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President's Corner

Ted C. MacRae, Newsletter Editor

The riotous colors of October are but a distant memory, the muted shades of November have morphed to a stark December landscape, and all but the most persistent of plants and animals have gone dormant. The transition to winter is complete as a 'great sleep' blankets the landscape. Activity in the natural world has reached its low ebb, but that doesn't mean WGNSS members must retire to their dens and abandon their nature studies. WGNSS activities continue unabated during the winter, and with so many nature study opportunities to choose from there is no need to hibernate until next spring's 'great awakening'.

Firstly, don't miss the WGNSS General Meeting on December 2nd, when Mark Twain National Forest Ecologist **Paul Nelson** will give a talk on "Missouri Glades". Perhaps best known for his landmark book, *The Terrestrial Natural Communities of Missouri*, Paul has spent the past six years involved in an effort to classify, describe, and map all of the restorable glade natural communities throughout Missouri where thought to occur. Come see one of Missouri's premier natural historians talk about one of the state's rarest, most interesting natural communities. Further details can be found in the General Meeting announcement in this issue of *Nature Notes*.

Our Natural History Groups also have a full slate of activities to choose from. Winter botanizing can

be a fun way to challenge your plant identification skills. Plants can still be found, but instead of using leaves and flowers to identify them, one must rely on bark, buds, or other more subtle clues. The WGNSS Botany Group has field trips scheduled in December for those who wish to try their hand at

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this, while the Bryology Group will examine materials collected this summer. Insects are almost universally dormant during winter in Missouri, but the WGNSS Entomology Group keeps its members from going dormant with monthly meetings featuring talks by some of the area's most practiced entomologists. Birds are among the few animals that remain active during the winter, with some birds appearing in Missouri's forests and waterways only during the coldest months of the year. Join the WGNSS Ornithology Group on one (or more) of their twice weekly outings to see these birds in the company of like-minded persons. And, of course, there is no better time than during winter to cozy up to a nice, good book. Why not pick up a copy of the WGNSS Nature Book Club's pick of the month and join their monthly discussion group? All of these events and more can be found in the Schedule of Events section in this issue of *Nature Notes*.

Volunteer opportunities also abound. Last month 1st Vice President **Rich Thoma** mentioned plans by WGNSS, St. Louis Audubon Society and Tower Grove Park to improve the Gaddy Bird Garden in Tower Grove Park. In October, Secretary **Burt Noll** and Ornithology Natural History Group Chair **David Becher** represented WGNSS during a walk-thru of the garden led by Park Director Bill Reininger. Plans include removing invasives, improving the fountain, reintroducing understory native plants, and creating an "urban prairie". WGNSS supports these activities, and you can too by serving as a volunteer—contact a Board Member if you are interested. December also brings with it the **Christmas Bird Count** at August A. Busch Memorial & Weldon Spring Conservation Area. Details can be found in this issue of *Nature Notes*.

Volunteer opportunities aren't limited to nature study. The WGNSS Board is always looking for member involvement, and with the offices of President, 2nd Vice President, and Hospitality Chair all vacant there is no better time than now to become involved. The Board has already assembled a search committee to find a new President, but don't hesitate to step forward if you are interested in serving in this or one of the other mentioned roles. On that note, please take a moment to welcome Member-at-Large **Bill Duncan** as the newest member of your Board.

A somber note—WGNSS mourns the passing of long-time member and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient **Marjorie Richardson**. Highlights of Marjorie and her involvement in WGNSS can be found in the memoriam in this issue of *Nature Notes*.



November General Meeting: "Environmental Missouri"

Richard Thoma

At the WGNSS November General Meeting, the guest speaker for the evening was **Don Corrigan**, Editor-in-Chief for the Webster-Kirkwood Times and Professor in the Department of Communications and Journalism at Webster University, who gave a presentation on his most recent book, *Environmental Missouri, Issues and Sustainability, What You Need to Know*. Back in the 1960s the environmental movement focused on endangered species, clean air, clean water, and toxic land waste. From those issues major federal legislation was passed that began to have an immediate impact on improving the world we live in. Today, the environmental movement has fractured into a host of issues, making it tough to keep track of each. At the meeting, Don gave a fascinating talk about 80 Missouri-specific issues that are found in his book. In a history lesson, Don took us from the toxic legacy left behind for Missourians to deal with today to a sustainable future. In the past, young people took an activist approach to solve environmental issues. Today, the young are much more into sustainability, i.e., maintaining permanent healthy ecosystems.

Don presented a variety of environmental issues that Missourians are dealing with today. A nuclear burial ground, dioxin sites, coal ash, lead poisoning, landfill methane, toxic plastics, PCB's and radon gas have all caused Missourians problems. The answer for the nuclear material and dioxin was to bury in large earthen mounds. Don implied that it remains to be seen whether this really solved the problem or will come back to haunt future generations. Oftentimes when a company closes, taxpayers are left holding the bill to clean up the mess. There are numerous sites