



Annual Report FY2018
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018



Our Mission is to contribute to the conservation of Missouri's birds and their habitats through research, monitoring, education & outreach. We do this by:

- *Gathering information about avian communities and habitat use that assists state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to improve conservation programs.*
- *Providing opportunities for Missourians of all ages to spend more time outdoors and to learn about species and habitat conservation.*

Permanent Staff

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Ethan Duke

Assistant Director

Paige Witek

Education Coordinator

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Byers Consulting

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Missouri Valley College

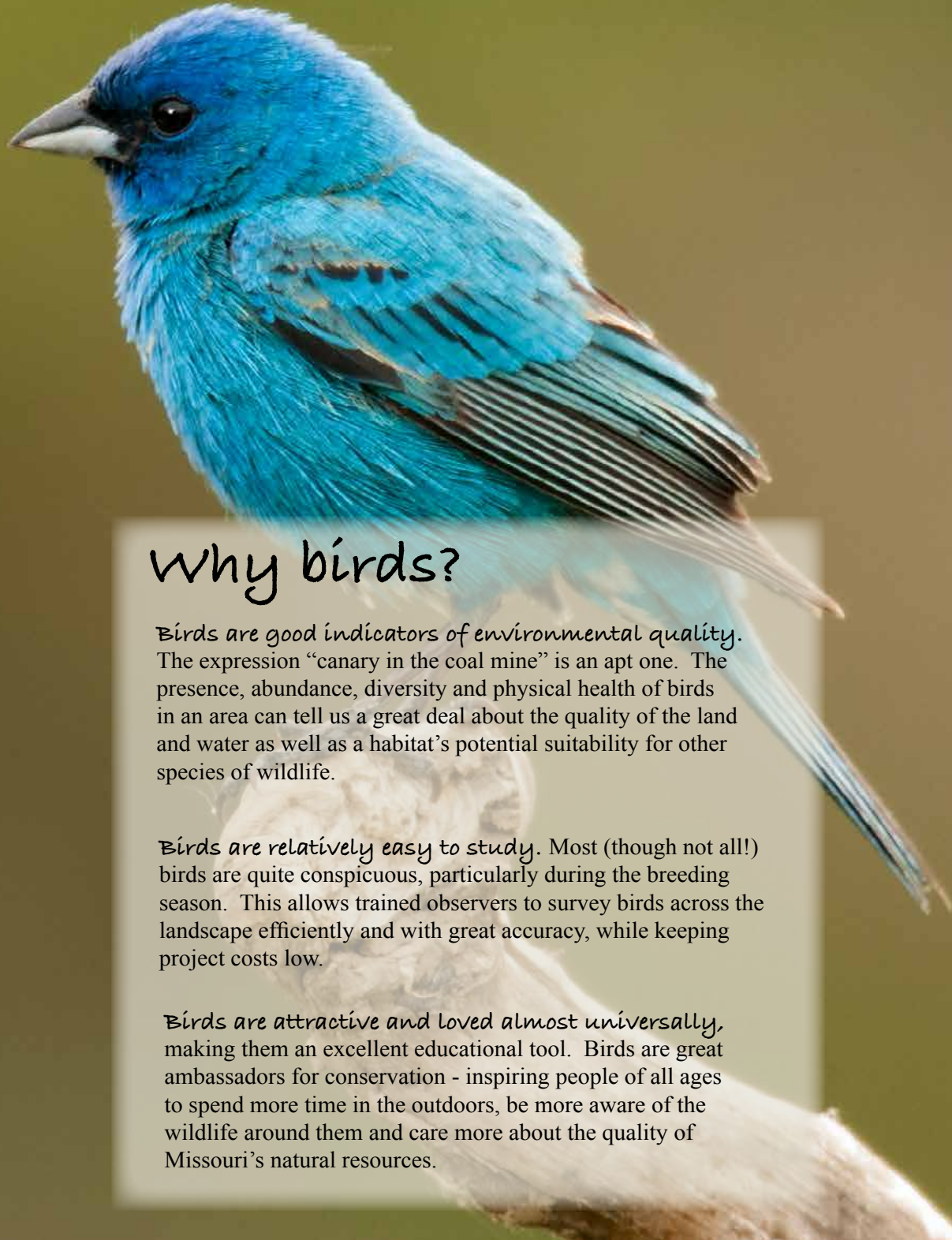
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Why birds?

Birds are good indicators of environmental quality.

The expression "canary in the coal mine" is an apt one. The presence, abundance, diversity and physical health of birds in an area can tell us a great deal about the quality of the land and water as well as a habitat's potential suitability for other species of wildlife.

Birds are relatively easy to study. Most (though not all!) birds are quite conspicuous, particularly during the breeding season. This allows trained observers to survey birds across the landscape efficiently and with great accuracy, while keeping project costs low.

Birds are attractive and loved almost universally, making them an excellent educational tool. Birds are great ambassadors for conservation - inspiring people of all ages to spend more time in the outdoors, be more aware of the wildlife around them and care more about the quality of Missouri's natural resources.

Prairies

Less than 1% of Missouri's original tallgrass prairie remains today. Prairie-obligate birds are undergoing the steepest declines of any guild in North America. In partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Prairie Foundation, and National Audubon Society, MRBO tracks Missouri's prairie bird populations with the goal of helping public and private landowners to better understand the management practices that result in stable or increasing bird populations on their properties.

Surveys

In 2018 MRBO staff continued our statewide prairie bird survey project, now in its seventh year. Surveys were conducted during the breeding season on 45 public and private properties. We keep close track of bird populations so that if a species is declining, land managers can respond quickly by providing more suitable habitat.

"The Missouri Prairie Foundation, a nonprofit conservation organization and land trust, depends on the excellent, science-based ornithological monitoring services of the Missouri River Bird Observatory to gauge the effectiveness of our prairie management activities. We appreciate and depend on MRBO's thorough monitoring protocols; additionally, they are always willing to participate in our prairie educational events."

-Carol Davit, MPF Executive Director

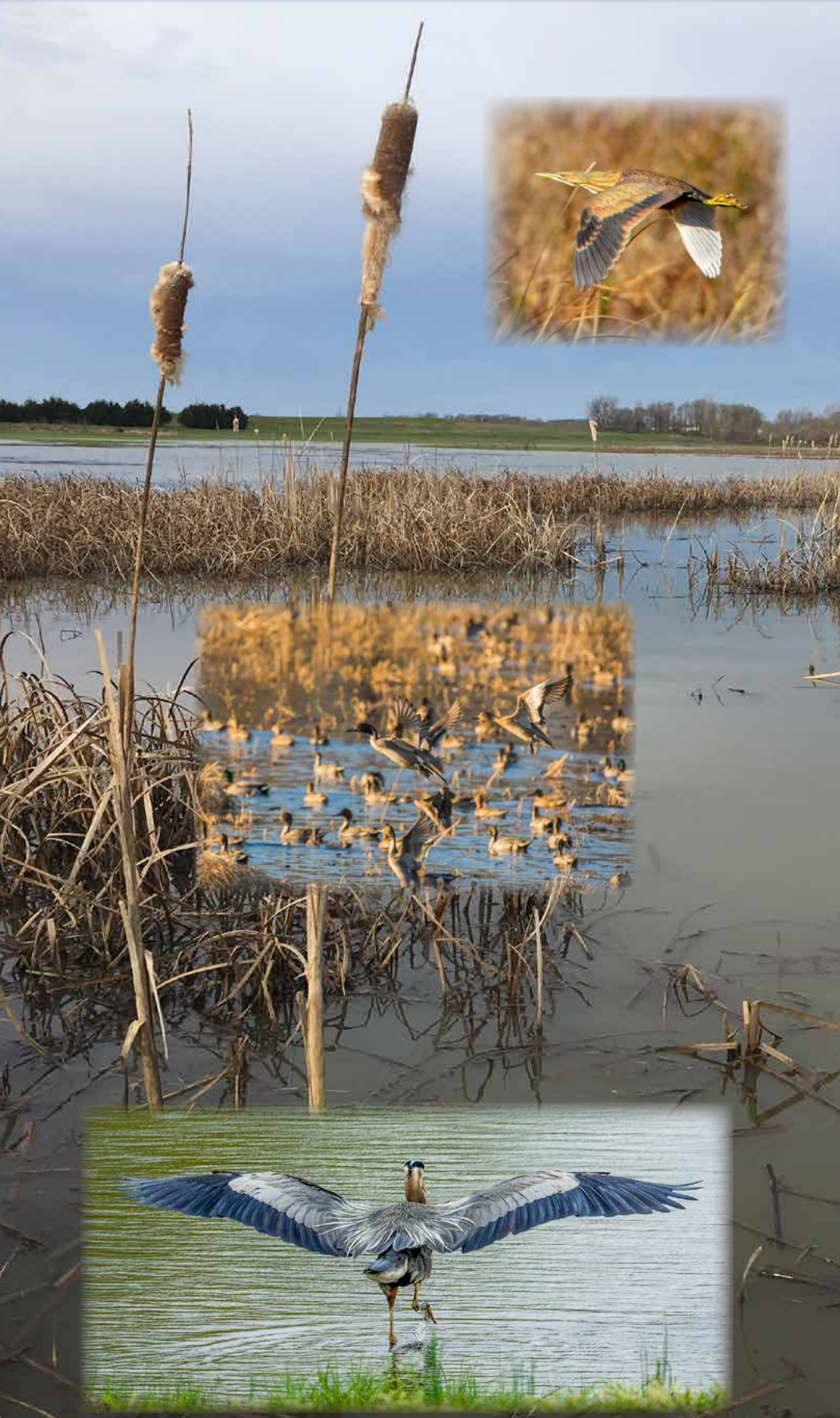
Nest Monitoring

From 2016-2018, MRBO surveyors have located and monitored more than 500 nests of prairie birds! This study aims to document the nesting success and amount of young produced in grasslands that receive prescribed fires and that are grazed by cattle. This helps managers determine the fire frequency and amount of grazing that constitute good habitat management.



Photos, top to bottom: Field Sparrow nestlings, Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel.

Wetlands



Approximately 15% of Missouri's original wetlands exist today. Critical acreage has been conserved and restored by Missouri's private landowners, often as part of the USDA's Wetland Reserve Easement Program. In cooperation with the USDA and MDC's Private Lands Division, MRBO monitors bird populations on thousands of acres of private wetlands each year. In addition to collecting data on bird diversity and abundance, we are able to reach out to the landowners on whom many bird species depend.

Marsh Bird Surveys

MRBO staff surveyed 61 private wetland easements during the 2018 spring migration and breeding seasons. Over 37,000 birds of 190 species were documented on 17,600 acres of marsh habitat. Several rare and state-endangered species were documented, including King and Virginia Rails and American Bittern.

Working with Landowners

A critical and very enjoyable part of MRBO's wetland survey project is the opportunity to interact with every landowner personally, relating to them how important their property is for birds. Each landowner receives phone calls throughout the survey season and a detailed yearly report of MRBO's findings.

"We wish there was some way to express our deep thanks for all you do to help the birds and educate those who hopefully will become supporters of all things with wings. I don't know how we were so lucky as to have you settle in Missouri – you are just the best."

-Chariton County Wetland Owners

Education & Outreach

A photograph of two hummingbirds perched on a tree branch. The bird on the right is larger and has iridescent green and brown feathers. The bird on the left is smaller and has more muted, brownish-green feathers. Below them is a cup-shaped nest made of dried leaves and twigs. The background is filled with green leaves, some showing signs of insect damage.

Even more important than scientific research and monitoring work is encouraging people to think about conservation. This is why MRBO places a great emphasis on education and public outreach. People are motivated to conserve the plants, animals and land that they appreciate. Also, a connection with nature and spending time outdoors has been shown to improve mental, emotional and physical health!

K-12 Education

Thanks primarily to our Education Coordinator, Paige Witek, MRBO conducted education events that reached nearly 3,000 young Missourians across the state during FY2018. Events included guided nature hikes, bird-banding demonstrations and inquiry-based outdoor activities that promote critical thinking.

Adult Education

Each year MRBO conducts a variety of adult programs, many of which are focused on training educators or parents in wildlife ID and outdoor skills that will help them get their kids outside. We also work with many conservation partners to deliver family-friendly events where parents can enjoy nature along with their children.

Education & Outreach

“Words can not express the value that your activity added to the education event. It was the favorite of all the students! What MRBO can offer in environmental education is unique and makes a lasting impression on all participants.”
-Missouri River Relief



“We want to thank you again for an interesting, informative presentation to our club. Your vitality and enthusiasm are greatly appreciated as well. Keep up the great education to our Missouri communities.”
-Raytown Garden Club



“Paige was amazing! Camp was run very well and I am so glad to have something like this in our area! Wonderful job!”

“My kids loved it! I was pleased with the info they came home with each day!”

“My kids loved the camp. Thank you for doing it!”

“Both kids, and myself, are learning so much and having a lot of fun at camp. You are an amazing teacher and so great with the kids!”

-Parents of Young Explorers



In FY2018, MRBO conducted:

105 education events attended by 2,820 K-12 students and 2,110 adults.

The second summer of the **Young Explorers' Club**, a day camp for 8-11 year olds in Arrow Rock.

The launch of the **Missouri Young Birders' Club**, a statewide organization with local chapters that offer field trips and birding opportunities to youth!

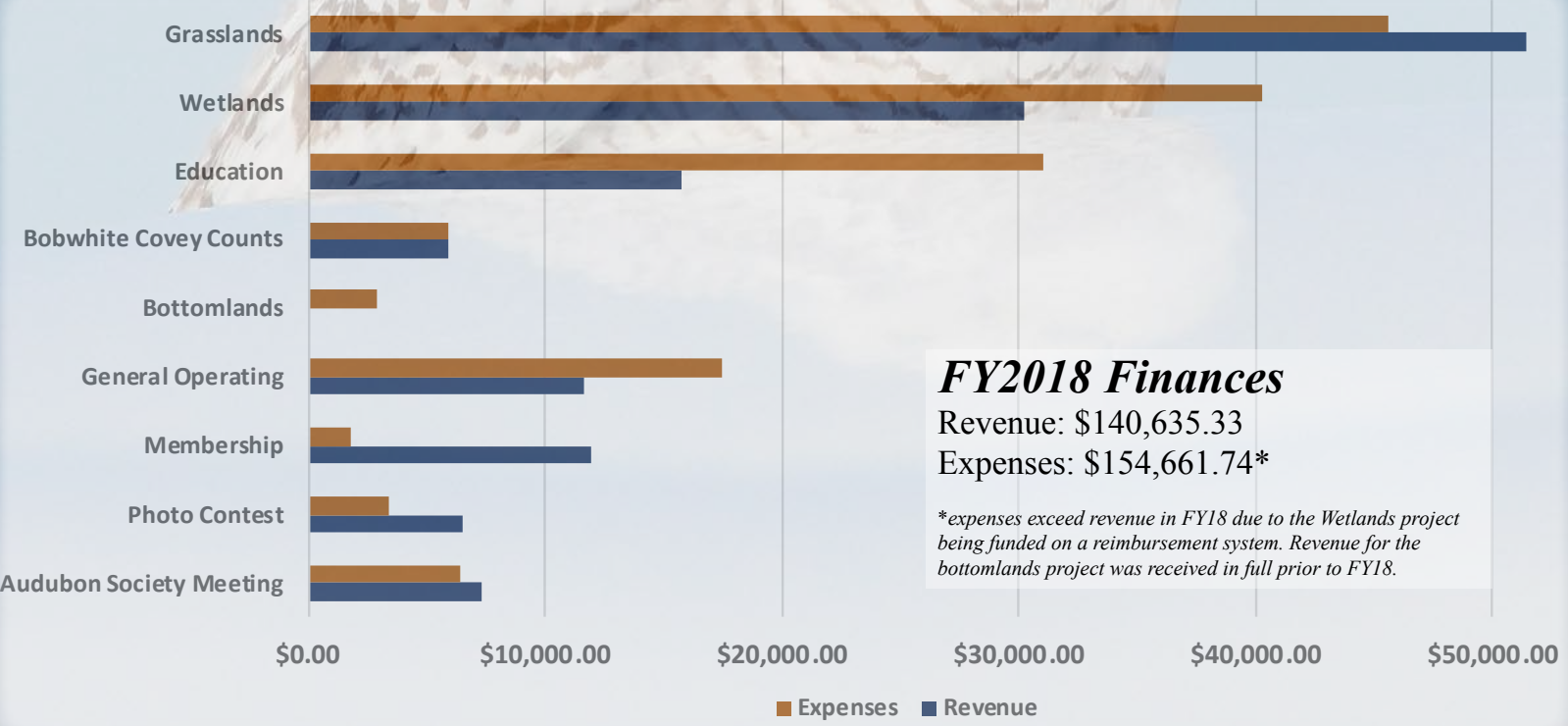
MRBO's work was made possible in FY2018 by



Members



Pat Jones



FY2018 Finances

Revenue: \$140,635.33

Expenses: \$154,661.74*

**expenses exceed revenue in FY18 due to the Wetlands project being funded on a reimbursement system. Revenue for the bottomlands project was received in full prior to FY18.*



Our thanks to the following photographers who contributed to MRBO's "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" photo competition in November 2017!

Cover: Henslow's Sparrow, Bill Blackledge

Second Page: Indigo Bunting, Chris Valentine

Wetlands: Great Blue Heron, George Albright. Northern Pintails, Rhyan Brooks. American Bittern, Tom Tucker.

Education & Outreach: Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Jacob Walter, age 13.

Partners/Financials: Snowy Owl, Tony Harris.

Back Cover: Blue Grosbeak, Paul Moffett