



The Rectrix

A seasonal newsletter of the Missouri River Bird Observatory

Volume 10 No. 1, Winter 2020



ANNUAL
PHOTO CONTEST
ISSUE!



Wetland
Birds



Prairie
Birds



MISSOURI RIVER
BIRD OBSERVATORY



Backyard Birds



Forest
Birds

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The Missouri River Bird Observatory is a 501(c)3 non-profit entity dedicated to the conservation of Missouri's migratory and resident birds through scientific research, community outreach, K-12 education and conservation policy advocacy.

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Dana Ripper Duke
Director/Founder

Ethan Duke
Director/Founder

Paige Witek
Education Coordinator

Erik Ost
Field Project Leader

Zeb Yoko
Conservation Science
Communicator

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P.O. Box 16
Arrow Rock, MO 65320
660.837.3888
www.mrbo.org

In this issue of *The Rectrix*

Welcome to the photo contest issue! In this newsletter, we present you with all of the photographs entered in MRBO's annual *Hope Is The Thing With Feathers* contest. The contest features wild birds photographed in the state of Missouri. Unlike previous years, for the 2019 contest photographers entered their pictures in one of four categories, each of which had an adult and youth winner. We also had a Grand Prize, which ended up being shared by the photographers of the images below, as they had exactly the same score! Photos were judged on originality, artistic and technical merit, composition and their conservation descriptions.

We are very thankful to Wood and Huston Bank of Marshall, which sponsored all of the contest prizes! This allowed all proceeds from contest entries to be earmarked entirely for MRBO's education and outreach program. Photos will be used in MRBO reports, newsletters, social media and public presentations to share the beauty and conservation value of Missouri's birds.



On the cover: *Purple Finch in the Snow* by Amy Watts and *Seed Explosion* by Steve Johnson tied for the Grand Prize, with an average score of 92.6 by the contest's five judges.

Thanks to MRBO's new and renewing supporters!

We greatly appreciate the contributions of the following supporters, who donated generously to MRBO since the publication of our December newsletter.



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Wetland Birds



Winner: Mystical Sunrise at
Riverlands
by Renant Cheng

As the dense fog slowly lifted on this chilly Autumn morning at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, a mystical looking scene is revealed as this location comes alive with bird activities. This wonderful refuge provides an excellent habitat for hundreds of species of birds that live in or migrate through the area.

Youth Winner: Silhouette
by Chelsea Mosteller

You don't always have to see colors to see a bird. The simplicity of a silhouette allows you to appreciate the unique shape of the heron and pay attention to its surroundings.





Back From Extinction by Paul Moffett

Riverlands contains the largest number of overwintering trumpeter swans. Last year the high total was 2400. These beautiful birds have returned from near extinction and can be found in many parts of Missouri overwintering. It is vital that wetlands remain and these birds be protected in our State. They are a prime example of what can be done when conservation works with our citizens.

Beauty in the Swamps by Paul Moffett

Prior to the wetlands at Columbia Bottoms being flooded the American Avocets stopped for a visit this spring in their beautiful buffy suits. There were 12-14 and could be seen daily walking and swinging their heads back and forth as they scared up invertebrates and minnows for a meal. Keeping wetlands available for these travelers is important to the generations to come.



Black-necked Stilt by Clay Guthrie

This spring I spent several evenings and mornings photographing a group of Black-necked Stilts who had taken up residence in a flooded field in rural New Madrid County. I made a makeshift blind with camo material and laid in mud for a few hours each visit waiting for the right photo opportunity. It usually didn't take long before the birds were trotting around me like I wasn't even there. This is the best shot from my outings and one of the few with good light. The BNS is a species of least concern, but it too will face the same problems as many of our other wetland birds if conservation doesn't continue. One positive note is that many wetlands species benefit from the same conservation efforts that are aimed at waterfowl protection by groups such as Ducks Unlimited or Delta Waterfowl.





Emerging out of the Sunrise by Paul Moffett

This year due to the flooding and many small ponds being filled with fish, the Great Egrets have had a virtual feast. The Great Egrets were another species that have been rescued from near extinction. Once again they emphasize the importance of maintaining wetlands throughout our State.



Fight

by Jun Zuo

Two immature bald eagles were fighting for a fish.



Filling the Air by Michael O'Keefe

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge in northwest Missouri provides over 7,000 acres of wetlands, grasslands and forest for resident and migrating wildlife. The large Trumpeter Swans in the foreground and Snow Geese behind them represent two of the thirty species of waterfowl which take advantage of the habitat each winter (the day after this photo taken, the official count was 1,863 swans and 35,007 snow geese.) The swan is the biggest of these, with a 6-foot wingspan and a weight of 25 pounds. Like the Bald Eagles that also depend on Loess Bluffs NWR, Trumpeter Swan populations were once endangered, but have grown in response to targeted conservation efforts. Unfortunately, neither species is immune from threats like lead poisoning, habitat loss and careless hunters.



Flying Over
by Jun Zuo

The photo was taken in Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Mound City, MO. Trumpeter Swans were flying over.

Freedom
by Steve Johnson

Seeing a Bald Eagle hunting Snow Geese and fish over large bodies of water will never get old for me. When most people are asked what their favorite bird is, the Bald Eagle is almost always mentioned. I always assume it's due to the fact they have a breathtaking contrast of dark and white plumage, are powerful hunters of prey, and of course are the American symbol of freedom. To preserve their freedom, I never use pesticides of any kind on my property. A pesticide called DDT almost wiped them out completely several years ago, and I do not want to make that same tragic mistake that was made then. I also believe in educating friends and family about these harmful pesticides, as well as helping anyone that wants to see one of these beauties in the wild. When I saw a Bald Eagle in the wild for the first time, it changed my life. It helped turned me into the birder and conservationist I am today. If I can plant that same seed in someone else's mind, then together, Bald Eagles will continue to have a successful future on our planet.



Great Blue Heron
by Scott Villmer

Great blue heron was sitting on the bank. It flew to a log when I got close. It finally jumped in the water and was looking for fish. The half-hour I was there he never found one.

Great Blue Heron
by Reva Dow

The great blue heron is a water bird found in every county of Missouri. It is often spotted along the edge of waterways including, rivers, ditches, lakes, and ponds. Any water quality issues affecting wetlands will also affect the animals and plants of the wetland. Great blue herons are near the top of the food chain and they also serve as an indicator species for a healthy shoreline habitat. Seeing a great blue heron is always a treat. Not only are they beautiful birds; their presence tells us our wetlands are healthy.



Great Blue Heron in Tree
by Kathleen Henrikson

This photo is of a Great Blue Heron resting in a tree next to the trail at the mouth of a small stream emptying into the shallow end of the lake where heron stalk and capture fish and other water life. Though this species is not currently endangered, it is important to keep or provide not only ponds/lakes for feeding, but nearby wooded and open natural areas for nesting, especially with increased land clearing and building in areas of large human population.



Green Heron With Fish
by Marvin De Jong

We are fortunate to have a short stretch of Bull Creek, one of Missouri's clearest and most pristine streams, running through our property. This photo of a Green Heron was taken on our stretch of Bull Creek, and if you examine the photo closely you can see the water is crystal clear providing a great place for wading birds to catch healthy minnows and for Green Herons to remain strong and breed successfully. Unpolluted Missouri wetlands, rivers, and streams, including Bull Creek, are vital to the health and abundance of all water-related birds, ducks, egrets, shorebirds, and herons, including this beautiful Green Heron.





I Know if I Stand Still They Won't See Me!
by Tom Tucker

Thank you, Corps of Engineers, for
providing such wonderful resources for
both recreation and wildlife!

Indigo Bunting
By Mark Gutchen

The ear can lead the eye to notice
wonderful, small creatures.



Just a Couple of Bald Eagles Out for A Meal
by Amy Petersen

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge
offers the American Bald Eagle a unique
opportunity to establish either a permanent
home or a place to pass on through as they
follow the snow geese and other prey along
their migratory path from north to south and
visa versa. The refuge offers its visitors an
equally unique opportunity to witness and
observe these magnificent creatures without
intruding on their ultimate quest for survival.
Loess Bluffs NWR allows the visitor to learn
about respecting the environment and about
the importance of providing such vistas for
educational purposes.

Least Tern
by Clay Guthrie

Least terns nest along a gravel road in rural New Madrid County during the record-setting Mississippi River flooding in 2019. Least Terns typically nest on sandbars and beaches along rivers and shorelines. Loss of sandbars along the Mississippi, which is at minimum encouraged by levee building upstream, has resulted in severe population declines for the Least Terns and nesting colonies are rarely - if ever - found north of about Cape Girardeau Missouri. This combined with 2019's extreme flooding often results in cases like the above where the birds nest in otherwise unsafe locations like this flooded gravel road in rural New Madrid County.



Lunch Time!
by Tony Harris

The Eagle Bluffs are a valuable food resource and stop over for migrating birds.

Lunch Time
by Bob Estes

This Great Blue Heron can't read the nearby sign prohibiting excess consumption of certain fish - a result of PCB contamination. Fortunately for it, the ban applies to fish longer than 24 inches. Nonetheless, this scenario is emblematic of harsh and inconsiderate environmental regard throughout our history.





Pelican at Rest
by Karen Davis

These big, graceful birds remind me not to hurry. I watch them glide on the wind with so little effort even at their large size. I see them together, like a big family. I can't imagine a world without these reminders, with out something to say "slow down and savor this moment".

Prepping for Halloween
by Tom Tucker

Dead Trees, Turkey Vultures, and bright sun to dry off and warm up in the morning, Life is Good!



Prothonotary Warbler
by Clay Guthrie

After making my way to a Prothonotary hotspot along a boardwalk at Mingo NWR I quickly found a subject bouncing from branch to branch in relatively close distance. After remaining still the Warbler slowly made its way closer and closer with each branch it landed on. It stayed in this position just long enough for a shot with some light slathering its face through the canopy. American wetlands have shrunk by more than 50% in the last 200 years resulting in many bird populations shrinking or being lost. Same is the story for the Prothonotary Warbler who calls our forested wetlands home.

Sandpaper in the Fog
by Karen Davis

Little sandpipers are just joy in motion.
They are so brave. They will land near
me and sometimes the skitter right up
to the camera lens when I'm sitting on
the ground. They rarely stop moving.
I love to watch them go all the way
along the shore line and then back
again, hopping over or running around
whatever is in their way. Sandpipers
remind me to have courage.



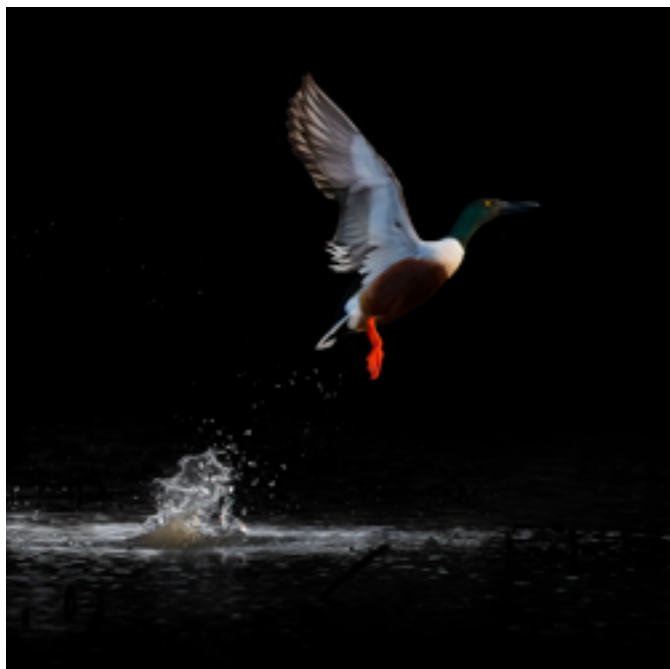
Sora
by James Gorski

I photographed this Sora in a wetland area at the eastern edge of Smithville Lake during spring migration. The area featured watergrasses and reeds and brush along the shoreline which extended several yards into the main body of the water. Efforts must be made, starting at the local level, to ensure preservation of wetland habitats for the Sora. Groups such as the Missouri Stream Teams (of which I am a member) play a critical role in monitoring streams and rivers which ultimately drain into larger lakes and rivers in Missouri. Groups such as the Stream Teams and other volunteers are an "early warning" system which can identify potential pollutants migrating into and through the waters critical to birds such as the Sora. Watershed management and water quality testing will ensure that sufficient habitat is available well into the future. The Sora helps control the insect population of the various insects it eats.

Sushi Anyone
by Paul Moffett

This fine fellow has decapitated and is enjoying a fish after a fierce confrontation with an immature bald eagle. The osprey migrates through the State and on occasion nests. Through the efforts of conservation many of the raptors are reaching healthy numbers. Many eagles are nesting in the State, now if only the osprey would follow suit.





Taking Off
by Jun Zuo

The photo was taken in Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Mound City, MO. A northern shoveler was taking off from a pond. Northern shoveler is a migratory bird. During fall migration season, Loess Bluff NWR can have hundreds to thousands of northern shoveler ducks staying there for a short period.

The Littlest
by Paul Moffett

The least sandpiper is the smallest of the sandpipers. Their migration through the confluence area heralds the coming of fall and winter. Beside being a beautiful bird they are quite fun to watch. They are in groups of 10-20 and will feed for several minutes get up and fly in unison for a bit, land and start the process all over. The flood plains and riverlands are vital to the least sandpiper and other wetland birds survival....



Tree Swallow in the Rain
by Amy Watts

I spend a lot of time bird watching at our local wastewater treatment plants. They are an amazing place to see a wide variety of migratory and year round residents in our area. On the day I took this picture it was pouring down rain and there were several tree and barn swallows flying around catching insects from the water. This particular tree swallow flew in and landed right in front of me and posed for about half a second before it flew off again. It is always so exciting to observe these fast flyers. Tree Swallows, as all birds, depend on good habitat and food sources. It is so important for us to help preserve wetland and grassland areas so that these beautiful birds may continue to thrive.



Trumpeter Prey
by Eric Wilhoit

The coyote is one of the many predators that hunt the Trumpeter Swan, which take refuge at Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, near Mound City, Missouri, during the winter migration. As the pools freeze over in the winter, the coyotes are afforded a highway to the Trumpeter Swans, which eat less and rest more in the winter. The Trumpeter Swan can live up to twelve years in the wild, if it can stay healthy and avoid predators like the coyote.



Who Wants to Hold the Bag?
by Paul Moffett

Who as a youth wasn't tricked into going snipe hunting only to find out there wasn't such a bird. Well in fact the Wilson's Snipe does exist. It migrates through the State and visits can be for long periods. They are quite fun to watch as they plunge their long bills in the goey mud. I take many folks out to see and photograph the snipe and they marvel that they had not seen them.

White Pelicans Migrating Over Missouri
by Marvin De Jong

The use of DDT and certain other pesticides, not to mention habitat loss, once reduced the population of these beautiful birds. Their populations are now increasing as a result of environmental protection legislation and, therefore, they become an example of what intelligent legislation can do for birds. In fact, White Pelicans have become a member of Species of Least Concern. Hope is the big bird with white feathers and a strange beak. During migration they have become very common on Missouri waterways and lakes, including Stockton Lake where this photo was taken.



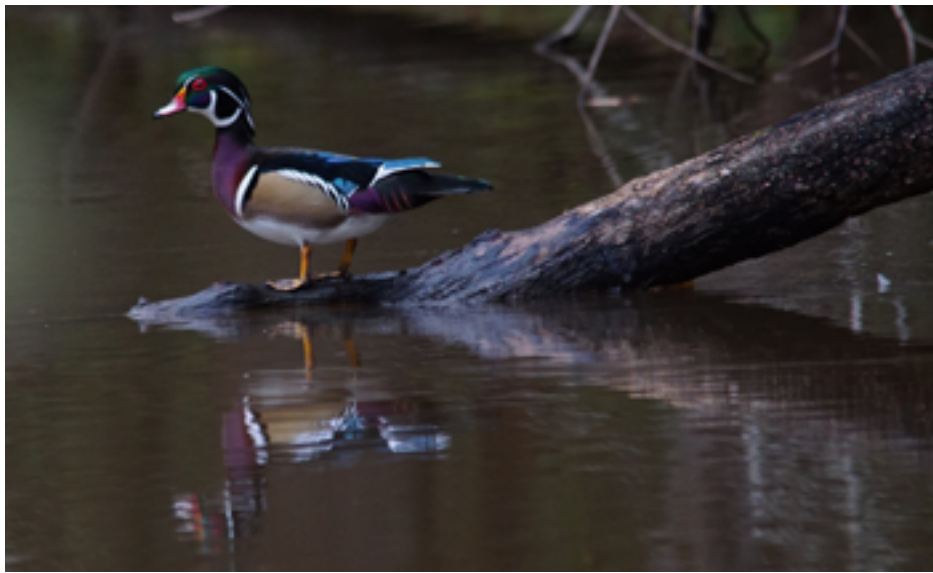


Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here?
by Tom Tucker

Wonderful Lake and Forest natural resources
provide great homes for summer visitors.

Waiting for a Fish
by Kyle O'Bryan

It is hard to get real close to the Belted Kingfisher. I am glad that they sit and wait to catch small fish or other small creatures from man made ponds or lakes that help keep this interesting bird around.



Wood Duck
by Mark Ramsey

Our property consists of 80 acres of oak timber, 30 acres of uplands and 10 acres of open creek bottom; we have a creek that flows through about half mile of the farm. Back in the timber we have two ponds surrounded by oak timber, with acorns. The wood ducks like to frequent these ponds in the fall. We have nesting boxes up on the pond, but they prefer nesting along the creek. In the spring they like to trade back and forth between the ponds and small wetlands we have created in the bottom surrounded by crops. I have many pictures of them eating soybeans; I never knew they

would. This picture was taken this fall. I like to sneak up over the pond dam and see if there are any ducks on the pond and if I am lucky get pictures. This day there was only a male, sitting on a log as to say take my picture I think this will make a good one. The lighting wasn't the best, but it turned out pretty good.

Prairie Birds

Winner: Greater Prairie-Chicken (Male)
by William D. Blackledge

Greater Prairie Chickens are considered an endangered species in Missouri. An estimated population of fewer than 100 birds remain in isolated populations in northwest and west-central Missouri. The loss of native prairies throughout the state has been the primary reason for their decline. Initiatives to protect and reestablish areas of diverse native grassland, such as the one being done by The Nature Conservancy at Dunn Ranch in northwest Missouri, provides some hope of protecting and expanding the current population.



Youth Winner: Lookout
by Jacob Walter

While walking on a trail at the Audubon Center at Riverlands, I saw a kestrel perched atop a tree. Even though kestrels are the most common falcons found throughout North America, seeing and photographing one of these fierce little hunters in the wild is thrilling. Since they are common, they give us insight into the world of falcons, inspiring protection for these awesome birds.



American Pipit
by Paul Winn

We were at a MDC Eagle Days event on the Missouri River when this American Pipit landing on the river bank in front of me and then went up on this buried stick. It reminded me that even though we were there to observe one of conservation's successes that conservation is about preserving all species and not just the high profile ones. That conservation is about the little ones as well as the large ones.

BOB WHITE
By Paul Moffett

Is there a more pleasant sound than the bob white whistling as they regroup? Bobwhites have had a difficult time in Missouri and other States due to loss of habitat. Preservation and increasing prairie lands will certainly help in this effort. Many groups are working hard to increase numbers of this beautiful and tasty game bird.



Booming on the Lek
by Eric Wilhoit

Over the past recent decades, the grasslands on which the Greater Prairie Chicken depends to survive have shrunk to less than one percent of the area that once covered the state of Missouri. While the prairie chicken is not endangered in Nebraska or Kansas, it is in Missouri. Fewer than 500 birds remain in isolated populations in southwest, northwest and north-central Missouri. The Missouri Department of Conservation is trying to improve habitat for prairie chickens by encouraging ranchers and farmers to allow cattle to graze in grasslands. As the grasses grow back, it promotes the growth of a variety of wildflowers and plants that benefit the prairie chicken.

Dickcissel on a Barbed Wire Fence
by Marvin De Jong

Plow up the prairie and plant corn and soybeans and the beautiful sounds of Dickcissels, Meadowlarks, and Bobolinks will no longer fill a spring morning. With a world filled with row crops, Dickcissels singing on barbed-wire fences will be as rare as Prairie Chickens and Bobwhite Quail. These are not birds of tilled fields and money-making crops. They like wild and open prairie and native grasses. In Missouri, conservation means setting aside prairies for the birds to nest and thrive.



Goldfinch
by Mark Ramsey

Each year I plant about 2 acres of sunflowers for the finch. I love to sit and watch and take pictures of them. The cardinals will use the patch as well as doves in the fall. We typically see 20-30 finch in the patch each year. Managing our farm for wildlife is not only for deer and turkey but all species of birds and animals and if you like to take pictures it makes for a nice bonus. After you sit in the patch for a while they tend to get used to you and will come pretty close as this one did, I liked that it had a seed in its mouth. They are fun birds to watch.



Hummingbird
by Mark Ramsey

In the spring and summer when the hummers start showing up I love to try to follow them around trying to get a picture. It's easy to get pictures around a feeder but out in the open it's a bit more difficult. However, we have done some things to make pollinators a bit more visible on our place; we have planted 3 acres of wildflowers and 10 acres of Conservation Reserve Program in our uplands that makes for several birds and bees. We are helping the pollinators and getting some neat pictures at the same time. This picture was taken on an autumn olive plant that makes a very nice bloom but are invasive according to my conservation agent friend so it had to go shortly after these pictures were taken.



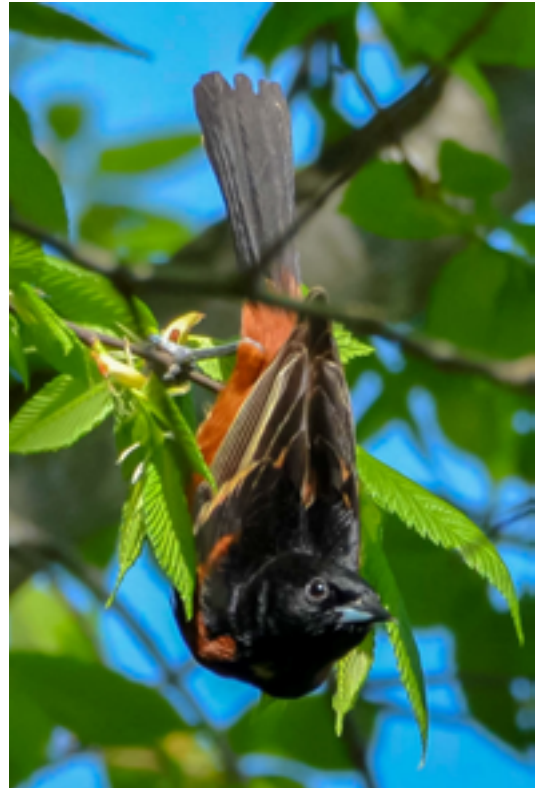


Hungry Eyes by Steve Johnson

Although Red-Tailed Hawks are currently considered to be a species of least concern conservation wise, that doesn't mean there isn't anything we can do to help keep them thriving. One thing I do that I like to think helps them in a small way, is by not using pesticides or rodent poison on my property. Most people don't realize it, but pesticides cause a horrible domino effect in the natural food chain. When a mouse or rat ingests a poison, and becomes food for a raptor such as this Red-Tailed Hawk, they unknowingly become poisoned themselves, and in some cases die. The use of pesticides needs to stop or drastically decrease in our nation. I am doing my part, as well as informing friends and family members of the deadly repercussions these chemicals have on our beloved wild animals.

Just Hangin' Around by James Gorski

The Orchard Oriole breeds in open country with scattered trees such as parks, orchards and farms and prefers areas along lakes and streams. It eats nectar and pollen from flowers and is an important pollinator for some tree species. For this reason, emphasis and support of environmental efforts to preserve and provide sufficient habitat for this species must be a priority in order to sustain a healthy population of this species.



MMMMMMM By Amy Petersen

Not only is the striking beauty of the Indigo Bunting breathtaking, but their song is infectious and an indication to this observer that summer is here and glimpses of this adorable creature seeking the various seeds from the bushes and trees that are plentiful at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary is just beginning for the summer months.



Northern Harrier in the Field
by Amy Watts

What a treat to watch these hawks hunt for food. Watching them fly, hover and then dive feet first at their prey never gets old. They are so graceful and stealthy at the same time.

Unfortunately, these hawks are a species of conservation concern. Keeping wetlands and grasslands maintained as such is so important for their survival. Also, it is so important to use a non-poisonous method of rodent control as eating poisoned prey is another danger to these and other birds.



Short-eared Owl at Deep Dusk
by Mark Gutchen

This owl was out hunting just as the twilight turned to deep purple dusk. The colors of the night are stunning.

Teamwork
by Chelsea Mosteller

Watching red-winged blackbirds is always an amazing experience.

The way they work together to escape predators is incredible. This image really gives you a glimpse of what's going on inside the cloud of blackbirds.





Yardbird
by Michael O'Keefe

Considered a bird of grasslands, parks, and rural roadsides, Eastern Bluebirds are adaptable to a degree, and may nest on your patio provided it has shelter, water, and access to open areas of low grass. I installed this nest box two years ago, inspired by the annual appearance of migrating bluebirds at the birdbath each March. Since then, at least three clutches of bluebirds have fledged from this spot ten feet from my camera – where this male bluebird feeds its young. Prospects are good for next year as at least five bluebirds regularly visit the nest box this December.

Your Majesty
by Paul Moffett

The kingbird is one of the early migrators to our State and remains until October. He sits on high, very still, and then will dart out catch lunch and return. This is just one example of birds that will remain in Missouri as long as prairies are available.



Forest Birds

Winner: Eager, Young Pileated Woodpeckers by Marvin De Jong

As inhabitants of woods, Pileated Woodpeckers are more often heard than seen and our ears always perk up when we hear them call. While they wait for a parent to feed them, the two young male Pileated Woodpeckers in the photo seem to truly symbolize that hope is the thing with feathers. The two birds seem eager to get started on their lives and inspire us as a result. Leave some dead trees in your yard or woodlot to provide nesting cavities for this King of the Woodpeckers and their sight and sounds will always be with you. Habitat is crucial for all birds and woodpeckers need trees.



Youth Winner: Hay is for Horses and Turkeys by Logan Hutchison

These three hens are watching out for their flock as they are above the other turkey and can see all around them and are prepared to warn the flock if danger is approaching.



Baby Screech Owl with Parent
by Marck Gutchen

One afternoon while I was walking the trails an upset house wren caught my ear. When I looked up I did not see the wren, but I did see this baby owl peering out of a ray of sun with sleepy eyes. Listening to the birds sometimes leads to wonderful surprises.

Camouflage
by Amy Petersen

The forest at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary offers the White-eyed Vireo the opportunity to sit camouflaged while seeking insects and berries among the various foliage offered throughout the sanctuary. Their song can be quite distinctive.



Dependable
by Michael O'Keefe

Each summer I listen for the song of an Eastern Wood-Pewee, making it a point to stop at the bench where a particular trail turns to the east. "Pee-a-wee!" is the song I listen for, and I have not been disappointed in the 20 years I've walked this trail. The surrounding woodlands have been managed to minimize the understory and keep the forest floor relatively open, which attracts the pewees year after year. While individuals of this species are often found in deciduous forests, they also inhabit open pine woodlands, orchards, woodlots and – in the case of this bird – forest edges. In this habitat trees, shrubs, weeds, grasses and other types of cover and food mix, and a variety of wildlife can be found hiding, eating and simply stopping to rest and clean its feathers.



Family Fun Time
by Tom Tucker

Annual flooding at Smithville leaves lots of dead trees in the woods near Smithville Lake making excellent nesting and access to food!



Golden-Crowned Kinglet
by Karen Davis

To sit on the ground with golden-crowned kinglets busying about in the bush nearby is just plain fun. A winter bird here, I don't often get to see them flash that orange stripe in the middle of their crown. I saw this one just as another kinglet landed nearby - 2 kinglets is 1 kinglet too many! Kinglets are small but mighty, not easily deterred by larger birds as they just move deftly around them. They remind me that no obstacle is too big and no one is too small to find their way in the world.



I See You Watching Me
by Debbie Fantz

I grew up in rural southeast Missouri and have always loved watching birds and other wildlife. I hated when someone would tell me "the only good hawk, is a dead hawk!". I was quick to respond that hawks and other raptors are beautiful, amazing animals important for the environment. Yes, it can be upsetting to see a hawk grab, kill and eat one of your prize chickens or snatch a blue jay off your bird feeder. You must move beyond that emotion and understand their contributions to the ecological health of their environments by keeping populations of small mammals and other species in check. We consider ourselves lucky that red-shouldered hawks and other raptors live around us in rural Cooper County. Their presence indicates a wildlife-friendly neighborhood and healthy, balanced ecosystem.



Night Shift

by Steve Johnson

Although Barred Owls are a common Missouri resident, seeing them for me is quite uncommon. I am always awestruck when I am fortunate enough to see one in the twilight hours of the evening, knowing they are just waking up when most of the world is going to sleep. Something I have recently learned about Barred Owls and other raptors are that they are extremely susceptible to pesticides. Many owls do not make it past their first year of life due to homeowners that use poison baits to kill unwanted mice and rats. Most people don't realize it but pesticides don't just kill unwanted bugs, rats, and mice. They also kill the predators that eat these bugs and rodents because the poison stays in these animals systems and transfers to the next animal that consumes them. For that reason, my conservation efforts for these beautiful creatures are to refuse to use pesticides of any kind on my property, and also educate friends and family members to do the same.

Turkey and Deer by Mark Ramsey

It had snowed for two days earlier this year so the deer and turkey were really feeding in the food plots. My blind is about 200 yards down the hill to blind in our creek bottom and has soybeans, sometimes corn, wheat, clover, and turnips. The deer had been in the field for a while and the turkey started coming out, and they started feeding near the deer; it always amazes me how they know what is danger and what is not. These guys could have touched each other. I took several hundred pictures that afternoon but this is one of my favorite. It always makes me feel like our hard work is paying off and that we are making a difference on how we manage our farm. The 80 acres of oak timber we have, we try to stay out of it in the winter as we feel they need a sanctuary away from pressure.



Peek-A-Boo

by Chelsea Mosteller

People often ask me how I get to see such amazing things. It is true that I get a lot of opportunities, but I believe it is the art of noticing that truly brings these opportunities to life. Seeing this great-horned owl took some luck, but also knowledge and dedication. It is important that we practice noticing the beauty of nature so we have motivation to protect it.

Red-headed Survivor
by Kyle O'Bryan

For myself and others who love conservation it is great to see a Red-Headed Woodpecker in its natural habitat. Not many of these woodpeckers are seen, but with dead trees where they stay at like these more will follow. Normally I have seen many Red-Bellied Woodpeckers and to see this was a special experience.



The Cardinal
by Mark Ramsey

I took this picture after a snow and while taking pictures of other wildlife deer and turkey. We own 120 acres and we manage it for wildlife. I have a blind I like to go to and take pictures especially after a snow. In this field we have wheat, clover, turnips, and about 6 acres of soybeans. When the temperatures get really cold and snow has everything covered, all species of birds and wildlife frequent the area. This cardinal found a bare spot in the snow and flew down right in front of the blind. So I took his picture; he also fed on some of the soybeans. Times like these we like to think we are making a difference for wildlife survival and conservation. I lost my mom in July; there is a saying that when you see a cardinal it's a visitor from heaven, so this is also why this picture has special meaning.

Backyard Birds



Cornell Lab

Winner: Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Eric Wilhoit



During a twelve-hour summer or fall day in Missouri, hummingbirds need up to 6,660 calories to survive. The hummingbird expends more than one third of that amount hovering in its efforts to gather food. The Hummingbird Mint (Agastache, or Desert Sunrise), with its reddish-pink tubular flowers, is an excellent source of nectar for the foraging hummingbird. It also helps in attracting hummingbirds to a strategically placed and stocked hummingbird feeder.

Youth Winner: Curious Chickadee
by William Huber

A native dogwood in my backyard is the busy hangout for birds to perch, chat, and eat. The dogwood provides ample cover and shade along with berries and insects for the birds to eat. This particular chickadee was hopping from branch to branch chasing insects.



Baltimore Oriole in the Sun
by Amy Watts

Baltimore Orioles are a common migratory visitor in our backyard. More often than not when looking out our back windows in the Spring these birds can be observed in the tops of our hackberry trees or enjoying the fresh orange slices and grape jelly that we keep out for them to enjoy. Planting trees with fruits and not destroying their insect supply with pesticides is so important to keep these birds migrating through our area for years to come.



Baltimore Oriole in Migration
by Marvin De Jong

Is there a more beautiful back-yard bird than the Baltimore Oriole? Each spring we attract them to our backyards with oranges and grapes. Of course, our motives are mostly to please our eyes and ears with these wonderful birds, but with the same effort we help them along during one of their most energy-demanding seasons of the year; migration and raising young. There have been precipitous declines in songbird populations; stopping the decline of Orioles should be a priority for all of us.



Breakfast, Check!
by Amy Petersen

The Eastern Bluebird, the State bird for Missouri, is well represented at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary. Here the Bluebird has access to both the fat and juicy insect of it's choosing and berries on the trees and plentiful bushes. Being able to provide the environment to promote survival and the educational opportunities to share with the local people and create more conservationists are needed to keep our natural environments and habitats going for years to come.





Cardinal in White
by Jerlyn Jones

Cardinals are beautiful but this one is mesmerizing! The white is just gorgeous with the pink and gray! It is attracted to the black oil sunflower seeds in our feeder that's hanging from a Sycamore tree in our yard. It isn't easy getting a picture of this bird because it flies in and then quickly flies off at the slightest noise or movement. Its coloring makes it stand out but we have plenty of trees and thick bushes for it to take cover in. Providing habitats for the birds is something we place great importance on. Everyone should get a chance to bask in the beauty of this cardinal!

Chomp!
by Michael O'Keefe

Found throughout Missouri all year long, goldfinches are found regularly at feeders in the winter where they feed on sunflower and nyjer seeds. Otherwise they feed on seeds of thistle, aster, echinacea flowers and of several trees. While this bird has found sunflower at this snowy feeding station, I delight in watching them in my backyard. As soon as my small patch of purple coneflower blooms in the summer, goldfinches are constant visitors as they spend a few moments each day bouncing from stalk to stalk. They test each flowerhead until the day they find mature seeds that can be pulled free.



Christmas Cardinal
by Logan Hutchison

This Cardinal is on a yew bush right outside my grandparents house. He stops buy several times a day to get food and because he sees his reflection in the window and thinks another cardinal is trying to come into his territory.

Coming In For A Sip
by Kyle O'Bryan

With the hummingbirds it is important that we, as photographers that love birds, also reach out as a way to help. By putting up feeders with appropriate nectar in our backyards we are making a difference to help keep them alive, and to see more and more Ruby-Throated hummingbirds through out the summer seasons.



Cooper's Hawk in Spring
by Mark Gutchen

I took this photo through the back window of my house. Creating an attractive habitat with wild flowers attracts amazing visitors.

Defending
by Sharon Takade

A winter shot taken from kitchen window after noticing that a sharp-shinned hawk had taken down a blue jay. The hawk fed for nearly an hour before it began to hunch over the kill and look around. A single crow arrived, landed about 20 feet away and began to approach the hawk in short diagonal walks until it got about 3 feet away. At the point it offered the hawk a feather, dropped the feather when the hawk advanced a bit and then started to close in. At that point the hawk attacked. Eventually the crow won and the hawk flew off.





Dinner Time
by Logan Hutchison

As we were eating lunch one day at my grandparents house we saw this American Goldfinch feeding its young from a bird feeder not too far away. It made several trips just to make sure its young has had enough to eat.

Family Conversations!
by Betsy Garrett

Much research is underway and articles and books written about the complexity of bird behavior. "The Genius of Birds" is an example of one such book bringing this research to the lay public. How and what birds communicate is a matter of much interest. Family groupings of bluebirds will gradually join in with larger flocks from mid-September through December. This group came to my deck for drinks and baths. I can only begin to imagine the topic of conversation among the smaller groups but it was clearly lively. One lone bird persisted in simply taking a bath.



Female Cardinal
by Lauralyn Fry

Our farm provides great opportunities to see various types of birds all year long.

House Finch or Purple Finch?
by Paul Moffett

Who hasn't confused the house and purple finch? Missouri is home to both. Bird feeders traditionally attract the house finch and they will remain most of the year as long as they are well fed. As amateur scientists, we can all help in maintaining the species by participating in annual backyard counts.



Hummingbird
by Jun Zuo

The photo was taken in Powell Gardens, Kingsville, MO. Hummingbirds are one of the smallest birds with the sizes of only about 3 inches. Powell gardens usually has a small garden with several types of the flowers that attract hummingbirds during August and September.

Hummingbird
by Reva Dow

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are found throughout Missouri during the summer months. They are small, fast, and colorful! It is always a joy to catch a fleeting glimpse of them in our gardens checking out flowers. They feed on nectar of plants and are important pollinators. Next time you are in a summer garden keep your eyes open for these bright small birds flying forward, backwards, and upside down!



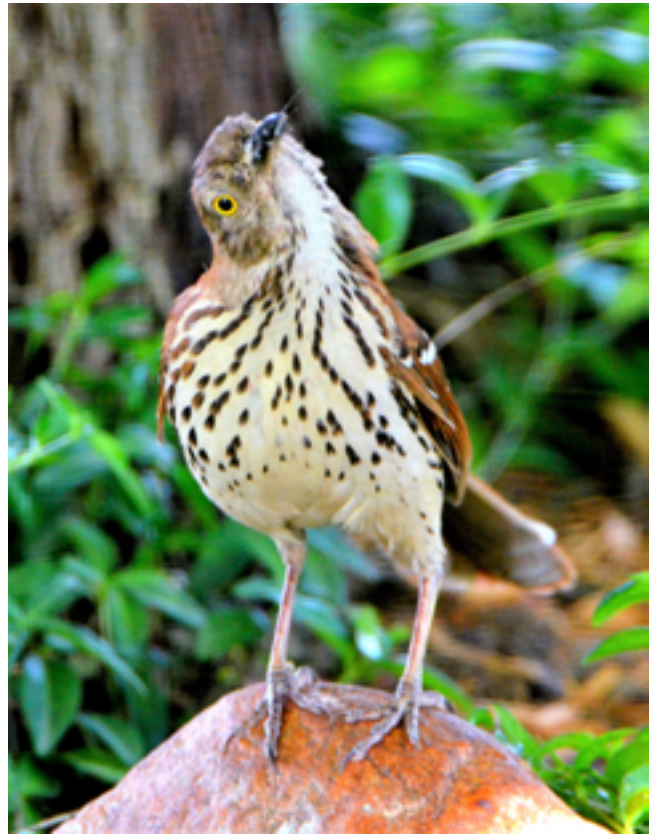


Just Hanging Around
by Kyle O'Bryan

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Lookin' for Food in All the Right Places
by Tom Tucker

Backyard Habitat provides food and shelter for nesting birds.



Mourning Dove on the Fence
by Mark Gutchen

Creating welcoming habitat for local creatures to call our yard home helps us share peaceful moments while catching the morning light.

My Catch
by Sharon Takade

Early one morning I heard a pair of crows sounding their alarm calls which caused me to grab my camera, check the hackberry tree to see where the birds were looking, and to my surprise found a Barred Owl with rabbit in its grasp in the dogwood tree outside my kitchen. Once the crows saw that the owl was no longer hunting they flew off and the owl remained on the branch for about 30 minutes before flying off to a larger and more dense tree.



Red-shouldered Hawk in the Snow
by Mark Gutchen

Many birds thrive in suburban habitats along side their human neighbors. A family of Red Shouldered Hawks has been living and raising families in my neighborhood for several years.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
by Jerlyn Jones

This year was the first time we've seen a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in our yard. It was significant to us because we have lived in the same house for over 25 years and have not seen this type of bird here before. What a beautiful bird with a beautiful song. It's important to us that we provide a good habitat for birds so we keep our fence rows thick with plenty of trees and bushes to provide coverage and berries. We also keep our bird feeders full of black oil sunflower seeds and put suet out.





She Is So Lovely by Betsy Garrett

This female eastern bluebird came in for a drink. We are often drawn to the more colorful males of the species but she is lovely in her own right. The eastern bluebird was chosen as the Missouri state bird in 1927 because it was "common in Missouri" and "a symbol of happiness". Thanks in part to the involvement of Missouri citizens in building and maintaining nesting boxes, eastern bluebirds have been seen in high numbers in recent years in the Breeding Bird Survey. It is still important to keep dead trees in the environment for existing and potential nesting sites.



Take To The Air by Jacob Walter

This photo captures Eurasian Tree Sparrows. These are one of my favorite birds because of one interesting fact. They are found only in eastern Missouri. They were taken from Europe and released in our area. I am lucky to see more than 20 of them at my backyard feeder in the winter. This photo reminds me that they are special and not to be taken for granted. I hope these birds can be conserved in our area.

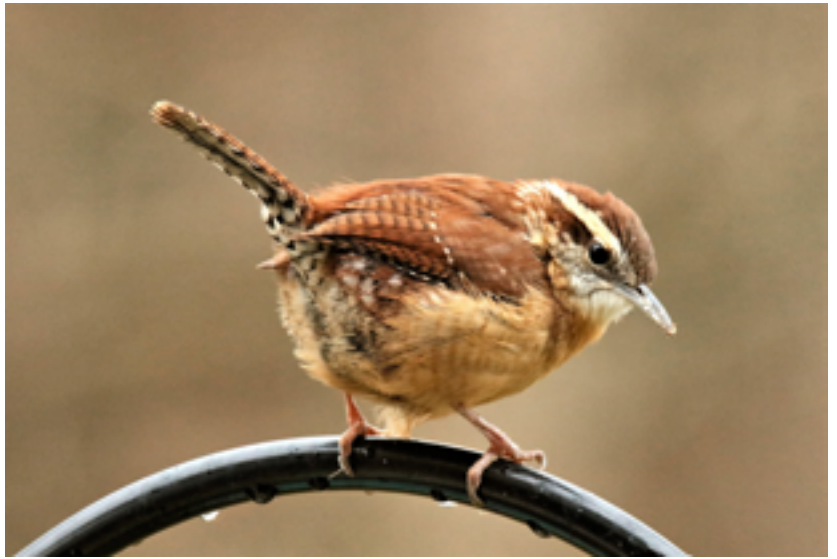


Woodpecker by Lauralyn Fry

Our farm provides great opportunities to see various types of birds all year long.

Thank You For Lunch!
by Debbie Fantz

One of my favorite birds to visit our winter suet feeders is the Carolina Wren; beautiful, entertaining, and full of personality! My love and concerns for wildlife led me to a career in conservation working to protect and conserve animals and their habitats. It's so sad that songbird numbers are continuing to decline at alarming rates. Although I did not work professionally with bird conservation, I have a personal commitment to helping protect our neighborhood wildlife by providing healthy habitats on our small rural piece of Cooper County. To help Carolina Wrens and other songbirds, we keep our cat indoors, do not use insecticides/pesticides, and provide a variety of feeders to encourage a diversity of bird species.



The Blue Five
by Scott Villmer

There were two birds on the lid of water meter. They were drinking snow that melted on the lid. The other three flew in one right after the other. They all lined up as they flew in. Nature just doesn't happen like that everyday. It was in my favor that day.



Yellow Variant of Female Red-bellied Woodpecker by William Blackledge

This is a rare variation of a Red-bellied Woodpecker. In this color variation it is quite similar in appearance to female Golden-fronted Woodpeckers that do not occur in Missouri. The yellow variant of Red-bellied Woodpecker can be distinguished from the Golden-fronted by the rump and tail pattern. Specifically, the dark speckles that appear on the white rump tail patch.



Winter Wonderland
by Steve Johnson

I am always amazed how these little birds survive the unpredictable Missouri winters. Their resourcefulness during tough winter conditions just shows how smart these Goldfinches and other songbirds really are. One thing I have noticed these past few winters is how appreciative they are of unfrozen water. Unfrozen water can be a challenge for birds to find during the cold of winter. Part of my conservation plan for my backyard birds is to always provide unfrozen water for them with my heated birdbath. When I fill the birdbath up it takes no time at all for my backyard birds to notice, and they fly right in for a drink and a bath. I understand that our Missouri birds have survived long before the invention of the heated birdbath, but if I can make it a little easier for them in the sometimes harsh winter weather, then I am happy knowing I helped them in a small way.

Thank you, contest photographers and judges!

New Photographers

Bob Estes
Debby Fantz
Eric Wilhoit
Karen Davis
Kathleen Henrikson
Mark Gutchen
Renant Cheng
Reva Dow
Scott Villmer
Sharon Takade
Steve Johnson

Returning Photographers

Amy E. Peterson
Amy Watts
Clay Guthrie
James Gorski
Jerlyn Jones
Jun Zuo
Kyle O'Bryan
Lauralyn Fry
Mark Ramsey
Marvin De Jong

Michael O'Keefe
Paul Moffett
Paul Winn
Thomas E Tucker
Tony Harris
William D. Blackledge

Youth Photographers

Chelsea Mosteller
Jacob Walter
Logan M Hutchison
William Huber

Contest Judges

David Stonner, Missouri Department of Conservation
staff photographer

Karen Miller, Little Studio and Gallery Artist

Steve Garr, Birds-I-View store owner and Missouri
Bluebird Society Founder

Dana Ripper & Ethan Duke, MRBO Directors