

The Rectrix

A seasonal newsletter of the Missouri River Bird Observatory

Volume 2 No. 2 - July 2012



rectrix [rek-triks] noun. (pl. -trices) any of the larger feathers in a bird's tail, used for steering in flight.

Letter from the Director



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On the cover ~
A Scarlet Tanager
banded at Van Meter
State Park on May 2nd
2012.

Photo by: Devin Couture

Dear MRBO members and friends,

It's been an incredibly busy and productive few months here at MRBO. We had hoped to get this newsletter out to you in June – but there were so many great opportunities to pursue, and the migration and breeding windows are so short, field work was the order of the hour, every hour!

Marshbird surveys continued throughout April – June, while spring migration monitoring lasted until the end of May, when we immediately phased into the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) project on the prairies. This is the second year of the MAPS program, which we conduct on Grandfather, Paintbrush, and Ionia Ridge Conservation Areas just south of Sedalia, MO. This summer came with the exciting addition of surveys on the Missouri Department of Conservation's Mora and Hi-Lonesome prairies, which represents a unique opportunity to follow up with management evaluation first started in 2006. As all of these prairies undergo restoration and intensive management by the MDC; we at MRBO have the pleasure of assessing bird response to these habitat changes.

Another exciting opportunity arose late May, when we were contacted by Audubon Chicago Region. MRBO was privileged with the chance to conduct bird surveys on private grasslands in Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas throughout the month of June. The goal of Audubon's programs is to increase the marketability of pasture-finished beef by certifying it "Bird-Friendly" – hence the need to determine if the cattle ranches are indeed supporting prairie birds. And the answer to this is "yes!". Many Dickcissels, Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows, Meadowlarks, and Bobolinks were observed on these extensive private properties. The "Audubon Beef" project, as we affectionately call it, has the chance to positively impact hundreds of thousands of acres for grassland birds!! We are so pleased to be a small part of this effort.

There are many people I'd like to thank for entrusting us with all of this important work that has made the last couple of months so fruitful for MRBO. Max Alleger, the MDC's Grassland Bird Coordinator; Justin Pepper of Audubon Chicago; Steve Cooper, the manager of the Hi-Lonesome prairie complex; our assistant Devin Couture, who never complained once about being sent out on a moment's notice to run surveys for many days without break; and, as always, Gene Gardner, MDC Wildlife Diversity Chief, who's unflagging support of MRBO has been instrumental to our success. I would also like to thank Dave and Anita Hartwig, who recently honored us with the largest private donation MRBO has ever received.

I hope everyone enjoys this issue of *The Retrix* and we always welcome your comments and feedback.

Sincerely,



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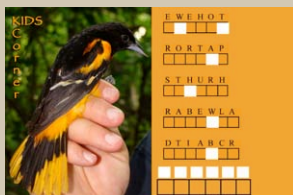
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YELLOW-BELLIED CUCKOO	
Yellow-breasted Chat	
Yellow-shafted Flicker	
Yellow-throated Vireo	
Total	418
Diversity	53
Net Effort (hours)	112
Banded Birds per 100 net hours	37

*On the Back Cover
(MRBO Bird Work Map)*

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In the next issue of The Rectrix...
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A Bobolink sings in a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement area in Saline County. A pleasant sound and sight during marsh bird surveys. Read about the surveys on Page 10.



Species Profile: Black Rail

By Ethan Duke

Our smallest and rarest marsh bird is the Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). Along the east coast, this species is known to be declining or extirpated in all states where enough monitoring has been done to elucidate a trend. Midwestern Black Rail populations have far less documentation. The most comprehensive information on the status of these birds is available at the Eastern Black Rail Conservation & Management Working Group website: <http://www.ccb-wm.org/BlackRail/index.htm> housed at the Center for Conservation Biology. Despite the dire situation of this bird due to human impacts, it has not been federally listed. In short this species needs much further research and immediate action to stem further habitat loss.

Habitat

Since Black Rails are so scarce in the Midwest, they have received little attention. Fine scale habitat preference variables remain unknown. These enigmatic, mouse-like birds skulk through short grasses and bulrush in shallow wetlands. In Arizona, they prefer consistent, shallow water levels (Flores and Eddleman 1995). These shallow wetlands have been largely removed from Missouri due to extensive alteration of watersheds by intensive agricultural practices such as tiling, draining, and aggressive control of the Missouri and other large rivers.

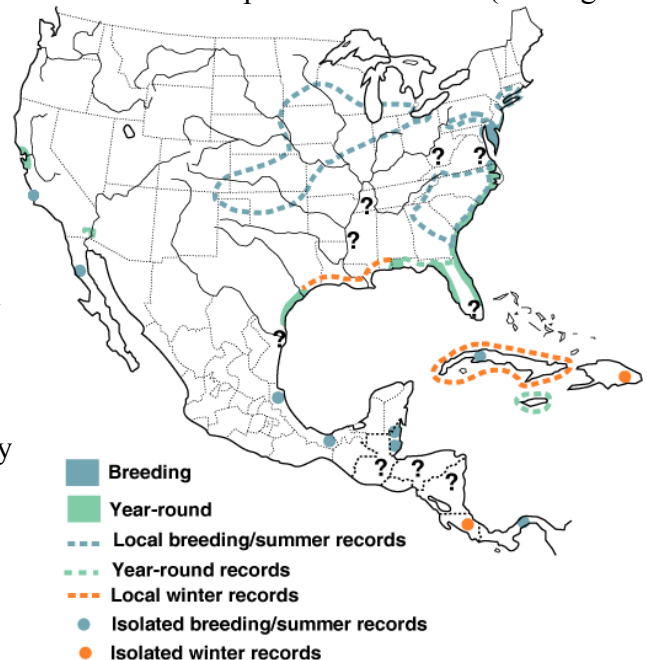
Behavior and Vocalizations

One can picture these Junco-sized birds running along trails beneath the grasses, communicating with one another with the tell-tale “kicky-doo”, “grrr-grrr-grrr”, or soft “churts.” One pair of researchers (Kerlinger and Wiedner 1990) theorized that they may form leks similar to Prairie Chickens. Despite their holding to deep cover, I’ve known them to be quite aggressive to the broadcast of vocalizations. Once, while attending marshbird survey training in Arizona, I had a Black Rail approach within a few feet of a speaker that played a Black Rail vocalization. He responded vehemently with “kicky-doo”... “kicky-doo.” We then switched to play a Virginia Rail “tick-it.” The Black Rail was not amused and subsequently approached the speaker to retort, “GRRR-GRRR-GRRR.”

During a literature review, I found varying descriptions on patterns of vocalization. Some sources claim that they vocalize solely in the middle of the night, while others, such as observers in north-central Missouri, heard them only at mid-day.

Distribution

Range maps of this non-abundant species are difficult to interpret -for instance, this map (right) from the Birds of North America account. Too few sightings make it difficult to provide certain range estimates. Often termed “rare” and “local”, Black Rails are among the most difficult to pin down species in the world. Reviewing ebird.org sightings (see im-



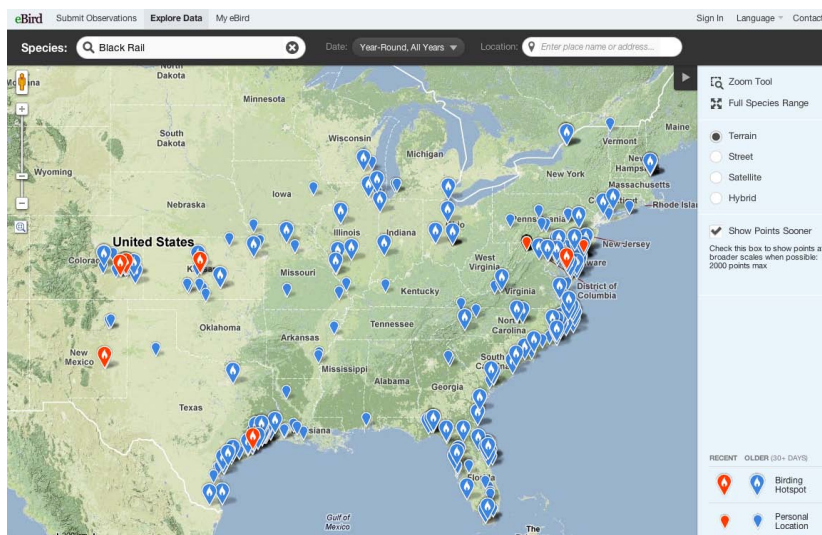
Range map used with permission from The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology; Retrieved from The Birds of North America Online database: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/> and ebird.org

age), which include some Missouri Rare Bird Records (http://www.showme-birds.com/index_files/BlackRailRecords.htm), shows just how few have been seen in the state in the past few decades.

In summary, we need to learn more about interior Black Rails and do more to restore the rare wetlands we have devastated in the last century. During MRBO marsh bird surveys we searched Missouri's marshes extensively for Black Rails and may have one possible sighting. At the time of this writing there are two autonomous recording units (ARUs) deployed in attempts to verify this.

Literature Cited

- Flores, R. E. and W. R. Eddleman.
1995. California Black Rail use of habitat in southwestern Arizona. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 59.
Kerlinger, P. and D. S. Wiedner. 1990. Vocal behavior and habitat use of Black Rails in south Jersey. *Records of New Jersey Birds* 16:58-62.



An ebird map used with permission from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This map depicts know ocurrence locations of Black Rails.

What Bird is This?

KIDS
C
o
r
n
e
r

Puzzle by: Diane Benedetti

E W E H O T

R O R T A P

S T H U R H

R A B E W L A

D T I A B C R

#1

Unscramble these letters to make five common bird names.

#2

Then, take the letters in the white boxes and unscramble them to identify the bird in the photograph!



Kids stop at the MRBO banding booth to learn about data collection during migration as they view birds being banded. MRBO housed just one of many stations at the Wings Over Weston event held at Weston Bend State Park each year.

Spring Migration 2012

Spring 2012 was a season of migration surprises. It was our fourth spring of operation at Grand Pass Conservation Area and our second season (first spring) at Van Meter State Park. Some of the highlights from this spring included:

- educational programs with Marshall 5th-graders at Van Meter State Park, where students rotated through two MRBO stations and two stations led by State Parks interpreters Mike Dickey, Lee Wilbeck, and Eric Fuemmeler (thanks guys!),
- a second great year at the Wings Over Weston festival during International Migratory Bird Day, and
- the opportunity to work with several new interns from Missouri and elsewhere.

As far as the “hard data” are concerned, two major factors played in to the results you’ll see on the following pages. One was the state of vegetation at the Grand Pass site. The Missouri River flooded out the migration monitoring project late last May, and the floodwaters remained on the site until mid-September, resulting in



no new growth and extensive decay of the existing understory. When we arrived back at the site in early April, there was little to no cover at ground level, and an immediately-apparent dearth of our common birds – Northern Cardinals, and later, Brown Thrashers and Wood Thrushes, that are normally abundant in the understory layers.

Concurrently, we initiated a new phase of our migration monitoring program, which involves comparing two or more sites to assess bird use of different habitats. Our fall site on the edge of the Van Meter State Park marsh was chosen as the pilot location for the first comparison season. This site has a diverse, thick understory of almost all native vegetation interspersed with thickets and widely-spaced trees. The productivity of this site in Fall 2011 encouraged us to revisit operations there this spring.

In order to adequately compare two or more sites, we must look not only at basic bird-capture rates, but also overall species diversity and the number of nets used and how often they were run. Bird observatories regularly use the measure “net hours” to assess how much effort was put into bird captures, and “birds per 100 net hours” to fairly compare sites that may have experienced different operating times. Net hours are calculated by multiplying the number of nets by the number of hours each day they were open – for example, at Grand Pass, we have 20 nets open for five hours each morning, totaling 100 net hours per day.

The operation of two sites this spring required a division of time between locations, as MRBO operates with a relatively small staff. This resulted in a lower net-effort at the Grand Pass site than in 2010 or 2011, but this difference in effort in no way accounts for the lower numbers of new captures recorded there this spring (please see the following tables). In contrast, we sampled Van Meter with approximately 1/4 of the net-effort of Grand Pass, and captured about 4/5 the number of birds. This lends support to our developing hypotheses about the importance of vegetation structure to migrants and the possibility that an abundance of native vegetation may provide higher insect biomass and fruit and seed availability, thus attracting more migrants. Grand Pass remained higher in terms of overall diversity, with 57 species represented over Van Meter’s 52.

We saw a marked, unexpected increase in the number of Tennessee Warblers captured this year, but a decrease in numbers for most other species at Grand Pass compared to previous years. Since this is our first spring at Van Meter, we’ll have to wait until we’ve collected several years worth of data there to assess annual differences!

This season provides an excellent example of the importance of operating monitoring programs on a long-term basis. The flooding of 2011 had unusual impacts on the Grand Pass site’s vegetation; a comparison of the two sites from only the spring of 2012 would have suggested that Van Meter is far more suitable for migrants; however, we know from previous years that Grand Pass provides stopover habitat for a high number and diversity of migrating songbirds. Whether or not the trend of high captures at Van Meter continues in the future remains to be seen. We will also be sampling at other locations to investigate the effects of a variety of habitats and vegetation types on migrant use of areas. This fall, migration will be tracked at Van Meter, a new Grand Pass site, and at least one site on private property. Stay tuned!

Bueker Middle School 5th graders enjoy a day of migration at Van Meter State Park. The day was full of fun educational activities.





Blackpoll Warbler



Black-throated Green Warbler



Yellow-throated Vireo



Sharp-shinned Hawk

Spring Migration Results

Species	2009 GPCA	2010 GPCA	2011 GPCA	2012 GPCA	2012 VMSP
Acadian Flycatcher		2	5		1
Alder Flycatcher		2			
American Goldfinch		4	21	4	1
American Redstart		27	19	5	14
American Robin	1	4	2	1	2
Baltimore Oriole	3	16	17	5	3
Bell's Vireo	1				
Black-and-White Warbler	3	21	16	8	4
Black-billed Cuckoo		1			
Black-capped Chickadee	3	8	2	1	4
Black-throated Green Warbler		1		1	
Blackpoll Warbler		2		1	2
Blue Jay	1	4	10	4	
Blue-grey Gnatcatcher			2		1
Blue-headed Vireo		6	2		
Blue-winged Warbler			1		
Brown Creeper	1				
Brown Thrasher	7	9	15	5	4
Brown-headed Cowbird	5	3	10	5	2
Canada Warbler		6	4	4	9
Carolina Wren	9				
Chestnut-sided Warbler		5	1	4	2
Chipping Sparrow	1		1		
Clay-colored Sparrow			1		
Common Yellowthroat	20	127	80	16	48
Dickcissel				1	
Downy Woodpecker		10	2	3	5
Eastern Phoebe	3				
Eastern Screech Owl		3			
Eastern Towhee	1			3	
Eastern Wood-Pewee		1	5	3	2
Field Sparrow	1	2	1		
Fox Sparrow	1				
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4				
Golden-winged Warbler		2	3		1
Great-crested Flycatcher	4	6	4	1	2
Grey Catbird	28	73	66	23	18
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2	19	6	11	5
Hairy Woodpecker		1	2		
Hermit Thrush	7	9	8	6	
House Wren	1	16	9	2	3
Indigo Bunting	31	160	94	48	41
Kentucky Warbler		1	3		2
Least Flycatcher	1	29	14	1	3
Lincoln's Sparrow	6	3	6	2	3
Louisiana Waterthrush		1			
Magnolia Warbler		17	9	1	7
Marsh Wren			2		

Spring Migration Results

Species	2009 GPCA	2010 GPCA	2011 GPCA	2012 GPCA	2012 VMSP
Mourning Warbler	1	16	11	7	9
Myrtle Warbler	1	13	60	4	
Nashville Warbler	1	13	6	8	7
Northern Cardinal	15	36	22	15	5
Northern Parula		3	1	2	4
Northern Waterthrush	31	38	39	9	16
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	7	7	4	
Orchard Oriole	3	16	7	3	5
Ovenbird	14	25	13	11	3
Pileated Woodpecker	1	1			
Prothonotary Warbler		2			
Red-bellied Woodpecker		4	2	3	
Red-eyed Vireo		7	4		1
Red-headed Woodpecker		2			1
Red-winged Blackbird	6	2		7	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	12	26	6	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	24	29	36	5	6
Scarlet Tanager					1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1		2	2	
Slate-colored Junco	6	2	1	1	
Song Sparrow	7	5	4		
Summer Tanager	1		1	1	2
Swainson's Thrush	25	85	83	29	22
Swamp Sparrow	5	17	27	2	2
Tennessee Warbler		1	6	17	5
Trail's Flycatcher		27	57	16	14
Tufted Titmouse	4	5	6	4	
Veery	1		3	2	
Warbling Vireo	12	18	22	7	2
Western Palm Warbler			1		
White-breasted Nuthatch		2			
White-crowned Sparrow	4	5	5		2
White-eyed Vireo		2	1	1	3
White-throated Sparrow	87	91	115	59	15
Wilson's Warbler	3	34	17	8	13
Winter Wren	1	2	1		
Wood Thrush	8	11	10	6	7
Yellow Warbler	2	5	5		4
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher		9	5	3	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1				
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				1	
Yellow-breasted Chat		3	2		2
Yellow-shafted Flicker		2	2	1	
Yellow-throated Vireo		1	1		2
Total	418	1154	1054	413	347
Diversity	53 Species	72 Species	70 species	57 species	52 species
Net Effort (hours)	1126	4117	3465	2864	739
Banded Birds per 100 net hours	37	28	30	14	48



Purple Martins in Missouri



~ Summer is Purple Martin time here at MRBO and we travel to various locations throughout Missouri to put uniquely colored and numbered bands on Martin babies. We've had the pleasure of working with Kathy Freeze of Licking, MO for two seasons, and she has provided us a fountain of knowledge about Purple Martin ecology, management, and education. ~

By Kathy Freeze

My Purple Martin colony was first started in 2007 by a spunky, pioneering sub-adult Purple Martin and his adventurous mate who raised 3 nestlings their first year. Since then, my colony has grown to 72 pairs and from 2011 to present, Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO) has banded over 450 nestlings and 6 adult Purple Martins at my site. Out of the 200 banded during 2011, I was able to read the bands of 9 returning sub-adults to my colony, one sub-adult female that returned to my aunt's colony over 8 miles away and confirm that another sub-adult male had taken up residence at a friend's house just over 6 miles away.

I never thought that banding birds and then resighting them the following year would be so exciting. The ability to spot a bird at a colony other than your own

and know that it was born at your site the year prior certainly gives you quite a sense of accomplishment in knowing that you have contributed to the overall population growth of Purple Martins in general and to the growth of someone's site in particular.



I first met Dana Ripper and Ethan Duke of MRBO in 2011. The Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) had given them my name as one of many Missouri landlords who conducts nest checks and keeps detailed records of the eggs, hatchlings and their ages and tracks the progress of each nest. I was very nervous about banding my nestlings at first. However, after meeting Dana and Ethan and seeing their love for birds and their kindness and gentleness towards them, I was immediately put at ease and now trust them explicitly to handle my colony. Migratory birds have a low survivability rate so having the ability through banding to track the ones that do come back, as well as the dispersal rates at colonies surrounding their natal colony sites provides good research data to groups such as MRBO.

As well as managing my own colony, I also mentor over 56 other Purple Martin landlords around Missouri by sending out a monthly newsletter during the martin season, full of tips and helpful articles for managing Purple Martin colonies. My goal is to help increase the population of Purple Martins throughout Missouri by educating other landlords regarding best practices for starting a new colony and increasing the sizes of existing colonies if a landlord wishes to do so.

The single most important thing you can do to attract martins to your site is choose the right location for your housing. Martins have very specific space requirements. Choose an open area that has a minimum of 50 feet clearing on all sides of your housing and no more than 120 from your own housing. This will provide the martins with the open

flyways they desire and help them escape when a hawk or owl attacks them.

Once martins are attracted to your site, providing them with housing that can be easily managed will help increase your chances of success. Choose a pole that either telescopes or is equipped with a winch or rope & pulley system and housing that has easy access to the compartments. This will make it easier for you to monitor and track the progress of your nests. Housing with larger, deeper cavities also provides greater protection from rain and predators for the adult martins and their nestlings.

Protect your nesting birds with pole guards. Landlords that have had healthy, thriving Purple Martin colonies have lost their entire colonies after a single attack by a raccoon or snake. Raccoons, snakes and owls can and will climb your wood or metal poles at night and raid your housing. Guards can be purchased online or homemade guards can easily be made out of galvanized steel stove pipe that can be purchased at your local hardware store. Regardless of the type of guards you choose to use, they are an absolute must for every pole to keep your martins safe! A happy, healthy colony will provide you with many hours of enjoyment while listening to the chattering and gossiping by the Purple Martins that will be sure to grace your yard.

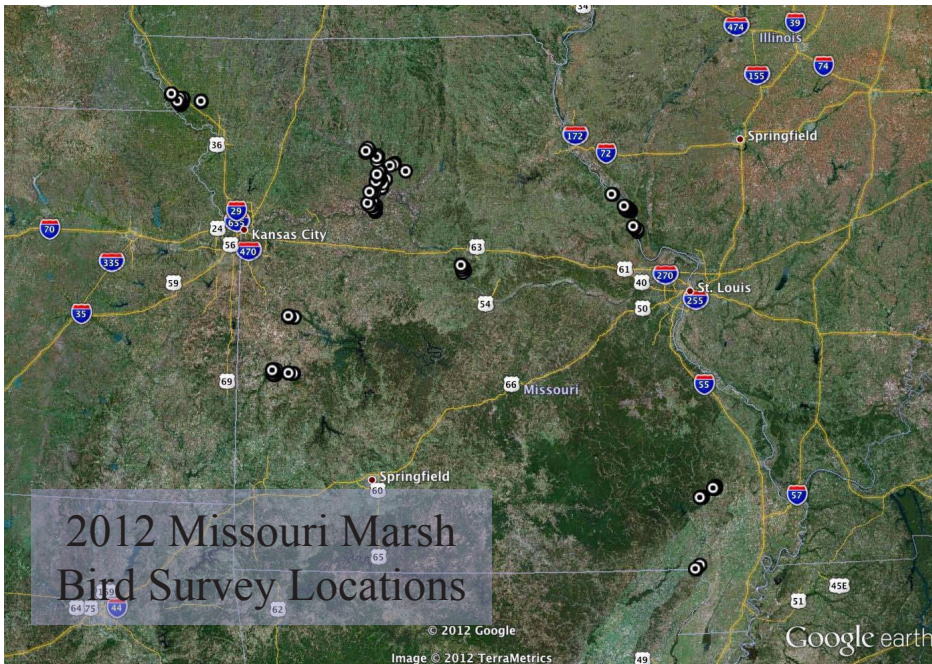
If you are interested in more tips and helpful articles on attracting martins to your site and maintaining a healthy colony, please contact me at purplemartin@centurytel.net.



Left: Kathy pauses for a moment with Ethan and Dana during a Purple Martin banding session in Licking, MO.

For more information on MRBO's Purple Martin banding project, visit <http://www.mrbo.org/Pages/purplemartins.html>

Initial Missouri Marsh Bird Survey Results



We at MRBO are pleased to announce the completion of the field component of our first year of the Missouri Marsh Bird Survey. It gives one a sense of accomplishment, knowing that we were able to give attention to a suite of birds that are so closely connected with our environmental health and well-being. It has long been known that wetland habitat loss has a profound effect on the health of our environment. The decline of marsh birds is a good indicator of this. There was a stated need to gather information on marsh birds in the Midwest and we have answered that call.

We were able to launch a statewide survey of 270 points on 44 sites (see image left). Forty-four percent of the points were located on state lands, 35 percent on private lands, and 21 percent on federal lands. Concurrently with surveys, we deployed autonomous recording units (ARUs) throughout the state to capture audio recordings of the vocalizations of marsh birds with and without human observers present.

The overall effort required planning and coordination with all stakeholders and survey technicians. After much discussion with a national coordinator, we were able to generate randomized survey points a few weeks prior to hitting the ground. Notwithstanding this delay, the Upper Mississippi River Great Lakes Joint Venture (UMRGLJV), the Wildlife Division of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) rose to the challenge.

Three survey technicians (see photo next page); Jean Favara, Tami Courtney, and Bo Brown met the logistical, technical, and physical challenges of actually doing the surveys. The 270 survey points were the end result from assessing a pool of approximately 700 random points. This “groundtruthing” process requires a great deal of time, navigation, planning, and communication. This team met that challenge head-on!

Another of the challenges of monitoring bird populations is addressing the question of scale. Do you count the marsh birds in your local swamp? In your region of the state? Throughout the state? In multiple states? The answer may depend on specific questions you are trying to answer. In our situation, regional planners are trying to assess distribution, status, and trends of marsh birds over the entire region. Surveying in one location or even in just one state would not be a reliable measure of this. Surveying a few locations randomly throughout the entire region of states can show a bigger picture.

Only a few marsh bird surveys have been conducted in Missouri prior to this year. Fortunately, a couple National Wildlife Refuges (i.e. Clarence Cannon NWR), have really worked hard to keep a long-term effort in place. It is only through long-term monitoring in a standardized fashion that we can detect significant trends within a study site and across the state. Part of this year’s project was to that end. We worked with NWRs as well as state conservation area managers to establish and refine long-term surveys. Speaking with these individuals, it was easy to see that they have an intense interest in measuring exactly how their management affects all birds.

MDC area managers, NWR managers, and private landowners were incredibly pleasant to communicate with. These are people who care. They are people who work hard to achieve a lasting benefit for others

Initial Missouri Marsh Bird Survey Results

and wildlife. The role private landowners play in wetland conservation cannot be emphasized enough. With boots-on-the-ground, it is readily apparent that habitats reserved by private landowners are a benefit to marsh birds who prefer wetlands maintained under a regime slightly different than those more appropriately designed for waterfowl use.

In the future we hope to continue refining this survey to provide the most accurate information of not only the distribution of marsh birds in Missouri but key information on the status and trends into the foreseeable future.

Final results are still being tallied in an online database and we have yet to begin analysis of the many hours of acoustic recordings. Recording units were deployed to record natural vocalizations as well measure effects of observer influence on detections. This information will be published in the fall issue of the Rectrix.

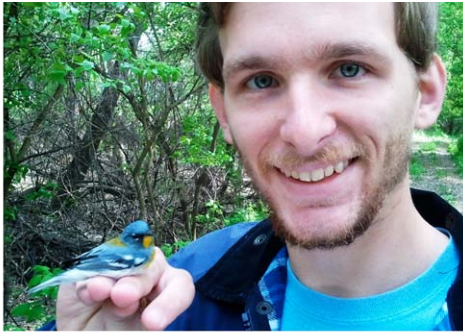


Above: Six additional boxes constructed to house acoustic recording units (ARUs). These six were all deployed by Mick Hanan of the USFWS at Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge. Two other units were rotated throughout the state.



The 2012 Missouri Marsh Bird Survey Crew: From left to right: Jean Favara, Bo Brown, Ethan Duke, and Tami Courtney. For more about the crew see page 15 of this issue.

~Meet the Staff: Monitoring Assistants~



~MRBO spring migration stations were operated with the help of Stephanie Putnam and Brittney Woody (below right), who were featured in our Fall 2011 newsletter. Brittney continues to assist us this summer, along with the interns highlighted here! ~

Devin Couture grew up in Olathe, KS. He developed a passion for nature through his family and activities such as hiking, camping, and fishing. His parents were always very “pro” spending time outside, and he grew up to have a fascination and deep interest in the natural world. He earned a BS in Wildlife biology from Pittsburg State University where he focused on ichthyology and ornithology. Through his coursework he developed a passion for birds and began to venture out birding regularly and began to dabble in a bit of bird photography. In his free time he enjoys activities such as wildlife photography, mountain biking, hiking, and going birding with his brother Justin and his father. He hopes his passion and the passion he has seen from workers here at MRBO will spread and help increase awareness and appreciation for the natural world around us, and the creatures that live within it. It is his hope that years and years from now Chestnut-sided Warblers will still be “Pleased-pleased-pleased-to-meeetcha” and that the Pileated Woodpecker will still be laughing from the trees above people’s heads; wondering how such a large woodpecker can be so elusive.

Daniel Nery Cardoso was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where his love for biology started to develop in early middle school. He came to Missouri Valley College in the fall of 2008 to go to college and play basketball at the same time. He had his first experience with bird banding in the fall of 2009 when his Vertebrate Zoology class visited MRBO at Grand Pass Conservation to see the banding of shore birds. He graduated from MoVal in the spring of 2012 and began working with MRBO during spring migration in the last week of May. This experience with the MRBO is his first of many in the biology field. Daniel plans on attending graduate school beginning in Spring 2013. After this summer with MRBO, he will be pursuing a research job with large mammals, specifically the wolverine. He also has interests in the archeology field, and in a possible future as a basketball player.

Alexandra (“Alie”) Mayes grew up in Sedalia, MO and had a rich childhood with encouraged exploration of nature. Her parents owned a greenhouse business which gave her and her siblings free range of the woods, creek, and lagoon nearby. Turtle races, tadpole tubs, and “moss pots” were the norm of childhood fun. This early love for the natural world led Alie to a B.S. degree in Biology from UCM, and a six month Environmental Education internship with Fish and Wildlife in Fremont, CA. It wasn’t until this experience in California that her appreciation and curiosity for birds developed, leading her to MRBO. Alie pursues Environmental Ed because she wants to provide others with the connection to nature that has been so important in her own life.



*Left:
Stephanie Putnam*



*Right:
Brittney Woody*

~For more information about our past and present interns and assistants, visit <http://www.mrbo.org/Pages/assistants.html> ~

~Meet the 2012 Marsh Bird Survey Crew! ~

Jean Favara received her undergraduate biology degree from University of Mary Washington and a master's degree in biology from Washington University in St. Louis. During a fourteen-year career as a pharmaceutical researcher in the St. Louis area, she worked in a wide variety of research areas including immunology, in-vivo biology and oncology. In order to incorporate her love of the outdoors, as well as to contribute to the field of ecology, Jean decided to pursue research opportunities beyond the pharmaceutical laboratory bench. Management of this career transition resulted in a diverse field research background including two different internships with USFWS (Blackwater NWR and Clarence Cannon NWR) where she performed marsh bird callback surveys, associated vegetation analysis as well as benthic invertebrate sampling. Jean's recent positions include crew leadership for the MOFEP project (Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project). She also worked as a project manager for Dr. William A. Hopkins' lab at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia in 2010 and 2011. The project's focus is examining the ecological consequences of a 2008 Kingston, TN coal ash spill on models of aquatic (fresh water turtles) and terrestrial consumers (tree swallows). Currently, Jean has returned to her love of birds and her home in Missouri surveying the state for secretive marsh birds with the Missouri River Bird Observatory. When not enjoying the calls of rails and other marsh birds, she continues volunteer banding at World Bird Sanctuary, hiking, and birding with friends and family.

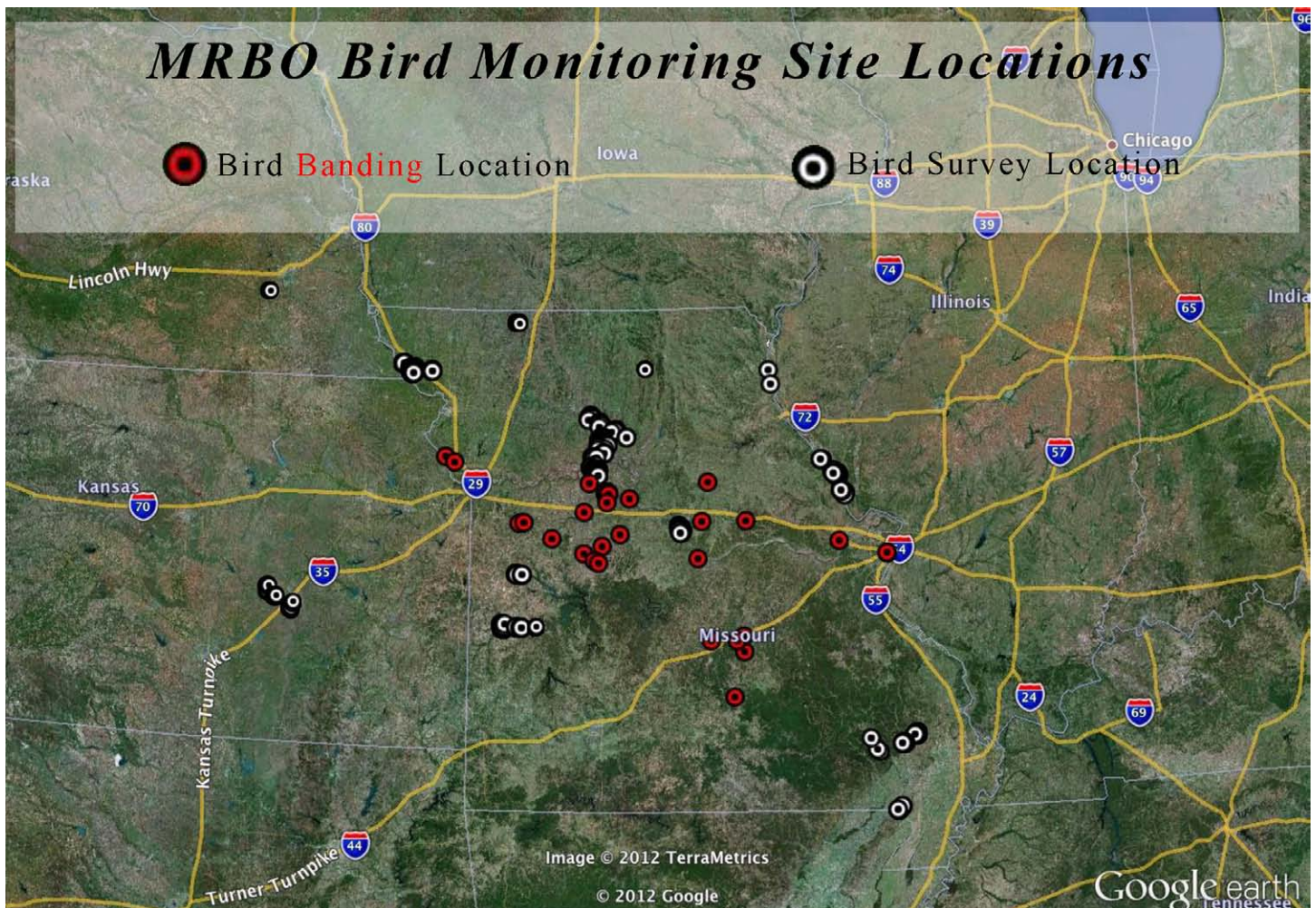


Bo Brown grew up hunting and fishing in rural southwest Missouri; his innate love for nature came from that early exposure. A friend offered to take him out birding in the mid-70s and after a warbler-filled morning, he was hooked for life. Around that time while playing music at Silver Dollar City theme park, he met medicine man and tribal chief Jim Fire Eagle, who had intimate knowledge of wilderness survival skills, plants, and nature in general. This further sparked Bo's interest in learning everything he could about the natural world and directly led to his unintentional career in wildlife biology. While doing fieldwork for her doctoral thesis in 1985, Dr. Jane Fitzgerald contacted him looking for MSU students to work as bird-banders on a 3-year Periodical Cicada study in NW Arkansas. He had never been to college and had no prior bird experience, but his wilderness survival skills and enthusiasm for the task of camping out all summer landed him the job. At the end of that study, a season at central California's Point Reyes Bird Observatory got him a resume that led to a string of 20+ field studies around the US and Central America; mostly with birds, but also included were black bears, gray whales, elephant seals/sea lions, plants, and a 9-year stint as naturalist at MDC's Henning Conservation Area near Branson. His association with MRBO came about in winter of 2011 during Ethan and Dana's visit to SW MO in search of Northern Saw-Whet Owls. In addition to avian fieldwork, he still plays music with several area bands, does occasional contract archaeology, teaches stone-age survival skills through his business, First Earth Wilderness School, and lives in a log home on 15 wooded acres near Rogersville, MO.



Tami Courtney is a lifelong learner and lover of nature and conservation. Tami went back to school for the second time and earned a second bachelor degree: B.S. Biology – Wildlife Management and Conservation from University of Central Missouri in 2011. She brings a passion and enthusiasm for our wild areas and wildlife, especially our birds. She has been an avid outdoors-woman her entire life. Growing up in Michigan she took advantage of hiking, canoeing, camping, skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, swimming, and anything that took her to the great outdoors. One of her many outdoor adventures was in 2009, when she and her husband, Jim, hiked the Grand Canyon Rim-to-Rim. She has also spent a multitude of years working in corporate settings and brings a substantial business background to MRBO. A hobby farmer and accomplished equestrian, she has raised and trained numerous horses, given riding lessons, volunteers for Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue, Lakeside Nature Center and a variety of other organizations.





Thank you to our new members! The following individuals have joined or renewed their membership with MRBO since the publication of our spring newsletter:

Steward Level

Dave & Anita Hartwig, Purple Martin Landlords, Kingsville MO.

Contributor Level

Kathy Freeze, Purple Martin Landlord, Licking MO.

Steve and Regina Garr, Birds-I-View Owners, Jefferson City MO.

Individuals, Families, and Students

Katie Koch, Midwest Coordinated Bird Monitoring Coordinator, Negaunee MI.

Patty Orsborn, Warsaw Garden Club Board Member, Warsaw MO.

Chrissy McClaren, Author and Environmental Activist, St. Louis MO.

Andrew Kinslow, High School Teacher and Land Conservationist, Fordland MO.