Audubon Climate Initiative Camp

By Herb Huebner

When asked to participate in the National Audubon Climate Initiative Camp in late July I was deeply honored. As I arrived at the meeting place in Minneapolis, one of the first things I saw were the T-shirts that graced the registration table. “Uh–oh,” I thought, “the Common Loon shirt was given to the delegates from the Mississippi Flyway Region. Don’t tell me the Loon is at risk?” During the conference I learned that the Common Loon is forecast to lose 56 percent of its current summer range and 75 percent of its current winter range by 2080! I grew up in Wisconsin, and the call of the Loon is one of the fond memories of many wonderful summer vacations I spent “up north.” If we can’t slow the pace of climate change, the Loons will no longer pass the summer in Minnesota or Wisconsin. What will happen to their population?

National Audubon has put together a great team of experts to analyze the situation and communicate to all what can be done to mitigate this problem that has been brewing for a century and is likely to get much worse unless we take action. This science–based initiative will take years, and the plan is to weave the bird expertise and strengths of local chapters, state organizations and Flyway regions into its fabric. We in the greater St Louis area will need to do our part.

See Climate on Page 4
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 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.

Proud Member of the

Westlake Landfill and Coldwater Creek
Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of the Center for Health Environment and Justice, spoke to a packed audience at a teach-in about the Westlake Landfill and the fire that's moving towards the radioactive wastes that were illegally dumped there in 1973. This is a volatile situation. Lois Gibbs is a mother who became an activist in New York in the 1970's when toxins in the Love Canal began affecting her children’s health. She emphasized that Westlake Landfill is the most pressing toxic situation she’s seen to date because of so many unknown dangers. Resolution has not been treated with urgency.

Even if you live beyond a 10 mile radius, you are likely aware that this landfill is not the place for radioactive waste. As more is revealed about the dangers of other portions of this same Manhattan Project waste from the Coldwater Creek watershed, this is the time to speak up about concerns about seepage of these waste into our main water supply, the Missouri River, and the risk of the landfill fire that could release radioactive gases into our air.

There are upcoming meetings in the area where you can learn more. Your federal representatives can authorize that the U.S. Army Corps’ FUSRAP be in charge of the West Lake Landfill now so that the radioactive materials can be moved from our area. See the sites below for more details and to take action:

http://www.justmomsstl.org/
www.ColdwaterCreekFacts.com

Bird Basics: Bird Vocalizations
Thursday, October 30th, 2014, 5:00–6:30pm
Learning Lab, Dennis and Judith Jones Visitor and Education Center in Forest Park

You’ll never ace a test if you don’t start studying till the test begins. Winter is a great time to learn and start practicing new birding techniques for when all those migration and breeding birds return. Binoculars are great but what about that little brown bird that’s hiding in the bushes? Learn how to solve those mysterious noises in the light. Bob Bailey will help us begin our journey into diversifying our ID skills by breaking down bird vocalizations! Learn why birds vocalize, how to start using bird calls in your birding, and some common calls you may hear in the St. Louis area. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided. Reservations are appreciated but not necessary. RSVP to Jean at iturney@forestparkforever.org. ◆
From the Director
By Mitch Leachman

Since 2012, nearly 400 area landowners have enrolled over 200 acres of potential native habitat in our Bring Conservation Home program! Nearly all of those landscapes were in suburban residential settings, an expected core focus for the program. However, the program vision has always included non-residential properties such as institutions, commercial and even municipal. Recently, we have embarked upon several partnerships that include such landscapes and will greatly increase the impact and visibility of our efforts.

Last winter, our own Susan Pang invited me to a meeting at Forsyth School to discuss upgrading at least some of their landscaping to natives. That led to many more conversations and our designing and helping them install two significant spaces this past spring, including the butterfly garden shown below. The collaboration continues with a “drain garden” native planting going in this week and plans for a “savanna” space next spring. Forsyth staff and parents are committed to an educational habitat-oriented landscape!

Recently, we were introduced to Tom Flood and the folks at the Schlafly Bottleworks in Maplewood (see calendar listing for Native Plant Expo and Sale on October 18). The company is already known for their work in the community with environmental causes, and they have their own veggie garden. It was natural to discuss a native plant overhaul of their landscape, which Tom fully embraced and that begins this week!

Other native landscape collaborations are under way, including with Wild Bird Rehabilitation in Overland. We’re very thankful for Susan Pang’s leadership with all three projects and look forward to many more! 

Field Trips, Etc.

**Oct 18th to Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge:** Mike Thelen will lead this all day trip. Meet at 7:30 am at the Gilbert Lake parking lot just north of the entrance to Brussels Ferry outside Grafton, IL. From Alton, take Hwy 100, the River Road, thru Grafton.

**Nov 1st at Busch Memorial Conservation Area:** Mike Thelen will lead this all day trip that starts at 8 am. 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.

**Nov 8th to Riverlands Bird Sanctuary:** This half 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.

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

Fortunately, there is a great storehouse of bird data for scientists to use in these studies. Because of the citizen science based data gathered in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the USGS North American Breeding Bird Survey and the summaries of data from the ebird entries; bird scientists have much stronger data than is available for many other plants and animals.

As the conference progressed, I felt encouraged to realize that St. Louis Audubon’s current activities fit in well with the National team’s initial recommendations. We hold scheduled habitat restorations in Important Bird Areas to protect bird species and build their strength for the challenges of the future. We partner with local government agencies such as St. Louis County Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Missouri Department of Conservation to enhance bird habitat, and to help educate the public on the need for Conservation. Our education team teaches both children and adults about birds and their habitat. Our Bring Conservation Home program encourages landowners to landscape their properties using native plants, reduce pesticide use, and wisely use water resources. Finally, the Chapter has formed a Climate Committee to identify what more we can do, and prioritize and implement the best actions.

In reviewing the Audubon report, I saw two other birds threatened by climate change: the Bald Eagle and the Trumpeter Swan. I thought “Didn’t these birds already go through tough times and were rescued from near extinction?” I get very concerned about all the threats to birds and people that might result from climate change. Yet, the 2014 State of the Birds Report (www.stateofthebirds.org) points out, “Today, we have the science, technology, and knowledge to prevent extinctions. Conservation works. When we have the will to conserve, we can make a better future: for birds, for ecosystems, for everyone.” So we need to nourish the public’s knowledge and will to do what is necessary to reduce the impact of climate change.

Habitat Restoration Workdays

Saturday, October 11th at McKelvey Woods Park. Restoration Day.
All ages welcome. We continue our partnership with the City of Maryland Heights! We may be clearing for a trail, planting or removing honeysuckle. All necessary tools provided. Meet at Dogport, just north of Aquaport at 2344 McKelvey Road, Maryland Heights, 63043. Lunch will be provided.

Saturday, October 25th at Creve Coeur Park. Honeysuckle kill.
All ages welcome, but those under 18 must have parental/adult supervision at all times. Bring your favorite lopper or saw. The work site is in the remote west region of the park, near Waterworks Road. From I–270, take Hwy 364/Page west to Exit 17 at the Maryland Heights Expressway and go north to the first light at River Valley Drive. Turn left and follow for approx. 2.5 miles to 4–way stop. Turn left again, drive into gravel lot, past concrete barriers, just as road turns right. Follow signs from there. Parking is rather limited, so please carpool if possible.

Volunteers are requested to register for all projects by providing their name, contact information and number attending to mitch@stlouisaudubon.org or (314) 599–7390. All projects begin at 9 am. All are half–day. Gloves and other supplies/materials are provided.
Missouri’s Bird Species Threatened by Climate Change, New Audubon Study Reveals

St. Louis, Missouri (Sep. 18, 2014) – Climate change threatens the survival of nearly half the bird species in the continental United States and Canada, including many of Missouri’s birds, warn National Audubon Society scientists in a groundbreaking new study released September 9th. Local birds at risk include the Purple Finch, Tree Swallow, White-breasted Nuthatch and White-throated Sparrow.

“Birds are moving in response to the changing climate, and they will face great challenges anywhere they go,” said St. Louis Audubon Executive Director Mitch Leachman. “Birds are some of the most magical of creatures, and climate change may very well rob our grandchildren of many of their songs.”

Of 588 bird species examined in the seven–year study, 314 species are at risk. Of those, 126 species are at risk of severe declines by 2050, and another 188 species face the same fate by 2080, with numerous extinctions possible if climate change continues on its current trajectory. The Audubon report says that hundreds of species not previously considered at risk will be challenged to survive in a climate–changed future.

The Purple Finch, Tree Swallow and White-breasted Nuthatch are expected to breed further north, perhaps out of Missouri entirely. Some birds that breed or winter to our south may seek habitat in our region. Landowners can help now by improving their landscapes as habitat by installing native plants, maintaining simple water sources and eliminating pesticides. St. Louis Audubon’s Bring Conservation Home program provides advice to landowners in those same practices. [www.stlouisaudubon.org/BCH](http://www.stlouisaudubon.org/BCH).

“The greatest threat our birds face today is climate change,” said Audubon Chief Scientist Gary Langham, who led the investigation. “That’s our unequivocal conclusion after seven years of painstakingly careful and thorough research. Climate change threatens the basic fabric of life on which birds – and the rest of us – depend, and we have to act quickly and decisively if we are going to avoid catastrophe for them and us.”

Langham and other Audubon ornithologists analyzed 30 years of historical North American climate data and tens of thousands of historical bird records from the U.S. Geological Survey’s North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count to understand the links between where birds live and the climatic conditions that support them. Understanding those links then allowed scientists to project where birds are likely to be able to survive – and not survive – in the future.

Audubon’s study shows how climate conditions including precipitation, temperature, and changing seasons – the building blocks for ecosystems and species survival – may have catastrophic consequences for birds when thrown out of balance. While some species will be able to adapt to shifting climates, many of North America’s most familiar and iconic species will not.

Audubon launched a new web portal – [Audubon.org/Climate](http://Audubon.org/Climate) – dedicated to understanding the links between birds and climate change, including animated maps and photographs of the 314 species at risk, a technical report, and in–depth stories from the September–October issue of Audubon magazine, which is also devoted to the topic.

“Climate change is real, affecting our birds and our entire community right now,” added St. Louis Audubon’s Leachman. “We have fought big battles before—water and air pollution, dioxin and DDT—but this is our biggest battle yet. We must recognize the opportunity to work together as a community to reduce the effects of and improve the response to climate change.”

*This press release was distributed to St. Louis area media by St. Louis Audubon on September 18, 2014.*
Please join us at the Crowne Plaza in Clayton for our 2014 Annual Dinner and Centennial Kick-off. Founded in 1915 as the St. Louis Bird Club, we have a whole year of special activities planned to celebrate a century of connecting the St. Louis community to nature through our education and conservation programs. We will release the plan at the Dinner. Also, we will hear personal stories from several folks that have benefited from one of our programs in recent years. The evening will close with award presentations for Outstanding Conservationist, Educator and Volunteer.

At 99 years young, St. Louis Audubon is stronger than ever! Our all-volunteer Education Team has engaged over 70,000 students and adults since 2001; they performed over 400 school programs in just the last two years. Our field trip leaders routinely lead 30 walks a year, sharing the wonders of birds with folks across the region, including beginners through our collaborations with Forest Park Forever and Chesterfield Parks. Our Bring Conservation Home native landscaping program has enrolled nearly 400 landowners with over 200 acres of potential new habitat in less than 3 years. There is much more, but we hope that’s enough to show why we’re so excited about our future and so looking forward to celebrating with you in November!

Jean Ponzi, Green Resources Manager at the Missouri Botanical Garden's EarthWays Center, will be our Master of Ceremonies. For 25 years, she has produced and hosted the weekly environmental radio talk shows, “Earthworms,” on St. Louis independent radio FM-88.1 KDHX, and more recently “Growing Green St. Louis” on AM-550 KTRS. In just the last year, she received the Population Institute’s Global Media Award for Best Radio Show and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment’s Kay and Leo Drey Environmental Stewardship Award.

6:00 p.m.—Registration & Social Hour / Silent Auction Begins
7:00 p.m.—Dinner Service Begins
The cost is $65 per person. Reservations are required; space is limited. Don’t delay!

Any amount contributed over $50 for each reservation is tax-deductible.
The Crowne Plaza is at 7750 Carondelet Avenue, Clayton 63105. Free parking available on location. ◆

Saturday, November 1st, 2014 Annual Dinner Registration Form
Please mail this form by October 20th with payment to: St. Louis Audubon at P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122.
Make checks payable to St. Louis Audubon Society. If you would prefer to pay by credit card, a PayPal account is not required at: www.stlouisaudubon.org/fwd/2014AnnualDinner.html

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Another Successful Year for Bird Housing in Creve Coeur Park

By Karen Meyer

With several generous donations of Bluebird boxes, we added to the count of the housing on the Bird Box Trail in the west end of Creve Coeur Memorial Park. Of the 10 total boxes, 8 of them saw activity this year. We estimate that 17 Eastern Bluebirds fledged from nests in 3 separate boxes. In a fourth box a Bluebird nest was begun, but Tree Swallows succeeded in taking that nest over, adding their signature feather nest materials on top. One week in June I saw a Tree Swallow near one of the new boxes at the end of trail and thought that they would claim that one too. However, the next week revealed that Eastern Bluebirds had begun nesting, and they fledged three in July.

Another box contained a “dummy” Tree Swallow nest that was never used. It was apparently constructed to keep other species a further distance from an adjacent house that Tree Swallows had claimed. We estimated Tree Swallows fledged from a total of 3 nest boxes. Often the female swallows would remain on the nests when nest checks were performed, so we have only a vague idea of how many fledged from the nests. In Audubon’s Birds and Climate Change report that came out last month, the data shows that Tree Swallows are a species at risk in our area. It’s my hope that the swallows and bluebirds will continue to share the habitat in Creve Coeur Park and find our boxes to be helpful year after year.

We added 4 donated gourds to the middle Purple Martin house at Mallard Lake this spring. That brought our unit total to 32 for the 3 houses and gourds. With that extra housing and another good year, we estimated that 110 Purple Martin babies fledged (compared to 80 from 2013!). Many park visitors stopped when we were monitoring the martin houses to find out what we were up to. We’re always happy to allow a quick look at the eggs and baby birds. It’s always a treat to observe the nesting and feeding activities of the martins. I’m picturing these birds, now in Brazil, spending their days foraging in another climate. In early spring they’ll once again be drawn to make the migratory flight back to the US to breed.

Thanks to fellow landlords Anne Rankin Horton, Brenda Hente, Glenn Meyer, and John Miller, and to those who donated the new houses! They’ve contributed to the success of another year of nesting in St. Louis County for these important bird species. And thanks to all of you readers/members for the many ways you contribute to conservation efforts. ◆
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

All Contributions are Tax Deductible

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

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