



Master Naturalist Picnic

By Cliff Parmer

Late in June the Confluence and Miramigua Chapters met for a picnic in Babler State Park. Thanks to Valerie and Sandy for organizing this fun event, and encouraging the forest spirits to provide a cool day for our event. After a delicious meal of grilled chicken and brats, Valerie and Sandy, some of our chapter's more serious birders, provided a challenging word game in which we attempted to extract bird names from hint phrases.



One of the other highlights of the picnic was an entertaining washer game. Members exhibited a variety of techniques for directing the washers but ultimately Leslie's "Be the Washer" technique triumphed. She took home the coveted "blue cheese ball that used to be cheddar." Fortunately for Leslie the "cheese ball" was a lovely green glazed vase with dragonfly motif.

Thanks to all who participated and special thanks to our Fun Committee members, Sandy and Valerie.

Riverwalk

By Lee Phillion

The first Confluence Chapter project (The Walk of Discovery) at the Lewis & Clark Boathouse and Nature Center St. Charles was so successful that they asked us to do another. This time, the Master Naturalists are creating areas along the riverfront where school children can learn about river ecology.

In 2009, the city cleared all of the willows and vegetation from the river bank near the Boathouse, leaving only sand with nothing to hold the bank. Kay LaBanca offered to head up a team of Master Naturalists to replant the bank with appropriate vegetation, and at the same time, create areas for outdoor education.

Her planning team laid out a design, but before any plants could be ordered, the Missouri River flooded, creating a massive timber snag near the site of the new construction. While the city thought the driftwood was an eyesore to be pushed back into the river to float downstream, the team had a different idea.

Jerry Lindhorst convinced the City Street Department to leave some of the larger logs and trees on the bank when they cleared the area. Recently, Jerry, Joe Walker, Jeff Hornung and Kay began cutting the logs to make a fence to enhance and define classroom spaces along the river bank.



When completed, the outdoor classroom will contain a variety of native plants that will augment the adjacent "Walk of Discovery." Newly planted willows will provide a backdrop for three areas where children will learn about Missouri River ecology.



Participating Master Naturalists include: Kay LaBanca, Jerry Lindhorst, Jeff Hornung, Joe Walker, Tom Schultz, Greg Munteanu, Yvonne Roffel, Mary Mierkowski, Judy Huck, Scott Barnes, Amy Ludwig, Leslie Limberg and Lee Phillion.

The next work session on the project will probably be a work day sometime the week of August 3, email will be sent with additional information. All Master Naturalists are invited to participate in this volunteer project.

June Water Quality Monitoring Activity Slip — Sliding Away *By Cliff Parmer*

Our early summer Femme Osage Creek water quality monitoring activity occurred on June 20, 2009. Thanks to Sarah and Larry Berglund, Ann Finklang and Carmen Santos for coming out to play. Recent rains had made the bank of one site a muddy slide which we all managed to negotiate on various portions of our anatomy — including the feet.

The purpose of this monitoring session was to check water chemistry and flow rates. Femme Osage Creek water quality remains reasonably good given the fact that the creek is a warm-water stream with little spring water influx and not a great deal of fall from source to its mouth. The dissolved oxygen level tested at 82%, which is considered good given the character of the stream. Dissolved oxygen is necessary to support aquatic life and is generally enhanced by cold water temperatures and turbulence. Nitrate levels were on the high side of average, however. Nitrate is a form of nitrogen which supports plant growth, hence its presence in fertilizer. High nitrate levels can encourage aquatic plant growth which can lead to a reduction in dissolved oxygen affecting the diversity of aquatic life-forms. So far this has not been observed to be a problem for Femme Osage Creek.

Our chapter is fortunate to have a number of members who have been trained in water quality monitoring techniques. Most of the techniques do not require training so interested folks are encouraged to come along on our next session later in the summer.

Portage Des Sioux *By Larry Berglund*

June 24th was a great day on the Mississippi River for Master Naturalists that took part in the Advance Training arranged by Joan Twillman at her river home on the "Mighty Mississippi". The three chapters, Confluence and Great Rivers and Miramigua, participated and shared the

training, social time and great food. Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) trainers came with some wonderful experiences for all Master Naturalists in attendance. Good learning and fun was had by all.

How do you teach a River Dynamics class? You put a dozen students in kayaks and tell them to paddle upriver to an island that looked so close to Joan's house. Little did we know that we would paddle up river for what seemed like forever, sometimes along shore, trying hard to pass a moored barge. However, some of us kept moving backwards though paddling with everything we had in us. Eventually we moved out of the strong current and began to make some progress towards our destination on the island. An hour later we reached our goal.



Perry Eckhardt, MDC "Water Guy" and Community Conservationist talked about the Mississippi River in the St. Louis area as a series of lakes between the locks and

dams. That day it was affected by flooding up river in Iowa that caused a pretty strong current and river flow at Portage Des Sioux. He talked about the force of the river actually moving the river island that we were on downstream over time. We thought we were going to be late to lunch so we paddled down river and made it back in ten minutes. Paddling with the current sure is easier! Perry knows how to teach the realities of river dynamics by giving us a real life example that will be remembered for a long time. All kayakers, even the first-timers, returned safely.

Mark Gruber, MDC Forester held classes in bottomland forestry and river trees both on land and on the river. He showed us the effects of the constant flooding in that part of the river on trees, and how to spot flood damage on a tree. He pointed out different species of trees on Joan's property as well as gave us a clear understanding of why 'topping off' trees, a common practice here in St Louis, is



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harmful to trees and weakens them rather than strengthening them, as some claim.

Nancy Schneider, MDC Education Consultant taught an afternoon class on "The Commandments of Wild Edible Plant Foods". It's amazing what you can do with some of the common plants we all identify with on our hikes in the prairies and woodland of the St. Louis area. Good plant identification abilities are critical. Nancy started with a good review of plant identification skills and the use of native plant guides such as the new "Missouri Wildflowers", Sixth Edition by Edgar Denison and the need to follow up with a detailed description in Peterson's "A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants" and other books or websites. We identified several local native plants and discussed what can be eaten and what can't.

It was amazing how great the jellies were that Nancy provided from Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*), Blue Violets (*Viola papilionacea*), mints and other natives from the area. A practical handout was provided. Nancy was effective in describing the fun and benefits of native plant edibles and the need for safety and being sure of the accurate identification of these plants (Queen Anne's Lace looks very much like the very poisonous Water Hemlock).

Garlic Mustard Work Day by Kay LaBanca

Saturday, May 2nd made a good day for pulling garlic mustard in the northeast corner of Busch Conservation Area. Led by Lia Bollmann, Missouri Department of Conservation, a small group, including three Master Naturalists, took on the task. The recent rains made pulling rather easy and 27 trash bags were soon full. One ambitious Master Naturalist was so involved with the task found that it was difficult to stop!

Confluence's New Secretary Believes It's Important to "Know the STUFF of your world"

By Jerry Lindhorst

Confluence is most fortunate to have a new Secretary, Judy Huck, who stepped forward and volunteered temporarily to plug this important job when the position was vacated. As impressive was her quick "yes" response when pursued to be a candidate for the position in the Chapter's November elections.

What motivates a person to step forward and accept a responsibility so important to Confluence?

Married 38 years to her husband Tom, a mother to three children and grandmother to five, Judy says, "My personal philosophy is 'Know the STUFF of your world'. If you recognize the flowers, trees, rocks, birds, insects, etc. of your world as you would your friends, then you will value them as friends. If you walk by them and think of them as "a bunch of trees, or weeds or bugs" you are more likely to disrespect them or think of them as disposable."



Judy says she joined the Missouri Master Naturalists because she looked forward to learning more about Missouri ecology and environment from highly recognized experts in their fields.

She adds she and her husband have always enjoyed participating in programs run by MDC and DNR, especially programs like Eagle Days and Wings of Spring.

"I felt that I might have some skills and talents that I could contribute to helping others learn about Missouri ecology and native plants and animals," she added.

What an understatement! Judy emphatically stresses she prefers to remain quietly in the background. However, the accomplishments in her life shout her strong leadership to help Mother Nature and desire to educate and inspire future generations to help protect our planet:

- B.S.Ed from MU-Columbia in Elementary Education
- M.Ed from UMSL in Curriculum and Instruction, specialty in science education and technology
- Post Masters (+30) Environmental Education and Brain Research
- Pre-school and elementary classroom teacher, part-time and full time for 37 years



- Instructed all grade levels pre-k to adult, general education, ecology and environmental education, gifted education, staff development, adjunct instructor for Truman State, Webster University, MU, science education, learning styles, geographic education
- Director/teacher of Elementary Program for 100 acre outdoor education facility, Ferguson-Florissant School District, 13 years
- Education consultant and local, state and national presenter in Learning Style/personality styles, Science Education, Technology applications for education
- National Geographic Education Consultant, 20 years

And yes, Judy has even more accomplishments, however, it is also important end this interview with what she has to tell us:

"I volunteered for the job of secretary because I felt that I am capable of listening carefully and remembering details," Judy says. "I am able to put those details into coherent form, usually, and know that is important for any organization."

Note: We in Confluence often sit in membership meetings and say "hello" or "good to see you" to the person across the table from us that we really don't know very well. As we are privileged to have so many outstanding individuals in Confluence, a member will now be featured in each future newsletter.

MDC/QDMA Habitat Field Day June 13th, 2009 *By Rick Gray*

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and the Gateway Chapter of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) sponsored an informative field day for Missouri landowners at a farm in Lincoln County to discuss and demonstrate a variety of habitat restoration practices.

MDC personnel and conservation contractors led tours through areas of the farm to show the results of timber stand improvement, edge feathering, food plot, and idle field restoration efforts. The take-home message: if you want wildlife on your property, then you must provide the necessary habitat.

As a landowner involved in my own habitat restoration projects, it is very helpful to see what others are doing and the results they achieve.

Habitat management involves much more than just sitting back and "letting nature take its course". In fact, such benign neglect is part of the problem. Missouri woodland,

savannah, prairie, and glade landscapes evolved with and in response to frequent disturbance, principally fire. And without disturbance, these habitats degrade and are eventually lost to succession and/or invasive species.

Habitat restoration and maintenance involves the reintroduction or simulation of natural disturbance processes to set back succession and encourage a diversity of plant and animal communities. It takes a lot of planning and hard work over many years, but the reward of enjoying the return of wildlife makes the effort very much worth while.

Missouri Master Naturalist Conference 2010

The 2010 Missouri Master Naturalist Conference is scheduled for Friday, October 15th through Sunday, October 17th at Cuivre River State Park. The co-chairpersons are: Connie McCormack, Holly Currier and John Vandover.

One of the main reasons we selected Cuivre River State Park was our desire to break from the urban area style conference and host the 2010 Conference at a location that had a non-commercial natural rustic character that we thought would be more befitting our Master Naturalist mission. We also wanted a location that possessed within easy walking distances a wide variety of differing ecosystems. These could be the focus of a unique range of field training opportunities. In addition, this Cuivre River State Park location can accommodate the bulk of our attendees in rustic bunk house style cabins. This particular area also has indoor and outdoor dining areas scaled to handle all our anticipated attendees and their guests. It also has ample classroom space that will easily accommodate all anticipated indoor advanced training classes. And lest I forget, for those who prefer urban style lodging, there are several modern motels a short four miles away in Troy.

It was also very gratifying that the majority of the Master Naturalists from the three St. Louis area chapters who responded to the on-line conference site survey endorsed our choice of Cuivre River State Park as the conference site. However now that the location has been confirmed and anointed, the work is about to begin. Much organization and teamwork amongst the St. Louis area chapters needs to be done in order for this conference to come off without a hitch and be a roaring success. As a kick-off for next years conference, a combined chapter picnic/meeting is planned for late summer – early fall at Cuivre River. At this picnic, members will be able to tour the conference site, see its facilities, walk through some of the natural areas and in general get a good sense of its great potential.



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Also at the picnic we will be soliciting members to commit their time to work on the various committees, which is the key for the conferences success. Examples of some of these committees are: Registration; Educational; Entertainment; Financial; Lodging; Silent Auction; Food and Beverage; Communication and Clean-Up.

Over the next few weeks, emails will be sent out to all our regions members informing them of the picnic date along with directions to Cuivre River State Park. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but with your help we will meet the challenge and make the 2010 Conference the best one yet for Missouri's Master Naturalists!



??? Did You Know ??? submitted by Leslie Limberg

Have you ever wondered why doves make that funny whistling noise when they take off flying

It comes from their primary feathers (the feathers on the outer most part of their wing) hitting the air. Some say it's designed as a warning to other birds. Similar to an aircraft, their wings form an airfoil shape that produces the lift force needed to take off. As they eat, they seem to toddle along the ground like a 'fat child,' but in the blink of an eye, they can reach up to 55 mph.



What is Your 'Color'? Understanding Yourself and Others

A Special Program replaced our regular membership meeting on Tuesday, July 14, 2009. The members participating in the program learned to recognize unique strengths of themselves and others. They recognized, accept, and learn to value the differences in others and increase communication skills. It helped to enhance our ability to understand how others process information. Through a short matrix system consisting of pictures, text and survey we each decided what color we are. Can you guess what color the following members are?





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Mark your Calendars for these Upcoming Events

Monday, Aug 31 - Sept 3 Association of Missouri Interpreters (AMI) Conference

AMI is an organization that Kevin McCarthy and his staff belong to that is dedicated towards helping Naturalists learn more about Missouri resources and present better programs. I encourage any and all Master Naturalists to attend.

The publication is a quarterly publication for members of the organization and includes conference information and registration forms at the very end.

<http://www.mmnconfluence.org/documents/AMIgoSummer2009.pdf>

Confluence Chapter meeting Busch Conservation Area

Tuesday 08/11/09 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
7:00 Speaker: Bruce Stinchcomb
Topic: Natural History and Geology of Missouri

Tuesday 09/8/09 6:30 pm to 9:00
Speaker: Kevin McCarthy
Topic: Everything Amphibian

Tuesday 10/13/09 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Speaker: Bill Miller
Topic: Alternative Energy: Pros and Cons

Please check our web site: <http://mmnconfluence.org> for volunteer opportunities and advanced training

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