



Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters Newsletter

Volume No. 02 Issue No. 01 Date: February, 2008

2008 CONFLUENCE CHAPTER OFFICERS

*Be of assistance to the president when he is not available
Linda Kalicak, Confluence Vice President*



Scott Barnes, President

When you asked me to share with everyone my goals as the president of the Confluence Chapter, I admit it made me stop and think for awhile. I really look at myself as more of "hands in the dirt" type of volunteer--not an administrative type. However, I realize that for our group to be a productive group, we need to take turns with the leadership responsibilities.

I accept my turn now as president of our group of Master Naturalists. To the best of my ability I will work with our members toward our program objectives. With the assistance of our officers and committees we will move forward in our common goals of improving public understanding of the environment and its natural resources and inspiring others to join us in our efforts. It is the effort of many not one that gets things done. A further goal that I would like to encourage is for our members to continue to freely share their knowledge and friendship with other members. This aspect of our group has been most enriching for me. I want that experience to be shared by others.

Scott Barnes, Confluence President



Leslie Limberg, Treasurer

I Promise to all Master Naturalists:

- to be an honest treasurer
- to keep all financial transactions transparent to members at all times
- to keep organized records, easily read by members
- to communicate problems/concerns promptly if and when they arise
- to work for master naturalists inspired by prosperity, abundance, & creativity

Leslie Limberg, Confluence treasurer



Holly Currier, Secretary

I will maintain my integrity, commitment and reliability by responding with PROMISES to the Confluence Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists. (Isn't this exciting!!)

I, Holly Currier, during my term as Secretary promise

- to take accurate minutes during our monthly meetings
- to organize the groups thoughts and activities into an understandable format

-to publish the minutes in a timely fashion for all Master Naturalists to read and review-

-to stay well-informed as to the groups activities so that I may answer any questions by persons from outside or within our organization

-to smile at and communicate with all of you in a friendly way, each time we are together

Holly Currier Confluence Secretary



Linda Kalicak, Vice President

Provide quality educational programs for the meetings. Programs that can be informative or used for advanced certification

*Be part of the advisory committee to make decisions regarding the education and resources for our chapter
Attend the chapter meetings*



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Connie McCormack, State Advisory Board

My goals as State Advisory Committee Representative (remembering that I am part of a group and that its the group that should decide the goals-

- Getting to know the other Missouri Master Naturalist Groups and who/how they function

- Getting ready to host a Conference - it is in our future as each chapter is responsible for hosting a conference

- On a more personal note I would like to know more about the state I live in and love

Connie McCormack, Confluence Representative State Advisory Board

2008 GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER OFFICERS



**John Vandover, President &
State Advisory Board**

From the Desk of the President of Great Rivers Chapter

The Great Rivers Chapter is currently working extremely hard to get the chapter up, running, motivated and self sustaining. To that end we have undertaken the following initiatives.

The first is to develop relationships with environmental organizations within St. Louis City and

St. Louis County that can provide Great Rivers with a steady flow of approved volunteer opportunities. Focusing our efforts on city and county area organizations will enable our Chapter's members to meet their volunteer requirements within an easy driving range of their homes. And in light of current gasoline prices having work opportunities only a short drive from home will simplify their decision to volunteer.

Second is to hold a couple of Great Rivers only advanced training outings. While these outings will go towards satisfying each member's annual requirement of eight hours of advanced training, they are also intended to be venues targeted at developing camaraderie and friendship within our group. Each outing will have several hours of hands on naturalist education followed by a social gathering with food and beverage where the attendees can have an opportunity to get to know each other.

The Third initiative is to strive to have a guest speaker for each of our meetings. Whether advanced training presenters or representative of potential partnering organizations, we have been fortunate in having guest speakers at all but maybe only one of our meetings since our chapter was founded last June. To facilitate this Third Initiative, we have a working committee whose mission is to identify guest speakers and training opportunities.

This final item, while not really an initiative, was a sincere effort to both recognize and accommodate our members concerns about their getting to our meetings, easily. With the specter of a difficult at best commute due to the Highway 40 closure and a constant concern over the rising cost of gas, it was readily apparent that we had to leverage our luxury of having two locations in which to hold our monthly meetings for the benefit of our members. The solution was a location vote at the January meeting. The result was, by a narrow margin, to meet at the Dennis & Judith Jones Pavilion in Forest Park through May with the June through the end of the year meetings at Powder Valley Conservation Area in Kirkwood. And by splitting the year's meetings between these two locations we gave the City members a short meeting commute for the first half of the year and then accommodated the St. Louis County members with a short drive for the second half.

Speaking for all of my fellow officers, running Great Rivers is truly a lot of fun and a source of great satisfaction. However it is also a tough challenge to both keep the Chapter moving forward and the membership motivated and involved. To meet this challenge successfully we need your help, we need the involvement of our entire membership. We encourage all of our members to be active, not only as volunteers but active in



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identifying speakers, suggesting training opportunities, developing concepts for group activities. I encourage each and everyone to become active, get involved in making Great Rivers a truly exciting Master Naturalists organization.
John Vandover, Great Rivers President and Representative State Advisory Board

Vice President Tim Dale is currently on leave of absences.

No Photo available



Dennis Honkomp, Treasurer

As an officer, one of my goals is to increase attendance at our monthly membership meetings. This will encourage more volunteers for our projects and develop stronger friendships with the common goal of fulfilling the mission of the Missouri Master Naturalists.
Dennis Honkomp, Great Rivers Chapter



**Sarah Ryno, Secretary
Great Rivers Chapter**

Bluebird Season is Coming! **by Claire Meyners**

While the calendar may say that it is still winter, February is the month when it is time to prepare for the coming bluebird season. For the past ten years I have monitored and reported data to Cornell University on the nesting habits of the Eastern Bluebirds at Shaw Nature Reserve. Fellow master naturalists Cindy Cross and Lynn Buchanan have assisted me, Cindy for four years now and Lynn last year.

The Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology has been collecting information on cavity nesters from willing sources all over the country. Cavity nesters include not only bluebirds, woodpeckers, chickadees and titmice, but also various species of wrens, swallows, flycatchers, and warblers. However, the specialized studies that Cornell has carried out have focused on bluebirds because of the large number of houses that have been built specifically for them.

Because Cornell's study is nationwide, some interesting data have emerged regarding regional differences in nesting habits. Some of these findings are quite intuitive. For example, bluebirds start laying eggs much earlier in the South than in the North. (In the early years of the study, Cornell never had its data forms ready before May 1st, because bluebirds around Ithaca, New York would not start laying eggs until May. This week, January 15th, the Lab has already posted the data forms for 2008 on the Internet. Clearly, the Lab has learned something from its own data and responded. Laying can start in February in the far South.)

Other findings are not so intuitive. Because a nest attempt typically takes from 5 to 6 weeks (from laying of the first egg to fledging), the weather permits no more than two nest attempts in the North compared to at least three in the South. Thus, one might expect many more bluebirds in the South. However this is not the case. It turns out that clutches are smaller in the South, i.e., there are fewer eggs per nest attempt, and the success rate of nest attempts is lower. There are several hypotheses as to why this is so, such as hotter weather puts more of a strain on the females so they lay fewer eggs, eggs overheat, and/or there are more predators.

So what does this say about the habits of Eastern Bluebirds in Missouri? Because of our latitude and weather patterns, birds here usually start egg-laying just before April 1st. In looking at the data I have collected over the last 10 years, the earliest an egg was ever laid was March 21st (in 2006). The latest date recorded for a first egg of the season was April 2nd (in 2003). The typical pattern over the years has been for the egg-laying season to get into full swing during the first week of April. Since the birds start nest building before the first egg is laid (and may even let a nest sit for a few days before starting a clutch) it is a good idea to have houses in place by mid-March.

I will bring to either the February or March meeting a box and predator guard design that I have found to be easy to monitor and clean out, and as effective as any design can be in preventing predators or competitors from destroying the eggs or nestlings. No design can be completely effective. However, by experimenting with various designs at the Reserve over the years,



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we have reduced the nest failure rate from 70% to around 35%. Positioning the box is also important. It should not be in a shrubby area as this attracts house wrens, a notorious competitor and destroyer of bluebird nests. Ideally the box should be in a fairly open area, 50 to 100 feet from a tree. Electrical conduit makes a good pole for a box. If it is placed on a fence post, a predator guard is essential to keep out mice, squirrels, cats and raccoons.

Because the Shaw Nature Reserve has an 85-box bluebird trail, our data has been very valuable to Cornell, and we have been requested to participate in several other studies. One study that has just been completed involved putting small data loggers into nests during egg-laying and incubation to measure a) when incubation started exactly and b) what the temperature range is in the nest versus in the box or outside. We have not heard the results of this study yet.

If you have some time and would like to learn more about bluebirds—or tree swallows, house wrens or chickadees, which are other species that also nest in these boxes—new volunteers would be most welcomed. Monitoring happens on a regular schedule twice a week, traditionally on either Monday and Thursday, or Tuesday and Friday. It starts the first of April. As nest attempts dwindle in July, the time required for each session lessens. If you are interested or want more information, please contact me at 636-938-3085 or at cawm@att.net.

Exotic Eradication

We got out our loppers, shovels, axes, and spray bottles of James' Homemade brew...a lovely royal blue concoction of deadly herbicidal poisons. It was a crisp Saturday morning, a good day for hacking out evil bush honeysuckle. Nine Master Naturalists along with other Shaw volunteers kept up the pace for three hours plus.

It was a prominent corner, highly visible to Shaw visitors where four key arteries converge through the Reserve. We cleaned it all out, that bad old invasive brush. Its part of the SGT, the self-guided trail used by school buses of kids, thoughtful home schoolers, and teacher-naturalists...to be planted with shade-loving wildflowers this Spring. Good work, Master Naturalists... The legacy of our good deed will be a bountiful cornerstone for all to feast.

Danger Lurks Beneath the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers By Gerry Lindhorst

If you're boating on the Missouri or Mississippi Rivers take extra precaution as danger to both humans and native fish is lurking beneath the water's surface. The danger is from Big Head and Silver Asian Carp, which are now overtaking over our rivers at an alarming rate. Brought from out of the country to control water quality (which did not work), the carp escaped into Mississippi River Basin in the 1980s from research facilities, state aquaculture facilities and sewage treatment ponds and during the 1995 flood from catfish ponds.

As an average female can carry up to 2 million eggs, experts fear the carp will eventually overrun the waterways and bully food away from native fish causing them to starve. They grow between 4 and 5 feet in length and weigh up to 100 pounds. They eat plankton and microorganisms. Stirred into frenzy by the sound of a boat's motor, a silver carp can leap 15 feet out of the water and slap anything near them. Many boaters have been injured when hit by these flying missiles. Boats have been damaged and the fish leave a slimy, bloody mess when they land in the boat.

While Missouri is in the planning stage of what to do, Illinois DNR recently gave temporary permission for commercial fishermen to join the battle. In the Kaskaskia River near the dam creating Carlyle Lake, the lake's assistant manager said that there was a school of Big Head Carp about the size of a building, 30 yards wide and 40 to 50 yards long below the dam. The water is about 8 to 15 feet deep and the fish extended all the way to the bottom. In three days, two crews, 6 fishermen, netted 60,000 pounds of the invasive carp. Congress is spending millions on an electric barrier in the channel that connects the Mississippi River Basin with the Great Lakes to help prevent the carp from entering the Great Lakes. A national strategy plan has been developed, recommended, but not implemented. In the meantime, the population of Big Head and Silver Carp continues to mushroom. *Editor's note: to learn more about the dangers of Asian Carp to go: <http://www.asiancarp.org/>*

Christmas Bird Count

Missouri Master Naturalists from the Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters and the St. Louis Audubon Society answered the invitation from the Friends of Bid Buddy to participate in the annual Christmas bird count on January 5th.

This was a beautiful day to be outdoors, and apparently, a great day to watch birds. In counting birds at the Boone's Crossing Unit of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the nearby area of Chesterfield, and across the river around Bonhomme Island, team members saw a total of 53 species and 1,429 individual birds. Of those, 39 species and 812 individuals were seen on or adjacent to the Boone's Crossing Unit, the highest species total we've had for the area in our four years of counts. A complete list of the results can be found at: <http://www.friendsofbigmuddy.org/WeldonSpringsCBC.htm>

Highlights include two Long-eared owls seen in a thick stand of willow saplings along the trail at Boone's Crossing, and also a Lincoln's sparrow.

This was the first year to do any of the area in Chesterfield south of Highway 40 and across the river around Bonhomme Island, so it was interesting to see the results for those areas.

If your appetite is whetted for other counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>) is coming up on February 15-18, and people are encouraged to count birds in area wildlife refuges, parks, etc. In this count, individuals count and report the totals themselves, so we do not count as a team, but if any of you are interested, I encourage you to participate. More information about this count will be available in early February.



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Data collected from the Christmas Bird Count and [Great Backyard Bird Counts](#) help refuge biologists to know what bird species use the refuge units.

The Conservation Princess' Diary

Green and Guiltless by Lee Phillion

This just in...green is the new color for 2008. A major St. Louis company recently announced that they had offset the "carbon footprint" of a big meeting by donating money to a conservation group for tree planting. The Academy of Motion Pictures gave a carbon offset of 100,000 pounds of CO₂ as a thank you to last year's presenters. A local bride and groom held a "carbon neutral" wedding, thanks to a ZeroCarbon™ Wedding offset – a gift from the maid of honor.

Carbon offsets are certificates confirming that someone is counterbalancing somebody else's carbon emissions by reducing CO₂ by an equal amount. For example, if my energy use adds a ton of CO₂ to the atmosphere and I can pay somebody else to decrease CO₂ emissions by a ton, I can remain carbon neutral. Organizations like Terrapass and CarbonFund, corporations that sell carbon offset certificates, fill the role of brokers in these deals.

Here's how it works. Let's say a company comes up with a new gizmo that reduces carbon emissions. That company can get one carbon offset for every ton of emissions reduced. Then they can sell that carbon offset through CarbonFund to somebody concerned about the size of their own carbon footprint – like me, or a major company concerned about their emissions.

It is an excellent tool in that the sale of offsets helps fund the development of more CO₂-reducing ideas and encourages preservation of forests. Low emission energy producers like wind farms may sell offsets to coal burning power plants. And, conservation organizations can generate contributions by providing information about the carbon-offset value of donations.

Anything that gets people to understand the magnitude and effect of their energy use is a good idea. The ability to measure personal impact is key to getting people to reduce energy use.

Maybe.

If I had the bucks, I *could* simply buy my way out of my carbon-based sins. I could keep driving my big gas-guzzler vehicle guilt-free with the purchase of offsets. For that matter, there's no reason why I can't extend the offset concept to my other indulgences and guilty pleasures?

The Chardonnay offset – I can probably offset the carbon emissions generated by producing and transporting my

favorite California wine by finding just three Master Naturalists who agree to refrain from alcohol in my name.

The Britney Spears offset – My obsession with perusing supermarket tabloids might be counterbalanced by reading three chapters of "War and Peace."

The Reality TV offset – A full four hours of watching The History Channel is probably needed to remain "stupid-neutral" after just one "Jerry Springer Show."

A typical Master Naturalist meeting at Busch Conservation Area adds up to a carbon footprint of about 513 lbs of CO₂. At current carbon offset prices we could offset that for \$65 per meeting. That's around \$5 per person. Bring cash.

Or, am I missing the point?

Perhaps the best way to offset our meetings is by tackling our conservation volunteerism with vigor. Plant trees. Hack honeysuckle. Preserve our carbon-sequestering natural assets like woodlands and prairies. We could even carpool to meetings.

I suppose I could also give up my evening glass of chardonnay. Bummer. Sometimes it's *really* hard to be green.

Go to www.carbonfund.org to calculate your carbon footprint.

Master Naturalists Participate in Prairie Seeding

It was a dusty morning at Quail Ridge. Our first recipe was to empty native seed bags on the floor, mix with spring wheat berries, adding a little cat litter for spread ability. After dividing it into 7 buckets, we traversed out to the prairie, beyond the maintenance building, past the grove of cedars, past the rain gardens, each of us carting our 5 gallon pail of forb/grass mix. Ben's cuisine was his very own experimental blend of Wingo homegrown and Live Seed with a dash of miscellaneous what not from other remnant fields. What the county doesn't know is that his fingers are always crossed. Hoping and guessing much of the time, he learns as he goes, spending their thousands of dollars, betting on Mother Nature's compassionate help. AND the help of us Master Naturalists! So, we wish the seeds well, tossing them up & out to the wind in loose handfuls. Kiss them goodbye and good luck. Hopefully tomorrow's rain will drive them deep between the gaps of already established gray-headed coneflower, rudbeckia, and prairie clover.... before the chipping sparrows gobble down their morning porridge.



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??? Did you know ???

Did you know that the opossum:

- is the most primitive mammal on the continent
- is the only North American marsupial
- loves persimmons
- as a newborn" (the size of a honeybee), he has well developed front legs, needed to crawl from birth canal to pouch; his hind legs are still embryonic, mere stubs at this time.
- the name opossum comes from the Algonquian word, "apasum," meaning 'white animal'
- are very resistant to rabies, however are a primary carrier of a deadly disease that infects horses and should be kept away from stables
- his playing dead is a result of a temporary nervous shock

Upcoming Events

February 7 1:00 – 3:00 pm Tree Keepers Workshop sponsored by Forest ReLeaf of Missouri and the MDC St. Louis Community College Wildwood Campus 2645 Generations Dr.(Route 109 & Manchester Rd.) **6 sessions starting Feb 7 to March 13 Free but must register** LIMITED to 25 participants Register early! 1-888-4-releaf

February 9 - 10 Cedar burning / glade restoration Escape the dredges of winter confinement and help restore Washington State Park glades! **PLUS, bonfires will keep you warm.** Glades are unique ecosystems with an abundance of botanical diversity. The encroaching Eastern red cedar

February 12 Confluence Chapter meeting 7 – 9 Busch Conservation – Guest Speaker will be Ian Brown, Past President of the Missouri Beekeepers Association. Ian has been in the beekeeping business for 24 years. He operates 200 hives at his Femme Osage Apiary in Foristell, Missouri. In 2000, Ian was named Missouri beekeeper of the year. He is the State director for the American Honey Producers Association and a member of the Russian Queen Breeders Association. Ian will discuss starting hives, raising queen bees, producing honey and beeswax, and how pollination services operate. He will also talk about colony collapse, swarm removal, and the many uses of honey and beeswax.

As always, Great Rivers Chapter members interested in the topic are invited.

February 15-18 Great Backyard Bird Count - for more information (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>)

February 19 Great Rivers Chapter meeting 6:30 – 8:30 Dennis and Judith Jones Visitors Center Forest Park Great Rivers Project Committee meeting 6 – 6:30 at the same location.

The Academy of Science of St. Louis seminar series. The seminars are held at the Living World building at the St. Louis Zoo, and are free and open to the public. Parking is free, too!

February 27 – 7:30 pm Geologic Secrets of the Danville, Illinois Fossilized Forest

April 2 – 7:30 pm Stressors and Amphibian Biodiversity

The speakers are professors at local universities who are Academy Fellows. For more info on the topics go to www.academyofsciencestl.org

March 11 Missouri Master Naturalist Confluence Chapter meeting at Busch Willdlife 7:00 pm

March 18 Missouri Master Naturalist Great Rivers Chapter meeting at Dennis and Judith Jones Visitors Center Forest Park

April 8 Missouri Master Naturalist Confluence Chapter meeting at Busch Willdlife 7:00 pm

April 15 Missouri Master Naturalist Great Rivers Chapter meeting at Dennis and Judith Jones Visitors Center Forest Park

April 19- 9am-1pm at Indian Camp Creek Park, Meet at shelter #6, we will be addressing any maintenance issues and will begin work on the final section of trail following the ridge line, this area will be a more technical section of trail designed for more advanced trail users, it will feature more up and down transition and feature some exposure as it follows along the hillside.

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Mark your Calendars:

2008 Conference - May 16, 17 and 18th in Springfield Mo. staying at the Clarion Hotel with meetings at the Nature Center.

Contacts

Scott Barnes, President Missouri Master Naturalists Confluence Chapter
sb4204@yahoo.com

John Vandover, President Missouri Master Naturalists Great Rivers Chapter
jtv4000@sbcglobal.net

Michael Wohlstadter, Web Master Missouri Master Naturalists Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters
webmaster.monaturalist@yahoo.com

Ann Finklang, Editor Missouri Master Naturalist Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters Newsletter
finklang@centurytel.net

Connie McCormack, Co editor Missouri Master Naturalist Confluence and Great Rivers Chapters Newsletter
connie_mccormack@yahoo.com