



The Fledgling

Fall, 2026
Celebrating 20 Years!

The official newsletter of the Missouri Bluebird Society



| Photo by Jim Rathert,
with permission from MDC

Letter From the President:

Dear MOBS members,

If you have not yet seen the pics from MOBS 20th Anniversary conference on our Facebook page- go there now and take a look! **Great job on that webmaster, Ann.**

MOBS appreciates everyone who attended and I especially want to thank our conference hosts, the Ivan Ray Miller family. Every aspect of everything they prepared was so beautiful, personal, educational and just very special.

I also want to thank the presenters for their educational programs. Education is officially one of the main goals of the Missouri Bluebird Society. Our presenters this year did our organization proud in this respect! And of course, the MOBS Board of Directors and committee chairs are essential to our conferences- thank you friends for your hard work again.

Congratulations to new Board Member Jack Corrigan! He was elected at the business meeting at the conference. Jack has been a long time MOBS member and supporter. He is the Nest Box Grant Program Ambassador and has already been working in MOBS' best interest for years. We are looking forward to working with him in this new capacity.

Congratulations to the 2026 Recipient of MOBS' "True Blue Service Award": Katharine Martin! The Board unanimously agreed that Katharine was a perfect choice for the Society's award to honor individuals exhibiting outstanding service to the Society. Katharine not only volunteered to become the Society Newsletter Editor (after her very first MOBS conference!), but she also routinely mans booths at events promoting MOBS and native cavity nesting birds. She is a knowledgeable, enthusiastic presenter and a talented Editor. Congratulations on your award Katharine—MOBS is blessed to have you!

MOBS is SO appreciative of our special friends from Bluebirds Across Nebraska. **We had 12 BAN members** (who are also MOBS members by the way) attend MOBS 2026 conference.

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The Missouri Bluebird Society
is an Affiliate of the North
American Bluebird Society.

20th Anniversary MOBS Conference Recap



| Courtesy of Ann Smith

|Katharine Martin

The Missouri Bluebird Society's annual conference was a special conference year, celebrating MOBS' 20th year in service. The conference took place July 17th – 19th in Jamesport Missouri.

There, the Miller family graciously hosted this year's conference and attendees, and "graciously" is an understatement. In addition to providing all of the food that weekend, the Miller family welcomed attendees to their home Saturday evening for dinner, birdwatching and, of course, plenty of Purple Martin watching.

Saturday's presentations highlighted both bluebirds and some of their fellow cavity nesters.

Marlee Malmborg shared her work with the Missouri River Bird Observatory's American Kestrel project, introducing everyone to the challenges these small falcons face.

Jack Corrigan followed next with Bluebird Basics, where he walked everyone through a seasonal schedule of care tips that bluebird landlords can follow. Along the way, Jack provided so much important advice, helpful to both new and seasoned bluebirders.

Ron Darling took us along the Paw Paw River in Michigan, revealing the important work the Two Rivers Coalition is doing with Prothonotary Warblers. These bright, yellow cavity nesters are an important wetland indicator species that tell us about floodplain habitat health.

Ivan Ray Miller knew he had a challenge when presenting after lunchtime. But the food coma was no match for Ivan's engaging talk about Purple Martins. He packed his

talk with practical advice and information about these charismatic birds.

Katharine Martin introduced attendees to another non-native sparrow, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow. While its population is mostly centered in the St. Louis area, it has spread into other states over the last 20 years, and it can be a threat to native cavity nesting birds.

As the silent auction and raffle wrapped up, MOBS President Steve Garr took us through different bird nests and identification.

After the Saturday presentations concluded, attendees were welcomed at the Miller family home for dinner and community. The weekend concluded with morning breakfast at the Millers' along with a morning bird walk.

Continued on page 3



| Ivan Ray Miller presenting his talk. Courtesy of Ann Smith



| Steve and Regina Garr. Courtesy of Ann Smith

continued from page 2

This event would not have been so memorable had it not been for the kindness and hospitality of this year's host, as well as the dedication and service provided by MOBS' officers, board members and volunteers.

To the Miller family, thank you for an exceptional event. To our officers and board members, thank you for organizing and working hard to bring this event into fruition. MOBS is also grateful to the program presenters this year, and to Greg and Laura Samuel for all of their help organizing and running the Auction and raffle. There are so many more who individually helped and volunteered in important ways to make this event run seamlessly.

Next year's event will be in Jefferson City, July 9-11. Plan on joining, and even consider ways you might be able to volunteer.



With Deep Gratitude to the Following Donors:

Jim Rathert Memorial Donations

The following individuals have sent donations in memory of Jim Rathert. We thank the Rathert family for designating MOBS to receive donations in memory of Jim.

Margaret Bruckart Frederick, Maryland
Wendy Bade Louisville, KY
Steve and Regina Garr Jefferson City, MO
Bluebirds Across Nebraska

Memorial Donation to Honor Former MOBS Member, Luella Bursewics

Ruth Davis Canton, MO

Donation to the 2026 Missouri Bluebird Conference.

Tom McRoberts Marshall, MO

Donations to the General Fund:

River Bluffs Audubon Society . . . Jefferson City, MO
Joyce Leech Madison, TN
Evelyn Fesmire Madison, TN

Letter from the President, continued from page 1

I am challenging every MOBS member to join us at the Bluebirds Across Nebraska Conference April 24, 2027 in Grand Island, NE. BAN knows how to put on a terrific conference, and Regina and I are looking forward to attending another one! Find out more at www.bbne.org/ events.

Finally, on this 20 year anniversary of the Missouri Bluebird Society, I honor my good friend Jim Rathert who was there from the very beginning. When six individuals got together to officially form an incorporated state organization dedicated to Missouri's state bird, Jim was there. And he stayed for the next 20 years. We are grateful for his contribution to founding this Society and his dedication to prospering it.

Do what you can to help the Bluebirds & other native cavity nesters too!

Steve Garr, President, Missouri Bluebird Society

What's That? ▶

Guess what this is a picture of!
Answer on page 7



| Courtesy of Katharine Martin



Jim Rathert's Missouri-Wide Legacy

| Katharine Martin

On July 2, 2026, MOBS lost one of its founding board members, Jim Rathert. Jim leaves behind an important legacy within the Missouri Bluebird Society, but his work in wildlife conservation began long before MOBS and reached people throughout Missouri and beyond.



Jim's Work with MOBS

This year, MOBS celebrated its 20th anniversary, and Jim was part of that story from the very beginning. As a founding board member in 2006, he remained on the board throughout the Society's entire 20 years.

One of Jim's most immediate and visible contributions to MOBS is something members still see today: our logo.

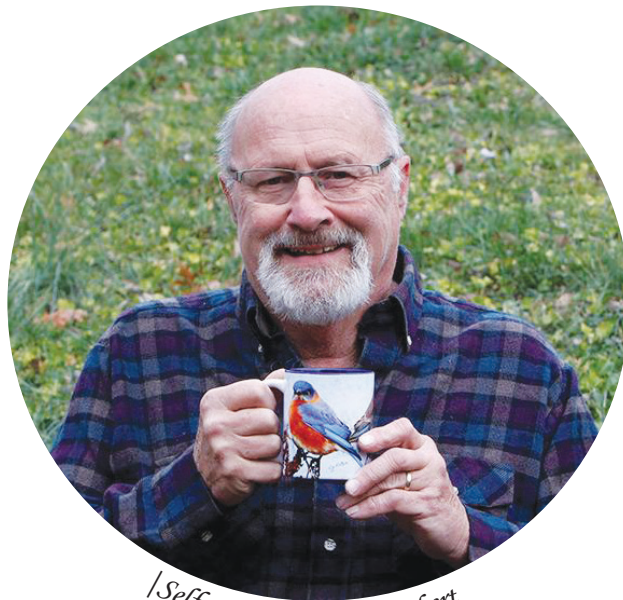
Just after retiring as a wildlife photographer for the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), Jim photographed the male Eastern Bluebird featured in the logo while in Branson. In a 2010 issue of *The Fledgling*¹, Jim recalled, "It was at the beginning of the courtship when the male was presenting nesting material to entice the female to the nest cavity. I like the photo because it touches on the importance of successful nesting programs to ensure a healthy population."



Jim's choice was more than a beautiful photograph of a bluebird. There was meaning behind the image, and that meaning reflected the mission of the organization he was helping to build.

The MOBS logo was far from his only contribution. Jim was the keynote speaker for the 2010 conference, led bird walks and field trips, shared his photography and knowledge with members, and in 2012 he became the first recipient of the True Blue Service Award. He later used his artistic talents to design the plaque presented to subsequent award recipients.

Jim was also very generous in sharing his work. Through Jim Rathert Photography, he handcrafted mugs, coasters, Christmas ornaments and other items featuring his wildlife photography, which were often donated for MOBS conference raffles and auctions.



Self portrait by Jim Rathert

Behind each piece was his own personal touch. Jim took pride in the process he used to transfer his photographs onto mugs because it meant he was involved with every piece he sold or gave away. Rather than doing large, expensive framed pieces, Jim chose to provide something accessible so anyone could enjoy nature in their own homes.



Photo by Jim Rathert, with permission from MDC

Jim's Work with MDC

Jim graduated from the University of Missouri with a degree in art education and a special interest in the natural sciences. Those two interests would eventually come together throughout his career.

Jim began working with the Missouri Department of Conservation in wildlife research, where photography became integrated with his research projects.

In 1984, he became a full-time photographer for the Missouri Department of Conservation, a role he would hold for the next 22 years².

By the time Jim retired in 2006, he had built a library of more than 100,000 images for MDC, including photographs of more than 270 bird species³.

In fact, Jim loved taking photographs of birds. In the 2002 Missouri Conservationist article "Looking Through the Lens," Barbara Baird² stated, "Although he photographs all types of animals, birds are his favorite subjects. In fact, he confesses that if he is not careful, he could fill the photo files at the Conservation Department with pictures of birds."

Rathert's bird photography also inspired one of MDC's current photographers Noppadol Paothong into a lifelong passion for prairie chickens.

Noppadol recalled seeing one of Jim's Greater Prairie-Chicken photographs on the cover of the Missouri Conservationist. The image helped inspire what would become Noppadol's own years-long journey documenting the lives and conservation struggles of prairie-chickens³.

It is difficult to measure the full impact of a lifetime spent helping people see the natural world. Jim leaves behind more than a collection of photographs. His influence can be found in the photographers and conservationists he inspired, in generations of Missourians who encountered wildlife through his images, and in the organization he helped build and serve.



/ Images by Jim Rathert with permission from MDC.
(Top: Eastern Bluebird, Row 2 Left: Carolina Chickadee, Row 2 Right: Tree Swallow, Row 3 Left: Eastern Meadowlark, Row 3 Right: American Goldfinch).

Celebration of Life

Jim's family will hold a Celebration of Life on October 3rd from 2–5 p.m. at Callaway Fields in Mexico, Missouri. Additional details will be shared as they become available. Check the MOBS Facebook page for more information.

Jim's family has also invited friends to share stories and memories of Jim through a "Memory Chain," offering those who knew him an opportunity to celebrate the experiences and memories they shared with him.

1. Regina Garr, "An 'Interview' with Conference Keynote Speaker Jim Rathert," *The Fledgling*, Fall 2010.
2. Barbara Baird, "Looking Through the Lens," *Missouri Conservationist*, April 2, 2002.
3. Noppadol Paothong, "Remembering Jim Rathert: A Life Behind the Lens," *Missouri Conservationist*, September 2026.

2025 Forest Park Tornado: Bluebirds Fly Again

| Ann Earley

The deadly tornado which struck the St. Louis area on May 16, 2025 caused the bluebird monitoring team at Forest Park to pause monitoring of the park's 24 bird boxes throughout the park.

Access to many areas was restricted due to safety reasons and to allow park staff to focus on clean-up and recovery.

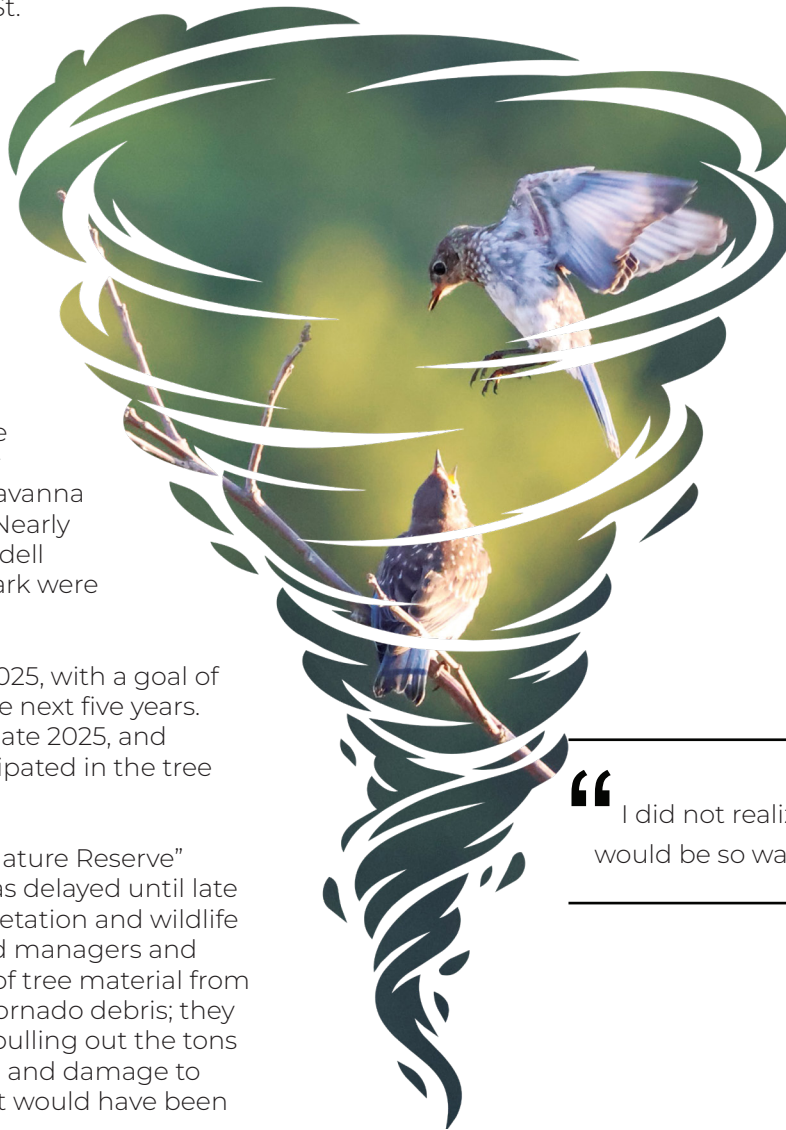
The EF3 tornado damaged over 5,200 park trees, at least 3,100 of which required complete removal. The western edge of the park near Skinker Boulevard, and Kennedy Forest and Savanna experienced major tornado damage. Nearly all of the large, mature trees along Lindell Boulevard on the north edge of the park were destroyed by the storm.

Tree replanting efforts began in late 2025, with a goal of planting at least 6,000 trees during the next five years. More than 1,100 trees were planted in late 2025, and bluebird monitoring volunteers participated in the tree planting efforts.

In some more ecologically sensitive "Nature Reserve" areas of the park, tornado clean-up was delayed until late fall and early 2026 to preserve soil, vegetation and wildlife habitat. In these parts of the park, land managers and stewards removed 2.1 million pounds of tree material from affected areas, or about 1,050 tons of tornado debris; they did this by mechanically or manually pulling out the tons of material to prevent soil compaction and damage to other vegetation in these habitats that would have been caused by using heavy machinery.

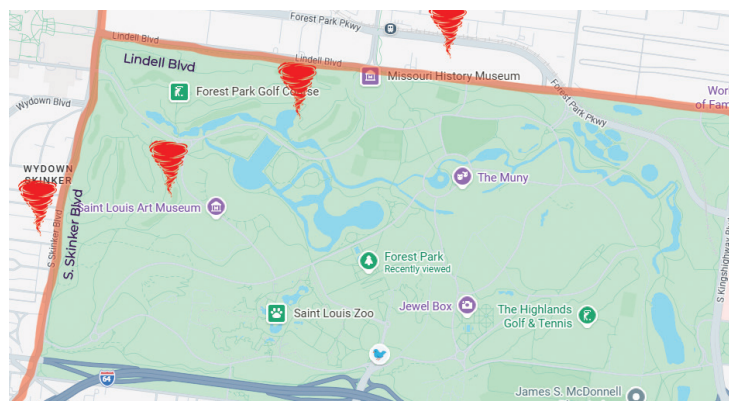
This work was done while plants were dormant, birds were not breeding, and other park dwellers were either hibernating or inactive. As signs of spring emerged in these impacted areas early in 2026, the bluebird monitoring team prepared to resume its efforts for this year's nesting season.

The bluebird boxes throughout the park largely survived the tornado intact, with minimal structural damage. Some were missing during our pre-season box checking in late winter, but they were located, with many having been removed for prescribed burns in the park. When checking the boxes that had not been removed,



“ I did not realize my heart would be so warmed by that! ”

 **Map:** Approximated path through Forest Park.



| Maps Data: Google, ©2026

*| Juvenile bluebirds in tornado graphic courtesy of Katharine Martin.
Tornado made in Adobe Illustrator*

we saw evidence of continued nesting in the boxes by bluebirds, tree swallows, and house wrens during 2025, in spite of the storm disruption. The park boxes have continued to experience good occupancy during this nesting season, with bluebirds nesting in some boxes that they have typically not used in the past.

We were fortunate to have most of our previous monitoring volunteers return to the team in 2026, and thanks to the efforts of Forest Park Forever staff, we also welcomed several new volunteers to the group. One of our newer volunteers noted in May, after finding



/Bob Siemer opens a bluebird box at the 2019 MOBS conference field trip to Forest Park. This box was used by bluebirds this year. Although it is located near one of the areas of heavy tornado damage in the park, it was not affected.

several boxes with bluebird babies in them, “I did not realize my heart would be so warmed by that!” I am sure all of us bluebird fans can identify with that feeling.

Earlier this year, research findings were released from a study of bird diversity in Forest Park (predating the tornado), showing that Forest Park Forever’s habitat restoration work has bolstered native bird populations. Prescribed burns, removal of invasive species and their replacement with native plants have contributed to the increase in bird diversity since 1997 observed by the researchers.

The conclusions of this study seem to be consistent with what we have observed in the park since bluebird monitoring began in Forest Park in 2008. Details about

the research study can be found here—

Uiterwaal SF, Wise A, Cain M, Deem SL, Dell A, Ferree C, Martin A, et al. 2026. Urban Habitat Restoration Increases Native Bird Diversity in the Midwestern United States. *Ecological Applications* 36(2): e70207. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.70207>

The Forest Park bluebirds and their monitors are flying again due to the efforts and support of Forest Park Forever staff members, including Volunteer Coordinator Susi Reed, Volunteer Manager Hilary Sears, and Park Ecologist Amy Witt (who was one of the speakers at our 2019 MOBS annual conference in St. Louis).

We hope the bluebirds and monitors will continue flying high for years to come!

By The Numbers:



5,200+
park trees damaged.



1,050
tons of tornado debris removed by stewards and land managers.



1,100 +
trees planted in 2025, with a goal of planting at least 6,000 during the next five years.



24
Bird boxes monitored in the park. Many survived the tornado with minimal damage.

What's That? Answer:

A cottonwood tree leaf. Cottonwoods are towering giants in Forest Park.

Your Fall Bluebird To-Do List



| Image courtesy of Katharine Martin

| Jack Corrigan

Editor's note: During this year's annual MOBS Conference, board member Jack Corrigan took us through bluebird basics and the annual bluebirding cycle. He provided a lot of great tips and a good to-do list for each season.

While we might be empty nesters at the moment, there are still things we can do to keep our lives full of purpose. This list comes from Jack's presentation.

1. Summarize your nesting data and send it to the Missouri Bluebird Society. You can find the form to print out and mail on the MOBS website. This newsletter will also have a QR code to direct you to this year's form for an online submission instead. Your data will be summarized in the spring and will show the impact of MOBS members across the state.

2. Create a maintenance list. Walk through your trails. Check out your boxes. Take notes of what work needs done. Have baffles slid? Have entry holes been chewed and widened? Don't limit this to just your trail. Check your supplies and equipment and jot down what you need to re-order.

3. Problem solving and troubleshooting. Look over your trail notes from the past season. What problems or issues came up? Now is a great time to get an action plan ready so that you don't encounter these issues next year. Or, maybe you encountered problems and did solve them during the nesting season. Excellent. Now is a good time to polish up your notes and build an easy reference. Also, SEND THIS INFORMATION TO THE EDITOR. You may have solved a problem that someone else is encountering. One of the benefits of birding quarterlies is info-sharing.

4. Participate in Project FeederWatch. Project FeederWatch is a citizen science survey that runs from November to April. To join and learn more, visit feederwatch.org/join-or-renew. This is another great way to share data, helping researchers learn more about bird populations. Also, you can give a membership as a gift.

5. Participate in the Christmas Bird Count.

This annual survey is one of the longest running citizen science surveys held between December 14th and January 5th. Aside from the importance of citizen science, this is a cool program to be part of because you can carry on a 127 year old legacy! You can find more information at Audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count.

6. Plan some outreach. While this is not on Jack's list, the editor wishes to add this to the list. With the trails quieted, fall is a great time to plan some outreach ideas. Talk to scout troops about nest boxes. If you like talking to a small group, connect with your local library about doing a small introduction to bluebirding. Or, simply review photos you have. What stories do these pictures tell? Share those stories on social media to bring a little awareness.

7. Prepare to winter sow. Another editor addition. Many native plants require cold stratification, meaning they need to go through a freezing period in order to germinate. If you are wanting to add some native plants to your yard to help build up bird habitat, look into winter sowing. There are several Facebook groups and YouTube tutorials you can search. Spend the fall collecting milk jugs for winter sowing. Coffee shops are a great resource for this. Then in December, have your seeds and dirt ready to plant.

8. Don't forget to check your nest boxes. Just because nesting season is lulled in the fall and winter doesn't mean things won't occupy your nest boxes. We certainly welcome our seasonal downy woodpeckers. But sometimes a mouse will take up residence. Sometimes a warm spell makes sparrows a little amorous. So don't forget to inspect your nest boxes during the fall and winter to make sure all is well.

Activity With the Kids:

Seed Saving

Fall is a great time to collect native plant seeds. Take the kids out back to your native plant garden along with a few envelopes and start collecting.

There are some things to keep in mind when seed collecting:

1. Only collect from places that allow it such as your own property or a neighbor's garden with permission. MDC properties are off limits without a permit, and parks usually require permission.
2. Leave most of the seeds behind for animals.
3. Never collect seeds from rare plants.

For more information search online for "MDC Seed Collecting Guidelines."

Get a **seed-saving envelope template** from the MOBS website. Look for the link on the right-hand side.

| Image designed in Canva Pro (NOT AI)

Membership Renewals!

MOBS Membership Application/Renewal Form Memberships expire on **December 31st of the year of expiration.** Check your mailing label to see if you need to renew. **If your membership expires in "2026," it does not expire until Dec 31, 2026.**

Feel free to contact Regina at regina@birds-i-view.biz or 573-638-2473 with questions about your membership status.

Please mail this form, along with your check or money order (payable to **MOBS**) to:

Missouri Bluebird Society/ P.O. Box 105830/ Jefferson City, MO 65110

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City/State _____ Zip _____

County: _____ Email: _____

Membership Levels:

____ Individual one year membership \$9.00 _____ DONOR (Annual) \$50.00 _____ *Family LIFE Membership \$175.00

____ Individual two year membership \$16.00 _____ SUPPORTER (Annual) \$100.00 _____ **Senior Life Membership \$100.00

____ *Family one year membership \$15.00 _____ How many nest boxes do you monitor? _____

____ *Family two year membership \$28.00 _____ How long have you been a Bluebirder? _____

*For individuals residing at the same address

**Is a family Life membership available to individuals 65 or older (family members must reside at this same address)

____ Mail me the quarterly newsletter _____ Save The Trees: Email me the quarterly newsletter

Ozark Prairie Master Gardeners' 2026 Field Day

The Ozark Prairie Master Gardeners and University of Missouri Extension bring together a wide range of gardening, conservation and nature topics for the 2026 Field Day at Britton Farm in Versailles, Missouri.

The September 19 event featured presentations on drip irrigation,

invasive species, fall vegetable gardening, native plants, xeriscaping, monarchs, cactus and succulent propagation, and more. Of special interest to MOBS members is "How Bluebirds Survive in the Winter," presented by MOBS member Ron Darling!



| Courtesy of Katharine Martin



Gratefully Recognizing MOBS Family Life Memberships

Julie Anielak
Bobby & Linda Arnold
Jerry & Donna Bahls
Bernie Bahr
Dan & Kim Basler
Craig & Sonja Berry
Bill & Martha Blackledge
Dan Blessing
Ronald & Sandra Bowen
Earl Bradfield
Emily Brown & John Johnson
Ben & Jodi Caruthers
Beverly Chapman
Chuck & Connie Clark
Leonard & Ellen Conrad
Joe Corio
Jack & Amy Corrigan
Ron & Terrie Darling
Mike Delacy
Steve & Beth DeVries
Larry & Mary Dobson
Jack Dodson
Susan Dyer
Ann Earley & Bob Siemer
Steve & Cheryl Eno
Nancy & Daryl Fulton
Steve & Regina Garr
Joy & Cindy Haeffner
Dr & Mrs. Thomas Hall

Kevin Hall
Kevin Hanson
David & Anita Hartwig
Robert Hawkins
Jerry & Jane Hemmersmeyer
Gordon Hopp
Ann Humphreys
Lori Johnson
JL Johnson
Pam & Bob Jones
Arvil Kappelmann
Linda & David Karns
Herb & Lois Kimrey
Mary Kladiva
Jerry & Loretta Koch
Paul & Elizabeth Konarske
Keith & Sandy Kridler
Leslie Limberg
Pamela Lindsey
Ken & Ann Littlefield
Terry Marmet
Katharine Martin & Scott Velten
Lynn & Mary McClamroch
Nancy McCormick
Tom McRoberts
Rodney Meyer
Nelson Miller
Janet Mills
Jerry & Susie Montgomery

Sarah Mueller
J. Kent Nelson
Elisa Oetting
Leland & Elva Osten
Leslie J. Palmer
David & Linda Patton
Judy Peak
Brenda Peculis
James & Carole Petersen
Linda & Joe Pridgeon
Susan Reinagel
Paul & Donna Richardson
Betty Richey
Shauna Roberts, M.D. & Gerald Early
Pat Ross
Greg & Laura Samuel
Jim & Janelle Schulte
Jim Scrivner
Sandy & Bill Seibert
Bet Zimmerman Smith
Steve & Ann Smith
Norm & Beth Stucky
Sandy & Brad Sullivan
Deborah Thompson
Ron & Pauline Tom
Delores Vlach
David & Kelly Warren
Tony & Charlotte Wening
Derry & Phyllis Wolford
Sheryl Wright



The Missouri Bluebird Society appreciates all of our loyal members.
We WELCOME the following New & Renewing members!

Bill and Martha Blackledge
Beverly Chapman
Paul and Elizabeth Konarske
Shauna Roberts, M.D. & Gerald Early

Submit Your Story, Field Observations & More!

Share your experience, wisdom, and stories with MOBS! Birding quarterlies over the decades have served as an archive of growing knowledge, where people share information to teach and solve problems. If you have an idea, a story, a little field experiment, a field observation or something else you want to share, email the editor at kmartinmobs@gmail.com.



MOBS Nest Box Trail Summary						
			Trail Name:		Year:	
			Trail Monitor:			
			Address / City:			
			County:			
Number of Nest Boxes:			Number of "Unused Boxes:			
Species	Total Nesting Attempts	Total Successful Nests	Total eggs laid	Total of White EABL Eggs	Total Chicks	Total Fledged
❖ A successful nest is considered to be one that has fledged at least one chick						
How often was the trail monitored:						
First date monitored for the season:			Last date monitored for the season:			
Signature of Trail Monitor:			Date:			
Please send this completed form to: Greg Samuel 4749 State Highway Z, Fordland, MO 65652						
Please mail form to arrive by December 31 st						
Everyone's data is important! Please report your data to MOBS						
www.missouribluebird.org						



Use the QR Code to access the Online form instead.



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The Missouri Bluebird Society
P.O. BOX 105830
Jefferson City, MO 65110



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*/ Photo by Jim Rathert,
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