



The Sky Hunter

Hunting and hunters have long played a very important role in human culture—so much so that we immortalized one in the stars!

Orion, a mighty hunter of Greek mythology, is one of the most prominent constellations in the night sky. February happens to be one of the best times to view this celestial marvel. Look due south around 8 p.m. to catch the distinctive row of three stars that make up the hunter's belt. Above and below the belt, four stars form a keystone pattern of Orion's body. To the right, a faint arc of stars makes up his shield. Look for a small, vertical row of stars beneath the belt. This is his sword, and in the middle is the great Orion Nebula. On a clear, dark night astute eyes can just make out a fuzzy glow, which becomes quite obvious in a pair of 7 or 10x50 binoculars. This cloud of gas and dust is a birthplace of infant stars!



To Orion's left, and slightly below, is his faithful hunting dog Canis Major. This dog truly has a twinkle in his eye, which is actually the brilliant star Sirius. Sirius has the distinction of being the brightest star in the entire sky as seen from Earth.

Scan to the right and just above Orion to make out the glowing "V"-shape of stars that are the head of Taurus, the Bull. Here the orange star, Aldebaran, is surrounded by the Hyades star cluster—another nice sight in binoculars.



Moving a little farther right, or west, from Taurus you can't miss the famous Pleades star cluster. Look carefully and you might just make out about six stars in a very tight, miniature "dipper" pattern. Train your binoculars on them and you'll be rewarded with a dazzling view. Formed together in a gas cloud like the Orion Nebula, the fledgling Pleades stars are now embarking on their journey into the galaxy.

Crisp, clear winter nights offer some of the best stargazing of the year. Just be sure to bundle up well, and get ready to discover nature at night!

*By DAN ZARLENGA, media specialist
Photos courtesy of Dan Zarlenga*

Your **"Passport to Nature"** begins March 1. Throughout the month of March there will be a variety of activities available at some of our Missouri Department of Conservation sites. See the March newsletter for details.

Jay Henges Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

1100 Antire Road, High Ridge, MO 63049 • mdc.mo.gov/node/299



From the east/St. Louis
I-44 west to Beaumont Antire Road, exit 269. Left over I-44 to Antire Road. Right on Antire. One hundred feet to entrance.

From the west/Eureka
I-44 east to Beaumont Antire Road, exit 269. Follow exit lane around to top.

HOURS:

April 1 – November 30

Wednesday: 11 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Thursday and Saturday: 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Friday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

December 1 – March 31

Wednesday – Sunday: 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **636-938-9548** or email henges.range@mdc.mo.gov with your name and phone number to sign up for a program requiring registration. Up to two reservations are allowed per registration; groups should contact the range for more information. If you are unable to attend, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to hunt and fish.

Women's Beginning Handgun

Feb 4 • Thursday • 6 – 9 p.m.

(Women, ages 16 and up)

Interested in hunting or target shooting with a handgun? This program includes basic handgun operation, shooting fundamentals, safety, maintenance, and safe storage. We start with a classroom session then move to a live-fire session on the range. Although equipment and ammunition will be provided, you may bring your own handgun and ammunition to the live-fire session. Anyone under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult. (Registration begins Jan 21.)

Crow Calling

Feb 9 • Tuesday • 6 – 8 p.m.

(Ages 6 and up)

Join us as we discuss and demonstrate calls and sounds used for bringing in these wary birds. Crow hunting is a great pastime and has a great history. Learn more about how to use calls and techniques to prepare for your hunt. (Reservations begin Jan 26.)

Basic Handgun Care, Cleaning, and Storage

Feb 11 • Thursday • 6 – 9 p.m.

(Ages 9 and up)

Even new firearms must be cleaned and properly lubricated before being shot or going hunting. Keeping that handgun shooting, whether a family heirloom, expensive sporting or competition gun, or a hard working basic shooter, requires proper care and attention to prevent worn or damaged parts. Learn the proper techniques and overview some of the multitude of products and claims out there to maintain firearms. Firearms and equipment will be provided. Anyone under age 16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin Jan 28.)

Boone and Crockett Antler Scoring

Feb 21 • Sunday • 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

(All ages)

Got that big buck last season! Your antlers have dried for the required 60 days. It's time to check the official score of that big rack. Certified official scorers will give you the big number for FREE. You may also bring shed antlers to be scored. Antlers do not have to be from this past season. Any previous rack can be scored. No reservation required, just walk in and have a smile.

Beginners Upland Gamebird Clinic and Hunt, Part 1 and 2

Feb 25 • Thursday • 6 – 9 p.m.

Feb 27 • Saturday

(Ages 10 and up)

This program is for first time upland gamebird (quail, pheasant, grouse, snipe, woodcock, etc.) hunters only, adult or youth. Part 1 is a clinic on hunting safety, species, equipment, techniques, and clay target shooting. Part 2 will be at another location on Saturday, Feb 27, with actual hunts, bird cleaning, and lunch. Although all shotguns and ammunition will be provided, you may bring your own shotgun and ammunition to the sessions. (Reservations begin Feb 11.)

Beginners Youth .22 Rifle Target Shooting

Feb 27 • Saturday 8 – 9:30 a.m.

(Ages 9 – 15)

Interested youth who have no experience shooting rifles are invited to participate in this session on learning safety and the proper techniques of shooting .22 caliber rimfire rifles in a controlled safe environment. Firearms, ammunition, and safety equipment are provided. (Reservations begin Feb 13.)

Unless otherwise indicated, youth under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304 • mdc.mo.gov/node/270

AUGUST A. BUSCH MEMORIAL CONSERVATION AREA SHOOTING RANGE RENOVATIONS

The Missouri Department of Conservation's August A. Busch Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center in St. Charles is being renovated into an expanded state-of-the-art shooting range featuring more shooting stations and classroom facilities.

To expedite the renovations to the existing site, the shooting range is temporarily closed for public use and will remain closed for the duration of the renovation project. The new range will incorporate the most current national shooting range design standards, including an increased number of shooting stations, new classroom facility, and other building improvements for user convenience, safety, and reduced waiting times. For further information and a camera view of the construction site visit mdc.mo.gov key word "Busch Range".



Due to the range closure, all Busch Range programs will be held at the Busch Conservation Area classrooms in the St. Louis Regional Office unless otherwise noted.

Programs are free. Call **636-441-4554** to register Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Survival Tactics for the Outdoorsman

Feb 17 • Wednesday • 6 – 9 p.m.

Feb 18 • Thursday • 6 – 9 p.m.

(Ages 11 and up)

Are you prepared if an emergency happens during an outdoor adventure? This class will teach the basic survival necessities when stranded, lost, or injured in the woods. Our experts will go over finding food, water purification, shelter, and other aspects that will help you survive. You must attend part one, on Wednesday, in order to attend part two. Class will be held at the August A. Busch CA regional office classroom. Children ages 11-16 must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin Jan 15.)

Women's/Youth Pheasant Clinic and Hunt

Feb 25 • Thursday • 6 – 8 p.m.

Feb 27 • Saturday • Women

March 5 • Saturday • Youth

(Ages 11 - 15 for youth/11 and up for women)

This program will introduce new hunters to the sport of upland hunting with an emphasis on the ringneck pheasants. We will start with a clinic on Thursday covering pheasant biology, habitat, safety, firearms, ammunition, hunting methods and more. Then on Saturday, Feb 27 for women, and Saturday, March 5 for youth, we will head to the field for an actual pheasant hunt. You must be Hunter Education certified, and not have attended this program in the past. Must attend clinic and have some experience with shotguns in order to attend hunt. The clinic will be held at the August A. Busch CA regional office classroom, and the hunt will be held at Missouri Gun and Quail located in Wright City, Missouri. (Reservations begin Jan 26.)



Unless otherwise indicated, youth under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122 • mdc.mo.gov/node/271



From I-44 east take the Watson Road exit and turn left on Geyer. Cross over the bridge and turn left on Cragwold Road. Follow one mile to the entrance. 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 oak-hickory forest.

HOURS:

Building: Tuesday – Saturday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Area: Daily: 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. DST
8 a.m. – 6 p.m. CST

Programs are free. Call **314-301-1500** to register. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Scout Table: Mammals of Missouri

Feb 13 • Saturday • 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

(All ages)

Our Scout Discovery Tables help Scouts earn portions of badges relating to nature. In this self-led program, you will learn about mammals' habitats, their tracks, how they use their senses, etc. We will have pelts, skulls, and other identification resources available. Discovery Tables are also open to the general public. (Brownies: Hiker and Senses, Juniors: Animal Habitats, Tigers: Tigers in the Wild, Wolf: Call of the Wild, Bear: Fur, Feather, and Ferns, Webelos: Into the Wild.) (No reservations necessary).

Beginning Birders

Feb 13 • Saturday •

(Ages 13 and up) 9 – 11:30 a.m.

(Ages 7–12) 1 – 3:30 p.m.

Have you ever wondered what types of birds you've been seeing out of your bedroom window? Or, how someone can tell the difference between a chickadee and a nuthatch at just a glance? Join us as we explore Missouri's bird life. Learn basic bird identification skills and put them to use collecting data for a citizen-science driven survey, The Great Backyard Bird Count. Binoculars and field guides will be provided, but feel free to bring your own. (Reservations begin Jan 30.)

Homeschool Special: Bluebirds of Missouri

Feb 16 • Tuesday • 10 a.m. – noon

(Families)

Soon bluebirds will be looking for a place to build their nests. Learn about their important role in our ecosystem. You may then partner with these beautiful creatures by building a birdhouse to take home and mount for them. You will be helping yourselves as well, by inviting natural bug zappers into your yard. We will also take a hike and look for some of our springtime favorites. Please bring a hammer to build the birdhouse. One bluebird house per family. (Reservations begin Feb 2.)

Discover Nature Families: Tracks and Scat Attack!

Feb 19 • Friday • 5:30 – 7 p.m.

(Ages 7 and up)

Tracks, scat, and other signs animals leave behind are clues to their true nature. Identify animals, their lifestyles, and their habits through these clues. What is scat? How do we use scat? Scat is a cool topic that scientists, doctors, and people study to keep our world healthy. Become a scatologist and discover the benefits of scat identification. The results can be very surprising. (Reservations begin Feb 5.)

Invasive Species

Feb 23 • Tuesday • 9:30 – 11 a.m.

(Ages 7 and up)

Sometimes plants and animals come into our region from outside. Some of these don't do well here. However, invasive species grow vigorously in their new home, and crowd out many native species. Why? How can they out-compete species that are already so well adapted to this environment? We'll consider some general reasons and some detailed examples. We'll also play some games, make a craft and go for a walk in the woods. (Reservations begin Feb 9.)

Early Birders

Feb 25 • Thursday • 10 – 11:30 a.m.

(Ages 4 – 7)

Birdwatching is an awesome way to discover nature in Missouri, but it isn't only for adults! So kids, join us to learn about some special tools that birds have to help them survive. We will mimic those tools ourselves at the discovery tables. We will also read a story, and then we will go outside for some bird-watching time with binoculars to see what the forest has to offer us. (Reservations begin Feb 11.)

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122 • mdc.mo.gov/node/271



Ozark Trail Adventure Workshop

Saturday, February 6

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Hosted by MDC and the Ozark Trail Association (OTA), spend the morning learning about the Ozark Trail's History, Sections, and adjacent MDC Conservation Areas. Choose from exciting breakout sessions in the afternoon, including: Flora and Fauna of the Trail, Backpacking Skills, Cycling, Horseback Riding, GPS/Map and Compass, and much more! To see details and to register, please see OTA's website: www.OzarkTrail.com.

PLEASE NOTE:

As of January 1, 2016, the nature center will be closed on all state holidays.

- Building and grounds are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
- Building hours: Tuesday – Saturday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Gift shop closes at 4:30 p.m.) Closed all state holidays.
- Area hours: Open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight saving time, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. the rest of the year.

Forest Park Office

5595 Grand Drive, St. Louis, MO 63112 • mdc.mo.gov/node/10254



From I-44 take Kingshighway north to West Pine Blvd, turn left. Follow West Pine to Lindell, turn left. Continue on Lindell past Union Drive to Cricket, turn left. Take first right onto Grand Ave. The visitor's center is on the right.

HOURS:

Monday – Friday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **314-877-1309** 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. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Geocaching - Presidents Style

Feb 15 • Monday • 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.

(Ages 11 – 16)

Middle schoolers, you should really spend President's Day with us! Using a GPS, you will search for a hidden container or geocache that provides insight to how our past presidents helped shape our natural resources. We'll even maneuver around a lake named after our third President! Students will learn how to work the provided GPS units and in turn, learn how to navigate the park. This program is all outdoors. Please dress for the weather. Meet at the Forest Park Hatchery Aquatic Education Area. (Reservations begin Jan 11.)



Columbia Bottom Conservation Area

801 Strodtman Road, St. Louis, MO 63138 • mdc.mo.gov/node/298



From I-270 north, take the Riverview Drive exit (last Missouri exit); go north 2.8 miles. Riverview Drive becomes Columbia Bottom Road at its intersection with Larimore Road. The entrance is on the right-hand side.

HOURS:

Building: Wednesday – Friday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Area: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset except authorized activities.

Programs are free. Call **314-877-6014** 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. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Valentines

Feb 6 • Saturday • 10 – 11:30 a.m.

(All ages)

Where does paper come from? How do you recycle paper? How does recycling paper help our forest? Explore the answers to these questions as we create valentines out of new and recycled paper. Learn how to take old paper and recycle it into something new! Please bring an old, clean bath towel (Reservations begin January 23)

Columbia Bottom Trading Post

Feb 15 • Monday • 10 – 11:30 a.m.

(Ages 10 and younger)

Be a great fur trader at the Columbia Bottom Trading Post! Capture “furbearers”, barter with the post staff, and learn about why trapping is important to Missouri. Enter the world of furbearers, trapping and bartering. (Reservations begin Feb 3, 2015.)



Sounds of Winter Adventure Hike

Feb 21 • Sunday • 5 – 6:30 p.m.

(Ages 7 and up)

“As the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen.” This old adage may be true, but life still stirs in late winter. The light of the bright silvery full Snow Moon sparkling across the frozen landscape beckons us. We will listen for coyotes howling, barred owls calling, and migrating waterfowl above. The crunch of the snow underfoot and the rattling of bare branches overhead add to the magic of our winter adventure. Meet at the Columbia Bottom Visitor Center. Dress for the weather. After a short walk, we will warm up with hot chocolate at the Visitor Center. (Reservations accepted Feb 3 thru 19.)

Birds of the Confluence, a Photo Display by Paul Moffett

Starting Feb 6, 2016

Paul’s premier photography exhibit, *Birds of the Confluence*, is a compilation of aviary admiration. His photos have been shared extensively on social media and serve as inspiration to reflect on the beauty and peace found in nature.

A graduate of Eastern Illinois University with degrees in zoology, chemistry, and medical technology; Paul recently rediscovered his passion for bird watching and photography after 45 years working in hospital laboratories.

The images displayed in *Birds of the Confluence* were primarily sourced from Columbia Bottom Conservation Area and Ted and Pat Jones Confluence Point State Park. Paul’s primary ornithological interests are warblers and hawks, particularly the Cooper’s hawk.

When Paul, a resident of Florissant Missouri for over 30 years, isn’t behind the camera, he and his wife, Jennifer, can be found riding their bicycles all over the United States, enjoying time with friends, and chasing after their yellow Labrador, Daisy.

“Birds are a miracle because they prove to us there is a finer, simpler state of being which we may strive to attain.”

-Douglas Coupland

August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area

2360 Hwy D, St. Charles, MO 63304 • mdc.mo.gov/node/300

Love for Nature

Feb 11 • Thursday • 6 – 8:30 p.m.

(Ages 12 and up)

Do you love nature? Don't forget to show it this Valentine's Day! Join us for an evening of discussion on current Missouri wildlife issues including chronic wasting disease, invasive carp, and white-nose syndrome. Learn what's being done to improve these issues and what you can do to help our great outdoors. Your new-found knowledge will inspire you to make witty valentine cards. We'll supply craft materials, you supply creativity! (Reservations begin Jan 29.)

Dresser Island Hike

Feb 13 • Saturday • 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

(Ages 12 and up)

Break out of your cabin fever! Discover Dresser Island, a winter wildlife haven. We will hike 3.5 miles along the Mississippi River in search of a variety of wildlife including pelicans, muskrats, deer and many others. Dresser Island Conservation Area is located near West Alton in St. Charles County. We will also participate in Cornell University's Great Backyard Bird Count as we hike this scenic trail. (Reservations begin Jan 29.)



From I-64/40 take Hwy 94 south to Hwy D; turn west on D for approximately two miles. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy D.

HOURS:

Building: Monday – Friday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Area: Daily: 4 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Programs are free. Call **636-441-4554** 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. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.



Orienteering: Emphasis on the Features of a Topographic Map

Feb 20 • Saturday • noon – 5 p.m.

(Ages 12 – 17 accompanied by an adult)

Are you physically fit and looking for a more strenuous and challenging off-trail experience? The opportunity of applying map interpretation to the land awaits you for a 4 to 6 mile off-trail trek in Weldon Spring CA. You'll work with our Naturalists to read waterways, ridges, and other landforms from a topo map. Together we'll find various landmarks, graveyards, and remnants of old homesteads in the rugged and steep woods of Weldon. This program is designed for those who have a working knowledge of an orienteering compass and desire more experience with reading a map. (Reservations begin Feb 1.)

Rockwoods Reservation

2751 Glencoe Road, Wildwood, MO 63038 • mdc.mo.gov/node/272



From I-44 take Hwy 109 north 4 miles to Woods Avenue; left on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road. From Manchester Road take Hwy 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, then immediately right on Glencoe Road.

HOURS:

Building: Monday–Friday: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Area: Sunrise to one-half hour after sunset except authorized activities.

Programs are free. Call **636-458-2236** 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. Interpretive services are available for those with hearing loss with 5 days notice.

Tales from the Sugar Bush

Feb 2 • Tuesday • 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
(Ages 3 – 5)

Join the naturalists for story time and exploration of the sugar bush. We'll learn about maple trees and how syrup is made. Everyone will get a taste of pure Rockwoods maple syrup. We hope to be outside, so please dress for the outdoors. (Registration begins Jan 19.)



Maple Sugar Festival

Feb 6 • Saturday • 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
(All ages)

It's maple sugar time! Experience conservation success and forest resources at their finest – and sweetest! Visit the Sugar Bush to see trees tapped. Boil sap down at the Three Kettle Station and Sugar Shack. Taste delicious syrup, sugar on snow taffy, and pure maple sugar. No reservations necessary. Parking will be available on-site and off-site via a shuttle bus.



After School Session: Maple Sugaring

Feb 25 • Thursday • 4 – 5:30 p.m.
(All Ages)

Did your child's school miss out on a Maple Sugar school field trip? No problem. Learn the history of maple sugaring, visit the sugar bush to collect sap, and learn to boil it down into syrup. Dress for the weather as the entire program is outdoors. A portion of the trail is not stroller accessible. (Reservations begin Feb 11.)

Winter Hiking in the Woods

Feb 27 • Saturday • 1 – 3:30 p.m.
(Ages 10 and up)

Break out of cabin fever to embark on a late winter hike into the open winter woods of Rockwoods Reservation for a new perspective of nature. We'll hike the 3.2 mile Lime Kiln Loop, starting in the lowland valley, to learn about the people that harvested lumber and rock to operate the Lime Kiln over 100 years ago. Then it's up the ridge for unique winter views into the continually changing forest in search of winter wildlife and signs of early spring. The trail is a natural surface with a couple of short, steep hills. (Reservations begin Feb 12.)

Homeschool Special: Maple Sugaring

Two separate sessions available:
Feb 12 • Friday • noon – 1:30 p.m.
or

Feb 18 • Thursday • noon – 1:30 p.m.
(All Ages)

Embark on a Missouri tradition. Learn the history of maple sugaring, visit the sugar bush to collect sap, and learn how to boil it down into syrup. Dress for the weather as the entire program is outdoors. A portion of the trail is not stroller accessible. (Reservations begin Jan 29.)