



Missouri Black Bears

By Ann Thorne

The Midland Empire Audubon Society presented a program on “Black Bears in Missouri” September 16. Evan Grusenmeyer was the guest



speaker. The Missouri black bear is this year’s pin for the Master Naturalists.

In the 1700’s explorers saw more than fifty black bears a day in Missouri territory. The bears were shot for meat, fat,

and hides. Then, when Missouri cleared out forests in the 1800’s, the black bears disappeared. In the 1980’s Arkansas released 3,000 black bears.

Some of those bears moved to Missouri. In 2008, there were 300 black bears sited in Missouri, mostly in the southern portions of the state.

Missouri black bears are members of the Ursidae family and are in the order Carnivora, the bears actually eat mostly berries, fruits, roots and acorns. Sometimes you can see a fallen tree hollowed out, evidence of a bear looking for insects.

The Missouri black bears are mostly black, but have brown on their muzzles. However, there is some variation, such as brown legs or other spots of brown or light tan.

The bears need large tracts of forests to roam. They are mostly solitary. However, when females have young,

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they keep their cubs with them for the first year. Females breed when they are three to five years old. They usually have two to four cubs. Each cub weighs eight



By Missouri Conservation Department

A cub stands by his mother and looks around to see what is going on.

ounces at birth.

In southern Missouri, there are 2.9 million acres of forest, which is good habitat for bears. Ninety percent of the bears live in this area. The male bears often range over a wide area looking for a mate. This is why some bears have been sighted in northern Missouri. The females don't have such a big range as the males. There are no females north of the Missouri River that we know of.

Conservation traps Missouri black bears and tags them. On the females, it places a collar. The collar lasts for 18 months. Then the bear will need a new collar. The collars are made of leather, so they will rot on the ground if the bear loses it and it can't be found. The collars have VHF and UHF antennas so they can be tracked. They also have a GPS locator.

The bears are trapped in large tubing that has holes drilled in it and painted white so the bears don't get hot. The Conservation Department lures them into the trap with donuts. The bears dif-



By Missouri Conservation Department

The traps are stored in a Missouri Conservation building.

fer on how they react once trapped. Some try to get out, some are agitated, some do not seem to mind. One black bear male, who weighs 450 pounds, seems to enjoy being trapped. He relaxes in

the trap after eating all the donuts.

When the Conservation Department traps a bear, they tranquilize it, use an eye gel to moisturize eyes, and tie a bandana over the eyes. They



By Missouri Conservation Department

Two bears are roaming around where there is a trap placed.

make 14 measurements of each bear, and they also take out a tooth in the back of the mouth to decide the age. In females, they can tell which years she had cubs.

At the end of the presentation, there was a discussion about what to do if you meet a bear, although it is unlikely in northwest Missouri. You should wave your arms and make loud noises. The bear should leave. Grunsemeyer said that you should not run. Nor should you climb a tree. Bears are very good at climbing trees. Bears like human food, so they tend to be around where humans have left out food or have garbage cans where they place food.

Master Naturalist 2014 Capstone Riverbend Treatment Facility

By Ann Thorne

The Master Naturalists Class of 2014 decided to do a gardening project for the Riverbend Treatment Facility in St. Joseph, Mo., as their capstone project. Cindy Bisacca, from Riverbend, emphasized that it is a treatment facility, not a correctional center. “Kids who have made some bad mistakes that hurt someone,” are the residents here, said Bisacca. The length of stay is generally

of meetings where they decided what flowers to use, what birdfeeders to place, and where to buy the plants they needed. Riverbend Treatment Facility was willing to pay for the plants.

When the project started, the 2014 class removed the grass covering the plot with a tiller. Then the residents raked it off the plot, put it in a wheelbarrow, and emptied the wheelbarrow into a truck. When the plot was clear of the grass, the planting began.

The class planted a total of 22 Missouri native plants, including Prairie Dropseed Native Prairie Grass, Little Bluestem Native Prairie Grass, Rattlesnake Master, Black-eyed Susan, Blue False Indigao, Butterfly Milkweed, Purple Coneflower, and many more. Shannon Holcomb dug up two Button Bushes and brought them to the site.

Two groups of Riverbend Treatment Facility residents participated in the clearing of the grass and planting, and seemed to enjoy both. One of residents,



By Ann Thorne

Riverbend Treatment Facility residents rake up the grass after a roto-tiller has pulled it up.

who participated in the project, said, “This is the most fun I’ve had ever.” Another said, “I love it!”

The project will continue as more plants arrive later in the fall.



By Ann Thorne

Mary Helen Stuber and Terry Gray lay down tarp to keep the grass from coming up around the bird feeder posts.

six to nine months. They are usually 14 – 17 years old.

The class of 2014 had a series



By Ann Thorne

Ed Andres stand by a truck in which the grass has been placed by the residents of Riverbend Treatment Facility.

Insect-O-Rama

By Charles Bramlage

When I was a young lad, there was a dare I overheard when a young boy was challenged to eat a fly. He eventually did eat it and collected a few quarters for his feat. I thought of this somewhat rare event from my childhood and in my mind compared it to a more common event that occurred at Insect-O-Rama. A gentle-

Guide to the Butterflies in the Kansas City Region.” It’s a very good field guide and I have one in my possession. Mary had a nice garden and works with “Monarch Watch.” She has an official “Monarch Watch Station” and this year collected around 100 Monarch eggs and hand reared them to adulthood. She gets a much higher survival rate for the butterflies than if they are left in the wild.



By Shelly Cox

This man offered edible flies, grasshoppers, and other bugs. Last year he was outside.

man set up an entomaphagy display with different insects to taste. They were cooked and seasoned in different ways to show what could be a good source of food for many.

There were eight other displays set up Saturday morning, Oct. 13. My favorite display was on butterflies. Two ladies from the Kansas City area, Betsy Betros and Mary Nemecek, brought many caterpillars and live butterflies for participants to observe. They are both Master Naturalists, Mary from Osage Trails and Betsy from the new Olathe, Kans. chapter. Betsy has been to several Insect-O-Ramas in the past and has written “A Photographic Field

Insect-O-Rama would not be complete without a display of bees, and it’s logical that Shannon Holcomb would be there. He brought some live bees and other gear to explain the importance of pollination. He didn’t do this by

himself as some other apiarists assisted him including a young lady who kept bees and is a “Bee Queen.” Yes, she worn a “tiara” and a “sash”. I’m not sure. She may have been a “Bee Princess.”

Other displays were crafts, microscopic insects, injurious insects, aquatic insects, pest control, and the large cockroach races. I was unable to spend time at these other displays as I was helping Tom Aldrich with the official count (301 participants) and was the greeter. I explained where the displays were located and handed out sheets to be stamped at each display and an insect trivia page.

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My Travels with Susie

By Mary Jo Ostenberg

This spring was so beautiful! Everything green burst from the warm soil nourished by steady rains and welcome sunlight. You could almost see everything growing! So I decided to declare amnesty. With the exceptions of fescue and pesky quack and Johnson grass I decided to let everything that



Photo by Mary Jo Ostenberg

The butterfly in this picture is a cabbage butterfly, *Pieris rapae*, introduced from Europe in 1860. It is sitting on garlic chives.

came up in my beds go on to flower and seed. I was taking the advice of our MDC Natural History Biologist, Steve Buback on keeping a “messy yard” and then just sitting back to enjoy the show. Now keep in mind. We live in the country with very few neighbors and none close, so no one was around to complain if my grand experiment went wild. My beds have been in perennials such as purple coneflowers and various natives for several years and are large, approximately 2,000 square feet in addition to smaller beds situated around the yard. I also extended amnesty to our lawn. We’ve never used herbicides in our yard but this spring and summer my mower blades were set at 4 inches and

I actually mowed around the dandelions and large patches of blooming clover. I’m not going to tell you what my husband thought! My efforts (or lack of) paid off in a very, very big way! First the hummingbirds checked out our place and when they found wild columbine growing **everywhere** they got out the word and flocks started arriving. It’s difficult to estimate the numbers this year. LOTS are my best guess. They still came to my feeders but many more stuck to the columbine and trumpet vine I let go wild. Everywhere we looked you could



Photo by Mary Jo Ostenberg

This black insect is an American Oil Beetle, *Meloe americanus*, sitting on Tall Goldenrod, *Solidago altissima*, waiting to hitch a ride on a bee.

spot the little jeweled wonders joyfully flying from bloom to bloom.

That’s when I asked my best friend Susie if she wanted to join me each afternoon for a stroll. She loved the idea. So



Photo by Mary Jo Ostenberg

This large bed on the north side of my front porch are Sawtooth Sunflower, *Helianthus grosseserratus*.

every day after dinner armed with my growing collection of field guides we slowly walked around the yard, on the paths in the flower beds, along the fence lines and through the walnut tree grove to see what new wildlife we could discover. We often walked for 2 hours or more. The frustrations and concerns of the day disappeared as Susie and I enjoyed all the wildness around us right out my back door.

We found and had fun identifying new plants (to me) such as lopseed (*Phryma leptostachya*) which belongs to the Lopseed family (Phrymaceae). This family is interesting in that there is only one genus and species, also occurs in Asia and is closely related to the Snapdragon family. The flowers are tiny pinkish-lavender and arranged in slender, elongated spike-like clusters along the top of a main stem. If you take a look with your loupe they do resemble snapdragons.

Another discovery was jumpseed (*Persicaria virginiana*).

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This belongs to the Buckwheat family *Polygonaceae* which includes smartweed. Jumpseed has an interesting means of dispersing its seed. Tension builds at the joint of the flower stalk as the fruit matures, which acts as a spring to launch the fruit up to 4 m. Passing dogs and humans can trigger this movement and the seeds stick like Velcro. Once we learned about jumpseed we both tried to steer clear and study this interesting plant from a safe distance.

The pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) along the fences grew to 9 feet. The mockingbird and blue jays can't get enough of the berries. Yarrow, white avens, pale indian plantain, climbing false buckwheat, cucumber vine, cinquefoil, goat's beard, mullein, new England aster and dayflower came up everywhere. And a new favorite (love to say the name) came up unexpectedly. Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium ca-*



By Mary Jo Ostenberg

This bird is an American Goldfinch, *Carduelis tristis*, dining on the Sawtooth Sunflower seeds.

nescens), also called Beggar's lice because the seed pods are hairy and stick to anything that walks by. These seeds are a big favorite of birds.

So with all this new plant life we have been rewarded with flocks of songbirds and large numbers of various butterflies, bees and dragonflies. The clover that wasn't mowed was full of honeybees. Susie and I chased swallowtails, sulfurs, coppers, commas, buckeyes, hackberry, vice-roy, skippers and monarchs. We spotted a flame skimmer, which is a bright red-orange large dragonfly that usually ranges in the western states.

What really surprised us was the large number of pollinators drawn to the simple white heath aster (*Aster pilosus*). Usually I pull these up, but this year with amnesty declared they were allowed to grow like, well, weeds! Some grew to 4 and 5 feet and were absolutely humming and buzzing with hundreds of bees, wasps, flies, butterflies and small beetles. Thanks to Steve's presentation on pollinators, Susie and I recognized honey bees, carpenter, mining, bumble, cuckoo and sweat bees. We even think we spotted a male bumble bee but we both decided not to grab it just to find out. There was so much to watch we sat by one plant for an hour. Perhaps next year we'll be able to identify more. It's always a welcome learning process.

Another astounding surprise was the sawtooth sunflowers (*Helianthus grosseserratus*) that the birds planted on the north side of my porch and in a



By Mary Jo Ostenberg

Mary Jo Ostenberg sitting with her dog, Susie.

small bed that runs in front of my sunroom. Goldfinches have always flocked to my purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) but the numbers increased when I added these sunflowers to the banquet. Susie and I estimate we have a flock of around 50 or more. They've gotten used to me sitting in the sunroom and come sit on the seed heads just outside the windows enjoying the feast. The photos of the finches were taken from my couch!

Susie found two painted turtles, a crawfish, and several black snakes and flushed a cubby of quail this summer. She's better at spotting creatures on the ground than me. But she's also good at spotting hawks and turkey vultures. Together we've had a great time this summer on our strolls. We've agreed to continue our little getaways to the back yard this fall and winter. As we both sit on the couch in the evening thinking about our day, me with a cold beverage, Susie with her dog biscuit, we'll both be thinking about all the life just outside our back door. I'm so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the Missouri Master Naturalist program.

Planting the Rain Garden at Corby

By Charles Bramlage

On Sept. 27, several members of the Loess Hills chapter helped improve the rain garden



By Shannon Holcomb

Bob Spurgat and Bill Blacklage work on one of the gardens planted at Corby Pond.

near Corby pond. Bill Blackledge, Shannon Holcomb, Janet Mason, Robert Spurgat, and Charles Bramlage assisted the

St. Joseph Water Department in weeding the area and planting more natives. In addition to more plants in the ravine, some were also planted in the swampy area including Marsh Milkweed. The date picked turned out to be a good one as



By Shannon Holcomb

Janet Mason attends to the flowers already planted.



By Shannon Holcomb

This picture shows the garden already established by a previous capstone class, and the garden with flags which is to be planted this time.

the swampy area was almost dry which made our planting chore easier. If you want to see and enjoy the area, it is between Corby pond and Ashland Ave. where the road splits into eastbound and westbound lanes.



There were four Loess Hills Master Naturalists at the Hartell Conservation Area Stream Team cleanup. Pictured are Gerry Crawford, Janet Mason And Charles Bramlage. Dan McCann also helped but did not make the picture as he was on his motorcycle and had to head out as it looked like it might storm.

Upcoming Events

October 25

Corn maze and Dutch Oven Cooking.

November 6

Hartell Conservation Area Envirothon

November 8

Holiday meeting at Lynn Tushaus's house

December 5, 6, 7

Eagle Days at Squaw Creek