



Confluence Chapters Newsletter

Welcome

The Confluence Chapter is proud to welcome our twelve new 2008 graduates.

Russ Barton, Sarah Barton, Mindy Batsch, Debbie Geno, Jeff Hornung, Tom Karnoski, Kay Labanca, Sam Ritter, Carmen Saritos Tom Schultz, Jean Truglio, and Joe Walker

Welcome New Confluence Members and Happy New Year!

Thanks for your participation and we look forward to getting to know you and volunteering with you in 2009.

Stream Team Freeze-Out

By Cliff Parmer

The Confluence Chapter Stream Team performed their first chemical monitoring and stream discharge surveys on our sites on the Femme Osage Creek near Busch Wildlife on November 8, 2008. Braving the chill were Ann Finklang, Sarah and Larry Berglund and Cliff Parmer. Although the participants managed to avoid frostbite, it was a challenging event. Stream Team protocol recommends chemical monitoring four times a year – so naturally at least one session will occur in cooler weather. Sessions for 2009 are currently planned for late March, June, September and November. Chemical monitoring and stream discharge surveys will be performed at all sessions and macroinvertebrate counts will occur in March and September.



The surveys indicated a low dissolved oxygen percentage at both sites (not so good) and a surprisingly low nitrate level (good) at the downstream site. We hope that further surveys will give us a better understanding of the health of our adopted stream.

For those new members of the Master Naturalist Confluence Chapter who have an interest in participating in our Stream Team activities, please contact Cliff Parmer

at either cparmer@kai-db.com or clfhanc@aol.com. It is not necessary to have received any training to participate in the team activities.

Confluence Master Naturalist Holiday Party

by Ann Finklang

A fun time was had by all who attended the Confluence Holiday Party at Amy's 'Party Palace'

Amy Ludwig graciously offered us her home on North Second Street in St. Charles where she has renovated the first floor into a 'Party Palace'. It was a great location for our members and their guests to enjoy the pot luck holiday party which included a delicious baked turkey along with all the trimmings. The Confluence Chapter is blessed with many great cooks which was evident at the Holiday party.



The Third Silent Auction was a huge success adding \$426 to our treasury. It was fun keeping an eye on the items to see if you were out bid and to up your own bid.

The relaxed atmosphere gave us time to share and exchange stories and laughter while enjoying each others company.

At the close of the evening each member received a gift. The members could choose from several types of bird feeders/ bird food for our feather friends.

A great evening – well done Entertainment Committee!

Thoughts

by Leslie Limberg

i love how....

when people want inspiration, they go to nature for pictures of swans or Redwood trees and when they want reminders of holy places, they choose nature shots like the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls

and when they think of God,
they paste up photographs of clouds, mountains,
and sunsets

i love how ...
God & Nature go together like soup & sandwich

Rain Garden at Indian Camp Creek

by *Connie McCormack*

Indian Camp Creek had a water shed problem which was leaving it hard to manage. A rain garden controls the water coming across and under the parking lot during rain events keeping the water at the site, improves the water quality and stops the erosion. Using a rain garden to catch water offered a solution that would slow down water runoff and mimic a wetland allowing plants to filter the water as it percolates back into the ground.

Using native plants to landscape the rain garden seems natural because they tolerate standing water or drought and their deep root systems allow the water to move down into the soil. Native plants will also serve as non-polluters because they don't need fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. They will do this and support the existing wildlife by improving habitat. Native plants reduce long-term maintenance by being winter hardy, drought tolerant and are less likely to attract destructive insects and diseases.

September 2007 gave us a Master Naturalists the opportunity to plan and build this rain garden at Indian Camp Creek. Work has gone exceptionally well given the large amount of rain that occurred in 2008. The rain garden is ready and waiting for plants to be planted so it can do what it is supposed to do – reduce storm water problems and create wildlife habitat. Please, leave time on your busy calendars to finish this wonderful project which is what we do as Master Naturalist.

A Fall Day at Spring Bend

by *Leslie Limberg*

As I drove up the gravel road, I spied an old sign with the name 'Cherbonnier' written on it. "You're kidding," I said to myself. "Could this be Elizabeth Cherbonnier?" (Better known as "Jabber" to friends and family?) Last I saw Jabber was at Northway Lodge, a canoeing camp that became my refuge for five summers in the 60's. Jabber was part owner of the camp? "Hmm. We'll see," I whispered.

This chilly November morning nine Confluence Chapter members volunteered with members of the Fleur de Lis

Garden Club, the Ozark Regional Land Trust, Forest ReLeaf, and Ben Grossman's County team to get rid of that *darn* invasive ...you guessed it,,,,,*that loathsome...that UNGodly....old bush honeysuckle.* And on the Spring Bend property, it is OLD. Most bushes had turned into trees with a circumference of 8" and completely occupying the mid- and understory canopies. Undaunted and bolstered by Kay LaBanca's "no-holes-barred" approach and Greg Munteanu's "lose yourself into oblivion" style, the Master Naturalists came to life, tearing apart every nook and cranny of the old Cherbonnier/Knowles hillside.



Over the years, Bill and Nancy Knowles repeatedly refused selling their country getaway to developers, and last year they and their 4 children donated the 100 acre habitat to St. Charles County Parks. The \$11 million donation overlooks the Missouri River high above the Katy Trail, just south of the city of St. Charles. So spectacular it is, that Jim Phillips was never seen until the end of our bushwacking detail, as he laboriously emerged from the dark of the woods, in a sweat-stained stupor like John Muir on drugs.

On and off as the day progressed, we'd see Bill Knowles (in his 80's) traipsing around the work area, bundled up, cane in hand with his notably precarious wobbling. After lunch, in his generous style, Bill invited the Master Naturalists into the cabin for a warm up by the fire. Authentic Native American artifacts adorned the simple wood timber mantle, and in simple chairs around the hearth, we relished the relaxing warmth of tea, coffee, and talk of natural history with Bill, Nancy, and county workers.

What I found out was Jabber's sister was Nancy Knowles, and it was Jabber and Nancy's father, Edward Cherbonnier who bought Spring Bend in the 1930's. He was part owner of my childhood camp, Northway Lodge. Edward was a true naturalist, especially fond of wildflowers. Throughout his lifetime, he brought a myriad of wildflower species to the property and planted them around the cabin.

So, as we restore Spring Bend, be on the lookout for the ghosts and wildflower fairies of Elizabeth and Edward

Cherbonnier. You'll probably find them down the hill by the Spring, splashing their legs in the water and gawking at bicyclists on the Katy Trail.

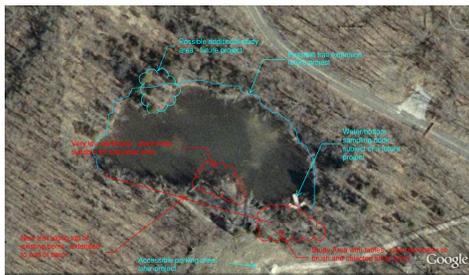
Class of 2008 Capstone Project
By Cliff Parmer

January has arrived and with it members of the new class of Master Naturalists has joined our Chapter. To provide service and bonding opportunities for the new graduates and current members, the Chapter has initiated an annual Capstone project.

This year the Capstone project is the improvement of a portion of the surroundings of a pond at Rockwoods Reservation in St. Louis County which is used to demonstrate aquatic invertebrate sampling to students. According to Kevin McCarthy, our MDC adviser, several thousand children visit the pond annually for class field trips and the surroundings are showing the effects of so many little feet.

Over the next several years we expect to collaborate with the MDC in creating a master plan for the pond, but this year's project will focus on the most heavily used areas. In order to reduce erosion from the existing pond side trail, Master Naturalist Confluence Chapter volunteers will construct a new trail on an existing berm away from the pond. Volunteers will also improve the current study area by clearing brush and invasive plant and installing new mulch. Several new trees planted in an adjacent low area by the pond and the old trail rendered unusable.

The photo below illustrates the project site and scope.



Riverlands, Birds, and a November Morning
By Joan Twillman

Did I ever have the wrong ideas about a bird walk in November! I had a lot to learn on a recent trip to Riverlands with our Missouri Master Naturalists (MMN) and the Audubon Society.

Here's what I thought (#1): A bird walk means that you walk around looking at birds.

Fact: According to our Fun Committee Co-chair, Val Geile, that is not the way it works during the winter. We did spend the morning looking at birds at Riverlands, but there are so many prime spots to watch these fliers that we had to drive from one viewing area to the next- which incidentally, was completely different from every other spot in terms of water, topography, man-made stuff, vegetation, and, yes, type of birds. This would be a perfect trip for an MMN who prefers the "Princess Line Tour"- heated van, great company, and knowledgeable guides. There was even a Fun Committee co- chair (Sandy) to show you how to best clean your binoculars.

Misconception #2: Real birders are the people who belong on Audubon expeditions.

Fact: This one's a bit uncomfortable to the uninitiated because the first thing the trip leaders ask about is how much each person knows about birds. Here is how to handle that smoothly: Admit to massive ignorance. I had my choice of three experts, in addition to Sandy and Val, who told stories and set up lots of *really* nice equipment at eye level for me and then explained what I was seeing.

Misconception #3: Cool, grey, dull days in November are dreary and boring.

Fact: There were birds everywhere, and the cloudy day made it so that no birds were backlit. That meant we could see details no matter whether we faced the river, the fields, or the ponds.

Wrong again #4: High-level education classes are expensive.

Fact: I was gloating seriously about this by the second of a dozen stops. What quality! Free, free, free, and free!

You would enjoy a winter bird walk. The Fun Committee took its job seriously in chaperoning the trip and making it delightful. Leslie Limberg, Kathleen Lindhorst, and I qualified for 3 ½ hour of advanced training. We saw amazing things. A peregrine falcon dive-bombed a bald eagle that had foolishly entered peregrine controlled airspace. Two types of wild swans, trumpeter and tundra, lazed in a field. (My 1980-something Peterson's bird book does not recognize either of them as Missouri residents.) Loons in Missouri? We saw at least four. White pelican squadrons, various shore birds with curled

bill, and gazillions of ducks were all taking advantage of the wonderful habitat. Some are here all year long, but "the Mississippi Flyway" is Party Central for the flocks in mid-November. You should just see it!

Winter Bird Tip

Come February/March food is scarce especially for fruit eating birds like local Bluebirds and Cardinals (frugivores). Migrating Cedar Waxwings and Robins also depend on late season berries.

If you have any cranberries leftover from the holidays, chop up a few and put them outside for our friends. They also like currants, grapes, and blueberries.

Introducing Confluence Chapter's Mascot



At the January meeting our new mascot was introduced. An incredible giant Dragonfly created by our Confluence member, Jim Phillips.

So far we do not have a name for our dragonfly – *maybe we should have a naming contest!*

Great Backyard Bird Count

Here is a great way to earn volunteer hours without leaving your home.

Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of bird watchers for the 12th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for

effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists, a new record.

Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute.

For more information click here:
<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

??? Did You Know ???

- submitted by Leslie Limberg

In the 1930's citizens of southeast Missouri (also called the 'Swampeast') campaigned to save their lowland forests from timbermen and farmers. Particularly of interest was protecting one especially large oak tree and the surrounding 80 acres. Many donated to the cause. Even school children gave their nickels and dimes to protect the tree.

In 1938 they purchased about 1,000 acres and from miles around people came to dedicate Big Oak Tree State Park.

The big oak tree they fought to save was in a track of virgin bottomland hardwood forest, which is now designated as a National Natural Landmark. The tree was 400 years old before it died in 1952.

Today trees in the park are the largest in all of Missouri with many over 130 feet tall. Five trees qualify as state champions and two others rank as national champions. Visitors have the opportunity to see 12 species of rare plants and animals, 250 kinds of plants, 25 mammals, 31 reptiles, 7 amphibians, and 150 kinds of birds.

The campaign to save the forests is still raging in 2009. Missouri Coalition for the Environment and the Environmental Defense Fund are waging war in federal court with the Army Corps of Engineers who want the area levied and dried out for corn, cotton and soybeans.

Mark your Calendars for these Upcoming Events

Fourth Annual Missouri Master Naturalist Conference and Advanced Training May 15-17, 2009

Members of the Osage Trails Chapter are putting together what promises to be a fun, interesting, and educational week-end. This is a great opportunity to earn advanced training hours and network with Master Naturalists across the state.



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Confluence Chapter meeting Busch Conservation Area.

Tuesday 02/10/09 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Speaker: Linda Tossing
Topic: Birds

Tuesday 03/10/09 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm
Speaker: Cliff Parmer
Topic: Fly Fishing Basics

Tuesday 04/14/09 6:30 pm to 9:00
Speaker: Maxine Stone (St. Louis Mycological Society)
Topic: Mushrooms

Confluence Members Volunteer Opportunities and Advanced Training

Please check our web site: <http://mmnconfluence.org>

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