



Missouri Master Naturalist



Loess Hills Chapter

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Spring III V. 2

Notes on Highway 36

Mary Jo Ostenberg

The following are excerpts from a conversation late last week with the new residences on Highway 36. They had a lot to say but it's really hard for trees and shrubs to hold a pencil so they asked me pass along their comments to all of you.

From the Elderberries, *Sambucus canadensis*:

Wow, that was one long summer in pots. But we all want to thank the lady that kept us watered and talked to us. We liked living on her front porch even if we couldn't spread our toes. Think you call them roots. But we knew something was up when she carried us from the porch to a dark, very tight space and laid us down on our sides. We all were a bit worried. But the nice lady reassured us it would only be for a little while. She was taking us to our forever home.

So we seemed to fly along in that awkward position for what seemed a very long time. Some of us could see



This is elderberry.

out the window but all we saw was blue sky racing overhead. Believe me; trees aren't really made for travel. But we finally stopped moving, the dark space was opened, and we were pulled out, carried a short distance and finally set upright. Then there was a lot of chatter. Humans sure like to talk. There were several voices now. But before long they got busy digging holes. You can't imagine our excitement. Before we knew it we were freed from our pots and placed in the earth. Oh my! We cannot begin to tell you how good that felt, even though it was CLAY! That nice lady that kept us on her front porch reassured us once more. "We know it's clay. You're

native. You'll just have to work a little harder to settle in. But we won't abandon you. We'll check to see that critters aren't lunging on you. We're swaddling you with protective wrap and we've mulched you with our own secret weapon. And until you've settled in someone will always make certain you get water when you need it."

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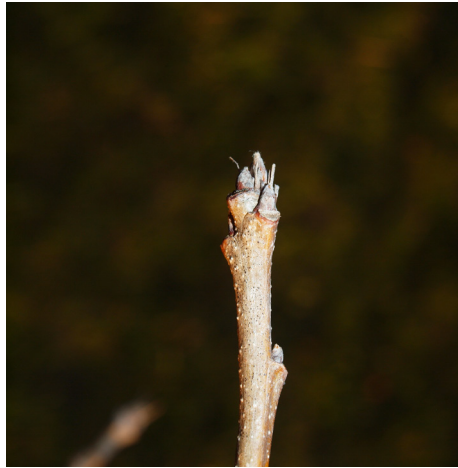
She was true to her work. More lovely ladies visited us often. We feel so good in our new home and can't wait for spring to kick in.

Status report: the elderberries are all leafed out and doing great. We were a little concerned about the clay but they seem fine. We'll expand the site this fall will more elderberry shrubs.

From the Burr Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa*:

We all pretty much agree with the elderberries but let's get one thing clear. They are shrubs. Yes, they are great pollinators and their berries will provide valuable food in the winter. But we will someday touch the sky with our branches. We'll spread our limbs to embrace everything around us and provide shelter for birds and host 100's of caterpillars and other insects. And when we grow up we'll shed our acorns and feed many.

So the elderberries didn't like their pots. We did. We take our time growing. We take it slowly. We liked living on that lady's front porch. She even moved us into bigger pots. She fussed over us and made us feel very special. After all, we are oaks.



This one is burr oak.

We all especially liked her music. We listened to violin concertos in the morning and jazz late at night. We all think we're going to miss that. It's going to be traffic noise from now on. But when we get bigger we'll have birds to sing to us and we really like the place the lovely ladies (and we think there were a couple of lovely men too) put us. Our earth is loamy and rich. Just what we need to take our time and they put us on the top of a bluff. So once we get going you won't miss us. Well done!

Status report: the oaks are indeed doing well and very slowly starting to leaf out (as all oaks do).

From the ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius*:

So you planted us on a steep hill facing south. I know you wanted us to set our roots down deep to help with any erosion problems. We're not too happy with all the wind and big trucks rushing by but like the elderberries and the oaks, we're going to do our best. And thanks to the lovely ladies that come to water us we feel pretty good.

Status report: the ninebarks are doing well, leafing out and we'll add more to the site this fall.

Lastly all the new highway 36 resi-



This one is ninebark.

dents asked me to thank the lovely ladies and men who planted them and have taken care of them.

Loess Hills Schedule

May 6

MPF Native Plant Sale, Kansas, MO, Anita Gorman Conservation Discover Center

May 13

Wings Over Weston

May 23 6:00 PM

Remington Nature Center, Class of 2017 Gradulation

Midland Empire Audubon Live Hawks and Falcons

By Margaret Slayton

The Midland Empire Audubon Society sponsored the “Day Shift” program by Operation Wildlife in March which brought live hawks and falcons of five different species to St. Joseph.

The free event by Operation Wildlife was held in the Hearnes Library Building at Missouri Western State University. Members of the Loess Hills Chapter of the Master Naturalists attended.

Operation Wildlife is the largest publicly funded wildlife clinic in Kansas and has been providing rehabilitation and veterinary services in Northeast Kansas for more than 25 years.

Bird species showcased at the event were the American Kestrel, Cooper’s Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and the Prairie Falcon.

During the program, the community learned the hunting habits and adaptive characteristics of the birds along with how the facility cares for the species. For example, young birds are fed every 30 minutes from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m..

Diane Johnson, executive director, said the nonprofit organization receives injured or displaced wildlife from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the Kansas Highway Patrol and private individuals. The organization has around 100 volunteers who cover wildlife found in the nine counties of Atchison, Doniphan, Jefferson, Wyandotte, Miami, Franklin, Osage, Leavenworth and Douglas.

They can receive all wildlife from the state of Kansas and cannot accept animals from across state lines. They can care for a wide-



This man holds a Prairie Falcon.

range of species including squirrels and rabbits.

Operation Wildlife closed its Shawnee Mission location in December due to a lack of funding. They do not receive federal or state funds. The main 4,000-square-foot building in Linwood, Kansas, will remain open.

The 4,000-square-foot rehabili-

tation and education facility enables rehabilitators to provide a full range of physical therapy for wildlife including ultrasound. The facility is also fully equipped with a surgical suite, radiology, outdoor enclosures and a song-bird habitat.

The facility receives thousands of wild animals each year, with a release rate back into the wild of 69 percent, which is 20 percent higher than the national average for rehabilitation centers.

“We do a lot of extra things to get them

well and get them back out into the wild,” Johnson said. “I like working with animals and feeling a sense of accomplishment when we release them. Our reward is getting to see them fly free again.”

For more information, contact Operation Wildlife at [785-542-3625](tel:785-542-3625) or at www.owl-online.org.

Pallid Sturgeon Survey 2017

By Gerry Crawford

Thursday April 6 was a beautiful sunny day to be on the Big Muddy; and to help with a now 12 year old, but ongoing study of the Pallid Sturgeon. The location to begin the survey was the Jenteel Brees launch on the Missouri river.

Bill Blackledge, Bob Dever, and Gerry Crawford from the Loess Hills Chapter of Missouri Master Naturalists were teaming up with Carol Lutes, Jane Cotton, and Thomas Huffmon, MDC fisheries techs from the Chillicothe office, to catch fish and collect data for the Survey. The survey has been ongoing now for 12 years; with funding for the study provided by the US Army Corps of Engineers and agencies such as MDC providing the data collection activities.

“The Pallid Sturgeon is an endangered species of fish endemic to the Missouri and lower Mississippi rivers.” Pallids have been on the endangered species list since 1990 as determined by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Pallid gets its name due to its pale coloration; and is a fish dating back to the Cretaceous period 70 million years ago. The fish became endangered largely as a result of channeling and damming resulting in habitat

loss of gravel deposits and slow moving currents which it prefers for spawning sites.

It takes 15 years for a female Pallid to reach spawning age; and then the spawn is infrequent with maybe 3 to 10 years between events. The males are capable of spawning in 5 to 7

50 and 100 years. Survival of naturally spawned fish in the river is very low with few surviving to adulthood. Consequently, there is an ongoing restocking program with hatchery raised fish being released into the wild. Although the fish are considered quite palatable, and the roe can be used for caviar, any caught fish must



Gerry Crawford

Pictured are Bob Dever and Gerry Crawford. Taking the picture was Bill Blacklage. Also from Missouri Department Conservation of Fisheries were Carol Lutes, Jane Cotton, and Thomas Huffmon.

years. Their full life expectancy in the wild may be between

be released back into the river. The USFWS has determined the



Gerry Crawford

The fish is weighted, measured, and a chip implanted.

restocking and surveying activities shall continue indefinitely.

On our trip to hatchery Pallids were caught. Data were recorded such as: length; weight; data from an implanted chip if present; and habitat measurements from the river. All the data is entered into an on board computer system and then fish are released. Other species of fish are caught such as Shovel nosed Sturgeon Blue and Channel Catfish and they are likewise sampled and released. The chips have been implanted at the hatchery so to determine wild from hatchery raised fish.

The catching system utilized is a heavy duty trot line anchored at both ends with large trident anchors and orange floats attached at both ends to allow sighting and recovery. Each line has 40 dropper hook lines which are baited with night crawlers. So, 320 hooks are rebaited and the recovered lines are reinstalled with fresh bait on the dropper lines. This rebaiting experience allows one to truly become a wormy expert. Another part of the fun on the Big Muddy!!!! Again with the river running at a high level a GPS device and sonar were utilized to find the under water wing dams and again install the trot lines. The freshly baited and reinstalled lines will next be run by another team on the next day.

Participating in this activity means a fun day on the river with other naturalists; and provides a great opportunity to see wildlife along the river, while providing support for an important conservation effort. Give it a try and you'll be glad you did.

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June 10 & 11
MPF Annual Prairie
Biobliz, Stilwell
Prairie, Vernon
County

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The New Class of 2017

Gerry Crawford

April 1st was a chilly breezy day for a field trip to Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge; but other than a cool day it was an outstanding field trip. Gathering at the refuge headquarters 19 interns of the 2017 class of Loess Hills Chapter Missouri Master Naturalists prepared to enjoy an event hosted by Lindsey Landowski USFWS and refuge manager.

of how the water flow is managed for use during the different seasons of the year. Everyone enjoyed viewing the carp swimming below the gate base, and noticed the large crawfish as well. One of the interns caught and shared watching one of the large crustaceans up close and personal. This prompted Lindsey to share a wealth of knowledge about the critters, including how to determine their gender, which brought some humorous comments from the group.

Billed Greebes. A few shorebirds were present as well; and hundreds of coots. Maybe some of the slightly unusual species were the Trumpeter Swans and White Pelicans with a few snow Geese here and there.

A few more stops like the old water pump, for a bit of history; and the tour concluded around noon.

The day began with a viewing of the refuge video; and a short talk by Lindsey about the wetlands management on the refuge. The group then



The Class of 2017

By Mary Jo Ostgenberger

Lindsey concluded by pointing out the hills were also part of the refuge; and for an awesome view

began the auto tour of the refuge which required staying on the gravel road. Due to recent rains the grass top roads weren't available. Lindsey made various stops at points of interest starting with the observation platform where she discussed general management activities on the marsh such as water levels, habitat, and other ongoing maintenance items. Next was the main Davis Creek water control gate and more discussion

All good fun!!!

Both active eagle nests had an adult bird sitting on the nest. Sure would have been an awesome view if the sun had peeked out. Many species of waterfowl were also seen on the marsh such as Northern shovelers, Blue Winged Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Pintail; and a few Ring Necks and Pied

the hike up to the hut was well worth the effort. A few energetic folks did take that hike.

Lindsey did another outstanding presentation as always; and we should be grateful to have such a fine resource available to us.