

# The Rectrix

Special Issue: Entries from "Hope is the Thing With Feathers"  
MRBO's 2017 Photography Contest

Volume 8 No. 1. 2018



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





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Upcoming Events at  
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### On the Cover

*Taking off* by Jun Zuo.  
Grand Prize winner of  
the “Hope is the Thing  
with Feathers” 2017  
photography contest!

### On the Back

*Henslow's Sparrow* by Bill  
Blackledge.  
1st place winner.

## Letter from the MRBO Staff

Dear MRBO Members and Friends,

We are delighted to unveil the wonderful entries we received in our recent bird photography contest, *Hope is the Thing With Feathers*. Many of you will remember that our first contest in 2016 was titled *Images of Hope*. We wanted to stay with the hope theme because we feel that birds are superb ambassadors for optimism and goodwill. A glimpse of a wild bird can lift you up when you're feeling down, and birds are often the “gateway” through which people begin their journey into love and concern for the natural world.

This year we had 38 photographers submit 103 photographs. We were so pleased to have 13 photographers from last year along with 25 new entrants! Thanks to the entry fees, the contest raised \$2,369.52 in support of MRBO's on-going education programs.

All of the judges said that the scoring process was difficult due to the quality of the photographs and the wide variation in photo descriptions. This year we had a number of photographers provide descriptions that represented very well thought-out connections between their photo and bird conservation. Next year we are planning to have the conservation relevance be an even bigger part of the judging, since conservation is the ultimate objective in all we do! We will be sharing all of these excellent photographs in publications, presentation and social media for the purpose of increasing appreciation for Missouri's avian diversity.

We are very grateful to all of the photographers for their important contributions to our education program and our mission to conserve Missouri's birds and their habitats.

Sincerely,

Dana, Ethan & Paige



# Hope is the Thing With Feathers



Clockwise from top left:

**1st Place: Henslow's Sparrow** by Bill Blackledge

*Henslow's Sparrow singing on the prairies of Dunn Ranch. These beautiful sparrows are an indicator species of the few remaining tallgrass prairies in Missouri.*

**2nd Place: I Was Just Leaving** by George Allbright

**3rd Place: Connection** by Jacob Walter (age 12)

I camped out in the front yard for weeks watching a young hummingbird family. Just after this chick left the nest, I got to see the mom feeding the chick. This photo shows amazing events in my own yard.

**Director's Choice: Northern Rough-winged Swallow Call**  
by Chris Valentine

**Youth: Mallard Feathers** by Chelsea Mostellar (age 13)





Below: *Bluebird* by William Palmer



Above: *Blue Heron* by K-Cee Colburn

Left: *Eagle Feast* by Lisa Hostetter

Below Left: *Black-necked Stilt in Flight* by Paul Moffett

**Below Right: *On The Hunt* by Lee Walter.**  
I watched this Cooper's Hawk hunt in our yard, diving into a holly bush next to the bird feeder. The bush exploded with sparrows flushed from their hiding place. Eventually, the hawk peered out of the bush, surveying its surroundings. This photo captures that moment. Although the predator was unsuccessful, the hunt illustrated interconnections in suburban nature.





**Right: Chipping Sparrow in Song**  
by Paul Moffett

**Below left: Fall Migrant Palm Warbler**  
by David Seidensticker.

As members of a group of species referred to as neotropical migrants, palm warblers pass through Missouri each year on their journey between their Caribbean winter home and their Canadian nesting areas. Though not a species of greatest concern they are subject to the same pressures of vanishing habitat as other North American songbirds, and Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary provides an island of habitat in which they can find refuge and resources to continue their semi-annual trip.



**Above right: Pair of House Finches** by Betsy Garrett.

**Below left: Great Blue Heron in Flight** by Paul Moffett. **Below right: Immature Cooper's Hawk** by Suzanne Wright.







Above left: *Flock of White Pelicans* by K-Cee Colburn. Above right: *Landing* by Jun Zuo.



Left: *It's Almost Like Home* by Tony Harris.

Right: *Flying Fast* by JoAnn Casner.

*My husband was haying the cattle. He came rushing to the house and told me to grab my camera because there were geese on the pond. I did and tried to get close without scaring them but they became edgy and flew before I could get very many pictures. I did manage to get this one and felt very lucky.*



Below left: *All Rise* by Kenneth R. Prier.

Right: *Female Red-Winged Blackbird* by George Albright.







Above left: *Young Red-tailed Hawk* by K-Cee Colburn. Above right: *Goldfinch on Thistle* by Paul Winn.



Left: *Blue Grosbeak Showing Off* by Paul Moffett.

The beautiful grosbeak is a great example of the variety of birds in the confluence area. The confluence area and its wetlands are vital to the survival of birds.

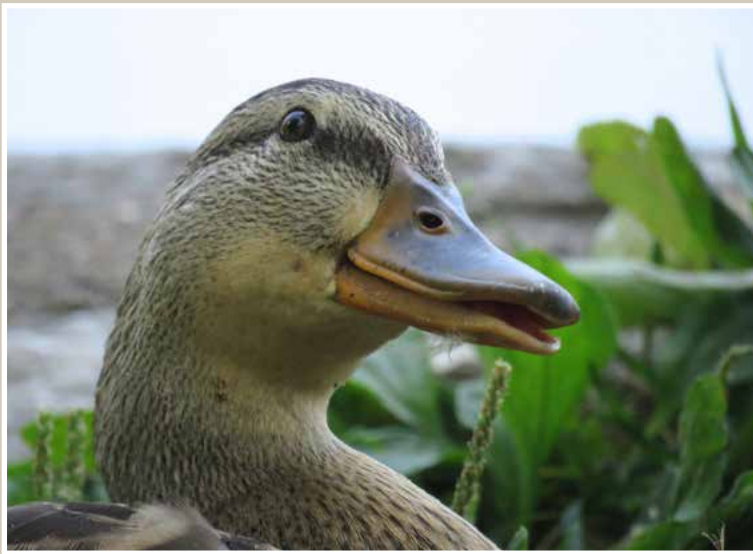


Above: *Soaring Above* by Kyle O'Bryan

Left: *After Dinner Break* by Donnie Nichols.







Above left: *Say Cheese* by Jacob Walter (age 12). Above right: *My Branch* by LeAnn Snodgrass.  
Below left: *It's Cold. Not Mad About It.* by Lisa Hostetter. Below right: *High and Mighty* by Ryan Steffens.



Below left: *Painted Bunting* by Betsy Garrett Below right: *Grubby* by Rhyan Brooks.







Above, left to right: *Red-shouldered Hawk* by Betsy Garrett, *Hoverin' Hummer* by William Palmer, *Little Lady* by Kelley McKay Fuemmeler.



Above left: *Northern Bobwhite* by Shelby Thomas (age 16). Above right: *Pecking Order* by Chuong Doan.  
Below left: *Stand Your Ground* by LeAnn Snodgrass. Below right: *Launch* by Rhyan Brooks.







**Above Left:** *The Convocation* by Kyle O'Bryan

**Above Right:** *Glassing the Field* by Ryan Steffens

Due to declining population numbers, this uncommon winter resident is a Species of Conservation Concern. Like with a number of grassland avian species, habitat loss and fragmentation are reasons for their struggle, but conservation efforts will focus on benefiting not only the owls, but other grassland species too.

**Right:** *Song Sparrow* by Suzanne Wright

Song Sparrows are year round residents at the Mussel Fork Marsh. I find them nesting in about the same location year after year. In the spring they sing their hearts out which makes it almost impossible to get a perfect photo as they vibrate all over.



Below left: *Bluebirds* by Besty Garrett. Below right: *Indigo Bunting Morning Light* by Chris Valentine.





by Carol Weston

**Right: Sparrow Spy**

**Middle Left: Lovebirds**

*I took numerous photos of this pair, building, repairing, flying their sticks in, then this one photo where it looks like their beaks are touching. To me, personally, nothing says conservation quite like our Bald Eagles. It's been a success story but we need to continue to be vigilant because there are forces at work in DC that are tearing down these protections that the Bald Eagles have enjoyed for many years, that have aided their successful comeback. I never get tired of seeing Bald Eagles or photographing them. I have photographed this pair and their offspring for several years now and have thousands of photos. They represent Conservation Success.*

**Middle Right: Snack Time**

**Bottom Left: Lookout**

**Bottom Right: Talking to the Kids**







by Mark Ramsey

**From top to bottom left:**

**Pollinators**

*I love to take pictures of hummingbirds. Taking them around a feeder is ok, but I like to get them out in our wildflower patch. We have three acres of wildflowers for the pollinators and other bird species. We see lots of finch in the flowers and they are a favorite roosting site for a covey of quail. We like to think we are doing our part for conservation.*

**Swan Heart**

*I was taking pictures of swans on a private lake near our home when I saw these two swimming toward each other. I hoped they would do this and they did! Swans are a remarkable conservation story - less than 100 in the country at one time to now seeing them in fall and winter is commonplace thanks to the efforts of many conservation agencies across the country.*

**Sunset Snows**

**Mass Confusion**

**Below: Wood Duck**

*We have a pond in our timber that wood ducks frequent in the spring and fall. I saw about a dozen go in one day so I crawled up the pond dam and took a few pictures. We manage our 120 acres for wildlife conservation practices include timber stand improvement, burning our grass lands in spring, planting three acres of wild flowers for pollinators, to foodplots- 12 acres of beans, wheat, corn, sunflowers, turnips and clover for all species of animals. We have wood duck boxes up on this pond but they prefer along the creek that runs through the place.*







by Marvin De Jong

**Top Left: Blue Beauty**

*The Blue Beauty photograph of a Cerulean Warbler is important if for no other reason that this species is rapidly declining, perhaps threatened, and it is good to know that some survive.*

**Top Right: Cedar Waxwing**

**Right: Father and Sons**

**Below Left: Spring in the Ozarks**

**Below Right: The Fisherman**

*The Fisherman, a photo of a Green Heron with a fish in its beak, was taken on Bull Creek as it passes through our property. Bull Creek is a clear, spring fed stream, that provides habitat for Herons, Kingfishers, and Waterthrush. All species of birds should be nurtured and protected; the Green and Great Blue Herons, in particular, are indicators of a viable stream habitat.*







by Tom Tucker

**Top Left:** *A Gorgeous Redhead on the Trail*

**Top Right:** *Next Time I Won't Get So Close to the House Painter*

**Left:** *May All Your Christmases Be Bright*

**Below Left:** *Bittern Not See Me*  
Refuges along the Missouri River Flyway provide not only rest areas but overwintering habitat for beautiful species.

**Below Right:** *The First Glimpse of Spring*







**Left: Northern Cardinal with Seed Pods** by James Gorski

**Middle Left: Sweet Candy** by LeAnn Snodgrass

Out of 200 species of nectar producing plants in North America, over 150 of those depend on the Hummingbird for survival. Hummingbirds are crucial pollen carriers. Nectar producing plants need Hummingbirds, just as much as the Hummingbird needs the plant.

**Middle Right: The Inspection** by David Seidensticker

In a ritual predating human arrival on the continent, greater prairie chickens gather on leks in the spring to display and seek mates for the coming year. Due to the very specific requirements of prairie chickens for this process, Dunn Ranch Prairie is one of the few places left in Missouri where this still occurs. Dunn Ranch protects part of the less than 1 percent of tall grass prairie remaining in Missouri, providing native plants and animals with a carefully nurtured area to continue to thrive.

**Bottom: Trumpeter Swans and Snow Geese with Controlled Burn** by Judith Leonard

Maintaining critical habitat by conserving land and using methods such as controlled burns is all part of insuring future generations of wildlife such as these Snow Geese will thrive.







Above left: *Trumpeter Swans* by K-Cee Colburn.  
Below: *Weathering the Storm Together* by Lisa Hostetter.



Above Right: *White-breasted Nuthatch Storing Up For the Winter* by Amy Petersen.  
This little guy is hoping to find and stash enough food for the inevitable cold and wintry times ahead. The Nuthatch is seen here in the late fall perched on a feeder at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty, MO, taking advantage of the available nuts here at the sanctuary.



Left: *Swainson's Thrush, Fall Migration* by James Gorski  
Below: *Blue Jay Eating a Nut* by Chelsea Mostellar (age 13)







**Left: *Taking A Break* by Ryan Steffens**

**Right: *Pileated Woodpecker - M* by Tammy Simmons**

**Below Left: *Young Canadians* by Rhyan Brooks**

*This image, captured in Loess Bluffs NWR, illustrates two juvenile Canada Geese grazing contently on grass seed at the waters edge. Due to their migratory nature, geese assist in transporting seeds, in their droppings, from one area to another enhancing diversity in plant life.*



**Below Left: *Take Off* by Rhyan Brooks.**

**Below: *Peek-A-Boo* by Mary Casey.**







**Top Left: Patient Lady Cardinal**  
by Marilyn Belcher

*I love to watch the variety of birds that perch in the dogwood tree outside my window in the winter. They are amazing creatures who have the ability to balance themselves on their little legs as they perch in the trees or when they take off in flight. Of all the birds that visit, the cardinals I find are most interesting. The male and female differ not only in their coloring but also in temperament. The males seem to be very flighty while the females are much more patient. This lovely lady cardinal was very patient while I took her photo last winter. All the birds differ in coloring, size and temperament; they have their own pecking order; some are more aggressive than others, but they are all created by God and it is our responsibility to protect and care for them as well as respect their home in the wild.*



**Left: Midair** by Jacob Walter (age 12)

**Bottom Left: Summer Tanager**  
by Suzanne Wright.

**Bottom Right: Next In Line**  
by Cinderella Morff







Above left to right: *Nature's Umbrella* and *Looking Back* by Kenneth R. Prier

Below left: *Barred Owl* by Betsy Garrett. Below right: *Kentucky Warbler* by Shelby Thomas (age 16)



Below left: *Two Cardinals in Snow* by K-Cee Colburn. Below right: *Ring-billed Gull Catch* by Chris Valentine.







**Top Left: Red-breasted Nuthatch**  
by Shelby Thomas, (age 16)

**Middle Left: Snow Falling on Owl**  
by Amy Petersen

*Just as we were exiting Montauk State Park in southeast Missouri, the snow began to fall. We stopped to marvel at this beautiful Barred Owl. He is sitting in this great old barn, protected yet out in the elements and enjoying the beauty of the silently falling flakes. He looks as if he's looking right at me, but I like to think he was spying some prey down the road and we were just a mere blip in his day. As we stopped, I lowered my window took three shots and we drove off. He never moved from his perch, just as it should be.*



**Bottom Left: Yellow-billed Cuckoo**  
by Betsy Garrett

*People are surprised to know there are cuckoos in Missouri. The call of the yellow-billed cuckoo is pretty unique and can be one early birders can be taught to recognize, increasing their enjoyment and knowledge.*

**Bottom Right: Lift Off**  
by Kenneth R. Prier







Above: *Eastern Kingbirds* and Below:  
*Sharp-shinned Hawk* by Suzanne Wright

Above: *Woodthumper* by Rhyan Brooks.

Below: *Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Male)*  
by Bill Blackledge



Bottom Left: *No Sunscreen Necessary* by Kenneth R. Prier. Bottom Right: *Taking Time to Tidy Up* by George Albright





Right: *White-throated Sparrow*  
by Nikki Madole (age 15)

Below: *Short-eared Owl Ice*  
by Chris Valentine



Above: *Snow Goose Spring Migration*  
by Jun Zuo.



Left: *The Thief* by David Seidensticker  
As sports fans in the US prepare to watch the 51st Super Bowl, two trumpeter swans and a third eagle enjoy the action as an adult bald eagle swoops in to displace a younger one from a fish. Riverland Migratory Bird Sanctuary (RMBS) provides a protected area for bald eagles, swans, and other migrating waterfowl to spend the winter months taking advantage of the rich resources of the Mississippi River and its surrounding wetlands, and the accessibility and proximity to the St Louis area of RMBS make it a popular place for wildlife enthusiasts to gather and appreciate the natural world.



Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

~Emily Dickinson, 1830-1886

## ~ Our Thanks To ~

### The Photographers

#### Contest Judges:

David Stonner, Photographer, Missouri Department of Conservation  
Noppadol Paothong, Photographer, Missouri Department of Conservation  
Karen Avery Miller, Artist, The Little Studio & Gallery  
Steve Garr, Conservationist, Birds-I-View and Missouri Bluebird Society  
Tim Hickok, Conservationist, Flint Hills Falcons

#### Contest Sponsor:



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### MRBO's New & Returning Members

Sherry Leonardo	Grandview MO
Chris Waters	Kansas City MO
Susan Hazelwood	Columbia MO
Bruce Satterlee & Mandy Dorrance	Arrow Rock MO
The Gearin Family	St. Louis MO
Kate Corwin	Kansas City MO
Karen O'Donnell, in honor of Jim & Patty Hamilton	
Timothy Donze	St. Louis MO
Karen & Terry Stair	Lee's Summit MO
Donnie & Kim Nichols	Warsaw MO
Rad Widmer	St. Louis MO
Kathy Digges	Columbia MO
Marge Lumpe	Cole Camp MO
Dianne Van Dien	Raytown MO
Janetta Smith	Clinton MO
Warren & Denise Loveland	La Crosse WI
Dess Caylor Trust	Kansas City MO
Steve & Regina Garr	Jefferson City MO
Carol Davit	Jefferson City MO



