



Welcome to *The Flicker*,
MRBO's e-newsletter
2025 | Volume 6, Issue 10

Conservation through Science, Education, and Advocacy

Double Your Impact for Kestrels!

We're excited to share a special opportunity for our supporters! Susan Lordi Marker, who purchased the very first nest box for MRBO's American Kestrel Nest Box Project and celebrated its first successful clutch, is generously matching all donations up to \$10,000.

Your contribution will directly support the placement and monitoring of nest boxes across Missouri, providing safe homes for kestrels and helping these charismatic falcons successfully raise their young. Every dollar helps with nest box materials, maintenance, and protection from predators and starlings.



Why it matters: Kestrels are facing habitat loss and limited natural nesting sites. By giving today, you're ensuring more young kestrels can fledge safely—and your donation will go twice as far!

[□ Donate now to double your impact and support kestrel conservation!](#)

Bird-friendly Tip of the Month: Spooky Outdoor Cats

WHAT'S SPOOKIER THAN HALLOWEEN?

OUTDOOR CATS

THE CAT'S MEOW

Beside habitat loss, outdoor cats are the leading cause of bird declines.

Outdoor cats kill about 2.4 billion birds per year!

BENEFITS OF KEEPING YOUR CAT INDOORS

- Increases life expectancy
- Reduces risk of vehicle collisions
- Decreases risk of disease/parasites
- Decreases risk for injury

Indoor cats can live on average between 10-15 years.

Meanwhile, outdoor cats typically reach 2-5 years.

This includes both feral and domestic cats!

PURR-FECT SOLUTIONS

- 🐾 Keep your cat indoors
- 🐾 Use a leash or harness
- 🐾 Make a catio
- 🐾 Add indoor enrichment
- 🐾 Avoid feeding outdoor cats
- 🐾 Educate and raise awareness



📅 Upcoming Events 📅

Duckfest

Friday, October 3rd from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Saturday, October 4th from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Knights of Columbus, 1270 Church Rd, St. Paul, MO 63366

The Missouri River Bird Observatory is thrilled to participate in Duckfest 2025, a premier outdoor festival celebrating waterfowl hunting and conservation. Join us for a weekend filled with family-



Oct. 3rd & 4th 2025

friendly activities and community spirit.

Duckfest features live music, a duck gumbo cook-off, a sanctioned duck calling contest, raffles, and a variety of food and drink options. Visit our booth to learn about bird conservation, participate in hands-on activities, and discover how you can make a difference. We look forward to seeing you there!

Arrow Rock's Heritage Festival
Saturday, October 11th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
and Sunday, October 12th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Downtown Arrow Rock, Missouri

It's time for the 57th Annual Arrow Rock Heritage Festival. This is one of Missouri's oldest and most popular heritage festivals. It features traditional and modern artistic hand-crafted items, historic reenactments, living history presenters, musical entertainment, and food vendors galore. Stop by the MRBO tent to see us and show your support! Make sure you shop the unique stores of this historic village, as well. Admission is FREE!

2025
ARROW ROCK
HERITAGE
FESTIVAL



Missouri Young Birders Club Monthly Meeting
Monday, October 20th from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.



Mark your calendars and join us this month for a special dive into Missouri's nocturnal animals!

Discover which creatures come alive after dark, from stealthy hunters to nighttime singers. Learn fascinating facts about how these animals thrive under the stars and explore the mysteries of the nighttime world.

Bring your curiosity and get ready for an evening full of wonder—you won't want to miss it!

By becoming a member of MYBC, you'll be part of a community that's passionate about protecting wildlife and fostering a deeper connection with nature. Don't miss out—visit our [website](#) to learn more and become a member today!

DarkSky Missouri Festival
Friday, October 17th and Saturday, October 18th
Big Spring, Van Buren, Missouri

Save the Date!

Show me the Stars



Image Credit: Ben Caruthers

DarkSky Missouri Festival
Big Spring - Van Buren, Mo

October 17-18, 2025

darksourcemissouri.org



MRBO's Upcoming Monthly Webinars
Every third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom



MRBO 2025 monthly webinars

Third Monday of the month @ 6:30 pm Central time on Zoom

Oct 20th

The Facts About Cats and Native Wildlife

with Dr. Jen Riley

<https://bit.ly/catsOctober2025>



Nov 17th

From Big Rivers to Prairies: Audubon's Conservation Work in Missouri

with Tara Hohman

<https://bit.ly/AudubonNov2025>



Dec 15th

Farm Bill 101: Sowing the Seeds for Conservation

with Bill White

<https://bit.ly/FarmBillDec2025>



October
Registration

November
Registration

December
Registration

Fall Plastic Brand Audit
Saturday, October 25th from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
[Bonnots Mill River Access](#), Bonnots Mill, MO 65016

Gathering Data for the Annual Global Report

Since 2018, thousands of Break Free From Plastic members all over the world have organized hundreds of brand audits every year to gather data and call out the world's top polluters, resulting in our annual global "BRANDED" reports. Thanks to the hard work of our brand audit leaders that forms the basis of these reports, we have collectively created some exciting impacts! Major international news outlets have written about our report amplifying the call for holding corporate polluters accountable and influencing the dominant plastics narrative.

BFFP members have used brand audit data to ban plastics, create zero waste communities and plastic-free schools, file lawsuits against top polluting companies, and advocate for policy change. We've even seen top polluting companies announce new sustainability commitments! This is a big step in the right direction, but these commitments are still not ambitious enough, so our work with brand audits continues.



The Missouri River Bird Observatory is conducting a Plastic Brand Audits this fall. We will be auditing plastic trash that our friends from Missouri River Relief pull out of the river that morning.

A Brand Audit consists of tallying the corporate brands found on the plastic trash collected by volunteer groups around the world. These audits allow us to determine which corporations' single-use plastic packaging is contributing the most to the global plastic pollution crisis...and ultimately, to call them out on it. We will be following Break Free From Plastic's audit methodology and submitting the data to their global brand report.

Sign up for the fall brand audit [here](#)!

Show-Me Less Plastic Workshop
Saturday, November 1st from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Earth's Classroom, 3649 Pump Station Rd, Rosebud, MO 63091



"SHOW-ME LESS PLASTIC" COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

*Join the Missouri River Bird Observatory,
Stream Teams United, and Earth's Classroom
for a hands-on workshop designed to empower you
with the knowledge and skills to join the effort
to reduce plastic use and pollution in Missouri.*



NOVEMBER 1, 2025

At Earth's Classroom

11:00 AM - 2:30 PM
3649 Pump Station Rd
Rosebud, MO 63091

LUNCH IS INCLUDED

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN :

- The State of the Plastic Crisis
- Community Outreach Strategies
- Effective Messaging Through Media
- Empowering Grassroots Action

**REGISTRATION
IS FREE!**



THIS PROJECT
IS SUPPORTED BY:



ENROLL NOW [HERE](#)
OR SCAN THE QR CODE

For more information, contact us at: dana.ripper@mrbo.org



<https://bit.ly/PlasticWorkshopRosebud>

MRBO's 2025 American Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring Update

This year, MRBO continued its efforts to support American Kestrels through our nest box monitoring project. With the help of landowners and volunteers, we monitored 26 nest boxes across 20 properties, placed in a variety of settings—poles, barns, sheds, trees, snags, and rooftops—ranging from seven to 15 feet high. This diversity helps us understand how kestrels adapt to different landscapes and



nesting opportunities.

Of the 26 boxes, eight were active kestrel nests, and seven successfully fledged a total of 27 young birds. We also recorded two active Eastern Bluebird nests, showing that these boxes benefit other cavity-nesting species as well. In total, 18 female and nine male kestrels were documented using the boxes during the season.

The breeding season spanned spring and summer. The first egg was laid on March 29th, with the most activity in April and May. Earlier clutches were larger and more productive, while two unusually late nests, with eggs laid as late as June 24th, fledged in August during peak summer heat—showing how kestrels cope with challenging conditions.

European Starlings continued to be a threat, trying to take over several boxes. The variety of box locations helps us learn how different placements handle weather, predators, and competition, while providing safe options for kestrels and other cavity-nesting birds.

This season once again highlighted the importance of collaboration. Thanks to our dedicated landowners and community partners, each nest box contributes to kestrel conservation and our understanding of their breeding success. We look forward to building on these lessons in 2026!

[□ Donate now to double your impact and support kestrel conservation!](#)

It's Time to Slow Down Fast Fashion!

On September 20th, millions of people around the world joined together for World Cleanup Day—a global effort to reduce pollution by picking up trash in communities everywhere. This year, organizers drew attention to a growing and often overlooked source of pollution: textiles.

You may have heard the term fast fashion. It describes the rapid turnover of inexpensive, mass-produced clothing designed to keep pace with changing trends. But while the price tags may be low, the environmental costs are high. Cotton production often requires massive amounts of water and pesticides. Most fast fashion pieces are made with synthetic, fossil fuel-based materials like nylon and polyester that shed microfibers—the most common microplastic in our environment—every time they're washed. Toxic dyes and finishes leach into waterways, and the industry's wasteful model encourages overproduction and overconsumption.

In the United States alone, an estimated 34 billion pounds of textiles are thrown away every year—that's more than 100 pounds per person. Recycling textiles is extremely challenging, particularly when garments are made with mixed materials. Even resale stores, flooded with constant donations, are often unable to resell everything and end up discarding much of it. The result? Vast amounts of fabric piling up in landfills and littering landscapes, where they break down slowly, release microplastics, and harm wildlife.

Events like World Cleanup Day are critical, but the most effective solution is prevention. Each of us can play a role in reducing textile pollution by making more thoughtful choices: buy fewer, higher-quality

pieces; support secondhand and sustainable brands; repair instead of replace; and recycle responsibly when possible.

Together, we can slow down fast fashion—and lighten the environmental load for future generations.

**Buy
fewer clothes**

**Shop
secondhand**

**Look for
unmixed natural
materials and
water-based dyes**



**Organize clothing
repair events for
your community**

**Teach others
to avoid
fast fashion**

**Wash clothes in
cold water
and line dry
when possible**

**Support policies
that hold fast
fashion brands
accountable**

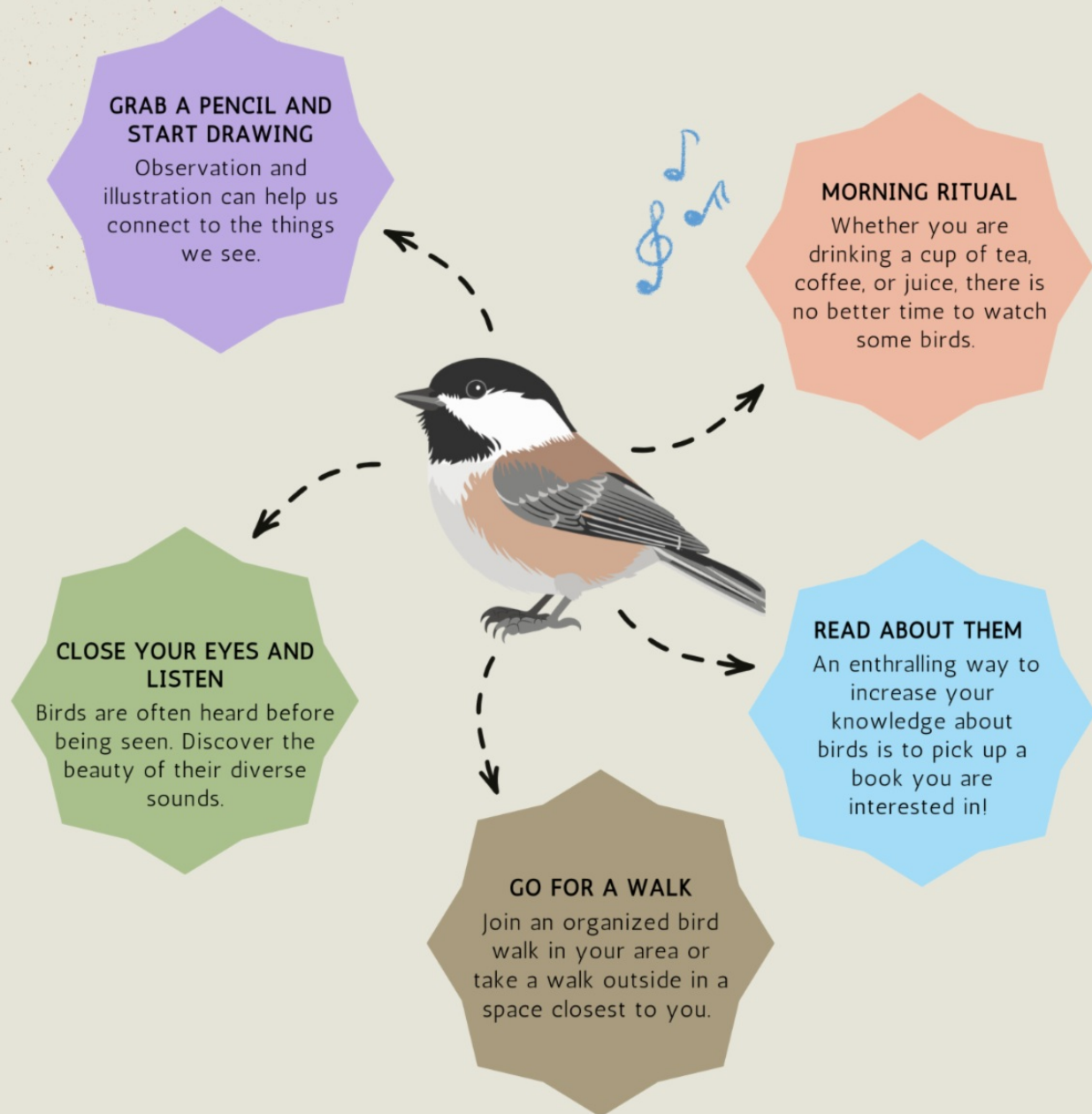
Check out Stream Teams United's plastic e-blast
here!



Our 2025 Fiscal Year Report is
now available to read on our
[website!](#)

5 ways to enjoy birds

FOR THE AVID BIRDWATCHER



Did you know? Any of these ways to enjoy birds have been shown to improve your mood through stress reduction, foster social community, and increase conservation awareness.

October's Bird of the Month: Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*)

October's featured bird is the Northern Saw-whet Owl, the smallest and most nocturnal of Missouri's owls. With spotty brown plumage, a crisp white facial disc, and bright yellow eyes,

these tiny owls are both striking and elusive. Though smaller than an Eastern Screech-Owl and only slightly heavier than a Hairy Woodpecker, the Saw-whet's clear, penetrating "too-too-too" call carries far through the night, often repeated dozens of times in succession.

Northern Saw-whet Owls feed primarily on small mammals, occasionally taking small birds during migration. Courtship is marked by males circling potential mates and presenting prey items before settling beside them. They are secondary cavity nesters, relying on abandoned woodpecker holes—particularly those of Northern Flickers and

Pileated Woodpeckers. Females typically lay four to seven eggs on natural debris at the bottom of these cavities or in nest boxes. Breeding occurs across southern Canada and much of the northern and western United States, with some populations remaining resident while others migrate.



By late October, Northern Saw-whets arrive in Missouri for the winter, lingering through mid-March. While some remain north year-round, every few years they "irrupt," appearing in higher-than-usual numbers farther south. For MRBO, this secretive species holds a special place. From 1950 to 2005, only 34 records of Northern Saw-whet Owls existed in Missouri. MRBO began banding in 2014, capturing fewer than 30 owls from 2014–2015 at sites in Marshall and Arrow Rock. Then in 2016, while banding exclusively at Arrow Rock, MRBO netted 51 owls as part of Project OwlNet, a nationwide effort to better understand Saw-whet migration. These results underscore how much there still is to learn about these tiny nocturnal raptors—and highlight the importance of targeted banding surveys in revealing their hidden movements.

Although considered common and widespread, Saw-whet Owls often evade traditional bird surveys due to their nocturnal and secretive habits. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of around 2 million birds, placing them in the "low concern" category. Still, habitat loss likely contributes to long-term declines, though firm data remain limited.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl reminds us that even familiar, widespread species can harbor mysteries—and that careful monitoring and research are essential to uncovering the hidden stories of our smallest owls.



Photo by: Eric Gofreed

October's Wild Edible - Black Walnuts



If you live near a black walnut tree, you probably know the sound of autumn all too well—the poppoppop under your tires as you pull out of the driveway, or the sudden launch of a walnut from under the lawnmower, threatening the shins of unsuspecting family members. While they may seem like little more than seasonal hazards, these aromatic nuts are actually a delicious, uniquely Missouri harvest waiting to be enjoyed.

Now is the perfect time of year to start gathering fallen walnuts. Begin by collecting the green-hulled nuts beneath the trees. Let them ripen in a bucket until the hulls are blackened and softened—don't be alarmed if you find bugs in the hulls; they rarely make it through to the nut itself. Once softened, remove the hulls and scrub the shells clean with water. (Pro tip: walnut hulls stain, so wear old clothes and gloves!)

From here, the nuts need to be dried. This can be done in a dehydrator or oven set below 180°F for 12–24 hours, or by laying them out in a warm, dry space with good airflow for up to three weeks. You'll know they're ready when the kernel rattles inside the shell.



To crack them open, place the dried nuts in a cloth bag and give them a good hammering—the old-fashioned way. Separate the nut meat from the shells and you'll have the rich, earthy flavor of wild black walnuts ready to enjoy. Keep in mind, foraged black walnuts are stronger in taste than the milder English walnuts you find in stores, so a little goes a long way in baking. For a slightly gentler flavor, try roasting nuts whose husks are removed while still green, though this requires more effort in cleaning.

Walnuts are as much a part of autumn as pumpkin spice and falling leaves. This year, why not give them a place to shine at your table?

Recipe: Black Walnut Pumpkin Bread

Ingredients

- 1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup canned pumpkin purée
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup chopped black walnuts

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.
3. In a large bowl, combine pumpkin purée, oil, sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Mix until smooth.
4. Stir in the dry ingredients until just combined.
5. Fold in the chopped black walnuts.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 55–65 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
7. Cool before slicing. Serve warm with butter for the perfect taste of fall.

This moist, spiced bread balances the earthy richness of black walnuts with pumpkin's sweetness—making it a perfect fall treat to share.



The BirdHouse is closing soon!

We're open just a little while longer! Stop by on Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. through October 12th before we close for the season. We'll reopen in the spring, so don't miss your chance to visit this fall.

At MRBO's headquarters, discover the KnOWLedge Nest



downstairs, featuring an interactive diorama of Missouri's beautiful natural communities. Upstairs, relax in our bird viewing area, browse the scientific library, and enjoy the soothing sights and sounds of our backyard water feature.

Before you go, be sure to stop in our tax-free Gift Shop, stocked with favorites like bird-friendly coffee, feeders, houses, seeds/suet, and field guides. Come explore while you still can—we can't wait to welcome you back in the spring!

Support MRBO by shopping in person at 406 Main St. in charming Arrow Rock, or click the "Shop Our Online Store" button below!

Missouri River Bird Observatory

406 Main Street
Arrow Rock, MO 65320
660-837-3888

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