



Nature Notes

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President's Corner

Ted C. MacRae, Newsletter Editor

Those who know me know well my wanderlust. From the time I made my first out-of-state natural history expedition to south Texas (as a newly employed entomologist just out of graduate school—way back in the early 1980s), I've longed to 'see the world' and explore its natural treasures. My travels have taken me across the U.S.—and beyond, but I always return to Missouri. There is something to be said for the breadth of experience that comes from exploring far and wide. There is also something to be said, however, about repeated exploration close to home for its more intimate knowledge and the ability to see natural processes as they occur through time—a dimension of experience that is missing from one-off trips to far away places. I belong to numerous scientific and natural history organizations. The larger ones feed my thirst for knowledge on a broad and fundamental level. The smaller ones, however, maintain my connection as a naturalist on a more intimate and granular level. WGNSS serves this latter role for me, as it has done for more than 30 years now, and if I have learned anything over those past three decades, it's that I get out of WGNSS what I take advantage of. I am an entomologist, but that doesn't mean I benefit only from going to Entomology Group functions. Botany Group activities have helped me learn more about the plants that the insects I so dearly love depend upon for completing their life cycles.

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The General Meetings have helped keep me connected to a broader array of naturalists, some of whom have directly benefitted my work with insects with the observations that they have made themselves. Even birders that have accompanied me on some of my insect collecting trips have been able to get me looking upwards and not just down—able to appreciate the other major winged class of animals as a significant component of the earth's biota that I seek to understand. Not to mention the social connectedness that exploring outside of one's own field of interest allows.

For those who have been involved in only one of WGNSS's diverse natural history groups, I encourage you to explore what the other groups have to offer. Not only might you learn something that aids understanding in your group of interest, you just might find a new interest sparked to life, or a new way of looking at nature as a complex, interconnected system, or maybe even just a new friend or two. There is no better time to do this than May! The marquis event of the year, the annual **WGNSS Spring Banquet**, will be held May 4th at Favazza's (on the hill). There remain only a few days left to make your reservation—see the form at the back of this issue of *Nature Notes*. Not only will you see what is sure to be a scintillating talk by **Doug Ladd** covering the most important "days" in the history of the earth, you will also get a chance to congratulate WGNSS's newest Lifetime Achievement Award winner, **Randy Korotev**, and this year's Menke, Scudder, and Bo Koster Scholarship winners **Lauren Copple, Kevin Kraus, Alexis King and Danelle Haake**. [Editor's note: I hear the food at Favazza's is pretty good also!]

For those who prefer more intimate gatherings, why not join one of the natural history groups that you don't normally attend on one of their outings as they take advantage of the flush of spring and the natural history opportunities it provides. If you're a botanist, consider joining the **Entomology Group** on their Spring Field Trip—you just might see they are interested in plants as well. If you're a birder, consider going on a Monday **Botany Group** walk—surely there will be birds to see, and you might be surprised at the mutual interest you share with other naturalists. Even us quirky entomologists can benefit from a day with the incredibly knowledgeable members of

the **Ornithology Group**, as many birds feed on the very insects that interest us so much. And, of course, naturalists in all of the natural history groups might find it enjoyable to absorb themselves in a good book and share the experience with other members of the **Nature Book Group**. Don't forget also that *Nature Notes*, this newsletter, not only tells you what events and activities are coming up, but what have already happened (and how good they were) with the skillfully prepared reports submitted each month by the respective members of each natural history. You might also enjoy the occasional featured article from among our organization's many talented writers. Last but not least, returning this month is the Featured Member Photo.



February Bird Report

David Becher

Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge and Horseshoe Lake in Granite City were the hot spots this month. Highlights included Eurasian Wigeon and Glaucous Gull. Many areas near the rivers were still showing the lingering effects of the floods—there was no access to Confluence Park, and only part of Columbia Bottom Conservation Area was open.

On the 5th, Al Smith reported a Goldeneye × Hooded Merganser hybrid at Riverlands. On the 20th, Tom Bormann and Dave Rogles found a Eurasian Wigeon at Clarence Cannon. Paul Moffett found an Egyptian Goose at Riverlands on the 25th. It was undoubtedly an escapee, but it is certainly an attractive bird.

On the 4th, Gail Gagnon found five Black Vultures sitting in a field near Defiance. Black Vultures are being found around the area more and more often, but five in St. Charles Co. seems to represent a significant move northward.

Pat Leuders reported a dark morph Rough-legged Hawk near Howell Island Conservation Area on the 13th. On the 17th, Doug Hommert photographed what appears to be a classic Harlan's Hawk in the same area. Examination of the pictures suggests that two different birds might have been involved, but this is one of the most