



# GOAS Scissortail

GREATER OZARKS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER : : OCTOBER 2014 : : VOLUME 37 ISSUE 7

**OCTOBER CALENDAR**  
**GOAS BOARD MEETING**  
**TUESDAY OCTOBER 14th**  
7:00 p.m. Environmental Resource Center  
**GOAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16th**  
7:00 p.m. Program  
Springfield Conservation Nature Center

**C4ZN040Z**

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**
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To join, make your check payable to National Audubon Society and mail with this form to:

**National Audubon Society**  
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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

### Owl Mania

"If you want to be an owl shout who who, then you get to sleep all day, and at night you get to play, if you want to be an owl shout who who." (From a children's song by Jean Warren.)

Owls have long fascinated both adults and children. If we study Greek mythology, we learn that the European Little Owl, *Athene noctua*, sat on Athena's shoulder and represented wisdom. Little Owls still breed in Greece, and across central Europe, north Africa, and Asia as far as Japan.

Another member of the same genus is the Burrowing Owl, *Athene cunicularia*, which is found throughout the American west, as well as Central and South America. It is delightful to birders because it is easily seen during the day, standing as a sentinel by its burrow.

Shakespeare was knowledgeable about owls. In *Love's Labour Lost*, we learn that "when icicles hang by the wall...then nightly sings the staring owl: Tu-whit, Tu-who, a merry note." Of course we know that owls breed and call in winter. Some like our own Northern Saw-whet owl, *Aegolius acadicus*, call only during the winter breeding season.

Another *Aegolius* is the Boreal Owl, *Aegolius funerarius*, which inhabits the northern forest belt across North America and Eurasia. *Funerarius* is latin for funeral and refers to a European legend

that owls call to announce a death. On the night of King Duncan's murder in *Macbeth*, Lennox reported "the night has been unruly...lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death...the obscure bird [the owl] clamoured the live long night." Shakespeare calls the owl the obscure bird because it hunts and flies at night and can't be seen (except by hardy birders with recorded owl calls and search lamps).



The owl most associated with death was the "screech owl." Our own Eastern Screech Owl, *Megascops asio*, is only found in eastern and central North America. We birders love its eerie call because it can attract chickadees, warblers and other passerines to try to mob the owl.

No members of the genus *Megascops* occur in Britain, but our own Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*, and Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*, do. The ghostly white Barn Owl may have been Shakespeare's screech owl. Sadly dead barn owls were once nailed to barn doors in Britain to protect the livestock from lightening and fire. No double blind controlled studies have been done, but thankfully the custom has fallen out of favor.

This column was inspired by the wonderful presentation on Saw-whet Owls at our October meeting given by Dana Ripper of the Missouri River Bird Observatory. I hope it inspires YOU to come to our next owl prowl November 8!



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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.*

Bob Ball photographed this Greater Roadrunner as it searched for insects, reptiles, or small mammals, on an Ozark prairie.



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**Announcing the 22nd Annual Bird Seed Sale**

Saturday November 15, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Southern Hills Shopping Center, on the northwest corner

Watch for order forms in the mail, and on our web page

Winter resident species are beginning to arrive. Plan to stock-up!

**THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM...**

Naturalist and nature photographer Bob Ball will present a program on the flora and fauna of **Tallgrass Prairies and Ozark Glades**. The program will feature his photographs of the plants, animals and birds of these rich and declining habitats in Missouri, and will be supplemented by his print show at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center for the month of October.

Mr. Ball is a retired economist, long-time photo hobbyist, and self-taught naturalist interested in everything in the natural world. Turning others onto the wonders of nature through his photographs and Power Point programs is something he thoroughly enjoys. His pictures have been published in several local and national publications, sometimes accompanying articles he has written. He has exhibited his prints in numerous locations throughout Missouri and Maryland, and also has participated in a number of juried craft shows including several years in the Easton, MD Waterfowl Festival and the Artists in Action Program on the Mall in Washington, D.C. For more than 19 years, he has served as a volunteer naturalist at the Nature Center. His fondness for prairies and glades was rekindled when he retired in 1995 and moved back to his home state of Missouri.

Come at 6:30 pm, Thursday October 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*

**OCTOBER CALENDAR**