



GOAS *Scissortail*

GREATER OZARKS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2015 VOLUME 38 ISSUE 6

DR. RUTH REPORTS

Ruth Grant, GOAS Chapter President

The Galapagos Archipelago

When we hear the name Galapagos, we instinctively think of Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, *The Origin of the Species*, gigantic land tortoises, and Darwin's finches. I spent ten days there in July. Before I arrived, I imagined islands that were unchanged from the nineteenth century. Sadly, of course, that is not the case.

Fortunately, no endemic birds have become extinct, but some species of tortoises have, and others hang on because of a captive breeding program maintained by the Darwin Research Station. Apparently people like to eat tortoises, and all manner of predators like to eat their eggs and hatchlings.

Charles Darwin actually spent only five weeks in the Galapagos, and only visited four islands. He didn't even pay much attention to the Darwin finches while he was there. He was more interested in the Mockingbirds, of which there are four species, easily distinguished by differences in their bills.

The Mockingbirds behave nothing like ours. For one, they have lost the ability to mock, that is to imitate other bird songs or random sounds. For another they form territorial gangs. They don't have tags or do-rags, but they do gang up and literally kill outsider Mockingbirds that stray into their territory.

The finches are plain brown or black birds with different sized and shaped beaks that represent about thirteen

different species according to experts. For the inexpert, like me, they were very difficult to tell apart.

The most exciting birds to me were the sea birds: Flightless Cormorants, Galapagos penguins, Blue footed boobies, Red footed boobies, Wave Abatrosses, and magnificent Red Billed Tropicbirds. The Albatrosses were breeding and we were able to walk among them and watch them bill and coo as part of their courtship rituals.

So what besides people are the major threats to these islands? Mainly introduced mammals. Whalers set donkeys and goats free on the islands, so that they could be harvested for meat on later voyages. People were accompanied by rats, feral cats and feral dogs. The goats and donkeys destroy native vegetation important for nesting birds. Rats, cats and dogs eat young tortoises, land iguanas and ground nesting birds.

Fortunately, the National Park Service, which administers much of these islands has been able to eradicate rats and goats from some of the islands, allowing a rapid rebound of native vegetation. Of course, more work remains to be done.

For anyone who would like to read more about the Enchanted Isles, I can recommend *Darwin in Galapagos* by Thalia Grant (no relation) and Greg Estes (one of the guides on my trip), and *The Beak of the Finch* by Jonathan Weiner.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

GOAS BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th

7:00 p.m. Environmental Resource Center

GOAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th

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.



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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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GOAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE—NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING
 September 17, 2015, 7:00pm, Election of Officers and the Board
 Ann Liles, Jill Hays, and Greg Swick present the
 2015-2016 Slate of Officer and Board Nominees

- Ann Liles President
- Janice Greene.....Vice-President
- Jim Fossard Secretary
- Charley Burwick Treasurer
- Lisa Berger Board
- Kathleen Cowens.....Board
- Art DanielsBoard
- Jill Hays.....Board
- Sherri HedgepethBoard
- Nikki HummelBoard
- Mary SturdevantBoard
- Greg SwickBoard
- Brooke WidmarBoard
- Ruth Grant Immediate Past President

Meeting Program Line-Up 2015-2016

October	Becky Wylie, Joplin Audubon, <i>Yellowstone</i>
November	2015 GLADE Grads Recount Experiences
January	Bob Ball, <i>Birds on the Nest</i>
February	Janice Greene, Ph.D., MSU
March	David Ringer, National Audubon Society
April	OPEN
May	Jeff Cantrell, <i>Neotropical Migrants Behavior</i>

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM...



We kick-off the start of a new year with our good friend, Doug Ladd, Director of The Nature Conservancy's Missouri program, where he directs science, land management, and conservation real estate activities. He has been involved with fire management and fire ecology, conservation planning, natural area assessment, and ecological management, restoration, and research for more than thirty years, with particular emphasis on vegetation. He has also worked on lichens in the Midwest for over two decades, and is currently collaborating with Richard Harris of the New York Botanical Garden on a study of Ozark lichens, which has resulted in the discovery of several species and genera new to science. Learn [more](#) about Doug's career and recent areas of focus.

The title of Doug's program is ***Space Dust, Sharp Sticks, and Bridge Failures: The making of the Ozarks***. Come to learn how he will connect those seemingly disparate dots; stay to be entertained and enlightened about our unique speck on the planet called the Ozarks.

Come at 6:30 pm, Thursday, September 17th 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