Night partridge, bog sucker, Labrador twister, timberdoodle... No matter what you call it, the American woodcock is truly an unique Missouri species.

This plump, goofy-looking shorebird can be found in young forests and overgrown fields throughout Missouri. Other shorebirds, birds in the plover and sandpiper families, prefer shorelines, mud flats, and other open habitats. A woodcock’s long, flexible-tipped bill is used for probing forest soils in search of its favorite food, earthworms, while its large eyes, placed near the back and top of its head, watch for predators. Due to their superb camouflage, woodcocks are incredibly difficult to spot. The best time to witness these exceptional creatures is at dusk during their spring migration, which peaks in March.

As the sun begins to set, a male woodcock prepares for his courtship display. First, he must select a stage; a small opening in the forest thicket. Entering the stage, he begins serenading his audience with a nasally song. “Peent... Peent... Peent!” After setting the mood with his vocals, it is time to dance. His “sky dance” commences by leaping from the stage, taking flight. Specialized feathers on the end of his wings produce a musical twittering sound as he flies in an ever widening spiral, higher, and higher. Upon reaching the peak of his flight, which can be over 300 feet in the air, he begins an erratic plummet back to the ground. Sailing downward, he produces a chirping noise before landing back on his stage. If an onlooking female has not presented herself, he begins the display all over again.

Although woodcocks do not perform to entertain us, their amazing ritual is still available to enjoy. Take time this spring to visit a conservation area near you to observe the American woodcock and their “sky dance.”

—Austin Lambert
Naturalist
Volunteer News
Helping you connect with nature.

Thank You Robin!

Robin Grumm, Assistant Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, with volunteers in attendance for their monthly meeting.

Leaving an Indelible Mark

We wish a fond farewell to Robin Grumm, Assistant Manager and Volunteer Coordinator at Runge Conservation Nature Center. Robin is retiring after more than 20 years with the Runge Team. Below are a few milestones from Robin’s career at Runge.

- Volunteer – 1 year
- Part-time Naturalist – 6+ years
- Naturalist – 7 years
- Assistant Manager/Volunteer Coordinator – 9 years
- Presented over 1,000 nature programs
- Trained 4 volunteer classes
- Oversaw more than 77,000 hours of volunteer time

We will dearly miss our mentor, colleague, and friend but look forward to seeing her with her grandchildren at future Runge programs. Enjoy your retirement, Robin!

Milestones

100 hours – Jason Presley
200 hours – Amy Cook
400 hours – Travis Cain
500 hours – Michaela Kirk
- Paul Winn
- Lana Wong
1,000 hours – Gabby Lehmut

Thank You!
Jane Bick Mudd lives on a farm outside of Fulton, Missouri with her husband Tom. She has three grown children and is an Assistant Professor of Art at William Woods University in Fulton. She works in several medias and has a body of work that reflects many different themes including Missouri’s outdoors. The subject of her painting or project is usually dictated by her daily experiences and exposures. Most of her paintings are oils. She has done solo shows throughout mid-Missouri and has won numerous awards in juried exhibits.

**3D Exhibit**

**Lured by Angling Ingenuity**
by Dean Murphy

Learn how Missourians combine their love of fishing with invention in a new exhibit about the state’s angling industry. Made in the central Missouri region and statewide, examples of baits, lures, and other equipment are a fascinating look at the state’s passion for fishing. Dean A. Murphy spent more than 30 years searching out Missouri-made fishing equipment. His collection includes more than 2,000 pieces of tackle, donated to the Department of Conservation. View a sampling of his collection at Runge.

**West Wing Exhibit**

**Realism Revisited**
by Larry Carver

Larry is a self-taught artist, and lifelong resident of Cole County. Rural landscape settings and reflective Americana is apparent in many of his paintings. Larry often paints of days gone by in a setting of rustic rural architecture or of flora and fauna capturing mood and color in a narrative scene. His love of the outdoors show up in many of his landscapes where the sky often takes center stage. Working primarily in acrylics, Larry has worked in pointillism pen and ink and watercolor.
March Programs
Get outdoors and experience what nature has provided for you.

Registration begins Wednesday, March 1st for the MARCH programs. Call 573-526-5544 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.

Little Ones

Drip and Drop
Rain, rain, go away, come back again another day! Who needs it? We all do! This month, we will have fun playing with rain and maybe even in the rain. It will be a damp, but exciting time.

Babes in the Woods
March 10 • Friday • 10–11 AM
March 28 • Tuesday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (ages 0-2 years)

Little Acorns
March 9 • Thursday • 10–11 AM
March 29 • Wednesday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (ages 3-6 years)

Little Acorns PLUS
March 14 • Tuesday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (For this program, you need one child in the 0-2 age range AND one child in the 3-6 age range.)

Kids for Conservation

Timberdoodle Tour
March 17 • Friday • 6:30–8:30 PM
Registration required. (ages 7-12 years)
What is small, plump, and brown, has large eyes, and a long bill? A timberdoodle, also known as an American woodcock. Join Missouri Department of Conservation Naturalists as we learn about woodcocks and attempt to view their twilight “sky dance.”

Adults

River Bluff Audubon Society: Purple Martins
March 9 • Thursday • 6:30–7:30 PM
No registration required.
John Miller, volunteer with the Purple Martin Conservation Association, will share the history of the bond between martins and humans, the best housing and placement, and steps to assure a colony returns each year and grows. He will also provide information about their migration.

Midweek Trekkers
March 15 • Wednesday • 8 AM–5 PM
Registration required.
Join our volunteer-led program designed to provide opportunities for people to hike Missouri trails and learn about our plants, animals, and natural communities. Meet at the nature center and drive to Cole Creek Federal Land, in Laclede County, and hike one or two of the best trails. Some transportation is provided, but carpooling may be necessary. Bring water, wear comfortable hiking shoes, and come dressed for the weather. Trail Length: 6 miles. Terrain: Moderate inclines and/or occasional rocks/roots. Notes: Bring lunch.

What’s Going On?
Programs and activities for all ages

Saturday 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required (all ages)
The Runge Nature Center offers exploratory tables, activities, and/or crafts every Saturday throughout the year. Stop in to see what adventure awaits you during our “What’s Going On?” at the nature center.
March Programs
Get outdoors and experience what nature is sharing with you.

Nature’s Needlers: Branching Out
March 16 • Thursday • 10:30 AM–Noon OR 6–7:30 PM
Registration required.
Some of the earliest spring trees to bloom in the forest are the serviceberry trees followed by the dogwoods. Learn more about these species as we create the third block in our series, “Branching Out!”

Color Your Natural World
March 16 • Thursday • 1:30–2:30 PM
Registration required.
Join us for a coloring program that features springtime bird behavior. Participants may color illustrations of some special Missouri birds while leaders talk about the birds’ courtships. Use our supplies or bring your own to color and relax.

The Hikers
March 18 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM
Registration required.
Join our volunteer-led program designed to provide opportunities for people to hike Missouri trails and learn about our plants, animals, and natural communities. Meet at the nature center and drive to Castlewood State Park, in St. Louis County, and hike the Grotpeiser and Lone Wolf trails. Some transportation is provided, but carpooling may be necessary. Bring water, wear comfortable hiking shoes, and come dressed for the weather. Trail Length: 5.5 miles. Terrain: Moderate inclines and/or occasional rocks/roots. Notes: Bring lunch.

Poetry Reading
March 21 • Tuesday • 2–3 PM
Registration required.
Do you find poetry in pollywogs and prairies? Missouri’s warming spring sun is shining on nature poems, and we are talking about some of them. From sentimental sonnets to vivacious verses, written by yourself or someone else, you’re invited to bring and share.

All Ages

Grow Native! Plant Sale at Runge
March 25 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required.
Welcome to our annual native plant sale! It’s time to purchase and plant beautiful and hardy flowers, shrubs, and trees for your home or business. The sale is a partnership with the Grow Native! program through the Missouri Prairie Foundation. Vendors are available to sell and provide you with answers to your native planting questions. More details on back page.

What’s Going On?
Harbingers of Spring
March 11 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required.
A harbinger is a sign of things to come. Woodcocks, spring peepers, and even a flower called Harbinger-of-Spring are all signs of spring. Explore some of nature’s harbingers with exploration tables, activities, and crafts.

Mixed Age Groups

Adventure Birding: A Grand Journey to Grand Pass Conservation Area
March 11 • Saturday • 7 AM–4 PM
Registration required. (ages 11 years old and older)
This 5,301-acre wetland birding paradise on the Missouri River near Marshall, Missouri is designated as one of the state’s “Watchable Wildlife” sites, and is listed by the Audubon Society as an “Important Bird Area.” An IBA is an area crucial for bird populations; in this case, because it is on the Central Flyway, it is managed to support huge flocks of migratory birds. Bring a lunch, water, and binoculars or borrow a pair of ours. Meet at Runge. Transportation provided.

Firearms Safety for Youth Hunting
March 18 • Saturday • 9:30–11:30 AM
Registration required. (ages 6–10 years old and accompanied by an adult)
Although not a hunter education course, this program can help you make sure your youth are safe during the hunting season. We’ll cover the commandments of firearm safety, safe methods for carrying a firearm, and tree stand safety.

Intro to Turkey Hunting
March 18 • Saturday • 1–4 PM
Registration required. (ages 8 years and older, children accompanied by an adult)
Get ready for spring turkey season. Learn about hunting methods, clothing, scouting, and wild turkey biology.

Half-Day Discovery Hike
March 25 • Saturday • 8 AM–Noon
Registration required. (ages 11 years old and older, children accompanied by an adult)
Join us this month as we travel to New Bloomfield to hike about 3 miles on the Cedar Creek Trail, starting at the Dry Fork campsite. The terrain varies from woods to fields so wear your sturdy shoes or boots, especially if it is wet! Meet at Runge. Transportation provided.

Did You Know?
American woodcock chicks are precocial, meaning they are able to leave the nest within a few hours after hatching.
April Programs
Get outdoors and experience what nature has provided for you.

Registration begins Saturday, April 1st, for the APRIL programs.
Call 573-526-5544 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.

Little Ones

Peep, Peep, Peepers
It’s a zoo in the goo of our nature center ponds! We’ll search for those little green monsters (frogs) and look at their fascinating life cycle. It’s a “Hoppy” time!

Babes in the Woods
April 7 • Friday • 10–11 AM
April 27 • Thursday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (ages 0-2 years)

Little Acorns
April 13 • Thursday • 10–11 AM
April 26 • Wednesday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (ages 3-6 years)

Little Acorns PLUS
April 19 • Wednesday • 10–11 AM
Registration required. (For this program, you need one child in the 0-2 age range AND one child in the 3-6 age range.)

Teens for Conservation

Spring Sunset Symphony
April 7 • Friday • 6–9:30 PM
Registration required. (ages 13-17 years)
Humans are not the only creatures that can create music. Discover what furry, feathery, and slimy animals are part of Missouri’s Spring Sunset Symphony. We will then venture out to Scrivner Road Conservation Area to witness this musical spectacle. Please bring your own water bottle and flashlight. Wearing rubber boots is highly encouraged; please come dressed for the weather. Snacks will be provided. A permission form is required and can be picked up at the nature center.

Did You Know?
From the day the woodcock hatches, chicks learn to “freeze” when threatened or in response to hearing the hen’s alarm call. During the first few days, the hen broods her chicks frequently, especially during inclement weather.

Adults

Design with Nature in Mind: Water Coloring
April 8 • Saturday • 9:30 AM–Noon OR 1–3:30 PM
Registration required. (Women)
The three-toed box turtle will be the featured critter as you try your hand at water-coloring painting. Leaders will take you through this unique way of painting and each participant will go home with one handmade note card.

The Hikers
April 15 • Saturday • 8 AM–5 PM
Registration required.
Join our volunteer-led program designed to provide opportunities to hike Missouri trails and learn about our plants, animals, and natural communities. Meet at the nature center and drive to Spring Creek Gap Conservation Area, Maries County, to hike and explore the area. Some transportation is provided, but carpooling may be necessary. Bring water, wear comfortable hiking shoes, and come dressed for the weather. Trail Length: 5 miles. Terrain: Moderate inclines and/or occasional rocks/roots.
Notes: Bring lunch.

Midweek Trekkers
April 19 • Wednesday • 8 AM–5 PM
Registration required.
Join our volunteer-led program designed to provide opportunities for people to hike Missouri trails and learn about our plants, animals, and natural communities. Meet at the nature center, drive to Ha Ha Tonka State Park, in Camden County, and explore the area. Some transportation is provided, but carpooling may be necessary. Bring water, wear comfortable hiking shoes, and come dressed for the weather. Trail Length: 5 miles. Terrain: Moderate inclines and/or occasional rocks/roots.
Notes: Bring lunch.

Color Your Natural World
April 19 • Wednesday • 1:30–2:30 PM
Registration required.
Explore the excitement of shorebirds returning to Missouri. About 35 species of birds that scurry along the shore looking for food will migrate into Missouri in the spring. We will discuss them as we color sheets of various birds. Use our supplies or bring your own to color and unwind.

Nature’s Needlers: Branching Out
April 20 • Thursday • 10:30 AM–Noon OR 6–7:30 PM
Registration required.
Want to attract more butterflies to your garden? The spicebush is the host plant for the spicebush swallowtail butterfly, the subject of our April block. Find out more about this fragrant shrub and share tips and tricks with other quilters. Both beginner and experienced quilters are welcome.
April Programs
Get outdoors and experience what nature has provided for you.

All Ages

What’s Going On? Amazing Amphibians
April 8 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required.
Amphibians (frogs, toads, and salamanders) need water to start their life. And what an AMAZING life they lead! Meet a few of our Runge amphibians and observe their life cycle through tabletop exhibits, activities, and outdoor pond exploration stations.

What’s Going On? Wonderful Wildflowers
April 22 • Saturday • 10 AM–2 PM
No registration required.
This time of the year is the perfect time to get outside and enjoy the natural beauty Missouri has to offer. Come visit the nature center and learn all about Missouri’s native wildflowers with activities, crafts, and even a Wildflower Walk.

Mixed Age Groups

Adventure Birding:
A “Birds and Blooms” Trek
April 8 • Saturday • 7 AM–4 PM
Registration required (ages 11 years and older, children accompanied by an adult)
Back by popular demand. Clifty Creek Conservation Area, on the Great Missouri Birding Trail, is a favorite hot spot for many birders. There will be spring wildflowers, migrant birds, and maybe some critters, too. Join us and be prepared to be amazed! Bring a lunch, water, snacks, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Wear sturdy shoes, dress for the weather, and bring your binoculars. Meet at Runge. Transportation provided.

Half-Day Discovery Hike
April 22 • Saturday • 8 AM–Noon
Registration required (ages 8 years and older, children accompanied by an adult)
This month, we will enjoy the sights and sounds of spring at Whetstone Creek Natural Area near Millersburg. Walking along Whetstone Creek, we hope to see blooming trees and flowers, and perhaps even a morel or two! The hike will be approximately 2 1/2 miles, and may be wet, so please wear comfortable hiking shoes. Meet at Runge. Transportation provided.

Did You Know?
Woodcock primarily feed in early evening and just before dawn. Because they have a quick digestive system, an adult woodcock may eat its weight in worms every day.

Scout Packs
Get outside and explore.

Cub Scout Packs
Runge Conservation Nature Center is happy to offer assistance in meeting requirements for some nature-related scout badges. We have a variety of scout packs available with activities and information to assist you in your efforts. Please contact Becky at 573-526-5544 ext. 3408 for more information or to reserve one of the following packs.

Tiger Adventure Pack: Backyard Jungle/Tigers in the Wild
Bear Adventure Pack: Fur, Feathers, and Ferns
Wolf Adventure Pack: Paws on the Path
Webelos Adventure Pack: Into the Woods/Walkabout
Webelos Adventure Pack: Into the Wild

Gift Shop...
20% Off Featured item

Tried and True Missouri Native Plants
$4.80 plus tax*

*The Heritage Card does not apply.
Welcome to our 12th annual plant sale! It’s time to purchase and plant beautiful and hardy flowers, shrubs, and trees for your home or business. The sale is a partnership with the Grow Native! program through the Missouri Prairie Foundation. Displays of plant groupings—including kinds and numbers of plants, and plant spacing—to create gardens to support monarch butterflies, as well as plants that serve as host for other beautiful and beneficial insects, will be available to help gardeners select plants.

**Vendors:** (vendors that are highlighted are taking pre orders.)

- **Forrest Keeling** - Elsberry (info@fknursery.com)
  Specialty: Trees and Shrubs

- **Missouri Wildflowers Nursery** - Jefferson City 573.496.3492

- **Papillon Perennials** - Wildwood 636.273.9688

- **Gaylena’s Garden** - Fulton 573.694.3228

- **Longfellows** - Centertown 573.584.9611 (ask for Stacey Davis)

- **SunRise Gardens, LLC** - Columbia

- **Prairie Hill Farm** - Auxvasse

**Ask the Native Plant Expert:**

**Dennis Figg** - owner of Greener Gardens

- Everyone has questions about native plants. Dennis will be available to help with native plant identification, bring photos or plant parts. He will offer guidance about growing native plants and including them in your landscape plans.

**Nature in the Arts:**

**Ann Grotjan** - potter and sculptor

- Ann uses nature as her inspiration for decorating much of her pottery. She will be demonstrating some of these techniques. Merchandise will be available for purchase.

Vendors will donate a portion of their sale proceeds to support the Missouri Prairie Foundations’ Grow Native! program.