

The Rectrix

A Newsletter of the Missouri River Bird Observatory

Volume 13 No. 1, Spring 2023
Special Photography Contest Edition



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



MISSION

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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Welcome to the photo contest issue of *The Rectrix*

In this newsletter, we present to you 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. This year we had two categories - Conservation and General. Photos were judged on originality, artistic and technical merit, composition and, in the Conservation category, the photos' descriptions. Please note that the photos, photo titles and descriptions are published as received from the photographer; MRBO staff make only minor edits in the interest of space and layout.

In 2022, we received **133 photos from 60 photographers!** Of these, 68 were entered in the Conservation category, while 65 were submitted to the General category. We're very excited that the contest was our second best year yet!

Sometimes we are asked what we do with all these photos. The answer is, a lot! Photos from the contest are used in presentations, reports, social media posts, and other educational venues regularly. On each of these occasions, MRBO uses the photographs to inspire and engage people in the appreciation of our Missouri birds. We hope that this engagement leads folks to consider conservation - both in their daily lives and in a big picture way. When MRBO uses the photographer's photos, credit is always given so people know who took the photo.

We are very thankful to Wood and Huston Bank of Marshall, which has sponsored the contest every year since its origins in 2016. The Bank provides all the prize money, which allows 100% of the proceeds from contest entries to be earmarked entirely for MRBO's education and outreach programs.



Hope is The Thing With Feathers
The Missouri River Bird Observatory's
Seventh Annual Missouri Bird Photography Contest
November 1st - December 31st, 2022



2016-2022
Sponsored by



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Conservation Grand Prize Winner



Just off the Highway by Chrissie Chapman

For a few days this September, these three American Avocets visited a small makeshift pond just off the highway in St. Charles County. This picture was taken in the early morning when they rested together. Most of the time, they moved as a pack over the course of a week or so, going from one end of a long narrow stretch of water to the other. The place they had landed, basically a low spot in a soybean field, felt more like an abandoned ditch than a pond, but it held a surprising number of fish and other small, aquatic creatures. As cars flew past and tractors lumbered by, the Avocets moved methodically through the shallow water, their temporary home, searching for, finding, and then quickly throwing back their food. American avocets need healthy wetlands, and drought and agricultural runoff can be problematic for them. These delicate birds did their best in this narrow stretch of water off of a highway in the middle of corn and soybean fields, but we need to make sure we protect our wetlands so that they always have a safe place to land, to hunt, and to thrive.

Winning Photographs



First Place Winner

Daddy's Home
by David Seidensticker



Second Place Winner

Building Dream Home
by Hang Chen

During the spring, I watched barn swallows busy at work building their homes. They picked material from a puddle of muddy water by Longview Lake. They never seemed to get tired.



Third Place Winner

Snow Geese at Sunset
by Bill Palmer

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge. Hundreds of thousands of migrating Snow Geese and other waterfowl stop at Loess Bluffs NWR near Mound City, MO for a well-deserved rest on their annual migration route and a chance to help farmers by feeding on waste grain in their fields. Refuges play a key role in the conservation of birds and other species, and they offer an opportunity to observe and appreciate this grand spectacle of nature. For me, watching the geese lift off the water in the morning or spiral down at sunset is a world-class miracle of nature, comparable to the wildebeest migration in Africa, caribou migration in Alaska, or the Sandhill Crane migration in Nebraska. On this March day, there were more than one million geese on the refuge giving true meaning to the phrase "Hope is the Thing with Feathers."

Youth Photograph Entries



Youth First Place Winner
Cheeky Chickadee
by Zita Robertson

Youth Second Place Winner
Resting Common Nighthawk
by Kade Bruce



A Springtime Guest
by Zita Robertson

Conservation Entries



A curious Green Heron exploring the banks of the Eleven Point River in the Mark Twain NF
by Rachel Hendricks

This photo was taken this past summer at one of my favorite birding spots along the Eleven Point River. I come to this spot regularly during the spring and summer and quietly sit for hours watching the warblers and water birds canvassing the trees, shrubs and shorelines. I imagine what it looked like here in the distant past and wonder whether generations of birds will continue to return here each year to raise their young. These quiet moments afford both a unique glimpse into their daily lives, as well as a clear and pressing understanding of how disruptive we humans can be to these sensitive environments.

Angle Wings
by Elaine Collins

This is the first year I have decided to go to the rivers and check out what a bird migration looks like. It is amazing to witness and think about how far these birds travel and how synchronized it all looks. I was surprised by the sounds, the splash upon take offs and landings and the joyous outcry of flight together. Each time I planned to observe for an hour or so and ended up spending the whole day.



American Tree Sparrow
by Wm Kirk Suedmeyer

Although it may be considered "just a sparrow", to me the American tree sparrow is a stunning blend of chestnut, black, grey, brown, white and yellow, a perfect camouflage which epitomizes its place in the environment. Couple that with its beautiful song and activity and it is Americas sparrow. Though the population is estimated at 26 million, the sparrow has declined by 53% between 1970 and 2014 (Nagel et al). While other, more glamorous endangered species get all the attention, many are seldom seen, and this little bird can be seen by everyone in Missouri. When you see one, marvel at it, respect its place, and remember what happened to the 3 billion passenger pigeons or the Seaside sparrow; nod your head, and let it be :)





Bald Eagle Among Red
by Robert Barth

Bald eagles have flourished under federal protections and in 2007, removed from the endangered and threatened species list. One of my favorite Missouri winter activities is photographing bald eagles. I recently acquired a telephoto lens and captured this image of a mature bald eagle at Loess Bluff National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) near Mound City, Missouri. I found myself surrounded by thousands of red-winged blackbirds. The noise was thunderous. I was able to capture the eagle surrounded by red-winged blackbirds and still maintain the focus on the eagle. The photograph was taken in the low light of the evening on November 11, 2021. The remarkable rebound of the bald eagle has occurred within my lifetime. The commitment and partnership of all stakeholders has preserved our nation's symbol for the years to come.

Bald Eagle Watching for Prey
by Kandi Harrison

The Bald Eagle eats dead animals and helps clean up the environment, they also kill the old, and weak so only the healthiest survive



Barred Connect
by Devin Savage

Anytime I make eye contact with an animal I take it as an opportunity to reflect on my connection with the natural world. Owls are especially good at forcing this introspection. I believe it has to do with their quiet and confident presence in the woods. Combined with an unrelenting stare from their massive eyes creates a huge sense of being seen. Something that can both frighten and comfort you. What I often feel and think about in these moments is a combination of humility and connection. It reminds of my place as an individual within a population of a species that's one part of the ecosystem. And that owl looking back at me is also an individual within a species that makes up another part of the ecosystem. It's humbling to remember that none of us are exempt from the natural world around us. We are all born to and die from the same Earth and water. Connecting us with the birds, reptiles and mammals that inhabit the landscape in and around us. It's a reminder that we must find sustainable practices to best thrive with all the living beings in our collective home. That's why I love sharing these intimate moments with wild animals. That's what this barred owl is reminding me. In a way it's like the entire world, past and present, is looking back at me through those deep dark eyes.





Black Vulture, Landing in 1, 2, 3...
by Robert Niemeier

This is a photograph of a pair of Black Vultures, they help the environment by eating large carrion. They are rarely seen near St. Louis, but they have been expanding their range. Their eyesight isn't very good, so they follow Turkey Vultures and follow them when they find food. Eating carrion is helpful because it limits the spread of disease.

Carolina Chickadee
by Robert Barth

Missouri songbirds provide essential service to our ecosystem. They disperse seeds, consume insects and pollinate plants and our gardens. The Carolina chickadee is one of two species of chickadee in Missouri. Chickadees chirp an alarm when danger approaches providing an early warning for other songbirds. They are plentiful in my backyard. I took this image on February 23, 2021 at Maramec Spring Park near St. James. Maramec Spring Park is operated by the James Foundation.



Catch of the Day
by Dan Getman

Our national bird, the Bald Eagle, has made a tremendous comeback over the last few decades. As cold weather arrives in the northern states, they migrate south and congregate near dams where fish are plentiful. This provides a unique opportunity to observe these majestic birds, their behaviors and how they interact with each other.



Catch of the Day
by Douglas Duncan

For the past 70 years I have had photography as a hobby. I have not sold any photos but enjoy donating them to charities for fundraising. Now being semi-retired I have had more time to devote to my hobby. Two weeks ago I spent two days in the woods by a lake where I had seen bald eagles recently and finally got a photo of an eagle with a fish. We never saw bald eagles in Missouri when I was growing up here. In college at the University of Missouri I took a course in wildlife conservation. I decided then that if I did not get into medical school I would become a wildlife conservation agent and photograph and study wildlife. Since I did get

into medical school photography remained a hobby. I welcome the opportunity to share my wildlife photos and hope they will be an inspiration to preserve this valuable resource for our state and country.



ChickaCare
by Julie Brown Patton

Who knew that small chickadees are one of the most important pest exterminators in Missouri's forest and orchards? Personally, I like that they eat spider eggs. Gardeners owe gratitude to chickadees, who feast on insects that target surrounding trees, including ants, aphids, beetles, caterpillars and moths. We've found them to be curious birds among the rest.



Cleared for Take-off
by Steven Pearson

The Common Merganser is a fish-eating duck common to all of North America and northern Europe. The hooked and serrated bill of the Common Merganser assist this large duck in capturing and holding fish. Their short wings require that the duck get a "running start" in order to take off from water. Populations of Common Mergansers are considered stable.



Catch of the Day
by Hang Chen

At Lake Jacomo, I observed an osprey trying unsuccessfully to pull up a big fish a few times before this attempt. I was so surprised that there is such a beautiful fish. After some research, I'm pretty sure it is a hybrid striped bass although I should have asked the experts. A great catch!

Cooper's Hawk on a Winter Day
by David Butel

As the weather gets cold, we may be tempted to stay inside our homes. However, if we brave the cold and snow, we can see wonderful things like this Cooper's Hawk after a winter snow.



Daddy's Home
by Steven Pearson

This stunning Wood Duck drake atop a man-made wood duck nesting box is one of the most colorful Missouri birds. Wood ducks are native to the eastern half of the US and experienced serious population declines in the late 1800s due to the use of its plumage in making women's hats as well as habitat loss. Improved conservation efforts and the introduction of man-made nesting boxes in the 1930s have resulted in dramatic population increases. The wood duck population is now considered stable.



Dreaming of Autumn
by Alex Ezell

A male Eastern Towhee perched in regal fashion and coordinating with his environment.

Eagle Eye
by Robert Barth



This is perhaps my favorite image. I captured this image of a mature bald eagle on January 12, 2021, above the Spring Fork Lake near Sedalia, Missouri. The lake is part of MDC's Community Assistance Program (CAP). With support of the MDC CAP, the Spring Fork Lake fishery offers pelicans bountiful fish before freezing over in the winter. I have viewed more than fifty bald eagles at one time at Spring Fork Lake.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, forty years ago, our national symbol, the bald eagle, was in danger of extinction throughout most of its range. Habitat destruction and degradation, illegal shooting, and the contamination of its food source, largely as a consequence of DDT, decimated the eagle population. Habitat protection afforded by the Endangered Species Act, the federal government's banning of DDT, and conservation actions taken by the American public have helped bald eagles make a remarkable recovery. Bald eagles were removed from the endangered species list in August 2007 because their populations recovered sufficiently, and their population has continued to grow in the years since. Bald eagles are a fantastic conservation success story, a pride of the American people.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act continue to provide protections not only for bald eagles, but golden eagles, too. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works to assure the preservation of both species of eagles. Viewing of eagles is a favorite pastime for both Missouri residents and non-residents during the winter. I have volunteered to assist with Eagle Days at the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in southeast Missouri.



Eagle Ice
by Robert Barth

I captured this image of a mature bald eagle on January 3, 2021, in Moniteau County near Tipton, Missouri. A sheet of ice had glazed the area trees following a large winter storm. The eagle was perched on top of a large oak tree.

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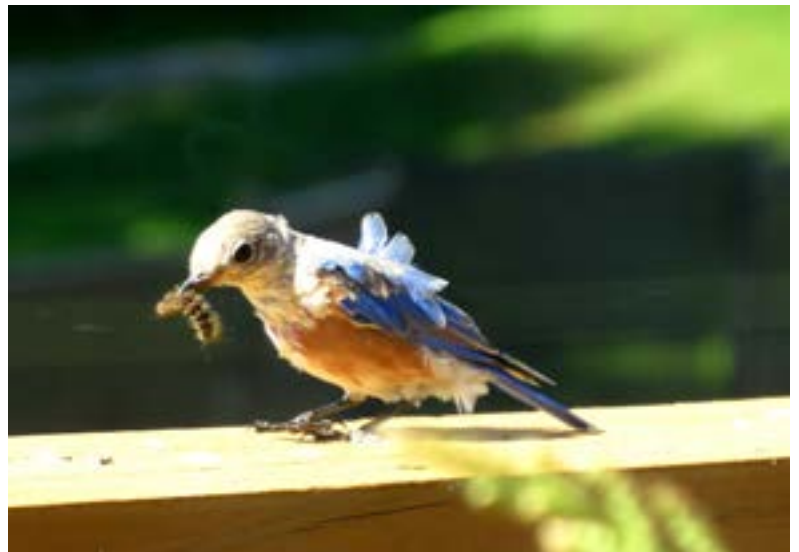
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Early Bird
by Teresa Etheridge

Easter Bluebirds are the reason I became an amateur birder and photographer. The moment I saw the bright flashes of blue in the sky I was hooked! I had to know what that bird was! In learning about Bluebirds my interest grew towards recognizing and learning as much as possible about the many native birds of Missouri. This photo captures the awe and joy I feel each and every time I see the beautiful Eastern Bluebird of Missouri. They never cease to inspire me!



Female American Goldfinch
by Robert Barth

I captured this image of a female American Goldfinch on May 17, 2021, in my backyard. I maintain an adjacent lot with native plants. I learned from the MDC that the survival of American goldfinches is closely linked to thistles and other composite-family flowers: Their breeding time corresponds with the seed availability from those plants, and they use the down from the seeds as nesting material. This bird is a favorite among backyard bird watchers. They are late nesters and gather nesting materials from thistles. Annually I plant coneflowers, sunflowers and zinnias for the goldfinch.



Fishing at the Lake
by Juan Aguilar

I found this photo interesting because you get to see a Great blue heron fishing, I live near a lake so I'm quite used to see him here but for some people that might be pretty awesome and interesting to see how they fish and the way they do it. And I think its nice to capture these moments, these routines animals do in the wilderness.

Gimme That Fish
by Dan Getman

Our national bird, the Bald Eagle, has made a tremendous comeback over the last few decades. As cold weather arrives in the northern states, they migrate south and congregate near dams where fish are plentiful. This provides a unique opportunity to observe these majestic birds, their behaviors and how they interact with each other. They often try to steal fish from each other.



Golden Flashlight
by Steve Johnson



While going on one of my normal birding routes, I suddenly heard a loud and clear "tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet tsweet" in the distance. Like most birders, we tend to bird with our ears before our eyes, and this is what led me to this stunning Prothonotary Warbler. Every time I see this bird, I am stunned by their beauty, and it reminds me why I love birding so much. This male was singing his heart out on a branch overlooking a nice swampy area, perfect habitat indeed. After taking a few photos of him singing, I simply sat and appreciated the moment. It got me to thinking how we can help these birds so our children and grandchildren can appreciate moments like these in nature.

For Prothonotary Warblers, it's all about habitat. They love swamps so much they're often simply referred to as "swamp warblers". We have to be stewards for them and protect the habitats they use and prevent further habitat destruction. Protect their current habitats by supporting conservation areas and wildlife refuges. Inform landowners and builders of why swamps are so vital for them and other wildlife. Volunteer and donate when you can. Buy certified bird friendly coffee. I always tell myself and others that small actions like these can make BIG positive changes to these birds' futures.

Got Here First
by Cathy Wilhelmi

Watching a backyard feeder is so amazing. There is much to learn about bird species and behavior. This provides hours of entertainment. It also encourages learning about the best ways to keep these birds healthy. Conservation starts in your own yard.



Hanging Around Without a Care in the World
by Kyle O'Bryan

The reason for the title is because I took a picture of this majestic bird where I work. This big female was just hanging out watching us go by on our gator and did not fly off at all. We all went outside to watch her and she just watched right back. I finally went home on my lunch break and got my camera. Got this wonderful picture and she still was sitting there without a care in the world. I love watching these beautiful birds!

Her Favorite Nectar
by Douglas Duncan

For the past 70 years I have had photography as a hobby. I have not sold any photos but enjoy donating them to charities for fundraising. In college at the University of Missouri I took a course in wildlife conservation. I decided then that if I did not get into medical school I would become a wildlife conservation agent and photograph and study wildlife. Since I did get into medical school photography remained a hobby. I welcome the opportunity to share my wildlife photos and hope they will be an inspiration to preserve this valuable resource for our state and country.



Keeping Watch
by Chrissie Chapman

One Great horned owl nestling looks out while the other one naps. Their nest is in a heavily populated area, with cars driving by on both sides of their tree, and people walking past them throughout the day. They have some protection from human intrusion because their nest is so high and tucked into the center of old, thick branches. They're also protected because of their incredible camouflage. Most people strolling past are completely unaware that just above their heads, two very fluffy siblings are being raised by their Great horned owl parents. They have carved out for themselves, in the midst of this busy thoroughfare, a hidden spot of nature to raise their young. As the parents keep watch over their progeny, and the nestling keeps watch over its sibling, we too need to keep watch over the wild places where nature can thrive, and protect the small wild spots that exist even in the busiest of places.



Kentucky Warbler
by Steve Johnson

I couldn't believe my eyes when this male Kentucky Warbler popped up in the open during one of my birding hikes a few years ago in the spring. It was a special moment for me since they are often a bird that's more often heard than seen due to their secretive nature. After getting this photo of the handsome little guy, I read up on Kentucky Warblers and wanted to learn all about them. I quickly realized that they are mature bottomland forest specialists, often staying low in dense thickets. A nice contrast to the other warblers that stay high in the treetops and give us all the dreaded "warbler neck"!

Learning about these birds' preferred habitats, I wanted to know how to protect them so they can thrive for generations. My main takeaway was for landowners to keep areas "messy". Don't eradicate shrubs and other thickets near woodlands that they desperately depend on for survival. Learn about native plants and help prevent spread of invasive species. Also, support your local conservation areas and wildlife refuges by volunteering or donations! These wild lands are essential for Kentucky Warblers as well as all other types of wildlife.

Let the Sun Shine In
by Chrissie Chapman

There is such a sense of beauty and elegance to an American Avocet. When it hunts, it skims its beak smoothly across the shallow water, back and forth, finding small bugs and fish to eat. When it rests, it preens by rubbing its head and beak on its uropygial gland, then spreads the protective oils on its feathers. This photo captures that moment. It looks like the avocet is posing elegantly, almost like a ballet dancer, looking straight up and soaking in the morning light. It shows that even simple, everyday activities of birds captured in a moment of time can show the grace of our natural world.





Leucistic Cardinal
by Cathy Wilhelmi

A leucistic Cardinal visits my feeder each winter. I do not see it the rest of the year. I wonder if it is the same one. I hope so. The bird is very shy. This inherited condition must make it harder for the bird to survive. I hope the conservation efforts of adding habitat and native plants help. It is a wonder to see.

Lunch Time
by Ingrid Palmore

Conservation is very important since it means managing, caring and protecting our natural resources as well as keeping a balance between species and nature.

While walking around the Waterfall Park in Independence Mo, this Great Blue Heron caught my attention. The heron was moving very slowly as if stalking its prey. The heron caught its prey, however the fish initially got away just for a moment before the heron successfully retrieved lunch. I hope this photograph shows that with maintaining and protecting our natural resources, we won't lose the resources that are needed to sustain wildlife and nature.

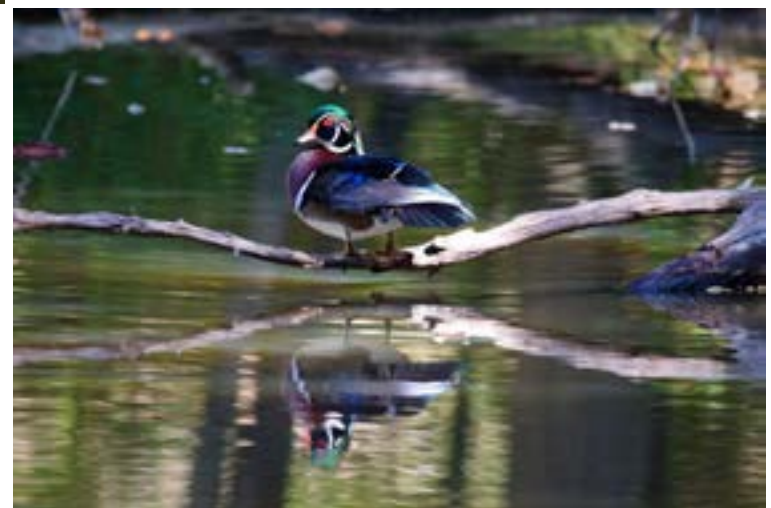


Male American Goldfinch Among the Blossoms
by Robert Barth

I captured this image of a male American Goldfinch on April 18, 2021, in my backyard on the blooming red bud tree. I maintain an adjacent lot with native plants. I learned from the MDC that the survival of American goldfinches is closely linked to thistles and other composite-family flowers. Their breeding time corresponds with the seed availability from those plants, and they use the down from the seeds as nesting material. This bird is a favorite among backyard bird watchers. They are late nesters and gather nesting materials from thistles. Annually I plant coneflowers, sunflowers and zinnias for the goldfinch.

Male Wood Duck
by Mark Ramsey

We have a pond that wood ducks frequent in the spring and fall, each year I have noticed that the numbers have increased. I have nesting boxes up on this pond, but they prefer hollow trees along our creek. I have watched them for hours, this pond is surrounded by oaks that produce acorns and the wood ducks love them, they will feed for a while and then find a log or branch like this one and preen for a long time. With the pond surrounded by timber the sun sometimes filters thru just right and puts a spotlight on them. We have also created a small wetland in our creek bottom that they will use from time to time.





Mesmerized by Your Eyes
by Tiffany Door

Conservation can be as simple as leaving areas of untouched land. The small area of woods in our back yard provides cover and homes for many bird species. I have been lucky to listen to owls, watch woodpeckers, and for the last three years watch our local hawk's rear young. This picture was special because it made me notice that we are hosting more species than I ever realized.

Migrating Cedar Waxwings
by David Butel

Spring migration can bring unexpected surprises. For several days in May, a large flock of over 100 Cedar Waxwings was in my backyard, feeding on berries and bathing in the stream that runs through my backyard.



Migrating Palm Warbler
by David Butel

Like many species of birds, warblers can travel thousands of miles from their winter homes to their nesting sites in the spring. It is a treat to be able to observe these beautiful birds as they migrate through our area each spring and may inspire us to do what we can to help protect them.

Moonlight Flight
by Robert Barth

I captured these Greater White-fronted geese during my first visit to the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) on November 11, 2021 in the late afternoon. I was amazed to learn from the Missouri Department of Conservation that the white-fronted goose has a circumpolar (global) distribution, breeding in northern latitude tundra in North America and all across Eurasia. They migrate to warmer climates in winter, including along parts of the Gulf Coast. This means

some of them fly through Missouri. As with many other geese, once mated, pairs stay together for years and migrate in family groups. I viewed many of the geese in flight and I'm thankful that conservation practices have resulted in a healthy population.



My Snag - Great Blue Heron
by Aaron Jungbluth

This regal Great Blue Heron was not giving up its snag in the middle of the wetland! With its specially adapted neck vertebrae, it can coil its neck into some unusual shapes, making it all the better to strike unsuspecting fish prey in the water. Great Blues have become very well adapted to human-created water features, like subdivision ponds, city park waterways, warm water discharges of power plants in the winter, and even small backyard fish ponds (much to the chagrin of the homeowners!?!). However, I find it most satisfying to see a Great Blue Heron in a wonderfully restored natural wetland where it is free to live out its life in peace.



Northern Cardinal in a Winter Blizzard
by David Butel

While we stay in our homes to stay warm during blizzards, our feathered friends don't have that luxury. Providing things like bird feeders and a heated water source can help them survive the cold and snow.



Painted Sunrise
by Ethan Hoggard

With improved habitats on some conservation and privately funded public lands, it is nice to see a small population of Painted Buntings, which I think are Missouri's most beautiful bird, nesting and thriving in a small location in the swamps of southeast Missouri.



Pheasant Rooster in the Snow
by Kandi Harrison

The pheasant was with several others, hens and roosters hiding in and out of the grasses as they fed. I don't normally see pheasant, so this was a treat. They help spread wildflowers and grasses which also serve other bird species.



Pelican Lineup
by Kevin Sullivan

These American White Pelicans *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* were photographed on the Upper Grand River Arm of Harry S Truman Lake in October 2022. As I quietly approached this large group of pelicans, they exhibited what must be considered an "alarm behavior" - they raised up their large orange bills as if at attention. I was struck by how every one of them turned in the exact same direction and all their bills seemed to be perfectly aligned. That's why I entitled this image "pelican lineup".

American White Pelicans migrate through this part of the Midwest in Spring and Fall. Numbers are particularly high in late September and October as they feed heavily on gizzard shad and other aquatic organisms. They are truly a gregarious species and it's not uncommon to see groups of 100-200 birds huddled up together on mud flats or shallow water islands.

With their large, webbed feet, they're a bit clumsy on land, but when they do decide to fly, they are some of the most graceful fliers imaginable. Larger than even a bald eagle, their broad wings make them coordinated fliers. They can glide quietly just inches above the surface of the water or soar in large groups high in the sky, riding thermal currents, often moving in wide circular patterns.

I've been admiring and learning about American White Pelicans for 20 years and never get tired of watching them. I'm looking forward to their return in the Spring, and I hope this image will inspire more to get out and observe these magnificent birds.

Red-headed Woodpecker
by Ronald Gaddis

Conservation should be everyone's concern, whether it is water, energy, or other natural resources. As stewards of our world we have to behave in a manner that maintains our ecosystem. For example, exhausting our natural forest to provide for larger farms is important to aid in treating world hunger but must be done in such a way that the organisms that maintain the balance of Nature is not disrupted.

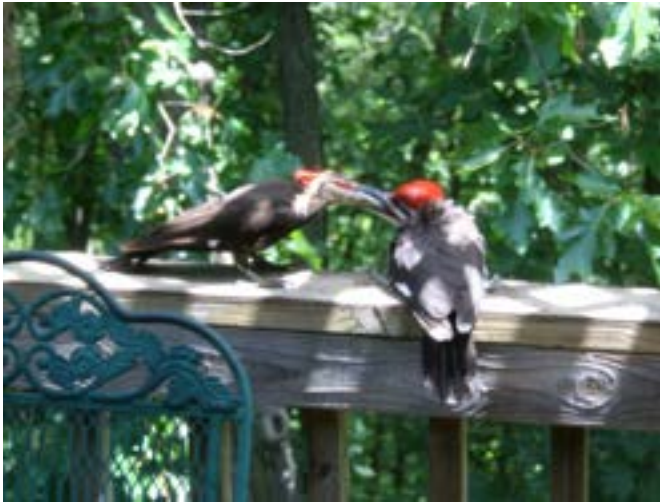
Removing forest for urbanization and farming impacts many animal species by removing their habitats. One species I am concerned with is the Red-Headed Woodpecker, (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). I remember a time when I could sit on my deck in the morning and hear the drumming and calls of numerous Red-headed woodpeckers all while enjoying a fresh cup of coffee. Not so much anymore! I am lucky to see and hear one on occasion.

Their numbers have been declining for some time. The exact cause is unknown. Studies have shown that there has been a shift in the host range for this species, actually a decline. A number of factors such as climate change, deforestation and urbanization have been suggested as the cause in the decline of red-headed woodpeckers in the

Midwest. Deforestation either for farming or urbanization removes the trees that birds require for nesting and for shelter from predators or inclement weather. In addition, increased atmospheric temperature associated with climate change can impact red-headed woodpecker breeding habits, egg maturation and hatchlings, further compounding the effects of deforestation and urbanization.



I hope that we never get to a point where this magnificent bird becomes extinct. In order to prevent this from happening, a concerted effort by all of us to better manage our forest and to reduce those factors that contribute to increased atmospheric temperature. There are many things we can do individually as well as organizations that we can participate in and/or support their efforts in order to preserve our natural world.



Pileated Parenting
by James Prenger

The sight of these beautiful and uncommon relatives of the Ivory Bill feeding its young should inspire all to do what they can to try and make sure these birds do not suffer the same fate!



Searching for Next Meal
by Kandi Harrison

This owl was sitting in a tree watching for his next meal, this is good control for small animal populations.



Show of Elegance
by Hang Chen

I was in full camouflage outfit by Lake Jacomo when this great blue heron came flying directly towards me. I made a subtle motion to persuade it to change direction. In return, it showed me such an elegant pose up close.



Snack Time
by Donna Ryder

This photo shows me how important it is to remember the food chain and how all parts of the animal community play an important part.



Snow Covered Dove
by Dale Kleinschmidt

I believe this photo is an important reminder that conservation isn't just about protecting the large, exciting wildlife species that are in the headlines. Sometimes we get stuck in the mindset that wildlife is something that exists "out there" away from where we live. Wildlife is still around us every day, and all it takes is for you to go outside in your backyard to reconnect with it.



Spotted Sandpiper
by Jacob Walter

The Spotted Sandpiper is found throughout Missouri near freshwater ponds, streams, and lakes. Simpson Park, where this sandpiper was photographed, hosts an amazing variety of ecosystems. The lake, ponds, and streams attract ducks, geese, and even sandpipers such as this one. Woodpeckers, nuthatches, cardinals, and more can be found throughout the extensive woodland at the park. The open field fosters many

other songbirds. Protecting and conserving these parks is crucial for all bird species because they are interconnected and interdependent.

Standing Tall - Bobolink
by Aaron Jungbluth

Sadly, we have lost 3 billion birds, yes billion with a "B", since 1970. The grouping of birds that have been hit the hardest were the birds that live in the grasslands. Our family has personally witnessed this decline. My Mom remembers hearing the bubbly, random song of the Bobolink at nearby farm pastures when she was a young girl in Ohio. She has not heard a Bobolink in decades. However, we are so proud here in Missouri to have the Missouri Department of Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, the Missouri Prairie Foundation, and other organizations maintaining and restoring excellent grassland habitat for Bobolinks and all of the other birds and wildlife that call grasslands home! Like this Bobolink standing on a tall perch of a Bunch Flower in the middle of Pawnee Prairie Conservation Area, we can all stand proud of our conversation efforts! To learn more about the decline and what you can do to help the birds,



check out 3billionbirds.org.



Lady Redstart
by Steve Johnson

While most female warblers are overshadowed by their brighter, more vivid male counterparts, I can't help but be in awe every time I see a female American Redstart and her subtle beauty. To me, she is the queen of the warbler universe and deserves just as much attention as the rest of the males.

For conservation purposes, I believe it is important for birders and photographers alike to learn how to identify females as much as the males. If you focus on just one sex, you're overlooking half of the bird population, and negatively affecting count totals for vitally important conservation minded

websites such as Ebird. Although identifying females can be challenging, isn't that what makes birding so much fun to begin with? I think so!

Surveying His Territory
by Elaine Collins

Native grasslands next to the river ways provide the important hunting areas the raptors require and provide a natural balance for wildlife. I love that efforts have been taken and continue to be taken to protect and/or restore these natural environments for our wildlife.



Take Off! The Race Is On!
by Kyle O'Bryan

This was another photo I had taken at work at the beginning of 2022 on my lunch break. It is nice to see more and more eagles around and it is important to help them if ever needed. But seeing them sitting together is so awesome! I don't want to ever get too close because I want them to be in their natural comfortable state and if they fly off like this it is fine. I will always enjoy taking pictures of these magnificent creatures. Their importance in conservation is huge because they are one of the most vital animals because they are like turkey vultures and eat a lot of the dead animals around the area.

Tennessee Warbler
by David Seidensticker

A late-year hatchling Tennessee Warbler scans the underside of a leaf as it seeks sustenance for its journey to wintering grounds in the Neotropics. Unfortunately, his destination area has undergone an estimated 10% habitat loss in the last 20 years alone [<https://doi.org/10.1093/botlinnean/boab061>]. That loss combined with substantial fragmentation of the remaining forests brings this region under tremendous threat for loss of biodiversity. Although many warbler species that winter in the Neotropics are under threat from habitat loss there, the Tennessee Warbler is relatively fortunate due to its ability to adapt to a variety of habitats and food sources. Unlike many of its relatives, it has had only small declines in numbers over the last 50 years and is rated 10 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score— a low concern rating, according to the All About Birds website. That doesn't mean there's no cause for worry, but they are in better shape than many of their peers.



That Sure Is a Red Eye! – Red-eyed Vireo
by Aaron Jungbluth

Even though the Red-eyed Vireo is one of the most common summer birds populating the Eastern United States' forests, they are seldom seen. High in the tree canopies tirelessly searching for caterpillars to eat, they are out of sight. However, you know they are there with their tireless, non-stop "here I am, over here, where are you?" segmented songs. It amazes my wife and I how they still have the energy to sing after the long flight from the Amazon basin in South America where they spend the winter! Keeping the forests healthy with big trees and lots of caterpillars and insects is critical to keeping this summer resident of ours flourishing.



The Lesser-Known Oriole – Orchard Oriole
by Aaron Jungbluth

With its jet-black and brick-red coloration, Orchard Orioles love the water edges of creeks, rivers and ponds. While mainly eating fruit and insects on their short summer stay here (potentially only late-May to mid-July), they are an extremely beneficial pollinator in Central America and northern South America during the rest of the year! Even though we call these "our birds," they spend more time in the southern regions as they do in Missouri. Orchard Orioles are true ambassadors for us to not look at the world as just our own backyard, but more globally in protecting their entire range for the benefits they provide nature and us on both ends of their journey.

The Surfing Pelican
by Robert Barth

I captured this image of an American White Pelican on January 3, 2021, on the Spring Fork Lake near Sedalia, Missouri. The lake is part of MDC's Community Assistance Program (CAP).

I learned from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) that their winter territory is located just south of Missouri. Normally, pelicans depart Missouri towards the end of November. Pelicans do not breed in Missouri. Fortunately,

I have viewed pelicans on both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers in Missouri. With support of the MDC CAP, the Spring Fork Lake fishery offers pelicans bountiful fish before freezing over in the winter.



The Swans Among Us
by Amy E. Petersen

If the opportunity to see such majestic beauty were not available through places like the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, one may never see Trumpeter Swans gathering in great numbers and frolicking in the beautiful waters the refuge provides on one of the largest migratory paths in the area.



Trumpeter Swan in the Storm
by Paul Moffett

The trumpeter swan coming out of a storm reminds me of how the species was rescued from the edge of extinction. It took concerned citizens, conservation organizations and government working as a team to reintroduce the trumpeter back into the lower 48 states. While the trumpeter appears to be repopulating nicely this is not true of many birds. Changes in habitat, warming, toxins and many other factors are negatively affecting many avian species. It is important that we all become involved in conservation efforts to reverse these trends. Individuals interested should volunteer at Conservation Organization, financially support organizations involved in bird protection and contact politicians and encourage them to support laws that protect birds and all wildlife.

Visitor
by Mark Ramsey

I took this picture on our farm during a fairly heavy snow.

We manage our 120 acres for wildlife, all wildlife. We have 3 acres of wildflowers and plant around 10 acres of food plots for all species... We have 80 acres of oak hardwoods that provide cover and additional food in the form of acorns. This Cardinal had been feeding in the corn and bean plot and these bucks walked out... You can't predict what wildlife will do, but I sure was hoping I could get a picture of the deer and the cardinal in one frame. I took several but liked this one the best. I like to think on a cold snowy winter day we are providing habitat for not only the deer and turkey that are on our place but as this shows for all species and hopefully making a difference in their survival.



Watch Out!
by Amy Watts

While I know that it is very common to see Killdeer in parking lots, it is always somewhat shocking to see them scurrying about amongst the cars in this very busy location. They seem to hold their own in this crazy, concrete world! I have seen them and their nests in flowerbeds mere inches from tires that could disrupt their whole breeding season. I've seen them dodging cars on foot and flying off as trucks come speeding past. I've also seen people hold up 3 or 4 cars to let them and their young pass. When the facility finished out construction they planted native trees, shrubs and plants around their entire campus and parking lot to help restore a small portion of habitat that was lost. It has become a place to shelter, feed and nest for many native and migratory birds in our area. It is one of my go to birding locations and the nature vs. concrete setting is an excellent reminder of how crucial it is to always consider nature and all of our feathered, winged friends when expanding for the human good.



Whistling Duck
by Mark Ramsey

I took this picture of this black bellied Whistling duck this summer in Chariton County. Its the second year in a row that I have taken pictures of them. They breed primarily in the southernmost United States, Mexico and tropical Central to south central South America. There were 6 in this group. Why they are showing up in Missouri I am not sure but my guess is it has been extremely dry in the Southwest US and they maybe pushing further north for better habitat. My hope is that like the Swans, that 10-15 years ago not be common in Missouri these Whistling Ducks become a common visitor to Missouri.

White-throated Sparrow
by Nancy Schanda

All birds are feeling the pressure of reduced habitat due to humans continuing to expand their footprint on our earth. While expansion is necessary and often positive, if we could convince people to take even the smallest steps toward saving and restoring bird habitat, it would make a significant difference for the lives of birds. Expansion can easily include fringe areas of habitat to support the bird population. Homes can plan vegetation within their yards to support birds, and even planters on a patio can be carefully planned to support birds and the ecosystem that supports them.



Winter Surprise
by Lisa Saffell

The conservation efforts I have made in my own yard, though small in comparison to larger conservation areas, has made a huge impact in my life and in the lives of the wildlife that visit my yard. I had no idea just how important it was until I watched a White-throated Sparrow forage through the leaf litter next to my patio, under the messy dried up stems of my native plantings, during a snowstorm. The sparrow was rewarded with an over-wintering moth and I was rewarded with the knowledge that even seemingly small things, like planting native plants and leaving the leaves, can have a huge impact.

Young Eagle
by Scott Villmer

I photograph the same Eagles Nest every year. This young Eagle is from that nest hatched this spring. A lot of people I talk to don't know it takes about four years for the eagle to get the white head and tail. The adult Eagles have been raising two eaglets every year. The first nest went into the river from a storm. They built another nest and it has been there for 9 years. One of the adults always does acrobats for me he must be showing off. The Conservation didn't know about the nest when I started photographing it. I sent them all the information and now it is on their register.



General Entries



A Good Morning with a Black-necked Stilt at Riverlands
by Chrissie Chapman



A Quiet Moment
by Teresa Etheridge



A winter feast for the Eastern Bluebird
by Amy E. Petersen



The Golden Hour Glow
by Autumn Gorzik

Black Throated Green Warbler
by Jamie McGuire



Black-and-white Warbler
by Michael O'Keefe



Bluebird Primp
by Maureen Murphy



Breakfast of Champions
by Chrissie Chapman



Brown and Red
by Amy Watts

Claret
by Julie Brown Patton



Cedar Waxwing in Mulberry Tree
by Jamie McGuire



Cheers!
by Amy Watts



Dickcissel Sings on Sunflower
by Jamie McGuire

Eastern Phoebe
by Michael O'Keefe



Ducks in a Row
by Mark Ramsey



Eastern Towhee Facing the Cold Winter
by Ben Caruthers



Family feedin
by Bruce Paneitz



Female Baltimore Oriole
by Mary A. Moore

Flicker by the Water
by Amy Watts



Frozen in Time
by Teresa Etheridge



Great Egret Reflection
by Juan Aguilar



Green Heron
by Juan Aguilar

Hello Little Northern Parula
by Amy Watts



Hello There
by Julie Brown Patton



Hooded Merganser
(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)
by Ronald Gaddis



Hooded Merganser
Taking Flight
by Thomas Swartz



Ice Fishing
by Julie Brown Patton



Killdeer Muddy Feet
by Scott Villmer



Loney Mallard
by Barbara Marshall



My Pond, My Rules
by Julie Brown Patton



Limpkin on the Move
by Cathy Webb



Love at First Beak
by Julie Brown Patton

Nelson's Sparrow
by Bill Davison



Northern Cardinal Taking a Bath
by Doug Thomas



Palm Warbler at Fellows Lake,
Basking in the Afternoon Sun
by Ben Caruthers



Ready, Set, Go!
by Lisa Saffell



Pileated Woodpecker Portrait
by Cathy Wilhelmi

Portrait of a Predator
by Christen Commuso



Predator Becomes Prey (Red-tailed hawk takes down
a Cooper's Hawk)
by Paul Moffett



Pink and Tan
by Amy Watts



River Stroll
by Julie Brown Patton



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Enjoying Milkweed Nectar
by Nancy Schanda



Seeing double
by Lisa Martin



Spider Lunch
by Amy Watts



Spread Your Wings
by Elaine Collins



Success!
by Lisa Saffell



Summer Tanager
by Michael O'Keefe



Summer Tanager in the Sanctuary
by Amy E. Petersen



Sunset Song
by Chelsea Mosteller



Surprise Visitor - Roseate Spoonbill
by Nancy Schanda



The Impressive Yellow-
headed Blackbird
by Debbie Fantz



The Next Generations
by Paul Moffett



The Kiss (Northern Cardinal
pair bonding)
by David Seidensticker



What's Up There
by Debbie Fantz



Swainson's Thrush
by Michael O'Keefe



Tufted Titmouse in Winter
by Ronald Gaddis



Well Good Morning
by Amy Watts



White-eyed Vireo, Eye to Eye
by Ben Caruthers



Window Sitter
by Lisa Martin

Winter's Angel
by Lisa Saffell



Thank you, contest photographers and judges!

Adult Photographers

Aaron Jungbluth
Alex Ezell
Amy E Petersen
Amy Watts
Autumn Gorzik
Barbara Marshall
Ben Caruthers
Bill Davison
Bill Palmer
Bruce Paneitz
Cathy Webb
Cathy Wilhelmi
Chelsea Mosteller
Chrissie Chapman
Christen Commuso
Dale Kleinschmidt
Dan Getman
David Butel
David Seidensticker
Debby Fantz
Devin Savage
Donna Ryder
Doug Thomas
Douglas Duncan M.D.
Elaine Collins
Ethan Hoggard
Hang Chen
Ingrid Palmore
Jacob Walter
James Prenger
Jamie McGuire
Jesse Worden
Jim Parish
Juan Aguilar
Julie Brown Patton
Kandi Harrison
Kevin Sullivan
Kyle O'Bryan
Lisa Martin
Lisa Saffell
Mark Ramsey
Mary A Moore
Maureen Murphy
Michael O'Keefe
Nancy Schanda
Paul Moffett
Rachel Hendricks
Rhonda Coleman
Robert Barth
Robert Niemeier
Ronald Gaddis

Scott Villmer
Steve Johnson
Steven Pearson
Teresa Etheridge
Thomas Swartz
Tiffany Door
Wm Kirk Suedmeyer

Youth Photographers

Kade Bruce
Zita Robertson

Contest Judges

David Stonner, Missouri Department of Conservation
staff photographer

Noppadol Paothong, Missouri Department of
Conservation staff photographer

Tina Casagrande, The New Territory founder and
publisher

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

Ethan Duke, MRBO Director





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