



Return of the Bald Eagle

Symbol of Freedom

The face of the landscape and the wild inhabitants that graced Missouri have changed since the Missouri Department of Conservation was formed 75 years ago. While there have been a few wildlife populations that continue to face demise because of loss of habitat and other critical issues, there are far more stories of conservation success. One of the most popular successes is undoubtedly our nation's symbol of freedom—the bald eagle.

Since its inception in 1937, the Conservation Department has had a constitutional mandate to regulate the forests, fish, and wildlife resources of the state and today that responsibility has been refined into five key conservation messages. These messages fit in perfectly with the bald eagle's return from being an endangered species to one of increasing abundance.

Missourians care about conserving forests, fish, and wildlife.

By 1978, eagles were listed as an endangered species by the federal government in 43 of the lower 48 states, including Missouri. Because of concentrated restoration efforts, the bald eagle has recovered dramatically. In 2007, the bald eagle's status was taken off the endangered species list although it remains a species of conservation concern in Missouri. Wildlife surveys indicated that more than 166 nesting territories were found in Missouri alone. Conservation efforts such as establishing trees along large streams and reservoirs, stabilizing stream banks, and providing a buffer around nesting trees to reduce disturbance have all contributed to the eagle's success story.

We work with you and for you to sustain healthy forests, fish, and wildlife.

Quality habitat was a critical component of the eagle's return. Before 1900, eagles were nearly eliminated as a nesting species in Missouri due to critical habitat loss including the draining of swamps in the Bootheel and deforestation of large trees near waterways. From 1981 to 1990, young

eagles were brought to Missouri and gradually reintroduced into suitable habitat. Because eagles imprint on the area where they were raised, they return to these locations as adults to nest and raise their own young. Many of the 74 eagles that were raised in artificial nest boxes in Missouri were undoubtedly among the first to nest successfully and produce young several years later.

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to hunt and fish.

What is true for people is also true for eagles. While people across the nation visit Missouri to take advantage of great hunting opportunities, bald eagles flock to Missouri during the winter months for the same reason. Feeding primarily on fish and waterfowl, eagles are forced by cold temperatures to leave their northern nesting grounds and migrate south where water remains open. Big rivers and large man-made lakes make Missouri one of the leaders in numbers of wintering bald eagles. More than 2,900 eagles have been counted in Missouri during winter.

We help people discover nature.

Eagle Days events have been held in various eagle "hot spots" around the state for the past 26 years. While five official events are hosted annually by the Conservation Department, other agencies and organizations offer similar events in other locations. Tens of thousands of people have participated in these programs to see captive eagles up close and to learn about their plight. The real highlight is the opportunity to see bald eagles in the wild. While Lake Springfield never attracts more than 2 or 3 eagles, the annual *Eagle Days* held at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center is a big event done in conjunction with Dickerson Park Zoo. Live eagle presentations are offered 11 times during the weekend of January 26 and 27 along with eagle viewing opportunities. The Joplin Office in the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center, along with the community of Stella and the Missouri Master Naturalists will



Bald eagle in the wild

host *Stella Eagle Day* on January 26 from 10 am to 3 pm at Stella Veterans' Memorial Park. (See inside pages for each site for more details.)

Conservation pays by enriching our economy and quality of life.

In smaller towns where events are held, tourists may bring a small financial boost to the economy each winter by combining eagle viewing with visiting local shops, eating in restaurants, and staying in hotels. While eagle viewing may help support the economy, no value can be placed on seeing an eagle in the wild—that experience is *priceless*.

These five key messages aptly describe the bald eagle's story. Sound conservation efforts by your Missouri Department of Conservation combined with the support of the citizens in Missouri for the past 75 years is the real key to success. Together, we can continue to make conservation history into the future.

—Linda Chorce, Nature Center Manager

Joplin Office in the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

201 W. Riviera Drive, Suite B, Joplin, MO 64804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/292



The Joplin Conservation Office, located in the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center, is your local connection to Missouri's fish, forests, and wildlife. Stop by and purchase hunting and fishing permits, attend a nature program, go for a hike, enjoy a picnic, or access Shoal Creek. Within the 190 acres of Wildcat Park, you will find a diverse mix of wildlife habitats rich with flora and fauna. From I-44, take exit 6, and turn south on MO-86. Turn right on Riviera Drive to enter Wildcat Park.

HOURS:

Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays.
Audubon Center hours vary.

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-629-3423 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

January and February Events

Kids' Christmas Bird Count

January 5 • Saturday • 9 AM–1 PM
Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center

Registration required (ages 7 and up)

Kids, enjoy a morning just for you and the birds. Learn about the basics of bird watching in the tradition of the annual Christmas Bird Count then break into groups to go outside. We are partners with the Ozark Gateway Audubon Society Chapter and will be providing hands-on birding experience. The morning will end with a tally of total birds observed and a special thanks to the Ozark Gateway Audubon Society for providing awards and lunch for all.

Short-Eared Owl Hike

January 19 • Saturday • 4:30 PM–Dusk
Shawnee Trail Conservation Area (Mindenmines, MO)

Registration required (all ages)

Our winter residents have arrived and are here for a limited time. Bring the family and dress for the weather as we search the prairie for these unique owls and other winter residents.

Stella Eagle Day

January 26 • Saturday • 10 AM–3 PM
Stella Veterans' Memorial Park (Stella, MO)

No registration required (all ages)

The fish-filled streams of Southwest Missouri are the winter home to bald eagles. Join the Joplin Conservation Office, community of Stella, and Missouri Master Naturalists for an eagle viewing opportunity. There will be spotting scopes set up and fun educational activities for all ages throughout the day.

Raptor Identification

February 9 • Saturday • 1–3 PM
George Washington Carver National Monument (Diamond, MO)

Registration required (ages 16 and up)

The Four-States area is a showcase of birdlife throughout the year and raptors are a highlight for many nature enthusiasts. This free workshop on the natural history and identification of raptors is presented in partnership with the Missouri Prairie Foundation and is open to all beginning birders and nature watchers who want to brush up on their hawk, falcon, and eagle identification skills.

Introduction To Trout Fishing

February 15 • Friday • 6:30–8 PM
Walter Woods Conservation Area

Registration required (ages 7 and up)

Have you ever wanted to go trout fishing but didn't know what to use or where to go? We will introduce locations to fish in Southwest Missouri, what equipment and bait you need, and how to clean and cook your catch.

Short-Eared Owl Hike

February 16 • Saturday • 4:30 PM–Dusk
Shawnee Trail Conservation Area (Mindenmines, MO)

Registration required (all ages)

If you missed the first chance to view the short-eared owls, you won't want to miss this chance to see our winter residents gliding and "barking" over the fields in search of prey. Dress for the weather and bring the family to discover nature's winter visitors.

Ask The Naturalist

What call or sound do bald eagles make?



Of all bird calls, people seem to have the most interest in the bald eagle's. The bald eagle, a huge and majestic bird, became our national symbol in 1782. Few birds of prey are as large; they stand about 3 to 3½ feet tall. These birds weigh between 8 to 15 pounds with the female being larger than the male. Their wingspan measures between 6 to 8 feet in length. Strong talons and a bill make them excellent predators that eat about 15 pounds each day of fish, small mammals, and other birds. Normally they fly 20 to 40 mph but may reach a speed of 100 mph. Even their nests are large; the national record is a nest 20 feet deep by 10 feet wide and weighing 2 tons!

Surely their voice matches the grand nature of this bird, right? No, not really. Their call is not what many people imagine. Both male and females make a high-pitched whistle or gull-like squeal of *kleeek-kik-ik-ik-ik*. For years, when seen on television, the bald eagle was given the voice of a red-tailed hawk. Apparently the harsh, slurred *keeeer-r-r* is more appropriate for a majestic bird.

Use the following links to hear the call of a bald eagle and red-tailed hawk: <allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bald_Eagle/sounds> and <allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-tailed_Hawk/sounds>. Now that you know, the next time you see a bald eagle on the television or in the movies, listen if it has the correct voice.

Discover nature and learn more about bald eagles at <mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/bald-eagle> or by attending any of the upcoming *Eagle Days*. Visit <mdc.mo.gov/node/3478> for a complete list.

—Cyndi Cogbill, Public Service Assistant

Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

4897 N. Farm Road 61, Ash Grove, MO 65604 • mdc.mo.gov/node/288



January Events

Firearms Basic Care And Cleaning

January 12 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM
Registration required (all ages)

Join us to learn the basics of the care and cleaning of firearms. This program will include tips and techniques for all aspects of maintenance of your firearm. You may bring your own unloaded firearm to class or use ours.

Cross Trail Outfitters Trapping Basics

January 17 • Thursday • 5–7:30 PM
No registration required (ages 7–17)

Join the families of Cross Trail Outfitters and learn about the importance of trapping as a management method for wildlife managers to use to control excess populations of sometimes problematic animals. This program is designed for youth ages 7–17, but parents will have fun learning too.

Woodworking For Wildlife Bluebird House Building

January 19 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM
No registration required (all ages)

Want to take a more active approach to conservation? Join us and learn how to make a nesting box for the state bird—the eastern bluebird. You will learn how to cut these out of a single board and then assemble your own bluebird nesting box.

Metallic And Shotgun Shell Reloading Basics

January 26 • Saturday • 8:30–11:30 AM
Registration required (ages 18 and up)

Now is the time to start saving money while having fun reloading your own ammunition for hunting or target shooting. Join us for this basic course about reloading rifle, pistol, and shotgun shell ammunition because you will have great satisfaction breaking targets or shooting bull's-eyes using your own manufactured rounds. We will cover all aspects of reloading from brass care and preparation to bullet selection and primer selection, and much more.

February Events

Civilian Marksmanship Program High-Power Rifle Shooting Clinic

February 16 • Saturday • 8 AM–Noon
No registration required (ages 11 and up)

Join the members of the Civilian Marksmanship Program to learn how to properly set up and fire a high-power rifle. The group shoots M-1 Garand and M-1 Carbine service rifles for fun and competition. For more information, please contact Bill Corcoran at 417-343-1102.

Cross Trail Outfitters Predator Hunting Basics

February 21 • Thursday • 5–7:30 PM
No registration required (ages 7–17)

Join the families of Cross Trail Outfitters and learn about the importance of predator hunting as a management method for wildlife managers to use to control excess populations of sometimes problematic animals. This program is designed for youth ages 7–17, but parents will have fun learning too.

Holiday Closings

January 1 • New Year's Day

January 21 • Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 12 • Lincoln Day

February 18 • Washington's Birthday



To get to the Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center, take US Highway 160 west of Willard, turn south on Farm Road 61, and go 2.5 miles, facility on the west side of road. Facilities include an outdoor education center and archery, rifle, pistol, and shotgun ranges, including skeet and trap.

HOURS:

September 14–April 14

Monday and Thursday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: Noon–4:30 PM

April 15–September 13

Monday: 9 AM–4:30 PM

Thursday: 9 AM–7:30 PM

Friday–Sunday: Noon–4:30 PM

Closed Tuesdays, Wednesdays and all state holidays. Hours are subject to change.

FACILITIES AND FEES:

Available for individual and group use. Call for information and possible restrictions.

- Rifle/pistol range fee: \$3 per booth per hour
- Trap/skeet range fee: \$3 per person per round of 25 clay targets
- Shotgun patterning range: \$3 per person per hour
- Archery range: \$3 per person per hour
- Group use fee: \$20 per hour plus \$3 per round of 25 clay targets

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-742-4361 or email <DaltonRange@mdc.mo.gov> to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 • mdc.mo.gov/node/287



The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). Indoors, enjoy nature exhibits, attend programs, purchase hunting and fishing permits, browse through a nature-related gift shop, and pick up free conservation brochures. Outdoors, enjoy three miles of hiking trails through a variety of natural communities. Call to schedule a naturalist-led program for your organized group.

CURRENT HOURS:

November 1–February 28

Building: Tuesday–Saturday: 8 AM–5 PM

Closed Sunday and Monday

Trails: Sunday–Saturday: 8 AM–6 PM

Building and Trails closed New Year's Day

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-888-4237 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

January Events

Registration begins January 2

Badge Bonanza

January 8 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins December 15 (ages 5 and up)

Attention all scouting and youth organizations! Here's a program to help you earn nature badges. The focus will be on venomous animals, conservation careers, and knot tying. Activities are also open to the public.

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

January 9 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

Owl Prowl And Evening Stroll

January 11 • Friday • 6–9 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The trails will be open and patrolled, so bring a flashlight and a walking partner because you're on your own. Dickerson Park Zoo docents will offer two indoor programs—one at 6:30 pm and one at 7:30 pm—to give you a close-up look at Missouri's owls. You'll learn about how these incredible predators have mastered surviving in darkness.

Fly-Tying Demonstration

January 12 • Saturday • 1–4 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be on hand to demonstrate basic fly-tying techniques. Stop by and learn how combinations of feathers, yarn, and thread can imitate insects or other food that will fool a fish.

Nature And The Arts A Musical Celebration Of The Land

January 18 • Friday • 7–8 PM

Registration required (ages 18 and up)

The duo of *Mike and Tenley* are seasoned multi-instrumental musicians providing music with a conservation message. Mike Fraser, an Ozark fiddler, was the author of and musician in *Fiddles and Forests* and *Voices of the Hills* CDs produced by the Conservation Department. Their program features a musical tribute to the Ozarks focusing on traditional music, history, and storytelling inspired by the Scots-Irish people who settled and survived in a hardscrabble landscape. Aldo Leopold, known as the "Father of Conservation" and author of *A Sand County Almanac*, has inspired them to compose original music that will be integrated throughout the program.

For Adults Only And Hiking Club Orienteering

January 19 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM

Registration required (ages 18 and up)

Learn the basics of using a compass and topographic maps during the indoor portion of this program. After lunch, test your newfound orienteering skills at Compton Hollow Conservation Area. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is approximately four miles and of moderate difficulty.

Little Acorns

Registration required (Ages 3–6) Programs are 45 minutes in length. Please limit to one per month.

Regal Eagles

January 4 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

January 5 • Saturday • 11 AM

Bald eagles are the kings of the sky. They are big, beautiful, and brawny. Come learn what other adaptations make these special birds like royalty.

Registration begins December 15

Wild Wonderful Wetlands

January 24 • Thursday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration required (ages 12 and up)

Wetlands are far from wastelands as they are so often depicted. Wetlands are not only home to many beautiful and rare plants, birds, and other critters, they are essential for controlling storm water runoff, reducing erosion, and filtering out pollutants before slowly releasing water into the ground. Join Volunteer Naturalist and nature photographer Bob Ball to discover the many incredible wonders found in swamps, bogs, and marshes in Missouri and through the United States.

Eagle Days

January 26 • Saturday • 9 AM–3 PM

January 27 • Sunday • 12:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (all ages)



We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield. This special event combines the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live bald eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo, with outdoor viewing opportunities at the Lake Springfield Boathouse and Marina. An indoor program will be held every hour on the hour at the nature center from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturday and at 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30 pm on Sunday. Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours.

You Got Game?

January 31 • Thursday • 7–9 PM

Registration required (ages 10 and up)

Outdoor enthusiasts always have questions about care and usage of nature's bounty and we have answers. Learn how to care for game taken from the field and then prepare it for the table. Taste samples of wild game from fish to venison. Copies of our favorite recipes will be available. Come enjoy a wild game taste-testing treat. *Priority given to first-time attendees.*

Temporary Exhibits

January

Swamp Fish of Southeast Missouri

Artwork by *AJ Hendershott*

February

Nature And The Arts

Original Artwork by the

Finley Valley Fine Artists' Association

Springfield Conservation Nature Center

4601 S. Nature Center Way, Springfield, MO 65804 •

• mdc.mo.gov/node/287



We help people discover nature

February Events

Registration begins February 1

Animal And Nature Tales

February 1 • Friday • 5:30–6:30 PM or 7–8 PM

Registration begins January 15 (all ages)

Kick off *Family Month* with a fun and fascinating exploration of nature and our place in it as storyteller Bobby Norfolk brings to vivid life creatures large and small that work as a group to solve problems. These stories are told with humor, lively animation, special voices, and unique sound effects. An internationally known story performer and teaching artist, this three-time Emmy Award winner and Parents' Choice honoree is one of the most popular and dynamic story educators in America today.

Orienteering For Women

February 2 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM

Registration begins January 15 (women and girls ages 12–17 with an adult participant)

Learn the basics of using a compass and topographic maps during the indoor portion of this program. After lunch, test your newfound orienteering skills at Compton Hollow Conservation Area. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is approximately four miles and of moderate difficulty.

Badge Bonanza

February 5 • Tuesday • 6:30–8 PM

Registration begins January 15 (ages 5 and up)

Attention all scouting and youth organizations! Here's a program to help you earn nature badges on Missouri animals and their characteristics, food chains, habitats, and more. Activities are also open to the public.

Winter Wildlife Survivors Puppet Show

February 8 • Friday • 4–5 PM or 6:30–7:30 PM

Registration begins January 15 (all ages)

The question is: How do animals spend the winter? The answer is: store, snore, or soar. Join ace reporter "Calvin The Catfish" and friends to get more of the scoop on surviving winter.

Hiking Club

February 9 • Saturday • 9 AM–2 PM

Registration required (Ages 18 and up)

Trek the trails of Little Sac Woods Conservation Area with Volunteer Naturalist Pat Stritzel. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring a sack lunch and water and wear comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is four miles and rated easy to moderate.

Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

February 13 • Wednesday • 11–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 2–6)

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2–6 year olds. Please, no organized groups.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15 • Friday • 9–11 AM

No registration required (all ages)

Stop by and help count birds in the Wildlife Viewing Area with members of the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society. Learn the basics of identification and how to count birds to contribute to the nature center's Great Backyard Bird Count tally sheet.

Owl Prowl

February 15 • Friday • 7–8:30 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The docents from Dickerson Park Zoo will join us for a close-up look at live owls. We'll also head outside and try to call wild owls during a guided hike. Bring a flashlight.

Attracting Birds To Your Yard

February 16 • Saturday • 10:30 AM–Noon

Registration required (Families, ages 6 and up with an adult mentor)

Parents, grandparents, and adult mentors, bring your youngster(s) to learn how to attract birds to your yard, how to identify them, and then work together to assemble your own birdhouse to take home.

Conservation TEEN Club

Building Birdhouses

February 16 • Saturday • 2–4 PM

Registration required (ages 12–17)

Come and enjoy an afternoon building birdhouses for you to take home. This is a great activity that will give something back to the wildlife we all enjoy.

Animal Jeopardy

February 22 • Friday • 6:30–9 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Family Month concludes with an interactive celebration of 75 years of conservation success stories during the Missouri Department of Conservation's anniversary celebration. Find out which animals were in jeopardy—peril or danger—of being wiped out 75 years ago, how they are doing now, and how you can help. Play "final jeopardy" with your friends and family to test your newfound wildlife knowledge. Plan to spend an hour.

Winter Tree Identification Through Nature Journaling

February 23 • Saturday • 10 AM–Noon

Registration required (Families, ages 8 and up with an adult mentor)

Parents, grandparents, and adult mentors, bring your youngster(s) to learn the basics of winter tree identification by using your skills of observation and a journal to record your discoveries. All that is needed is a curiosity of and an interest in nature. Dress for a short time outdoors.

Conservation Kids' Club

Bird Feeding

February 28 • Thursday • 6:30–7:45 PM

Registration required (ages 7–12)

Feeding birds during winter is a fun way to learn about bird behavior and identification. Learn how to set the table, plan the menu, and attract feathered guests to your backyard this winter. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids.

Little Acorns

Greet The Groundhog

February 2 • Saturday • 11 AM

February 15 • Friday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

It's February and time to celebrate groundhogs. Will spring be early or late? Only the shadow knows. Come out to learn about groundhogs and their shadows. Registration begins January 15.

Registration required (Ages 3–6) Programs are 45 minutes in length. Please limit to one per month.

Wily Coyote

February 12 • Tuesday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

Howl like a coyote and hear some coyote folklore. Learn why the cunning nature of this animal has earned it the nickname "trickster."

Opossum Trot

February 21 • Thursday • 11 AM or 1:30 PM

February 23 • Saturday • 11 AM

Opossums are awesome! "Trot" on over to the nature center to learn why.

Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center

483 Hatchery Road, Branson, MO 65616 • mdc.mo.gov/node/290



The Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center is located on 221 acres in Branson off Highway 165 next to Table Rock Dam. Outdoors, visitors will experience an active fish hatchery with 700,000 rainbow and brown trout in 30 pools with opportunities to feed the fish. Indoors, enjoy a 3,500 gallon aquarium and hands-on nature exhibits and purchase hunting and fishing permits. The area also features four hiking trails, a picnic area, a boat ramp, and access to Lake Taneycomo.

FACILITY HOURS:

Memorial Day–Labor Day

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–6 PM

Remainder of Year

Sunday–Saturday: 9 AM–5 PM

AREA AND TRAIL HOURS:

4 AM–10 PM

The area is open to fishing 24 hours daily, but special permits and regulations do apply. Check the current fishing regulations or call for details.

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM:

Programs are free. Call 417-334-4865, Ext. 0, to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

FISHING LAKE TANEYCOMO:

Before fishing on Lake Taneycomo, become familiar with the regulations and restrictions. Come by for a free brochure of the entire lake including fishing accesses. For specific details about trout fishing here and across the state, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/5603.

January Events

Winter Tree ID

January 12 • Saturday • 2–3:30 PM

Registration required (ages 12 and up)

Winter is a great time to learn how to identify trees. By using the bark, twigs, scales, and shape, it is often easier to identify a tree in the winter than in the summer. After a brief introduction to the features of trees in winter, we will take a short hike and learn to identify some of the more common trees in our area.

Owl Prowl

January 18 • Friday • 7–9 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Can owls see in the dark? How many owls are there in the Ozarks? What sounds do they make? Here is your chance to learn about owls and how important they are to our landscape. In addition to a short indoor presentation, we will go on a guided outdoor night hike to listen and “call” for owls. Back inside, we will investigate owl pellets to see what they have eaten.

February Events

The Mitten

February 2 • Saturday • 2–3:30 PM

Registration required (ages 2 and up)

This program features the book, *The Mitten*, and involves both story time and crafts. The program is geared towards exploring how animals spend the winter and hibernation. Learn why the groundhog gets to predict the weather for the next six weeks.

Vulture Venture

February 16 • Saturday •

Presentations at Noon, 1, 2, 3 and 4 PM

No registration required (all ages)

This is our 17th annual event featuring one of Missouri’s most unusual wildlife viewing experiences. This program promotes nature’s original “clean-up crew”—the vultures. In addition to half-hour presentations with Socrates, a live turkey vulture from the WOW Museum in Springfield, there will be lots of vulture-related games and activities. You will also have the opportunity to see large numbers of vultures along Taneycomo with the help of volunteers and spotting scopes. Each family will receive a free 2013 vulture print to take home. Bring your camera and dress warm for this truly unique outdoor wildlife event.

Socrates performing at Vulture Venture



What’s Your Vulture IQ?

- 1) What do vultures use to keep them high in the air without having to constantly flap their wings? A) *Thermals* B) *Hurricanes* C) *Tornados*
- 2) What is the primary diet of most vultures? A) *Healthy wild animals* B) *Any dead animal* C) *Plants and trees*
- 3) If you approach too close to a frightened vulture, what could they do to scare you away? A) *Sing* B) *Kick and scratch* C) *Projectile vomit*
- 4) Although protected by law as a bird of prey, to which birds are vultures more closely related? A) *Hummingbirds* B) *Storks* C) *Ducks*
- 5) Having dark feathers on a hot summer day, how can a vulture cool itself off while roosting in a tree? A) *Urinate on their legs* B) *Spit in the air* C) *Hang upside down*

Answers: A (5) • B (4) • C (3) • B (2) • A (1)

— John Miller, Interpretive Center Manager

Southwest Regional Office

2630 N. Mayfair Avenue, Springfield, MO 65803 • mdc.mo.gov/node/257



February weather is usually too wintry to conjure up thoughts of nesting songbirds and hatchlings. However, regardless of what the outdoor landscape or thermometer tells you, February is when to prepare a home for bluebirds if you enjoy seeing them. Many residents, particularly rural ones, know Missouri's state bird, the eastern bluebird, is a common and colorful sight in this region. What people may not realize is that bluebirds usually begin arriving at nesting sites in

February. So, if you're one of the many people who put up nest boxes with the hope of attracting bluebirds, February is the month to begin putting up new nest boxes or cleaning and refurbishing existing ones.

The bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) prefers rural grassland areas with scattered trees that can be used for perching and nesting. As with most bird species, males have more eye-catching colors than females. A male in spring courtship colors sports a striking shade of blue over most of its body complemented by a rusty breast and white belly. (Females have a blue-gray back. The rest of the body resembles the male.)

Besides creating a great bird-watching opportunity, putting up a nest box provides a benefit to bluebirds. In the wild, bluebirds have to compete with starlings, house sparrows, and other creatures for cavity nesting space. It's thought this shortage of natural nesting space is one reason bluebirds will readily accept appropriately placed man-made nest boxes.

Bluebird boxes work best in rural areas. Nest boxes should be placed in open grassy areas that have perching sites. Meadows, pastures, or big yards that are not too heavily shaded are ideal. It is best if the grass is short. Fencerows, power lines, scattered trees, or nearby woods provide good perches.

For best results, mount the box on a lone post. Posts can be fitted with metal sleeves to discourage climbing predators. Nest boxes placed on fence posts may work, but it's often easy for snakes and other predators to climb fence posts. Tree trunks aren't the best locations either because the boxes are often too shaded or can easily be accessed by squirrels or snakes.

Bluebirds will nest at varying heights but a distance of four to five feet off the ground is convenient for human observation. If you put up more than one box, place them approximately 100 yards apart. This allows for a bluebird's sizeable territory.

Information about bluebirds and bluebird nest boxes can be found in the Missouri Department of Conservation publication *Bluebirds in Missouri*. This free booklet is available at many Department of Conservation offices. Visit mdc.mo.gov/node/4484 for more bluebird information.

– Francis Skalicky, Media Specialist



The Southwest Regional Office is conveniently located just west of the intersection of US-65 and Kearney in Springfield. The public may obtain information on land management, nuisance wildlife, educational opportunities, river and pond management, and more, as well as purchase hunting and fishing permits and obtain area brochures for Conservation Department areas.

HOURS: Monday–Friday: 8 AM–5 PM
Closed all state holidays

PHONE: 417-895-6880

Hunter Education



Register online for all Hunter Education courses at mdc.mo.gov/node/3722. A complete listing of courses is also included on this website.

These free 10-hour courses are required for anyone born on or after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri, unless they are:

- Using a resident firearms deer or turkey hunting permit while hunting in the immediate presence of a properly-licensed mentor and age 6 to 15.
- Using a resident landowner deer or turkey hunting permit.
- Hunting under the provisions of the Apprentice Hunter Authorization.
- Developmentally disabled. Hunters with developmental disabilities who have taken a Hunter Education course but failed to pass the certification tests may purchase firearms permits as long as they carry a physician's statement as proof of their disability and hunt in the immediate presence of a properly-licensed mentor.

Students ages 11 and older must pass a test at the end of the course to be certified. Students under 15 years old must be accompanied by an adult and show proof of age. If you have any previous Missouri hunting or fishing permits or a Missouri Conservation Heritage Card, bring them to class.

| Location | Date | Day/Time |
|--|----------------|---------------------|
| Andy Dalton Shooting Range | February 1 & 2 | Friday, 6–10 PM |
| For questions, call 417-742-4361 | | Saturday, 8 AM–6 PM |
| Springfield Conservation Nature Center | February 8 & 9 | Friday, 6–9 PM |
| For questions, call 417-888-4237 | | Saturday, 8 AM–5 PM |

Trapping Seasons

Beaver and Nutria

Season Dates: November 15, 2012–March 31, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: Any number

Rabbit

Season Dates: November 15, 2012–January 31, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: 6 Possession Bag Limit: 12

Furbearers: Badger, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, red fox, mink, opossum, raccoon, and striped skunk

Season Dates: November 15, 2012–January 31, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: Any number

Otter and Muskrat

Season Dates: November 15, 2012–February 20, 2013

Daily Bag Limit: Any number

Bobcat and otter pelts must be delivered to an agent of the Conservation Department for registration or tagging before selling, transferring, tanning, or mounting by April 10

Conservation Area Showcase:

Stockton Lake Management Lands

LOCATION: Stockton Lake is on the Sac River and lies at the western edge of the Missouri Ozarks. The lake and associated wildlife area include land located in Cedar, Dade, and Polk Counties. The dam is located in Cedar County near the town of Stockton. Water covers nearly 25,000 surface acres and the wildlife area comprises over 30,000 acres.

ABOUT THIS AREA: The Osage Indians controlled this area prior to the first French explorers. As settlers continued moving west, tensions increased between settlers, the Osage, and the U.S. government. In the early 1800s, a treaty was signed which removed the Osage from the area. This led to rapid Euro-American immigration. Various settlements developed along the Sac River including the town of Stockton.

Construction of Stockton Dam began in October 1963 and was completed in December 1969. The lake reached full pool in December 1971. Over 298 miles of shoreline wind through the rolling hills of three counties. Stockton Lake provides flood protection to downstream areas, hydroelectric power, drinking water to Springfield residents, and outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting, fishing, and camping. There are 12 parks located around the lake which provide many opportunities for camping, swimming, and picnicking.

About half of the lands located around the lake are licensed to the Conservation Department for management. The other half is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The lands around the lake are a diverse mix of forested and open field habitats. The forested lands include stands of bottomland maples and willows, some nice oak- and hickory-dominated tracts, and areas of walnut, hackberry, and Osage orange. The majority of the open lands consist of warm season grass fields, scrub-dominated old fields, and food plots. Most areas of open lands include a mix of all of these habitats in an effort to provide adequate habitat to a variety of wildlife species.

FISHING: Stockton Lake provides outstanding opportunities for a variety of fish species. This lake is well-known as one of the top walleye lakes in the state. In addition, crappie and bass fishing are considered good to excellent most years. White bass attract the attention of anglers up the rivers in the spring and on wind-blown flats and points in the fall. The lake contains a strong population of bluegill and channel catfish and a fair population of flathead catfish. Please refer to the Fishing Regulations Summary for all length and creel limits.

HUNTING: Most open land acres are managed for early successional species. This is intended to provide suitable habitat for rabbits, quail, deer, and turkey in particular. In addition, some dove fields are planted annually to provide high-quality hunting opportunities. Rabbit and turkey hunting are typically good with quail and deer hunting being rated only as fair. Waterfowl hunting is also available on Stockton Lake. Much of the shoreline of Stockton Lake is comprised of rock, which limits the amount of seed-producing plants that waterfowl desire. However, some opportunities still exist to harvest ducks and geese in coves, particularly during cold weather when surrounding ponds tend to freeze. There is no hunting allowed in most of the parks and there is a waterfowl refuge located on the east side of the lake which is closed during winter months. The majority of the wildlife area is open to statewide regulations for most species. However, there are different deer hunting methods allowed depending upon which portion of the lake you wish to hunt. Please consult the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Summary and the Fall Deer and Turkey booklet for detailed regulations.

WILDLIFE VIEWING: Stockton Lake affords bird watchers with nearly unlimited opportunities. Forest birds, grassland birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors are among the many types of birds found utilizing Stockton Lake. A favorite of many birders is the bald eagle. Stockton has a few year-round resident bald eagles that nest around the lake, so observers may see an eagle anytime of year. However, the best opportunity to view bald eagles exists during the winter months. The area around the dam is a likely location for eagles in December and January. Also look for eagles resting on trees at the tip of lake points. When ice starts to form on portions of the lake, bald eagles will often be seen standing on the ice dining on waterfowl or winter-killed shad. Observers wishing to see shorebirds and waterfowl should consider utilizing the viewing blind located in the Aldrich Area of the Little Sac Arm of the lake. This blind overlooks a wetland pool that can contain populations of waterfowl and shorebirds when the pool has adequate water.

For more information about Stockton Lake, visit the website at <mdc.mo.gov/a7701>.

— Kyle Hedges, Wildlife Management Biologist



Available at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center and Southwest Regional Office.

Missouri Department of Conservation



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Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15–18

Save the dates so you can stretch your wings and do your part in the worldwide Great Backyard Bird Count. By participating in this joint project of Cornell University Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, you can help document where birds are and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists determine the status of birds this winter. You can count birds in your backyard, a local park, or other natural areas on one or all count days. Visit <birdsource.org/gbbc/> or stop by the Springfield Conservation Nature Center and pick up a packet with data sheets and further information.

Going Global in 2013