

THE RECTRIX

Volume 14 No. 1
Spring 2024

A Newsletter of the Missouri River Bird Observatory
Special Annual Photography Contest Edition



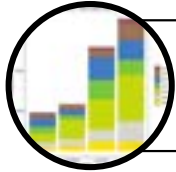
rectrix /rek-triks/ noun. (pl. -trices) any of the larger feathers in a bird's tail, used for steering in flight.

Our Mission



Conservation

To contribute to the conservation of Missouri's migratory and resident birds through scientific research, education, and conservation policy advocacy.



Science

To gather information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement conservation programs.



Education & Outreach

To provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn about species and their habitats.



Advocacy

To advocate for sound, science-based conservation policies that benefit birds, other wildlife and environmental quality.

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MRBO's Core Values

- Robust data and scientific integrity
- Time-and-cost-efficiency and use of technological innovations
- Fostering the formation of partnerships
- Embracing and encouraging equity, diversity and inclusion
- Empowering and providing opportunities for young people



In this Newsletter

Conservation Grand Prize Winner	5
Winning Photographs	6
Youth Photograph Entries	7
Conservation Entries	8
General Entries	25
Thank you, contest photographers and judges!	39

Birds, Bees, & Blooms Festival April 27th, 10am to 4pm

MRBO and the village of Arrow Rock are teaming up for our annual spring festival, Birds, Bees & Blooms! The Birds, Bees & Blooms Festival's goal is to raise awareness for animals, plants and nature in general and provide a fun, family-oriented experience in the surroundings of Arrow Rock.

We will have >30 booths with activities, educational demonstrations, crafts, food, ecological info of all kinds, and nature-related items for sale. Guided bird and wild edibles hikes around the Arrow Rock State Historic Site and adjacent Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge, fishing, presentations will take place throughout the day and even get your photo taken with a Bald Eagle!

MRBO's visitors center will be fully open, including our natural communities diorama KnOwledge Nest! Make sure to stop by and see us!



<https://www.32auctions.com/MRBOSpring2024>

MRBO Flowers, Flavors & Fun Spring Auction April 20th-28th, 2024

MRBO is excited to announce a shift from its annual fall auction to a virtual auction, to usher in the spirit of spring! This event is poised to showcase a wonderful array of items and experiences that resonate with nature enthusiasts and environmental conservation advocates alike. The move to the spring season will spotlight native plants, gardening tools and tips, and the fostering of connections between individuals and the natural world. The auction will have items for both adults and children, offering outdoor experiences from physically exhilarating to totally relaxing.

The auction will boast a diverse collection of responsibly sourced and organic products in the ever-popular category of food and beverages. Additionally, participants can bid on bird-friendly coffees, ethically produced teas, and responsibly crafted wines, emphasizing MRBO's dedication to promoting sustainability in all aspects of life.



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. Once again 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. Opinions expressed in photo descriptions are the photographer's own.

In 2023, we received 114 photos from 47 photographers! Of these, 56 photos were entered in the Conservation category, while 58 were submitted to the General category.

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 broader context.

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. The Conservation Grand Prize winner receives \$1000, First Place receives \$500, Second Place wins \$250, Third Place \$150, and the Youth Winner receives \$300.



Hope is The Thing With Feathers

The Missouri River Bird Observatory's
Eighth Annual Missouri Bird Photography Contest
November 1st - December 31st, 2023



2016-2023
Sponsored by



Conservation Grand Prize Winner



Limpkin by Jian Xu

My photo is of a Limpkin, a bird native to Florida and South America. However, in recent years, the Limpkin population has crept northwards in the face of warming temperatures and the spread of the invasive Giant Apple Snail, a limpkin food source. This photo showcases how ecosystems in nature are a complex web, and how apparent small changes (in temperature or a snail population) can lead to broad ecosystem changes. It brings up potentially tough questions about conservation: which species "deserve" conservation status? The Limpkin is "non-native" to Missouri, so is there a responsibility for us to help protect it, and if so how far should we go?



Winning Photographs

First Place Winner

Searching for Insects by Lisa Saffell

At the beginning of May, 2023, I was visiting Tower Grove Park hoping to see some migrating warblers. It was a slow morning so I walked over to where a small wildflower prairie used to be. It was now mostly grasses and weeds. I spotted movement in a small patch of butterweed (*Packera glabella*), an early blooming native perennial, and noticed that it was a male Common Yellowthroat actively foraging for insects in and around the underside of the blooms. I sat quietly to watch and photograph him as he covered every inch of every plant in that little patch. This, to me, underscores the need for us as a society to reconsider our love of turf grass and try to reduce it in favor of some early blooming native perennials. In addition, I think we need to encourage our local governments and parks departments to take an active role in converting some grassy areas to micro prairies and micro native plant gardens. We owe it to the birds and the pollinators to do everything within our power to help them so that we, and generations that follow, can enjoy our moments in time like I had with this beautiful little warbler.



Second Place Winner

White-faced Fine Dining by David Carron

This image of White-Faced Ibis feeding at Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area shows the importance of maintaining healthy wetlands, providing a safe area to rest and refuel on their migration. This helps ensure that species will flourish, and their beauty can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Third Place Winner

Break Time by Tony Cook



Youth Photograph Entries



Youth First Place Winner

Spotted Towhee by Ruth French



Conservation Entries



A Native Amongst Invasives by JL Johnson

This photo represents conservation in Missouri because it speaks to the complexity of the work before us in managing our lands. The Ruby-Throated Hummingbird brings joy to all, not just conservationists and naturalists. Hummingbirds are “spark birds” for many, they draw folks in. The specimen is perched on, and flanked by mullein, an introduced species from Europe with invasive bull thistle in the background. While many might find beauty in the juxtaposition of these three, a naturalist sees an opportunity for conversation about the challenges that introduced and invasive species pose for conservation in Missouri.

A Trio of Mallard Ducks by Karen McGillis

This photo shows the beauty of Mallard Ducks that are delightful to watch swim about and take flight. They have an attractive blue patch of feathers near the shoulder area. They benefit nature by feeding on insects and aquatic plants.



All My Turkey in a Row by Mark Ramsey

We own 120 acres in Chariton County north of Salisbury, we have owned it for 30 years. Thirty years ago we had considerably more turkey than we do now. We manage our farm for wildlife. We have almost 80 acres of white oak timber, uplands that are enrolled in conservation reserve programs with wildlife friendly grasses and plant annual food plots for many species of wildlife. This picture was from a week ago. We have around 30 turkeys hanging out in the timber eating acorns and then feed in the standing beans we have. In the middle of the beans I have created a small wetlands that is used by several species... In this case, the turkey there is a bearded hen that is one of two in the group. I was hoping for a nice reflection picture and it worked out. The turkey picture was nice but seeing the turkey on our place is the icing on the cake.



Autumn Cardinal by JL Johnson

This photo is valuable to me from a conservation perspective because it illustrates how accessible nature can be to Missourians at over 1000 MDC conservation areas across the state. This photo was taken from the bird watching area at the Anita B Gorman Discovery Center in the heart of urban Kansas City. The core of Missouri's Conservation Model is public trust. This trust is earned, in part through public engagement. MDC's convenient bird watching areas facilitate trust, kindle interest in birds and, with luck, support an interest in the state's broader conservation efforts.



Apex Pair by Tony Cook

Nesting together on Mother Earth, harmony is achieved among all creatures only by sharing the air, waterways, and interwoven ecosystems.



Balance, Vision, Courage, Wisdom, Strength by Debby Fantz

We are fortunate that hawks and other raptors live around us in rural Cooper County. This year we observed a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks court, mate, and build their nest high in a majestic oak tree. Four fluffy white chicks eventually peered from the nest and we watched them grow from nestlings to fledglings, and eventually leave their nest. The adults were experts at capturing different types of wild prey, including small mammals, birds, snakes, lizards, and frogs, and delivering them to their hungry younglings.

Raptors are top predators that play an important role in maintaining balance in their ecological community. Without predators, exploding prey populations could push out other organisms resulting in reduced species diversity and an unbalanced community. Unfortunately, raptors continue to face many threats to their survival. They are impacted by habitat loss; may die when they collide with wind turbines, powerlines, and vehicles; and are sometimes illegally killed, especially when they prey on pets, chickens, or other small livestock. Fortunately, conservationists are working to protect Red-Shouldered Hawks and other raptors, and their habitats, so wildlife-friendly neighborhoods like ours continue to exist for future generations.





Bald Eagle by Denise Palmer

On the anniversary of the signing of the ESA (Endangered Species Act) it is important to note that conservation is not only our job as stewards of nature. We share this planet with many animals that strive to conserve their own existence as shown in this photo of a Bald Eagle defending his dinner from a Red-tailed Hawk. All creatures must be given the opportunity to live their lives with minimal human interference.

Bald Eagle by Paul Moffett

The Bald Eagle is a reminder that the Endangered Species Act of 1973 is now 50 years old. The act has given conservationists the tools needed to protect the Bald Eagle and many other birds. Many species have rebounded from near extinction under the umbrella of this act. Yet it is a constant battle to keep this piece of legislation and other protection laws on the books. Keep the eagles and other birds flying by reminding your politicians of the importance of this legislation.



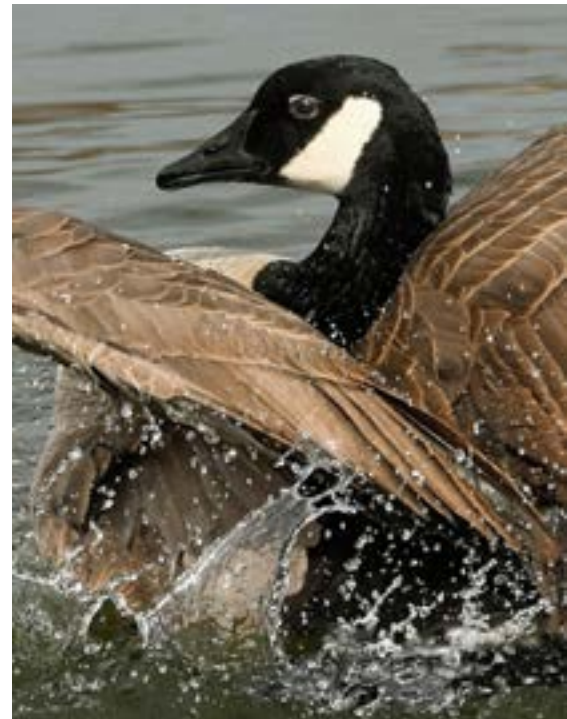
Barn Swallow in the Rain by Jerlyn Jones

I was captivated by this little Barn Swallow sitting in the rain. The drops of water on the fence made me think about how important it is that the birds have good habitats and food sources to thrive. I hope everyone can build a deeper appreciation for nature and conservation.



Bathing Canada Goose by Karen McGillis

Canada Geese graze on vegetation, and also eat worms, snails and mice. I love watching them fly in V-shaped groups.





Birds Eye View Tells It All By Stephen Weiss

Photo used to show photography students depth of field and that "reading" an eye on people and animals shows lots of information. See the flash, photographer and photographers' positions by looking at the reflection!



Birds in Flight by Jennifer Harrison

Birds in flight are awe inspiring. They show off their power and connection to each other as they fly in formation.



Botanical Ducks by Cathy Wilhelmi

I went to visit the Chihuly glass exhibit at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The glass is beautiful. A crowd was around one lily pond that contained Chihuly glass. As I got closer it was this duck and duckling that had everyone's attention. I thought it was amazing to view the beauty of the glass and the tenderness of the ducks. I find it important to note how people are drawn to the birds and how this connection is so strong. We have to take advantage of the connection to keep all birds safe and healthy.

Brave Birds by David Carron

I read a quote that says, "Brave birds still fly through fog."

This image of the swans was taken after sunset as the birds were descending out of the fog as a snowstorm was just clearing. The image conveys both the bravery and endurance these birds must have in order to successfully navigate their migration. It is important from a conservation viewpoint that we provide sustainable habitat that allows protection, rest, and food sources to make this a continued success for future generations to witness.





Camouflage by Cathy Wilhelmi

This heron was standing in the sticks and almost blended in. When I uploaded the photo a small Green Heron is in the sticks next to the blue. This summer we had fewer herons, both blue and green. It was so amazing to see these two birds together. I wonder how many more were camouflaged. In the days that followed more and more herons landed around the lake. It was comforting to see them and a mystery to know where they were possibly camouflaged. I observe the changes on this lake and take note of changes in the populations.

Cattle Egret by Teresa Etheridge

With a variety of Egrets in Missouri, I feel this photo is a great representation of a Cattle Egret as it shows its beautiful white feathers and distinct golden plumes. These birds are fascinating to see up close in their natural environment and instantly spark interest with their unique features. Egrets' diet, such as flies and ticks, play an important role in our ecosystem. This photo was taken near the fields of a Century farm in Southeast Missouri where a small colony searched for worms and crickets.



Chickadee the Yard by Jerlyn Jones

These little chickadees bring smiles every time I see and hear them. A connection with nature is important for the bird's benefit and ours in that the birds help us relax and de-stress as we help them by providing habitats and food sources. Conservation is a win all the way around.



Dickcissel At Dawn and Dickcissel In the Early Morning Light of the Common Sunflower by Robert Barth

I captured an image of a Dickcissel at dawn in the sunflower patch at Columbia Bottom Conservation Area near St. Louis on July 7, 2023. The Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) posed on top of a common sunflower as the sun rose in the east.

According to the Missouri Department of Conservation: "Sunflowers usually take about 60 days from planting to flowering. The Columbia Bottom team typically plants about 14 fields throughout the 4,300-acre area in early May as part of the dove management regimen. At the peak of their 10-day blooming period they decorate the area with vibrant bursts of gold. The additional plots in the fields intended for viewing are planted later in May so that their blooming is timed to occur through mid-August."

The common sunflower (*Helianthus annulus*) is extremely large and is a showy member from the same plant family as daisies. The impressive height and brilliant yellow rays of a single sunflower is a striking sight. Uniform rows of hundreds can be positively mesmerizing. Sunflower fields have always been a popular draw for sightseers, nature buffs, and photographers."

I viewed numerous birds among the sunflowers including the beautiful Indigo Bunting. Dickcissels have seen declining populations due to habitat loss. Habitat loss in Central and South America contributes to the population decline. Conservation requires a world-wide effort.

Thank you to MDC for planting sunflowers each spring for both public and wildlife enjoyment. I plant sunflowers in my yard each year but it is difficult to keep the deer from foraging.



Ducks Dining by Veronica Johnson

Mallard Duck Hens

Mallard duck hens are important to me because they are a shuttle service for plant seeds, distributing seeds from one area to another creating plant biodiversity. I love plants. I think Mallard ducks are cute. I love to go to McKay Lake in Jefferson City and watch the Mallard ducks. They are friendly and put a smile on my face. I know they are important because Almighty God created them to serve a useful purpose and to bring us happiness.



Duck at the Wetlands by Jacob Walter

Shaw Nature Reserve is an amazing area with various ecosystems and habitats. There are prairies, forests, fields, and wetlands. Each habitat hosts a variety of different wildlife. To be able to see species like warblers, woodpeckers, and ducks all in one place speaks to the immense importance for conserving these wild areas and making sure that species of all ecosystems have access to a place to live and thrive. Seeing these ducks in the wetlands spoke to the fascinating biodiversity that one of the Missouri's most impressive conservation areas holds.

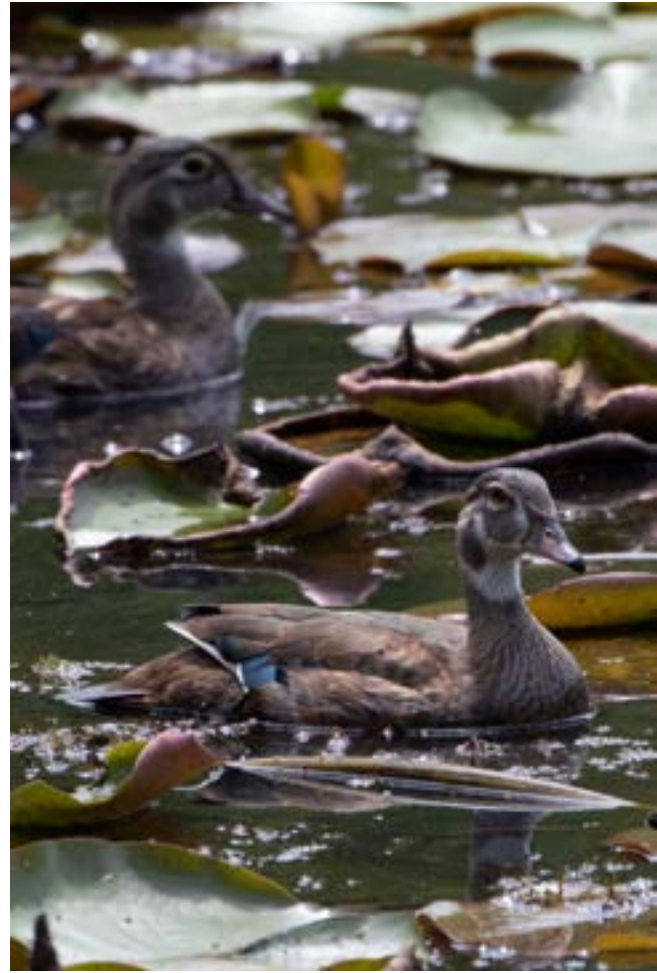


Eagles Evening by Cathy Wilhelmi

On a very hot evening in August I watched as one eagle landed in the water the second followed. They walked in the water, drank, and looked around. I have followed this eagle pair for 5 years. They have fledged two eagles this summer. I watch all the people around the lake watch the eagles in awe. We talk about their behavior and share how lucky we are to have them so near.

Eastern Wild Turkey On A Foggy Day by Karen McGillis

Wild Turkeys eat various plants and insects like ticks, grasshoppers and beetles. They have sharp eyes and warn other animals of danger. They are very interesting to watch during the mating season. This turkey looks like it's on guard duty.



Fighting Eagles by Renant Cheng

In the heart of the expansive Mississippi River in Clarksville, MO, a riveting and at times intense drama unfolds as Bald Eagles, the majestic icons of American skies, engage in a compelling struggle for sustenance. As guardians of this vital ecosystem, the Bald Eagles must contend not only with the challenges of the river but also with each other in a relentless competition for food. The struggles prompt reflection on the importance of conservation efforts and our collective responsibility to preserve the habitats that sustain these awe-inspiring creatures.



Glows Like the Sun by Aaron Jungbluth

Environmental and conservation themed festivals are a fun and engaging way to learn new skills, educate yourself on the latest conservation efforts, and network with like-minded people. In Missouri, one of the favorites is the Birds, Bees, & Blooms Festival hosted in Arrow Rock, Missouri. During the Festival, several wonderful field trips are led by experts in their field. One hike that fits that mold was hosted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologists at the local Jameson Island Unit of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. With hard work restoring the property to excellent Missouri River bottomland forested wetlands, it attracts an array of unique plants, trees, animals, and birds. One of those bird species glows like the sun and is called the Prothonotary Warbler! This rare bird is declining in population due to the channelization of our rivers, which greatly reduces the specialized habitat of periodic flooding of forests that these birds require. Thanks to the dedicated work of the USFWS at Jameson Island, and the Birds, Bees & Blooms Festival giving us the opportunity to get out on the trail, we were privileged to witness this striking migratory bird in its preferred breeding habitat.



Golden-crowned Kinglet by Maureen Thomas-Murphy

A few minutes before this photo was taken, this Golden-crowned Kinglet collided with a 2nd story window on my home during fall migration. It landed on the porch roof about four feet beneath that window. Happily, the kinglet recovered and resumed its travels. After a Magnolia Warbler collided with the same window, which is surrounded by bald cypress and other trees, I got serious about trying to prevent these incidents. Since installing rows of window dots two years ago, I have not witnessed any more collisions. I often feel helpless in the face of bird declines, but being able to do this one small thing to help birds gives me a little hope.





Green Heron on Bull Creek by Marvin De Jong

This is a photograph of a Green Heron catching and eating a crawfish on Bull Creek in Christian County; it is likely that this early September photograph caught the Green Heron on a migration stopover to restore its energy for further travels. The heron hung around for a few days before disappearing. What you don't see in this photograph is the Great Blue Heron who lives and feeds in the exact spot all year long, or the American Crows who, somewhat surprisingly, catch and eat minnows here, not to mention the pair of Belted Kingfishers who feed their family from this stream. When the stream is in flood stage and the water is over the low-water bridge, even a Barred Owl spends the night watching for and eating crawfish that cross the bridge in the shallow water going over the top. Beneath the surface of the creek is another world of life; stone, mayfly and dragonfly larvae, hellgrammites, minnows and fishes of various species, and the crawfish the Green Heron just caught. However, there are always threats to the stream and the life it supports. Sparta, a growing

Christian Country community, is at the head of the Bull Creek watershed and threatens the stream with pollution, hunters drop carcasses of deer into the stream, cattle enter the stream to cross it to greener meadows, ATV folks drive their vehicles into the stream, and farmers and homeowners put down fertilizer which filters into the creek. Who will protect this gem of a stream and the life it supports? My role is to use photographs to share the beauty of the stream and its critters with others.

Home Sweet Home! By Tony Cook

Nesting together on Mother Earth, harmony is achieved among all creatures only by sharing the air, waterways, and interwoven ecosystems.



Indigo Bunting by Jennifer Harrison

The Indigo Bunting encourages the use of our senses of sight and hearing. Sight to seek out the beautiful coloring and hearing to listen to the distinctive song they sing.





Hunting in the Ice by Robert Barth

I captured this image of an immature Bald Eagle hunting after a big ice storm at Spring Fork Lake near Sedalia, Missouri. The lake is part of the Missouri Department of Conservation's Community Assistance Program (CAP). With support of the MDC CAP, the Spring Fork Lake fishery offers birds bountiful fish before freezing over in the winter. I have viewed numerous Bald Eagles and pelicans at Spring Fork Lake during the winter.

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."

Johnny the Yellow Finch by Melinda Baitinger

I truly love these birds. This photo happens to be one of my favorites. My yellow wagon wheel makes great bokeh in background. And his color reminds me of John Deere yellow so I named him Johnny! He truly captured my eye!



Keep Calm and Carry On by Stetson Stevens

I got to witness these blackbirds harass a Bald Eagle and it didn't even phase it. Although Bald Eagle sightings aren't exactly everyday scenarios, their dominance doesn't go unnoticed when you spot one.





Male Pileated Woodpecker by Jan Harcourt

This photo was taken at a suet feeder outside my kitchen window. Thanks to my location in town, I'm treated to a wide variety of bird visitors. Adding native plants to my yard has helped, but being near water sources like Wears Creek, the Missouri River, and a small private pond, is a big factor. A ravine across the street also provides habitat, including large sycamore trees. Jefferson City has taken important steps to conserve habitat including creating the Greenway Trail along Wears Creek and also a small wetlands area near the creek. The City's many parks also provide habitat. All this makes it possible to enjoy the spectacular calls and appearance of this large, impressive bird, the Pileated Woodpecker.



Mallard Ducklings by Karen McGillis

These cute babies will grow and learn how to eat and keep bugs in check. This photo shows that they've been sampling the aquatic vegetation which also helps the lake environment not to become overgrown with it.



New Visitor by David Carron

This image of a single male Painted Bunting was captured in an empty lot in Jefferson City, MO. A combination of volunteer bird watchers and photographers began putting out millet bird seed and water a couple of years ago to attract a mating pair. In subsequent years, we are now seeing multiple pairs returning to the area. This is how volunteer conservation works.





Nomadic Visitors by Aaron Jungbluth

My wife Angie and I visited the Native Hoofed Animal Enclosure operated by the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department near Lee's Summit, Missouri to witness the hoofed animals (of course!). That all changed when we entered the parking lot. Multiple people with binoculars and long-lensed cameras were focusing up in the pine trees in the opposite direction of the bison and elk! Crossbills! A large flock of nomadic Red Crossbills were foraging in the pines flying in unison from tree to tree. Since crossbills' main food source of conifer seeds is unpredictable across their "normal" range, they wander in erratic dispersals to find food. This extremely unique finch species has specialized bills to break into unopened pine cones, that other birds cannot get access to. Crossbills have crazy hooked bills with super strong biting muscles. They hook their upper and lower bills between the scales of the pine cone, bite down opening the scales, and then use their tongues to scoop out the now-exposed seeds. What an honor and privilege to "happen upon" such a unique flock of birds finding their way to a small grove of pines in western Missouri to sustain themselves for a few days, then off to who knows where! This is a great reminder to always "look up!" You never know what birds might be around you.



Pareidolia by David Carron

This image shows how sometimes we have to be willing to think outside the box in our conservation efforts. We can sometimes be overcome with self-imagined fears of failure that can get in the way of conservation success. Just like fear of flying or imagined giant spiders that are portrayed in this image.



Pileated Woodpecker in the Greenbrier by Robert Barth

I captured this image of a Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*, along the Alley Branch below Alley Spring in the Ozark National Scenic Riverways near Eminence. The woodpecker was foraging in the greenbrier near the Alley Branch's crystal clear water. The Alley Branch flows into the Jack's Fork River.



Red Bird Roost by Kyle O'Bryan

Seeing how these birds live their life eating food from bird feeders, it is important to see how they also live in the woods or other places that some people really don't get to go explore as much. This may help with people getting out and wanting to explore more to see these creatures or to help in a conservation kind of way. Maybe build more shelters for them or provide more food for more birds.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher by Eric Ward

I photographed this Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in a Kohl's parking lot in the Kansas City northland. It had a nest in one of the handful of trees planted in the expansive paved area. The picture is an example of one of the many benefits of urban tree planting. Not only do trees improve local climate and human health in a city, but they also provide home and food sources for a variety of birds species, especially those that adapt well to human presence.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher by Joe Fasig

Pastures and cutting hay is important for farmers and livestock in Missouri, but is also important to wait until at least July 15th to cut hay to allow grassland nesting birds to fledge one to two broods and provide food sources for birds like this Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. I was lucky enough to capture this image on a late July morning because the next day the pasture had been cut. The birds had moved on to a different pasture.





Solitude and Sweet Serenity by Veronica Johnson

Serenity, beauty, peacefulness, and stress reduction - this describes watching beautiful white swans on a sparkling blue lake. Now in these stressful times that we live in I think we all can use a little peacefulness and serenity in our lives. I thoroughly enjoy watching the beautiful white swans on Binder Lake. It is so relaxing. It just makes me happy.



Symbiosis by David Carron

This image shows the symbiotic relationship between flowers, birds, and insects. The image is composed in a square format to convey the perfect balance needed between each. The repeating pattern of the focused sunflower and the out-of-focus sunflower portrays the repeating cycle that needs to continue on an annual basis. The gaze of the goldfinch on the sunflower towards the honeybee conveys the importance for conservationists to pay attention to each aspect of this symbiotic relationship.





Trumpeter Swan by Scott Villmer
Helps keep waterways clear of vegetation.



Turkey Vulture by Scott Villmer

This bird helps out the environment by being a garbage disposal.



Tom and Friends by Mark Ramsey

I took this picture in our creek bottom that has a 10-acre food plot planted with soybeans and other wildlife friendly food. It borders a 80-acre white oak timber stand and some Conservation Reserve Program land planted in wildlife friendly species and three acres of wildflowers. In the bottom is a little wetland that I made for the wildlife and in the spring and fall Wood Ducks love to use it. I was taking pictures of them and I heard a turkey gobble. I had a call in my pocket and I called and here he and several others came. I have several pictures of this bird and others but I liked him strutting and the Wood Duck in the background. Makes me feel like our hard work is paying off when I get pictures like this. The Wood Duck believe it or not love the soybeans.



Twilight by Tony Cook

Nesting together on Mother Earth, harmony is achieved among all creatures only by sharing the air, waterways, and interwoven ecosystems.



Wading Egret by Doreen Kozeny

Wading Egret/Showing the importance of water/marshlands to water fowl.



Water Drops by David Carron

I wanted to capture the vital importance that clean water plays in our conservation efforts to provide sustainable habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl.



Wild Turkeys at Runge Conservation Nature Center by Jan Harcourt

Wild Turkeys are often seen at Runge. We are lucky in Jefferson City to have the nature center trails to allow us to view a large variety of birds and other wildlife. Walking the trails and taking part in the center's programs can help instill a love of wildlife and a desire to conserve them.



Wintering Eagle over the Current River by Robert Barth

I captured this image of a mature bald eagle over the Current River on January 14, 2023. It is my favorite wildlife image of the year. I had been paddling the Current from the Pulltite access and the eagle was located near the take out. I waited for almost an hour in my kayak for the eagle to take off from the sycamore branch.

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."



Wood Ducks through the Duckweed by Robert Barth

I captured this image of male and female Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) on a spring fed pond within the Little Piney Creek watershed near Newburg, Missouri, on April 4, 2023. The Wood Ducks were gliding through the duckweed, Missouri's smallest flowering aquatic plant. Male Wood Ducks are my favorite Missouri waterfowl to photograph due to their beautiful tan, green, red, white and chestnut colors. These Wood Ducks were very skittish and I had to keep a low profile on the county road embankment to capture this image.

According to the Missouri Department of Conservation: "Habitat loss and overhunting for meat and plumage caused severe declines in the Wood Duck's population by the late 1800s, but federal and state conservation laws helped rescue this species, and artificial nesting boxes have helped increase populations to where they are now stable."



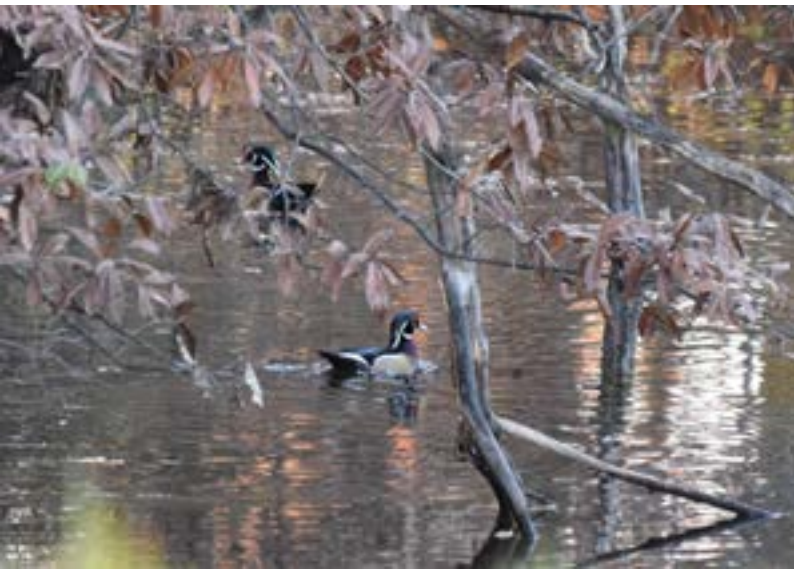
General Entries



A Carolina Wren sits still long enough for a few photos by JL Johnson



A face that only a mother could love, but true grace in the air by Steven Ward



A Sunset Swim by Kyle O'Bryan



Backyard Mallards by Michael O'Keefe





Bad Hair Day by JL Johnson



Barn Swallow by Scott Villmer



Beautiful Horned Grebe by Nancy Schanda



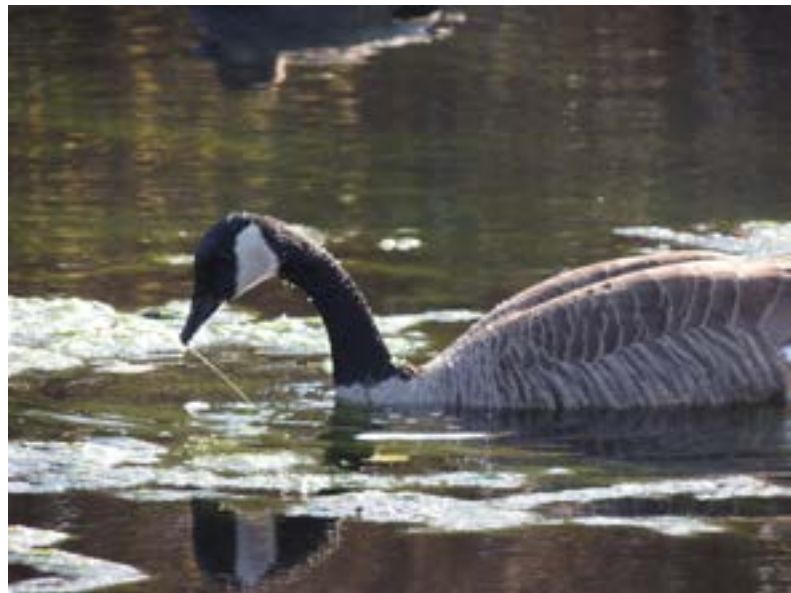
Barred Owl Watching by Cathy Webb



Bluebirds Bathing by Marvin De Jong



Breakfast by Kyle O'Bryan



Canada goose feeding on the lake by Kandi Harrison



Cardinal color at the end of a dreary winter by JL Johnson





Catching Snowflakes by David Seidensticker



Cattle Egret with Worm by Teresa Etheridge



Cedar Waxwing, "Looking Good, If I Say So Myself" by Daniel Getman



Cedar Waxwings "Group Drink" by Daniel Getman





Dove in the fall by Paul Moffett



Door Dash...Mother Nature style. By Steven Ward



Eastern Bluebird hunting for food in the snow by Doug Thomas



Ducks lined up, looking for food by Kandi Harrison

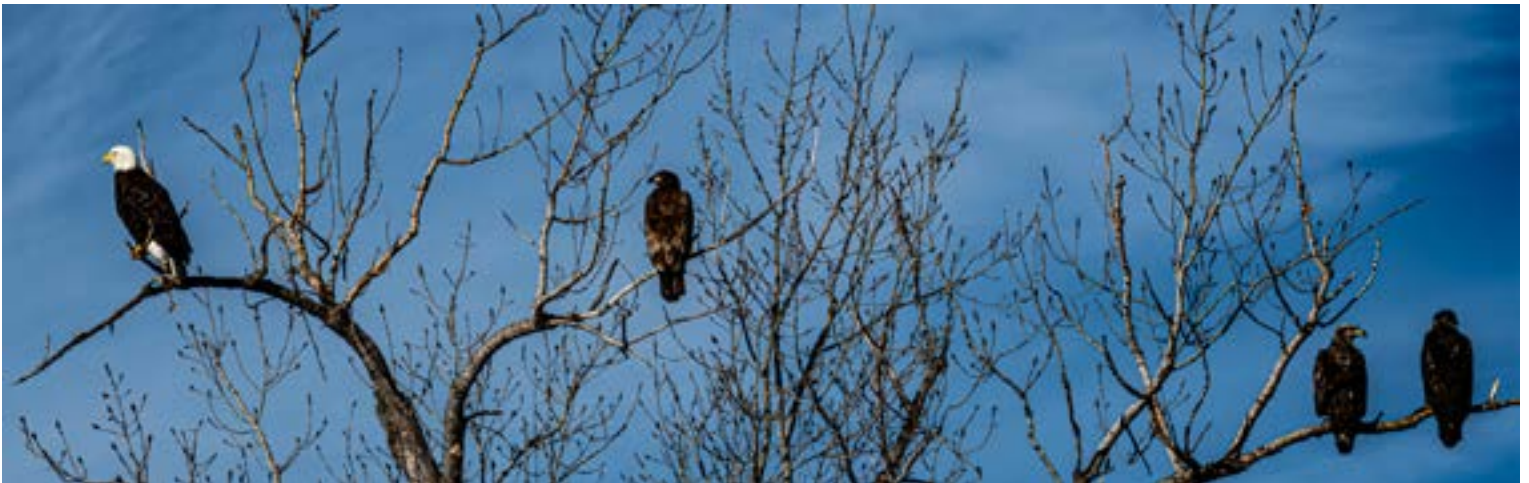




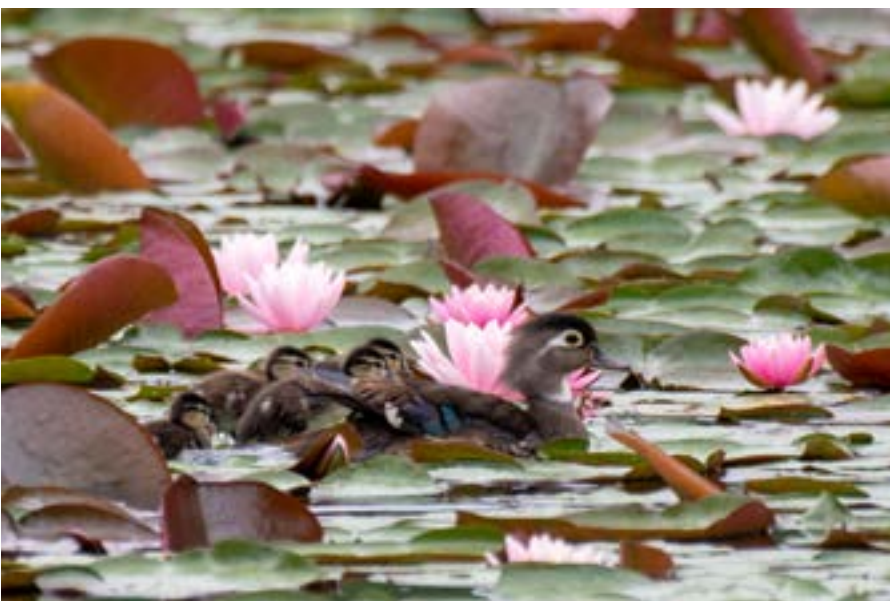
Female Indigo Bunting by Michael O'Keefe



Great Blue Heron with Lunch by Marvin De Jong



Family Conflict by Tony Cook



Female Wood Duck with ducklings by Scott Villmer



Hang On by Eric Ward





Hey There by Eric Ward



House Finch by Scott Villmer



Hummingbird by Mark Gilmore



Hummingbird with Nectar on His Bill by Kandi Harrison





I'm Home by Ingrid Palmore



Indigo Bunting Stretching for a Better View
by Michael O'Keefe



Insect Smorgasbord by Jamie McGuire



Make sure you get my good side... by
David Seidensticker





It's Mine by Thomas Vesely



Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak by Jan Harcourt



Northern Parula by Mary Moore



Peek-a-Boo by Thomas Vesely





Northern Flicker on Post by Marvin De Jong



Predator and Prey by Mark Ramsey



Peck and Taste by Stephen Weiss



Red on Red by Tony Cook





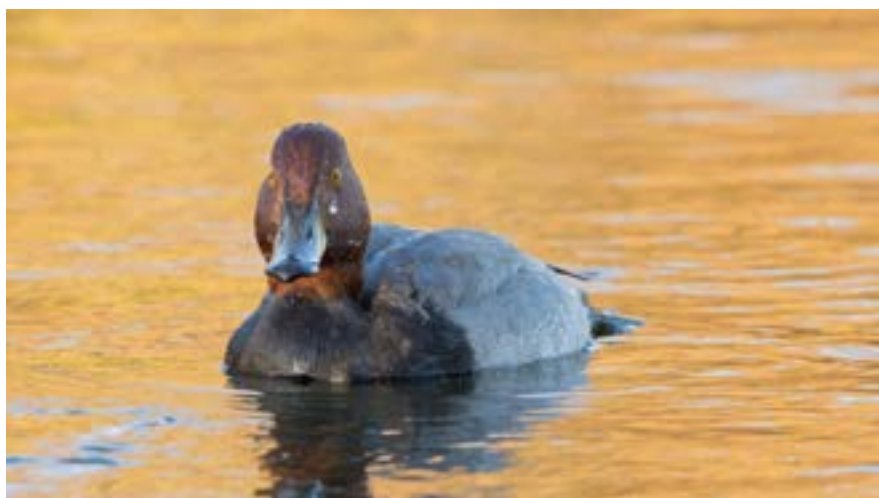
Red Headed Beauty by Thomas Vesely



Red Shouldered-Hawk with Fall Leaves by Betsy Garrett



Ringo by Joe Fasig



Redhead Staredown by Craig Alexander





Ring-necked Duck by Nancy Schanda



Red-Bellied Woodpecker by Michael O'Keefe



Stealing the Show by Shawna Bethell



Shake it off by David Seidensticker





Stealthy Pileated Woodpecker
by Michael O'Keefe



Spring Seed Delight by Kyle O'Bryan



Suspicious Sparrow by Thomas Vesely



The owl has been waiting and finally
makes its move for a kill by Kandi
Harrison





Watchful Young Barred Owl by Betsy Garrett



Tuft-moussed Titmouse by David Seidensticker



Who are you looking at? by Steven Ward



Where'd all those songbirds go! Guess I'll just wait... by JL Johnson



Thank you, contest photographers and judges!

Adult Photographers

Aaron Jungbluth
Betsy Garrett
Cathy Webb
Cathy Wilhelmi
Craig Alexander
Daniel Getman
David Carron
David Seidensticker
Debby Fantz
Denise Palmer
Doreen Kozeny
Doug Thomas
Eric Ward
Ingrid Palmore
Jacob Walter
Jamie McGuire
Jan Harcourt
Jennifer Harrison
Jerlyn Jones
Jian Xu
JL Johnson
Joe Fasig
Kandi Harrison
Karen McGillis
Kyle O'Bryan
Lisa Saffell
Mark Ramsey
Mark Gilmore
Marvin De Jong
Mary Moore
Maureen Thomas-Murphy
Melinda Baitinger
Michael O'Keefe
Nancy Schanda
Paul Moffett
Renant Cheng
Robert Barth
Scott Villmer
Shawna Bethell
Stephen Weiss
Stetson Stevens
Steven Ward
Teresa Etheridge
Thomas Vesely
Tony Cook
Veronica Johnson

Youth Photographers

Ruth French

Contest Judges

David Stonner, Missouri Department of Conservation photographer; David Stonner Photo Journal

Tina Casagrande, The New Territory founder and publisher: <https://newterritorymag.com>

Bill Graham, Missouri Department of Conservation Media Specialist

Chrissie Chapman, 7th Annual MRBO Photo Contest Grand Prize Winner

Pat Whalen, Missouri Department of Conservation Naturalist





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Spotted Towhee by Youth Winner Ruth French

