



THE BLUEBIRD

The voice of MBS since 1934

**June 2026
Volume 93, No. 2**



***The Missouri Birding Society
Missouri's Ornithological Society Since 1901***

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Deadlines for submission of material for publication in *The Bluebird*

Manuscripts for *The Bluebird*—to the editor by:

Feb. 1 for March issue; May 1 for June issue;

Aug. 1 for Sept. issue; Nov. 1 for Dec. issue

Manuscripts submitted for peer review may be published in a subsequent issue.

Deadlines for submissions to the Seasonal Survey Editors

Winter (Dec. 1-Feb. 28)—to Kendell Loyd by Mar. 10

Spring (Mar. 1-May 31)—to Josh Uffman by June 10

Summer (June 1-July. 31)—to Joseph Mosley by Aug 10

Fall (Aug. 1-Nov. 30)—to Allen Gathman by Dec. 10

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Front Cover — Gyrfalcon, Confluence CBC, count week 2025. Photo Joseph Burkes

Peer-reviewed articles in The Bluebird are noted by a header.
Species mentioned in articles not so designated may not have been subject to review.

THE BLUEBIRD is published quarterly by The Missouri Birding Society. The submission of articles, photographs, and artwork is welcomed and encouraged. The views and opinions expressed in this journal are those of each contributing writer and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of The Missouri Birding Society or its officers, Board of Directors, or editors. Send address corrections to MBS, 2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122, Columbia, MO 65203-1261.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER—MICHAEL O'KEEFE



The Spring 2026 Meeting is now in the books! I was delighted to see that nearly 100 people registered for the gathering in St. Louis - thank you all for being there! We observed approximately 170 species (my preliminary count,) mostly on the 21 field trips to 13 areas. We spent time catching up with our friends, making new ones, supporting our youth camp scholarship through the silent auction and learning from our presenters.

On Friday night Kristen Heath-Acre, MDC state Ornithologist, gave updates

on the many projects for which her office is responsible. Mike Checkett, Executive Director of Great Rivers Habitat Alliance, spoke about how his organization works to protect and promote natural habitats in the region around the confluences of the Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. On Saturday night Noah Strycker gave an entertaining recounting of his global quest to be the first person to observe over 5,000 bird species in one year, and he chatted and shared stories with many of us that evening and on the field trips throughout the weekend.

I appreciate the work of all the volunteers who created the meeting – no mean feat. The planning team included Mike Grant, Tommy Goodwin, Carol Thompson and Kelly Smith. Thanks to all of our friends who lent their expertise and time to lead the field trips, work at the registration desk, silent auction and more. They include Bob Bailey, David Becher, Mary Dueren, Susan Eaton, Jonah Eckels, Andy Hoyne, Janet Hoyne, Pat Lueders, Jim Malone, Veronica Mecko, Kelly Ormesher, Dick Palmer, Cheryl Rosenfeld, Bill Rowe, Matt Rowe, Matt Schlamberger, Kelly Smith, Kate Sprague, Chris Tomera, Josh Uffman, and Rad Widmer. Thank you all very much!

Before Noah's presentation, former MBS president Sue Gustafson and board member Lottie Bushmann celebrated Edge Wade and the significant contributions she has made to the mission of our society. They had nominated Edge for our society's highest honor, collecting testimonials from many of our partners. The board's executive committee heartily agreed, and on May 2, 2026 Sue, Lottie, and I presented Edge Wade with the Rudolf Bennitt Distinguished Service Award for many years of dedicated service to the Missouri Birding Society. She graciously accepted the award, challenging all of us to mentor younger birders, as they are the future of MBS.

Please note that the Fall 2026 meeting will take place in Columbia, and the Spring 2027 meeting will be based in Arrow Rock. My sincere thanks to our friends with the Columbia Audubon Society and the Missouri River Bird Observatory for the initiative.

In other news, MBS has received a gift of \$11,000 from Dr. David Easterla, an endowment for the newly established "Dr. David A. Easterla Undergraduate College Avian Scholarship." The board appreciates the generosity of Dr. Easterla in creating this opportunity to support undergraduate students early in their career tracks. Details on the application process are forthcoming.

On another note, earlier this year the board voted to devote the following amounts from the CACHE/SPARKS funds for our partners: \$3,000 to Greater Ozarks Audubon Society for two participants in the summer session of the Green Leadership Academy for Diverse Ecosystems (GLADE); \$2,000 to Missouri River Relief to support operation of the Missouri River Adventure Camp; \$1,000 to the 2026 Missouri Birding Challenge. In addition, the board approved a slight adjustment to the previously funded MOTUS tower located in Hannibal, MO. The total donated for this project, which became operational at the end of April, is \$1,427.

I will take this opportunity to thank Kevin Wehner, who is stepping back from his role as eNews editor, and previously as webmaster. I thank Kevin for his dedication and wish him well. I welcome Nellie Robertson as the new editor who will have assistance from Karen Lyman in providing you with information, thanks to compiler Edge Wade.

With this, I wish you happy birding and a delightful spring!

Michael O'Keefe, President

WE WELCOME OUR NEW MBS MEMBERS!
Greg Leonard

Remember, new members are our future. If a new member lives near you, say, “Howdy and welcome to MBS.” In addition, recruit another new member. **Welcome to these 10 new MBS members in the 2nd quarter of 2026!**

Kyle Bess

Austin Hess

Emily Pitts

Jennifer Pierce

James Barr

Priya Sudarsanam

Diane Korn

Rob Kilo

Lynn Schmidt

Portageville, MO

Branson West, MO

Kansas City, MO

Saint Louis, MO

Benton, MO

University City, MO

Kirkwood, MO

Chesterfield, MO

Saint Charles, MO

Subscribe to the MOBIRDS Listserv!

If you are curious about what birds are being seen around Missouri, have a question about a bird, enjoy sharing your birding experiences, want to know what field trips are coming up, want to meet other birders online, the MBS sponsored MOBIRDS listserv is for you.

Join the active Missouri birding community by subscribing here:

<https://lists.umsystem.edu/scripts/wa-UMS.exe?SUBED1=MOBIRDS-L&A=1>

Please note that MBS members are NOT automatically subscribed to the listserv. You must subscribe yourself by going to the link above.

Also, all listserv posts are retained in a searchable archive:

<https://lists.umsystem.edu/scripts/wa-UMS.exe?A0=MOBIRDS-L>

Hatching

Chloe DeVos

My world was the dark of night,
Warm and cozy, safe from the cold.
My feathers were free from the touch of time,
But an eggshell isn't the biggest home.
My mother's beak rolled me beneath
The twigs and sticks that fused me
To the magnificent softness of her body.
After a while, I craved the joy
Of the birds who sang as they soared
Past the nest; their wings hummed
A light, breezy melody of spring.
My body curled into the moist heat,
Began to burn like hell.
I slammed my beak against the shell—
My world was a vein of light.

Missouri Birding Society Mission Statement

The society is dedicated to the preservation and protection of birds and other wildlife; to education and appreciation of the natural world; and to effective wildlife and habitat conservation practices.

In Memoriam **Jack Hilsabeck**

I first met Jack during the fall of 1965 upon my arrival from Kansas City to Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, to initiate a Wildlife Ecology and Conservation program for the Biology Department. Jack was a biology teacher at the Rosendale, Missouri high school and was responsible for obtaining a speaker for their spring graduation. Our mutual interest in birds quickly sealed our friendship, and I agreed to be the guest speaker for a program on “Missouri Birds.”

I was impressed with Jack’s knowledge of birds and was also impressed upon learning that he had discovered nesting Yellow-crowned Night Herons and Prothonotary Warblers in a One Hundred and Two River oxbow swamp near Rosendale. In later years he discovered in the same area a rare Purple Gallinule and a Sandhill Crane. (Unfortunately, this habitat eventually disappeared due to extensive farming and swamp drainage.)

Jack was an outstanding naturalist who showed me several species of orchids and a Worm-eating Warbler that he had found in a nearby woodland managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. He was always entertaining, especially on field trips chasing lifers, and if the pursuit was unsuccessful, he still had a laugh. Jack’s ability to make people laugh was uncanny, whether it involved a joke on him or an amusing narrative concerning the world’s problems.

Jack, his colleagues, and Missouri Western State University students banded thousands of birds, including, on October 9, 2015, a state record Townsend’s Warbler – a species normally found in the western US. He was also in the field with me at Bigelow Marsh when we confirmed the first Great-tailed Grackle for Missouri on May 8, 1976.

Jack participated in many sports, including basketball. He and his brother Larry were on a local Rosendale basketball team that played

against other nearby towns' teams. Sometimes we played against each other, and according to me, the Maryville Merchants team always won – although, according to Jack, his team always won. Bluebird readers will probably never know the truth.

For many years, Jack, Kirby Goslee, and I did a Big Day bird count during early to mid-May in Holt County. We always exceeded 100 species, and sometimes approached 150. Target areas included Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Bob Brown Conservation Area, Jamerson McCormack Conservation Area, and Bigelow Marsh.

Jack will be missed by all those who were fortunate enough to know him – may he now dwell where the birds soar forever, and he can obtain unlimited lifers!

-- David Easterla

At the Wings Over Weston bird festival at Weston Bend State Park, Jack would run a bird banding station. With younger children, he'd ask if they wanted to gently pet the bird which they invariably did with Jack's careful guidance. "That'll be a dollar" he'd say to the startled look of the child. Then he'd laugh and say "No, I'm just kidding" and they'd both end up laughing and smiling.

That was Jack – whether it was birding, telling stories, banding birds, chasing birds, watching a Cardinal baseball game or other things that put him and others "in the moment", these were some of the things that gave him pleasure in life.

Jack was teaching a birding class one March. A variety of ducks were moving through the area including the Redhead, a type of diving duck. He was reviewing the different types of ducks with the class when a student said "Mr. Hilsabeck, show us a Redhead," so he googled it...what came up on the screen was not quite what he expected.

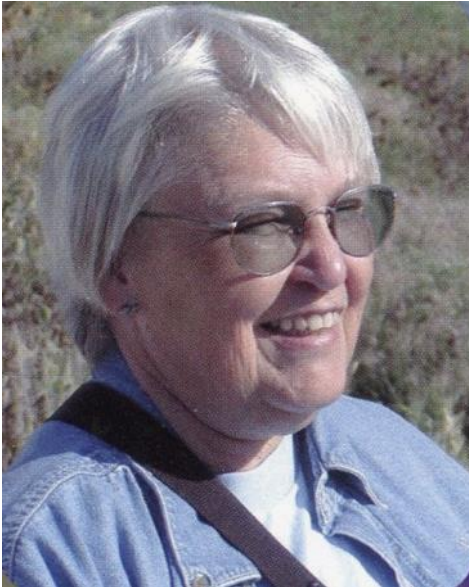
When I still worked for the Conservation Department, I was based at the regional office on the Missouri Western State University Campus. For a time, the banding station was just down the hill from the office. I didn't have time on work days to help very often but did on a couple of infrequent occasions when Jack and Larry Lade were overrun with birds in the banding nets and called.

On one occasion when Jack called, I arrived to find them taking 30 to 40 warblers (mainly yellow-rumped warblers) out of the net. Jack said “Let’s just ring ‘em and fling ‘em.” That meant let’s process them as fast as we can, get a band on their leg and release them and do it as quickly as possible to minimize any stress on the birds. It was a morning with comfortable temperatures, and the bed of his truck was practically covered in paper lunch sacks, each with a bird yet to be processed inside. I marveled at how fast Jack could process a bird – his nearly 50 years of experience doing it certainly showed.

Jack was a friend and mentor to many in Saint Joseph and the surrounding area birding community. His wealth of knowledge about birds and nature in general, willingness to share it, warm sense of humor, easy going nature and friendship will be greatly missed.

— Tom Nagel

In Memoriam **Ann Johnson**



Few people, perhaps none, have had as much impact on the successful operations of state ornithological and other nature-related organizations in recent years as Ann Johnson of Indianola, IA. With her death March 23, 2026 at age 76, the Missouri Birding Society, including the sister organizations of Iowa, Arkansas, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota, and many more NGO's including the Missouri River Bird Observatory—approximately 125 organizations, overall, lost a dynamic champion of

natural history and a major facilitator in their delivery of services and communications with membership and the public.

In Ann's career with the Iowa Department of Social Services, she became the intermediary between the IT department and field staff, taking classes and then self-teaching coding skills to improve communications between them.

Ann was a lifelong birder. In 1995, as an active member, she brought those skills to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union to develop a basic, static website that required her input for updating. In 2000, she became secretary of the Iowa Rare Birds Records Committee and moved committee operations from a paper, photocopy, and mail system to a transactional on-line process. This ability to work through a web browser became the model for other activities and the IOU site was expanded to include membership management, meet-

ing registration, and even board of directors motions and discussions between official meetings.

Word of her skills spread as birders noted the quality and breadth of the IOU website. She answered several pleas for website help before forming ajEndeavors, LLC, her small web development company in 2009, before retiring from her state job in 2010. ASM (now MBS) was one of the first to seek Ann's help.

In 2002, Mike Beck, a past president, took on the job of creating the first version of the ASM website. In 2003, Patrick Harrison became editor of *The Bluebird* and assumed the duties of webmaster. Consulting with Ann, Patrick created the first ASM interactive version and, when in late 2005, ASM entered into the agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation to conduct bird surveys in the program that came to be known as CACHE, Patrick designed the first-in-the-nation statewide bird occurrence database (pre-eBird) with on-line entry directly by the observers, going live in February, 2007.

The Missouri Bird Records Committee (MBRC) was starting to evaluate the idea of putting the documentation process on line in 2005. MRBC Secretary Bill Rowe began corresponding with Ann to tap into her experience as the Iowa records committee secretary and her web design for the IOU site. The product of Ann and Bill's collaboration with help from Patrick went live in December 2007. That began 19 years of work back and forth, debugging the system and (according to Bill) debugging the secretary, as well.

"I'm sorry I never met Ann, but she was a great correspondent, always prompt to reply to my questions, always keenly interested making things work properly, and always candid, with replies ranging from "Oops..." to "Not sure what's going on...get back to you tomorrow" to a patient explanation (perhaps for the third time) of what I was supposed to do at my end to make something happen. No matter what the problem was, I knew I could count on her to get on it right away and to fix it—and I always appreciated her sense of humor. I will miss her." -- Bill Rowe

By late 2008 the complexity of the CACHE/SPARKS concept had grown immensely, and both the ASM and IOU websites had been hacked. Patrick contacted Ann and discussed what she was going to do about the hack. She was beginning to convert her websites to a

different format. Patrick asked her about converting the ASM site at the same time, as well as addressing the increased complexity of the CACHE/SPARKS system. That began the collaboration of code writing for the new version of the website, a working acquaintance that continued in Patrick's tenure as webmaster into 2017, and developed into a personal friendship with shared birding experiences.

"Ann acted as a generous and giving person throughout our association. She was more than a mentor to me. She was a springboard from which new ideas were created and improvements to our website took place." -- Patrick Harrison

Kevin Wehner became ASM/MBS webmaster in 2017. During Kevin's time in the job, Ann totally re-built the website to modernize it and make it mobile device friendly. It was her idea to use Mail-Chimp for the membership renewal notices.

"Ann was always very quick to respond to requests to fix bugs and/or make enhancements to the website." -- Kevin Wehner

In my role as ASM/MBS Conservation Partnership Coordinator during nearly 20 years working with Ann I hardly missed a week communicating with her--most of it via emails beginning with, "How do I..." or "Where is x on the website?" Alas, some of the same questions were posed more times than I'd like to admit. She never chided or commented on the limitations of my ability or memory. Again and again, she would walk me through the process with kindness and humor.

When the birding site guide series was added as a deliverable in the CACHE/SPARKS agreements, Ann added that section to the website and we worked to make it input and user friendly.

As a component of the SPARKS agreement ASM/MBS took on the responsibility to maintain and update the bird checklists for every Missouri State Park hosted on our website. Ann created that feature and the required links to make them available on the individual park websites.

It took a while (years), but Ann finally convinced the folks at Cornell that the CACHE/SPARKS data could be transferred into eBird. With minimal help from me, she identified and connected all C/S

contributors to the sites, converted entries to eBird format, and transferred the data into the eBird dataset. This effort put Missouri among the top states for eBird data.

Bird identification workshops have often been included as elements of our obligations within CACHE/SPARKS. We began delivering some on-line via Zoom, especially as a response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Ann made the recorded sessions available on our website.

In recent years, she was quick to see the potential of the privately developed Birding Hotspots website, connected it to the MBS website, and with Kevin Wehner and me, served as editor, as she did for her home state, Iowa. [The Hotspots website as of 2026 has been absorbed by eBird, largely because of the value of the site as demonstrated by Ann and various webmasters].

In her overview of her endeavors, Ann listed three financial goals in working with non-profits:

Assure that the organization gets a quality product for their money. In this vein, I assume all risk except for hosting costs.

The application should be self-sustaining and manageable by members of the organization with little to no on-going development costs.

To be at least minimally compensated for my time for my birding travel fund.

The members of the Missouri Birding Society, and by extension, all birders of Missouri will continue to benefit from Ann's work, done with very modest compensation for her considerable skills and time. And I, along with the many people she mentored and shared birding adventures with will miss Ann Johnson's empathy, humor, and reassuring presence.

— Edge Wade

In Memoriam **Lois Smith**

April 10, 2026, the Missouri birding community lost Lois Smith. Lois, age 80, was a classic example of the patient spouse of birder—enjoying birding herself, but making sure husband Al had support in his goal of photographing as many bird species in Missouri as possible.

Lois was usually in the van when Al took off from their home in Bridgeton, headed to some remote corner of Missouri to photograph perhaps a Mountain Bluebird or a Long-billed Curlew. Her good-humored companionship made the miles easier as Al ranged far from home to photograph 362 Missouri species.

Lois's smile and encouraging words for other birders will be missed by all who were fortunate to share time with her as Al worked for the perfect photo. — Edge Wade



Announcement: David Easterla Scholarship

The Missouri Birding Society has accepted an endowment gift of \$11,000 from Dr. David A. Easterla to establish and manage a scholarship to be called the “Dr. David A. Easterla Undergraduate College Avian Scholarship.”

Dr. Easterla joined the Audubon Society of Missouri (now MBS) when he was fourteen years old. He served on the Board of Directors from 1970 to 2004, the longest length of service on record; as Vice President, 1965-1966 and President from 1966 to 1970; and was among the original members and elected the first chair of the Missouri Bird Records Committee in 1986. While a professor at Northwest Missouri State University, for many years he brought a vanload of students to Fall Meetings.

Dr. Easterla was presented the Rudolf Bennitt Award for Distinguished Service, the Society's highest honor, in 2006 (see *The Bluebird*, December 2006, Volume 73, No.4, for highlights of his career and contributions to the Society). His service continues as a frequent contributor of articles to *The Bluebird*.

The scholarship is for those seeking an undergraduate degree in wildlife-related studies, especially with an emphasis in ornithology, at a Missouri institution of higher learning. MBS is in the early stages of determining the details of managing the scholarship, including establishing the amounts to be awarded, the process for accepting applications, and the method to accept donations to the scholarship fund.

Watch for updates regarding the Dr. David A. Easterla Undergraduate College Avian Scholarship in *The Bluebird*, on the MBS website, the Mobirds listserv, MBS Facebook, and eNews.



Dr. David Easterla , founder of the
David A. Easterla Undergraduate College Avian Scholarship
Photo Mike Grant

Meet Jim “Ketch” Ketcherside

Edge Wade

Jim “Ketch” Ketcherside is a name recognized by only a few MBS members, but Ketch’s work is seen regularly by all...and has been for 46 years.

Ketch, owner-operator of Ketch’s Printing Company, has been printing *The Bluebird*, MBS’s quarterly journal, since 1980. That’s 200 issues, working with a series of 11 editors. This is a guy all MBS members should know more about...and appreciate!

He was in high school when he went to work part-time for the National Guard and learned printing. He joined the Guard in 1969, served for forty years, and retired in 2009. He worked full time in the printing department of the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations for 32 years.

Ketch’s Printing Company had its beginnings in his basement, then in 1975, officially opened as a company at 925 Madison Street, Jefferson City, where it remains today. He began operating an offset press, then moved to using copiers.

His mother, Addie, worked for MDC for 20 years and was a member of River Bluffs Audubon Society. Mother and son shared a common interest in birds, erecting and maintaining Purple Martin houses, and watching hummingbirds at the feeders.

Averta Loomis, secretary of the ASM Board, was also a member of River Bluffs Audubon Society. In 1980, ASM was seeking a printer for *The Bluebird*. Addie knew a good one, and the connection was made.

Printing of *The Bluebird* peaked at about 500 copies. Depending on the number of pages, it took 3 to 4 days’ work on the press, then another 2 to 3 days to assemble and staple, that work done by Carolyn, his wife of 35 years.

Through the years, editors have continued to mail Ketch a paper

paste up camera/copy ready version to begin the reproduction process. But there have been some changes in addition to moving from offset press to copiers. The first color cover was the March 2010 issue with Bill Eddleman as editor, and as of March 2014, members were offered the option to read *The Bluebird* online, rather than receive a mailed copy.

Currently 110 copies are mailed. To cover mailing costs, a surcharge is included in the membership dues for those receiving printed copies. MBS Board member Lottie Bushmann picks them up at Ketch's shop, prepares them for mailing and takes them to the post office. Libraries and institutions also receive copies, a practice that preserves our records in printed version.

There are no plans to cease printing *The Bluebird*. Ketch's Printing Company is a solid operation serving several Jefferson City organizations, including the American Legion, VFW, Eagles, and Helias Booster Club. Ketch's son, Derek, helps with the printing these days, and Ketch hopes he will one day take over the business.



Lottie Bushmann picking up the Bluebird with Ketch

What is a Male Mandarin Duck Doing at the Maryville Sewage Lagoons?

David A Easterla and Lisa R Owens

On the afternoon of December 10, 2025, David Easterla was viewing hundreds of waterfowl at the Maryville, Missouri sewage lagoons. In the same second to last southern pool where he'd found the Missouri first winter record Wilson's Phalarope in 2024, a bizarrely patterned and colorful duck flashed briefly into view among the other crowded and swimming waterfowl. After about 15 minutes he found the bird again and had a view of a beautiful male Mandarin Duck, a first for the Maryville lagoons. It's not a countable species, but because of the duck's beauty and rarity in the wild, he contacted Lisa Owens to try to view and photograph it.

Upon Lisa's arrival the next morning, we were able to find the Mandarin Duck in the same pool. The bird was very skittish and flew away before adequate photos were obtained. After we left the lagoons, we observed flocks of waterfowl flying back to the lagoons, so we returned and eventually found the Mandarin Duck in the same pool. This time, with more caution and tiny footsteps, we were able to approach and Lisa got some good photographs. When out of the water and standing on the ice, the Mandarin Duck's legs were easily observed to have no bands (See back cover). That night and the next day, an extremely cold front arrived with the lagoons freezing over solid, and all of the waterfowl left.

The Maryville Christmas bird count was conducted on December 16, 2025, with some waterfowl present again at the sewage lagoons in partial open water, but no Mandarin Duck. However, during that same day while viewing waterfowl at the Mazingo Lake/dam, we discovered the Mandarin Duck swimming with Mallards. Keeping the company of Mallards was not a surprise, since the same companionship was observed at the lagoons.

Despite not being countable, the male Mandarin Duck (*Aix ga-*

lericulata) seems unmatched in beauty, with its relative the gorgeous male Wood Duck (same genus), running a close second, and the showy and striking male Harlequin Duck third (in our opinion). It was thrilling to see the Mandarin Duck in the wild with other native waterfowl, and we believe the readers will appreciate seeing this photograph.

Questions abound:

How common are reports of Mandarin Ducks in the wild, not only in Missouri (old St Louis records on and off 2018-2021), but for other United States regions? What about any United States breeding records in the wild? In checking eBird on January 25, 2026 for recent records, the following were found:

2025-2026 Records in Midwest US

2/17/25: eBird report from Jeffrey Bailey at Rybridi Farm south end in Green County **TN**

2 males (pic) Note: Unusual visitors to our pond. Flew in and then out with Wood Ducks. No idea where these two could be from. No known keepers of exotics in this area.

5/2/25: eBird report from Brett Roberg at 120 S Lincoln St Holdrege, **NE** (Phelps County).

One male associating with wood ducks (pic)

5/17/25: eBird report from Mark Yaeger at Pueblo City Park **CO** (Pueblo County) of one male. No pics, but his note says “Male, there used to be an established population of these birds in and around the park for about twenty five years. Have not seen any for many years. Do not know the origin of this one but was very surprised to see it.”

5/27/25: eBird report from Evan Carlson at Pueblo City Park **CO** (Pueblo County) of the 5/17/25 continuing one male (pic)

11/20/25: eBird report from Kipp Paulsen at 1201-1243 Prairie View Dr, West Des Moines, **IA** (Polk County).

Report of 8 Mandarin Ducks. Not many details, but one picture shows 4 females and 2 males together

Other reports on west and east coasts last year and this year. States included: **UT, AZ, CA, OR, WA, NV, TX, MS, FL, NC, VA, PA, NY, NH.**

2023-2024 Records in Midwest US

3/22/23: eBird reports of a male (pic) at a lake in Dane County **WI**

5/28/23: eBird report of a male in Lake County **IL**

12/9/23: eBird report from Lake George in Stearns County **MN** of a male (pic)

12/28/23: eBird report from Glenn Daniels at Scarborough Elementary in Johnson County **KS** of one mal (pic)

4/23-4/24 2024: eBird reports by many at a Reservoir in El Paso County **CO** of a male (pics)

Other reports on west and east coasts and a few in TX.

The Mandarin Duck is native to eastern Asia. Because of its attractiveness, it is commonly kept in captivity in zoos and private aviaries, and even sometimes raised for taxidermy purposes. Obviously, escaping into the wild can occur anywhere. Mandarin Ducks have established small, feral breeding populations in the US, mainly in CA, with smaller populations along the Gulf Coast. One would expect to see more reports of migrating Mandarin Ducks, even in the Midwest, as the breeding populations grow in these areas. It will likely take many more years of established, independent sustained breeding for the ABA to change its status from a “non-countable” exotic.



Mandarin Duck, Nodaway Co, 11 Dec 2024
Photo Lisa Owens

Follow the Beetle, Part 2

Christina McClarren

(This is the conclusion of a two-part story—see the March 2026 issue for part one.)

On August 21, I underwent a setback.

Full of energy at first, I bounced from one bug discovery to another on the walls of the Columbia Bottom visitor center that day. Among them was another new species. I'd learn that night she was called the Feeble Grass Moth—apropos of the day.

Daydreaming about Amorpha Borer Beetles, I drove straight from the visitor center to Lot I to try my luck at finding one. Having a habit of inspecting the bulletin boards in each parking lot for insects, I noticed a new flyer. A family was pleading for help to find a missing man, Steven Reed, whose car had been found abandoned inside Columbia Bottom. He'd been missing for two days. The flyer read, "Mr. Reed is a 41-year-old black man, 5'6", 155lbs, with short black hair and brown eyes, with a tattoo on his left arm. Mr. Reed made statements of self-harm and family has not heard from him." I touched his face on the flyer. Waves of sorrow washed over me. Dizziness. Nausea. The horrific, crushing reality hit me. He'd come here to commit suicide. I wanted to leave immediately and go home. I didn't want to face his anguish or feel this.

Depression, panic attacks, and anxiety had been a struggle for me since I was very little. I knew what it felt like when failure crushed you and self-loathing dominated your thoughts. I recognized Steven's pain immediately: its heaviness and the systemic racism at work in this man's life.

In a fit of anger, I stormed down the road, trying to decide what to do. Andy was left bewildered. A man in a truck drove by and stopped to ask if I'd seen a dog. Steven's dog, 'Blue,' was missing, too.

I attempted to calm myself, but sharp terror surged through my

body—trembling in my chest. Trauma from years ago of finding a woman’s decaying body in a sinkhole in my local park resurfaced. I’d been following around and admiring a songbird I was inordinately fond of, a Veery, when I’d found her. After police identified her body, I’d dubbed the area the Barbara Gettings Thicket.

I didn’t want to come across a dead body again; I’d collapse into a nervous wreck. Columbia Bottom, which had become a refuge, no longer felt safe. Tapping into a less fear-based wisdom, I meditated on this for a few minutes and decided to stay. I renewed my commitment to self-love in honor of Steven—to love the wild, to let the wild love me back, to keep sacred my quest to follow the beetle. I would carry this new sorrow with me and reach out for help if needed.

Two days later, I prepared for our first mothing survey at Columbia Bottom. I checked things off my list as we loaded the car: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, water canisters, headlamps, extra batteries, a neck gaiter in case the lights attracted too many cad-disflies that might try to get into my ears, nose, and mouth, a change of clothes, medicine, folding chairs, jars to catch bugs and place them on the sheet for better photo opportunities, and a copy of the permit. Pacing myself was going to be key. The day was oppressively hot, and the night would bring no relief.

Arriving at the visitor center a few hours before sunset, Andy began setting up the sheet between the two central beams of the foyer. I wanted the lights up and running an hour before dark descended, an early invitation to the bugs. While he set up, in childlike eagerness, I looked around for moths. Shocked elation burst from me when I spied a most unexpected giant moth hanging above a doorway, one I had a hunch I’d never seen. “Oh. My. God. Andy, look! A sphinx moth is here to greet us! Do you believe it? Please take a photo!”

Setting up ceased. Andy flew to the car to grab his camera. He crept toward the moth, heart hammering. Each inch closer was a gamble. If she spooked, our chance was gone. Lisa, who hadn’t arrived yet, had to see her. Freezing at the perfect distance, he got a shot. The moth stayed!

With a grand, sweeping motion, I tipped my imaginary cap, plunging into a deep, theatrical bow. “Never,” I proclaimed, “have I had the pleasure of your glorious acquaintance, Ms. Achemon Sphinx.” With her deceptively understated brown forewings covering her body, I had only the faintest glimmer of the resplendent fuchsia of

her undergarments.

Lisa arrived in plenty of time to regale her with lavish compliments. As the evening progressed, I was ecstatic that she had the privilege of seeing six other species of sphinx moth. One was even a new one for us. High up a wall, I spotted an extremely large Modest Sphinx, her massive abdomen ready to burst with eggs. Sphinx moths, along with Lunas and Silkmoths, are the largest of all the moth species, and the ones that most debunk notions of them as being drab brown little annoyances. As species after species flew into the area that night, I felt myself melt in awe of each unique, small, and large arrival.

Lisa's frank curiosity was a highlight of the night, especially when she witnessed her first moth play dead. Andy tried to get a Salt Marsh Moth to open her wings to reveal her polka-dotted bright orange abdomen by gently tapping her from beneath. She dropped to the ground and delivered an absolutely convincing performance that she'd been mortally wounded. Lisa worried, unconvinced this was feigned. She listened as I explained the full gamut of moth behavior at the sheet.

"There are moths that fly away at the slightest hint of an approach. Of those that stay, a nudge can prompt several to open their forewings and reveal their lovely hindwings, but that is risky. Some depart at the faintest touch. Some, like the Salt Marsh Moth, tumble to the earth immobile, fooling predators into thinking they are dead and no longer a delicious morsel."

On cue, as if I were boring her, the Salt Marsh Moth finally moved beneath my feet, revealing her charade. Relief and amazement lit up Lisa's face.

When I noticed an exquisite Pandorus Sphinx fly in and land, I shrieked, "Lisa, hurry! You have to see this moth!" Rushing over, Lisa was mind-blown. Pandorus hung there on the sheet like a green alien spaceship made of velvet. Mesmerizing everyone, she flaunted her pink punk rock highlights and the lavender of her underwings. Sighing with satisfaction, the night felt complete.

It might have been the large, portly black fly with the golden butt—*Belvosia borealis*—who hung out with us all night on the mothing sheet, and who I became quite fond of, that spurred my closer examination of the flies at Columbia Bottom over the next month.

We encountered more fly magic than I could have ever imagined, intense beauty in their designs and diversity, awe in their mimicry, enormous respect for them as underappreciated pollinators, and delight in their names: Maroon-legged Lion Fly, American Harlequin, Swift Feather-legged Fly, Oblique Streaktail, and Prairie Robber Fly, for starters. But more than likely, the discovery of a wee one called a Bomber Fly inspired my fly-philía. Her cheerful buoyancy led me to an *Amorpha*.

Two days after the moth survey, I paced the parking Lot I cul-de-sac for over an hour before giving up hope of finding an *Amorpha*. Sulking in the parking lot, almost ready to leave, I noticed a little bouncy fly nectaring in frogfruit. Years ago, a close friend had taught me how important frogfruit was to insects, particularly butterflies and moths, not just for providing nectar, but as food for their larvae, who loved to munch upon it while growing up. Frogfruit had appeared very humble at first, growing unobtrusively low to the ground, but when I had examined the flowers more closely, I discovered outlandish plum-colored coneheads around which unfolded countless petite pinkish flowers with bright yellow centers.

Approaching closer to the alluring sweetie dancing along the frogfruit, I wowed over her endless proboscis, almost as long as her body, that was dipping daintily into the flower centers. With one set of wings and huge eyes, I realized this wasn't a bee, but a fly, mimicking a bee. Enchanted, I followed her path, when out of the sea of frogfruit appeared a slightly taller plant, Carolina Horsenettle, with larger star shaped flowers. Something bright yellow was tucked inside one. An *Amorpha* Borer Beetle was lying on a leaf, not moving, except for an occasional twitch of an antenna. Gratitude brought tears to my eyes. I wanted to kiss that Bomber Fly. I would have never thought to look for *Amorpha* there, but then not much was known about their habits, being rare and localized.

In an instant, my jubilant cry rang out. "Andy! An *Amorpha*!" Andy, wandering the edges of the road trying to photograph a different non-stop Bomber Fly, sprinted to my side. "Where?" he pleaded breathlessly. He'd fallen as head over heels with the beetle last year as I had. Pointing to the spot, I was perplexed by Andy's crestfallen expression—the *Amorpha* was buried too deep in the plant for a decent photo. Undaunted, he tried coaxing the beetle onto a stick—and it worked. He placed him on top of the Horsenettle, but the beetle scampered away and hid again. One more try proved successful. When the *Amorpha* climbed aboard, Andy maneuvered the stick



Amorpha Borer Beetle
Artwork Chrissy McClarren

over the top of the nearby frogfruit. The beetle scrambled off and stood atop a flower head, staring back at Andy like, “Okay, take the photo already, you nuisance!”

I’m not sure who glowed more, me or the Amorphas, but the ride home that evening was non-stop blissful rehashing as we wondered if they had just emerged from their pupal cases. They had been so sluggish, and their yellow-orange had radiated newness. We made fast plans to return and look for them again.

With renewed vigor, we returned a few days later, making a stop at the visitor center first. Unable to decide where to start, I’d tossed a coin, letting ‘heads or tails’ decide. Right away, I saw updated flyers for another search for Steven Reed. Various items belonging to him had turned up. Blue had been found unharmed.

As I paced the foyer, a Northern Walking Stick dropped from the rafters and landed on the ground in front of me. He was lying upside down and his legs were slowly bending inward. When it dawned on me that he was dying, a pained gasp of “NO!” escaped, alerting Andy, who came to join me. I wept quietly for the walking stick and Steven, choosing to be present. Reverence welled up in me as my tears fell. More than any insect I’d ever admired, the camouflage of this one was incomparable. His brown body and brown-green legs were a perfect imitation of a twig with new shoots emerging.

Continuing my pacing while contemplating this ‘coincidence,’ I heard a “Psst.” Andy caught my eye from twenty feet down a path. With a slow-motion gesture of his hand, he beckoned me toward the forest edge, curtailed by a low rock wall. Whatever he’d found had to be super sensitive.

“Look just above the tangle at the back, near the wall,” he whispered.

It took me a minute, then I saw the head and part of the body of an adult Blue Racer, whose cerulean blue lit up like the sky. He was only ten feet away, just below eye level, staying still and peering at us sideways. Sighing, I thanked this comforting presence for his solace. The three of us stayed together in stillness until he slithered off into the brush, leaving me with a profound sense of peace and acceptance. After a search at Lot I, we found no sign of Amorpha and headed home.

Days later, the news confirmed the worst: they had found Steven Reed. His tireless family had carried out at least four searches, if not more, that I'd tallied as each new flyer appeared. They had never given up, finding his shirts, a shoe, and his cigarettes shortly before they discovered his body. Maybe the family would find some closure now, but a pressing unease still weighed on my chest. My mother was stable in hospice, but a continued need to reach out to the wild compelled me forth.

Parking at Lot I, I walked into the cul-de-sac bereft. Two weeks had gone by without finding another *Amorpha*. Listless, I half-heartedly checked the ground and the surrounding plants, when I reached the back and stopped, utterly stupefied. A fifteen-foot sand willow was oozing a bubbly whitish substance that had attracted what looked like every insect in the area, including AMORPHA! Loaded with Eastern Commas, Question Marks, Viceroy's, Red-spotted Purples, a Mourning Cloak, various wasp and fly species, the sand willow hosted at least eighteen *Amorpha*. It was one big drunken party, with several *Amorpha* mating. Hypnotized, I couldn't pull away. Each time I moved my rapturous gaze up and down the tree, something new popped into view. I finally managed a glance to the left and right. More butterflies and other insects waited, perched on numerous plants in the vicinity.

Intoxicated on insects, I raved, "We will have to call this the *Amorpha* Shrine, not parking Lot I." I wished the entire human population could shrink to fit into this weensy cul-de-sac and share in this gift. The spot was exploding with so much goodness.

As if that spectacular gathering wasn't enough, two days later, I awoke with an uncanny premonition that I had to return, that very day—that something extraordinary was going to happen.

Negative foreboding was my default *modus operandi*. This was radically different. For the first time, I felt a strange intuitive certainty that something miraculous was coming. Eerily, I was in no hurry—and completely trusting the process. When Andy said he wanted to go late that afternoon, I didn't mind. A vast, tranquil patience had taken over, a complete revolution of presence.

Arriving with two hours of sunlight left, we first paid our respects to the *Amorpha* Shrine, where the party was still in full swing. Lazily moving on to parking Lot J, I gushed over sparrows, a skunk, and

the scurry of bobwhite. We then headed back to the visitor center for the ‘golden hour,’ a term I had learned from photographers, meaning the hour before sunset when the sun is low in the sky and infused with soft warm tones.

As we drove the new gravel road back, hundreds of dark flying specks materialized on the horizon. Slamming on the brakes and yelling for Andy to get out, we watched in awe as the heavens opened and more than one thousand Common Nighthawks poured in from every direction, bat-like, foraging intensely, flying high, low, even almost bumping into each other. A cauldron of kettling joy.

Spiraling around us, they sometimes flew so close, I could peer into their eyes. I watched them watch me—a deeply intimate experience. They were feasting with the voracious hunger of migrating birds headed on a long journey to South America for the winter, feasting on what we’d been feasting on these past months, the grasshoppers, the beetles, the moths, the wasps, the flies, the bees, the stink bugs, the butterflies—wild mystery.

Euphoric, I raised my arms in Hallelujah, in honor of this sublime grandeur and the ravenous interconnectedness of all things. Held by Earth, her majesty of love, I saw a vision of Steven Reed, tenderly smiling, riding on the back of one of the nighthawks, waving good-bye.



Common Nighthawk, Columbia Bottom CA, St Louis Co 19 Sep 25
Photo Andy Reago and Chrissy McClarren

Rudolf Bennitt Award Presented to

Edge Wade

The Rudolf Bennitt Award, first awarded by the Missouri Birding Society in 2004, recognizes those whose work has contributed to ornithology, the birding community, and conservation efforts in Missouri through outstanding service to the Missouri Birding Society. The award is named for Dr. Rudolf Bennitt, who was a professor of zoology at the University of Missouri from 1927 till 1950. He was instrumental in reorganizing and revitalizing the society, then called the Audubon Society of Missouri, at a time when it had become inactive. He served as Secretary of the society, founded *The Bluebird*, and served as its first editor. He was influential in the founding of the Missouri Department of Conservation, and served as technical advisor to the first Missouri Conservation Commission. Edge Wade is now the fifth person to earn the award that is given in his name.



Edge Wade
Photo Mike Grant

To list all of Edge Wade's contributions to the Missouri Birding Society, conservation efforts in the state, and the broader birding community would probably take an entire issue of the Bluebird or more. I will highlight a few of her many accomplishments here, drawing on testimonials from members who supported her nomination for the award.

Several members mentioned Edge's work in helping start and maintain the CACHE and SPARKS programs – agreements with the Missouri Department of Conservation and Department of Natural Resources under which MBS members bird conservation areas and state parks, and those agencies provide funding to MBS for conservation and education efforts. June Newman said "One of the first ways I was involved in MBS was some survey work we did at Truman on mitigation wetlands. I remember sitting in the lobby of the hotel where we stayed in Clinton, listening to Brad Jacobs and Jerry Wade and Edge brainstorm about a plan for our organization to contract with MDC to do work related to bird habitat. This was the beginning of CACHE and later SPARKS, and represented the first time MBS had enough funds to make a difference in that way."

Edge continues to serve as Conservation Coordinator for MBS, managing our CACHE and SPARKS partnerships. As Mark Haas noted "For years she kept the CACHE and SPARKS programs going, often through difficult times dealing with the administrators of MDC and DNR--some who seriously questioned the value of programs. Edge deserves high praise for her dogged determination to keep these programs thriving."

Edge was also involved in the inception of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative, MoBCI, a consortium of organizations dedicated to conservation of bird populations in the state. Ethan Duke of the Missouri River Bird Observatory noted that "Edge has been a constant participant in conservation circles. We've interacted with her for a decade and a half through the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative."

Edge has served the MBS as Vice-President and President, and in a wide range of other roles; she has worn more hats than probably any other member of the society. Ellen and Jim Zellmer, along with Paul McKenzie, noted some of her many accomplishments, including serving as chair of the committee that revised the bylaws in 2013, serving on the bylaws revision committee in 2022, negotiating a cooperative agreement with the L-A-D Foundation, establishing a

hang-tag program for birders on University of Missouri properties, and helping establish Bird for Brad Day each May 1st. Sarah Kendrick, former Missouri State Ornithologist, cited Edge's work supporting bird research such as the Motus Wildlife Tracking System through funding proposals to the MBS board.

Furthermore, of course, she is a remarkable birder and birding educator. As Bill Clark, MBS historian, noted, she has an eBird checklist in every MDC and DNR site in the state. He went on to say "Edge Wade's dedication to conservation and her learned expertise as an 'amateur' ornithologist, her mastery of the technology required of today's birder/conservationist, and her willingness to fill whatever role needed to be filled – locally, statewide, or regionally, put her in a class of one."

Pat Lueders mentioned that, as a birder, Edge has been an ambassador for MBS through the years. "She willingly took beginners under her wing and, in my case, invited me to travel with her and often Susan Hazelwood chasing birds. She taught us to respect the birds, to study hard to learn as much as possible about each species, and to enjoy all of the birding opportunities in Missouri." It should also be noted that she does a fine impression of a Barred Owl.

In short, Edge Wade has contributed to the Missouri Birding Society, bird conservation, and wildlife education for many years, and has made an indelible impression on the state and on the many people who have had the pleasure of meeting her and birding with her. She exemplifies the determined conservation work and sheer love of birds that the Rudolf Bennitt award was founded to recognize. It was an honor for the Missouri Birding Society to present her with this award at the spring meeting in the society's 125th year.

-Allen Gathman

Birders' Guide:
Burr Oak Woods
Conservation Area
and Nature Center
James Barry, 2026

1071 acres Jackson Co. DeLorme 27, I-8
GPS 39.049, -94.290
MDC owned; for information call 816-228-3766

Directions: From eastbound or westbound I-70, take Exit #20 (MO-7), then go about 1.1 mile north on MO-7. Go west for 1 mile along Park Road to the main entrance. There are also several hundred acres north of Pink Hill Road; a small gravel parking lot can be found on Strode Road to access this portion of the area. Area is open daily from 6am to 8pm. Nature Center is open Tuesday through Saturday 8am to 5pm.

ADA Information: Paved trails are accessible, as is the nature center.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: Birding is good year-round; however, spring migration is by far the most active. Just under 200 species have been found on the property. The area is best broken down into the 6 trails and the north Strode Road area.

Wildlife Habitat trail (0.9 & 1.5 mile loops) – This trail comprises two loops through a woodland section with some wetlands and glades. You will find woodpeckers, tanagers, warblers and vireos during appropriate seasons. The walnut plantation next to the parking lot is great area to find American Woodcocks in early spring. There is a small farm pond where Green Herons and sometimes sandpipers will be seen. This trail is well used by non-birders.

Hickory Grove trail (1.15 miles one way) is the longest trail on the conservation area. It runs from the habitat trail parking lot to the Bethany Falls parking lot. You will go through woodlands, restored prairie, Burr Oak Creek and the educational fishing pond. The

fishing pond will have some ducks and geese during the winter. Wood Ducks have tried to nest there for several years, but never successfully. The restored prairie grasses have a wide variety of sparrows and Common Yellowthroats. Raptors are always hunting the area. The west section of trail is through the wetlands and creek. Favorites are nesting Wood Thrushes, both tanagers, and Kentucky Warblers. This trail is popular with joggers.

Bethany Falls trail (1.33 mi loop) is by far the most crowded trail. It meanders through the limestone outcroppings and a mature forest. A good place for owls in the evening calling back and forth. Black-capped Chickadees, titmice, and Summer Tanagers are found here. The parking lot always has warblers, phoebes and vireos. I have better luck birding the parking lot than I do on the trail. Don't forget to go west of the picnic area down to the creek; waterthrushes are found here during migration. You rarely hear of someone crossing the creek and birding the west area.

Discovery trail (0.5 mi paved loop) – This area has the oldest trees of the area. Spring migration has warblers, vireos, and tanagers feeding in the treetops. Kentucky Warblers and Yellow-throated Vireos nest here. A great place for woodpeckers, Brown Creepers, and nuthatches. Wild Turkeys are very common heading toward the center's bird feeding station. The trail starts at the back of the nature center.

MO Tree trail (0.75 mi paved loop) – This is the go-to trail for warblers during spring migration. The south side of the trail is unofficially called “warbler way” by local birders. In late April to mid-May this is where you will find the rare birds migrating through. There is a farm pond on the trail that has had Eastern Phoebes nesting under the bridge since 1994. Barred Owls and Red-shouldered Hawks hunt around the pond. The trail borders a restored prairie that is wonderful for sparrows, bluebirds and turkeys.

Prairie Connector trail (0.5 one way) – Restored prairie is the main habitat. It can be difficult to bird with 10-foot-high grasses. It is used mainly to bird the nearby forest edges. However, after a prescribed burn the area is fantastic. Late summer you find Mississippi Kites hunting dragonflies. Northern Harriers have also been seen hunting here.

Strode Road (North) area – Very underutilized area. The primitive trail is through former pastureland with ongoing prairie grass

restoration. There is a farm pond where Green-winged Teal, other ducks, and Red-winged Blackbirds are found. Yellow-Breasted Chats will nest here. In the 1990s, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Upland Sandpipers were documented here.

Features of interest to birders: There is a Nature Center with bird exhibits, bird feeding area, and an auditorium. There are six maintained trails on the property. Two trails are paved, and four are gravel. Several primitive trails are also found on the property. These primitive trails will intersect one of the main trails. There are six ponds, and Burr Oak creek flows west of Bethany Falls trail. Habitats include restored prairie, deciduous forest, walnut plantation, pine plantation, ponds, a creek, wetlands, glades, limestone outcroppings and pastures. The Nature Center parking lot is a good place to bird year-round. Chipping Sparrows, Summer Tanagers, and Eastern Bluebirds are very common during the Spring and Summer.

Toilets: Modern restrooms in the Nature Center. Primitive toilets are in the parking lots of the Habitat/Hickory Grove trail, Bethany Falls trail and a picnic area along the main road. A primitive toilet is also at the educational fishing pond; however, the toilets tend to be locked when a program is not going on.

Camping: Prohibited.

Hazards/Limitations: The area is closed for youth turkey hunts and for managed deer hunts. Please check with MDC for dates and times. No fishing is allowed except for MDC programs. Make sure to lock your vehicles and hide all valuables.

Nearby Birding Sites: Woods Chapel Park, Little Blue Trace Trail – Fisher Rd. Trailhead, Lake Remembrance, Little Blue Trace Trail – Hartman Heritage Trailhead, and the many areas in Fleming Park.

Birders' Guide:
Jerry Smith Park and
Saeger Woods Conservation Area
Sherry Leonardo, 2026

360 Acres (Jerry Smith Park), 20 acres (Saeger Woods CA), Jackson County, DeLorme 34, C-1
GPS 38.883, -94.568
Owned by MDC and Kansas City. For more information call (816) 622-0900

Directions:

From I-49, take Main St. exit 179 in Grandview. Follow signs around traffic circle for Main Street West, and follow Main Street through downtown, across railroad tracks to 2nd St. Turn left on 2nd St. and follow it approximately 2 miles as it winds around to the west, changing names to Arrington Rd. and then 139th St. The entrance is on the right, marked by a large wooden sign. Follow the drive to the parking area.

From I-435, take exit 74 and follow Holmes Rd 3.5 miles south to 139th St. There is no street sign; look for a white wooden sign with red and blue symbol for "Saddle & Sirloin." Turn left on 139th St and go $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the park entrance on the left; the sign is hard to see from this direction. Follow the drive to the parking area.

From MO Hwy 150, take Holmes Rd north 1.5 miles, turn right on 139th St., and follow the directions given above for "From I-435."

ADA Information: No accessible facilities.

When to Visit/Species to Expect:

Year-round birds include Mourning Dove, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Eastern Bluebird, American Goldfinch and Northern Cardinal.

American Woodcocks start showing up in mid-February, and organized programs are held the first 2 weeks in March. Early spring migrants are Eastern Phoebe, various sparrows such as American Tree, Fox, Savannah, Song, and White-Throated, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle. Later spring migrants include Least and Great-crested Flycatchers, Eastern Wood-pewee, Eastern Kingbird, Northern Rough-winged and Barn Swallows, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, warblers including Nashville, Tennessee, Black & White, Orange-crowned and Palm, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting and Summer Tanager.

Summer residents are Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting. Mississippi Kites can be fairly common in August. The latter half of October is the best time for fall migrants. A walk on the grassy service road can produce LeConte's, Lincoln's, Harris', Savannah, Swamp, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows. Additional species can include Sedge and Marsh Wrens and Nashville and Palm Warblers. Cliff Swallows and Chimney Swifts are commonly seen over the prairie.

Birding in the winter is the leanest season of the year. Year round residents are the most likely birds to be encountered. Winter residents include American Tree, Song and White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eye Junco and Purple Finch. Hermit Thrush can be encountered along the walking trail where there are cedar trees.

Features of interest to birders:

Jerry Smith Park is a 360-acre property of Kansas City Parks & Rec., of which 40 acres is the largest remnant tallgrass prairie in Jackson County. Saeger Woods is a 20-acre Conservation Area owned by MDC. The Conservation Area is poorly marked, has no trails and is not often birded. Jerry Smith Park can be birded year round from 8 am to sunset. The gate to the park may or may not be open after a snow as neither the drive nor parking lot is plowed. There's a 1.4-mile walking trail that loops around the prairie. The grassy service road from the edge of the parking area as well as fire lines can also be walked. It's often a good idea to start on the service

road and then move to the walking trail. There is a side trail off the walking trail that goes to an overlook view of the prairie with nice wooden benches for sitting.

202 species of birds have been reported to eBird. Plant experts have identified 266 species of native plants and grasses that brighten the landscape from mid-April through fall. A bee expert identified 68 species of bees, 2 of which he hadn't seen elsewhere in the state. Butterfly surveys have recorded 73 species of butterflies, 25 species of dragonflies and 5 species of damselflies.

Picnic Areas:

There are 2 picnic tables just off the parking area.

Toilets: None

Camping: Not permitted

Hazards/Limitations:

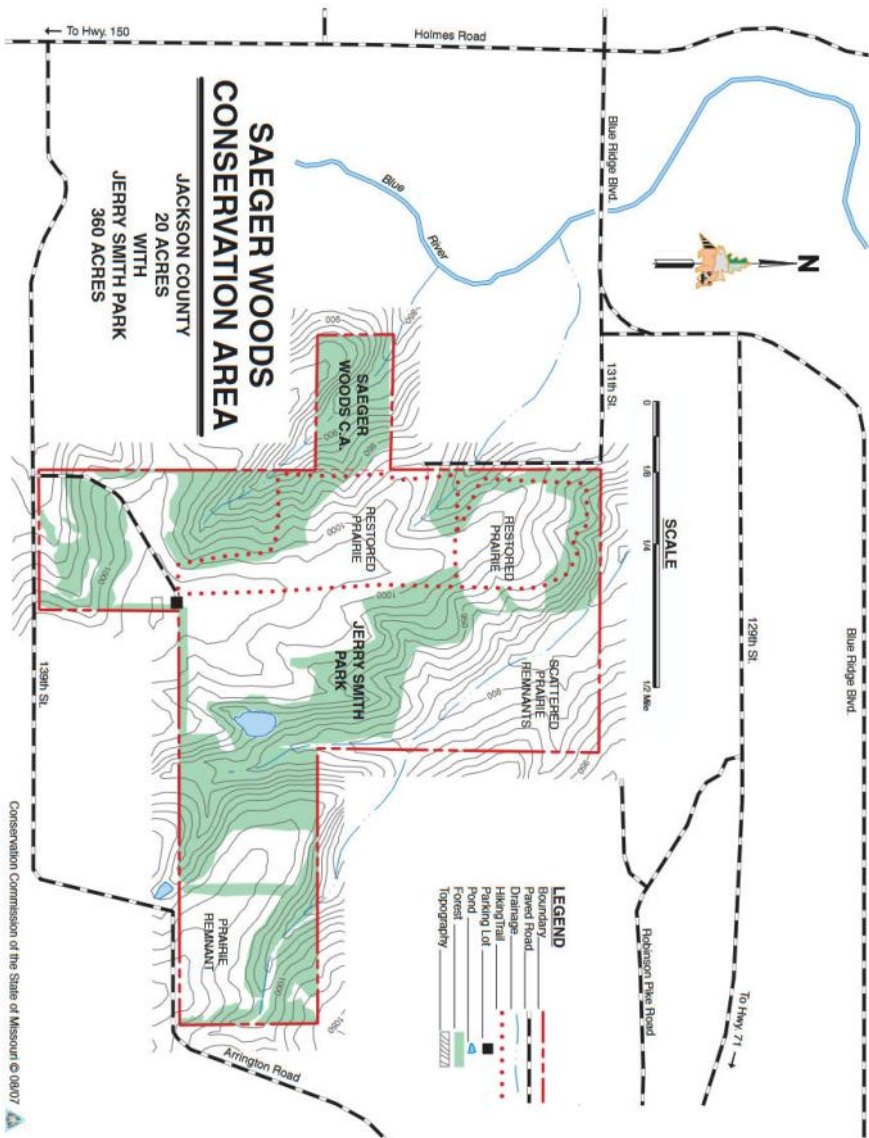
The walking trail can be rugged in spots. There are hills at north and south ends of the loop, as well as on the west side. The latter hill is particularly steep and rocky.

Please be sure to lock your vehicle and leave no valuables inside.

Despite city and county-wide leash laws, some people choose to either leave the leash at home or carry a leash in their hand rather than attach it to their dog.

Nearby Birding Sites:

Longview Lake, Little Blue River Trail- Meadowmere Park, Stamm Field, Minor Park, Alex George Lake.



Birders' Guide:
Wade and June Shelton
Memorial Conservation Area

Kelly Ormesher, 2026

Dade County, DeLorme 51, E-6

GPS: 37.460509, -93.986940

Owned and managed by Missouri Department of Conservation

For more information call: (417) 895-6880

Directions: From Lockwood, take Highway 97 north 4 miles, then Route VV west 2 miles, and Dade 51 north 0.75 mile.

The tract is located between Dade County Roads 61 and 51. Parking and signage are located on Dade CR 51. The tract can also be accessed from the east along Dade CR 61 at the locked gate. It is best explored on foot.

ADA Information: No dedicated accessible facilities. There is no east-west access to this conservation area, therefore birding by automobile is limited.

When to visit/Species to expect:

A birder can expect to find a variety of permanent prairie residents including Northern Bobwhite, Mourning Dove, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, and Red-winged Blackbird. Open skies make for excellent viewing of Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, and seasonally, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and Merlin. Winter sparrows are in abundance along the east side of the conservation area. Bell's Vireo and Henslow and Grasshopper Sparrows are expected during the breeding season. Bobolink may be seen late-April to mid-May.

Features of interest to birders: This 320-acre prairie was purchased in 2009 with funds donated by the Wade and June Shelton Family. The area is mostly open prairie with a small amount of

brushy cover. The West Prong Son's Creek drainage, which sometimes has water year-round, runs from the southwest side of the area crossing CR 61. There are some trees located on the southwest border of the conservation area. The area is home to a fair number of rabbits and quail, as well as many other species of grassland birds.



Looking northwest from Dade CR 61 above the creek.

Toilets: None

Camping: None

Hazards/Limitations: Cattle grazing is permitted and electric fences may be present. Hunting is allowed.

Nearby Birding Sites: Niawathe Prairie, Penn-Sylvania Prairie, Sloane CA, Hedeman Lake/England Pond, Stony Point CA

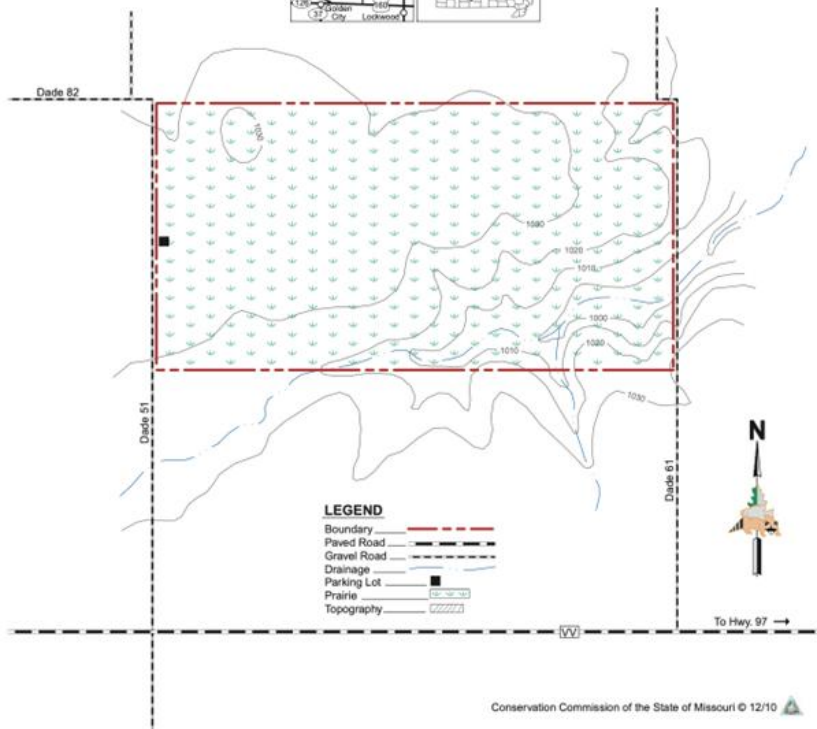
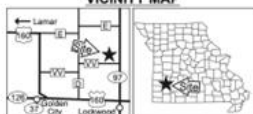
WADE AND JUNE SHELTON MEMORIAL CONSERVATION AREA

DADE COUNTY
320 ACRES

SCALE



VICINITY MAP



Birders' Guide:
Woods Chapel Park
James Barry, 2026

10 acres, Jackson Co. DeLorme 34, A-3

GPS 39.0225, -94.3108

Owned by City of Blue Springs; for information call 816-228-0137

Directions: From NW Woods Chapel Road and Interstate 70 (Exit 18); travel south on NW Woods Chapel Road for 0.5 miles. Turn right, west, at the signal/intersection at NW Briarwood Dr (Sonic is a landmark). After 0.3 miles turn left on NW 39th Street. Travel south 0.3 miles until you see the park entrance on the right. There is a cul-de-sac parking lot. The park is open daily from 6am to mid-night.

ADA Information: No accessible facilities.

When to Visit/Species to Expect: This is a rarely birded migration stopover in the Spring. This park is in a residential neighborhood and directly north of Lake Tapawingo. From mid-April to the 3rd week of May I am always surprised at the number of warblers feeding at the park. You can find many migrant species here. The last 10 years have had Green Herons nesting at the pond. Besides warblers, you will find thrushes, vireos, sparrows, swallows, and orioles. Waterfowl and herons will be on the RR side of the pond. Don't let the lack of species on eBird discourage you. Year-round you can expect the usual cast of city park birds.

Features of interest to birders: There is a paved trail (approximately 0.5 miles) that circles the park. The trail goes around a small pond, through wooded sections and normal park grass area. The pond's southwest edge is a railroad bed that is good spot for birds. Water flows under the tracks to Lake Tapawingo. The herons hunt here.

There is a small swale that cuts the park in half as it moves storm-water out of the nearby neighborhood. Mallards, phoebes, and sparrows will be feeding here. A tall evergreen is nearby that has been used by a Red-shouldered Hawk to nest.

The wooded areas are where the warblers can be found in spring. The city staff have done maintenance to remove bush honeysuckle in the understory. There are 3 wooded areas, with the south area woods being the largest tract. The west woods along the railroad tracks can be a hotspot for migrants.

Toilets: A portable restroom is usually located near basketball court.

Camping: Prohibited.

Hazards/Limitations: As it's a residential park, you will have to deal with the occasional off leash dog and questionable activities at night. The basketball court and playground can be loud. Not many birders, so the public is curious what you are doing with binoculars.

Nearby Birding Sites: Burr Oak Woods CA; Little Blue Trace Trail – Fisher Rd. Trailhead; Lake Remembrance; Little Blue Trace Trail – Hartman Heritage Trailhead; and the many areas in Fleming Park.

Missouri Christmas Bird Counts 2025-2026

Kendell Loyd

This year marked the 126th Christmas Bird Count (CBC), hosted by the National Audubon Society. Missouri has now held CBCs for 124 years. Each annual count consists of count circles that are established around a fixed central point and have a 15-mile diameter. Each holiday season—between December 14th and January 5th—volunteers descend into each circle to count every individual bird they see or hear within a single day. These counts occur into perpetuity, all in the name of bird population science. The data of each circle are collected by groups of volunteers, then compiled and submitted by the count compiler. There are over 2600 count circles across North America, South America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. The CBC remains the largest and longest-running citizen science project in history and provides scientists invaluable information on long-term trends in bird populations.

This season Missouri hosted 34 active count circles. While no new circles were established, all previously active circles continued operation, maintaining the record-high number of counts achieved last year (Figure 1, Table 1).

A total of 652 participants recorded 155 species across the state, consisting of 823,789 individual birds. On average, approximately one species was recorded for every 4 participants, and about 1260 birds per person were counted. In total, this year's efforts included roughly 1850 hours of birding and about 8000 miles of walking or driving. Collectively, 31 bird feeders were monitored as part of counts, and 72 hours of nocturnal birding were logged. Compared to last year, participation and total individuals were lower, though species diversity and nocturnal effort increased.

Weather conditions across the count period were variable but generally mild. The average temperature across all counts was 38.8° F, slightly cooler than the previous year. The coldest count occurred at Maramec Spring (4°F), while the warmest occurred at Taney

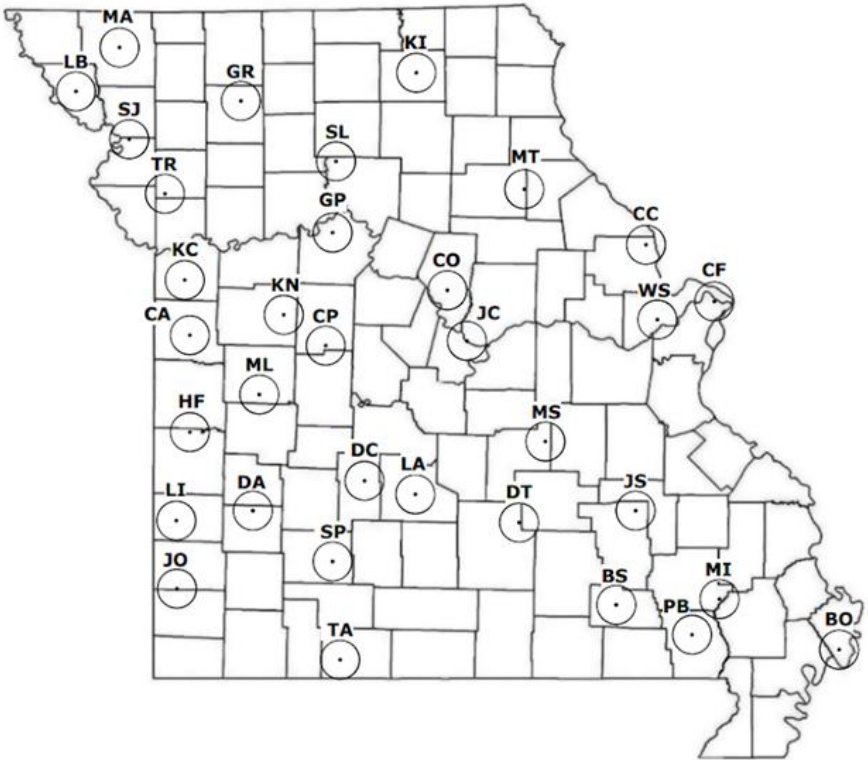
Table 1.

Ab- brev.	Count Name	Date of Count	Count Compiler	Years Active
BO	Big Oak Tree SP	Dec 17	Bill Eddleman	60
BS	Big Spring	Dec 19	Steve Paes	29
CA	Cass County	Dec 27	Barry Jones	03
CC	Clarence Cannon NWR	Jan 03	Bruce Schuette	24
CF	Confluence	Jan 01	Tommy Goodwin	17
CO	Columbia	Dec 20	Allison Vaughn	69
CP	Cole Camp Prairies IBA	Dec 29	Ryan Steffens	17
DA	Dade County	Dec 31	Rick Hostetler	05
DC	Dallas County	Dec 17	David Blevins	37
DT	Dent-Texas County	Dec 27	Melissa Lewis	11
GP	Grand Pass	Dec 18	Laura Semken	03
GR	Grand River	Dec 16	Terry McNeely	37
HF	(Horton) Four Riv- ers	Dec 16	Kendell Loyd	28
JC	Jefferson City	Dec 20	Barbara Brueggeman	48
JO	Joplin	Dec 20	Lydia Swift	38
JS	Johnson's Shut-Ins SP	Jan 05	Dairan Elam- Pyles	07
KC	Kansas City	Dec 28	Mike Stoakes	95
KI	Kirksville	Jan 02	Sarah Kendrick	11
KN	Knob Noster	Dec 21	Shelby Palmer	48

Table 1 Continued

Abbrev.	Count Name	Date of Count	Count Compiler	Years Active
LA	Laclede County	Jan 03	Zach Haring	18
LB	Loess Bluffs NWR	Dec 18	Mark Robbins	66
LI	Liberal	Jan 02	Dana Hoisington	25
MA	Maryville	Dec 16	David Easterla	63
MI	Mingo NWR	Dec 15	Bill Eddleman	62
ML	Montrose Lake WA	Dec 20	Rhonda Edmunds	62
MS	Maramec Spring	Dec 14	Linda Frederick	42
MT	Mark Twain Lake	Dec 20	George Wisdom	06
PB	Poplar Bluff	Jan 04	Cindy Bridges	39
SJ	St. Joseph	Dec 20	Tom Nagel	62
SL	Swan Lake NWR	Jan 01	Steve Kinder	49
SP	Springfield	Dec 20	Greg Samuel	71
TC	Taney County	Dec 27	Charley Burwick	43
TR	Trimble	Dec 20	Kristi Mayo	50
WS	Weldon Spring	Dec 14	Anne McCormack	75

Figure 1



County (82°F), representing an unusually wide temperature range for the season. Most counts experienced favorable conditions, though several were impacted by precipitation or wind. Grand Pass experienced heavy rain during the morning hours, Kansas City had light rain followed by snow, and Laclede County recorded light rain during the morning. Loess Bluffs reported strong winds with gusts up to 40 mph. Snow cover was minimal, with only Weldon Spring reporting any accumulation.

As in previous years, climate patterns continue to shape winter bird distributions. Several species showed continued northward expansion consistent with warming winter temperatures, including Black Vulture and Red-shouldered Hawk. Additionally, species such as Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, and Sedge Wren appear to be increasing in winter abundance and distribution. Conversely, this season was marked by an irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatch, which was detected on an unusually high number of counts statewide.

As for total species counted, Four Rivers recorded 115 species, setting a new state record and surpassing the previous high of 114 species set at Four Rivers in 2016 and tied by Dade County in 2023. Dade County also had an impressive total with 112 species, while Confluence recorded 109 species, a new high for the circle. Several other counts established new high species totals: Jefferson City (84 species), Kirksville (69 species), and Laclede County (60). Additionally, Mark Twain Lake recorded their highest number of individual birds (3536).

A total of 24 species were recorded on all 34 counts: Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Blue Jay, American Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal. This is only the second time Red-shouldered Hawk has made this list, likely as a result of its steady northward winter expansion.

One new species was added to the Missouri CBC list this year: a Red-necked Grebe* at Dade County, which is considered casual in winter in the state. Records of species mentioned in this report that are under review by the Missouri Bird Records Committee (MBRC)—the body responsible for maintaining official bird records in the

state—are denoted with an asterisk (*) and will be officially added to the Missouri CBC list upon acceptance.

Other noteworthy birds in the state included Blue-winged Teal, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Inca Dove, Greater Roadrunner, Sora, Greater Yellowlegs, American Woodcock, Iceland Gull, Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, dark ibis (*Plegadis* sp.), Golden Eagle, Long-eared Owl, Gyrfalcon, Prairie Falcon, Fish Crow, Northern House Wren, Gray Catbird, Redpoll, Smith's Longspur, Vesper Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Indigo Bunting. A more in-depth description of notable sightings follows in taxonomic order. It is important to note that records are deemed notable with the longevity of the circle taken into account. Numbers within parentheses mark the number of individuals recorded, and, unless specified, high counts refer to the greatest number of individuals of a species counted in a specific circle. Species not seen on the count day, but recorded within three days before or after the count day are denoted as “count week birds”.

Collectively, Missouri set apparent high counts for numerous species this season. Among these were Sandhill Crane (52), Wilson's Snipe (355), Bonaparte's Gull (1093), Bald Eagle (1957), Red-shouldered Hawk (488), Belted Kingfisher (208), Red-bellied Woodpecker (2601), Pileated Woodpecker (555), Northern Flicker (2375), American Kestrel (789), Merlin (30), Blue Jay (6553), Winter Wren (175), Sedge Wren (16), White-crowned Sparrow (4090), and White-throated Sparrow (7552). While these totals are calculated without data from inactive historical counts, they illustrate several notable trends. Species such as Sandhill Crane and Bald Eagle were once the focus of major conservation efforts that have resulted in record-high numbers today. Additionally, milder winters are the likely driver for increases in species such as Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Sedge Wren.

As usual, waterfowl were particularly well represented across Missouri this season, with numerous circles reporting first records and high counts. Among geese, Poplar Bluff recorded its high count of Snow Goose (8000), far surpassing the previous high of 45 set in 2008. Ross's Goose was notable at Kansas City (fifth record) and Maryville (sixth record), particularly given the longevity of both counts (Table 1). Greater White-fronted Goose was widespread, including a first record at Johnson's Shut-Ins and a high count at Poplar Bluff (516), nearly doubling its previous record. Grand Pass saw its first record of Cackling Goose; Joplin recorded its third, and

Liberal and Montrose each recorded their fourth. Notably, Big Spring recorded its fifth record of Canada Goose, four of which have occurred since 2020, and Johnson's Shut-Ins established a new high count (230).

Trumpeter Swan continues to represent one of the most notable conservation success stories reflected in CBC data. Once on the brink of extinction and then the focus of intensive restoration efforts, the species is now regularly detected across an increasing number of circles. This season produced first records at Laclede County and Maramec Spring, and other circles had additional records: Weldon Spring (third), Grand River (fourth), Columbia (sixth), and Trimble (seventh). Several circles also established new high counts, including Kirksville (94), Maryville (174), and Montrose (147), the latter nearly tripling its previous high and having no records prior to 2009. Jefferson City recorded its first Tundra Swan, while Maryville had its fourth. At Mingo, Tundra Swan was recorded for the first time since 2002.

Dabbling and diving ducks also produced several highlights. Trimble recorded its sixth record of Wood Duck. Blue-winged Teal was seen at Four Rivers, Jefferson City (third record), and Columbia (seventh record). Swan Lake established a new high count for Gadwall (232). American Black Duck was recorded for the first time at Dade County, while Northern Pintail represented a first for Laclede County. Green-winged Teal was recorded for the sixth time at Poplar Bluff, and Trimble found its fourth Canvasback. Both Big Oak Tree and Mingo established high counts for Ring-necked Duck (455 and 10,600, respectively). Kansas City recorded its first Black Scoter, becoming the first circle in Missouri to document all three expected scoter species; this also represents only the second Missouri CBC record for Black Scoter, following birds at Confluence last year. Long-tailed Duck was recorded for the third time at Confluence. A new high count of Common Goldeneye was established at Kansas City (462), while Big Oak Tree recorded its seventh occurrence. Maryville reported its third Red-breasted Merganser, and Mingo set a new high count for Ruddy Duck (165).

Grand Pass recorded its first Wild Turkey; Big Oak Tree had its eighth; and Maryville recorded its first in the past 10 years. Mingo recorded its second Ring-necked Pheasant—likely an escapee or released individual. High counts of Rock Pigeon were recorded at Jefferson City (1322) and Kirksville (69), and Eurasian Collared-Dove represented a fourth record at Kansas City. An Inca Dove* was

documented at a private feeder within the Cole Camp circle, although only recorded this time during count week. This was the first detection for that count. Greater Roadrunner was recorded at Taney County, where the species is an expected low-density resident. Virginia Rail and Sora were recorded at Columbia, where both are known winter residents; however, Virginia Rail was also detected at Confluence* for the first time and at Liberal* for the second. Four counts recorded Sandhill Crane, including Big Oak Tree, where an impressive 33 individuals represented the count's second record. Liberal established a high count for Killdeer (14).



Inca Dove, Cole Camp Prairies CBC . Photo Karen Wienberg

An early-displaying American Woodcock represented a first record at Confluence. High counts for Wilson's Snipe were established at Big Oak Tree (166), Poplar Bluff (80), and Taney County (8). Greater

Yellowlegs was recorded only at Four Rivers. Maryville saw its fifth American Herring Gull. Confluence recorded both Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and the latter was also reported at Dade County. As noted previously, Red-necked Grebe* at Dade County represents both a first for that count and the first Missouri CBC record. Trimble recorded its second Western Grebe. Dade County documented its first Red-throated Loon* and its fourth Pacific Loon*, representing the second and fifth state CBC records, respectively. Confluence recorded its second count week Common Loon but still lacks a definitive count-day record. Maramec Spring also recorded a count week Common Loon but has one prior count-day record. Cass County found its first Double-crested Cormorant; Big Oak Tree recorded its fourth; and Maryville its eighth. Four Rivers recorded its first dark ibis (*Plegadis* sp.), most likely White-faced Ibis, though winter identification to species is often impossible. Grand Pass recorded its first Great Blue Heron, and Columbia found its second American White Pelican.

Black Vulture continues to expand its winter range northward and eastward. Big Spring recorded its third occurrence (all since 2022), Jefferson City its fifth (all since 2019), Big Oak Tree and Columbia each their eighth (all since 2015 and 2018, respectively), and Weldon Spring its ninth (all since 2015). Maramec Spring recorded a count week individual but has four confirmed records, all since 2020. Even in southern portions of the state, the species is increasing, as evidenced by Springfield's high count (235). Turkey Vulture was also present, with Montrose recording its fifth record and Jefferson City (8) and Johnson's Shut-Ins (4) establishing new highs. Four Rivers recorded the only Golden Eagle. Springfield set its high count for Northern Harrier (15). Bald Eagle reached high counts at Grand River (47) and Loess Bluffs (940), while St. Joseph tied its record from the year 2000 (78). Red-shouldered Hawk also continues to expand its winter range, with additional records at Loess Bluffs (fifth), Maryville (third), and St. Joseph (eighth). High counts were established at Big Oak Tree (16), Clarence Cannon (19), Confluence (17), Grand River (5, tied with 2023), Johnson's Shut-Ins (11), and Trimble (9). Cole Camp had its first records of both Harlan's and Krider's types of Red-tailed Hawk. Rough-legged Hawk was recorded for the first time at Dent-Texas County and Grand Pass. American Barn Owl was found for the first time at Kirksville and for the ninth time at Big Oak Tree. Eastern Screech-Owl was recorded for the second time at Laclede County and Poplar Bluff, with a high count at Big Oak Tree (6). Grand Pass recorded its first Great Horned Owl, while Big Oak Tree set a high count for Barred Owl (9).

Four Rivers had its fourth Long-eared Owl. Kirksville recorded its second Short-eared Owl, and Jefferson City its fourth. Belted Kingfisher high counts were established at Confluence (26), Johnson's Shut-Ins (8), and Laclede County (6).

High counts for woodpecker species were widespread across the state. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker reached new highs at Grand River (5), Jefferson City (17), and Trimble (12). Red-headed Woodpecker totals at Grand River (45), Liberal (30, tied with 2020), St. Joseph (40), and Trimble (152) each represented new record highs for those circles. Similarly, Red-bellied Woodpecker established high counts at Columbia (357), Confluence (125), and Johnson's Shut-Ins (31, tied with 2019). Downy Woodpecker achieved new highs at Confluence (149) and Dent-Texas County (38), while Hairy Woodpecker set highs at Confluence (28), Dent-Texas County (21), and Mingo (32). Pileated Woodpecker had high counts at Jefferson City (27) and Johnson's Shut-Ins (37). Northern Flicker totals were highest at Confluence (120), Swan Lake (256), and Trimble (147). Loess Bluffs recorded its third occurrence of the intergrade-type (Red-shafted x Yellow-shafted) Northern Flicker, and St. Joseph its fourth.

American Kestrel established high counts at Big Oak Tree (54) and Confluence (37). Merlin appeared more frequently than in recent years, with records at Weldon Spring (sixth), Swan Lake (eighth), Kansas City (ninth), and Springfield (eleventh). High counts were established at Four Rivers (5) and Jefferson City (3). Peregrine Falcon was recorded only at Confluence, and Prairie Falcon only at Four Rivers. Perhaps the most notable bird of the season, an immature Gyrfalcon* was photographed within the Confluence count circle during count week [see front cover], representing the first record for that count and only the second Missouri CBC record, the first occurring at Loess Bluffs in 1977.

Eastern Phoebe was recorded on 11 counts. Springfield saw its ninth record, and Four Rivers tied its previous high count (4). Northern Shrike was recorded only at Grand River and Clarence Cannon, where at the latter it represented the third record. Fish Crow was reported at Big Oak Tree and Big Spring, exemplifying its status as an occasional low-density winter resident in the southeast. Golden-crowned Kinglet reached high counts at Johnson's Shut-Ins (27), Laclede County (15), and Liberal (24). Ruby-crowned Kinglet also reached new highs at Liberal (5) and Trimble (19). White-breasted Nuthatch established high counts at Confluence (93) and Johnson's Shut-Ins (59).

Poor cone crops in the eastern Canadian boreal forest during fall 2025 led to a notable irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatch into Missouri. The species was widespread, with Cass County and Grand Pass recording first records and Big Oak Tree recording its seventh. High counts were established at Clarence Cannon (5), Confluence (5), Dent-Texas County (20), Kirksville (11), and Laclede County (12). Over the past 25 years, detection at similar levels to this season have occurred only twice (2018 and 2001).

Brown Creeper was recorded for the first time at Mark Twain Lake and for the third time at Laclede County. High counts were established at Confluence (19), Johnson's Shut-Ins (4), and Kirksville (5). Northern House Wren was recorded for the ninth time at Big Oak Tree, where it is expected as a low-density resident. Elsewhere, it remains casual, including at Four Rivers*, where it represented a first record. Winter Wren was recorded for the second time at Laclede County, with high counts at Columbia (20), Confluence (17), Knob Noster (5, tied with 2007), and Liberal (7). Sedge Wren was recorded for the second time at Montrose and the third time at Confluence*, with a high count at Liberal (8). Marsh Wren was recorded on only three counts. Carolina Wren established high counts at Confluence (152), Johnson's Shut-Ins (40), Laclede County (15), and Maryville (7). Gray Catbird records at St. Joseph and Weldon Spring represented third occurrences. Liberal established a high count of Brown Thrasher (4), while St. Joseph recorded its tenth occurrence. Maryville had its first Northern Mockingbird in 10 years. Confluence set a high count for Hermit Thrush (5), while St. Joseph (fourth) and Swan Lake (sixth) added additional records. Big Oak Tree tied its 2020 high count (22). American Pipit records included a first at Cole Camp, second at Jefferson City, third at Poplar Bluff, fourth at Springfield, and ninth at Mingo. Dade County recorded its fourth Smith's Longspur, remaining the only circle where the species occurs with any regularity.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow, introduced to the St. Louis area in 1870, remains largely restricted to that region and adjacent areas. However, evidence of gradual expansion continues. Kirksville recorded a new high count (42), triple its previous high (14), and Columbia recorded its fifth record. Most notably, Four Rivers* recorded its first occurrence, representing the southwestern-most record of the species in North America.

The Winter Finch Forecast predicted that, despite poor boreal cone

crops in central and eastern Canada, many irruptive finch species (e.g. Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin) would shift west rather than south into the state. Purple Finch, however, was expected to move south in greater numbers and was recorded on 30 counts—approximately a 10% increase over the five-year average. A count week Redpoll at Cass County represented the first detection for that circle. Pine Siskin occurred at low levels this year, detected on only 15% of counts. A count week individual at Cass County likewise represented a first record for that circle—occurring at the same feeder as the Redpoll—and Montrose recorded its tenth record. Kirksville established a high count for American Goldfinch (218).

Sparrow numbers were generally high this winter. Columbia recorded its eighth Chipping Sparrow, a rare winter resident. Cole Camp set a high count for Field Sparrow (78), and Grand River recorded its fourth occurrence. Columbia established a high count for Fox Sparrow (148). Dark-eyed Junco high counts were recorded at Cole Camp (960), Confluence (511), and Kirksville (837). White-crowned Sparrow reached high counts at Jefferson City (170), Kirksville (75), and Liberal (891). Confluence recorded its fourth Harris's Sparrow. White-throated Sparrow was recorded in high counts at Confluence (935), Liberal (378), and Trimble (165). Vesper Sparrow* was recorded only at Weldon Spring as a count week bird. Savannah Sparrow was recorded at Dallas County (fourth), Laclede County (fourth), and Maryville (eighth), with a high count at Liberal (221). Laclede County also recorded its third Swamp Sparrow. Spotted Towhee was recorded at St. Joseph (fifth), Trimble (seventh), and Liberal (eighth). Confluence tied its 2022 high count of Eastern Towhee (22).

Grand River recorded its fifth Western Meadowlark, while Johnson's Shut-Ins had its first Eastern Meadowlark. Big Spring recorded its fourth Brown-headed Cowbird. Grand Pass saw its first Brewer's Blackbird, Kansas City its third, and Loess Bluffs set a high count (100). Swan Lake recorded its second Great-tailed Grackle.

Orange-crowned Warbler was recorded at Confluence and Weldon Spring, representing second records for both counts, and was also reported as a count week bird at Cass County and Kansas City. Common Yellowthroat was recorded at Liberal for the third time. Maramec Spring had its sixth Pine Warbler. High counts for Yellow-rumped Warbler were recorded at Confluence (146), Kirksville (26), Knob Noster (51), and Trimble (139). Mark Twain Lake recorded its first occurrence. Lastly, Four Rivers reported its second Indigo Bunting.

I would like to thank the many compilers and participants that make the Christmas Bird Count a success year after year. It is an incredibly important data collection project that allows professional and citizen scientists alike to participate and provide data, as well as meet new people and have an enjoyable time birding. It is something I look forward to every winter, and I know many of you feel the same way. If you have any questions about CBC data or how to get involved, please contact me, Kendell Loyd, at KLoyd892@gmail.com.

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Missouri Fall Seasonal Report

Aug — Nov 2025

Allen Gathman

After a summer of above-average rainfall, a “flash drought” affected almost all of Missouri from August through December; all five of these months were drier than average. Temperatures in August were slightly below average, while September through November averaged 4° F above average statewide. There were widespread reports of dry or low ponds, streams, and rivers. For the year, the state was 1.7 °F above average in temperature and 2.95 inches below average for rainfall.

There were several noteworthy records. A Short-billed Gull at Smithville Lake was the fourth record for the state. Two Lewis’s Woodpeckers in Lafayette County constituted the fifth record, changing the status of this species from accidental to casual. A couple of early records were set: a Golden-crowned Kinglet on August 29 in Boone County and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on August 12 in Kiener Plaza in St. Louis. Two late records were a Yellow-throated Vireo on October 18 in Platte County, and a Stilt Sandpiper on November 22 in Lincoln County.

Note: A dagger (†) denotes the Missouri Bird Records Committee (MBRC) has received documentation from the listed observer. Those marked (acc.) have been accepted by the MBRC. Records marked with a single asterisk (*) indicate that documentation has not yet been received by the MBRC.

Ducks through Rails

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks with young were in Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Pemiscot, Scott, and Ste. Genevieve Cos; adults without young were in Barry, Bates, and Stoddard Cos. A **Trumpeter Swan** on a private pond near Powersville, Putnam Co 2 Aug set the earliest fall record (†Joshua Uffman). The season’s only **Cinnamon Teal** was at Duck Creek CA, Wayne Co 8 Sep* (Lee Hopwood, ph. Raymond VanBuskirk). Two **American Black Ducks** were at Smithville Lake Dam, Clay Co 21 Oct (Doug Willis); one was at Grand Pass CA, Saline Co 30 Oct (Alan Moss); one to three were at Riverlands 9 Nov–30 Nov (m.obs.); and at least one was at

Loess Bluffs 20 Nov (Vicki Nelson). Two **Surf Scoters** were at Riverlands 27 Oct (ph. Mike Thelen); Three were at Lake Jacomo Marina, Jackson Co 28 Oct (James Barry, ph. Rick Wilhoit); and two were at Longview Lake, Jackson Co 29 Oct (Sherry Leonardo). Two **White-winged Scoters** were at Smithville Lake Access 14, Clinton Co 10 Nov (Doug Willis). A **Long-tailed Duck** was at Smithville Lake Dam, Clay Co 23–24 Nov (Andrew Christy, ph. Jared Cole, ph. Alexandria Cook, ph. Doug Willis), and apparently a different individual was at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 30 Nov (Amanda Brownlee, ph. Steve Romo).

Two **Greater Prairie-Chickens** were at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 21 Aug (Ethan Shepherd) , and three in that location 20 Sep (Linda Callahan). The only **Ring-necked Pheasant** outside the northern part of the state was a probable escapee at Little Prairie CA, Phelps Co 15 Nov (ph. Darby and Eugene Nugent). An **Inca Dove***, casual transient, was in Cole Camp, Benton Co 10 Nov (ph. Anonymous, eBird). Up to four **White-winged Doves** were in their usual haunts in Kennett, Dunklin Co 1 Aug–14 Nov (Kent Freeman). One was in Greene Co 21–24 Aug (ph. Nadjie Najar, ph. Jerry Savage) and one was in Jacob Loose Park, Jackson Co 4 Sep and 21 Sep (ph. Emma Greenberg, ph. Caesar-Maeve Lune).

Single **Greater Roadrunners** were in Taney Co 12 Aug (Adam Diel), Butler Co 25 Aug (Ethan Hoggard), Christian Co 19 Sep (Greg Swick), and Webster Co 14 Oct (ph. Jerry Savage). This fall's high count of **Common Nighthawks** was at Columbia Bottom CA, St Louis Co 19 Sep, where Chrissy McClarren and Andy Reago (ph.) saw a flock of over 1000. A



Surf Scoter, Lake Jacomo Marina, Jackson Co 28 Oct 25
Photo Rick Wilhoit

Rufous Hummingbird was in Warren Co 6 Sep–23 Oct (ph. Connie Palmer, Carol Thompson). One to two **Common Gallinules** were at Loess Bluffs 26 Aug–29 Sep (m. obs.); five were at Duck Creek CA, Stoddard Co 10 Sep (ph. Allen Gathman, Sophonisba Gathman, Mark Haas); up to six were at Lake Contrary, Buchanan Co 21 Sep–Oct 1 (m.obs., ph.). A **Yellow Rail** was at Shawnee Trail CA, Barton Co 23 Oct (Jacob Decker).

Shorebirds through Waders

Nathan Steinbach found a **Piping Plover** that continued a for week at Stockton Lake, Polk Co 8–15 Aug (m.obs., ph.). Up to six were at Truman Reservoir, Henry Co 10–12 Aug (ph. Pete Monacell, Nathan Steinbach, ph. Doug Willis), and one was at a sod farm in Lincoln Co 13 Aug (ph. Billy McCaslin, Tommy Goodwin, ph. Henry Gorski). This fall's high count of three **Upland Sandpipers** was at Stockton Lake, Polk Co 13 Aug (Asher, Darby, and Tobias Nugent). Three **Wilson's Phalaropes**, uncommon in the east, were in Canton, Lewis Co 15 Aug (Julian Dane, Alis Yoder); one was at Lake Gray Ghost, Dunklin Co 5 Sep (Alis Yoder); and one was at Otter Slough CA, Stoddard Co 17 Sep (Daniel Fisher). A **Red-necked Phalarope** was at Lake Gray Ghost, Dunklin Co 28 Aug (ph. Kyle Bess, Kent Freeman); one was at Stockton Lake, Polk Co 29 Aug–1 Sep (ph., m.obs., vid. Raymond VanBuskirk); and one was at Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area,



Rufous Hummingbird, Warren Co 6 Sep 25
Photo Connie Palmer



Piping Plover, Truman Reservoir 10 Aug 25
Photo Pete Monacell

St Louis Co 5 Sep (Diane Bricmont, ph. Pam Bruns & Ken Smith, David Dean).

Twelve **Willet** was the high count for this fall at Four Rivers CA, Vernon Co 1 Aug (Doug Willis). The high count of **Ruddy Turnstones** this fall was 10 at Contrary Creek Road, Buchanan Co 9 Aug (Brent Galliard, ph. Tom Nagel). Up to three were at Riverlands 9–16 Aug (ph.



Upland Sandpiper, Perry Co 15 Aug 25
Photo Dave Haenni

James Bolte, m.obs.), and one to three were at Truman Reservoir, Henry Co 10–12 Aug (ph. Pete Monacell, Doug Willis). A **Stilt Sandpiper** (acc.) at Winfield Dam, Lincoln Co 22 Nov set a new latest fall record (ph. †Seth Winkleman). **Sanderlings** were in eight counties, with this year's high count of 6 at Four Rivers CA 1 Aug (ph. Doug Willis).

The season's only **Laughing Gull** was at Longview Lake, Jackson Co 12 Oct (ph. Karen Davis). A **Short-billed Gull** (acc.) at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 29 Oct was the fourth state record for the species (ph. †Doug Willis). **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were in Dade, Henry, Jackson, Macon, St Charles, and St Louis counties.

The highest number of **Common Terns** this fall was 18 on 20 Sep at Smithville Lake, Clay Co (ph. Doug Willis). A **Western Grebe** was at Fellows Lake, Greene Co 21 Nov (Bill Whaley), and one was at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 24–30 Nov (Steve Bingham, Amanda Brownlee, ph. Skyler Lessenden, Steve Romo, ph. Doug Willis). This season's only **Red-throated Loon** was at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 30 Oct (ph. Doug Willis, Kelly Ormesher).

Single **Neotropic Cormorants** were in Benton, Clay, Henry, Polk, and St Charles Cos. The only **White Ibis** this fall was at Lake Gray Ghost, Dunklin Co 2 Aug (ph. Kent Freeman). **White-faced Ibis** were in Bates, Buchanan, Chariton, Greene, Holt, and Polk Cos, including 29 at Loess Bluffs 12 Oct (Terry McNeely). A **Roseate Spoonbill** was seen by many at Stockton Lake, Polk Co 1 Aug–4 Sep, another was at the Hayti Welcome Center, Pemiscot Co 5–7 Aug (ph. Kyle Bess, ph. Diane Bricmont, ph. David Dean, ph. Kent Freeman, ph. Jim Malone), and one flew by the SEMO River Campus, Cape Girardeau Co 7 Aug (Mark Haas). **American Bitterns** were in Chariton, Franklin, Holt, Jackson, Jefferson, Macon, and St Charles Cos. A **Least Bittern** was at Table Rock SP, Taney Co 2 Oct (Anonymous).

Raptors through Crows

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** was at Apple Creek CA, Cape Girardeau Co 5–6 Aug (ph. Leon Book, ph. Mark Haas, ph. Allen Gathman); one to two were at Confluence Point SP, St Charles Co 11 Aug–1 Sep (m.obs., ph.); up to four were at Cooley Lake CA, Clay Co and nearby areas 14 Aug–1 Sep (m.obs., ph.); up to three were in Fair Play, Cedar Co 16–24 Aug (m.obs., ph.); and



Roseate Spoonbill, Hayti Welcome Center Pemiscot Co 5 Aug 25
Photo Kyle Bess

one was in Easton, Buchanan Co 27–30 Aug (Gus Brunette, ph. Joanne Dial, Terry McNeely, ph. Clint Wiederholt). A **Golden Eagle** was in Vernon Co 2 Nov (Dani Alba, Ross Shiery). Rare outside the western part of the state, one to two **Swainson's Hawks** were at SelecTurf Sod Farm 3 and 17 Aug (Joseph Bieksza, Scott Johnson, Brenda Morris, ph. Pete Monacell). **Rough-legged Hawks** were in 15 widely distributed counties. **American Barn Owls** were in nine counties, as were **Short-eared Owls**. Single **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were on private property in Pettis Co 24 Oct (Julian Trelow) and in Putnam Co 23 Nov (aud. Josh Uffman).



Black-throated Blue Warbler, Tower Grove Park STL City 25 Sep 25
Photo Alex Bryant

Two **Lewis' Woodpeckers** (acc.), accidental transients, were in Lafayette Co 11–12 Nov (†Mary Nemecek, ph. Katy Putsch-Townsend), constituting the fifth state record. A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** (acc.) at Kiener Plaza, St Louis City 12–15 Aug was the earliest fall record (ph. †Lauren Harter). A hybrid **Yellow-shafted x Red-shafted Northern Flicker** was at Ashland Cemetery, Buchanan Co 8–12 Nov (ph. Lisa Owen, ph. Tom Nagel). A **Prairie Falcon** was at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 15 Nov (Zach Roy).

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, rare in the west, were in Buchanan, Clay, Dade, Greene, Platte, and Polk counties. A new third-earliest fall record of the species was at Apple Creek CA, Cape Girardeau Co 6 Aug (Allen Gathman, Mark Haas). A **Say's Phoebe** was on private land in Buchanan Co 14 Nov (ph. Keaton Schneeflock). The latest fall record **Yellow-throated Vireo** (acc.) was on Line Creek Greenway Trail, Platte Co 18 Oct (ph Klara Way, †Sam Cable). A **Northern Shrike** was in Andrew Co 1 Nov (ph. Clint Wiederholt); one was at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 3 Nov (ph. Doug Willis); and one was at Whetstone Creek CA, Callaway Co 23 Nov (Edge Wade). A single calling **Fish Crow** was still present at St. Mary's Access, St. Genevieve Co 24 Oct (†Joshua Uffman).

Kinglets through Buntings

A **Golden-crowned Kinglet** (acc.) at Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary, Boone Co 29 Aug set a new earliest fall record for the species (†Paul McKenzie). Up to six of the reintroduced **Brown-headed Nuthatches** were in Carter Co 10 Aug, 25 Sep, and 11–12 Nov (m.obs., ph. James Muller), and three were in adjoining Oregon Co 1 Oct (Pat and Richard Glessner). A **Wood Thrush** 18–26 Oct established a third-latest fall record near Caledonia, Iron Co (aud. †Joshua Uffman). A **Redpoll** was at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 19 Nov (ph. Doug Willis), and one was at Winfield Dam, Lincoln Co 23 Nov (Henry and Oliver Gorski). A **Smith's Longspur** was at Prairie SP, Barton Co 25 Oct (Chad Gardner); one was at Pawnee Prairie NA, Harrison Co 3 Nov (Doug Willis); two were in Vernon Co 8 Nov (Mark Robbins); and up to 16 were at the Bradford Research Farm, Boone Co 11–26 Nov (m.obs.).

A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, rare in the east, was at Riverlands 25 Sep (ph. Jonah Eckels); another was at Kiener Plaza, St Louis City 11 Oct (ph. Sylvie Purkis). A single **White-throated Sparrow** at Helton WA, Harrison Co established a second-earliest fall record 30 Aug (†Joshua Uffman). A **Henslow's Sparrow** was in the middle of Ozark woods near Caledonia, Iron County 19 Oct (ph. †Joshua Uffman). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, rare in the east, was at Confluence Rd , St Charles Co 17 Aug (Ryan L, Adrea and Russell Williams). This season's latest **Worm-eating Warbler** was in Iron Co 27 Sep (Josh Uffman). A rather late **Cape May Warbler** was at Carondelet Park, St Louis City 24 Nov (Matt Schamberger). A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was in Tower Grove Park, St Louis City 4 Sep (Yvonne Homeyer, Maureen Thomas-Murphy); one was in Forest Park, St Louis City 5 Sep (Matt Schamberger); a male in Tower Grove Park pleased the crowd 20–25 Sep (m.obs., ph.); a female was there 27 Sep (m.obs.,ph.); and Terry McNeely had one as a yard bird in Daviess Co 2 Oct.

Acknowledgement:

Thanks to Joshua Uffman, Mark Robbins, and William Rowe for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Abbreviations:

aud. — Audio recording

CA — Conservation Area

Co — County

m. obs. — Multiple observers

NA — Natural Area

NWR — National Wildlife Refuge

ph. — Photo

SP — State Park

vid. — Video recording

Riverlands — Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, St Charles Co

Loess Bluffs — Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Holt Co

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Short-billed Gull (left), Smithville Lake, Clay Co 29 Oct 25
Photo Doug Willis

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