

GOAS *Scissortail*

GREATER OZARKS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2015 VOLUME 38 ISSUE 4

DR. RUTH REPORTS

Ruth Grant, GOAS Chapter President

Dr. Georg Wilhelm Steller's Birds and Beasts

In the February issue of *Scissortail* I promised an article about Steller of Steller's Jay, that beautiful dark blue jay of the American West. Steller also lent his name to other creatures of the Alaskan wilderness that he was the first to describe.

Dr. Steller was a German physician and naturalist who joined the second Kamchatka expedition (1740-1742) of Vitus Bering, the Russian explorer who was the first European to make landfall in Alaska. He spent several years in Kamchatka both before and after the expedition. He both befriended and admired the natives there, which would lead to imprisonment by the Tsar's government in St Petersburg in 1744.

The Bering expedition eventually made landfall on Kayak Island in Alaska. Steller was allowed only ten hours on land to collect specimens. During that brief sojourn he collected specimens of North American plants and birds new to science. Imagine a towering scientific reputation based on ten hours work!

During the return voyage from Alaska the ship the *St Peter* was wrecked on a one of the Commander Islands, where Bering and twenty eight crew members would die from the effects of scurvy. It was already widely known that eating fresh fruits and vegetables would cure scurvy although the actual

cause, deficiency of Vitamin C, was unknown. (Vitamin C would finally be isolated in the 1920's by the chemist, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi.)

Dr. Steller had no Florida oranges and no Flintstone vitamins. However he did have kelp. When he was finally able to convince the officers and men to eat it he was able to nurse the survivors back to health. The crew was then able to build a new boat and return to Russia.

The Bering expedition and Dr. Steller's writings brought the area's flora and fauna to the attention of science, but also unfortunately to the attention of whalers, trappers, and seal hunters. Exploitation of the natural resources of the Aleutian and Commander Islands led to the extinction of Steller's sea cow, a relative of the Manatee which lived in shallow kelp beds, and the Spectacled Cormorant. Both creatures had the misfortune to taste good when cooked properly.

Steller's sea eagle, Steller's eider and Steller's sea lion all survive but are endangered, probably by overfishing, by pollution, and by the melting of Arctic sea ice and the oil exploration that may follow.

To honor Dr. Steller and the other naturalists whom I wrote about in February, let us all work to ensure the survival of their namesakes: The beautiful birds that populate our world and thrill our imagination!



APRIL CALENDAR GOAS BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 14th

7:00 p.m. Environmental Resource Center

GOAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY, APRIL 16th

7:00 p.m. Program

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

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YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE

GREATER OZARKS CHAPTER

OF THE

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership in the National Audubon Society includes:

- ◆ Affiliation with Greater Ozarks Audubon
- ◆ Eight issues of the **GOAS Scissortail**
- ◆ Four issues of **Audubon** magazine

- Please enroll me as a member of NAS and Greater Ozarks Audubon.....\$20
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Please send renewals to National Audubon. Follow instructions provided with notice to renew your membership, or **renew** through our web page.

Get the **Scissortail** in your inbox!

Contact Mary Sturdevant, GOAS Membership Chair with questions, or Jim Fossard, Secretary, if you want to receive the newsletter by mail.

GREATER OZARKS AUDUBON SOCIETY
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Springfield, Missouri 65808-3231

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Representing:
Cedar, Christian, Dallas, Douglas, Greene,
Hickory, Polk, St. Clair, Stone, Taney,
Webster, and Wright Counties in Missouri.

Our mission is to promote bird conservation in southwest Missouri through birdwatching, education, habitat preservation and restoration, and public awareness, for the benefit of humanity and wildlife.

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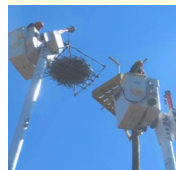


Announcements



The American Birding Association (ABA) announced their Youth Birder of the Year Awards. Klee Bruce placed second in the Writing Module, and scored third place in the Conservation and Community Leadership Module in this nationwide competition. We are super excited for Klee, and glad she is a member of GOAS, and is a friend!

Green Leadership Academy graduates assume new leadership roles, post-GLADE. Most recently, Ethan Green, GLADE Class of 2013, was named the Conservation Federation of Missouri's (CFM) Youth Conservationist of the Year. Ethan also serves as Vice-President of CFM's Conservation Leadership Corps. Congrats Ethan! We are honored through your accomplishments.



GOAS collaborated with Empire District Electric Cooperative, hatching a plan to relocate an Osprey nest from a Stockton Lake transmission tower to a nest platform, complete with a nest cam! Within just days, the Ospreys reclaimed the nest. The Goal? Reduce power outage risks, and conserve the small number of breeding Ospreys in Missouri: Win-win solutions through joint efforts.

There is still time to make plans for Birdathon! This is our chapter's annual fund raising event for Education Projects, including the Green Leadership Academy, and Audubon Adventures resource materials for early elementary classrooms. You can join a team, form a new one, sponsor a team, ask friends and family for donations, or help call our 600+ members. Contact Myra Scroggs to learn [more](#). Images courtesy of Kelsey Rumley: (2nd & 4th, top to bottom).



APRIL CALENDAR

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM...

Please join Ted Floyd, Editor of the American Birding Association's *Birding* magazine, for public lectures and bird walks co-sponsored by the Springfield Conservation Nature Center and Greater Ozarks Audubon Society.

On Thursday evening, April 16, Ted will talk about "Appreciating Birds and Nature in the Digital Age." This presentation reviews the dramatic new ways that birders and other natural historians are engaging and conserving nature in the 21st century. On Friday evening, Apr. 17, Ted's presentation updates us on recent research on warbler conservation, taxonomy, and population biology. Please call the Nature Center, 417-888-4237 to register for Friday evening's program.

Then, we'll have a chance to try out these tips and pointers in the field! Join Ted for bird walks at Busiek State Forest and Roaring River State Park on Friday and Saturday mornings. Time and meeting location appear in the GOAS field trip [schedule](#).

Come at 6:30 pm, Thursday, April 16th for refreshments and to socialize. The program will begin at 7:00 pm, followed by the membership meeting at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center, 4601 Nature Center Way (off Business Highway 65).
Ruth Grant, Program Chair