

# THE RECTRIX

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*A Seasonal Newsletter of the Missouri River Bird Observatory*

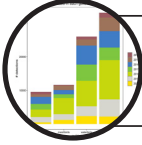


*rectrix* lek-triksl noun. ( pl. -trices) any of the larger feathers in a bird's tail, used for steering in flight.

# Our Mission



To contribute to the conservation of birds and all wildlife through scientific research, education and outreach, and conservation policy advocacy.



## Science

To gather information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement conservation programs.



## Education

To provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn about species and their habitats.



## Advocacy

To advocate for sound, science-based conservation policies that benefit birds, other wildlife and environmental quality.

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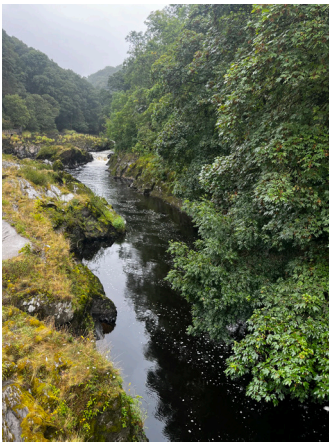


# Letter from the MRBO Directors

Dear MRBO Supporters, Partners, and Friends,

Greetings from central Missouri. By the time you read this, we hope that the weather is seasonably cool. We're writing in mid-September, and though it's 90 degrees currently, we've already seen a significant wave of migrants in the early part of the month. Our home area, Saline County, hosted many warbler species, including Nashville and Bay-breasted Warblers and Northern Parula. We've seen several flocks of Common Nighthawks, often feasting on dragonflies that consisted of new hatches or migrating swarms. What a great time of year!

Last month, the two of us were fortunate to spend some time in England and Wales. This trip held special meaning for us, as we were finally able to visit some of the places where Ethan first started birding while stationed with the Air Force. It was a long-awaited journey—14 years in the making—and a reminder of how our connection to nature can transcend time and place. In addition to revisiting those birding sites, we spent time at several Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserves, gleaned information about their public outreach and learning about UK habitats.



We also observed the UK's inspiring strides toward reducing single-use plastics. Over our 16 days there, we did not see a single plastic straw or polystyrene container. It was refreshing to see a society so consciously reducing unnecessary waste. The UK's regulations on plastic use, enacted in the last few years, reflect a commitment to environmental stewardship that feels like a renewed social contract—a focus on collective responsibility through small acts of decency. We left feeling encouraged that similar steps could be taken here in the US to curb plastic waste and its impact on wildlife and habitats.

Did you know there's an election coming up? You may have heard... The MRBO team will be hosting a "Green Democracy" webinar in late October to discuss various federal and state environmental policies, bills, and agency structures that are highly relevant to the November 5th election. Look for the webinar registration link in your inbox via an MRBO email in early October.

Speaking of webinars -- back by popular demand! -- we will be hosting another Winter Learning Series on Monday nights from January through March 2025. Many folks have complimented the lineup of topics and our excellent speakers from last year; we look forward to producing another quality series with amazing presenters! The schedule will be announced in early December and registration will also open at that time.

Until we all meet again, happy autumn!  
Dana Ripper & Ethan Duke, MRBO Co-directors



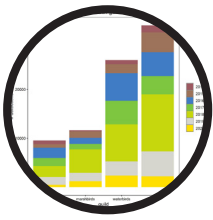
**Cover Photo:** *Make Sure You Get My Good Side.*  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet by David Seidensticker

## A note on changes to the *Rectrix*

Please note that the next issue of *The Rectrix*, to be published in December 2024, will be the annual photo contest issue. For its first seven years (2015-2023), MRBO's photo contest ran from November to December, with the photos published in the spring issue of *The Rectrix*. In 2024, we changed the contest dates to July through August, and will feature all of the photos in the December issue. Going forward, look for the spring, summer, and fall issues of *The Rectrix* to contain articles and updates, while the winter issue will feature the annual photo contest.

Photos in *The Rectrix* bearing no photographer credit were taken by MRBO staff.





# Science

**To contribute to conservation** by gathering information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement conservation programs.

## Brown-headed Nuthatch Reintroduction Project

In late August, MRBO directors Dana and Ethan were fortunate to be a very small part of the Brown-Headed Nuthatch Reintroduction (BHNU Reintro) Project team in Arkansas. Supporters and long-time readers of the *Rectrix* know that MRBO does very little bird-trapping at this point in time. Though the organization started as a traditional bird-banding station, over the past 15 years we have moved on to other methods of bird monitoring. The BHNU Reintro is a significant exception; it represents a valuable opportunity to return a species to a geography it once inhabited prior to human-caused habitat loss!

Started by Sarah Kendrick and continued by Kristen Heath-Acre, the BHNU Reintro project involves carefully target-trapping nuthatches in the Ouachita National Forest of western Arkansas and translocating them to suitable habitat in the Mark Twain National Forest of Missouri. The birds are trapped by 9:30 am, flown by light plane to Missouri, banded, Motus-tagged, and released around noon the same day.

Dana and Ethan arrived in western Arkansas on the evening of August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024. They were preceded by 10 other teams of two to three people who had been trapping BHNUs for the previous two mornings. With 11 teams out in the field, it took only four days to trap the quota of just under 100 nuthatches! Many of the field biologists on the project had been involved in the 2020-2021 BHNU Reintro effort, and thus had perfected target-trapping techniques. All the teams used these techniques to capture several individual birds each morning. Dana and Ethan were thrilled to contribute four birds on August 29<sup>th</sup> and three on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The trapping teams reconvened each morning at a National Forest District Office and the nuthatches were secured for transport to the local Waldron, AR airstrip for the flight to Missouri. The birds were placed in individual tubes with mealworms for nourishment. Unlike many bird species that are (understandably) too stressed by confinement to take food, Brown-headed Nuthatches tend to eat their mealworms throughout the journey to Missouri.

When the BHNU Reintro flight landed on the Missouri end each day, Sarah Kendrick, Kristen Heath-Acre, and several other experienced banders were there to receive the birds. They quickly placed regular USGS aluminum bands, along with color-bands in unique combinations, on each nuthatch. Of the 95 translocated, 31 birds also received Motus tags, allowing the MDC team to track their presence and, potentially, any dispersal over the next several months. The birds were then released in the mature, carefully managed pine woodlands of southern Missouri.

We are very fortunate to have the Missouri Department of Conservation’s long-term planning, management, and vision that have made it possible for a once-extirpated species to return to Missouri. We’re also indebted to the biologists and habitat managers of the Ouachita National Forest, who have successfully stewarded their forest resources and sustained a thriving population of Brown-headed Nuthatches.

*All birds were captured and handled under state and federal permits.*



A nuthatch banded just before release in Missouri. Photo courtesy of Kristen Heath-Acre



Brown-headed Nuthatch captured in Arkansas. Photo courtesy of Miranda Wilkinson



Dana with a just-captured nuthatch in Arkansas.



# MDC and partners finish third round of Brown-headed Nuthatch reintroduction

Ninety-five birds were released last month in Mark Twain National Forest.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and partners recently finished phase three of Brown-headed Nuthatch reintroduction efforts in the Missouri Ozarks. In 2020 and 2021, MDC released 102 birds to the U.S. Forest Service’s Mark Twain National Forest as part of a pilot effort to achieve holistic ecosystem restoration of Missouri’s shortleaf pine woodlands. To continue this effort and to establish an extensive, sustainable population, 95 more nuthatches were reintroduced Aug. 27-30.

Brown-headed Nuthatches are only found in pine-woodlands where the pines are mature, the canopy is mostly open to sunlight, and there are plenty of well-decayed snags for nesting. Brown-headed Nuthatches were likely extirpated from Missouri in the early 1900s when the last large swaths of shortleaf pine woodlands were removed by intensive harvest and logging. The Ozark landscape regrew into primarily oak-hickory forest, which is unsuitable for Brown-headed Nuthatches. However, decades of pine woodland restoration by the Mark Twain National Forest has returned Brown-headed Nuthatch habitat to the landscape.

“Brown-headed Nuthatches excavate their own cavities, and so they employ an important role in the ecosystem,” explained MDC State Ornithologist Kristen Heath-Acre. “The cavities they create are used by other bird species, as well as mammals such as flying squirrels.”

A portion of the birds were fitted with a tiny radio transmitter and are being monitored using a local array of automated telemetry Motus towers.

“We’re monitoring their movements and survival like this, in combination with tracking them on foot, to get a clearer picture of their space-use and dispersal behavior after release,” said Heath-Acre. “This will help us identify habitat management that best suits these birds because what’s good for Brown-headed Nuthatches is good for Missouri’s pine woodland ecosystem as a whole. These birds are teaching us a lot about how far we’ve come in terms of habitat restoration over the past three decades and are helping lead a path forward.”



US Fish & Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Biologist Sarah Kendrick (left) and Missouri Department of Conservation State Ornithologist Kristen Heath-Acre (right).



Brown-headed Nuthatch habitat in the Ouachita National Forest, Arkansas

Partnerships were key in making this conservation action possible, involving nearly a dozen state, federal, and non-government organizations which came together to capture, translocate, and release Brown-headed Nuthatches. Partners include U.S. Forest Service’s Mark Twain National Forest, Ouachita National Forest and Northern Research Station, the University of Missouri, Central Hardwoods Joint Venture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri River Bird Observatory, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and more. In particular, this effort would not be possible without the habitat restoration accomplished by the U.S. Forest Service’s Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri.

To learn more about the Brown-headed Nuthatch, visit the MDC website at <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/brown-headed-nuthatch>.

Article and photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Conservation and Jill Pritchard, News Services Coordinator.





# Education

**To contribute to conservation** by providing opportunities for Missourians of all ages to spend more time outdoors and to learn about species and habitat conservation.

## Meet MRBO's new Plastic Pollution Education Coordinator!

### Cameron Gromek

Cameron is originally from southeast Michigan and graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife focusing on upland wildlife biology and management. During his undergrad, Cameron had his "a-ha" moment on a study-away trip to Yellowstone, Wyoming where he watched a pack of wolves traveling across the iconic Lamar Valley.

After graduation, Cameron worked at the Howell Nature Center in Michigan where he was a wildlife educator. There he found his passion for educating the public on various wildlife topics and fell in love with an especially charismatic group of birds - raptors. From there, Cameron moved to the Michigan Metroparks where he was the Volunteer Coordinator. There he led volunteer workdays aimed at removing invasive vegetation and improving habitat for native plants and wildlife. Cameron moved to Missouri in 2023, where he gained experience as an agricultural research specialist for University of Missouri Extension. Through this experience he has seen firsthand the effect of plastic pollution on wildlife, waterways, habitats, and agriculture.



Cameron enjoys camping, hiking, fishing, kayaking, going to Missouri football games, and watching the Detroit Lions. Cameron is especially passionate about educating the public on environmental health concerns and fostering environmental stewardship for all communities. With his new role at the Missouri River Bird Observatory, he hopes to make a positive impact on the plastic pollution crisis through education and advocacy.

## Plastic Pollution 101 A Review of the Worldwide Plastic Waste Problem

Plastics have infiltrated every aspect of our lives – they're in our food systems, electronic devices, children's toys, and building materials. But what is this synthetic material made of and where does it go once it leaves our trash cans and recycling bins? It's a question many people are asking, and for good reason.

To best understand the problem of plastic pollution, one must first start at the root of what plastic is made of. Plastic is made from carbon-based fossil fuels and synthetic chemicals. Plastic cannot exist without chemicals, and many of these chemicals are either untested or harmful to the human body. Over 10,000 chemicals have been identified in plastic, and data has identified that over 2,400 of these chemicals are substances of concern. The overproduction of plastic has led to these harmful chemicals being released at every stage of the plastics life cycle. From oil extraction to production, transport, use and disposal - these plastics are leaching harmful chemicals into our environment and our bodies.

So how did we get here, and why are fossil fuel and petrochemical companies continuing to mass produce a product that has so many health concerns?

Plastic first started entering the world in the late 1800's to early 1900's through the production of rubber and early electronic devices such as radios. But it wasn't until WWII that plastic production really took off. Modern military gear such as nylon



Photo by David Clode



parachutes, rain gear, and plastic wrapping for planes proved that the use of plastic was only just beginning. In the 1950's oil and chemical companies realized they had something big and shifted the industry to move plastic not only into homes, but through them via disposable consumer goods. Since 1950, plastic production has tripled and is on pace to triple again by 2060. Plus, 56% of all plastic produced has been made since 2000. With all this plastic circulating our planet, you may now be wondering where it all goes.

The chemicals transported around the world through plastic production and use do not break down or leave our environment. Instead, they break apart into tiny pieces known as microplastic or nanoplastic. Recycling is a popular way the industry promotes reuse and reduction of plastic waste, but it tells an incomplete story.

According to a 2022 report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, it's estimated that only 9% of plastic ever produced has been recycled. 19% of it has been incinerated and 72% ends up in landfills or the environment. When plastics are recycled, the toxic chemicals they contain simply transfer from old to new plastic. Burning plastic contributes to climate change, and releases extremely toxic chemicals known as dioxins. As consumers, whether we support it or not, the plastic being produced is here to stay.

Since recycling and burning are not sustainable ways to manage plastic waste, we must "turn off the tap" of plastic production. As consumers, exposure to plastic is unavoidable and fossil fuel and petrochemical companies must adapt to the global push to reduce plastic production.

While this may seem all doom and gloom, there is still hope. Systemic change is happening across the globe to influence change at a local, state, or even worldwide level. Currently 12 states have issued bans on single use plastic bags. Advocacy and policy changes such as this highlight our collective power as consumers to hold large fossil fuel and petrochemical companies accountable for the overproduction of plastic. The plastic waste problem is a daunting challenge, but communities around the world have shown they're ready to face it head on.



Photo by Naja Bertolt Jensen



Photo by Dustan Woodhouse

## KC Community Conservation Updates

Just over a year ago, the KC Community Conservation Educator (KC CCE) position launched. This position made room for MRBO to provide an undeviating presence in Kansas City. Over the course of that year, KC CCE Tessa Poolman has reached over 1,700 Kansas City residents through various outreach and programming events. Education in Kansas City has taken significant strides with Tessa developing and delivering targeted programs.

### MDC + MRBO Education in KC

Tessa worked diligently with the Missouri Department of Conservation over the summer to tackle the high demand for outdoor and environmental education in Kansas City. She partnered with a range of MDC staff to deliver varied program opportunities to KC residents.

This summer, MRBO was welcomed into a partnership opportunity to add environmental education curriculum into an established Summer Camp hosted by Lincoln University Cooperative Extension Kansas City Urban Impact Center. Project Conservation brought together volunteers from MDC, MRBO, and the Osage Trails Master Naturalists chapter. This five-week camp, organized by Marion Halim and Taylor Ashley, included conservation



Tessa with MDC Forester Taylor Neff at Wings Over Weston



education alongside STEM, financial literacy, and fitness programs, making it a rewarding summer for all involved. To celebrate the end of our collaborations, the Kansas City Campers joined MRBO in Arrow Rock for an immersive field trip, with the help of Osage Trails MMN, MRBO volunteers, MDC, DNR and State Parks.

### EPA Environmental Education Project

Last fall, as environmental education efforts in Kansas City gained momentum, it became evident that despite the involvement of numerous organizations and agencies, many programs were not having the lasting impact hoped for by the community. MRBO recognized the need for more intentional and immersive programming. Tessa sought guidance from other professionals who had successfully implemented programs in Kansas City. A key takeaway was that the success of these initiatives often depended less on the program content itself and more on the groundwork laid before launching. Underserved communities, too often inundated with new initiatives, are rarely consulted beforehand, leading to disengagement.

MRBO wanted to break this cycle. Instead of launching another top-down program, the organization sought to bring community members to the table, inviting them to share their firsthand experiences with environmental issues and express their interests in learning more. Around this time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity for Environmental Education grants in Region 7. This was the perfect opportunity for MRBO to propose a fresh approach to environmental education.

With the collaborative efforts of MRBO staff and board member Tammy Gillespie, MRBO submitted a proposal in November 2023 for the EPA Environmental Education Grant. The result was an \$80,000 award to fund the project "Empowering Kansas City Residents to Take Environmental Action." This grant will enable MRBO to deepen its mission of fostering environmental awareness and stewardship, especially in underserved Kansas City communities.

The project is designed to create a lasting impact by engaging a broad cross-section of community members—residents, business owners, local organizations, Title I school parents, and subaward recipients from five underserved neighborhoods. By equipping these groups with education and resources, MRBO aims to build a network of empowered environmental stewards capable of driving sustainable change.

Ultimately, the initiative will not only improve environmental health but also contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and communities. By cultivating long-term partnerships and giving residents a voice, the project will ensure that participants are equipped with the knowledge and tools to protect their local environment and shape a more sustainable future.



Ready for visitors at MDC's Ladies Night Out



Photos above and below: KC Urban Impact Center day campers visit MRBO in Arrow Rock



Tessa and the education program volunteer group at KC Urban Impact Center







# Little Nestlings Corner

## Outdoor Cats: Scary for Birds and Cats

Tammy Gillespie, MRBO Volunteer and Board Member

Created by Luis Prado from Noun Project

### Spooky fact

Cats kill about 2.6 billion birds each year in the U.S. and Canada. Aside from habitat loss, this is the #1 human-caused reason for the decline of birds.

### Hunt to kill

Cats are natural predators and have an instinct to hunt and kill birds - even when well fed by their owners.

### Street cats

Unowned (feral) cats are responsible for more than two-thirds of birds killed by cats in North America.

### Simple steps to help cats and birds live longer

If you want your cat to go outside, make an outdoor "catio" or train your cat to safely walk on a leash.

### Drawing directions:

Draw 15 birthday cake candles for the indoor cat and three candles for the outdoor cat. That's how many years experts say each type of cat will live on average.

#### Indoor cat



Created by Izzul Firry from Noun Project

#### Outdoor cat



Created by Izzul Firry from Noun Project



Cake created by Hello Supay

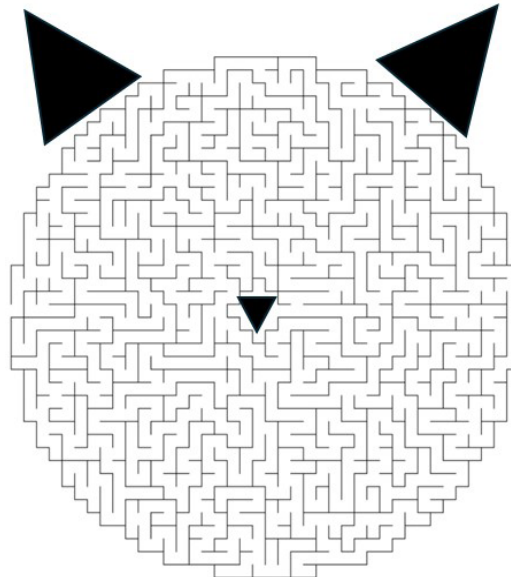


## Scaredy Cat Maze

### Directions

Enter the maze and follow the trail until you reach the cat's nose in the middle of the maze. See page 11 for answer.

You can also draw eyes, a mouth and whiskers for the cat.



### Did you know

Cats who go or live outdoors have a shorter life. This is because they may encounter diseases, vehicles, other animal predators, and even mean people who are cruel to animals.

Maze answer on page 11



# Bird-friendly Communities Program Updates

As readers of the Rectrix are probably aware, bird populations in North America are experiencing significant declines due to human-caused factors. Since the 1970s, North America has lost about 30% of its native bird population, which is about 3 billion birds. As urbanization and agricultural intensification continue to increase and expand, bird populations continue to decline at a rapid rate. Habitat loss is one of the biggest drivers, but there are other threats that impact populations such as window collisions, light pollution, plastic pollution, cats, and other contributing factors. The Missouri Bird-friendly Communities Program is striving to address these varying threats.

The Missouri Bird-friendly Communities Program is a collaborative initiative led by MRBO along with various partners including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Missouri Department of Conservation, and St. Louis Audubon. We aim to assist municipalities in making community-wide changes to reduce threats to bird populations. One way to expedite conservation changes is to engage in a bird-friendly designation program, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Urban Bird Treaty Program (UBT) and the American Bird Conservancy's Bird City Network.

To navigate through these processes, one of Kaylee Woelfel's roles as the Bird-friendly Communities Coordinator is to bring together local partners and communities to establish both UBT cities and Bird City communities statewide. She aims to establish these partners and communities and work with municipalities to earn the designation status of these programs. UBT and Bird City programs are designations that are both attained by urban centers and smaller municipalities by meeting guidelines that benefit birds in four main categories.

1. Habitat
2. Addressing Threats
3. Engagement
4. Sustainability

## Program Overview

### Urban Bird Treaty:

- Has three main goals:
  1. Conserve habitat
  2. Reduce urban hazards to birds
  3. Engage communities in bird conservation through, science, education, and recreation
- For cities with population size of at least 100,000.
- Requires a core group of at least three partner organizations with city government support. Also required is a letter of intention with a 3-5 year implementation plan that will focus on program goals/actions.

### Bird City Network:

- Sister program to UBT
- For communities of any size, no population requirement
- Requires Bird City Program team to fill out and submit application and intent form outlining community actions for birds and other wildlife.

Kaylee is very excited to work with each community interested in reaching designation status, to walk them through the process and choose actions that are feasible but also impactful and beneficial to our bird populations. She will also be involved with the education and outreach aspects of other programs, such as Lights Out Heartland, BirdSafe KC, and BirdSafe STL, that address local threats to birds.



Kaylee and Isabelle at the Rolla Fall Festival



Bird-friendly Communities Steering Committee meeting



Kaylee and Cam at the first-ever Coopers Landing Conservation Expo



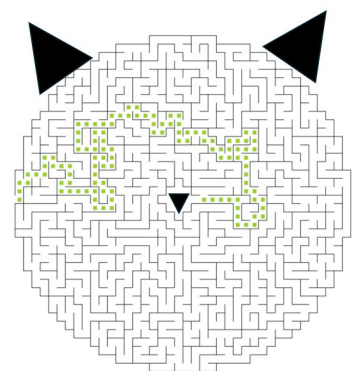
# Recent Education Events

MRBO staff members have partnered on or independently delivered a total of 138 education events since the beginning of 2024. Below are photos from a few summer events.

From left, column 1: presentation on plastic at the CFM Affiliates Summit; Ozark Prairie Master Gardeners Field Day; Ethan and Dana prepare to give a native plant presentation; Ethan presenting on the book *Migrations* at Daniel Boone Regional Library's Ashland branch. Column 2: KC student fishing in Arrow Rock; learning about the magnitude of various threats to birds at Prairie State Park Jubilee ; KC day campers at the Big Spring. Column 3: Dark Sky event at Arrow Rock State Historic Site; plastic brand audit in St. Charles; KC students at Big Soldier Lake.



From page 9 – Scaredy Cat Maze (Answer Sheet)





# Advocacy

To contribute to conservation by advocating for sound, science-based conservation policy that benefits birds, other wildlife and environmental quality.

## News from the Federal Level

### Migratory Bird Treaty Act petition

Conservation is often an uphill battle, but the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), enacted in 1918, remains one of the cornerstone achievements in the fight to protect avian species in the U.S. The MBTA was a response to the rampant, unregulated killing of birds—driven largely by the fashion industry, which prized feathers for hats. The Act made it illegal to hunt, capture, or kill migratory birds, their eggs, or nests without a permit. Its passage was an international collaboration, starting with a treaty between the U.S. and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada) and later expanding to include treaties with Mexico, Japan, and Russia.

PETITION FOR RULEMAKING TO ALLOW PERMITS AUTHORIZING THE FORESEEABLE KILLING OF MIGRATORY BIRDS IN BUILDING COLLISIONS



Over the decades, the MBTA has protected hundreds of species, helping populations recover from significant threats. However, like many environmental laws, it has faced challenges—both legal and political. One of the most notable battles emerged recently when the Trump administration rolled back protections by interpreting the MBTA to exclude incidental takes, or unintended bird deaths caused by industrial activities. This interpretation was particularly contentious, as it shielded industries like oil, wind energy, and construction from accountability for bird deaths. In 2021, after extensive litigation and public outcry, the Biden administration reinstated the broader interpretation of the Act. Yet, there remain ongoing gaps in enforcement.

The Center for Biological Diversity recently filed a petition to address one of the most pressing issues for bird conservation today—collisions with buildings. According to the petition, U.S. buildings kill over 1 billion birds annually, many of which are already in population decline. These collisions are a violation of the MBTA, yet no formal enforcement or permitting process exists to hold building owners accountable for preventable bird deaths.

The petition calls on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish a rulemaking process that would require commercial building owners to obtain permits for foreseeable bird deaths due to collisions. The proposal also demands that these permits include mandatory measures to reduce the risk of bird collisions, such as adopting bird-safe building designs and window treatments.

Despite a 2021 Director's Order acknowledging that incidental take violations include building collisions, enforcement remains nonexistent. The petition argues that without a formalized process, bird populations will continue to suffer, and the MBTA's potential to protect against modern threats will remain underutilized.

If the petition is successful, it could mark a significant step forward in addressing one of the most pervasive—and preventable—causes of bird deaths in the U.S.

### Supreme Court's Chevron doctrine decision

You may already be acquainted with several recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings, including the well-known *Sackett v. EPA*, which has been widely discussed within the environmental community. We encourage readers to also familiarize themselves with the *Chevron Doctrine* decision, a case with significant and far-reaching implications that may pose challenges to science-based environmental policy. Below, we present a summary of the decision, kindly provided by Anya Fetcher, Federal Policy Advocate at the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Earlier this summer, the U.S. Supreme Court issued rulings on two related cases that are expected to seriously undermine the power of federal agencies to protect clean water, healthy air, and wildlife. The cases challenged what is known as the "Chevron doctrine," a pillar of the U.S. legal system for 40 years, which holds that courts should defer to experts in Executive Branch agencies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) when they reasonably interpret ambiguous instructions from Congress.

The Supreme Court's decisions will affect how federal courts consider the implementation of foundational environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Endangered Species Act, by federal agencies through regulations, guidance, and procedures. These bedrock environmental laws have been enormously successful at cleaning up our air and water and protecting threatened species, in part because of the deference provided by the Chevron doctrine. That's why polluting industries sought to dismantle it by bringing these cases to the Supreme Court.

Since its establishment in 1984, the Chevron doctrine has played a crucial role in empowering federal agencies like the EPA to interpret statutory provisions when enacting regulations. Under this doctrine, courts traditionally deferred to an agency's interpretation of a statute as long as it was reasonable and the statute was ambiguous. This allowed agencies to apply their scientific expertise to complex and evolving challenges.

The Supreme Court's recent ruling could change this landscape dramatically. With Chevron curtailed, the EPA and other federal agencies may face additional hurdles in implementing new regulations, particularly where Congress has not directly addressed the issue in question. We are likely to see more frequent legal challenges of environmental regulations by corporations and polluters, potentially wasting taxpayer dollars and causing delays in the implementation of important measures such as pollution controls and smarter land use regulations. This could slow down community-based initiatives aimed at protecting unique ecosystems, such as forests, lakes, and coastal areas.

It's also important to recognize that this extreme decision by the majority of justices on the Supreme Court will go well beyond the environment, impacting many other regulations that impact the health and safety of the American people in areas like aircraft safety, food safety, workplace safety, and consumer protections against fraud.

Originally published by the Natural Resources Council of Maine at <https://www.nrcm.org/blog/supreme-court-ruling-chevron-doctrine/>



# BirdSafeKC Project Update



This year, between the spring and fall migration survey seasons, MRBO staffers Tessa Poolman and Kaylee Woelfel transitioned to full-time BirdSafeKC Coordinators. With Tessa based permanently in Kansas City and Kaylee engaged in bird-friendly community work, it was a natural fit for them to lead BirdSafeKC. Both are eager to bring fresh perspectives and drive the project forward.

In late June, Tessa, along with MRBO Operations Assistant Marlee Malmborg, attended the first regional Bird Collisions Workshop at the Field Museum in Chicago. Kaylee participated virtually from Missouri. The workshop covered various aspects of bird collision work, including glass retrofitting, dark sky initiatives, data collection methods, and building ordinance conception. The workshop also featured mini-presentations from several bird collision monitoring projects across the U.S., including BirdSafeKC. The opportunity to engage with

others who share the same passion was incredibly inspiring, and Tessa and Kaylee returned with many new ideas to advance BirdSafeKC.

A new development for BirdSafeKC is the launch of its Instagram page. This addition to social media will help broaden the project's reach and raise awareness about bird collisions, particularly in Kansas City. The Instagram page will provide project updates, offer tips for making homes and businesses bird-friendly, and highlight efforts to address window collisions in KC.

One of Tessa and Kaylee's major goals is to expand the BirdSafeKC volunteer base. A larger volunteer force will enable the collection of more data on bird-window collisions in Kansas City. These data are crucial for understanding the impact of various buildings and structures on local bird populations and for collaborating with the City of Kansas City and building owners to make KC safer for birds.

In this new phase for BirdSafeKC, we aim to grow our volunteer network, reach new audiences in Kansas City, and work with more building owners and managers to improve bird safety.



birdsafekc Following Message

1 post 7 followers 21 following

**BirdSafeKC**  
BirdSafeKC is a volunteer-driven project that aims to reduce bird collisions with windows throughout the KC metro area.  
© birdsafekc.org



# Meet the Plastic Pollution Advocacy Outreach Coordinator with MRBO's partner Stream Teams United!



**Emily Young**

Emily is a Pennsylvania native who attended Juniata College in South Central Pennsylvania and received a degree in Environmental Chemistry in 2022. During her time at Juniata, she completed an immersive learning semester focused on Aquatic Ecology at the Raystown Field Station, where she explored and strengthened her life-long passion for the outdoors and all things streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Using the skills and tools she acquired during this intense, hands-on semester, she completed an undergraduate thesis investigating total phosphorus sequestration in Raystown Lake, a US Army Corps of Engineers reservoir located in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Following graduation, Emily began working as a Watershed Specialist at the Franklin County Conservation District in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where she coordinated watershed restoration projects in the county and organized several conservation education programs and events for children and adults. In this role, Emily also worked closely with local, state, and federal partners and

stakeholders to implement Franklin County's Chesapeake Bay Countywide Action Plan. Emily served in this role for just over two years before moving to Waynesville, Missouri with her husband in June 2024.

Two months later, she eagerly joined Stream Teams United as an Advocacy Outreach Coordinator with a focus on a project aimed to reduce plastic pollution in the waterways of the Great Rivers State. When she's not engaging in watershed conservation work, Emily enjoys spending her time traveling and exploring with her husband and their dog, hiking, reading, and most recently, learning the ins and outs of sourdough baking. She is excited to join the Stream Team family and to be part of positive change in watershed conservation in Missouri.



*The 2024-2027 Missouri Plastic Team! Mary and Emily of Stream Teams United and Cam and Dana of MRBO*

## Activate Our State!

Missouri's legislative session is coming up quickly! Beginning January 8th, 2025, elected officials in Jefferson City will be working on laws that affect YOUR community and environment. Get involved and stay abreast of issues via updates from the following MRBO partners. You can sign up to receive legislative updates by email as well as peruse bill trackers on these organizations' websites.

- Conservation Federation of Missouri Legislative Action Center: [confedmo.org/LAC](http://confedmo.org/LAC)
- Missouri Coalition for the Environment: [moenvironment.org](http://moenvironment.org)
- Missouri Stream Teams United: [streamteamsunited.org](http://streamteamsunited.org)
- Missouri Rural Crisis Center: [morural.org](http://morural.org)





# Community News

## Upcoming Events

### Missouri Young Birders Club Fall Event

October 5<sup>th</sup>, 9 am to 12 pm

Location: Waterfall Park 4501 S Bass Pro Drive, Independence, MO

Join MRBO and the Missouri Birding Society (MBS) for a guided bird walk around the lake at Waterfall Park in the morning and a pizza lunch, courtesy of the MBS, in the afternoon!



### Arrow Rock Heritage Festival

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 10 am – 5 pm and October 13<sup>th</sup>, 10 am to 4 pm

Location: Arrow Rock, MO

It's time for the 56th Annual Arrow Rock Heritage Festival! This is one of Missouri's oldest and most popular heritage festivals, featuring traditional and modern artistic hand-crafted items, historic reenactments, living history presenters, musical entertainment, and food vendors galore. Admission is FREE! Come visit us at MRBO's BirdHouse, 406 Main Street.

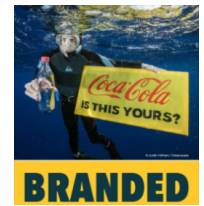


### Plastic Brand Audit

October 19<sup>th</sup> 1 pm – 4 pm

Location: The New Haven Boat Ramp, 63068, New Haven, MO

Join MRBO at our last 2024 audit as we collect data on the plastic trash Missouri River Relief pulls out of the river. Contribute to a global dataset that helps us hold polluters to account! Visit <https://bit.ly/NewHavenAudit> to sign up.



### HOWLoween

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 5 pm to 8 pm. Walk in any time.

Location: Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center, 4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, MO

HOWLoween is almost here and we want you to join the fun! The Discovery Center and KCPD along with several neighborhood partners will provide nighttime fun for all ages.

Take a hike on the Wild Side Walk to get up close with some of Missouri's nocturnal wildlife. Kids will have a howling good time exploring nature stations like Track or Treat, The Bone Yard, Buggy Bistro, Operation Wildlife and much more. It will be a fun, free and unforgettable event for the entire family.



### Invasive Species Volunteer Workdays

October 19th from 10 am to 2 pm

November 2nd from 1 pm. to 5 pm

Location: Arrow Rock State Historic Site Visitor Center, 39521 Visitor Center Drive, Arrow Rock, MO

Hosted by Missouri Conservation Corps (MCC), MRBO, Columbia Chapter of the DAR, and Arrow Rock State Historic Site. Join us for two volunteer workdays to improve natural habitats in Arrow Rock by removing invasive privet on the trails. Recommended for ages 10 and up. MRBO and MCC will host a scavenger hunt for children.

A parent or guardian must accompany kids participating. For more information contact: [stephenbybee@gmail.com](mailto:stephenbybee@gmail.com)



### DarkSky Missouri Festival

October 25th -26th

Location: Big Spring, Van Buren, MO

The DarkSky Festival is an opportunity for people to enjoy and celebrate unpolluted skies and learn about what light pollution costs us in our daily lives. There will be DarkSky viewing on Friday and Saturday nights, along with programs, presentations, and booths on Saturday during daylight hours. Visit <https://darksourcemissouri.org> to learn more.



### Your Voice, Your Environment: The Power of Informed Voting for Conservation

October 28<sup>th</sup> 6:30 pm on Zoom

Join MRBO as we explore the vital connection between environmental conservation and the democratic process. We will discuss voting to shape environmental policies, key election dates to keep in mind, and real-world examples of environmental policies at the local, state, and federal levels that highlight the power of your vote. This dialogue is designed for everyone with a passion for protecting our natural world.

Visit <https://bit.ly/ConservationVoting> to register.



**Project FeederWatch Kick Off**

November 16th 10:00 am – 11:00 am (Walk-in, ages 7+)

Location: Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center, 4750 Troost Avenue, Kansas City, MO

Curious about getting involved in the expanding field of community science and seeking opportunities to participate? Join MRBO to kick off Project FeederWatch! Whether you're a seasoned birder or just starting out, FeederWatch offers a unique opportunity to connect with nature and contribute to conservation efforts. Discover how to combine technology with nature to record wildlife encounters and gain connections to scientists. This event is free; smartphones or tablets are recommended.



**Gateway Outdoor Expo and Summit**

November 22nd - 24th

Location: St. Charles Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Plaza, St. Charles, MO 63303

Walk in for free and walk out with new gear and information on the top outdoor programs, services, and resources in the Midwest. Browse more than 200 exhibit booths, learn about events and adventures, and try your hand at interactive demos! You'll find the MRBO crew and much more at the 2024 Gateway Outdoor Expo + Summit. Visit <https://gatewayoutdoorexpo.com> to learn more.



# Thank you for your support!

The following individuals and organizations and several anonymous donors have provided support since the publication of the summer newsletter. We give thanks to them and to all who have supported the Missouri River Bird Observatory! YOU make our work possible. *Please note that donations received after September 30th, 2024 - the date this issue went to print - will be acknowledged in the next issue of the Rectrix.*

- |                                |                            |                              |                       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Dave and Janice Erickson       | Lee and Jacob Walter       | Nicole LaPlante              | Thomas Jones          |
| Donna and John Huston          | Jim and Cindy Brengarth    | Pat and Charlie Cooper       | Tom and Margaret Hall |
| Ginny Wallace                  | Julie Fisher               | Sarah and Kip Kendrick       | Tracy Lewandowski     |
| Greater Ozarks Audubon Society | Marge Lumpe                | Sarah Howard                 | Valerie Vreeland      |
| Jane Smith and Ryan Burson     | Mark Belwood               | Stacie Laff                  | Wayne Morton          |
| Joshua Tripp                   | Mark Zurbrick              | Steve Schnarr and Mel Cheney |                       |
| Kathy Cary                     | Meredith and Joe Donaldson | Steven Johnson               |                       |
| Kathy Digges                   | Myra Christopher           | Theresa Cline                |                       |



**A recent note from a long-time MRBO donor**

What was it that prompted my donation? If I was only allowed a one-word answer, I would say "diversity". There are many worthy conservation/environmental organizations and efforts, but many are focused on a fairly narrow mission.

Is the Missouri River Bird Observatory just focused on bird watchers on a single river? No! Reading the Rectrix reinforced what I already know. The MRBO staff are everywhere, doing everything, all the time. Opening the magazine, I read about grassland surveys, state park inventories, species-specific science, broad-based conservation education, cooperation with other agencies and organizations, standing up to anti-conservation policy in Jeff City, recycling, astronomy, and deserved recognition from peers. Keep up the good work!

## Scenes from MRBO Supporters Parties



Columbia



Marshall



Kansas City





P. O. Box 16  
Arrow Rock, Missouri  
65320

NONPROFIT  
MARKETING MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PI 17  
MARSHALL MO  
65340



Red-shouldered Hawk by Betsy Garrett