Calendar

**Beginner Bird Walk Field Trips**
Forest Park Visitor Center at 5595 Grand Drive
First Saturday of Most Months
Walk from 8:30 AM to 10 AM, Meet at 8:15 AM
For info contact Amy at birding@forestparkforever.org.

**Great Backyard Bird Count—page 5**
Anywhere you want to bird, www.birdcount.org
Friday February 17 thru Monday February 20

**Birding Field Trip—page 3**
Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary
Saturday February 18th at 8A

**Beginner Bird Walk—page 3**
Mallard Lake at Creve Coeur Park
Saturday February 18th at 8 AM

**Gardening for the Birds**
Bowood Farms
Saturday February 18th from 10A to 11A

**Native Landscaping Events—page 7**
St. Louis Community College – Meramec
Friday March 3rd and Saturday March 4th

**Honeysuckle Sweep for Healthy Habitat**
Various Locations Around the Region
March 4th thru March 19th

**Birding Field Trip—page 3**
Busch Conservation Area Woodcock/Owl Prowl
Saturday March 11th at 5P

**Confluence Trash Bash Cleanup—page 5**
Various Places Around the Region
Saturday March 18th from 9A to 12P

**Birding Field Trip—page 3**
Horseshoe Lake State Park in Illinois
Saturday March 18th at 8A

**March Program—page 2**
Sierra Club Office – Maplewood
Thursday March 23rd at 7P

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Save Our Parks…Again!

*By Mitch Leachman*

Many times over the years, we have used these pages to inform you of commercial development plans that would degrade the wildlife habitat quality and user experience of one or more of our region’s parklands. Not so long ago, the St. Louis County Executive even proposed closing or selling a number of county parks outright. Sadly, forces are at work again, with a plan to convert over 40 acres of public parkland into a hockey complex. We need your help to again save Creve Coeur Lake Park!

The St. Louis Ice Center would include four sheets of ice intended to host youth and collegiate hockey as well as St. Louis Blues practice sessions. The facility would be built entirely on public parkland just south of Highway 141 in Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park. St. Louis County would continue to own the land but lease it to a private enterprise to build and operate the ice center for 30 years, and the lease is not expected to generate revenue for St. Louis County Parks. (See the graphic on page 4.)

St. Louis Audubon is opposed to this project along with a number of other groups and individuals, many of whom voiced their concerns at a public hearing held on January 25th in Clayton. Those groups include the Great Rivers Environmental Law Center, Greenway Network, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Open Space Council, Sierra Club and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. Chief among the common concerns is the conversion of public open space into a facility for use by a small...
Board Meetings
Open to All. 2nd Tuesday of Even Months at 7 pm at the Sunset Hills Community Center at 3915 S. Lindbergh Boulevard.

Board recruitment is an ongoing process and combines your interest and our need. If you have considered serving in such a way, stop by or call one of us.

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Katy Fechter, President
(618) 339–7356
stlauudubonpresident@gmail.com

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Mitch Leachman, Executive Director
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mitch@stlouisaudubon.org

Newsletter
Tale Feathers is published monthly. For submissions, comments or corrections, contact Mitch Leachman as noted above.

Purple Martin Passion
March 23rd at 7:00 p.m.
Sierra Club Office – Maplewood

Native Americans were hanging empty gourds to support the nesting of Purple Martins when Europeans arrived in North America. Settlers co-opted the practice by installing artificial houses at taverns. The houses became so prolific and varied that John James Audubon considered the quality of the Martin house when choosing his lodging for the night. Today, Purple Martins in eastern North American, including those in the St. Louis region, nest almost exclusively in bird houses.

John Miller, a long-time member of the Purple Martin Conservation Association, will discuss the natural history of these birds. He will outline the steps necessary to foster a colony of these birds, which are declining in parts of their range. While most private yards in the metro area do not have the required open space to attract Purple Martins, the program is an opportunity to learn about them and perhaps be inspired to help establish a new colony in an open public space.

John Miller manages a thriving colony of purple martins at Forest Park and the Missouri Botanical Garden and has consulted with dozens of groups and landowners around the region to help them establish Martin colonies. He assisted St. Louis Audubon’s Karen Meyer in establishing a colony at Creve Coeur Park in 2012. Karen will also be on hand to help answer any questions.

This is our annual joint program with the Eastern Missouri Group of the Sierra Club. Their office is at 2818 Sutton Blvd in Maplewood, 63143. Park on the street or in the lot at Hazel & Sutton. For questions, contact Mitch at (314) 599–7390 or mitch@stlouisaudubon.org.

Proud Member of the Missouri Environmental Fund
A simple way to support a wide range of positive programs that are improving the world around us.

Purple Martin (male)  Jim Paris Photo
From the Director

My wife and I recently spent a long week in southern India, visiting with friends and relatives and touring the countryside. A focus of the touring was Bandipur National Park and Tiger Reserve, about 4 hours southwest of Bangalore, our entry point into the country. We spent 3 nights at the Bandipur Safari Lodge, took 6 open-top safari tours into the Park and could not be happier with our experience. And YES, we did see tigers, plus elephants, bear, deer and LOTS of birds!

Mid-way between Bangalore and Bandipur lies Mysuru, seat of a long-running kingdom with an opulent palace still standing. After a quick culture tour, we visited several parks and lakes around the city to add to our tally of new bird species. We found Eurasian Spoonbills, Painted Storks, a River Tern and more. Yet, one of our closest and best encounters was with a small flock of Red-naped Ibis on the grounds of the Mysore Palace, “tending” the rose garden. It reminded me of the hours many of us spend during spring migration looking for those tiny little warblers high up in the tree canopy or panning flocks of ducks and geese with a scope looking for the rare species only to return home and find the Common Redpoll at the feeder or the Mississippi Kite nesting next door.

That sense of a common experience was on display for the HSBC Bangalore Bird Race where we joined over 100 local birders for a big day. The only difference from birding in St. Louis was the sheer number of “bazooka birders” with their long zoom digital cameras. Of the 117 species our group tallied that day, Great Egret, harrier and Northern Shoveler stood out, reminding us just how small this planet we call Earth really is! That was the message I shared with the birders at dinner that night, as guest speaker and Audubon ambassador...regardless of race, politics or time zone, we are all connected to and dependent upon this one web of life!

Field Trips

**Feb 18th to Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary:** This all day trip will start at **8:00 am.** Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. Turn right on the last road before the Alton Bridge (at the gas station). Turn right on the next road to the Teal Pond lot.

**Feb 18th Beginner Walk at Mallard Lake:** This easy walk starts at 8:00 am from the south parking lot at the Creve Coeur Lakehouse, 2160 Creve Coeur Mill Rd. Bring your binoculars, if you have them; loaners are available. We should finish about 10. Check our Facebook page for any last-minute updates.

**March 11th at Busch Memorial Conservation Area:** Meet at 5 p.m. (note the time) for this evening Woodcock and Owl Prowl. Take Hwy 94 south from Hwy 40. At 1.3 miles, turn right at light for Hwy D. Go 2 miles to entrance on right. Turn left at T to Hampton Lake and meet in lot.

**March 18th to Horseshoe Lake State Park:** This all day trip starts at 8 am and is good for beginners with some light walking. From St. Louis, take I-70 east to Hwy 111 (exit 6) and turn left. Go ~2 miles to Park entrance and meet in first parking lot on right inside Park.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required. If questions, contact Mike Grant mikecurlewe@att.net.
Save Our Parks...Again!

fraction of our community, including a large, for-profit professional sports franchise. And this “taking” of tax-supported parkland is being done without a vote of the people who collectively own that land.

Other concerns voiced at the hearing and in writing to the County include, but are not limited to:

- Noise, light and air pollution from facility operations, its patrons and their cars, up to 1,500 of them.
- Loss of 40 acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife.
- Construction in a designated Special Flood Hazard Area, also known as the 100-year floodplain.
- Loss of several acres of mature tree canopy.
- No identified revenue sharing with the County to support operations at Creve Coeur Park.
- The parkland was purchased with federal funds that restrict use of the land to outdoor recreation.

I grew up in Michigan going to minor league hockey games with my dad and hold many fond memories. Exercise is important and team sports can be very valuable learning for our children—the profusion of soccer complexes (including at Creve Coeur Park) attest to both. But unlike a hockey arena, soccer fields, baseball diamonds and even golf courses can somewhat readily be converted to other uses in the future. Further, the other activities do not subsidize a major professional sports franchise; the Blues were valued by Forbes last November at over $300 million. We’re confident the Blues can afford a better location on private land.

Unfortunately, the County Council gave County Executive Stenger authority during the 2016 holiday season to negotiate this “deal”. Yet, any ordinance passed can be rescinded, and we urge you to voice your concerns to the County Executive, if you live outside the county, and your respective councilmen, if you are a resident.

More importantly, an environmental assessment (EA) of the proposal is required by the federal government as part of their consideration to approve “conversion” of the land to a non-outdoor use. Again, most of the land in question was purchased with federal funds that included restrictions. When completed, that EA will be made available for public comment, which will hopefully include public forums/hearings. ALL comments will be recorded and included with the EA as it is sent to the state and federal agencies for review. We urge you to lend your voice at that time, in writing and in person.

We have developed a web page that includes more details on the project, links to our local elected officials as well as our official comments and the Open Space Council’s blog on this subject. OSC has taken a critical lead in helping identify concerns with this project. We will also post a link, when available, to the completed EA and instructions for your comments. www.stlouisaudubon.org/CCP-ice-center

Thanks for your past support! With your help again, we can save our public parkland from the pressures of ill-placed development.
Bird watchers count the birds they see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, then enter their checklists at birdcount.org. All the data contribute to a snapshot of bird distribution and help scientists see changes over the past 20 years.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to introduce people to participation in citizen science,” says Audubon vice president and chief scientist Gary Langham. “No other program allows volunteers to take an instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations that can contribute to our understanding of how a changing climate is affecting birds.”

Learn more about how to take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count at birdcount.org where downloadable instructions and an explanatory PowerPoint are available. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada and is made possible in part by sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

Confluence Trash Bash

Saturday, March 18, 2017, 8am-1pm

Come out and help clean up rivers and streams in the Mississippi and Missouri River watersheds in North St Louis County and City! We need your help to take care of these valuable resources in our community.

All are welcome, no experience required! Individual volunteers, civic groups and youth organizations are encouraged to attend.

Sign-in: 8:00am - 8:45am (breakfast provided)
Clean-up: 9:00am - 12:00pm
Prizes: 12:00pm - 1:00pm

Dress for the weather. Bring a water bottle and gloves. Leave your valuables at home. Expect to get muddy and have a great time!

For more information, go to: www.greenwaynetwork.org
Riverlands Bird Sanctuary Field Trip Report

By Mike Grant

Wednesday, January 18. Eighteen birders spent a half-day in mild weather at RMBS. A week and a half ago there was ice everywhere with the only open water a small area near the Ellis Island parking lot with many birds crammed around it. Yesterday there was no ice and bird numbers had also dropped considerably.

Teal Pond had the expected Canada Geese and Ring-billed Gulls and also all three species of mergansers. We also saw nine Bald Eagles, two Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels on lines and poles. A Great Blue Heron in fleeting sunshine was on the shore in Ellis Bay near Riverlands Way. A little further in another Kestrel was seen. From the picnic shelter Ellis Bay had nothing of interest and as we walked across the road to scan the marsh a flock of about 60 Greater White-fronted Geese flushed up. A distant Harrier was spotted there.

Heron Pond had nothing of interest (it did have 6 Trumpeter Swans before the walk started). Scanning Ellis Bay from the Heron Pond area we found some Common Goldeneyes. We then got to watch staff from the Rivers Project Office release a rehabilitated Trumpeter Swan into Heron Pond. The bird had been at Treehouse for a year or so recovering from lead poisoning.

A cooper’s hawk was perched in the single big tree in the low area on the approach to the dam. Only birds at the dam were Ringed-billed and few Herring Gulls. Heading back on Riverlands way we stopped to scope the water and found more mergansers, some Bufflehead and a single White Pelican.

From the Audubon Center two Black Ducks and two Trumpeter Swans were seen in Ellis Bay.

Several of the group then journeyed to Grafton to try for the Screech-Owl but it was not there.

After lunch I found a Peregrine Falcon perched on the tower on the Alton side of the Clark Bridge. In Teal Pond I found two Gadwall that we hadn’t seen earlier. A drive to the Cora Island parking lot added only a hoard of White-crowned Sparrows and a single Blue Jay.

In a field near Portage Des Sioux I found 26 Trumpeter Swans.

Thank you to Pat, Dick and John for helping with leading.

Partners for Native Landscaping
...present a reception and workshop for homeowners
featuring Neil Diboll, President of Prairie Nursery
and Heather Holm, author of Pollinators of Native Plants
Reception and Talks Fri., March 3, 2017  5:30-9pm
Workshop Sat. March 4, 2017 9am-4pm
at St. Louis Community College - Meramec Campus

Saturday’s Workshop offers information and resources
on how to landscape with native plants for greener communities.

Breakout sessions on...
- Gardening for Wildlife
- Designing Native Gardens
- Maintaining Native Gardens
- Developing Rainscaping Features

Also...
- Hear about Organizations
- Discover Upcoming Events
- Meet Other Native Gardeners
- Purchase Missouri Wildflowers

Cost:
Friday $20  With Appetizer Buffet
Saturday $15  With Lunch

Register Online at
www.stlouisaudubon.org/PNL2017
Workshop at
St. Louis Community College - Meramec
11333 Big Bend Blvd
Kirkwood, MO 63122
For more info call 636-451-3512 x6078

Partner Organizations...
St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, MO 63122–0227

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☐ $250 ☐ $100 ☐ $60 ☐ $30 ☐ Other_____

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