University City’s Bird Garden

By Mitch Leachman

Editor’s Note: This is another local project funded by the Cathleen Creley Memorial Fund, an endowment fund of the St. Louis Audubon Society.

In 2009, University City and the non-profit partner U-City in Bloom began constructing a 6,000 square foot urban bird garden in Heman Park, the city’s largest, in the courtyard of the Centennial Commons recreation center. Their vision was to create a garden that will attract local and migratory birds in a space dedicated to the enjoyment and enrichment of the public and to the education of all ages about birds and their needs.

The garden is anchored by a large rain garden, installed by the City and landscaped with native plants, that receives runoff from the adjacent parking lot and roof surface. The garden itself has several distinct habitat zones including a pondless bubbler, prairie plantings, shrubs and a glade rock garden.

In 2011, funding was secured through an Urban Bird Treaty grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Additional funding has been provided by the Employees Community Fund of Boeing–St. Louis, the University City Parks Foundation, U City in Bloom, and private donors. St. Louis Audubon support, through the Cathleen Creley Memorial Fund, enabled purchase of 30 native...
**Board Meetings**
Open to All. 2nd Tuesday of Every Month at 7 pm. Powder Valley Nature Center at 11715 Cragwold.

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

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

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**CREVE COEUR PARK BIOBLITZ**

If you’ve been looking for a family-friendly way to uniquely experience the outdoors, mark your calendar for the Creve Coeur Park BioBlitz on Saturday morning, May 26th. The Academy of Science of St. Louis and the St. Louis Audubon Society are collaborating to produce the event with support from the National Audubon Togetherness program, REI, St. Louis County Parks and many others. You can sign up for one or more teams, led by experts in the field, to help observe and identify amphibians, birds, butterflies, plants, reptiles and more. Registration is required but currently only open for team leaders. Check back soon at [http://academyofsciencestl.org/initiatives/bioblitz/creve_coeur_park/](http://academyofsciencestl.org/initiatives/bioblitz/creve_coeur_park/).

Be a citizen scientist and help us record the plants and animals of the region’s biggest municipal park. Bring your camera and binoculars and dress for the weather. Questions call Karen at (314) 602-7318. Hope to see you there! ◆

*Photos by Bryan Prather*

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**All Natural Gardening Help**

A month or so ago I noticed an infestation of aphids on the tops of a Rose of Sharon shrub in my yard. (Yes, I know it is NOT NATIVE!) I was going to spray them off with soapy water but also noticed some strange looking other little creatures in among them. I was very happy to discover that the “other” insects were lady bug larvae which were happily eating the aphids. The shrub is now totally aphid-free.

*By Lynne Breakstone*
From the Director

By Mitch Leachman

Every spring is a transition for the board of directors, but this year especially so. We bid farewell and thanks to four officers and one at-large member who collectively provided over 40 years of service.

Lisa Nansteel is handing the leadership of our Education Team to Marty Smigell. After three years as VP of Education, Lisa will return to her preferred “behind the scenes” activity with the Team. Sharon Nickl joined the board in 2002 and also served three years as VP of Education (2004–2007). She will also continue with the Team, but in a more limited role.

Dave Rogles retires after four years as President and four years as Treasurer immediately prior to that. He deserves a rest, but we still expect to see him leading a field trip now and then. Jim Wilson joined the board in 2004 and served the last two years as VP of Finance. We also expect to see him around, most especially at Forest Park. Lastly, with 15 years behind him, John Solodar is retiring. He has served as VP of Finance, Field Trip Coordinator and the last four years as Treasurer. With no formal accounting experience, he created a monthly payroll and managed the income and expense of up to five simultaneous grants!

In many ways, all five have helped shape the organization. Please help us thank them for their sacrifice and contributions. They will be missed!

At the same time, we welcome several new board members—with the complete roster approved by the members present at the April 14th Annual Meeting. Jean Favara, currently working marsh bird surveys for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, will be active with the Conservation Committee. Tim Ganz is Environmental Manager for MO American Water and will be a vital liaison for Bring Conservation Home. Lastly, J. Rixey Ruffin, an attorney with Muhm & Reilly, LLC, is our new Board President. He is working hard to come up to speed, but we have great confidence in him. Please watch the August TaleFeathers (our next issue) for a personal introduction from him. Thanks to all of them and hope to see you in the field! ♦

Field Trips, Etc.

**May 5th at Tower Grove Park:** Pat Lueders leads this half day trip at 7:30 am. From I-44, take Kingshighway south to Magnolia. Turn left and proceed to entrance on right. Right again on Northwest Dr and follow to Gaddy Bird Garden on right. Meet at Garden entrance.

**May 19th to Shaw Nature Reserve:** Connie Alwood leads this all day trip that includes moderate hiking over some rough terrain and is good for beginners. Meet at 7:30 am in the lot inside the main entrance. Take I–44 west to Hwy 100 (Gray Summit exit). Cross the highway and turn right. Entrance is on the left.

**May 26th at Blue Grosbeak & Lost Valley:** Mike Grant leads the half day trip that includes moderate hiking over some rough terrain. *Meet at 6:30 am.* From Hwy 40, take Hwy 94 south ~ ¾ mile to the Lot on left.

**June 9th at Columbia Bottom and Riverlands:** Bob Bailey leads this all day trip. Meet at 7 a.m. From I–270 in north St. Louis, take Riverview Blvd exit and go north about 2.5 miles to entrance on right. Meet in Visitor Center parking lot.

**June 16th at Blue Grosbeak & Lost Valley:** Mike Grant leads this half day trip that *meets at 5:45 am.* Take directions from May 28th trip.

**July 21st at 8K Leach and Hwy 79:** Dave Rogles leads this all day trip that includes some moderate hiking. Meet at 7 a.m. in the southeast corner of the Dierberg’s parking lot at the southwest side of the I–70 and Hwy 79 interchange.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required, unless noted—consult our website for details. For questions, contact Mike Grant at mikecurlew@att.net.
Bird Garden

Continued from Page 1

trees/shrubs and over 100 containers of native grasses and perennial wildflowers. All are being planted this spring.

The active water feature was installed last fall, and its constant motion and sound should help attract birds. A creative landscape design is guiding the plantings this spring, which include trees, shrubs and grasses identified in Dave Tylka’s book “Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People.” Additional help and direction was provided by St. Louis Audubon Society members and Cindy Gilberg, a native plant consultant. Benches and interpretive signs to aid in education are also being planned.

It is important to recognize the specific contributions of the following. The University City Parks Department and their excavation equipment completed the hard work of soil preparation in the fall of 2011. The pondless water feature was purchased from and installed by West Winds Earthscaping. The glade rock garden, along the courtyard’s east wall, was designed and created by Andre Buehler, who also created the new fountain in Lewis Park pond. Landscape design was provided by St. Louis Audubon’s own Jerry Breakstone, architect and bird enthusiast. As noted above, Cindy Gilberg reviewed and edited the planting plan. Interpretive signs are in progress, and a 3D CAD rendering of the garden is a special project by Steve Wurst’s art class at University City High School.

Community partners will be key to capitalize on the full education potential of the Garden. Centennial Commons Complex attracts over 500 children to its summer youth camp and thousands of regular visitors throughout the year. The Green Center, the Missouri Department of Conservation and St. Louis Audubon are likely supporters of the efforts.

The Cathleen Creley Memorial Fund was created in 2007 with a generous donation from Thomas J. Creley, in memory of his wife. Income from the fund is used to support education or conservation projects, as approved by the St. Louis Audubon Board of Directors. Please contact the Board President with project inquiries.

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Top: The water feature, with surrounding plantings and beds awaiting plant.
Bottom: The rain garden, adjacent to the Bird Garden.
Margy Terpstra Photos
Awards Dinner Honors Many

On Saturday, April 14th St. Louis Audubon held its 2012 Awards Dinner at Orlando Gardens in Webster Groves. Awards were presented for education, conservation, volunteer and advocacy, followed by a keynote presentation by Mark Glenshaw on the Great Horned Owls of Forest Park.

Pat Lueders received the Outstanding Volunteer Award for her nearly decade-long support of the Chapter. Largely known for her work coordinating and leading field trips, Pat has also been instrumental with many bird survey projects in the area. She is leading a multi-year effort for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at three St. Louis County Parks and the recently created Don Robinson State Park. Also, this past winter she helped coordinate the Great Rivers Trumpeter Swan Watch.

Dennis Hogan and Chris Ludwig, natural resource technician and planner, respectively, for the St. Louis County Parks Department, were joint recipients of the Outstanding Conservationist Award for their long-term efforts to restore habitat for birds throughout the Park System. A key highlight of their work, and the presentation, was the large-scale restoration of the wetland complex known as Little Creve Coeur Lake, just south of Page/364 in Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park.

Continued on next page

Award Recipients with Their Presenters:
Right, from top: Pat Lueders and Mitch Leachman, Dennis Hogan and Karen Meyer (Chris Ludwig could not attend), Patricia Hagen and Chris Ferree.
Bottom left: Ben Senturia (left) and John Solodar.

All photos by Mike Grant
Patricia Hagen, Executive Director of the Audubon Center at Riverlands, accepted the Outstanding Educator Award for her work in leading curriculum development and education outreach at the Center. A primary focus of those efforts has been creating learning opportunities for underserved children throughout the region.

Ben Senturia was awarded Outstanding Conservation Advocate for his life-long work with environmental justice issues in St. Louis and across the state. Just one hallmark achievement of his career was helping create Missouri Votes Conservation, a non-partisan statewide nonprofit that advocates for pro-environment legislation and political candidates. Their efforts support birders, hunters, anglers, scientists, independent farmers and many more.

Finally, Alonso Bussaleu and Leticia Gutierrez received scholarships for their graduate work at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Since 2001 the Chapter has provided nearly $62,000 in graduate student scholarships. As always, many thanks to Dr. Owen Sexton for reviewing the scholarship applications and to Lynne Breakstone for coordinating all the awards.

Thanks to all who assisted with or attended the event, and we hope to see in the field! ◆

Leticia Gutierrez (Alonso Bussaleu could not attend) and Lynne Breakstone

Chapter Archives on Display

The estate of Lillie R. Ernst donated to the St. Louis Audubon Society a collection of early bird, wildlife and birding photographs that were taken in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Ms. Ernst served the St. Louis public schools for 48 years as an educator and administrator. An amateur ornithologist, she was active in the 1915 founding of the St. Louis Bird Club (which later became the St. Louis Audubon Society) and elected an associate of the American Ornithologists’ Union in 1933.

The images were taken by various birders and photographers from the area. The prints can be viewed Tuesday thru Saturday at the Powder Valley Nature Center in Kirkwood.

Many thanks to Paul Bauer for preserving the collection. ◆
Wings of Spring at the Audubon Center at Riverlands

Saturday, May 12 from 8:30 am–3:00 pm

FREE FAMILY FUN! Wings of Spring is a chance to witness the amazing spectacle of birds’ spring migration and to learn about the fascinating ecosystem of this unique location. The festival will be held at The Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way, West Alton, MO. (636) 899-0090 for info.

* Nature Walks
* Bird Presentations
* Bluebird House Building
* Owl Prowl
* Food and Drink

See the flyer at http://riverlands.audubon.org/events/2827 for all the details.

A Birds, Beer and Bluegrass Celebration!

Saturday, May 12 from 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.

$60 per person (Open to adults 21 years+)

Over 20 different kinds of craft beers will be served. Bluegrass by The Local Gents, winner of the 2011 RFT “Best Bluegrass Band of St. Louis.” BBQ Buffet by Kenrick’s, serving BBQ Pork Steaks and Chicken.

See the flyer at http://riverlands.audubon.org/events/2824 for all the details.

Audubon Center Volunteers Needed

Volunteers play a vital role in helping us fulfill our mission of connecting people to nature. The volunteer program is open to individuals age 16 or older who are interested in nature education and natural history. No experience is needed, as all volunteers will attend a required training program about the center and its educational programs, as well as individual training for specific roles.

Once you become a volunteer you can assist in all facets of running the center. Volunteers work indoors or out, with the public or behind the scenes. They provide critical support at special events, assist the public visiting the nature center and help maintain the landscaping and trails.

If you are interested in sharing your time and expertise with us please complete the interest form at http://riverlands.audubon.org/support-us/volunteer-opportunities or call Debra at (636) 753–2900. ◆

Contaminated Bird Seed Prompts Local Lawyer

In January of this year, Scotts Miracle–Gro pled guilty in a federal district court in Ohio to knowingly selling bird seed from 2006 to 2008 that was tainted with pesticides harmful to birds, fish and other wildlife. The seed was marketed and sold as Morning Song, Country Pride, Scotts’ Songbird Selections and Scotts’ Wild Bird Food.

St. Louis area attorney John Driscoll is interested in speaking with consumers who purchased any of these products during that time period. If you did so and would like to discuss that purchase with him, he may be reached at (314) 932–3232. ◆
April Birding

Bernie Favara led a few intrepid veterans and a couple adventurous beginners on a rainy walk at Castlewood State Park on April 14th. Some great looks at Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler made it worth slogging through the rain and mud. A Louisiana Waterthrush was not as cooperative and provided only fleeting glimpses. They were also able to get a decent scope view of one of the Great Blue Heron nests in the rookery just across the Meramec River. Other highlights included Eastern Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow, Swainson’s Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Towhee.

The BK Leach Conservation Area was the focus of a rare weekday field trip led by John Solodar on Wed, April 18th that drew 10 participants. The waterbirds seen included Black-necked Stilt, Wilson’s Snipe, Fish Crow, Dunlin, Least and Pectoral Sandpiper, Hooded Merganser, Sora and Widgeon. Woodland birds included Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Northern Parula, Pileated Woodpecker and Yellow-throated Vireo. Other highlights included Northern Harrier, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Savannah Sparrow and Bald Eagle.

On Saturday, April 21st, Mary Dueren led a large group of over 30 birders at Creve Coeur Park—all anxious to see the “new” Little Creve Coeur Lake area. They enjoyed shorebirds, turkey, ducks and a Common Yellowthroat at the new marsh area. A “first of the year” Eastern Kingbird was seen at the parking lot as well as Killdeer, Brown Thrashers and an American Kestrel. Many Warbling Vireos were singing along the road as well as Blue-Winged Teal, Coot, Pied-billed Grebe, and Shovelers in the water. Three Sora were seen along the edge of the cattails, and one was heard calling near the parking area. Northern Bobwhite were heard as we got close to the end of the road near the new highway. Spotted Sandpiper and a Kingfisher were seen in the large pool, and numerous swallows and Chimney Swifts were in the air.

All the birders were extremely impressed and pleased with the new improvements and the condition of the area and anxiously await the opening of a new, permanent access point. It appears that St. Louis County has created a successful marsh area for the enjoyment of our wildlife. ◆

Right: Sora
Below right: Black-necked Stilt
Below: Magnolia Warbler (seen during Forest Park/Tower Grove Park walk on April 28th)
All photos by Al Smith
St. Louis Audubon Society

Donation Form

**Mission:** to create a community connection to nature through education and conservation.

Your support will allow us to maintain and expand our efforts in the St. Louis Metro Area. All our programs are free to the public. Thank you very much for your past support!

[ ] $20  [ ] $30  [ ] $50**  [ ] $100  [ ] Other ______

[ ] Education Only
[ ] Conservation Only
[ ] General Fund--Unrestricted

If you prefer credit card, visit our online donation page at [http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/giving/giving.php](http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/giving/giving.php).

All Contributions are Tax Deductible

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