



August 2013, Volume 7, Issue 03

Confluence
St Charles County, Missouri

Your key to discovering the Natural Missouri

The Art of Prairie Cultivation

I think it was last year when someone mentioned that they did not volunteer to help at the Quail Ridge projects because they would not learn anything—"it was just pulling weeds, the same thing they do at home."

Well, I choose to differ. Pulling weeds at home is easy and not challenging. One knows exactly where the weeds are—after all, one planted the wanted plants and everything else is a weed.



There is no **weed** pulling at the Quail Ridge Projects!

The projects involve learning about prairie plants, plant diseases, pretty bugs, "funny looking bugs," dragonflies, butterflies, rain garden plants, and plants that smile at you in acknowledgement of the love you bring with you every time you come to work with the Quail Ridge Team.

It is important to learn how the plants look when they are seedlings—there are plenty of those—and to know



"*who*" is trying to take over areas designated for "*someone else*."

Then you must make big decisions—who gets to stay and who must go. This is sometimes hard.

 You will rejoice when you find a "*desirable newcomer*" who invited itself to populate the area. This is a compliment to your work.

You will be able to share your knowledge with the many trail walkers who constantly praise your work and enjoy a visit with their pets. And do not forget: there is a tremendous exchange of ideas, knowledge, and "war stories" among the team members

Come over sometime, sit down at the bench at the Prairie Demo Area or at the Pavilion next to the Rain Garden and let the cool breezes rejuvenate your soul.

You will keep coming back ...



Quail Ridge Rain Garden
Rose Mallow, *Hibiscus lasiocarpus*



Quail Ridge Prairie Demo Area
Eastern Gama Grass Blooms,
Tripsacum dactyloides
and
Ragweed Leaf Beetle
Zygogramma suturalis



2013 Certification Pin
Orangethroat Darter
Etheostoma spectabile

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To engage Missourians in the stewardship of our state's natural resources through science-based education
and volunteer community service.
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Advisors Kevin and Scott:
Thank you for another superbly educational MN training.

Carol Morgan: Thank you Carol for your (smiling) leadership the past 2 years as Membership Services Committee chair. You have set an excellent foundation for this committee. A tough act to follow.

Larry and Sarah Berglund:

Thank you for your commitment to our education. The bird seminar series was a smashing success!

Ben Grossman and his crew: You are THE BEST. Each time we ask for extras at Quail Ridge, you are "Johnny On The Spot". AWESOME!

Steve Thomas: You have been the best Advanced Training Committee chair we have ever had. Tall shoulders to stand on indeed.

Bob Coffing, Steve Thomas, Leslie Limberg, and Jennifer Moore—for your contributions for the newsletter.



Confluence Chapter Member **Leslie Limberg** received the **'Bring Nature Home'** Platinum Habitat Certification from the ST Louis Audubon. Her property is one of three platinum certified in the St. Louis region.



Did you K now?

- ♦ Hunters and anglers support more jobs nationwide than the number of people employed by Wal-Mart.
- ♦ National Hunting and Fishing Day is Sept. 28.



May, June, July — 2013 Certifications and Annual Pins



May 14, 2013

Annual Pins

Glenn Bish, Mindy Batsch, and Carol Morgan.

Tom Nagle received the Gold Milestone pin for one thousand hours of service.

June 11, 2013

Certification Pins

Gail Gagnon, Martha Schermann, and Debra Maurer

Annual Pins

Lee Phillion, and Alberta McGilligan

July 9, 2013

Annual Pins

Carmen Santos, Sarah Berglund, Valerie Geile, Larry Markley, Bill Brighoff



Pewter Pin was awarded to Jim Morrison for 500 hours of service.





2013 STREAM TEAM # 3612 ACTIVITIES

Following are the scheduled dates for our Stream Team water quality monitoring activities for Fall 2013. No training is necessary to participate in many of the monitoring activities and new volunteers are welcomed.

Well-behaved children are also welcome. The macro-invertebrate monitoring sessions are usually a big hit.

Contact Cliff Parmer at ClfHanc@aol.com if you are interested in attending an activity.

August 24: Chemistry and macro-invertebrate monitoring

October 26: Chemistry monitoring



At Work, June 22, 2013 Chemistry and Macro-invertebrate Monitoring



Treasure of the Day
Baby Catfish (We placed it back into the water at it took off like gang busters.)

Our fearless leader Cliff Parmer, Amy Humrich, Victoria Barton, Carmen Santos and Russ Walker (Carmen's better-half)

Collecting and sorting macro-invertebrates and other creatures; identifying the collected specimens. When identifying the specimens, the reference manual is an invaluable asset.



And, how fast is the water moving?



Outdoor Classroom Babler Elementary, Wildwood

This July, three Master Naturalists and a local church group helped Master Naturalist Jennifer Moore transform an overgrown garden into something phenomenal. These before/after pictures show the amazing work that took place. The Master Naturalists helping Jennifer to create this great new space for the kids were Nancy Newcomer, and Daniel and Denise Dundon.



Jennifer Moore



Advanced Training



Steven Thomas

The Confluence Chapter's Advanced Training Committee, spearheaded by Larry Berglund, initiated a training program to advance our knowledge of Missouri birds and bird identification. The instructor was Sarah Pitzer, MDC Naturalist at Rockwoods Reservation and Busch CA, working in the Interpretive Center with Kevin McCarthy. Sarah has a Master's Degree in Avian Science from the University of California – Davis.

Classroom training sessions were prepared and conducted by Sarah at Busch CA and included the following:

- ~ February 25: Introductory Bird Training on several topics
- ~ March 18: Water Birds
- ~ April 1: Raptors
- ~ May 6: Warblers and Migration
- ~ June 3: Foraging Birds

Field trips lead by Sarah complimented the training classes to further identification skills and habitat knowledge.

The spring field trips were...

- ~ March 22: Marais Temps Clair CA
- ~ April 14: Riverlands and Confluence Point State Park
- ~ May 8: Tower Grove Park in St. Louis
- ~ June 8: Weldon Spring CA

The training classes and field trips were very well attended by Confluence members with members from Miramigoua and Great River Chapters and folks from the general public also attending. Additional birding classes and field trips with Sarah are currently being planned for this fall. We want to sincerely thank Sarah Pitzer for lending her time and expertise in developing this excellent bird training.

Cuivre River State Park

Cuivre River State Park is part of the MDC Cuivre River Hills Conservation Opportunity Area and contains the Lincoln Hills, George Hamilton Forest and Big Sugar Creek Natural Areas. It will provide a broad range of volunteer opportunities for Master Naturalists, including working with a highly respected naturalist Bruce Schuette. Contact **Bob Coffing** for more information, bobcoffing@gmail.com.

Cuivre River State Park is located in northeast Missouri, an area that shows few effects from the glaciers that once covered all of northern Missouri. As a result, the park contains many natural features normally found in southern Missouri. Visitors encounter a rich mosaic of tall grass prairies interspersed with oaks and hickories. Denser forests stand on sheltered hillsides, with open, rocky, sun-drenched glades dotting the more exposed slopes. Scattered throughout the region are caves, sinkholes, springs and rocky creeks more typical of the Ozarks.

Most of the land was originally acquired as a federal recreation demonstration area from 1934 through 1936. Workers from President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration built many of the park's roads, bridges, group camps and a picnic shelter. Many of the structures have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park was transferred to the state in 1946 and became Cuivre River State Park.

Master Naturalists Leslie Limberg, Alberta McGilligan, and Carmen Santos have joined Bob Coffing's project and are now in the process of collecting seeds. As of now we have collected seeds for wild dill (also known as thicket parsley)

Perideridia americana; Hairy Woodland Grass-Brome (*Bromus pubescens*); Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*); Columbine (*Aquilegia*); Wild Garlic (*Allium canadense*); and Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon meadia*).

Seed collecting is a seasonal habitat restoration practice used to introduce or increase plant species presence in representative terrestrial natural communities. Spring wildflowers (for example) emerge, bloom and quickly disperse their seeds. The seed collector or planner must know the annual life cycle of these plants for the collection to be productive.

For the master naturalist this practice offers the opportunity to explore the selected communities, learn to identify and collect seeds from our most colorful plants

with names like Bloodroot, Dutchman's Britches, Birds Foot Violet, and Shooting Star.

We were delighted to find a flowering False Hellebore plant on one of our outings (*Veratrum woodii*). The plant with its distinctive lower leaves were scattered around. Generally one does not find many (if any) that flower in a given year. This year it looks like there will be a few that will flower.

We will be planning seed collection workdays for the summer, and fall plants, so watch the Chapter Calendar for dates and join the team.

Where else do you get a chance to bum around and become so close to nature and good friends.



Wild Dill



Hairy Woodland Grass-Brome



False Hellebore with buds and a picture of its flower

For more information on the park visit <http://mostateparks.com/park/cuivre-river-state-park>



Boat House Project Update

We have new signs made up, featuring the new

"Never Die Garden,"

a garden that has survived a drought and 3 floods.

Signs now reflect river life, the resilience of native plants, birds' habitat, and water that rises and falls.

We are working on new plant ID plaques and will be finishing up soon.

The project is in need of trimming—EVERYTHING grows so fast!

You'd never known leaves were under water for four days, died; but new growth is extraordinary... new silt and fertilizer produced monstrous, immediate regrowth.

Join the project! Contact Leslie at llimberg@aol.com



Benefit of Floods

Floods occur in rivers when the flow rate exceeds the capacity of the river channel, particularly at bends or meanders in the waterway.

Floods (in particular more frequent or smaller floods) can bring many benefits, such as recharging ground water, making soil more fertile and increasing nutrients in some soils. Flood waters provide much needed water resources in



arid and semi-arid regions where precipitation can be very unevenly distributed throughout the year. Freshwater floods particularly play an important role in maintaining ecosystems in river corridors and are a key factor in maintaining floodplain biodiversity. Flooding can spread nutrients

to lakes and rivers, which can lead to increased biomass and improved fisheries for a few years.

For some fish species, an inundated floodplain may form a

highly suitable location for spawning with few predators and enhanced levels of nutrients or food. Fish, such as the weather fish, make use of floods in order to reach new habitats. Bird populations may also profit from the boost in food production caused by flooding.

Periodic flooding was essential to the well-being of ancient communities along the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers, the Nile River, the Indus River, the Ganges and the Yellow River among others

From: Our Mississippi

Saving ‘The Big One’— one tank-load at a time

The Fed-Ex drivers whose routes include the Pvt. John Allen National Fish Hatchery in Tupelo, MS, get quickly used to the fact they'll be carrying precious—and unusual—cargo, say 100,000 tiny fish in a box, oxygen in a bag to help with breathing and ice packed in to keep them cool.

That's one way the hatchery transports the fish bred there to boost scarce populations for preservation, sports fishing or research. But no cargo is handled as carefully as the alligator gar—the monster of the Mississippi River—when it comes time to move them to various river pools, says Ricky Campbell, the hatchery manager.

Special temperature-controlled trucks are used to haul this, the river's largest fish species, inside 500-gallon circular tanks complete with oxygen systems.

But tricky transport issues are par for the course for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency that's been moving species since at least 1907. That year, 15 native plains bison were loaded onto a railroad car, traveling from New York City to Oklahoma as the seed stock for the bison managed today at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The agency has moved 800-pound brown bears and

600-pound caribou and more to reintroduce species to historic habitats, keep them off the endangered list or introduce them to new areas where climate warming is creating new habitat.

In Tupelo, thousands of alligator gar are propagated for restoration efforts throughout the lower Mississippi Valley, all from a handful of male and female fish caught at the St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Sibley, MS, and the Passer Swamp in Yazoo City, MS, Campbell said. By tracking gar outfitted with active transmitters and experience gained over a 12-year program, “We know where and why they're going and where we can set our collection gear.”

All they need are four females (between 100 and 180 pounds) and eight males (between 25 and 65 pounds), collected when the water warms to a certain temperature and fish preparing to spread out into the floodplain for spawning. The caught fish are used to propagate more fish inside fish hatchery tanks, where crews can collect 80,000-90,000 eggs per fish with a 70 to 80 percent hatch rate, the fingerlings (baby fish) are then shipped to supply 10 other hatcheries and various academic institutions doing research work.

Some 8,000 alligator gars each season are held at the hatchery; and the fish, resembling a plump alligator that swims, are tagged and returned to the Mississippi, between Cairo, IL and the Gulf Coast, to help restore a nearly extirpated population.

The story behind their decline has many factors, but overharvesting was cer-

tainly one of them, Campbell says. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, he says, states believed alligator gar were harming game fish; as a result, several states launched predator fish eradication programs, nearly leading to the fish's extinction. Today, conservation experts see the alligator gar as good for game fish since it eats fish that compete with them. This “apex predator” is perhaps the only fish that feeds on the invasive silver carp, he says, and offers potential for reducing their population.

Commercial fishing for gar still takes place in Louisiana and Texas, where alligator gar have a value of about \$4 a pound. Every other state puts a limit on gar haul, Campbell says, so it's moved from trash fish to trophy fish. “I've had old commercial fishermen who used to fish them tell me it's like deep fishing in fresh water, he said. “They'll float to the surface and bask in the sun, and you can side cast to them. They're opportunistic feeders. Whatever's easy, they'll feed on them.”

While fishing options won't likely expand any time soon, ideas for further preservation are being launched. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with the Gulf Coast Plains and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative on a model that'll show where there's the most potential for improved connectivity between the Mississippi River and its floodplain to provide habitat. “If you look at the alligator gar, one of the longest-lived species that's in the river, they'd be a good indicator in my opinion of a good ecosystem. If you look at the food chain, this is a top link. If you take a link out of the top, the rest of the chain is pretty useless. Getting it restored is a fundamental element.”

Our Mississippi is a quarterly newsletter of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about its work in the Mississippi River Basin. It is published in cooperation with other state and federal agencies and other river interests with whom the Corps collaborates and partners toward long-term sustainability of the economic uses and ecological integrity of the river system.

<http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/Media/Publications/OurMississippi.aspx>

http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/Portals/52/documents/regional_flood_risk_management/our_mississippi/Archive/ourmiss_summer13_lowres_single.pdf



Wildlife "Adoptions"

Young wildlife is best left in the wild. Young animals' best chance of survival is in their natural homes.

Resource Scientist Jason

Sumners got a call recently from a concerned citizen who had a newborn white-tailed deer fawn. He gets them every year, just as every office of the Missouri Department of Conservation does.

The fawn had been near a highway with its mother when traffic spooked the doe. Instinct took over. The doe bounded into nearby woods, a move that normally would draw a predator's attention. The fawn dropped to the ground, where it lay stock still.

So far, so good. However, the fawn was in plain sight of the highway. Traffic stopped, and a well-intended motorist decided the fawn was abandoned and scooped it up and took it home. Then they called Sumners.

"The fawn was fine where it was," said Sumners. "Left alone, they doe would have come back and led its young to a safer place. But now you've got a wild animal out of its element, a nice person who has unwittingly broken the law and decreasing chances of the fawn's survival with every passing hour."

This situation plays out dozens of times each year, involving wildlife ranging from deer and opossums to Robin chicks and tiny cottontail rabbits. People don't see the animals' mothers nearby and decide the young are orphans. Thinking they are doing a good deed, they bring the animal home. But these well-intended adoptions are not in the animals' best interest.

Conservation officials say wild animals are better off in the wild than in captivity. Fawns that survive human adoption and are later released back into the wild lack survival skills normally learned from their mothers. One study tracked the survival of fawns rehabilitated at an animal rescue center and later released at



Duck Creek Conservation Area. All died within six months.

Most young birds found on the ground have simply grown too big for their nests and are still being fed by their parents. Young birds or mammals brought inside can't survive on bread soaked in milk. Human food is no substitute for the natural foods they receive in the wild. These often are partially digested or otherwise prepared by parents.

"I know many people pick up kitten milk replacer to feed 'abandoned' mammals," said MDC Wildlife Veterinarian Kelly Straka. "This can be very dangerous to animals such as opossums that have unique vitamin and mineral requirements. Stunted growth and even severe deformities that interfere with normal walking are common and unfortunate results of well-intended supplemental feeding."

If a child brings home a young animal, it is not too late to fix the situation. Explain to the youngster that the baby's parents miss it, and you need to take it home. Have them show you where they found the baby animal and put it back. Then leave the area so the adults feel safe returning to their young.

Retrievers sometimes find cottontail rabbit nests and come to their owners to deliver saliva-covered but otherwise unharmed baby rabbits. Again, the solution is to return them to the nest. Finding the nest usually is as easy as accepting the dog's gift, then telling it to "Fetch!" and following it back to the nest. Put the dog indoors, and then replace the bunny and cover the nest with material your dog may have nosed aside. Don't be surprised if the nest is empty the next time you check it. After such a traumatic experience, a mother rabbit usually will move her young to a different location.

Similar solutions are advisable for deer fawns and other young wild animals found without obvious parental supervision. Many wild parents don't act like humans, hovering around their young. A human mother would not leave a baby alone in clumps of grass, but this is normal behavior for white-tailed deer. Does visit their fawns only long enough to nurse them. By staying away the rest of the time, they avoid drawing preda-

tors' attention.

Even knowing these facts, some people still can't resist adopting wildlife. Hollywood has created an immensely appealing image of playful, mischievous pets from the wild. But before you take home a cuddly raccoon kit, or a whitetail fawn, you should be aware of some not-so-cute facts.

First, it is illegal to possess wild animals without a permit. More important, there are no approved vaccines to protect wild animals against rabies and other diseases, many of which can strike humans as well. Wild adoptions put people as well as animals at risk.

Parasites present another risk. One example is *Baylisascaris procyonis*, a common parasite of raccoons. Eight of 10 raccoons have this parasitic round worm, but they have a natural resistance. Humans don't. *Baylisascaris* can cause serious illness in people, particularly children. "This isn't a disease where you can just get a pill from a doctor and fix it," said Straka. "*Baylisascaris* can cause permanent blindness and even comas in people. It is an excellent example of why adopting wild animals is a bad idea."



Scary stuff aside, wild animals don't make good pets. They remain wild, regardless of how they are treated. "Tame" white-tailed deer often become aggressive when fully grown and attack the humans who befriended them. Raccoons' natural curiosity, combined with intelligence, strength, and climbing ability, inevitably leads to property damage.

Even under the best of circumstances most animals born in the wild don't survive to adulthood. Most fall victim to disease, predators, inclement weather, or just bad luck. That is why they produce many more young each year than are needed to perpetuate their species. Death is a necessary part of life in the wild.

This knowledge, along with an understanding of the dangers and problems involved, provide ample reason not to adopt wildlife.

Jim Low, News Services Coordinator
Missouri Department of Conservation



Remember Fun Committee member Jayme Hanna?

Newly married this Spring, she is now Jayme Gribble.

Congratulation Jayme!

And... update your email rosters,
jaymegribble@yahoo.com



TOWNE PARK

The Confluence Chapter and St Charles County Parks staff spent two years building the Nature Explore Classroom at Towne Park.

This is an outdoor classroom off Highway 61 in north St Charles County, designed for children to more spontaneously play outdoors, while learning to appreciate nature. This past Spring/Summer was our first season to test out the classroom. Several public schools attended, as did hundreds of students.

If you would like to participate in this ridiculous fun, contact Connie Campbell, our project leader, at lwcampbell@aol.com.



Mindy (wearing her favorite red vest) monitors at Quail Ridge Park near Wentzville and Connie monitors at Spring Bend Park, just south of St Charles.

If you would like to learn more about our state bird, the bluebird and/or help monitor bluebird boxes, contact project leader Mindy Batsch at msbatsch@hotmail.com

The Confluence Chapter is looking for a Secretary and a Vice President. If you would like to experience the fun and interest of either of these positions, you can contact Leslie Limberg and/or read the job description on our website in the 'members' box and 'chapter documents.' Nominations are being accepted. Elections will be Tuesday, November 12

Another friend at Quail Ridge



Libellula luctuosa, Widow Skimmer

Our Leadership

President—Cliff Parmer

Vice President—Alberta McGilligan

Secretary—Connie Campbell

Treasurer—Ann Finklang

Advanced Training—Steven Thomas

Volunteer Coordinator—Rob Merriman

Membership Services—Carol Morgan

Fun Committee—Cathy Dedecker

Communications—Jerry Lindhorst

Web Site—Rick Gray

Photography—Joe Adamo

Newsletter—Carmen Santos

and Bill Brighoff

Advisors—Scott Killpack, University of Missouri Extension,
and Kevin McCarthy, MDC



Project Leaders:

- Daniel Boone Hays—Bob Coffing
- Castlewood State Park—Bob Coffing
- Cuivre River State Park—Bob Coffing
- Confluence Chapter Stream Team #3612—Cliff Parmer
- Babler State Park—Alberta McGilligan
- Lewis & Clark Boathouse and Nature Center—Leslie Limberg
- Weldon Spring Prairie Demo Garden—Leslie Limberg
- Quail Ridge Prairie Demo and Rain Garden—Carmen Santos
- Bluebird monitoring - Mindy Batsch
- Nature Explore Classroom Education—Connie Campbell
- Nature Explore Classroom Construction—Gary Schneider

The Confluence Chapter was founded in 2005 as the fifth Master Naturalist chapter in Missouri. The chapter was formed by 24 individuals from St. Charles County, St. Louis County, and St. Louis City after completing the Missouri Master Naturalist™ training program. We share a common interest in nature and in volunteering to help protect, preserve and restore Missouri's natural heritage. Most of our members live in the region West of the Missouri-Mississippi Confluence and from both north and south of the Missouri River.

We operate according to the bylaws and operating handbook of the Missouri Master Naturalist Program developed by the Missouri Department of Conservation and University of Missouri Extension.

Visit us at <http://www.mmnconfluence.org/>

