

# GOAS *Scissortail*

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society Newsletter :: January 2015 :: Volume 38 Issue 1

## JANUARY CALENDAR

### GOAS BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY, JANUARY 13th

7:00 p.m. Environmental Resource Center

### GOAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15th

7:00 p.m. Program

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

### C5ZN040Z

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OF THE

### NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership in the National Audubon Society includes:

- ◆ Affiliation with Greater Ozarks Audubon
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- ◆ Four issues of **Audubon** magazine

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Please send renewals to National Audubon. Follow instructions provided with notice to renew your membership, or [renew](#) on 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.

## DR. RUTH REPORTS

Ruth Grant, GOAS Chapter President

### Wing Sounds

It was a chilly, overcast December day on Tablerock Lake when two boatloads of intrepid birders embarked on a search for wintering waterfowl. Common Goldeneye were abundant, but skittish. They would not let us closely approach. One group flew directly over the boat I was in. Captain Samuel killed the engine, and we listened in wonder to the whistling of their wings.

That experience has led me to wonder how many other birds use their wings to make distinctive sounds. Mourning doves, nearly ubiquitous on the Springfield plateau, also make a whistling flight sound familiar to most of us.

Male Ruffed grouse, which are sadly disappearing from the Missouri landscape, make a characteristic drumming sound to attract females. I once thought males produced the sound by vibrating their tails against a hollow log. WRONG! Research for this article revealed they sit on logs as a good vantage point, or perhaps as an acoustic amplifier. But the sound itself is produced by use of their wings.

To quote, "The Birds of North America Online," the "male spreads his wings and then rotates (them) forward, then quickly backward. This creates a sudden compression and release of air pressure, which produces the drum-like sound. (The) sound is actually the rushing of air into a momentary vacuum, creating a miniature sonic boom."

All hummingbirds produce an epony-

mous humming sound with their wings in flight, but the wings of male Rufous hummers can produce a very high pitched sound "similar to the whine of cicadas" at 8,000 to 10,000 hertz. The sound is produced by modified primary feathers. By comparison the musical note middle C is 261.63 hertz. The upper limit of adult human hearing is 16,000 hertz. While we love to find vagrant Rufous hummers in the fall, the sound the males produce is definitely not "music to our ears!"

Those of us who've had the privilege to bird in the tropics may have seen and heard tiny colorful birds called manakins. There are many different species but most are deep forest birds. The males display in leks, which usually consist of a tree branch. They attract female attention in part through the snapping and popping sounds they can create with their wings. You can find a recording of male Club-winged manakins from National Geographic and the Cornell Laboratory on YouTube, referenced as "Bird feathers 'Sing'."

The wing sound I enjoy the most is the soft sound of a bird flying just overhead when it doesn't seem to realize I'm there. The one that startles me the most is a covey of quail exploding from cover when I accidentally stumble upon them while hiking. What are your favorite bird sounds, whether vocal or wing produced?

Happy New Year and good birding to all!

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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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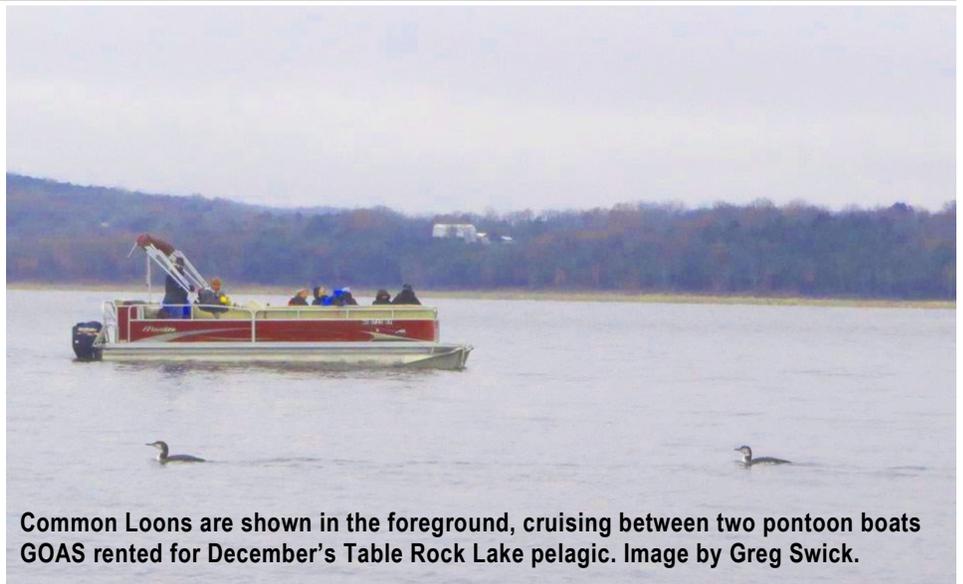
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Common Loons are shown in the foreground, cruising between two pontoon boats GOAS rented for December's Table Rock Lake pelagic. Image by Greg Swick.

## 18th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

**When:** Friday-Monday, Feb 13-16

**Where:** Your yard, a park, a conservation area, all of these, and more. Or, join GOAS at the Nature Center on Friday and Saturday, 9:00-11:00 am. Submit your count data to eBird!

Learn More →



## THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM...

Dr. Ruth Grant will present the January program, *Breeding Birds of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands*. Ruth is a retired physician and current president of GOAS. A lifelong birder and conservationist, she serves on the board of the Missouri chapter of the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and is a former TNC board chair. Ruth travelled to the Aleutian Islands and the Pribilof's this past July. That trip was the subject of her column in the September issue of the Scissortail.

Additionally, She will also discuss other seabirds found in the North Pacific, and some of the conservation issues facing these birds. Most of her photos have been kindly provided by guides who accompanied the expedition.

Come at 6:30 pm, Thursday, January 15th 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*