

We're All Conservationists Now

Conservation Committee meets March 2nd 7 pm at Crave Café. State issues include birding trails in Northeast Kansas and Northwest Missouri, the Loess Hills Initiative, regional clean air and defense of conservation funding. To receive updates, send your email address to Jill DeWitt, jdewitt1@kc.rr.com.

WHICH IS THE REAL "SPORT OF KINGS"?

Most people would say the answer is "horseracing", but the phrase also describes another ancient pursuit: falconry (the practice of using trained raptors to hunt birds and small mammals). The sport originated about 2000 B.C. among nomadic herders of the Asian plains, but falconry was introduced to Europeans by the Huns during the decline of the Roman Empire. For 800 years falconry was very popular and prestigious in Europe, with only the nobility allowed to own and fly the rare and beautiful gyrfalcons. Commoners, if fortunate enough to possess birds at all, owned goshawks and kestrels. Occasionally, even Great Horned Owls and shrikes were used to hunt!

Falconry (also called "hawking") almost disappeared following the Middle Ages but experienced a renaissance in Europe and North America after World War II. Now there are hawking groups in almost every state, united by a national organization—the North American Falconer's Association. There are three levels of expertise in falconry: Apprentice, General, and Master Falconer. An apprentice must acquire at least 7 years experience with raptors and also do a lot of studying to earn the coveted "Master" title and qualify for the government permits necessary to keep and train birds of

prey. Want to learn more about this fascinating sport? Make plans now to attend the March 3, 2005 Burroughs Audubon General Meeting at the Discovery Center. Vanessa Avara, a falconer from the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, Kansas, will present our program. She plans to bring two of her own birds, falconry equipment, and some videos of raptors in action! See you there!

—Elizabeth Kohler

CALL FOR QUESTIONNAIRES!

To assess interests and priorities of BAS members and to help guide the Board's strategic planning process, we included a one-page questionnaire (with space for written comments on the back) in the Winter 2004 issue of the *WingBeat*. PLEASE return your form if you have not already done so! We value each member's input to help plan Burroughs' activities for the next 1-3 years. If you have lost your form, please go to the BAS website (burroughs.org) to print out a new one (it will be 2 pages), or contact Elizabeth Kohler (816-353-1784; lizkvet@yahoo.com) to receive one via mail or email.

Unfortunately, we have had some difficulty with the forms being damaged in return mail, so in the future, we ask that you please fold the form for mailing and place it in an outer envelope. Also, you may bring the form to any General Meeting to return it.

I say a hearty "Thank you!" to all those who have already submitted questionnaires; a summary of results will appear in the next issue of the *WingBeat*.

—Elizabeth Kohler

Subscribe to BurroughsAnnounce for notification of Burroughs events at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BurroughsAnnounce/>

CBC Report

Audubon's 105th Christmas Bird Count was held this season from December 14th to January 5th, at locations across the metro area. Many chapter members participated in local counts. On Saturday December 18th, I participated in one led by Mike Beck, that covered an area near Lake Jacomo, Missouri.

Mike has been covering this section of the CBC for many years. I was looking forward to birding with such an experienced guide, and I wasn't disappointed. We met at his house (which is in the count area) at 6:30. The team of three included Mike, me, and Frank Messer, an outdoor enthusiast, and relatively new birder.

One of the first birds we located was a Great-horned Owl, while tramping near the edges of the lake. Soon, Mike spied a Winter Wren. I wish I could say that I was fast enough to see it, but I never did get a good look! After some more hiking, we returned to the truck and moved around to a different side of the lake. We focused the scope in on some waterfowl and tallied Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Mergansers, and primarily Common Goldeneye. We searched the fields repeatedly for sparrows, locating a few, but never in the quantities that we expected.

We finished the day with 51 species, after hiking through tall grass, dense underbrush and beautiful rock ledges. Mike's wife treated us to a wonderful lunch, and I made some new friends. Not a bad way to spend a Saturday! See the Audubon website to locate current year results: http://cbc.audubon.org/cbccurrent/current_table.html.

The 106th Christmas Bird Count will be held December 14, 2005 through January 5, 2006.

For family-oriented nature and birding-related activities at Ernie Miller Nature Park in Olathe KS, check out the Upcoming Events Calendar at <http://www.erniemiller.com/index.htm>.

Wanted: Lenexa Birders

Lenexa birders are encouraged to contact Jill (jdewitt1@kc.rr.com) to join and coordinate a potential partnership between Burroughs Audubon and the City of Lenexa.

Lenexa's Rain to Recreation Program (watershed management program) www.raintorecreation.org has a threefold mission: to reduce flooding, protect water quality and provide for recreational and educational opportunities. Lenexa has completed several stream restoration projects in highly suburbanized areas utilizing native vegetation. The city will have an ordinance to create stream setbacks for all the riparian corridors in western Lenexa for many reasons, including protection and enhancement of habitat.

For the purpose of flood control and water quality protection, the city is creating several lakes, and has planned wetlands and stream restoration and stabilization projects. Along with the lake and wetland construction, Lenexa plans to preserve large tracts of riparian and upland forests - Mize Lake, with 60 acres (complete) and Lake Lenexa/Black Hoof Park 240 acres (wetlands complete; lake to be completed in the fall of 2005.) These areas are connected by trails and boardwalks. Goals include preserving, enhancing and creating habitat for many different bird species.

As Mike Beezhold sees it, the City is trying to engage the community in nature, while at the same time educating and likewise being educated by the interactions, and trying to better understand the implications and benefits of providing diverse habitats in a urban/suburban environment. Leaders recognize that birdwatching and other such activities are very popular in the urban area. A partnership with Audubon would have mutual benefit. Lenexa could encourage community participation in Audubon activities through use of its

facilities. Anyone having historical data regarding bird populations or presence of birds in Lenexa is encouraged to contact us to provide baseline data and future data on how these efforts have worked for habitat.

More info is available at www.raintorecreation.org, including information on a popular stream restoration project at Rock Creek (headwaters of Indian Creek in Lenexa) at 103rd street and Hauser.

--Information for this article was provided by Mike Beezhold

Birding Challenge 2:

In North America, which group of birds has shown the most consistent declines of any group of birds monitored by the North American Breeding Bird Survey?

(Answer on page 6)

Long Johns and Loppers Restoring Wild Kansas City

Kansas City Wildlands has three ecological restoration workdays scheduled the afternoon of Sunday, February 27. If you take stewardship seriously, these are the afternoons for you. Experts will be on site at three locations:

Ogg Road (Shawnee Mission Park remnant prairie, Shawnee Mission, Kansas, managed by Johnson County Parks and Recreation District),

Blue River Glades, Kansas City, Missouri (Jackson County Parks and Recreation).

Rocky Point Glades, south Kansas City, Missouri (Kansas City Missouri Parks and Recreation),

What: Lopping and treating exotic and invasive woody growth that threatens these delicate ecosystems. Another multi-site community workday is scheduled in May.

To register for a workday, contact Dick Dawson, dick_yodar_dawson@hotmail.com, or Linda Lehrbaum, at 816-561-1061, ext. 116 or Linda@bridgingthegap.org. Dress appropriately for workdays! Long

pants and sturdy shoes are recommended. Insect repellent, gloves and drinking water are provided.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES is an environmental education program for children in grades 3 to 6. Developed by professional environmental educators, it presents basic, scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. It comes to you packaged as a Classroom Kit (serving 32 students) or Individual Kit (serving 1 student). To contribute \$75 to put Audubon Adventures in an area classroom, mail check to Treasurers Phil and Nancy Reicher, 401 West 58th Terrace, KCMO 64113.

MIGRATIONS



The Wood Pewee

Burroughs members celebrate the lives of outstanding members, influential in the establishment and vigor of Burroughs Audubon.

RUTH ELLEN B. ROBINSON, 88, of Merriam, Kansas, died November 7, 2004. She had lived in Merriam since 1969. She was a member of BAS, and was an avid birdwatcher and traveler all her life. Mrs. Robinson was an accomplished pianist with the KC Banjo Band. Her family kindly requested donations to BAS in her memory. Expressions of sympathy may be addressed to her son, Mr. David Robinson, 6555 W.

75th St., Apt. 208, Overland Park, KS,
66204.