities of a toddler.

Their parents will protect and feed them for several months while they get their bearings. Then they’re ready for “dispersal,” when they leave the parents’ territory to find a home and a mate.

Last year, Charles and Sophie’s first pair of owlets had already fledged when one fell ill and died.

“That was really tough,” Glenshaw said, “especially because they weren’t independent yet, but you could see them approaching that line.”

Erin Schreiber, 34, an owl devotee who started watching them about a year ago, found the body last year. She said that makes her especially worried about Betty and Sidney.

“I’m so stressed,” she said. But along with the stress, Schreiber, Glenshaw, and other owl enthusiasts have found wonder and a community around Charles and his family.

Owl observers update each other on social media and talk about Betty and Sidney’s milestones — most recently the owl equivalent of potty training — like proud parents. They hang out late into the evening some nights, peering through binoculars or camera lenses and discussing Charles’ recent perches and behaviors.

Daria McKelvey, 32, and Matt Barton, 32, followed Charles as he hooted and hid in one of his favorite hollows they jokingly called the “man cave.” They stopped conversation to listen and learn whether Sophie was prompting her mate to leave and hunt.

The following day, Glenshaw heard from observers that one of the owlets had left the nest and was perched on a nearby tree. Later that day, an owl mentee confirmed the other had fledged and was farther away.

It’s a big and exciting step for the owlets, but of course, Glenshaw said he’s also apprehensive.

He’s excited to see them gradually get better at flying and landing, nibble on branches and make early predatory attempts. But the owls challenge him to be patient in that excitement, he said — there are no shortcuts in nature.

“People ask me, ‘Where are they going to go, what are they going to do?’” he said. “I don’t know until it happens.”



One of two baby great horned owls and its mother peer from a hollow in a tree in Forest Park on Tuesday, March 8, 2022. The space has served as an owl nesting spot for years, attracting camera and binocular-toting visitors. Photo by Robert Cohen, rcohen@post-dispatch.com



The mother great horned owl returns to the nest where two owlets are being raised inside a hollow in a tree in Forest Park on Wednesday, March 9, 2022. Photo by Robert Cohen, rcohen@post-dispatch.com



Advanced Training-Winter 2022

February 19, 2021

BirdSafeSTL, Jean Favarra, VP of Conservation St. Louis Audubon Society, jpouf1@swbell.net



Jean Favarra gave a very enlightening and data-driven presentation on the crisis of declining bird population in North America. She first referenced a Cornell Lab of Ornithology study which stated that, between 1970 and 2019, 29% of the bird population has been lost. The study further stated that the primary causes of this decline are habitat loss, changing climate, cat predation, and collisions.

Jean focused her presentation on bird collisions with buildings, of which glass and light pollution are the major drivers, especially during migration. For reference, 70% of North American bird species are migratory, with roughly 3-5 billion birds migrating every year in the spring and fall. 80% of those birds migrate at night using the moon and stars for navigation. The United States has four (4) primary bird flyways, and Missouri is in the Mississippi Flyway. As this flyway is used by roughly 40% of North American waterfowl, 60-70% of all songbirds, St. Louis has been determined to be the 5th most dangerous city in North America for Migrating Birds in the spring migration season. It ranks as the 6th most dangerous in the fall migration season.

Roughly 600M birds are killed annually in the United States by building collisions. High-rise buildings account for < 1% of bird collisions. The greater numbers are with low-rise buildings and residences, which account for 56% and 44%, respectively.

Bright lights cause birds to become disoriented and confused. As an example, on September 11, the Twin Tower Memorial in New York City annually shines very strong spotlights up into the sky. In that spotlight, viewers can see thousands of birds caught in that beam, unable to find their way out. Because of this, New York Audubon partnered with the Memorial to lessen the impact. During this time, volunteers count the birds in the beam. When the bird count approaches 1000, the lights are turned off for 20 minutes so that the birds can find their way and resume their migration.

A 20-year study of collisions at one large urban building, McCormick Place in Chicago, showed that bird collisions can be greatly reduced by reducing the amount of building light output. In addition to light output, the study also determined that collisions are affected by the magnitude of the nocturnal migration and by wind conditions.

To reduce light pollution in our area during bird migration periods, St. Louis Audubon partnered with **Lights Out Heartland** <https://www.lightsouthheartland.org/>.

Their collaboration with 'Program Partners' focuses on outreach and education. Whereas they also collaborate with 'Building Partners' to turn off or dim building lights in May and September. One of the Building Partners is the Gateway Arch National Park, which has agreed to turn off spotlights that illuminate the arch in May and September.

Building Design has a strong impact to bird collisions. When birds see light through a window, they think that they can fly through it. Further, birds may try to fly through vegetation which is reflected in the glass.

In response to the problems of light pollution and building design, St. Louis Audubon established the **BirdSafeSTL** project <https://stlouisaudubon.org/birdsafestl/> to promote bird-safe practices. The group conducted bird mortality surveys of 23-26 buildings in St. Louis during migrations. Data is recorded using iNaturalist. Birds found on given days fluctuates with the migration intensity, and Jean suggested referencing the BirdCast site for prediction of migration intensity. <https://birdcast.info/>

Some Observations of the project:

- Some buildings consistently have a much higher number of bird collisions than others.
- Of the species identified by the project, the bird with the #1 highest collision count is the Ovenbird; #3 is Common Yellowthroat. One common trait is that these night-flying warblers tend to fly lower than other birds. These species also talk to each other during migration with "call-notes." For some reason, these species tend to die at a higher rate than other species.

What can you do?

- Self-certify your home as dark-sky friendly. <https://idsw.darksky.org/activities/dark-sky-friendly-home/>
- Take advantage of free training and learn how to teach others. <https://idsw.darksky.org/activities/dark-sky-training-for-volunteers/>
- Volunteer with **BirdSafeSTL** project.
- Use only the amount of light that is necessary.
- Place patterns or UV applications on the outside of a window so that birds see the glass. Guidance is available from the American Bird Conservancy
- Interestingly, raptors don't see UV applications. <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/>
- Close your blinds.
- Placing bird feeders closer to window reduces bird mortality.
- Consider temporary solutions during times of migration.

---contributed by **Chris Hull**



March 15, 2022

The Missouri Master Naturalist Program & Conservation Relevancy



Jessica Hoey,
MDC Relevancy
Branch Chief



Julie Stone,
MDC Regional Admin.
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Jenni Rabenau,
MDC Partner & Citizen
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The MDC Relevancy Branch was created in July 2020, during the reorganization of MDC. Jessica explained that “Relevancy” in conservation is about getting more people involved in conservation. Doing so requires that they “Facilitate and provide opportunities for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.” Because of the many societal changes, including changing demographics, MDC is addressing these changes to remain relevant and to ensure that they have strong support of the 1/8 of 1% conservation sales tax.

The MDC reorganization moved the Stream team program to the new **Relevancy Branch** and created four new positions, including a Hunter & Angler Marketing Specialist and a **Partner & Citizen Engagement Specialist**. This year, the Master Naturalist Program was moved from the Education Branch (Syd Hime) to the Relevancy Branch, under Jenni Rabenau. Jenni’s background in managing volunteer programs for school districts was instrumental in her selection for this position.

The Relevancy Branch is organized into the following areas: Stream Team, Recreational Use, Marketing and Data Analytics for Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation (R3), and Partner & Citizen Engagement. The Missouri Master Naturalist program resides in the Partner & Citizen Engagement area, along with Missouri Conservation Partners Roundtable (September 2022) and MDC Volunteer Programs Working Group (to be organized in 2023).

Jenni Rabenau explained that the Missouri Master Naturalists can expect that she will 1) Collaborate with UM Extension advisor Bob Pierce, 2) Be open to suggestions about curriculum changes, 3) Provide consolidated & clear communication to each chapter, and 4) Be a consistent champion for Missouri Master Naturalists.

The audience posed several questions related to:

- **Bicycles-** The recent announcement that some state conservation areas have opened service roads to Bicyclists.
- **MMN training:**

Conducting training multiple times per year - Jenni is open to this possibility, and she and Bob Pierce will assess the classes to see if any might be conducted virtually.

Larger Class size - Jenni is not aware of any limits on class size.

- **Flexibility in conducting some training by Chapter members** – Jenni and Jessica are open to ways in which we can build capacity, reduce the waiting list, and explore efficiencies. They will, as stated earlier, discuss these possibilities with Bob Pierce. Ultimately, they feel that it may take some time to weigh these options against the policy manual.
- **Diversity:**
 - **MDC Diversity Protocol** – Since MDC does not have a diversity protocol for volunteers, we would look for the MMN program manual for guidance. Jessica added that the restructuring also created a position of the Assistant to the Director for Inclusion and Diversity (I&D). The Director of I&D’s responsibilities include chairing an MDC I&D Council, which includes 50 staff from across the organization. Anything that comes out of this council that impacts not only staff but also volunteers will be communicated to MMN chapters.
 - **Hybrid training** – There was broad agreement that virtual training can help us to reach a more diverse group of trainees.
 - **MDC Diversity “Lessons Learned”**– Members requested that any lessons learned from within MDC be shared with MMN to help us in our effort to reach a more diverse populace.
- **MDC Organization**, and the groups with which our chapter interacts in the St. Louis region:
 - The MDC reorganization created 8 regional offices, each with its own administrator, staff, and with more authority to make decisions that impact their region.
 - The statewide Headquarters still owns the framework, policies, and many of the key functions to ensure consistency and efficiencies across the state.
 - Within the St. Louis region, the **Community and Private Lands Conservation Unit** is the parent for the St. Louis **Community Conservation Team**, led by Tracy Boaz. Tracy’s team includes Wildlife Biologist Erin Shank, Urban Foresters Danny Moncheski and Mark Grueber, Urban Fish Management biologists, and other specialists who are all focused on the needs of the St. Louis region.

---contributed by **Chris Hull**



Monthly Advanced Training Opportunities



Advanced Training Speaker Series 2022 Calendar

1/18/2022	New Member Orientation	Bob Ochs, Bob Virag, Lisa Picker, Michael Meredith, Kari Pratt
2/15/2022	BirdSafe STL	Jean Favara, VP Conservation St. Louis Audubon Society
3/15/2022	The Missouri Master Naturalist Program Going Forward	Jessica Hoey, MDC Relevancy Chief and Jenni Rabenau, MDC Partner & Citizen Engagement Specialist
4/19/2022	Nighttime Photography	Dan Zarlenga, MDC Media Specialist
5/17/2022	St. Louis Zoo, WildCare Park	Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman, Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Park Director
6/21/2022	CHAPTER PICNIC with Forest Therapy	Susie Van de Riet, St. Louis Native Plants, WildOnes & GrowNative!
7/19/2022	MOTUS Tracking of Wildlife	Sarah Kendrick, MDC State Ornithologist
8/16/2022	Great Rivers Greenway	Elizabeth Simons, Community Program Manager
9/20/2022	Astronomy	Rich Heuermann, William Breeden, St. Louis Astronomical Society
10/18/2022	Plastics Reduction	Leslie Gittemeier, Wildlife Conservationist
11/15/2022	(pending)	
12/20/2022	Holiday Party	

Great Rivers Member Milestones 2022 Awards and Recognition.

First Quarter Results as of March 31, 2022

The Great Rivers chapter appreciates the challenging work and consistent dedication to our mission of the following members:



*Silver Dragonfly
2,500 hour Milestone Pin*

Michael Meredith



*2022 Recertification Pin
"Grass Pink" Orchid*

Sue Forquer
Chris Garhart
Jack Hambene
Kathleen Kapayou
Mary Kreppel
Michael Meredith
Kris Monahan
Bob Virag



*Initial Certification
Dragonfly Pin*

Anna Hancock
Kris Monahan
Tony Pryse

Member Spotlight *Sharing members accomplishments*

Former Chapter President, Michael Meredith, Class of 2007, earns his 2,500-hour Milestone Award

Congratulations, Michael, on earning your well-deserved award!

My Journey by Michael Meredith



Not to sound too sentimental, but the fact that I can remember the precise moment when I learned of the Missouri Master Naturalist program should give you some sense of the impact that it's had on my life. I was sitting on a plane bound for Houston, reading the February 2007 issue of Missouri Conservationist. There I found an article entitled "Humanity for Habitat" outlining the relatively new Missouri Master Naturalist program. Something about the program resonated with me and shortly after returning home from that trip, I sent an email to Scott Killpack with MU Extension asking to be put on the list for the next class. In those nascent days of the program, the waiting list was way shorter than it is today.

Within a couple of months, I received notice about registering for the class and I wasted no time in signing up for 10 weeks of late afternoon classes at Powder Valley and a couple of field days. I was fortunate with my job in that I was able to play hooky for a couple of hours each week without incurring the wrath of AT&T (my employer). Admittedly, I was wary of my ability to find 40 hours of volunteer opportunities, but I quickly discovered that one workday had a habit of generating two or more opportunities.



Collecting trash, Christian Pond, Spanish Lake Park in St. Louis County.



Missouri Master Naturalist-Class of 2007



Member Spotlight-Michael Meredith (continued)

Over the years I've had the opportunity to work or participate in a myriad of activities that I might never have indescribable. There was the baby elk survey at Peck Ranch, where after one sighting, I found myself running through the woods in pursuit of what proved to be a deer (only three months after having my second knee replacement).

I've shoveled mud from trails along the Mississippi River and helped carve new trails in Creve Coeur Park; and counted swans at the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Of course, there are always the trash bashes, and don't get me started on honeysuckle hacking and tree planting, I've been fortunate to have been involved in a lot of plantings throughout the region; including tree planting in tornado-devasted Joplin.

I hope to be volunteering at Eagle Days until I'm well into my 80's. The joy at watching a child look through a spotting scope and seeing an eagle in the wild is indescribable.

The St. Louis Audubon Society has become almost as important to me as the Master Naturalist program. And then there is Forest ReLeaf and the Green Center (though I haven't managed to work there for a while). Most recently, I've had more fun working at Chronic Wasting Disease Sampling stations; far more than I would have ever thought possible.

The work... the impact on nature... the places... all have enriched my life; however, nothing compares with some of the people that I've met. the overall list would be a mile long, but I have to call out people like **John Vandover, Kathleen Kapayou, Pam Wilcox, Bob Virag, Vaughn Meister**, and a host of others who've enriched my life simply by getting to know them. I hope that my journey as a Missouri Master Naturalist continues for a long, long time. I dare say that it would be impossible to overstate the effect that it's had on my life.



Removing non-natives, Little Creve Coeur Lake , Creve Coeur Park in St. Louis County



Naturalist's Journal

The Story Behind the Cover Photograph

Eastern Screech Owl

Megascops asio

by Miguel Acosta (Class of 2021)

Another winter is here. While some shudder at the thought of snow fall, I embrace the season of change, as winter migrants make their return to our area.

Only 10 inches tall and well-camouflaged, the Eastern Screech Owl (*Megascops asio*) is more often heard than seen. In Missouri, its body can either be gray all over, brown, or red (rufous) as is the one pictured. All three-color phases make the Eastern Screech Owl very difficult to see against the bark of trees, where it lives. In addition to large ear tufts, the little owl has large yellow eyes and a yellow beak

Where do you find them? Well, that is the fun part – As long as there are trees with cavities for nesting, the Eastern Screech Owl might be there. It is found in almost all habitats below 4900 feet in elevation, including urban, suburban, and heavily forested areas. The Eastern Screech Owl easily acclimates to human presence and will use bird boxes for nesting. From my observation, this particular one seems a bit shy and did his best to avoid being seen.

Conservation Status: Still widespread and fairly common but thought to have been gradually declining in various parts of the range. This species is helped in some areas by provision of nest boxes.



Reference source –

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-screech-owl>

Until the next adventure.

If you would like to be updated when I post new blogs articles, please sign up for my email list [@ my blog.](#)



Naturalist's Journal

Missouri Master Naturalist, **Lisa Picker, In the News!**

Contributed by Tessa Wasserman



Spring Arts Preview

Resident Raising Funds For Ukrainian Relief Through Art

Mar 21, 2022

Webster Groves resident Lisa Picker is using her longtime love of creating Pysanky — often called Ukrainian eggs — to help provide relief for the people of Ukraine.

Picker is part of the United Nations of Eggers, an international group that meets virtually once a week to create Pysanky together at the same time. This type of egg decorating has been a tradition in Ukraine for thousands of years. Ukrainian legend says the more Pysanky that are created, the more evil that is driven from the world. Last week, more than 100 artists from 14 countries came together over a 30-hour period to create Pysanky for peace in Ukraine.

Picker will gift one of her Pysanky creations to those who donate at least \$30 to Ukrainian relief efforts. Any organization helping Ukraine counts, but some suggested organizations include Doctors Without Borders, the Ukrainian Red Cross, Heart to Heart International, Water Mission, Mercy Corps and Mercy Chefs.

Residents should screen shot a photo send a receipt of their donation to Picker via email at picker.lisa1@gmail.com. Every \$30 donated earns a chance in the drawing for the Pysanky. Picker will choose the gift recipient on April 2, and she will deliver it to the winner that day.



Every \$30 donated to Ukrainian relief efforts earns a chance in the drawing for this Pysanky, or Ukrainian egg, created by Webster Groves resident Lisa Picker.



Naturalist's Journal

Wild Edibles

-- by Tara Morton

Red Bud Capers + Foraged Spring Salad

One of my favorite spring blooming trees is the redbud, whose color brings such hope for the turn of the season into a near colorless wintery woodland landscape. Those little pink flowers are more than just looks - they are also edible! I usually toss the flowers into a salad, but this year I was early enough to go one step further, in turning the unopened flower buds into "capers." Capers plants are found in Mediterranean areas, where its buds are pickled into a delicious salty little treat. But really, you can pickle just about any unopened flower bud to create a similar snack. Here's a fast and easy way to try this yourself.

Red Bud Capers

1. Gather unopened redbud flowers from trees. Harvest in small patches without stripping the tree. A grove of trees is best and try to gather after a rain but once it's dried.
2. Separate out any bits of bark or stem, or any other debris. At this point I had about a 1/2 cup of buds, but work with whatever you have! Place into mason jar
3. Using either white wine vinegar or distilled vinegar, combine equal parts vinegar and room-temperature water in jar with flowers. I ended up using about 1/2 cup of each in my small jar.
4. Add 1/2 tsp of salt for every cup of brine.
5. (Optional) Add any other pickling seasoning you might like. I threw in fresh dill to mine!
6. Ensure liquid reaches very top of jar, to the point of flowing over. Buds want to float, so this will keep them covered in brine. Seal with plastic lid if you have one, as metal lids can rust with vinegar. Some liquid may overflow when you seal, so be prepared to cleanup.
7. Leave the jar in a dark place on the counter for at least 3 days. "Burp" your jar a few times a day to release pressure.
8. Refrigerate and enjoy!

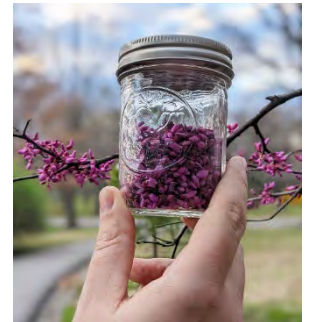
Foraged Spring Salad

The capers you've made are great for tossing into a nice spring salad, as they will add a nice color, taste, and texture to your dish. I recommend walking through your yard and seeing what early spring greens you can gather. Many edible greens get more bitter through the summer, so spring is a great time to enjoy them. Many are very nutritious- filled with lots of Vitamin A, C, and many other nutrients.

In my salad, I started with a store-bought mix and threw in whatever greens I was able to gather. Give them a good wash in the salad spinner! Here are some suggestions:

- Dandelion leaves
- Wild Violet leaves + flowers
- Chickweed
- Plantain
- Ground Ivy

I created my own dressing with a mixture of rice vinegar, olive oil, lemon juice, and honey, with added salt and the redbud capers. Mix those to your personal taste or use whatever dressing you'd like!





Logo Wear Order Form Spring-Summer 2022



50/50 fleece
(kelly green)
men or women
\$35



microfleece no hood
(aqua green)
women
\$35



bright green tee
women's
\$17



khaki/hunter ball cap
\$19



kiwi short sleeve tee
\$16.00



military green hoodie
\$25.00



tan long sleeve tee
\$20.00



MMN logo patch
\$5.00



We can also bring in our own items to be embroidered for \$10.50 each item.

Member's Name:		Phone Number:	
Name of item	size (s/m/l/xl)	quantity	total cost

Orders due by the May 17, 2022 monthly meeting

SAVE, then EMAIL and ATTACH COMPLETED FORM TO:

Kari S. Pratt

kpratt@lindberghschools.ws

636-391-2901



Harbinger of Spring
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