

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 84, ISSUE 12, DECEMBER 2023
SERVING NATURE & YOU



JOIN THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Do you know your birds well by sight and sound? Join the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count from Dec. 14 through Jan. 5, 2024, and add to a nationwide citizen science project! This early-winter bird census involves thousands of volunteers gathering data on winter bird populations. There are over 20 Christmas Bird Counts in Missouri alone.

To learn more, visit
tinyurl.com/ybropbvq



BIRDS NEED OUR HELP

North American bird populations are declining. Here's what you can do to help:

Plant native plants, shrubs, and trees.

Native plants attract native insects, which provide the best food for birds and their young.

Make windows safer.

To break up reflections and cut down on window strikes, install stickers, film, or screens to the outside of windows.

Be a citizen

scientist. Learn your birds by sight and sound, record sightings on eBird, or join monitoring efforts.

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White-tailed deer
Michael Layne,
via Flickr

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MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST



ON THE COVER

Cypress tree at sunrise.

 **JIAN XU**

Missouri Conservationist reader photo, submitted via Flickr

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mdc.mo.gov/conmag



Download this issue to your phone or tablet at mdc.mo.gov/mocon.



Inbox



Letters to the Editor

Submissions reflect readers' opinions and may be edited for length and clarity. Email Magazine@mdc.mo.gov or write to us:

MISSOURI
CONSERVATIONIST
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JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65102

BLUE JAYS

I opened the October issue, and I was delighted to find an article and photos about blue jays, my favorite bird [Blue Jays, Page 16].

Mark Forster
via email

HURRAY FOR BLUE JAYS

For nearly 70 years, I have labeled the blue jay as a villain among the bird population. After reading *Blue Jays* in the October issue, the villain has become the good guy.

Bob Allen Nixa

I have been a reader of the *Missouri Conservationist* for many years and have always been amazed at the photography of Noppadol Paothong. He is a master. I have been meaning to write to thank him for his work for a long time, but the October issue with the amazing pictures of blue jays finally got me to act.

William M. Fogarty Jr. Webster Groves

Your October issue was excellent. I especially enjoyed your article about blue jays, as it brought back a fond memory from when I was about 10 years old. A friend of mine and I discovered a nest that had fallen from a tree and in it was a juvenile blue jay. We picked it up and looked for a place to release it. At that moment, its mother came sweeping down upon us, screaming like mad and pecking us on the top of our heads. We ran for our lives. I'll always remember how dedicated and devoted that mother was to her offspring. It made quite an impression on me, and that was more than 80 years ago.

Marvin Fremerman Springfield

FOR THE LOVE OF BIRDS

I lived in Hawaii and always loved nature. My wife and I both have degrees in biology. One of my teachers from Hawaii visited me while I lived in Arizona, and her husband was so enthralled with seeing a Gambel's quail. We always thought they were just normal.

We have lived in the woods in Missouri for over 10 years now, and we still have such wonderful encounters with birds – I can't even list them here. My favorite recently is a pileated woodpecker that keeps ruining my Ford Escape's mirror at \$30 each.

David Aniuik via email

LET'S HEAR IT FOR SCIENCE

I love the *Nature Lab* articles. Even though there's science throughout the magazine, I really enjoy the in-depth tidbits provided by the *Nature Lab* articles. It's always nice to read about the hard work and scientific rigor that goes on behind the scenes at MDC.

I especially enjoyed the October issue's article on LHI, or Landscape Health Index [Page 4]. Thanks for keeping us engaged and informed.

Patrick Rebmann via email

Connect With Us!



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Have a Question for a Commissioner?

Send a note using our online contact form at mdc.mo.gov/commissioners.

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The Missouri Department of Conservation protects and manages the fish, forest, and wildlife of the state. We facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.



Want to see **your** photos in the *Missouri Conservationist*?

Share your photos on Flickr at [flickr.com/groups/mdcreaderphotos-2024](https://www.flickr.com/groups/mdcreaderphotos-2024) or email Readerphoto@mdc.mo.gov.



Each month, we select three reader photos to highlight and share on this page. This month, you'll find a larger selection of the best reader submitted photos from 2023 starting on Page 10. We can't wait to see what our readers capture next year!



Want another chance to see **your** photos next year?

→ We plan to feature more great reader photos in 2024. Use the submission methods above to send us your best year-round pictures of native Missouri wildlife, flora, natural scenery, and friends and family engaged in outdoor activities. Please include where the photo was taken and what it depicts.

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Up Front

with Sara Parker Pauley

✳️ Now at year's end, I tend to reflect more on the passage of time and memories made. With a glance in the rearview mirror, there is an innate proclivity to contemplate the highlights and perhaps lowlights of the previous year, before transitioning to the next. Thank goodness research suggests we remember pleasant memories longer than the unpleasant ones. As I look back on 2023, highlights include time with MDC team members doing incredible work to carry out our mission — from management efforts on grasslands and wetlands to our rivers and lakes to our myriad efforts with partners across the state.

These moments of time afield are treasured memories. And as I age, I also recommit efforts to live more intentionally in the present moment and to “encounter all the mysteries a moment brings,” as writer Ellen Bernstein suggests. And with this month's issue, we offer the second annual readers' photo essay (Page 10) when once again readers share amazing examples of how they've captured the mysteries a moment can bring in Missouri's great outdoors. I share my own captured moment of a field trip to the Kansas City area where I joined team members working with peregrine falcon chicks.

Thank goodness technology allows such images to be enjoyed by many, long after they're captured. And such images can be captured only if we are staying present in the moment. As author and spiritual teacher Thich Nhat Hanh encourages, “My destination is the here and now, the only time and place where true life is possible.”



SARA PARKER PAULEY, DIRECTOR
SARA.PAULEY@MDC.MO.GOV

Nature LAB at WORK

by Angie Daly Morfeld

The Missouri Department of Conservation team is diverse and dedicated to conserving, protecting, and improving our fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

Bob DiStefano RESEARCH SCIENTIST

✦ As a resource scientist who directs MDC's Statewide Crayfish Conservation Program, Bob DiStefano conducts research on aquatic species, issues, and problems. He specializes in crayfish, although he has done work on sportfish, such as wall-eye and smallmouth bass.

"I simply love streams. I have long felt that my 'calling' was to be a strong steward of this one small but important part of our world. That has always driven me to be the best that I can be and justify the trust that the state's public and professionals have placed in me."

A Typical Day

DiStefano says the days that make up his 37-year career with the department can be divided in two — spring/summer and fall/winter. Much of his spring and summer days are spent primarily working in rivers and streams, and recently in caves, conducting research on the importance of crayfish to Missouri's aquatic systems and on our several at-risk crayfish species. Fall and winter months are spent mostly analyzing data and writing reports and articles about research findings.



Bob DiStefano has spent many days of his 37-year career with MDC wading through rivers and streams to learn more about crayfish species.

Notable Projects

In the last several years of his career, DiStefano has worked on the Caney Mountain Cave Crayfish, the rarest crayfish in the U.S. and Missouri, known to exist in only one cave in the entire world.

"It has been very humbling, and I have felt very privileged to help ensure this species will continue to exist and call Missouri its home," DiStefano said.

In addition, DiStefano and his crew spent 12 years studying the interactions between sportfish and crayfish, and the ecology of those important prey — the crayfish — in the Jacks Fork and Big Piney rivers.

"Studies of that length and depth are rare; nobody else has looked so deeply at these important stream relationships, and so Missouri's work has set the bar and is studied and used all over the country," DiStefano said.

How You Can Help

Just get outside in our waterways. Play in them, learn about and ask questions about these fascinating and very important resources that contribute so much to our well-being and our society.

His Education

- Bachelor's degree, Eastern Kentucky University: fisheries management
- Master's degree, Virginia Tech University: fisheries and wildlife science

In Brief

News and updates from MDC



CATCH A RAINBOW

ENJOY WINTER TROUT FISHING THANKS TO MDC'S STOCKING EFFORTS ACROSS THE STATE

➔ MDC staff have stocked about 80,000 rainbow trout for winter trout fishing in more than 40 community lakes statewide. Many of these areas allow anglers to harvest trout as soon as they are stocked, while others are catch-and-release until Feb. 1. Find locations at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZF3.

The daily limit for catch-and-keep at these locations is four trout with no length limit. All Missouri residents over age 15 and under age 65 must have a fishing permit. All nonresidents over age 15 must have a fishing permit. To keep trout, all anglers of all ages must have a Missouri trout permit.

Buy permits from vendors around the state, online at mdc.mo.gov/buypermits, or through our free mobile app — MO Fishing — available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices.





DISCOVER NATURE WITH EAGLE DAYS

From December through February, Missouri's winter eagle watching is spectacular. Discover nature with MDC through Eagle Days events around the state or enjoy watching bald eagles on your own.

Because of Missouri's big rivers, many lakes, and abundant wetlands, the Show-Me state is one of the leading lower 48 states for bald eagle viewing. Each fall, thousands of these great birds migrate south from their nesting range in Canada and the Great Lakes states to hunt in Missouri. Eagles take up residence wherever they find open water and plentiful food. More than 2,000 bald eagles are typically reported in Missouri during winter.

Watch for eagles perched in large trees along the water's edge. Early in the morning you can see them flying and fishing. Be sure to dress for winter weather and don't forget cameras and binoculars.

MDC offers various Eagle Days events around the state. Some will include live eagle programs, exhibits, activities, videos, and guides with spotting scopes. Some require registration.

Can't make an MDC Eagle Days event? Here are some hot spots for winter eagle viewing:

- Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area on Route K, southwest of Columbia
- Lake of the Ozarks at Bagnell Dam Access, east of Bagnell
- Lock and Dam 20 in Canton
- Lock and Dam 24 at Clarksville
- Lock and Dam 25, east of Winfield
- Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge, south of Mound City
- Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, northwest of Puxico
- Moses Eagle Park in Stella
- Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, south of I-270 off Riverview Drive in St. Louis
- Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, east of West Alton
- Schell-Osage Conservation Area, north of El Dorado Springs
- Smithville Lake, north of Kansas City
- Stockton Lake, near Stockton
- Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge, south of Sumner
- Table Rock Lake, southwest of Branson
- Truman Reservoir, west of Warsaw.

For more information on Eagle Days events, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/Zt6.

Ask MDC

Got a Question for Ask MDC?

Send it to AskMDC@mdc.mo.gov
or call 573-522-4115, ext. 3848.

Q: What are some of the common markings of a native bobcat?

➔ Bobcats are yellowish- to reddish-brown cats with both black striped and spotted patterns on their bodies. They have long hind legs, short, broad faces, and short "bobbed" tails, which can be from 3½ to 8 inches long. The backs of their ears are black with a central light-colored spot and occasionally black tufts. Both sexes look alike. The pupils of their eyes are oval (vertically narrowed) in bright light but nearly round in dim light. Bobcats and their dens have a very strong odor.

Originally, bobcats ranged from southern Canada, throughout the United States, and most of Mexico. However, they were extirpated from much of the central United States by 1900 due to habitat loss. Through conservation efforts, bobcat numbers have rebounded in many areas of their distribution. In Missouri, bobcats can be found statewide, and their populations are stable.

When rabbits, moles, voles, and squirrels are in abundance, bobcats can inhabit many different areas, including areas near human populations without incident. Active both during the night and day, these felines



Bobcat

mark their territories with scat, but don't socialize much. Within their ranges, they can travel between 3 and 7 miles nightly.

Mating begins in December, and litters of two to three kittens are usually born in May and June. Weaning occurs after two months, and young stay with the female until fall or later. For more information, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4ir.

Q: I think I've seen woodcocks in downtown St. Louis. Is that possible in December? One appeared injured and the other seemed disoriented but successfully flew away.

➔ Yes, it is possible. American woodcocks migrate later compared to songbirds. Missouri's peak occurs in late October and November, but it's common



American woodcock

to see them in December, too. Like waterfowl moving south through the continental United States, woodcocks stop where food is available. American woodcocks forage for earthworms in young woodlands near water, in moist pastures, and forested floodplains. The tip of their long bill is flexible, and the bird uses it to probe soft ground for its prey.

During migration, MDC receives reports of exhausted American woodcocks and Wilson's snipes found in urban yards and

parking lots. Seeing a Wilson's snipe is more common. To see a comparison of the two species, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZpK.

Often, these birds just need a break and will continue their journey. Also, glass window strikes are common for birds, leaving them injured and disoriented. You can help these exhausted migratory birds by keeping cats indoors. The St. Louis Audubon Society is a good resource to learn how to keep birds safer in the St. Louis region. To learn more, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/Zpv.



Corporal Norman Steelman Jr.

AUDRAIN COUNTY
CONSERVATION AGENT

offers this month's

AGENT ADVICE

Hunting in December might best be described as the calm after the storm. We're past the rut, over opening day excitement, and the woods are a little less crowded. The cold weather has set in, but the deer are still moving. I like to get out there, sit in the quiet, and converse with nature. It puts you in a different mindset. There is nothing like tracking a deer in the snow. If you are going to enjoy this season of hunting, remember your permit and dress in layers. The weather can change quickly, so be mindful of that. Tell someone where you will be and carry your cell phone. For more information, consult the *2023 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet online at short.mdc.mo.gov/4eu.

What IS it?

Can you guess this month's natural wonder?

The answer is on Page 9.





Interested in exploring the outdoors, but unsure where to start? It's as easy as stepping out your door! Join host Jill Pritchard from the Missouri Department of Conservation as she explores everything nature has to offer — from health benefits and wildlife viewing, to outdoor recreation and unbelievable conservation stories. Subscribe and get your own *Nature Boost*!

Download the podcast at mdc.mo.gov/natureboost.



CRAIG'S PICANTE PECANS

Cooking Wild in Missouri author Bernadette Dryden first tasted Chef Craig Cyr's namesake pecans at a summer event in downtown Columbia. This combination of ingredients adds an herby-floral-spicy taste to your pecans. And this is a recipe you can play with — adjust the quantities to your taste, depending on the balance of salty, spicy, and sweet you prefer.

Makes 1 cup of spicy pecans

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1½ teaspoons fennel seeds, slightly crushed
- 1½ teaspoons fresh rosemary, coarsely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons lavender buds, coarsely chopped
- 1½ teaspoons red pepper, crushed
- Several pinches coarse sea salt, slightly crushed
- Several twists of black pepper from a pepper mill
- 2 tablespoons Missouri maple syrup
- 1 cup Missouri pecans

PREHEAT oven to 350 degrees. Melt butter in a small saucepan.

ADD fennel seeds and lightly toast, stirring. Add herbs and stir for a moment until they begin to release some of their oils. Add remaining ingredients and toss well.

POUR mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet and bake until toasted, about 5 to 8 minutes (depending upon the size of the nut). Stir several times during baking to make sure the pecans are well coated and that their grooves are stuffed with herby, spicy bits. Watch carefully to make sure they don't get too brown.

REMOVE from oven and spread out on a cool baking sheet. When cooled, store in an airtight container.



This recipe is from *Cooking Wild in Missouri* by Bernadette Dryden, available for \$16 at www.mdcnatureshop.com.



MDC WELCOMES NEW AGENTS

MDC congratulates 16 new conservation agents on their graduation in October from the 2023 Conservation Agent Training Academy.

The new agents spent six months of training, housed at the Highway Patrol Academy in Jefferson City. They received more than 1,200 hours of intense instruction both in and out of the classroom throughout the state. Agents received training in criminal investigations, defensive tactics, firearms qualifications, and technical instruction in fish, forest, and wildlife management. Training also included courses in legal studies, communications, conducting education programs, and first aid/first responder and CPR certification.

Upon successful completion of this training, agents are issued a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) license from the Missouri Department of Public Safety. The conservation agent training program is also certified by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship.

The 16 new agents joining the 200 existing MDC agents in protecting Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife include: Luke Armentrout, Claire Burch, Brandon Cotter, Austin Davis, Kaitlyn Davis, Zachary Durbin, Jobe Edwards, Juvenal Escobar, Ty Garrison, Kelsey Gillenwater, Breeann Hamblin, Sierra Page, Justin Ralph, Jacob Sieve, Dakota Sweeney, and Gil Turk.

The new agents have been assigned their counties. However, they will be involved in field training operations and special assignments while under the supervision of veteran agents during which they will acquire vital field experience.

For more information on MDC careers, visit jobs.mdc.mo.gov.



Sixteen new agents graduated from the 2023 Conservation Agent Training Academy in October. These new agents will now join existing MDC agents in protecting Missouri's fish, forest, and wildlife.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET HOLIDAY GIFTS FROM MDC

Holiday shopping is a breeze with MDC's online Nature Shop. For the nature lover on your list, we offer a variety of items, including the *Natural Events Calendar*, a variety of books, and more for all ages.

Purchase items through the MDC online Nature Shop at www.mdcnature-shop.com, by calling 877-521-8632, or at one of MDC's nature centers located across the state. Nature centers are located in Kirkwood, Cape Girardeau, Springfield, Kansas City, Blue Springs, and Jefferson City. Order early in anticipation of slower shipping deliveries. Applicable tax, shipping, and handling costs will apply.



WHAT IS IT? DEER ANTLERS

Antlers normally occur only in white-tailed bucks, or males. Bucks start growing antlers in April or May. During this growth period, the antlers are "in velvet," or covered by a plush, hairlike membrane. When antlers reach full size, bucks rub them on trees and shrubs to remove the velvet and polish them to shiny bone. By winter, the connection between the antler and the buck's skull weakens and the antlers drop off.

Eye of the Beholder

Readers find the beauty in nature through their lenses

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. An adage nearly as old as time itself, it is attributed to *Molly Bawn*, written by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford in 1878, to describe the subjectivity of beauty. Different people can look at the same thing and have wildly different opinions on its attractiveness, its worth, its beauty.

Photography is a lot like this. The *Missouri Conservationist* relies on our two award-winning photographers — David Stonner and Noppadol Paothong — and their photos of wildlife, flowers, scenic spots in Missouri, and much more to enhance the written word that graces our pages each month. We often turn the pages over to them completely, letting them tell an entire story through the lens of their cameras.

Yet, if we give these two photographers the same assignment, chances are they would come back with completely different photos. That's because there's an abundance of beauty in nature, and every moment offers a different opportunity to capture it.

To find out what you, the reader, find beautiful in nature, we decided to turn over the following pages to you for the second year in a row.

We receive so many good reader photo submissions — routinely well over 6,000 submissions each year — that we want to highlight some of the better ones beyond the three small photos we run every month (Page 3). The volume and excellence of those photos makes choosing the best a daunting task. With so many striking, beautiful, even breathtaking photos, making the cut requires one to have something extra. In many cases, that something extra is just a stellar, unusual, or unique moment. In some cases, it is a matter of capturing particularly striking light or a compelling angle. Humor is a factor in some choices.

We believe these photos show some of the beauty in nature. Of course, there is a lot more to discover. It just depends on the beholder.





Short-eared owl
Doug Wallace,
via MDC website

Sunset over lake

Chris Tharp,
via Flickr

Spring polypore mushroom

TRV,
via Flickr

Moss covered western painted turtle

Brad Wilson,
via Flickr

Fox kit

Susan Frey,
via MDC website

Spotted orb weaver

TRV,
via Flickr

Green sunfish

David Bice,
via email









Howling coyote

Craig Alexander,
via Flickr

Violet wood sorrel

Peter Catalano,
via Flickr

Bullfrog by floating leaf

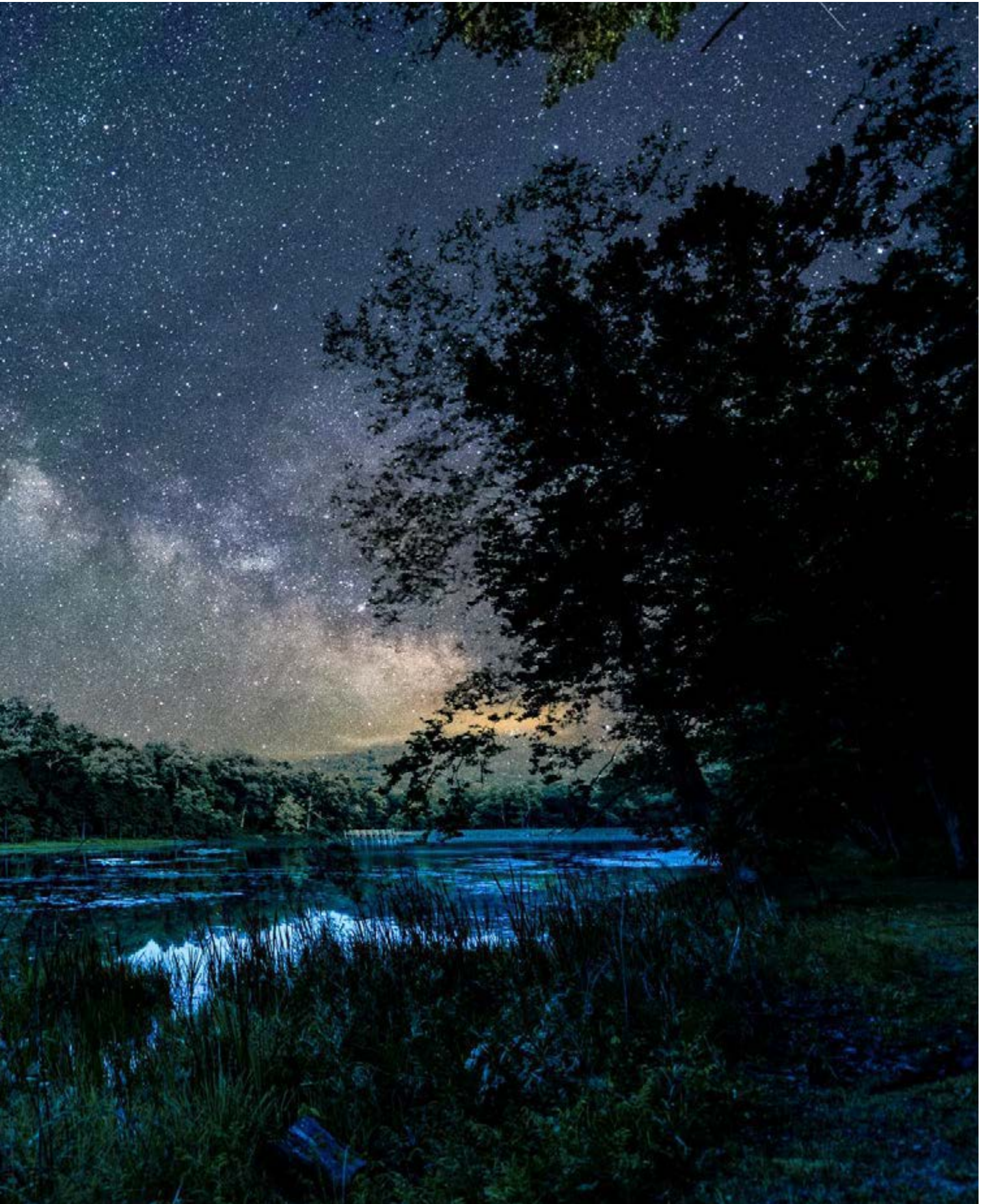
Garrett Frandson,
via MDC website

Blue-winged teal

Jian Xu,
via Flickr



**Night sky over McCormack Lake,
Mark Twain National Forest**
Ben Caruthers,
via Flickr



Opossum in tree cavity

Joy Hoyt,
via email

Green metallic sweat bee

Robin Lynn Mayer,
via MDC website

Prairie lizard

Susan Smith Kline,
via email

Western cottonmouth

Smashtonlee05,
via Flickr

Sedge wren

Jack Backs,
via Flickr









Sandhill cranes

Dan Staples,
via email

Muskrat

Stephen Bogue,
via Flickr

Woollen breeches

Kathy Bildner,
via Flickr

White-tailed deer

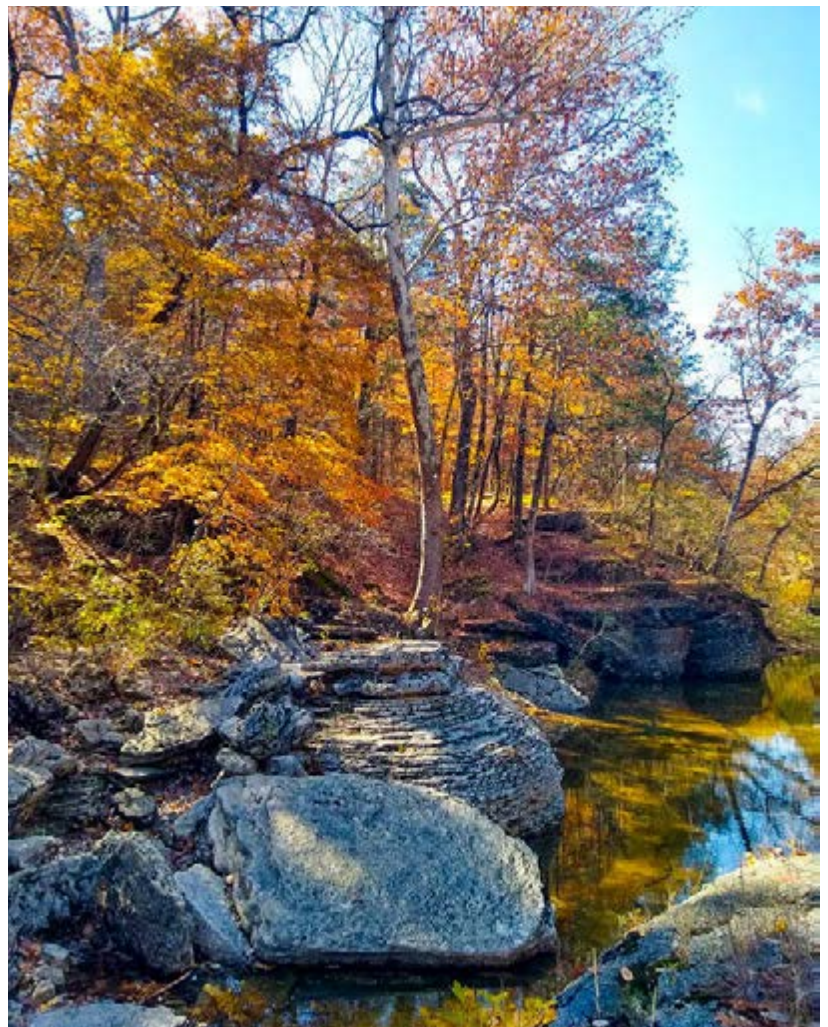
Rob Chance,
via Flickr

Three-toed box turtle

Angelique McVey,
via Flickr

**Hercules Glades
Wilderness Area**

Mike and Sarah Scott,
via email







Jumping spider
Christian Gott,
via Flickr



Prowling coyote

Kim Starostki,
via MDC website

Smithville Lake

Kevin Henderson,
via Flickr

Bald eagle and Canada goose

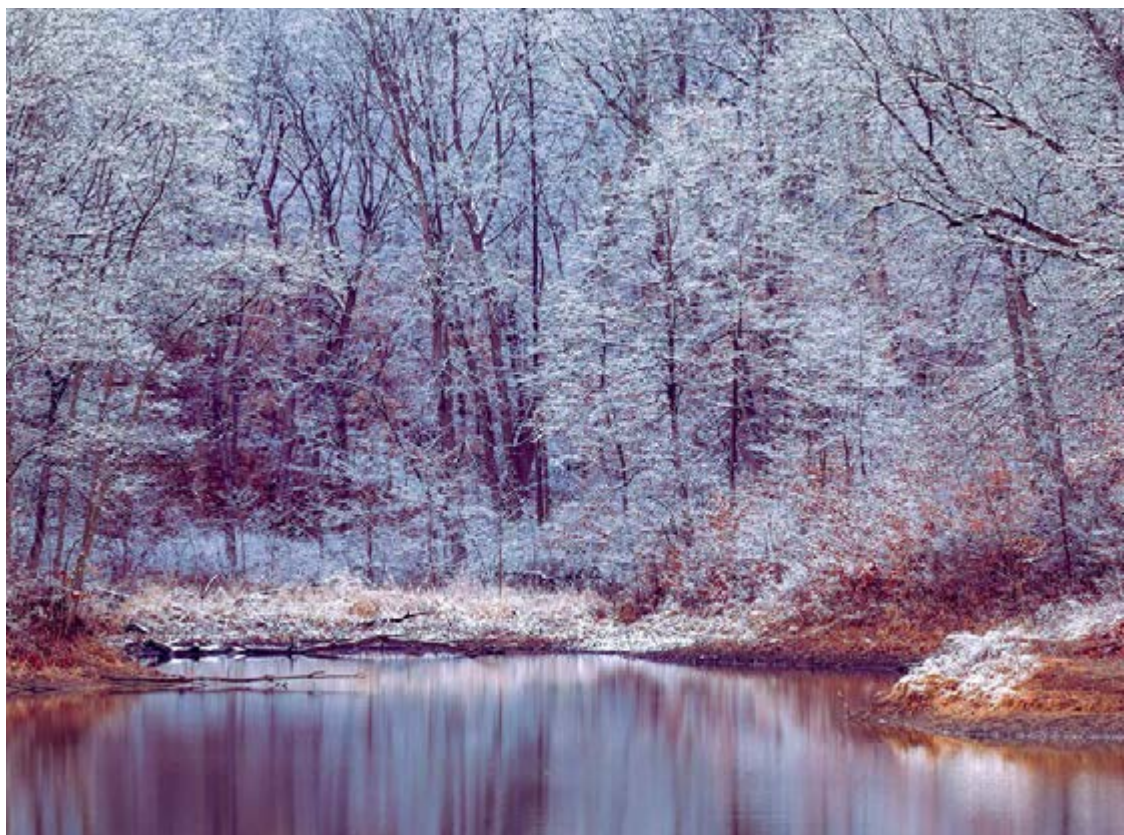
Mark Duane Curtis,
via MDC website

Ostrich fern

Lily Sohn,
via Flickr

Juvenile red- shouldered hawk

Jian Xu,
via Flickr









River otter

Dan Staples,
via email

**Red admiral
on hairy
vetch**

Donnie Dryden,
via Flickr

**Blue dasher
dragonfly**

Lisa Daniels,
via Flickr

**Mina Sauk
Falls**

Steven Bender,
via MDC website

**Northern
flicker**

Bebe Wanders,
via Flickr

Get Outside

in DECEMBER →



Ways to connect with nature

VIRTUAL

Virtual Hike: The Sights & Sounds of Powder Valley

Tuesday • Dec. 12 • 5-5:30 p.m.

Online only

Registration required by Dec. 12. Call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZcN.

All ages

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center (CNC) is a natural oasis nestled within 112 acres of oak hickory forest near urban St. Louis. Join MDC Naturalist Andy Klingensmith for a virtual hike as we explore and discover the natural wonders found throughout this unique conservation area. This program will touch on a range of ecology topics to deepen our appreciation of Missouri's natural resources. Topics include plant and animal ID, natural history, ecological management, and conservation philosophy. Whether you're a regular to Powder Valley or someone looking for new hiking trails, join us as we discover the sights and sounds of Powder Valley CNC.



Time to Fish

MDC stocks rainbow trout in certain lakes and streams in winter, beginning in November. Dust off those fishing poles and head to your nearest lake. For winter trout locations near you, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZF3.

A Butterfly in Winter?

Your eyes are not playing tricks on you — you just may be seeing a butterfly in the dead of winter. Mourning cloak butterflies overwinter as adults and may be seen flying on warm winter days. They need a body temperature of about 65 degrees to fly. Most butterflies bask in sunlight to raise their body temperature, but mourning cloaks can truly shiver, rapidly contracting muscles with only minimal wing movement. This can raise their temperature 15–20 degrees in just a few minutes.



Mourning cloak

Natural Events to See This Month

Here's what's going on in the natural world.



Beavers swim under the ice.



Pickerel frogs overwinter in caves.



Gray squirrels mate.

Holiday Decorating

Add some Missouri nature to your holiday decorating this year! Eastern red cedar is a great choice as greenery for outdoor holiday decorating. It is abundant, it has a beautiful natural juniper scent, and boughs of female trees are decorated with blue, berrylike fruits.

Head to the Water

If you like to birdwatch, winter is truly your season, and the waterfront is the place to be. Missouri is blessed with many wetlands, lakes, ponds, and rivers where you can go with your binoculars and a field guide and watch a variety of winged animals.

Considered critically imperiled in Missouri, trumpeter swans are a rare winter resident at marshes, lakes, and rivers. They are a breathtaking sight to see.

Look for seagulls along the Mississippi and other large rivers and lakes from December through February.

Winter is a good time to look for bald eagles. The majestic bald eagle forages for fish and carrion near lakes, rivers, and marshes during the winter. Their return to the Lower 48 is a conservation success story.



VIRTUAL

Wild Game Prep

Saturday • Dec. 9 • 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Online only

Registration required by Dec. 8. Call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZqU.

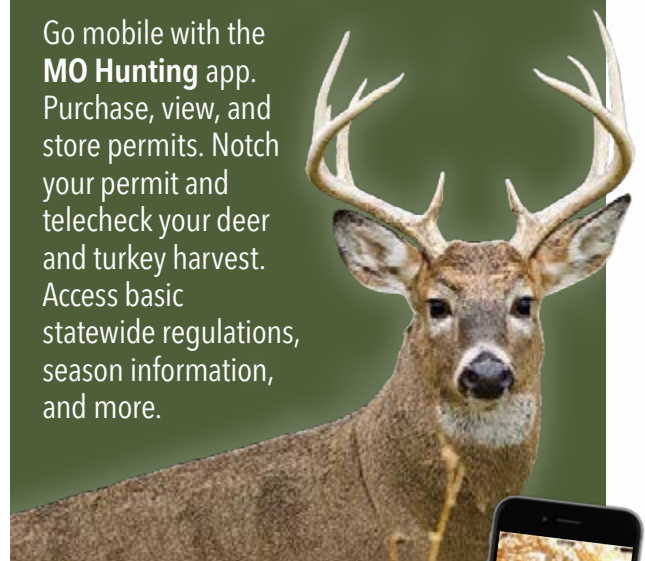
All ages

Join us to learn about cooking all sorts of wild game, including rabbit, squirrel, deer, and turkey. We will be looking at how to prepare good meals from different game animals. We will also share some recipes that will make your mouth water. Feel free to have your favorite wild game recipe to share.



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Places to Go

KANSAS CITY REGION

The Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center

A taste of Missouri in the heart of KC

by Larry Archer

✳ Designed as an outdoor oasis in an urban setting, Kansas City's The Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center (CDC) also has strong ties to historic figures who influenced the area centuries apart.

Located on nearly 10 acres, the 34,000-square-foot visitor center features a wall-sized mural depicting the area in the time of Lewis and Clark, according to Gorman CDC Manager Stacey Davis.

"And we have a half-sized keel boat replica of what they would have gone up and down river in," Davis said.

And while the center has a Lewis and Clark theme, it's named after a pioneer of another sort.

"Anita B. Gorman was the first female conservation commissioner," she said. "She was also heavily involved in the KC Parks Board, but her real goal was a nature center that served the people who rarely leave the sidewalk, people who were in the heart of the city."

The center's nearly one-half mile of trails takes visitors through a variety of habitats, she said.

"We've got a mini forest, pond, prairies," she said. "We've got all the main Missouri habitats here, just mini — you get a taste of Missouri right in the heart of KC."



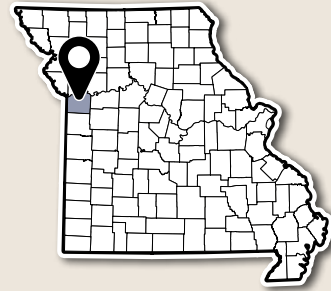
"Besides getting to see the snakes and turtles and frogs that are on display, we also have the wildlife viewing courtyard, so visitors can sit inside and watch birds at the feeders, squirrels, and rabbits."

—The Anita B. Gorman CDC Manager
Stacey Davis

NORPADOL PAOTHONG



A flock of Canada geese make themselves at home at The Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center's one-half acre pond.



THE ANITA B. GORMAN CONSERVATION DISCOVERY CENTER

consists of 9.7 acres in Kansas City, southwest of Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard and Troost Avenue.

From Hwy. 71, follow road signs from Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard exit (if coming from the north) or Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard exit (if coming from the south). From I-70, take Van Brunt south. It will turn into Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard/47th Street as it bends to the west.

Continue west, passing under Hwy. 71, then turn south on Troost Avenue to the area. From I-70, take Van Brunt Boulevard exit. Turn left and continue for 5 miles (road name will change to Emanuel Cleaver II Boulevard) to Troost Avenue and turn left.

39.0399, -94.5732

short.mdc.mo.gov/Z4M 816-759-7300

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT



Birdwatching Included in the Great Missouri Birding Trail (short.mdc.mo.gov/ZGZ). The eBird list of birds recorded at The Anita B. Gorman CDC is available at short.mdc.mo.gov/Z4d.



Trails Nature trails totaling nearly one-half mile.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU VISIT



Cooper's hawk



Northern mockingbird



Northern cardinal



Mallard



Eastern Cottontail

Sylvilagus floridanus

Status

Common

Size

Length: 14-19 inches; weight: 2-3¼ pounds

Distribution

Statewide



Did You Know?

Cottontails sometimes damage the edges of crop fields, and in winter when other foods are scarce, they may damage orchard or ornamental trees. However, rabbits constitute an important link in the food chain of life by converting plant food into animal matter.

The eastern cottontail is a medium-sized rabbit with long ears, large hind legs, shorter front legs, a short fluffy tail, and soft fur. Eastern cottontails prefer open brushy or forest-border cover. While they may venture into the open, they usually don't go far from brushy or dense weedy cover. Providing good habitat is the key to increasing cottontail populations.

FOODS

Rabbits feed almost entirely on plants. Their three favorite foods are bluegrass, wheat, and white clover. Other choice foods are red clover, Korean lespedeza, small and common crabgrass, timothy, and common chess. They also relish certain sedges, forbs, and cultivated plants. To survive during heavy snow cover, they eat buds, twigs, bark, and sprouts of shrubs, vines, and trees.

LIFE CYCLE

Breeding season is from mid-February through September. A female can produce eight litters per year, with one to nine young per litter. Young leave the nest 13-16 days after birth, and most breed for the first time in the spring following their birth. Despite the large number of young produced each year, only a very few survive to breed. Some 44 percent of newborn cottontails die during their first month of life, and only 20 to 25 percent live to one full year.

ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIONS

Cottontails have been declining since 1955 due to habitat loss. Land use changes that affect plant composition on pastures and reduce the availability of brushy fence rows and winter forage have contributed to this decline.

Outdoor Calendar

❖ MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION ❖

Lifetime permits make great gifts!

For more information, call 573-522-0107 or email lifetime.permit@mdc.mo.gov.

FISHING

Black Bass

Impounded waters and non-Ozark streams:
Open all year

Most streams south of the Missouri River:

- ▶ Catch-and-Keep:
May 27, 2023–Feb. 29, 2024

Nongame Fish Giggling

Streams and impounded waters,
sunrise to midnight:
Sept. 15, 2023–Feb. 15, 2024

Paddlefish

On the Mississippi River:
Sept. 15–Dec. 15, 2023
March 15–May 15, 2024

Trout Parks

During the catch-and-release season,
state trout parks (except Maramec Spring
Park) are open only Friday–Monday.

Catch-and-Release:

Nov. 10, 2023–Feb. 12, 2024

TRAPPING

Badger, Gray Fox, Red Fox

Nov. 15, 2023–Jan. 31, 2024

Beaver, Nutria

Nov. 15, 2023–March 31, 2024

Bobcat, Coyote, Mink, Muskrat, Opossum, Raccoon, River Otter, Striped Skunk

Nov. 15, 2023–Feb. 29, 2024

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods, and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zib. Current hunting, trapping, and fishing regulation booklets are available from local permit vendors or online at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZf.

HUNTING

Badger, Gray Fox, Red Fox

Nov. 15, 2023–Jan. 31, 2024

Bobcat, Opossum, Raccoon, Striped Skunk

Nov. 15, 2023–Feb. 29, 2024

Coyote

Restrictions apply during April, spring turkey
season, and firearms deer season.

Open all year

Crows

Nov. 1, 2023–March 3, 2024

Deer

Archery:

Nov. 22, 2023–Jan. 15, 2024

Firearms:

- ▶ Late Antlerless Portion (open areas only):
Dec. 2–10, 2023
- ▶ Alternative Methods Portion:
Dec. 23, 2023–Jan. 2, 2024

Elk*

Only hunters selected through a random drawing
may participate in this hunting season.

Firearms:

Dec. 9–17, 2023

Groundhog (Woodchuck)

May 8–Dec. 15, 2023

Pheasant

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2023–Jan. 15, 2024

Quail

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2023–Jan. 15, 2024

Rabbits

Oct. 1, 2023–Feb. 15, 2024

Squirrels

May 27, 2023–Feb. 15, 2024

Turkey

Archery:

Nov. 22, 2023–Jan. 15, 2024

Waterfowl

See the Migratory Bird and Waterfowl
Hunting Digest or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZx
for more information.

Wilson's (Common) Snipe

Sept. 1–Dec. 16, 2023



ILLUSTRATION: MARK RAITHEL



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📷 by **David Stonner**

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