



# **THE BLUEBIRD**

*The voice of MBS since 1934*

**March 2026  
Volume 93, No. 1**



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

# THE MISSOURI BIRDING SOCIETY

## Officers

**Michael O'Keefe\*\***, President (2026);  
17202 E. 48th Terrace Ct. South, Independence, MO 64055 .(816) 803-2632,  
mokeefe478@comcast.net

**Mike Grant\*\***, Vice President (2026);  
14764 Timberbluff Dr, Chesterfield, MO 63017-5574. (314) 779-8032,  
mikecurlw@att.net

**Karen Lyman\*\***, Secretary (2026);  
3312 Newport Rd, St. Joseph, MO 64505. (816) 351-0889, karen@lymanreporting.com

**Ellen Zellmer\*\***, Treasurer (2026);  
2001 NE 4th St., Blue Springs, MO 64014. (816) 507-7759, ellen-zellmer380@gmail.com

## Honorary Directors

**Richard A. Anderson**, St. Louis\*\*

**Nathan Fay**, Ozark\*\*

**Leo Galloway**, St. Joseph\*\*

**Jim Jackson**, Marthasville\*\*

**Lisle Jeffrey**, Columbia\*\*

**Floyd Lawhon**, St. Joseph\*\*

**Patrick Mahnkey**, Forsyth\*\*

**Rebecca Matthews**, Springfield\*\*

**Sydney Wade**, Jefferson City\*\*

**Dave Witten**, Columbia\*\*

**John Wylie**, Jefferson City\*\*

## Rudolf Bennett Award Recipients:

**Brad Jacobs\*\***, 2016

**Jim Jackson\*\***, 2012

**Dr. David Easterla**, 2006

**Paul E. Bauer\*\***, 2004

## Regional Directors

**Cindy Bridges+** (2026)  
Couch (417) 938-4567

**Lottie Bushmann+** (2027)  
Columbia (573) 445-3942

**Tommy Goodwin** (2027)  
St. Charles (417) 241-9189

**Greg Leonard+** (2028)  
Columbia (573) 443-8263

**Kendell Loyd+** (2026)  
Willard (573) 776-0901

**Terry McNeely+** (2028)  
Jameson (660) 828-4215

**Kelly Ormesher+** (2027)  
Greenfield, kormesher@msn.com

## Chairs

**Bill Clark**, Historian  
3906 Grace Ellen Dr.  
Columbia, MO 65202  
(573) 474-4510

**Greg Leonard**, Membership  
2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122  
Columbia, MO 65203-1261  
egreg2@yahoo.com

## + Board Position

\* **Executive Committee Member**

\*\***Deceased**

# THE BLUEBIRD

## *The Bluebird* Editor:

**Allen Gathman\*+**, PO Box 1, Pochontas, MO 63779, (573)  
579-5464, agathman@gmail.com

## Christmas Bird Count Compiler:

**Kendell Loyd 698 Shelley St, Willard, MO 65781**, (573) 776-0901,  
kloyd892@gmail.com

## Communication Services:

**Kevin Wehner**, eNews editor

**David Scheu**, Listserv co-owner mobirds-l-request@po.missouri.edu

**Mike Grant**, Listserv co-owner

**Jack Corrigan**, Webmaster

## MBS Bauer Graduate Scholarship Committee:

**Sarah Kendrick, Chair**, 808 Fairway Dr. Columbia, MO 65201,  
612-394-8822, sarah\_kendrick@fws.gov

## MBS Youth Scholarship Committee:

**Edge Wade, Chair**, 3105 Blackberry Lane., Columbia, MO 65201,  
(573)268-3714, edgew@mchsi.com

## MO Bird Records Committee:

**Pete Monacell+—Chair**, 2324 W Main St., Jefferson City, MO 65109,  
(573) 289-8116, plmonacell@ccis.edu

**Bill Rowe—Secretary**, 7414 Kenrick Valley Drive, St Louis, MO 63119-  
5726 (314) 962-0544, rowemb45@gmail.com

## Seasonal Survey Editors:

**Spring: Josh Uffman**, 707 Ashton Way Circle, Eureka, MO 63025,  
(314) 616-0296; birdsandbugs@sbcglobal.net

**Summer: Joseph Mosley**, (660) 492-7954; birder.je@gmail.com

**Fall: Allen Gathman**, PO Box 1, Pochontas, MO 63779, (573)  
579-5464; agathman@gmail.com

**Winter: Kendell Loyd, 698 Shelley St, Willard, MO 65781**, (573) 776-0901,  
kloyd892@gmail.com

\* Executive Committee Member + Board Position

## 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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

March 2026

Volume 93, No. 1

1	President's Corner — Michael O'Keefe
3	Subscribe to the MOBIRDS Listserv
4	We welcome our new MBS members — Greg Leonard
4	MBS mission statement
5	MBS policies and procedures for non-renewed memberships
6	Peregrine box up and ready for occupants—Edge Wade
7	A European Starling who couldn't eat — David A. Easterla
8	Follow the beetle — Christina McClarren
19	Fire-headed visitor — Chris Barrigar
23	Spreading the gull gospel — Jonah Eckels-Galbreath
27	Feeding bluebirds — Karin Pelton
29	Bauer research scholarship report: Nest-site selection and nest success of Northern Harriers ( <i>Circus hudsonius</i> ) in California's Sacramento Valley — Georgia Coleman
35	Thirty-eighth annual report of the Missouri Bird Records Committee — William C. Rowe
47	Missouri spring seasonal report — Joshua P. Uffman
56	Missouri summer seasonal report — Joseph Mosley

Front Cover — Palm Warbler, Forest Park, St. Louis City 15 Apr 2025.  
Photo David Davis

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



Before anything else I want to thank you for your continued support of the Missouri Birding Society and to welcome our new members listed on page 3. We appreciate your financial support and contributions to citizen science through your bird sightings on eBird, as well as your support of fellow birders in the field and through our listserv and on social media.

Just as important is sharing your passion for birds and conservation with your neighbors, friends and throughout your community.

When you employ native gardening practices, for example, you provide habitat for insects (and food for birds) as well as a positive model for others in your neighborhood.

Since before its founding in the summer of 1901, the Society has long depended on passionate people willing to support conservation causes. While many people have been instrumental throughout our history, there are two specific people to whom we are especially indebted.

The first is Walter J. Blakely, a St. Louis businessman and civic leader who led the effort to found the Audubon Society of Missouri (now MBS). According to research by Society Historian William M. Clark, and noted in his “A 100-Year History of the Audubon Society of Missouri,” Blakely was known as a “genial, warm-hearted man with a quick and kindly wit, and ready and helpful sympathy.” He was moved by reports of massive slaughters of birds to push for the creation of an Audubon Society in Missouri for the purpose of turning the tide in favor of birds. Although the destruction was due in large part to the sportsmen supplying the milliners with feathers for their fashionable hats, Blakely called out agricultural practices

that eliminated insects and even boys for their wanton destruction of songbirds.

The nascent society was important, he argued in an article written for “The Commonwealth Magazine” in June of 1902, for the purpose of educating school children and the general populace about the benefits of birds, to lobby the state legislature for protection of birds, and to support game wardens responsible for enforcing the resulting laws.

We have also to thank Rudolf Bennitt, who as secretary of the Society was instrumental in reviving the organization after a period of relative dormancy. He came to Missouri as a professor of Zoology at the University of Missouri, and was respected for his work in ornithology.

It was in 1934 at a business meeting at the Tiger Hotel in Columbia that Bennitt presided in place of the absent Dr. von Schrenk, who was obliged to be out of the state at the time. The board considered and approved many actions which changed the Society, and helped to double its membership in just a year. These initiatives included, but were not limited to, the following: provide for an auditing committee, allow all members to vote regardless of age, affiliate with the newly formed Missouri Academy of Science, and establish a board of regional representatives to advise the executive committee, stimulate interest in and coordinate activities in their respective regions. In addition, the enthusiastic Bennitt was able to put forth a strong slate of officers who continued to be active in the birding community for many years: President, Professor A. E. Shirling, Kansas City; Vice-President, Mr. Sterling P. Jones, Webster Groves; Secretary, Dr. Rudolf Bennitt, Columbia; Treasurer, Dr. Homer R. Bolen, Cape Girardeau.

On May 1-3 of this year, 125 years after the founding and 92 years after the reorganization of the Society, we will gather for our Spring Meeting in St. Louis. It will be based at the Drury Plaza Hotel in Chesterfield, MO. If you’ve not registered yet, the group rate is effective through April 1. To obtain this rate, call the hotel (1-800-325-0720) or visit the hotel website ([www.druryhotels.com](http://www.druryhotels.com)) or linked at <https://mobirds.org/MBS/NextMeeting>) and use the code “10161082.”

Returning to the theme of gratitude, I draw your attention to the contents of this volume of “The Bluebird.” I appreciate the talents

and time of the people who bring this publication to life, taking many hours to fill it with information and inspiration each quarter.

For example, this issue features a report from the Bauer Graduate Scholarship recipient Georgia Coleman on nesting habits of Northern Harriers in California as well as the much anticipated Annual Report of the Missouri Bird Records Committee. In the first of a two-part story, Christina McClarren shares her experiences in observing the natural world and reinvigorating her passion for making personal discoveries in the field; Chris Barrigar details March 2025 observations of the Miller County Vermillion Flycatcher; David Easterla recounts a visit to his yard by a European Starling with aberrant mandibles; Johan Eckels-Galbreath spreads the gospel of gulls at Creve Coeur Lake; and Karin Pelton describes her success and satisfaction in providing habitat for Eastern Bluebirds.

I thank you for your time and wish you great birding this Spring!

Michael

**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 6 new MBS members in the 1st quarter of 2026!**

**Dale Dietz**  
**Maggie Szewczyk**  
**Daniel Fisher**  
**Tammy Wood**  
**Mark Snowden**  
**Taylor Veach**

**Chesterfield, MO**  
**Wildwood, MO**  
**Puxico, MO**  
**Jefferson City, MO**  
**St. Peters, MO**  
**Columbia, 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.umssystem.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.umssystem.edu/scripts/wa-UMS.exe?A0=MOBIRDS-L>

## 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.

## **MBS Policies and Procedures for Non-renewed Memberships**

The by-laws specify that notices of delinquency shall be sent within sixty (60) days after the start of the membership year (that is, on or before March 1). Everyone delinquent in membership renewal, i.e., hasn't paid dues for this membership year, will have received two delinquency notices by now.

You can help by reminding fellow MBS members to send in their dues. **Those who have not paid their dues will be removed from membership the first week of April.**

To renew online, go to MBS's website, [www.mobirds.org/MBS/Membership.aspx](http://www.mobirds.org/MBS/Membership.aspx) or use the membership renewal form on the back cover of any recent *Bluebird*.

Your membership is important. Membership dues support MBS's mission of conservation and education, and the services to enhance your birding experience in Missouri.

If you have any questions or problems with the renewal process, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Greg Leonard  
Membership Chair  
Missouri Birding Society  
2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122  
Columbia, MO 65203-1261  
[egreg2@yahoo.com](mailto:egreg2@yahoo.com)  
(573) 443-8263

# Peregrine Box Up and Ready for Occupants

Edge Wade

Michael Byrne, University of Missouri Associate Professor of Wildlife Ecology, has announced that the jointly funded peregrine nesting box (equipped with a monitoring camera) has been installed on the north side of the north tower (stack) of the University of Missouri-Columbia power plant complex on the corner of Providence and Stewart. The box faces north, toward Broadway/downtown.

The box can be seen from Flat Branch Park, the MKT trail, and from various points around Elm St. between Providence Rd. and 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

The peregrine nest box project is a cooperatively funded effort of the Missouri School of Natural Resources, UMC Campus Facilities, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Birding Society and Columbia Audubon Society.

Now we wait...



View from the Peregrine Box camera

# A European Starling Who Couldn't Eat

David A. Easterla

On the afternoon of April 3, 2025, Debbie and I were enjoying feeding birds in our back and front yard. Besides mixed bird seed, sunflower seed, and bird suet in the back yard, we had placed kitten pellet chow and table scraps (bread and other food) on the front yard sidewalk. Surprisingly, we discovered that an American Robin relished eating the kitten chow.

During this time in our front yard, we observed a European Starling landing and attempting to eat. However, close observation revealed that the bird was unsuccessful because it could not close its mandibles to pick up food and swallow it.

The extreme gap of the mouth seemed almost grotesque as the bird struggled unsuccessfully to hold onto food for swallowing. Finally, after trying for approximately five minutes, the starling flew, landed on our roof, and then departed.

Although unusual, there are many published accounts of birds with aberrant mandibles. Often such bill deformities involve disease, genetic mutations, or injuries. In 1971, James Todd and I published an article about an adult male Yellow-headed Blackbird from Coolie Marsh, Clay County, Missouri, that possessed an abnormally long, decurved upper mandible that was flared or spatulate at the tip, and a lower mandible also abnormal but much



Photo Debbie Easterla

shorter (Bill deformity of a Yellow-headed Blackbird. *The Auk* 88(3): 677-678).

In 1972, Roland Wauer and I published on two avian species from Big Bend National Park, Brewster County, Texas, with bill abnormalities. At Rio Grande Village we observed an adult male Bronzed Cowbird (new park and west Texas record) with aberrant crossed mandibles. Despite the handicap, the bird appeared healthy and seemed able to eat. Another bird from Panther Junction was a female Pyrrhuloxia with an aberrant lower mandible that was greatly elongated and curved to the left, with a spatulated tip and a large tumor at the base. The bird appeared healthy and evidently could eat. (1972. Bronze Cowbird in West Texas and two bill abnormalities. *Southwest Naturalist* 17(3): 293-295).

This European Starling's wide gaping mouth is unique, as a search of the literature revealed nothing similar. The bird was obviously healthy and I suspect it suffered a recent injury by flying into an object such as a windowpane. Regardless, the injury was probably lethal, as the bird likely starved to death.



Photo Debbie Easterla

# Follow the Beetle

Christina McClarren

“There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground. There are a thousand ways to go home again.” – Rumi

Tiptoeing along a concrete cul-de-sac in Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, I sifted through the luscious goldenrod and white aster for tiny wondrous beings called bugs. I was drenched in sweat from standing on asphalt for two hours, relishing the rare presence of four Swallow-tailed Kites visiting the area on the last day of a sweltering August in 2024. The sassy chip-note call of a Common Yellowthroat pierced the silence as the startled bird landed in a small tree in front of me, obscured by leaves. Movement of something a few feet above her head caught my attention, a being that would bring a miracle of epic proportions into my life.

A bold orange-yellow and black beetle, hefty, about one inch tall, with long, curvy antennae, seemed engrossed in whatever delicacy was coating the trunk of the tree. Held rapt, I could barely squeak out, “Andy,” as I called my partner over. No response. Fearing I’d never find him again if I took my eyes off this longhorn beetle, but concerned about raising my voice and frightening him off, I risked yelling, “ANDY!”

Relief washed over me when I heard him answer, “Yes?” and the beetle remained unperturbed.

“Come quick!”

Communing in astonishment together for a few minutes, a competing urgency, one that might ruin the moment, welled up in me as I yelled, “Andy, get a photo!”

“Oh, yeah, of course!” he responded, awakened from the beetle’s spell.

Eager to know the identity of this charmer, I uploaded one of Andy’s

photos using the iNaturalist app and discovered this was an Amorpha Borer Beetle, named after the plant their larvae survive inside of for an entire year, taking this adult form for only a few weeks.

We found two that day and searched for more in the days that followed with no luck. By the beginning of the next summer, I was desperate to find them again—and dumbfounded by my obsession.

In early June of 2025, eight months after I'd turned sixty years old, I thought I had the support I needed to get through the difficulties life was throwing at me—increased caregiving responsibilities along with my health issues, an escalation of multiple crises facing the world, and a post-traumatic stress disorder in overdrive from watching too much news that fueled a rollercoaster of anxiety and despair. Andy, my loving family, a dedicated spiritual community, close friends, and the wonder of the birds had been keeping me grounded. But when my mom entered hospice, after three months of deteriorating health, an inchoate knowing that I needed something more to get through the year surfaced, and bizarrely, it seemed connected to a quest for that beetle, the being that had most riveted me the year before.

Wicked wisdom was at work. Columbia Bottom was a disturbed and broken land, much like I felt, a kindred spirit, where floods had destroyed levees, roads, and trails for years. In my case, untended grief over human brutality towards the earth and each other had ravaged me over time. The current plan of management was to bow to the dictates of climate change and the powerful confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in which the land was nestled, remove the compromised levees, and let the rivers flood and recede as they would. They were letting this broken land heal in nature's arms, letting her return home to the wild. I ached for a deepened restoration in my life.

The combination of heat and humidity plagued my search for the beetle in June. Extreme heatwaves resulted in cowering in the air conditioning, but my determination returned in July as I pushed myself to take walks in high heat and get acclimated. High temperatures didn't deter Andy. Newly retired, he started a full time DIY project to replace the worn siding on our garage and was too exhausted to be persuaded to accompany me. I waited. His companionship had always been essential to me.

He was still working full bore on his project in August, with no end

in sight, but my urgency to find the beetle had increased tenfold. Cajoling and whimpering did the trick. As each visit revealed a stream of unimaginable surprises, we visited almost every other day. Each trip soon involved not only checking for the beetle at the infamous parking lot I cul-de-sac, but expanded to include exploring five other areas of the four thousand plus acres: the defunct visitor center, the new gravel road, the boat ramp, and parking lots J and K.

On the second visit of the first week of August, we started the day scanning the native wildflowers and other plants lining the two walkways leading to the entrance of the visitor center. While Andy and I were swooning over a luscious Eight-spotted Forester, a velvety-black day-flying moth with bright creamy spots and orange-tufted legs, I heard the squeals of baby birds coming from the large outdoor foyer of the center. With fifty-foot-high wooden rafters, large wooden support beams, and ten-foot-high glass windows and doors that spanned the fifty-foot-wide front entrance, this neglected foyer had become a shaded place for the wild to find refuge.

Looking up, I smiled at six puffy, almost-ready-to-fledge Barn Swallow chicks being fed insects by frenzied parents flying back and forth at least twice a minute to the cozy nest they'd built on top of a ledge. My grin grew bigger each time a parent came in with food and the chicks let out a raucous, "Me! Me! Me!" Curious as to what the parents were feeding them, I approached closer but was halted by a flurry of activity. Flushed Viceroy, Pearl Crescent, and Red-spotted Purple butterflies encircled me, then settled back down on the concrete floor of the foyer. A large welcome mat was still present but covered in debris and detritus.

Carefully watching where I stepped, I searched for more treasures underfoot. Pale gray and cream-colored detritus was scattered about as if someone had sprinkled uncarded wool. Smatterings of it clung to the walls. Where was it coming from? A wasp zipped past carrying what looked like long strands of straw and disappeared. Other wasps entered and exited holes in the wooden walls but ignored me.

Swiveling my attention back to the detritus, spiders and beetles scurried off as I came near. Disappointed I'd scared them, I moved infinitesimally, with barely a hint of motion. Undeterred by my presence, small ants busily hauled away the strewn remains of numerous insects. Mostly moths! Half were identifiable; half were too decayed. After twelve years of studying moths, I could recognize

most of the species found in the St. Louis bioregion immediately.

Drawn by large amounts of debris pooled in a corner of the foyer, I scrutinized the area. Spying the torn off wings of large moths, I leaned down for a closer look and shrieked, flabbergasted.

“What?” cried Andy.

“There are *Promethea* and Imperial Moth wings on the ground!”

These were two of the largest moths in our area—and not encountered very often. Having seen a living *Promethea* Silkmoth only once, the memory of her beauty still burned like a torch. She had been the size of my palm and looked like a flying hibiscus flower. The Imperial Moths I’d found had been even larger than the *Promethea*. Their rich yellow wings, splotched with variable shades of purple, brown, and red, had spanned the entire length of my hand.

“Watch where you step,” I warned. “There are so many cool bugs on the ground.” The surprise of these finds enlivened us both. I lifted each of the wings reverently as he photographed them. Wondering what had attracted these moths, I gazed around and confirmed my suspicions. Numerous large light fixtures on the walls illuminated the area at night. “Andy, look! Those lights have to be bringing in hundreds of moths.”

My imagination was on fire. I felt so AWAKE. We had not conducted a moth survey since 2022, but I knew in that instant that we had to do one there.

Then I spied a moth hanging near the bottom of a wooden column, blending in with the woolly detritus. She had folded her charcoal gray forewings together over her underwings, keeping them flat as many moths do. There was just enough of a gap where the wings met to see an orange abdomen with a central row of black spots peeking through. A Milkweed Tussock Moth! Having seen plenty of their colorful spiky caterpillars over the years, I’d longed to see the adult form—and here she was!

In one quick but subtle movement I’d seen many times before, she closed the gap in her wings, alerting me to the fact that she was still very much alive.

She clinched my decision. My doubts about performing a survey

vanished. Having already seen over one thousand species of moths in Missouri, it was incredibly rare for me to see a new species, but here she was! And a chance to see another *Promethea*? Irresistible!

Watching birds eat moths and moth caterpillars since my devotion to birds began in 2009, I'd been intrigued by moths, but my passion exploded in 2013. That fall, the largest moth species found in the United States, the Black Witch, had flown into Tower Grove Park and perched in front of me with her unbelievable nine-inch wingspan on full display. Wanting more of that kind of magic in my life, I started black lighting in my backyard and learned that there were over ten thousand moth species in the United States, many of which were critical pollinators. What really bowled me over was learning that in their caterpillar form, they were the main source of food for almost all songbird chicks. Finding out that a single clutch of chickadees required six to nine thousand caterpillars had astounded me, but learning that adult moths made up sixty percent of the declining Eastern Whip-poor-will's diet had me worshipping them.

Since 2013, Andy and I had carried out six, sometimes ten, surveys a year for Missouri's state parks, but in 2022, we'd stopped. It was grueling late-night work—hard on the body and a strain on the eyes. Taking a break for a year led to taking a break a second year. I fiercely missed the moths, planthoppers, lacewings, and weevils, to name a few of the kind of bugs that were drawn to the sheet. We'd set up Andy's intricate rope and clip system, used to hang and keep a king size white bedsheet taut. From this, we'd hang two 40-watt blacklights encased in his specially designed lightweight open housing. In front of the sheet, we'd placed a very bright 250-watt mercury vapor lamp and ballast contraption he'd built. Due to an arm injury I incurred from too much moth photography, Andy had to do all the setup and photography. Even though Andy did the heavy lifting, each survey had required a tremendous amount of teamwork and stamina, as we spent hours on our feet spotting moths as they visited the sheet and nearby surroundings, often staying up until 2AM, even 4AM on occasion.

To carry out a survey in the foyer, I knew we'd need a permit from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Their permitting process had always intimidated me, but after seeing those tantalizing wings, I emailed the manager of the area that evening and filled out MDC's online special use permit request form, crossing my fingers that it wouldn't take the requisite thirty days to process. I wanted to carry out the survey in a few weeks, the first day of the



Amorpha Borer Beetle  
Artwork Chrissy McClarren

new moon, when the sky was darkest. With no moonlight, moths are more attracted to artificial lights. Emailing my concerns to the manager, he simply responded, “We will see if we can get it pushed through faster.” Magically approved in two days, I rejoiced in his generosity. I couldn’t wait to invite my friend, Lisa Saffell, who’d always wanted to see a Luna Moth. She had counseled me through some of my caregiver woes, and had lost her mother that year. We might not attract a Promethea or a Luna with the lights, but I sure wanted to try, particularly for her.

The day I found the Promethea wings, we also found another surprise. As planned, after the visitor center, we drove to Lot I to look for Amorpha. Getting out of the car, I immediately spied and pointed out an audacious cherry-red Common Eastern Velvet Ant. While Andy photographed her, I trailed an Oblique-lined Tiger Beetle who was vying for attention and kept flying away as I drew near, and then to my consternation would reappear ten feet behind me. He got the better of me repeatedly, until I was tired of playing leapfrog and followed a large midnight-blue wasp with golden antennae instead. Flying into a tangle, he disappeared, but a large two-foot web led to a Yellow Garden Spider at its center. Although common, I’d only seen them a few times. That name should have been given to some small gentle looking spider. She deserved a name like Countess Dracula, with those eight orange and black pointy legs longer than my fingers, which looked more like giant nails that could rip me to pieces. Her immense yellow and black body exuded unabashed magnificence and power. Entranced, I barely registered Andy hissing insistently, “Chrissy. Come over here.”

Lingering a little longer with Countess Dracula, I finally slinked in Andy’s direction. “There’s a really cool jumping spider in those leaves. He’s on the move,” he whispered and pointed. As often happens when we’re together, we have a sixth sense about where the other is looking. Following Andy’s gaze, I found our jumper perched on a curved slender blade, waiting for prey below. Long ago, I’d learned that jumping spiders don’t use webs to catch their prey; they pounce.

Neither of us had ever had the privilege to be in the presence of what we’d learn later from Andy’s photos was a Brilliant Jumping Spider. Looking closer, I saw that he had fine white markings on his brick-red body and a dark blue streak down the middle. His head was massive. I murmured, “He’s soooo beautiful. I’m in love. Thanks, babe.” This was our cherished way—finding bits of the

marvelous for each other, finding joy in each other's joy. Staying to watch the spider hunt, I was momentarily sad to see him disappear into the recesses of the thick plants, but the thrill of him stayed with me.

Near the end of the second week of August, we again treaded lightly around the visitor center. Reveling in a slow intimate pace with the wild ones, I came upon a sunbathing Broad-headed Skink. Forgetting the necessity for caution in my excitement, I carelessly emitted, "Whoa." The skink peered at me, and being very shy, waited only a second before darting off, sashaying beneath the building, leaving the tip of a tail sticking out—a clue I pointed out to Andy. Andy's patience was legendary. Ten minutes after I'd surrendered, he remained a statue, rewarded for his efforts by the skink's reemergence.

At parking Lot I, I scrutinized the area around the small tree where I'd found the beetle last year, but there was no sign of one. A few Dainty Sulphurs appeared at my feet, flying low to the ground and renewing my waning energy. I watched these tiny, whimsical beings bounce haphazardly, landing for a mere millisecond before springing up again in an endless search for love or a place to lay eggs. Their unassuming yellow, green, and even flashes of orange color set off the black dots on their wings. They lured me into seeing the world through more humble eyes. Meister Eckhart's quote came to mind. "Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God." I relinquished my delicious reveries only when Andy tapped me on the shoulder to continue our exploration.

On the drive to lot J, the road was alive with grasshoppers. I feared crushing them and swerved around them, but there were too many. When I stopped the car for a second to look back, to my relief, I saw no carnage. They had successfully jumped out of the way. Magicians!

Arriving at lot J, we encountered more katydids and grasshoppers scattered on the concrete walkway leading to a boardwalk and hidden blind. Andy and I had gotten into a routine of letting me go ahead of him, since he was much taller than me. Although we walked at such a pace that neither of us seemed to move at all, sliding our feet forward, inch by inch, stopping for long spells, most of the grasshoppers and katydids gave us no chance to get close before jumping off into the brush or grass, being extremely high wired for safety.

Invoking an ultra-glacial approach, I was allowed close and lost myself in the emerald green of a Green-striped Grasshopper and the lustrous pink of a Woodland Meadow Katydid—until I heard Andy frantically stomping around like he was putting out a fire. Every bug in the area took off.

When I turned around to give him a glare, he said defensively, “Sorry. One of those Obscure Bird Grasshoppers attacked me again!” I chuckled, immediately forgiving him. Big bugs liked landing on him. Besides this species’ impressive size, the way their lime green and brown bodies—outlined to perfection in livid yellow—struck us as obscenely superb. Obscure Bird Grasshoppers were favorites of ours, despite their proclivity for attempting to mate with Andy.

Now that Andy had cleared the path of bugs, I wasn’t sure what we’d find, but from out of the edges, a stink bug started walking across the path—evident by the shield shape. Yet, the coloring and pattern was stirringly different from any I’d ever seen before. This was a new stink bug species for me! Whispering to Andy to hurry to get a photo, I continued to admire her striping. Thin dark brown lines set off thicker caramel ones, with a central creamy streak down the middle of her back. She wasn’t interested in loitering, which gave Andy a brief window of time to take a shot before she disappeared into the looming grass. Squatting down to her level, he managed not only to get a quick three-quarter angle photo, but enough focus to identify her later that night as *Aelia americana*. Although a native to our area, our sighting was only the second in Missouri—a delightful shock. As envious as I was of Andy’s limberness, I was far more grateful the man could still do a split! Bending down, buttocks on his heels, gave him the perfect vantage point for little ones like this. Despite stink bugs getting a bad rap as a pest, I know they are vital to the ecosystems they live in, often as important food sources for birds, spiders, bats, and a multitude of insect pollinators. I wanted the world to see her and know her and celebrate. A photo was a start.

Gazing at a photo of *Aelia* later that night, unexpected tears poured forth as I kept looking at her, feeling both my joy in her being and my sorrow over the ravaged earth she’d inherited, mass extinction in full swing. Despair did not pull me under. I steadied myself and held the whole. Meditating with my community, my sangha, had been helping, as was experiencing life abounding at Columbia Bottom. *Aelia americana* had no common name, only the scientific Latin, so I

took it upon myself to give her one—Queen of Earthtones.

My phone abruptly rang. I looked at the clock. Dad was calling at 10:20PM. Alarm shot through my body as I expected the worst, but he reassured me that Mom was fine. He was just checking to see if I was still driving him to play bridge the next day. After chastising him for almost giving me a heart attack by calling so late, I thanked him for the not-so-subtle reminder, likely because of my tardiness the previous week. It was still hard for me to believe, but Mom's health had improved under the tender care of the weekly hospice nurse visits, as much as my well-being was improving under the tender care of the wild at Columbia Bottom.

On August 21, a week later, I underwent a setback.

-----

*Follow the beetle to the conclusion of this two-part story in the June issue.*

# Fire-headed Visitor

Chris Barrigar

Little did we MO Birders know the significance of the March 18, 2025, storm system that originated in the central and southern Rockies. A progressive and dynamic storm system, it produced a swath of high winds and hazardous conditions stretching from Texas to North Carolina.

March 20 was just a normal day, and I was returning from a visit to Saline Valley Conservation Area during my lunch break. As I passed over Saline Creek, something odd caught my eye; there in the creek bed was a fiery, flame-colored speck perched atop a fallen limb among the exposed gravel. It hadn't been present on my first pass into Saline Valley Conservation Area thirty minutes prior; this was new. In disbelief, I recognized it immediately through my binoculars. A vibrant male Vermilion Flycatcher! What a wonder! According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, "The Vermilion Flycatcher's genus name, *Pyrocephalus*, literally translates to "fire-headed."



This Miller Co. Vermilion Flycatcher (VEFL) was most likely displaced northward beyond its intended destination (possibly somewhere in TX) by this storm system, and the question I had (as did many other observers) was "How long will it remain?" The short answer: until the night of March 24. In speaking with the curious landowners, they said they had observed it on the 19th, a day prior to my initial observation. They confessed not knowing what it was, only that they knew it *wasn't* a Northern Cardinal. Throughout this birds' accidental visit, more than 52 observers were blessed to see this vibrant and brilliantly colored Aves there in humble Eldon, MO.



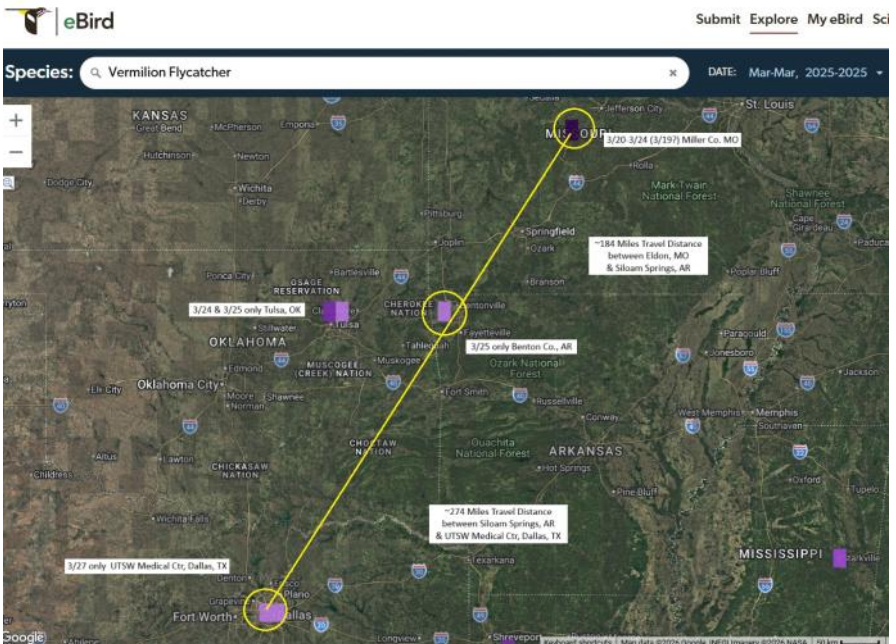
On the night of March 24th, Steve Griffaw and I were present when, near sunset, I noticed a change in the VEFL's behavior. Unlike previous days when it had been contentedly sallying forth out from its favorite perches approximately 10 feet above ground, hunting flying insects low over the gravel creek bed, and moving up and down Saline Creek, we saw it fly up higher than usual and to the other side of the sycamore trees that stand sentry along the creek bank. As if nervous, it flitted high in the branches overlooking the adjacent mowed field, perching only briefly on the

tips of seemingly random branches, and then we lost sight of it into the darkening night sky.

In the subsequent days, I returned to the Saline Creek location keeping a watchful eye for this magnificent, winged ball of fire. . . to no avail. Shortly after, on March 26, I received email correspondence from Sue Gustafson about a brilliant male VEFL that had been seen in Siloam Springs, AR on the 25th.

Could it be??? Could this be the same flame-feathered gem from Miller Co. making its way homeward? It prompted me to explore VEFL observations for Mar. 2025 date range, and I noticed that “our” VEFL wasn’t the only VEFL being seen in the Midwest beyond their normal range. There were several other individuals found in AR, IN, and OK during the same time frame of March 24-25.

The following days, I continued to check eBird’s “Explore” search function for VEFLs, and I suspect that “our” VEFL did manage to make it back home with what appears to be a nearly straight line from Eldon, MO to the westside of Dallas, TX. Beyond that, there are too many records of VEFL within the species’ normal range for me to further track “our” guest fireball.



Timeline: Eldon departure on 3/24; approx. 184 miles to Siloam Springs, AR on 3/25; and approx. 274 miles to Dallas, TX on 3/27. These distances between sightings seem completely reasonable for just about any small bird flying throughout the night.

What's truly interesting, though, is that according to eBird records, the VEFLs in AR, IN, and OK were only two-day sightings on March 24th and/or 25th. Those records corresponded to the Miller Co.'s VEFL's last day observed March 24... as if there was some higher, universal call for them to return home at about the same time. There most certainly was! March is the start of the VEFL's breeding season. Nature is truly awesome.

Of course, there were some assumptions made in tracking the Miller Co. bird, but due to the below factors, I feel that it's very probable that this is the same bird that was observed in Miller Co. At the very least, it's fun to believe it is possible, given:

1. Its rare status out of range in March of 2025
2. It's a vibrant male with orange flecks appearing on its belly
3. Other eBird records with photos indicate different males and a female observed
4. Timeline for this and the other eBird VEFLs

Migration is an exciting time of year regardless; couple that with a few "good/bad" storm systems, and, well, . . . who knows what might be waiting for us next time we're out and about?

*Photos by Chris Barrigar*

# Spreading the Gull Gospel

Jonah Eckels-Galbreath

“Whatcha looking at?”

Eighteen birders all stopped their momentary reveling, turning their backs on a gull-filled lake, to face two newcomers. This duo of twenty-somethings didn't bear the vestments often associated with the birding clade. No binoculars hung from vulturine necks. No spotting scopes proudly planted in the ground like a cross at Easter, nor were they garbed in muted shades of khaki; the typical attire worn by those known as birders. No, they came in hoodies and sweatpants; young, optimistic, and wholly unprepared for an evening spent in the presence of gulls.

A long silence hung in the air, as the question to the question lingered on everyone's tongue—did these two newcomers really want to know what they stumbled upon? The scene surely must have looked bizarre. Walkers and joggers at Creve Coeur Lake in west St. Louis County were used to birders, sure, but not often did they find quite this many assembled in the same place, much less all in a line and loudly celebrating. But, as the moment approached the threshold of being uncomfortable, the assembled group caught a glimpse in the eyes of the interlopers. A gleam of genuine curiosity. And really, that's all they needed to see.

Party members quickly jumped into action, directing the two to nearby scopes. Sunlight was fading fast, as it often does at an early December gull roost, but there was much to share with these curious visitors before a purple sandpiper sky turned to a great black-backed night. But with which gull to start their first gull communion?

Blessedly, on that day, there was a veritable convocation of gulls from which to choose, including a couple rather interesting pilgrims

from points distant. And thus, scopes were duly pointed at a large bird—the color of a Starbucks latte with two pumps of creamer—in the middle of the flock. It was the perfect gull in which to start their immersion in the gospel of gull. Much larger than its nearby kin, it was easy enough for even the untrained eye to pick out; its creamy-white plumage lit like a beacon amongst a sea of stoney gray. And it was extraordinary, a bird unknown to the masses, and a gull that dedicated *larophiles* could wax poetic about for days. Yes, a Glaucous Gull seemed just right.



Glaucous Gull, 9 Dec 2025, Creve Coeur Lake, St Louis Co  
Photo David French

Our two new friends appeared to concur. Quickly, they picked up on the gull's salient features, all the while listening to the excited murmurings of four to five nearby birders, who couldn't stop themselves from sharing various tidbits of gull lore, including, but not limited to: a Glaucous Gull's key field marks, the winter ramblings of white-winged gulls, and even, a detailed description of gull molt. These two potential gull converts were either extremely polite, or were truly interested, as they followed up each gull passage with a thoughtful question of their own. If there's anything a gull disciple loves more than gulls, it's an engaged audience.

So, these two students got the full gull crash course. The hundreds of seagulls gathering on the lake took their names, two by two,

starting first with the Ring-billed Gulls then moving on to the Herring Gulls and all their associated perplexities. Next came the diminutive Bonaparte's Gull and a quick aside into the history of Charles Lucien Bonaparte. All of this they took in without a hint of boredom or annoyance. Lesser Black-backed Gulls came next, a lone bird with a sooty cassock providing another easy to spot lesson in this impromptu gull workshop. But the group saved the pièce de résistance for last; the gull for whom this gathering of gull devotees came together to worship on this December evening under a purple sandpiper sky.

It, like the Lesser Black-backed and Glaucous Gulls, stood out. A shade lighter than soot, the back of this bird drew the gaze of our curious students away from the steel gray of the Ring-billed Gulls and to a bird with no real business in west St. Louis County. These gull initiates may, or may not have, noted the gulls' rounded heads, long wing projection, and bold white scapulars. But they both immediately observed one key field mark—they were very quick learners after all—a bill so small that it appeared downright tiny at 40x zoom in the scope.



Short-billed Gull (?), 9 Dec 2025, Creve Coeur Lake, St Louis Co. Photo David French

“What’s so special about this one?” they asked.

So as the sun finally dipped below the horizon, leaving only the vestiges of a cloud-covered sunset, the two twenty-somethings, both who only thirty minutes prior knew nothing of gulls nor birders, listened to the tantalizing tale of Missouri’s fifth record of Short-billed

Gull. Each prior record was recited like psalms on a Sunday, each story told with fervor and passion. They learned this bird belonged on the Pacific Coast, not in Missouri. The first record for the state, they heard, occurred in 2008, and that a small few gathered there that evening had witnessed the third record of this glorious gull only twenty-three months prior. By the time of this duo’s departure, many moments after the last light of the day, they knew much of Short-billed Gulls and their history in Missouri. But they left, as

many of us did that evening, without knowing the full story of that small-billed gull with a smokey gray cloak.

That lone gull, seen amongst a sea of a thousand others, remains a mystery as of this recounting. Those field marks observed by the cadre of birders that evening were notable, but apparently not diagnostic. If they'd dug deeper, dreamed bigger, taken more photos, they may have noticed this bird didn't quite fit the short-billed narrative they'd believed. That smokey back? A shade darker than one might expect for a short-billed. Its general shape and impression? Maybe a touch off. And its open-wing pattern, the key to clinching its identity, left truly unexamined in the moment.

So today, there are some who maintain that the unknown bird was a Short-billed Gull, the true and rightful heir to the fifth state record. Others claim it to be Missouri's first occurrence of Common Gull, a Russian bird never before seen in these parts, a December miracle that would go down in Missouri's gull lore as one of the most improbable sightings ever. Photos of this gull, plus one—possibly the same one—from Riverlands two days prior, shed some light on the situation, but left much to be desired for the Creve Coeur individual. So, for now, it simply remains a “gull species.”

The two passersby that evening knew none of debate to come, oblivious to a common theme in the gull gospel—the simple act of not knowing. This tenet is often the hardest for potential converts to grasp. “How can we not know,” they may ask, “all birds must have a name and place.” But with gulls, lines blur, identities remain hidden, and sometimes, all you're left with is a mystery. As was the case for the small-billed gull on Creve Coeur Lake, who remains before the Missouri Birds Record Committee, the authority on such matters, its fate soon to be decided.

But I believe the duo who stopped by the gull roost that December day under a purple sandpiper sky, would have reveled in the unknowingness of it all. Taking in each new detail, asking all sorts of questions, and enjoying time amongst a fellowship of passionate parishioners of gull. A moment of mystery in a sea of gray and white. And really, that's the heart of the gull gospel.

# Feeding Bluebirds

Karin Pelton

When I moved here from California in 2008, I had never seen an Eastern Bluebird. When I got them at my feeder here in Jackson MO, I fell in love with them. So, I learned how to make my own suet for them. Especially when we have a bad winter and they can't forage on the ground, I put out suet and rehydrated mealworms. I also provide a water source, which is very important. I started doing this in 2009, and each year I would get more bluebirds. This year I'm up to 45 or so bluebirds at a time. It's a big responsibility, though – I feel like once you start you can't really stop, because they rely on you.



I buy dehydrated mealworms, put them in a dish, pour hot water on them, stir, and let sit for about 5 minutes. Then I strain them and put them out.



My homemade suet recipe is as follows:

2 cups crunchy peanutbutter. (1 jar)

2 cups lard

Melt, but do not boil.

Add

4 cups quick oats

6 cups cornmeal ( not self-rising)

Mix well . You may need to add more cornmeal if it's too moist.

Stir together. Let cool, scrape into crumbs, and put it out.



**Bauer Graduate Research Scholarship Report**

**Nest-site Selection and Nest Success  
of Northern Harriers  
(*Circus hudsonius*) in California's  
Sacramento Valley**

**Georgia Coleman**



*Background:*

The Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*) is a medium sized, ground-nesting hawk widely distributed across North America (Smith et al. 2020). In the United States, this species is listed as endangered, threatened, or a species of concern in multiple states (Smith et al. 2020), with the latest North American Breeding Bird Atlas (NABBA) reporting an estimated 0.93% decline since 1966 (Hostetler et al. 2025).

In California, the Northern Harrier is designated as a Species of Special Concern (breeding, priority 3), due to the degradation and loss of suitable breeding habitat in the state (Davis and Niemela

2008). The NABBA estimates a decline of 1.83% since 1966 in California (Hostetler et al. 2025). California's Central Valley region once held some of the highest breeding densities of Northern Harriers in the state but has undergone extensive landscape change due to the expansion and intensification of both agriculture and urban development (Davis and Nielmela 2008, Matchett and Fleskes 2017).

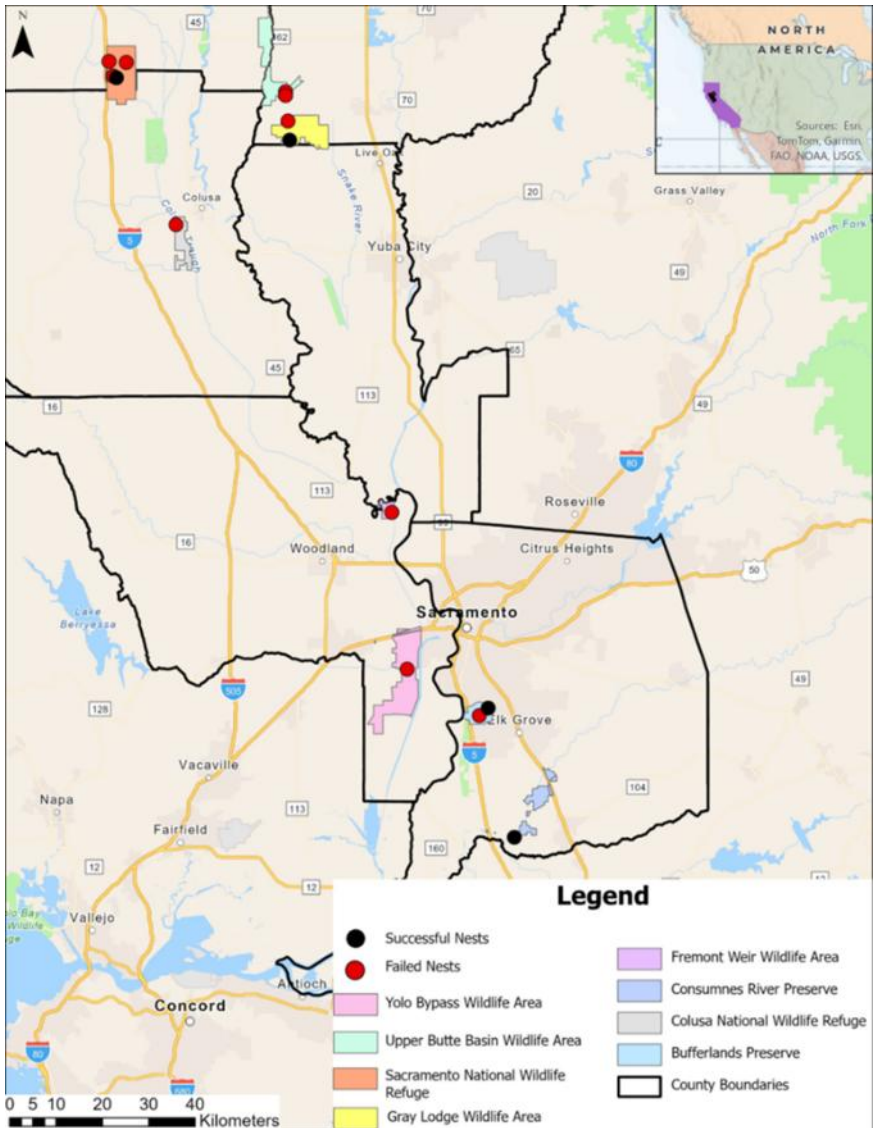
The loss of breeding habitat and a lack of recent monitoring and research of the species is the impetus for my research. In conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, I am investigating the current distribution and size of the Northern Harrier breeding population in the northern portion of the Central Valley (i.e. the Sacramento Valley). Over two field seasons, I will be surveying for breeding Northern Harrier pairs, monitoring nests, and quantifying both nesting habitat and success. This project will provide baseline data for future research and management of Northern Harriers in California and will add to our knowledge of this species' breeding ecology across their range. The following is a summary of the findings from the first season of fieldwork.

#### *2025 Field Season Recap:*

The 2025 field season occurred from April through July of 2025. Surveying for Northern Harrier breeding behavior occurred at 8 sites throughout the Sacramento Valley (Figure 1). Surveys mostly occurred on public wildlife areas (both state and federal owned) due to project logistical constraints. In total, approximately 134 hours of surveys were conducted, which included 446 km of driving and walking surveys, as well as 94 stationary observation points. From these surveys, 17 Northern Harrier nesting attempts were identified; our team was able to find and consistently monitor 14 of these nests (see Figure 1). Nests were monitored at least once a week by visual observation of adult harrier behavior, and nests were not physically visited until failure or ~1-2 weeks post-fledging. A second season of fieldwork and monitoring of new nests will occur in the Spring/Summer of 2026. Next season, more private land will be surveyed in addition to these public wildlife areas that were surveyed in 2025.

4 out of 14 confirmed Northern Harrier nests were successful (29%) and successful nests fledged a range of 1-3 young. Because nests were not physically visited until final status was confirmed, causes of nest failure were difficult to determine. However, cause of nest

Figure 1. Locations and status of Northern Harrier nests monitored in 2025.



failure was confirmed at 3 nests (abandonment = 1, predation = 2). Aerial prey passes were the main behavior used to determine the status of an occupied nesting territory, and prey type was recorded when possible. Most prey items were small rodents, but also included lagomorphs, birds, and reptiles.

Once final nest status was confirmed, our team evaluated nesting habitat via vegetation surveys at each nest and 5 paired random points. Vegetation surveys included measurements of vegetation heights and covers, as well as nest site moisture. The majority of nests (50%) were found in seasonal wetlands, followed by upland (36%), and then permanent wetlands (14%) (Table 1). The two nests located in permanent wetlands were successful, but only 20% of upland nests and 14.3% of seasonal wetland nests were successful (Table 1). Emergent graminoids were the most dominant vegetation cover type, and the ground in the vicinity of most nests was completely dry, with only two nests located over standing water.

Habitat Type	Successful Nests	Nest Success	Mean (range) Vegetation Height (cm)	Dominant Vegetation Cover Type
Seasonal Wetland (n= 7)	1	14.3%	151(75-260)	Emergent Graminoid
Upland (n= 5)	1	20%	162 (95-260)	Terrestrial Graminoid
Permanent Wetland (n= 2)	2	100%	330 (310-350)	Emergent Graminoid

Table 1. Nest success and nest habitat characteristics (vegetation height and cover) by habitat type. Harrier nests were found in three habitat types: seasonal wetland, upland, and permanent wetland.

29% nest success is low, but not unexpected for a ground nesting species, and it falls within the range of nest success reported for Northern Harriers in other studies (Jiménez and Conover 2001, Skalos 2021). Interestingly, most nests were found in seasonal wetlands, and yet these nests were not as successful as nests in permanent wetlands. Northern Harriers are known to have greater nest success in wetlands, with standing water and tall vegetation hypothesized as protecting nests from predators (Simmons and Smith 1985). Both successful nests in permanent wetlands were in knee-deep water and tall (>300 cm) vegetation. I suspect that the use of these seasonal wetlands may be an example of an ecological trap (Chalfoun and Schmidt 2012). Wetlands in the Sacramento Valley are flooded in winter through early spring, with some retaining some water through the breeding season (“permanent wetlands”) and others draining/dried out by the end of the season (“seasonal wetlands”). While my small sample size from one field season is not enough data to make any substantial claims, I suspect that these seasonal wetlands may present the cues of “good” nesting habitat (i.e. tall/dense wetland vegetation and standing water) in late March/April when Northern Harriers begin to defend breeding territories, but then become more susceptible to predation as they dry out.

### *Acknowledgments:*

This work was funded by California Department of Fish & Wildlife State Wildlife Grant F24AF01578/G2498091 and the Missouri Birding Society Bauer Graduate Research Scholarship. I sincerely thank the Missouri Birding Society for their support in funding, as this support allowed fieldwork to continue when main project funding was significantly delayed. I also extend thanks to Finn Velisaris, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bufferlands, and Cosumnes River Preserve staff for their assistance with fieldwork and project logistics.

### Literature Cited

- Chalfoun, A. D., and K. A. Schmidt. 2012. Adaptive breeding-habitat selection: Is it for the birds? *The Auk* 129:589–599.
- Davis, J. N., and C. A. Niemela. 2008. Northern Harrier. Pages 149–155 in W. D. Shuford and T. Gardali, editors. *California Bird Species of Special Concern: A ranked assessment of species, subspecies, and distinct populations of birds of immediate conservation concern in California*. Western Field Ornithologists, Camarillo, California, and

California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento. California

- Hostetler, J.A., Sauer, J.R., Hines, J.E., Ziolkowski Jr., D.J., and Lutmerring, M., 2025, The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Analysis Results 1966 - 2023: U.S. Geological Survey data release, <https://doi.org/10.5066/P1F2X4WH>.
- Jiménez, J. E., and M. R. Conover. 2001. Ecological Approaches to Reduce Predation on Ground-Nesting Gamebirds and Their Nests. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 29:62–69.
- Matchett, E. L., and J. P. Fleskes. 2017. Projected Impacts of Climate, Urbanization, Water Management, and Wetland Restoration on Waterbird Habitat in California’s Central Valley. *PLoS ONE* 12:e0169780.
- Simmons, R., and P. C. Smith. 1985. Do Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*) choose nest sites adaptively? *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 63:494–498.
- Skalos, S. 2021. Reproductive and Migration Ecology of Breeding and Wintering Northern Harriers (*Circus hudsonius*) in Suisun Marsh, California. UC Davis
- Smith, K. G., S. R. Wittenberg, R. B. Macwhirter, and K. L. Bildstein. 2020. Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*), version 1.0. *Birds of the World*.



**2025 Northern Harrier team  
(left: Georgia Coleman, right: Finn Velisaris)**

# Thirty-eighth Annual Report of the Missouri Bird Records Committee

William C. Rowe, Secretary

This report summarizes records reviewed and finalized by the Committee from 1 January to 31 December 2025. It is divided into two sections, Accepted and Not Accepted, with birds listed in phylogenetic order under each of these two categories. Taxonomy and nomenclature follow the latest American Ornithological Society (AOS) Checklist of North and Middle American birds, which is available online at <http://checklist.americanornithology.org/taxa>.

Accepted records in this report include the names of observers who submitted documentation and/or photographs or audio, or were present with those who documented, along with comments to indicate the record's significance. For Not Accepted records, observers' names are omitted, and a brief explanation is provided as to why the record was not accepted. Status and distribution statements for each species are based primarily on Robbins, *The Status and Distribution of Birds in Missouri*, Second Edition (2020) (<https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/30959>).

To submit documentation online, go to [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org), log in (important!), and click on Submit Documentation in the "SCIENCE" section menu. Then click the Get Started box at the bottom (this will not appear without logging in). At the end of the process, photographs in .jpg format, audio recordings in .wav format, and written notes in .pdf format, with a size limit of 4 MB, can be uploaded to accompany documentations. Observers are strongly urged to use the online system for both the report and accompanying media, but if this proves unworkable, any part of the documentation can be mailed or emailed to the secretary. All records since 2008 have been electronically archived. The Committee once again thanks Ann Johnson for creating and improving this system. In addition, the Missouri eBird team (Lisa Berger, Diane Bricmont, Ryan Douglas, Pete Monacell, Marky Mutchler, Kristie Nelson, Mary Nemecek, and Joshua Uffman) deserves great thanks for the long hours they put in

as reviewers for our state, and for their careful coordination with this Committee, both in requesting documentation from observers when needed and in initiating discussion on various points of bird distribution and identification.

Of the 60 new records reviewed during this period, 50 were accepted and 7 were not, for an acceptance rate of 88%, with 3 held over into the next year for further discussion. Also, one record from several years ago (American Flamingo, 2019-42) was re-reviewed and the outcome changed. Members participating in these decisions were Cory Gregory, Kendell Loyd, Kristi Mayo, Pete Monacell (Chair), Mary Nemecek, Marky Mutchler, and Joshua Uffman. Bill Rowe served as non-voting Secretary.

One new species for Missouri, Arctic Tern, was accepted this year, so that Missouri had 433 fully-accepted species as of December 2025, including five extinct species and three formerly-occurring species that have been extirpated from the state. There are also 10 Provisional species on the list, for a total of 443 species. The Annotated Checklist of Missouri Birds, which receives regular updates to reflect changes in Missouri status and distribution as well as the latest taxonomic and nomenclatural changes by the AOS, can be viewed at [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org) under "BIRDS."

The Committee reviews records of species that are considered "accidental" (1–4 records) or "casual" (5–14 records) statewide. It also reviews records of species that are casual or accidental for the season when reported (example: Wilson's Phalarope in winter); records of species that are casual or accidental in the part of Missouri where reported (example: Chestnut-collared Longspur in central or eastern Missouri); and other records of unusual interest, including first breeding records and extreme arrival and departure dates. The Review List, also maintained at [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org) (under "SCIENCE" and the Missouri Bird Records Committee), lists all species that require review due to their year-round casual or accidental status in all or part of the state, plus a few for which the Committee still wishes to receive documentation despite their status as only "rare" (example: California Gull). The Review List does not cover out-of-season status; for summarized information on seasonal status, consult the Annotated Checklist, and for specific earliest and latest dates and other data, consult Robbins (2020), supplemented by Annual Reports since 2020.

Note on photographic and audio documentation: Photographs, and in some cases audio recordings, are extremely helpful, and all observers are encouraged to carry a camera and/or a smart phone in the field; using smart phones, both images and audio can often be obtained with relative ease. In some cases (as noted in a few entries below) the absence of a photograph or an audio recording can be a problem for acceptance of a record. On the other hand, photographs can sometimes be misleading as to colors and patterns, and they may or may not show all of a bird's key characters. For this reason, it remains important for the observer to describe what he or she saw and heard as accurately as possible.

Note on organizations: In December 2016, the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) completed a merger with the Cooper Ornithological Society to form the American Ornithological Society (AOS). The AOU's North American Classification Committee, its Birds of North and Middle America Checklist, its journal *The Auk* (now *Ornithology*), and all of its other activities and resources are now those of the AOS, along with the journal *The Condor* (now *Ornithological Applications*) and other functions of the Cooper Ornithological Society. The society's website is [www.americanornithology.org](http://www.americanornithology.org).

The Committee extends thanks to the many birders throughout Missouri who submitted their observations, and to the Missouri Birding Society for its continued support of the Committee's efforts. Observers who would like a status report on their current submissions can email the Secretary at [rowemb45@gmail.com](mailto:rowemb45@gmail.com). The next annual report will appear in the March 2027 issue of *The Bluebird*.

RMBS = Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, St. Charles Co.

LBNWR = Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Holt Co.

MNWR = Mingo National Wildlife Refuge,  
Bolinger/Stoddard/Wayne cos.

CBC = Christmas Bird Count

CA = Conservation Area

SP = State Park

NWR = National Wildlife Refuge

## RECORDS ACCEPTED

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Mareca americana*), 2025-45: Male, 3 June 2025, RMBS. Becky Lutz (documentation with photographs), Shirley Foreman. Casual in summer outside northwestern Missouri.

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), 2025-1: One, 7 October 2023, Current River, Shannon Co. (photographs by Benjamin Amundson; transmitted to MBRC by Kendell Loyd). The occurrence of this bird, photographed standing on the riverbank, was considered to be in line with the pattern of wild vagrants across the eastern U.S., including Missouri and Kansas, in the fall of 2023 following Hurricane Idalia. Accidental; second record accepted as Definitive due to wild provenance.

**AMERICAN FLAMINGO**, 2019-42: One, 20–21 July 2019, mostly near Donaldson Point CA, New Madrid Co. Tim Kavan, Mike Thelen, Brad Jacobs, Paul McKenzie (documentations with photographs). This record was first discussed in 2019. Photographs provided evidence that it involved the same bird previously in residence for months at St. Marks NWR in Florida, then presumably carried north by Hurricane Barry across western Tennessee, where it was observed on 13 July. There seemed, however, to be no evidence of where the St. Marks bird had originated, and the Committee voted to leave American Flamingo on the Missouri list as Provisional, with no Definitive records. Since then, two other Missouri records (both 2023) have been accepted as Definitive (i.e., of wild origin), and some Committee members requested a second review of the 2019 bird. This occurred at the Committee's annual meeting (27 August 2025). It was decided to accept the 2019 record as Definitive, on the basis that it was clearly a hurricane-driven bird like those of 2023, and previously in long-term residence at a National Wildlife Refuge that is far from the known captive flocks from which birds occasionally escape. With much published in recent years about the increase in occurrence of presumably wild flamingos in Florida and beyond, it now seems more reasonable to associate our flamingo records with this pattern, in the absence of any sign of captive origin.

**RED-NECKED GREBE** (*Podiceps grisegena*), 2025-11: Two, 27 December 2024–25 January 2025, Stockton Lake, Cedar Co. Billy McCaslin, Kendell Loyd (documentation with photographs), Brian Nelson (original reporter). Casual in winter; ninth record.

**WESTERN/CLARK'S GREBE** (*Aechmophorus*, sp.), 2025-44: One, 1 June 2025, Thousand Hills SP, Adair Co. Veronica Mecko (documentation), Taylor Merrels. Western Grebe is casual in summer, Clark's accidental at all times. The description made it clear that the bird observed was possibly a Western, but it was not sufficient to eliminate a hybrid Western x Clark's, nor did it in fact discuss that species.

**SNOWY PLOVER** (*Anarhynchus nivosus*), 2025-43: Adult, 15 May 2025, Hedeman Lake/England Pond, Dade Co. Kelly Ormesher (documentation with photographs). Casual spring transient outside northwestern Missouri.

**STILT SANDPIPER** (*Calidris himantopus*), 2025-57: One, 22 November 2025, Winfield Dam, Lincoln Co. Seth Winkleman (documentation with photographs). Latest fall record.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*), 2025-17: One, 29 December 2024, Little River CA, Dunklin Co. James Armstrong. Accidental in winter; fifth record, moving the species to casual at that season.

**SOLITARY SANDPIPER** (*Tringa solitaria*), 2025-27: One, 17 March 2025, Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St. Louis Co. Anita Otal (documentation with photographs), David Bartnicki. Earliest spring record.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*), 2025-19: One, 27 January 2025, Winfield Dam, Lincoln Co. Bill Rowe (documentation with photographs), Tom Parmeter. Casual in winter in northern and central Missouri.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*), 2025-2: One, 11 December 2024–4 January 2025, Maryville sewage lagoons, Nodaway Co. David Easterla (documentation), Lisa Owens (documentation with photographs). Photographs suggest a juvenile bird molting into winter plumage. First winter record, and CBC record.

**RED PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), 2025-47: Molting adult, 26 July 2025, RMBS. Chris Tomera, Diane Bricmont (documentation with photographs), Alex Pyles, David Dean, Terri Pyles. This bird had considerable mottled reddish color on the neck

and underparts, but also a good deal of basic-plumage gray on the back and wings. Earliest fall record.

**ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisea*), 2025-40: Adult, Mississippi River bridge, Pemiscot Co. Kyle Bess (documentation with photographs). Definitive, and first, state record of this species. The bird was associating with a small flock of Black Terns on the river; a series of clear photographs showed all characters of a breeding-plumaged Arctic Tern.

**SHORT-BILLED GULL** (*Larus brachyrhynchus*), 2025-55: Adult, 29 October 2025, Smithville Lake, Clay Co. Doug Willis (documentation with photographs). The world-wide species previously known as Mew Gull (*L. canus*) was recently split into the Short-billed Gull of North America (*L. brachyrhynchus*) and the Common Gull of the Old World (*L. canus*), which in turn has three subspecies, two of which have occurred as vagrants in North America (nominate *canus* of Western Europe and *kamtschatschensis* of Siberia). The photographs, including a flight shot, helped rule out those two forms and establish this individual as the North American species. Accidental; fourth state record.

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*), 2025-12: One adult and one immature, 2 January--9 February 2025, Stockton Lake, Cedar Co. Darby Nugent (documentation with photographs), Eugene Nugent, Asher Nugent, Tobias Nugent. Casual in winter; 13th record.

**PACIFIC LOON** (*Gavia pacifica*), 2025-41: One, 1-16 January 2025, Stockton Lake, Cedar Co. Kelly Ormesher (documentation with photographs, 9 January). Casual in winter; 14th record.

**PACIFIC LOON**, 2025-36: One, 27 April 2025, Thousand Hills SP, Adair Co. Peter Kondrashov (documentation with photographs). Casual spring transient; 13th record.

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), 2025-24: Juvenile, 16 February 2025, Eagle Bluffs CA, Boone Co. Shelby Thomas (documentation with photographs), Mike Thomas. Casual winter visitant.

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*), 2025-38: Adult, 2-8 May 2025, O'Fallon Park, St. Louis City. Diane Bricmont (documentation with photographs), Jim Malone, Matt Barton. Unusual location, in a well-

documented heronry on an island in a city park, with nesting Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, and Black-crowned Night-Herons. Despite observation over days, only one ibis was seen, and it exhibited no evidence of interest in nesting.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** (*Buteo regalis*), 2025-20: One, 3–6 February 2025, Shawnee Trails CA, Barton Co. Jeff Cantrell (3 February), Krista Smith (6 February). These sightings were documented separately but were presumed to be the same bird. Ferruginous Hawk is listed as “rare” in western Missouri but remains on the Review List; documentation is requested for all observations.

**BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*), 2025-29: Adult male, 21 March 2025, private residence, St. Louis City. Brought to World Bird Sanctuary, Valley Park, St. Louis Co., for care and rehab; present there until at least 26 March. The sanctuary provided photographs and submitted documentation. Accidental transient in eastern and central Missouri; fourth record.

**LEWIS’S WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes lewis*), 2025-60: Two birds, 11–12 November 2025, private farmland, Lafayette Co. Katy Putsch-Townsend (photographs); submitted to MBRC by Mary Nemecek. Accidental transient and winter visitor; fifth record, moving the species to casual.

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*), 2024-49: One, 12–15 August 2025, Kiener Plaza, St. Louis City. Lauren Harter (documentation with photographs). This may have been an adult female; its throat and face stripes appeared white, and its crown was solidly black, as is true of some females. Its plumage overall, however, was messy, with dark, dingy flanks. Earliest fall record.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** (*Sayornis phoebe*), 2025-15: One, 10 January 2025, Kirksville, Adair Co. Peter Kondrashov (documentation with photographs). Casual in winter in northern Missouri.

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), 2025-18: Subadult male, 2–3 January 2025, private residence, Johnson Co. Alex Marine (documentation with photographs). Accidental in winter; third record.

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** (*Vireo flavifrons*), 2025-53: One, 18 October 2025, Line Creek Greenway Trail, Platte Co. Sam Cable (documentation), Klara Way (photographs). Latest fall record.

**NORTHERN SHRIKE** (*Lanius borealis*), 2025-6: Adult, 18 December 2024, Ten Mile Pond CA, Mississippi Co. Chris Barrigar (documentation with photographs), Tim Kavan. Casual in southeastern Missouri.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*), 2025-13: One, 2 January 2025, Stockton Lake, Polk Co. Theo Bockhorst (documentation with video). Accidental in winter; third record.

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus satrapa*), 2025-21: Female, 29 August 2025, Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary, Boone Co. Paul McKenzie. Earliest fall record.

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Polioptila caerulea*), 2025-26: One, 17 March 2025, Drury-Mincy CA, Taney Co. Greg Courtney (documentation with photographs). Earliest spring record.

**SEDGE WREN** (*Cistothorus stellaris*), 2025-9: One, 20 December 2024 to 8 January 2025, RMBS. Jonah Eckels, Theo Bockhorst (documentation with audio), Jim Malone, Tommy Goodwin, Cheston Hostetler. Casual in winter in north and central Missouri.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** (*Passer montanus*), 2025-7: One, 18 December 2024, Holden, Johnson Co. Dan Cowell (documentation with photographs). Casual away from central and northern Mississippi River corridor and nearby counties.

**BRAMBLING** (*Fringilla montifringilla*), 2025-59: Adult male, 1 December 2025, private residence, Pasadena Hills, St. Louis Co. Matthew Schamberger, Jennifer Gauble (documentation with photographs). This bird appeared below a backyard feeder just as a severe snowstorm arrived in the area. It was in view for 2-3 hours, off and on, and then disappeared for good. Accidental transient; second record.

**LESSER GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus psaltria*), 2025-8: Adult male, 21 December 2024 through about 2 March 2025, private residence on Table Rock Lake, Stone Co. Anne Baggott, Paul McKenzie, Pete Monacell, Kendell Loyd (documentation with photographs), Gretch-

en Bussman, Lisa Owens, Annette Talbot. This bird had a greenish back with dark streaking, appearing intermediate between the green-backed and black-backed subspecies and suggesting an origin in the intergrade zone located in Colorado. Casual transient and winter visitant; 12th record.

**CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius ornatus*), 2025-25: Adult male, 15–16 March 2025, County Road 4033, Callaway Co. Pete Monacell, Paul McKenzie, Edge Wade (documentation with photographs), Chris Barrigar (documentation), Brenda Morris, Joseph Mosley. Accidental transient in eastern and central Missouri; fifth record, moving the species to casual there.

**BULLOCK'S ORIOLE** (*Icterus bullockii*), 2025-58: Immature male, 1 December 2025 to at least 24 January 2026, Dietz residence, Chesterfield, St. Louis Co. Dale Dietz (documentation with photographs), Kathie Thomas-Dietz. Additional documentation with photographs by Diane Bricmont, David Haenni, Doug Hommert, Paul McKenzie, Pete Monacell, and Bill Rowe. Accidental transient and winter visitor; fifth record, moving the species to casual.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), 2025-4: Ten birds, 14 December 2024, MNWR, Stoddard Co. Bill Eddleman (documentation). CBC record.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*), 2025-3: Female, 29 December 2024, Gateway Arch National Park, St. Louis City. Patty and John Werth (documentation). Accidental in winter; third record.

**NASHVILLE WARBLER** (*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*), 2025-14: One, found dead, 7 January 2025, Harrisburg, Boone Co. Melody Murray (documentation with photographs). Accidental in winter; fifth record, moving the species to casual at that season.

**MOURNING WARBLER** (*Geothlypis philadelphia*), 2025-35: Adult male, 26 April 2025, Lake Springfield, Greene Co. Robert Carr. Earliest spring record.

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*), 2025-22: Male, 9–16 February 2025, private residence, Jefferson Co. Janet Prasuhn (documentation with photographs). From the photograph, clearly a

male, but not certain whether adult or first-winter. Casual in winter; ninth record.

**BAY-BREASTED WARBLER** (*Setophaga castanea*), 2025-32: Adult male, 25 April 2025, Tower Grove Park, St. Louis City. David Becher (documentation), Loy Barber, Jean Cook. Earliest spring record except for 2025-33, below. Very unlikely to have been the same bird involved in 2025-33, given the flow of migration by the day and the hour in this park.

**BAY-BREASTED WARBLER**, 2025-33: Adult male, 24 April 2025, Tower Grove Park, St. Louis City. Jeffrey Blunt. Earliest spring record.

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga disolor*), 2025-16: One, 1 October 2024, Busch CA, St. Charles Co. Jeff Johnson (documentation with photographs). Latest fall record.

**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** (*Setophaga virens*), 2025-46: Six singing males, 16–23 June 2025, L-A-D Foundation property, Shannon Co. Megan Blair (documentation with photographs and audio), Dana Morris. These were two sets of countersinging males and two other individual singing males in mature oak-hickory forest; they presumably represented a breeding population, as discovered in Shannon, Carter, and Reynolds counties in 2010 and described by Burke et al. (*Bluebird* 78:54-58). Due to the paucity of documented records, the species is still listed as an accidental summer resident in Missouri, but it has been known to breed in the Arkansas Ozarks since 1993 (Robbins).

**WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*), 2025-5: Male, 16 December 2024, Heman Park, University City, St. Louis Co. Christopher White (documentation with photographs). Accidental in winter; second record.

**SUMMER TANAGER** (*Piranga rubra*), 2025-10: Female, 23 December 2024–6 January 2025, private residence, Bonnots Mill, Osage Co. Paul McKenzie (documentation with photographs), Paul Nelson (homeowner). Casual in winter; ninth record.

**WESTERN TANAGER** (*Piranga ludoviciana*), 2025-31: Adult male, 7–16 April 2025, private residence, Ava, Douglas Co. Kelly Ormsher, Lisa Owens, Conway Hawn (documentation with photo-

graphs), Carolyn Tate, Reva Dow, Greg Swick, Christian Hawn. Earliest spring record.

**LAZULI BUNTING** (*Passerina amoena*), 2025-39: Female-type, 5 May 2025, Otter Slough CA, Stoddard Co. Kendell Loyd (documentation), Zach Haring. Casual spring migrant outside northwestern Missouri.

**PAINTED BUNTING** (*Passerina ciris*), 2025-28: Female-type, 13 October 2024, Lake Allen Island, Dunklin Co. Timothy Jones (documentation with photographs). On Review List for female-plumaged birds outside southwestern Missouri. This is also the second-latest fall record for the species.

**PAINTED BUNTING**, 2025-37: Female-type, 1 May 2025, Forest Park, St. Louis City. Chris Tomera (documentation with photographs). On Review List for female-plumaged birds outside southwestern Missouri.

## ***RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED***

“Not accepted” does not necessarily mean that the identification was incorrect. In some cases, the Committee may indeed believe that the bird was misidentified; in other cases, it may seem possible or even likely that the identification was correct, but the information provided is simply insufficient to rule out other possible species. The Committee is unable to accept any record if the description is too sketchy or vague, or if it fails to mention enough critical field marks to eliminate all other species. It is also true that the more extraordinary the report, the stronger the evidence required, and there are some reports that can be accepted only with diagnostic photographs or other physical evidence. Our belief is that a report should go into the permanent scientific record only if it is free of reasonable doubt. This is the standard approach of bird record committees everywhere. All records that the Committee reviews, whether accepted or not, are permanently archived so that future investigators may examine them.

**WHOOPEER SWAN** (*Cygnus cygnus*), 2025-23: One, 15 February 2025, near Salisbury, Chariton Co. This bird did indeed show the field marks of a Whooper Swan, but the Committee felt that there was no evidence that it was of wild provenance rather than an

escapee. This documentation, however, records its presence in Missouri, and it could be reconsidered if future observations yield a pattern of occurrence that suggests wild provenance for this species.

**RED-NECKED GREBE**, 2025-50: One, 6 September 2025, Creve Coeur Lake, St. Louis Co. Given the distance, lighting, and other circumstances as described, the committee felt that other grebe species were not eliminated. Other observers the same morning were unable to confirm the presence of this species, for which this would be an extremely unusual early record.

**BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*), 2025-34: One, 26 April 2025, Lake Hunnewell, Shelby Co. Parts of the description sounded inaccurate; overall, an immature Turkey Vulture was not eliminated.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), 2025-52: One, 4 October 2025, St. Louis City. The description lacked enough detail to eliminate some other raptors, and there were no photographs. Mississippi Kites migrate to South America for the winter; most of them are gone by early September, and there is a single October record (3 October 2020). Any further records that late or later should be supported by photographs.

**NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL** (*Aegolius acadicus*), 2025-51: One, 10 September 2025, wooded residential area in Stone Co. This bird was heard only, and it was later discovered that the calls had come from a Great Horned Owl.

**SCARLET TANAGER** (*Piranga olivacea*), 2025-30: Male, 1 April 2025, Forest Park, St. Louis City. For such an early record, a photograph would have been important.

**CAVE SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon fulva*), 2025-48: Juvenile, 2 August 2025, Aldrich Arm, Polk Co. Description and photographs did not clearly eliminate a juvenile Cliff Swallow. Cliff and Cave Swallow can resemble each other closely as juveniles.

# Missouri Spring Seasonal Report

## 1 March 31— May 2025

Joshua P. Uffman

Seasonal highlights included a first-state record Arctic Tern, Burrowing Owls on each side of the state, a continuing Lesser Goldfinch, and many record early spring arrivals.

### Abbreviations

Loess Bluffs (Loess Bluffs NWR, Holt Co); Mingo (Mingo NWR, Stoddard, Wayne Cos); Otter Slough (Otter Slough CA, Stoddard Co); Riverlands (Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, St. Charles Co); Smithville (Smithville Lake, Clay Co); Tower Grove (Tower Grove Park, St. Louis City).

**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.

### WATERFOWL

The first **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** were in Vernon Co starting 4-5 Apr, where up to 14 were seen (Lyndon Hostetler, ph. m. obs.). Elsewhere, they were noted in eight additional counties, all south of the Missouri River, with the season's high of 24 in Lawrence Co 1 May (ph. David Blevins, ph. Barb Blevins). Loess Bluffs is always the stronghold for **Snow Geese** and this season was no different with upwards of a million 2-3 Mar (m. obs.). The highest **Ross's Goose** counts included 25-50 at Loess Bluffs 16 -29 Mar (m. obs.) and 24 in Bollinger Co 2 Mar (Mark Hahn). Nine **Cackling Geese** at Riverlands was the season's highest count 7 Mar (Dave Gibson). The highest **Trumpeter Swans** counts came from Loess Bluffs, with a high of 750 on 3 Mar (Don Arney), and the last two were seen at Muskrat Lake, Buchanan Co 23 May (Tom Nagel). Single drake **Cinnamon Teal** were at: Montrose CA, Henry 24 Mar (Dan Cowell); City of Columbia Wetland Unit #2, Boone Co 31 Mar-1 Apr (ph. Jean Leonatti, m. obs.); and Bob Brown CA, Holt Co 15 Apr (ph. Doug Willis). At Loess Bluffs, singles were noted on

various dates 11 Apr-1 May (Zach Haring, ph. Doug Willis, m. obs.) with two present 17 Apr (Brenda Middleton, Don Merz). 9000 **Northern Pintail** at Fountain Grove CA, Linn Co 6 Mar (Terry McNeely) and 3000 **Ring-necked Ducks** at Ted Shanks CA, Pike Co 8 Mar (George Gerules, Ann Steffen), were the highest tallies of the season for each. The season's only **Long-tailed Duck** was at Ten Mile Pond CA, Mississippi Co 6 Mar (Tim Kavan). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** lingered at Riverlands through 28 May (ph. Mike Thelen) and a male **Common Merganser** was there through 31 May (ph. Diane Bricmont, David Dean).

## GROUSE through RAILS

Braeden Young flushed a **Ruffed Grouse** in Gasconade Co while turkey hunting 26 Apr. One to 3 **Greater Prairie-Chicken** were at Pawnee Prairie CA, Harrison Co 26 Mar-25 May (ph. Doug Willis, m. obs.), while another was at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 16 Apr-29 May (m. obs.). A **Red-Necked Grebe** was at Stockton Lake, Cedar Co 3 Mar (Kelly Ormsher.); while two were at both Truman Reservoir, Benton Co 19-20 Mar (ph. Sheila Yoder) and Table Rock Lake, Stone Co 28 Mar (Billy McCaslin). **Eared Grebes** were only observed in the western half of the state with the last sighting, two, at the Maryville Sewage Lagoons 25 May (Clint Wiederholt). A **Western Grebe** was at Smithville 8 May (ph. Doug Willis, Keaton Schneeflock).

The city of Kennett, Dunklin Co continues to be the best location in the state to see **White-winged Doves**, with one to two reported most days this spring (m. obs.). Elsewhere, singles were observed in Oregon Co 22 Mar (Jacob Miranda), 25 Mar in Greene Co (ph. Becky Swearingen), Lincoln Co 5 and 21 Apr (ph. Jerry and Jane Hemmersmeyer), Cape Girardeau Co 5 May (Allen Gathman), and St. Louis Co 20 May (ph. Geoff Anderson); while one to two were observed at Tim Kavan's Mississippi Co home 26 Apr-24 May, and two were in Pettis Co 23 Apr (Echinacea Morris). **Greater Roadrunners** were reported from the expected southwest Missouri locations; Taney, Stone, Douglas, McDonald, Ozark, and Christian Cos. Single **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** in Stoddard (Jason Frey), Christian (Tobias Nugent, Asher Nugent), Shannon (aud. Reva Dow), and Boone Cos (Mizzou Ornithology class), all 22 Apr, were quite early. However, a **Black-billed Cuckoo** at Tower Grove 24 Apr tied the earliest spring record (ph. m. obs.) and the following day one in Christian Co tied the second-earliest record (aud. Robert LaCelle).

**Common Nighthawks** arrived in good numbers early 23 Apr; with singles in Stone Co (Austin Hess) and St. Louis Co (Kel Halley), and two at Lake Allen Island, Dunklin Co (Timothy Jones); all tying in establishing a second-earliest spring record. The following day, reports of 1-2 came from two St. Louis City sites, Scott Co, and Jackson Co; tying for third-earliest spring arrival date. A **Chuck-will's Widow\*** in Webster Co 31 Mar establishes a new earliest spring record (aud. Andrew Kinslow). Two **Eastern**

**Whip-poor-wills** heard singing at Peck Ranch CA, Carter Co 24 Mar tied the third-earliest spring record (Sarah Kendrick, Joseph Mosley). A very early **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was spotted by Bruce Beck at his Butler Co home 27 Mar.

**Common Gallinules** were early, with the first tying the earliest spring record at Mingo NWR 12 Apr (Kimberly Henshaw, Dennis Henshaw) and a **King Rail** was heard calling at Loess Bluffs 29 May (Doug Willis).



Hudsonian Whimbrels 20 May 25, Loess Bluffs NWR, Holt Co.  
Photo Peter Kondrashov

## SHOREBIRDS through TERNs

The first **Black-necked Stilt** established a second-earliest spring record in Stoddard Co 11 Mar (ph. Daniel Fisher), while the next, also in Stoddard Co, tied the third-earliest 12 Mar (Grace Hamilton). Don Merz counted an impressive 56 **Black-bellied Plovers** at Loess Bluffs 15 May. Peak **American Golden-Plover** counts included 4000 at Grand Pass CA, Saline Co 12 Apr (Steven Romo, Terry McNeely) and 3000 in New Madrid Co 26 Apr (Tim Kavan). One to 2 **Piping Plovers** stopped at Loess Bluffs 14-15 Apr (ph. Doug Willis, ph. Lisa Owens, ph. Joanne Dial). A **Snowy Plover** (acc.) was in Dade Co 15 May (ph., †Kelly Ormesher, Kendell Loyd, Zach Haring, ph. Sheila Yoder). **Hudsonian Whimbrels** had another great showing this spring, with singles observed in Nodaway Co 2 May (ph. Kendell Loyd, Zach Haring), Chariton Co 8 May (ph. Jacob Tsikoyak, ph. Steven Romo), Barton Co 20 May (Darby Nugent, Eugene Nugent, Asher Nugent, Tobias Nugent), Riverlands 22 May (Chrissy McClarren, Andy Reago, m. obs.), and two at Stockton Lake, Cedar Co 24 May (Wilbur Shrock, m. obs.). Muskrat Lake, Buchanan Co had a single 1 May (ph. Tom Nagel, m. obs.), but then five on 16 May (John Bollin), and finally, numerous observers reported one to four

at Loess Bluffs 12-31 May, where this season's high of 25 were at 21 May (ph. John Bollin). The first **Hudsonian Godwits**, 9 Apr, all tied in establishing a third-earliest spring record: at least eight at Loess Bluffs (ph. Don Merz), 75 at Smithville (Doug Willis), and 63 at Muskrat Lake, Buchanan Co (ph. Clint Wiederholt). Two **Marbled Godwit** high counts surpassed the highest listed in Robbins (2020): 25 at the Hwy 113 wetlands, Holt Co 14 Apr (ph. Lisa Owens) and 20-50 were reported at Riverlands 29 Apr (m. obs.). The season's high count of 20 **Ruddy Turnstones** came from Fountain Grove CA, Livingston Co (Steven Romo). Two **Red Knots** were at Loess Bluffs NWR 27 May (Steve and Debbie Martin) and one was still there the following day (Don Merz). Loess Bluffs also held this season's high count of **Stilt Sandpipers** with 757 on 17 May (ph. Mark Robbins). Always a treat to see in the spring, single **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were in Greene Co 3 May (ph. m. obs.) and Loess Bluffs 5, 16, and 21 May (ph. Lisa Owens, Robert Brundage, John Bollin). Single **Western Sandpipers** were at Riverlands 28 Apr (Bill Rowe, Tom Parmeter, ph. Mike Thelen), Otter Slough 8 May (ph. Chelsea Ayers, Lori Ayers), and Muskrat Lake, Buchanan Co 18 May (Terry McNeely). Otter Slough held the season's high count of 1030 **Long-billed Dowitchers** 16 Apr (Kristie Nelson). A **Solitary Sandpiper** (acc.) at Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St. Louis Co 17-22 Mar established a new record early arrival date for spring (ph. †Anita Otal, David Bartnicki, m. obs.). A record high eastern Missouri count of 149 **Willetts** was made at Riverlands 25 Apr (ph. Jonah Eckels), where up to 100 remained the following day (Dave Haenni). Kristie Nelson tallied this season's high count of **Greater Yellowlegs** with 440 at Otter Slough 16 Apr. Loess Bluffs hosted the season's only **Red-necked Phalaropes** 20-29 May (m. obs.), with high counts of 14 on 22 May (ph. John Bollin) and eight to nine 24 May (ph. Billy McCaslin, Joseph Mosley, Denise Welch, Robert Brundage).

Mark Robbins tallied the season high count of 1100 **Franklin's Gulls** at Loess Bluffs 18 Apr. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** sightings included: single adults at Smithville 3 Mar (ph. Doug Willis), 21 Mar (ph. Doug Willis), and 23 Mar (Nate Yates); an adult at Fellow's Lake 20 Apr (ph. Kendell Loyd); and singles of various ages were at Riverlands starting 25 Apr through 10 May (m. obs.). A third-cycle **Glaucous Gull** established a second-latest spring record 30 Apr-6 May at Riverlands (ph. Diane Bricmont, ph. Randy Schiller, m. obs.). Bill Rowe and Tom Parmeter observed Missouri's third-earliest **Least Tern** at Riverlands 28 Apr. This spring's highest counts included 30 in New Madrid Co 18 May (Tim Kavan) and 21 at Riverlands 24 May (Dave Rogles). A single **Caspian Tern** at Duck Creek CA (Wayne Co) set a third-earliest spring arrival record 27 Mar (ph. Sally Hancock, Karin Pelton). The highest **Black Tern** count included about 700 at Loess Bluffs 17 May (ph. Doug Willis, aud. Mark Robbins). Long overdue for Missouri, the first **Arctic Tern** (acc.), an adult was photographed flying over the Mississippi River, Pemiscot Co 23 May (ph., †Kyle Bess).



White Ibis 2 May 25, O'Fallon Park , St. Louis Co.  
Photo Diane Bricmont

## LOONS through FALCONS

Two **Red-throated Loons** were at Creve Coeur Lake, St. Louis Co 27 Mar (ph. Alex Bryant), and a single **Pacific Loon** (acc.) was at Thousand Hills SP, Adair Co 27-28 Apr (ph., †Peter Kondrashov, ph. Nicholas March). An adult **Neotropic Cormorant** was at Lake Springfield, Greene Co 23 Mar (ph. Zach Haring), where at least one remained through 5 May (Austin O'Reilly), and two were present 1 May (ph. Kendall

Loyd, Zach Haring). Other sightings, all singles, included: Smithville 27 Mar-16 May (ph. Doug Willis, Terry Miller); Winfield Lock and Dam, Lincoln Co 11 Apr (ph. Mike Thelen); Lamar Lake, Barton Co 18 Apr (ph. Chad Gardner); Fellow's Lake, Greene Co 20 Apr (Kendell Loyd); Riverlands 29 Apr-29 May (ph. Mike Thelen, m. obs.); and Montrose CA, Henry Co 1-11 May (ph. Dan Cowell, Carson Jones). An **American Bittern**, possibly an overwintering individual, was early at Big Oak Tree SP, Mississippi Co 8 Mar (ph. Diedre Peters). The O'Fallon Park heron rookery, St. Louis City peaked at 45 **Little Blue Heron**, 60 **Snowy Egret**, 65 **Black-crowned Night Heron**, 40 **Western Cattle Egret** in mid-May (m. obs.). Topping it off was an adult **White Ibis** (acc.), found by Nancy McIlvaney 2 May, and enjoyed by many through 8 May (ph., †Diane Bricmont). Unfortunately, much of the rookery was destroyed due to the 16 May tornado. A **Green Heron** in Phelps Co tied the earliest spring arrival record 1 Apr (Scott Alford), whereas one at the Kansas City Zoo, Jackson Co, tied the second-earliest 2 Apr (Kirk Suedmeyer). The first **Glossy Ibis** tied the third-earliest spring record at Loess Bluffs 11 Apr (ph. Don Merz), where one to two were seen until 29 May (ph. Doug Willis, ph. m. obs.). Elsewhere, singles were in: Vernon Co 14 Apr (ph. Steve and Debbie Martin); Fountain Grove CA, Livingston Co 25 Apr (ph. Terry McNeely); Columbia Bottoms CA, St. Louis Co 28 Apr (ph. Dana Bangs); Golfport Road, St. Louis Co 8 May (ph. Jim Malone); Swan Lake NWR, Chariton Co 8 May (Steve Romo, ph. Jacob Tsikoyak). **White-faced Ibis** started with 110 at Loess Bluffs 11 Apr (ph. Becky Lutz), where they peaked at 325 on 21 Apr (Tom Nagel, Paul McKenzie). Elsewhere in the state, they were observed in 19 counties, primarily along the western border. As Glossy and White-faced ibis numbers increase in number each spring, observers are cautioned to be aware of increasing hybrid Glossy x White-faced. This season, one to three were noted at Loess Bluffs 11 Apr-6 May (ph. Doug Willis, Becky Lutz), and singles were noted at Fountain Grove CA, Livingston 8 May (ph. Jacob Tsikoyak), Four Rivers CA, Vernon Co 18 Apr (ph. Austin Hess, ph. Kelly

Ormesher), and Swan Lake NWR, Chariton Co 8 May (Steve Romo, Jacob Tsikoyak).

**Black Vulture** numbers continued to increase along the northern edge of their Missouri range, with two in Pike Co the most northern sighting 10 Mar (ph. Lisa Saffell, Gail Gagnon). Pike Co continues to be the hotspot to see **Golden Eagles** in Missouri, with one to two observed 1 Mar-1 Apr (m. obs.) and the season high of three at Ted Shanks CA, 21 Mar (ph. Doug Hommert, Dave Haenni, Connie Alwood). Elsewhere, singles were observed in Lincoln, Caldwell, Boone, Franklin, Phelps, Ozark, Andrew, and Carter Cos. The last individual established a new second-latest spring record at Jefferson Barracks Park, St. Louis Co 28 Apr (ph. Kyle Hawley). A **Mississippi Kite** in Dunklin Co tied the third-earliest spring record 18 Apr (Kent Freeman), while a count of 50 at Red Star Access, Cape Girardeau Co was the season's high count (ph. Ted G).

A wounded adult male **Burrowing Owl** found at a private residence, St. Louis City 21 Mar was brought to World Bird Sanctuary for care and rehab (ph., †World Bird Sanctuary staff) and another visited a private residence in Clay Co 29 Mar (ph. Steve Bingham, ph. Kristi Mayo). A **Long-eared Owl** was at Tower Grove 1 Mar (ph. Jian Xu, ph. Jeff Johnson), another was heard barking at Shawnee Trail CA, Barton Co the same day during an owl banding session (Christian Machen, Mitchell Pruitt), and two continued from the winter season at Riverlands through the 22 Mar (ph. m. obs.). Terry McNeely tallied a new record high spring count of 47 **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Fountain Grove CA, Linn Co 6 Mar. **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** numbered 22 at Tower Grove 28 Mar (Matt Rowe), while 35 there 11 Apr set a record spring high count (Matthew Curtis). A single **Prairie Falcon** in the Muskrat Lake area, Buchanan Co 3-21 Mar was the only report (Terry Miller, m. obs.).

## KINGBIRDS through THRUSHES

An **Eastern Kingbird** 30 Mar at Moose Park, Newton Co established a third-earliest spring record (Jeff Cantrell). Early **Olive-sided Flycatchers** included one in Christian Co 28 Apr (ph. Dylan Nugent, Darby Nugent) and another in Jackson Co 29 Apr (ph. MW Stoakes). **Eastern Wood-Pewees** arrived early, all singles: 19 Apr at Little Prairie CA, Phelps Co (Abigail Cummings, Isaac Dement); two separate private residences in Christian Co 20 Apr (Robert LaCelle, Steve and Debbie Martin); Forest Park, St. Louis City 20 Apr (Nick Staten); Cape Girardeau Nature Center, Cape Girardeau Co 21 Apr (Leon Book). Single **Least Flycatchers** at the City Garden Sculpture Park, St. Louis City 21 Apr (Matt Schamberger, Christopher Johnson, Will Condit) and in New Madrid Co (Tim Kavan) tied the second-earliest spring record, while sightings at sites in Greene, St. Louis City, Boone, Johnson, St. Louis, and Christian established third-earliest records (m. obs.). Zach Harring photographed a **Say's Phoebe** in Polk Co 3 Mar and a male **Vermilion Flycatcher** was enjoyed by many along Saline

Creek, Miller Co (ph. Chris Barrigar).

A **Yellow-throated Vireo** at Busiek SF and WA, Christian Co established a second-earliest spring record 29 Mar (ph. Steve and Debbie Martin). The first **Philadelphia Vireo** set a third-earliest spring record at a private Stone Co residence 22 Apr (ph. Austin Hess). Single **Northern Shrikes** were recorded at sites in Andrew, Barton, Pike, and Harrison Cos, while the last established a third-latest spring record along Crockett Road, Buchanan Co 17 Mar-3 Apr (ph. Keaton Schneeflock). Two **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** in Dade Co established a second-earliest spring arrival date 9 Mar (Kelly Ormesher, Krista Smith). A single **Barn Swallow** tied the earliest spring record at the Webb City wastewater treatment plant, Jasper Co 1 Mar (ph. Jessie Ballard), while the next at Greentree Park Access, St. Louis Co tied the second-earliest (Anne McCormack). Single **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in Greene Co (Jill Hays) and Tower Grove (ph. Jeff Johnson) tied the second-latest spring record 23 May. **Brown Creeper** in Boone Co 15 May set a second-latest spring record (Linda Frost). A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** (acc.) established a record early arrival date at Drury-Mincy CA, Taney Co 17 Mar (ph., †Greg Courtney).

Well north of the expected Missouri range, single **Bewick's Wrens** were in Rutledge, Scotland Co 9 Apr (aud. Alis Yoder) and Sugar Creek CA, Adair Co 12 May (ph. Peter Kondrashov). Missouri's second-earliest **Veery** was at Tower Grove 22 Apr (Mike Thelen) and the next tied Missouri's third-earliest record 23 Apr at Babler SP, St. Louis Co (ph. Jim Malone). Two **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at Tower Grove 22 Apr tied the third-earliest spring record (Mike Thelen). A **Hermit Thrush** in Kent Freeman's, Dunklin Co yard established a second-latest spring record 13 May.

## FINCHES through TOWHEES

Scott Alford had a late male **Purple Finch** visiting his Phelps Co yard feeders through 22-30 May (ph.). Missouri's eleventh **Lesser Goldfinch** (acc.) continued at a private Stone Co residence through 2 Mar (ph., †Anne Baggott, ph., †Pete Monacell, ph., †Paul McKenzie, ph., †Kendell Loyd, ph. m. obs.). Pete Monacell found a **Chestnut-collared Longspur** (acc.) along Mokane Road, Callaway Co 15-16 Mar, followed by one to two at this same site 24-29 Mar (ph., † Pete Monacell, ph., †Paul McKenzie, ph., †Edge Wade, †Chris Barrigar, m.



Chestnut-collared Longspur, Mokane Rd  
Callaway Co 15 Mar 25.  
Photo Pete Monacell

obs.). Also at this location, there were up to five **Smith's Longspurs** 26-28 Mar (Pete Monacell, m. obs.). Elsewhere, up to 27 were at Bradford Research Farm, Boone Co 11-26 Mar (John Besser, ph. Paul McKenzie, ph. Billy McCaslin, m. obs.); up to nine were at Swan Lake NWR, Chariton Co 28 Mar (Terry McNeely), a single in Dade Co 6 Mar was the first of the season (Kelly Ormesher, Debbie Martin, Steve Martin), and the season's last was at Dunn Ranch, Harrison Co 16 Apr (James Brady).

Three **Clay-colored Sparrows** at Riverlands 1 May is the season high count for eastern Missouri where the species is rare (ph. Mike Thelen). The only **Nelson's Sparrow** report came from Niawathe Prairie CA, Dade Co 16 May 2025 (aud., Jacob Yoder). The most eastern **Harris's Sparrows**, all singles, included: St. Louis Co 2 May (aud. Anita Otal); East Prairie, Mississippi Co 6 and 21 Apr (ph. Tim Kavan); Waters Point, Jefferson Co 30 Apr (Kyle Hawley); and Riverlands 29-30 Apr (Chrissy McClarren, ph. m. obs.). A **White-throated Sparrow** was still at Whitecliff Park, St. Louis Co 29 May (aud. Diane Bricmont, David Dean). A **Swamp Sparrow** at Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St. Louis Co tied the third-latest spring record 24 May (aud. Julie Leemann, Anne McCormack). **Spotted Towhees** were noted in seven western Missouri counties through 25 April and in the east a male was at a St. Francois Co home 11 and 22 Apr (ph. Judy Bergmann).

## BLACKBIRDS through BUNTINGS

The season's highest **Yellow-headed Blackbird** counts included up to 24 in Greene Co 21 Apr (Steve Martin, Debbie Martin, m. obs.), 25-27 at the Webb City WWTP, Jasper Co 20-21 Apr (ph. Heather Steinbach, Phil Steinbach, Nathan Steinbach, m. obs.), and the season's high of at least 100 at Loess Bluffs 4 May (ph. Emerson Harman). Three **Bobolinks** in Greene Co set a third-earliest record 22 Apr (ph. Debbie and Steve Martin, Jill Hays, Laura Samuel). The season's first **Orchard Oriole** set a new second-earliest arrival record in Maries Co 13 Apr (ph. Adam Nisbett), while singles in Crawford Co (ph. Deb Kizer), Tower Grove (ph. Christopher Tomera), and Miller Co (Kyle Hawley) all tied for the third earliest spring record 14 Apr. A male **Brewer's Blackbird** in Ste. Genevieve Co set a second-latest spring record 7-9 May (ph. Stephen Price). Up to 10 **Great-tailed Grackles** were late and a bit east of their Missouri range 12 apr-30 May along Hwy 60 near Mountain Grove, Texas Co (ph. Jerry Weimer, m. obs.).

A **Worm-eating Warbler** along Sugar Camp NF Scenic Byway, Barry Co tied the second-earliest spring arrival record (David and Barbara Blevins). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** at Saline Valley CA, Miller Co established a third-earliest spring record 13 Mar (ph. Chris Barrigar). North of their expected Missouri range, single **Blue-winged Warblers** were noted at: Watkins Mill SP, Clay Co 26 Apr (Kristi Mayo); Steyermark Woods CA, Marion Co 26 Apr (Corey Gregory, Ashley Casey); and Rebel's Cove CA, Putnam Co 29 Apr (Dillon Freiburger). A **Black-and-White Warbler** along

the Belladonna Trail, Taney Co tied the third-earliest arrival date 16 Mar (ph. Cindy Todd). Single **Connecticut Warblers** were enjoyed by many 10-28 May at two St. Louis City sites, two St. Louis Co sites, two Jackson Co sites, and Warren Co. A male **Mourning Warbler** (acc.) at Lake Springfield, Greene Co established a record early arrival date 26 Apr (†Robert Carr) and another at Ritter Springs Park, Greene Co 29 Apr was still on the early side (ph. Kendell Loyd). **Cape May Warblers** had a good showing away from the Mississippi River, with singles in Christian, Phelps, Warren, and Ozark Cos and one to two on the University of Missouri campus, Boone Co 9 May (Ella Witzman, ph. m. obs.). A single adult male **Bay-breasted Warbler** (acc.) set a second-earliest spring record at Tower Grove 24 Apr (†Jeffrey Blunt). The next day, both singles (acc.), tied an establishing the third-earliest spring record 25 Apr at Tower Grove (†David Becher, Loy Barber, Jean Cook) and Turner Mill Spring, Oregon Co (Reva Dow). The only **Black-throated Blue Warbler** report came from Bluffwoods CA, Buchanan Co 13 May (aud. Tom Nagel). A **Palm Warbler** at Riverlands 24 May set a third-latest spring record (Yvonne Homeyer, Pat Lueders, Dave Gibson), while 43 there 5 May established a record high spring count (Mike Thelen). Forty **Pine Warblers** at the Current River Pinery, Carter Co established a new record high spring count 25 Mar (Sarah Kendrick, Joseph Mosley). **Prairie Warblers** at the north edge of their Missouri range included one in Randolph Co 6 May (ph. Barb Gregory), another at Blue Springs Lake-Fleming Park, Jackson Co 13 May (ph. Audrey Percy-Muenz, m. obs.), and two near Kirksville, Adair Co 9 May (ph. Peter Kondrashov). A male **Western Tanager** (acc.) established an earliest spring record at a Douglas Co private residence 7-16 Apr (ph., †Kelly Ormesher, ph., †Lisa Owens, ph., †Conway Hawn, m. obs.). A well described male **Lazuli Bunting** was in St. Joseph, Buchanan Co 29 Apr (Thomas Jones), while a well-described female-type (acc.) was well east of its expected Missouri range at Otter Slough 5 May (†Kendell Loyd, †Zach Haring). Unexpected **Painted Buntings** included female-types at Forest Park, St. Louis City (acc.) 1 May (ph. †Christopher Tomera) and another in Holt Co 28 May (ph. Mark Robbins). A **Dickcissel** at Taberville Prairie CA, St. Clair Co 18 Apr was a bit early (ph. Kelly Ormesher, Austin Hess). A well-described male **Indigo Bunting** was also early in Greene Co 2 Apr (Becky Swearingen).

eBird data and seasonal reports submitted from observers were the primary data sources for this report. Thank you very much to Allen Gathman and Kendell Loyd for reviewing this document. Their comments and suggestions greatly enhanced the quality of the report.

## Reference:

Robbins, M.B. (2020). The status and distribution of birds in Missouri. University of Kansas Libraries.

# Missouri Summer Seasonal Report

## June—July 2025

Joseph Mosley

Statewide, Missouri temperatures averaged 77.8°F across the June-July period in 2025. The average for June and July historically is around 75 degrees F, thus 2025 was around 2.2 degrees warmer than the average. Precipitation for the region started the period above average, continuing the wet trend from the spring season. The precipitation totals statewide were 9.5-10 inches. This is not much more than the average precipitation and was influenced by flash drought conditions starting in the last 2 weeks of July. Humidity was reportedly record-breaking in the 2025 season, with a daily statewide average of 79.7% compared to the 65-70% historical average. The effect of rising temperatures and humidity on breeding birds is a continuing research topic, but studies from 2024 already show differences in the responses of grassland and woodland species to changes in temperature and associated microclimates. Grasslands and similar habitats do not have the same thermic buffering capabilities as standing forests (Gardner et al. 2025). This report does not have the scope to consider ongoing changes, but it is worth noting when comparing long-term data.

Note: Data sourced from NASA POWER (Prediction Of Worldwide Energy Resources) for representative locations across Missouri. Individual microclimates may vary. Note: Records marked with an asterisk (\*) require documentation, but no documentation has yet been received by the Missouri Bird Records Committee (MBRC). Observers involved with such sightings are encouraged to submit documentation. The MBRC has received documentation of those records marked with a dagger (†), and those marked (acc.) have been accepted.

## WATERFOWL

**Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** were in 11 counties including as far north as Saline and Lincoln Cos; the high count was in Ste. Genevieve Co on 13 Jun (Stephen Price). A lone **Cackling Goose** was at Harrisonville Park 8 Jun–18 Jul (Barry Jones, m.ob.). **Mute Swans** were in 8 counties, with the

highest count of 8 individuals at Binder Lake, Cole County, 14 Jun (Rosemarie Richardson, m.ob.). A breeding pair of **Trumpeter Swans** was in Sullivan County on a private wetland easement 10 Jun (Steve Romo). **Blue-winged Teal** were in 12 counties; the high count was 8 individuals at LBNWR 7 Jul (David Crawford). Four counties reported **Northern Shovelers** with 3 at LBNWR 6 Jun (Don Merz). Two **Gadwall** were on opposite sides of the state, one at RMBS 9 Jun (Leann Henderson) and one at Longview Lake 16 Jun–29 Jul (Karen Davis, Dan Cowell). A single **American Wigeon** was at RMBS 3 Jun (†Becky Lutz, Jack, and Shirley Foreman); this species is casual in summer outside of the northwest counties. A single **Northern Pintail** was at LBNWR 19 Jul (Sam Manning).

**Green-winged Teal** were in 2 counties, 2 at City of Columbia Wetland unit #1, Boone County 22 Jun (Joseph Bieksza), and 1 at RMBS 7 Jun (Terri and Alex Pyles). Up to 5 **Ring-necked Ducks** were at Otter Slough CA, Stoddard Co 10 Jun (Brendan Beard), and 3 other single birds were at Simpson Lake, St Louis Co 7 Jun, (Christopher Gordon), RMBS 17 Jun–8 Jul (Leann Henderson), and Hamilton City Lake, Caldwell Co 7 Jul (Nathan Pieplow). A single **Lesser Scaup** was at RMBS 2 Jun (Tom Parmeter). **Hooded Mergansers** were in 18 counties, with a high count of 21 at De Soto Wastewater Pond, Jefferson Co 1 Jun (Kyle Hawley). **Common Mergansers** continued at RMBS 2–17 Jun (Bob Ortmeier, Leann Henderson), and a female with young was at Sam A Baker SP, Wayne Co 18 Jun (Mike Goodwin, ph. Mark Hahn). **Ruddy Ducks** were in just 4 counties.

## GALLIFORMES THROUGH WADERS

Two **Greater Prairie Chickens** were at Pawnee Prairie CA, Harrison Co 18 Jul (Nathan Steinbach). **Ring-necked Pheasants** were in 10 counties. A high count of 4 **White-winged Doves** was at East Prairie 1 Jun–6 Jul (Tim Kavan) along with sightings from Jackson Co 18 Jul, (ph. Tracy Lewandowski); Lincoln Co 14 Jul (ph. Jane Hemmersmeyer); and continuing birds in Kennett, Dunklin Co at Kent Freeman's feeders. It was a good summer for **Greater Roadrunners**, as they were in 8 counties with a high count of 3 from Bull Shoals Reservoir–Spring Creek Public Access, Ozark Co 2 Jun, (Lori Ayers, Chelsea Ayers).

**Black-billed Cuckoos** were at 9 counties and photographed at Forest Park, St Louis City, 1–7 Jun (ph. Ellie Bruns, ph. Christopher Tomera, m.ob.). Two **Soras** were at Boone Co 31 Jul, (Joseph Mosley) and Buchanan Co 7 Jul (Tom Nagel). A pair of **Common Gallinules** were at CCLMP 8–20 Jun (m.ob.), and another at MNWR 20 Jul (m.ob.). **Sandhill Cranes** were in 6 counties, 2 at EBCA, 22 Jun (ph. Joseph Bieksza); 2 at SLNWR, 16 Jun (aud. Matt Longabaugh); 3 at LBNWR 4 Jun–18 Jul (Don Merz, m.ob.); 3 from BKLCA 16–24 Jul (Dave Haenni, Bruce Schutte); 3 at Grand Pass CA,

Saline Co 1 Jun (ph. Adem Diel); and 2 from Marais Temps Clair CA, St. Charles Co 12 Jun (Brian Lockwood).

## SHOREBIRDS

The high count for **Black-necked Stilts** was 5 from Mertz Rd., St Charles Co 26 Jul (David Rogles). **American Avocets** were at Polk Co 25 Jul (Nathan Steinbach) with a high count of 8 in Warren Co 30 Jul (Billy McCaslin). Four **American Golden-Plovers** were at Stockton Lake, Polk Co 25 -31 Jul (Grace Jordan, Michael Baljeu) and 1 at FRCA, Vernon Co 28 Jul (Kelly Ormesher). **Semipalmated Plovers** were in 6 counties, with a high count of 15 at RMBS, 28 Jul (David Becher). **Upland Sandpipers** were in 10 counties. **Short-billed Dowitcher** were in 6 counties, and the high count was 9 from Contrary Creek Road, Buchanan Co 11–23 Jul, (ph. Tom Nagel, Joanna Dial, Clint Wiedeholt). A single **Long-billed Dowitcher** was at RMBS, 31 Jul (m. obs.). Three counties reported **American Woodcocks**: Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St Louis Co 22–29 Jun (Billy McCaslin, Sally Edwards), Livingston Co Jun 12–18, (Steven Romo, Jeff Folkerts), and 2 in Bollinger Co 10 Jul (Mark Hahn). Single **Wilson's Snipe** were in 3 counties. A **Red Phalarope** was the earliest fall record at RMBS, 25 Jul (†ph. Diane Bricmont, †David Dean, †ph. Christopher Tomera, m.ob). **Lesser Yellowlegs** were in 11 counties with a high count of 35 at LBNWR, 17 Jul (Mark Robbins). Four counties reported **Willet**, with a high count of 8 at RMBS, 23 Jul (Diane Sprung). **Greater Yellowlegs** were in 8 counties during the season. Notable sightings of **Ruddy Turnstone** were only from RMBS, 3 late spring migrants on 3 Jun (ph. Dennis Bozzay) and up to 7 from 26–28 Jul (ph., m.ob.). 23 individuals were the high count for **Stilt Sandpiper** from Stockton Lake–Baller Rd, Polk Co 20–31 Jul



Ruddy Turnstone, RMBS 26 Jul 25. Photo Doug Hommert

(Kelly Ormesher, m.ob.). Three counties reported **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** with a high count of 4 from Schell-Osage CA, St Clair Co 28 Jul (Kelly Ormesher), along with 2 in Polk Co 28 Jul (m.ob.), and 1 at RMBS, 29 Jul (ph. Mike Thelen). **Sanderlings** were at RMBS with spring stragglers on 7 Jun (m.ob.) and 19–31 Jul (ph. Billy McCaslin, m.ob.) and 1 in Dade Co 24 Jul (Kelly Ormesher). A **Dunlin** was at RMBS 26–29 Jul (Kyle Hawley, m.ob.). A late **Baird's Sandpiper** was at Confluence Point SP, St. Charles Co 15 Jun (Linda DiSantis) with other sightings in July at RMBS 20 Jul (James Hickner) and up to 3 at Stockton Lake, Dade Co 20–25 Jul (Michael Baljeu, m.ob.). Up to 12 **White-rumped Sandpipers** were at LBNWR, 1–4 Jun (Don Merz, Karen Stair); 2 in Laclede Co 7 Jun (Zach Haring); and 1 at RMBS, 20 Jun (ph. Jonah Eckels). Up to 60 **Western Sandpipers** were at RMBS, 26 Jul (ph. David French, m.ob.), and single birds were at City of Columbia Wetland Unit 1, Boone Co 25–27 Jul (Joseph Mosley, Jim Gast); Stockton Lake, 21–29 Jul (ph. Kelly Ormesher, m.ob.); and FRCA, Vernon Co 27 Jul (Chad Gardner). **Semipalmated Sandpipers** lingered at Cottonwood Island, Perry Co 3 Jun (Ph. Ted "GT") and were in 9 counties later in the season.



Common Tern (center), Smithville Lake, Clay Co 17 Jul 25.  
Photo Doug Willis

## GULLS THROUGH RAPTORS

A **Laughing Gull** was at RMBS, 27 Jul (Ph. Becky Lutz, m.ob.). Up to 60 **Franklin's Gulls** lingered at LBNWR, 1–11 Jun (Karen Stair, Don Merz). In July 2 showed back up at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 17 Jul (Doug Willis). A single **American Herring Gull** was at RMBS 19–31 Jul (Jim Malone, m.ob.). **Least Terns** were away from the Mississippi at Smithville Lake 25 Jul (Doug Willis), and Stockton Lake, Polk Co 26 Jul (ph. Kelly Ormesher, Greg Swick). **Caspian Terns** were in 6 counties. **Black Terns** were in 18 counties, with a flock of 250 at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 25 Jul (Doug Willis). **Forster's Terns** were in 20 counties. 2 **Common Terns** were photographed at Smithville Lake, Clay Co 17 Jul (Doug Willis). A single **Common Loon** continued into the summer at Smithville 17 Jun–4 Jul (ph. Doug Willis, m.ob.). A **Neotropic Cormorant** was at Lake Springfield, Greene Co 4–6 Jun (Nicholas Walton, Jenna Walton, ph. Dorothy Thurman, m.ob.) and Smithville Lake, Clay Co 31 Jul (ph. Lisa Owens, ph. Doug

Willis). Continuing from the spring, 7 **White-faced Ibis** were at LBNWR, 1 Jun (Karen Stair). A **Roseate Spoonbill** was at Stockton Lake–Baller Rd, Polk Co 31 Jul (Grace Jordan, ph. Kelly Ormasher, m.ob.). Two **American Bitterns** were in the St Louis region; one at Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St Louis Co 3 Jun (Karen Meyer) and one at Forest Park, St Louis City, 3–15 Jul (ph. Ray Mielke, m.ob.). **Least Bitterns** were in 9 counties, with a high count of three from Little Creve Coeur Ecological Area, St Louis Co 22 Jun (Christopher Tomera). **Western Cattle Egrets** were in 12 counties. A high count of 2000 **American White Pelicans** was at FRCA, Vernon Co 27 Jul (Chad Gardner). A **Black Vulture** was at Mapleview Park, Jackson Co 3 Jul (ph. Eric Walters) and 48 other counties reported this species in the season. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** periodically have been confirmed to breed in the Ozarks; two records from the season include 1 from the Pioneer Forest–Virgin Pine Randolph Tract, Shannon Co 18 Jun (Joseph Mosley), and 1 from St Louis City 30 Jul (ph. Bryce Baker). Single **Northern Harriers** were in three counties. A record high count of 107 **Mississippi Kites** was at Columbia Bottom CA, St Charles Co 9 Jul (Dave Haenni). **Swainson’s Hawks** were in 12 counties, and the high count of 3 was at SelecTurf Sod Farm, Callaway Co 31 Jul (ph. Pete Monacell). **Barn Owls** were at Benton, Greene, Pettis, Texas, and Vernon Counties. **Eastern Screech-Owls** were in 14 counties. **Peregrine Falcons** were in 6 counties.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH MEADOWLARK

Late migrating **Olive-sided Flycatchers** were in 5 counties from 1–4 Jun. Similarly, single **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were in 5 counties 1–4 Jun. **Alder Flycatchers** continued in the state until 10 Jun, with a high count of 2 at LBNWR, 4 Jun (Don Merz). **Willow Flycatchers** were in 27 counties. Single **Least Flycatchers** stayed in the state until 7 Jun, with 8 counties recording a lingering migrant. **Loggerhead Shrikes** were in 39 counties, but the furthest east records were from Adair Co (ph. Peter Kondrashov), Monroe Co (ph. Joseph Mosley, CS Keen), and Boone County (ph. Nicholas March, ph. Andre Cutolo). **Brown-headed Nuthatches** from the reintroduction project had a good season with five successful nest fledges and a new summer high count of 26 post-fledge, Current River Pinery, Carter Co 19 Jun (ph. Joseph Mosley). Single **Marsh Wrens** were in 4 counties. A high count of 3 **Swainson’s Thrushes** continued at Table Rock Lake, Taney Co until 4 Jun (Jonathan Pesek). A single male **Purple Finch** (ph.) would be the fourth summer record from private feeders in Saint James, Phelps Co 1 Jun (Scott Alford). The season high count of **Lark Sparrows** was 30 at Mokane Rd. Callaway Co 21 Jul (Pete Monacell). A single **White-throated Sparrow** lingered at Citygarden Sculpture Park, St Louis City, 8 Jun (Sonia and Isabel Martinez) A **Vesper Sparrow** was at the Buckner Educational Wetlands, Jackson Co 8 Jun (Joyce Suedmeyer). **Bobolinks** were in 17 counties. **Western Meadowlarks** were in only 3 counties, Harrison, Holt, and Nodaway.

## WARBLERS THROUGH BUNTING

Single **Worm-eating Warblers**, rare in the north in summer, were in Sugar Creek Subdivision, Adair Co 2 Jun–4 Jul and Thousand Hills SP, Adair Co 4 Jul (Peter Kondrashov). **Blue-winged Warbler** is also rare in summer in the north; 2 were present at Mineral Hills CA, Putnam Co 14 Jun (Becky Lutz), 1 in Sullivan Co 14 Jun (Becky Lutz), 1 in Shoemaker CA Adair Co on 14 Jun (Becky Lutz) and 1 at Sugar Creek Subdivision, 19 Jun (Peter Kondrashov). A **Magnolia Warbler** was at Ruth Park, St Louis Co 8 Jun (aud. Joshua Hedlund). A late **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was in Forest Park 5 Jun (ph. Rad Widmer). Also late, a **Blackpoll Warbler** was still at LBNWR 4 Jun (Don Merz). Up to 6 singing male **Black-throated Green Warblers** were in the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry, Shannon Co 16–24 Jun (aud., ph. † Megan Blair). A single **Canada Warbler** was at Red Bridge Rd, Christian Co 2 Jun (Doug Willis) and another at Forest Park, St Louis City, 8 Jun (ph. Trevor Leitz, Seth Winkleman). Outside of their northern breeding range, **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were at Prairie SP, Barton Co; 3 individuals 8 Jun and 1 on 17 Jun (Joe Neal, Samantha Heller, Dana Hoisington). **Painted Bunting** northern records from this year included Henry Co (Mark Robbins) and Camden Co (ph. Mark Haas).

### Abbreviations:

BK Leach Conservation Area, Lincoln Co (BKLCA), Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park–Little Creve Coeur, St. Louis Co (CCLMP), Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area, Boone Co (EBCA), Four Rivers Conservation Area, Bates and Vernon Cos (FRCA), Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, Holt Co (LBNWR), Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, Wayne and Stoddard Cos (MNWR), Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, St. Charles Co (RMBS), Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Chariton Co (SLNWR)

aud. audio recording made

ph. photographed

m.ob. multiple observers

### Sources:

eBird. (2021). *eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance* [web application]. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. <https://ebird.org>

Gardner, J. L., Amano, T., Mackey, B. G., Sutherland, W. J., Clayton, M., & Peters, A. (2025). Sweating the small stuff: Microclimatic exposure predicts declines in body size across birds and mammals. *Biology Letters*, 21(1), Article 20240599. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2024.0599>

NASA Langley Research Center. (n.d.). *Prediction of Worldwide Energy*

*Resources (POWER)*. <https://power.larc.nasa.gov/>

Robbins, M. B. (2020). *The birds of Missouri* (2nd ed.). University of Kansas Natural History Museum. <https://hdl.handle.net/1808/30959>

University of Missouri. (n.d.). *Climate of Missouri*. Missouri Climate Center. Retrieved January 30, 2026, from <http://climate.missouri.edu/climate.php#temp>



Painted Bunting, Lake of the Ozarks, Camden Co 7 Jul 25  
Photo Mark Haas

# THE BLUEBIRD

**Awards Committee:** The MBS Executive Committee

**Executive Committee:** Michael O'Keefe, Mike Grant, Karen Lyman, Ellen Zellmer, and Allen Gathman

**Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative:** Bill Eddleman

**Conservation Partnership Coordinator:** Edge Wade

**Bluebird Mailing Coordinator:** Lottie Bushmann

**Missouri Bird Records Committee:**

**Chair:** Pete Monacell

**Secretary:** Bill Rowe

**Voting Members:** Diane Bricmont, Cory Gregory, Kendell Loyd, Kristi Mayo, Pete Monacell, Marky Mutchler, Josh Uffman

---

## ADDRESS CHANGES

If you move to a new address or you register a temporary address with the post office, please let MBS know. For an address change, just send me an email with your new address, or mail me a note. If it is a temporary address, do the same thing, but also let me know the date of your return and whether you want THE BLUEBIRD sent to your temporary address or held and sent after you return home. You can also change your address anytime on your own by logging into your profile at MOBIRDS.ORG. Thank you!

**Greg Leonard**  
**MBS Membership Chair**  
**2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122**  
**Columbia, MO 65203-1261**  
**(573) 443-8263**  
**egreg2@yahoo.com**

**JOIN**

***The Missouri Birding Society***

***Membership Brings You***

*The Bluebird*—quarterly journal of the MBS

Birding Fellowship

Spring and Fall Birding Weekends

Organized Input into Conservation Issues

Birding Education

**Go to [www.mobirds.org](http://www.mobirds.org) and pay using PayPal, or by mail:  
Application for MBS Membership**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Do NOT Publish My Phone Number in the MBS Membership Directory

\_\_\_\_\_ Do NOT Publish ANY of My Information in the MBS Membership Directory

~~~~~

**\*\*Indicate whether this is a NEW membership or a RENEWAL\*\***

\_\_\_\_\_ New      \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal

**\*\*Please check the Membership Category that applies and your BLUEBIRD choice\*\***

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual—\$20.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Contributing—\$50.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Family—\$25.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Benefactor—\$150.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Student—\$15.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Mail paper BLUEBIRD—\$12.00 per year

\_\_\_\_\_ I'll read the BLUEBIRD online at MOBIRDS.ORG—FREE!

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Enclosed**

Send checks (payable to Missouri Birding Society) to:

**The Missouri Birding Society**

**2101 W. Broadway, PMB 122**

**Columbia, MO 65203-1261**

**THE BLUEBIRD**  
**The voice of MBS since 1934**