

SIERRASCAPE

Eastern Missouri Group - Missouri Chapter Volume 37, Number 1 - Spring 2021



LaBarque Creek. Photo by Louise Bullock.

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**SIERRA
CLUB**

Enjoy, Explore & Protect the Planet

SIERRASCAPE

Volume 37, Number 1
Spring 2021

Sierra Club Eastern Missouri Group (EMG) is located at the Missouri Sierra Club office:

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EMG Monthly Meetings

Monthly in-person meetings have been suspended due to COVID-19. Please follow the Missouri Sierra Club's Facebook page and website for information on virtual events.

Contribute Material

SierraScape is published twice a year (Spring and Fall). Articles, photos, ideas and other member contributions are encouraged!

To contribute material contact **Caitlin Zera** at caitlinzera@gmail.com or 314-324-2417.

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EMG ACTIVITY COMMITTEES

Members of the Eastern Missouri Group Sierra Club work on a wide range of issues to promote a healthy environment and protect wild places for all to enjoy. Below are committees and activity areas. Reach out today to learn more about how you can help the Sierra Club explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

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Turn Lights Out – Save Birds!

BY STEPHANIE TODD
Sierra Club Member

As part of Lights Out Heartland, Missouri Sierra Club is advocating for people/businesses to turn off exterior lights during the month of May and September, the peak migration times for songbirds. Every year billions of birds migrate during spring and fall, and the majority migrate at night, using the moon and stars to navigate. St. Louis sits on the Mississippi Flyway, one of the largest migratory pathways for birds in the world, which is used by 60% of North American songbirds and over 325 bird species during migration. Bright artificial lights can cause birds to become disoriented and die either by exhaustion or collisions. St. Louis is ranked by Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists as the 5th most dangerous city to birds during spring migration and the 6th most dangerous city during the fall migration.

Overall, light pollution has serious environmental consequences for

humans, wildlife and our climate. But, it can be easily eliminated by using light only where it is needed, using motion sensors, or shielding lights so they do not shine up into the sky. We understand that safety is an issue, but poorly designed outdoor lighting has been shown to increase crime. Bright or poorly aimed lights can hide danger by creating deep shadows where criminals can hide. A study by the city of Chicago found a correlation between increased crime and brightly lit alleyways. The bright lights attracted criminals because they could hide in the shadows and then it allowed them to see what they were doing when conditions were right. To learn more about light pollution go to www.darkskymissouri.org.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please turn off your exterior lights or place them on motion detectors to help save birds! Learn more at www.lightsoheartland.org.

Meet Diana Oleskevich, New EMG Executive Committee Member

BY CAITLIN ZERA
EMG Executive Committee Member

The EMG Executive Committee welcomes new member Diana Oleskevich. Diana's lifelong love for the environment was nurtured by her father, whose passion was gardening. His green thumb led him to plant oak trees - 800 of them, to be exact - throughout Diana's childhood. This act, which still inspires awe and admiration in Diana, set her on a path of environmental awareness.

Diana and her husband moved to Missouri in the 1970s where they have spent decades enjoying trips around the state to parks and conservation areas. One way they have explored public lands in Missouri and beyond is by bike. Diana fell in love with cycling when she had to transition to cycling from jogging due to an injury. She has biked all over the United States, including a trip along the Katy Trail and a National Sierra Club

Outings trip biking along the Pacific Coast. She and her husband are part of the Warm Showers network, which connects



Diana at Hughes Mountain

traveling cyclists to one another with a place to stay. They have hosted traveling cyclists and have also been hosted during their travels. Being part of the network has given Diana the opportunity to meet and learn from a wide diversity of people as well as share her love for cycling and the outdoors.

A longtime Sierra Club member, Diana is excited to join the EMG Executive Committee this year and looks forward to working on regional environmental issues, with a particular focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. **Page 3**

Endangered Monarchs on the Waiting List

BY CAROLINE PUFALT
Conservation Chair

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined in December 2020 that the Monarch Butterfly “meets the listing criteria” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, the final, official listing is on hold, putting the Monarch on the ESA waiting list. There are 161 species currently on that list.

It’s tragic that all these species wait for the more robust protection that comes with official listing. But the USFWS lacks the staff and funding to keep up with that workload.

An official ESA listing decision brings with it federal reporting and protection requirements and sometimes designation of critical habitat. It’s clear that Monarch numbers are in serious decline, as much as 80% in the past two decades. Monarchs are at risk due to serious habitat loss, pesticide use (neonicotinoids), and logging in their wintering habitat. The delay in final listing is extremely frustrating, but it doesn’t mean that action is not being taken to help Monarchs.

Many individuals and agencies have planted milkweed and other native



plants for Monarch habitat in small backyards to much larger areas. Missouri Department of Conservation encourages landowners with an acre or more to cultivate larger scale habitat.

But it won’t be enough until we reduce pesticide use, create and protect more habitat across the Monarch’s migration, breeding and wintering habitat. Final listing under the ESA will help.

And the push for more natural protected areas under the 30 by 30 campaign is also a plus. Also, a good time to support more funding for the USFWS.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can find information from the US Fish and Wildlife Service at:
www.fws.gov/savethemonarch

Ozark National Scenic Riverways Trails Plan

BY CAROLINE PUFALT
Conservation Chair

This time we really mean it, we hope! Intrepid readers will recall back in 2017 Missouri Sierrans and fellow conservationists poured over plans and maps to submit comments on a draft updated Roads and Trails plan (RT) for the Ozark National Scenic Riverway (ONSR). This beloved park encompasses the Current and Jacks Fork rivers.

It has been many decades since the park’s RT plan has been revised to meet current needs and address future challenges. The ONSR has a new park superintendent, Jason Lott, who is

dedicated to completing unfinished park work such as the RT plan and implementing a decision on seasonal horsepower limits which has been pending since 2015. We welcome his energy and dedication.

When the new RT plan is unveiled, there will still be an opportunity for public feedback. We hope the new plan includes sustainable trails for the hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders who use the park. And we hope the issue of motorized access to gravel bars is addressed as are the large number of authorized and unauthorized stream crossings. Stay tuned!

Explore Trails Less Traveled

BY LOUISE BULLOCK

Outings Co-Chair

I invite you to follow the example of Robert Frost and explore some less traveled areas of Missouri. The creeks and the waterfalls are now flowing full force and the Spring ephemeral wildflowers are beginning to show themselves in all their colorful glory.

Now is the perfect time to give the trails in our state parks a little rest from their overuse this past year by people looking for a socially distant outdoor activity. The tread on numerous trails has become degraded and widened, roots are now exposed and erosion is developing. These trails are pleading for a "time out" to heal. They have been "loved to death", particularly the ones closest to metropolitan areas. Do the trails and yourself a favor - treat yourself to adventures in new territories.

You might try one of the conservation areas (C.A.s) administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). MDC administers hundreds of parcels in all regions of the state totaling nearly 1 million acres. You can locate these properties at nature.mdc.mo.gov.

Here are several to get you started all within a couple hours of metropolitan St. Louis:

- Engelmann Woods Natural Area
- Valley View Glades Natural Area
- Maramec Spring Park (The James Foundation)
- Millstream Gardens C.A.



Paddy Creek Wilderness. Photo by Louise Bullock

- Little Indian Creek C.A.
- Amidon Memorial C.A.
- Buford Mountain C.A.
- Hughes Mountain Natural Area

Other less traveled destinations include National Wilderness Areas. These lands, protected by the Wilderness Act of 1964, are defined as areas "where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." In keeping with this definition, signage is limited and trails are not always evident, so proficient map and compass skills are required. Missouri's eight National Wilderness Areas, most located in Mark Twain National Forest, are the following:

- Bell Mountain Wilderness
- Devils Backbone Wilderness
- Hercules-Glades Wilderness
- Irish Wilderness
- Mingo Wilderness
- Paddy Creek Wilderness
- Piney Creek Wilderness
- Rockpile Mountain Wilderness

New EMG Facebook Group Coming Soon!

Join us! On the
Missouri Sierra
Club
Facebook Page

@mosierraclub



Make sure to 'Like' Missouri Sierra Club on Facebook for your statewide environmental updates & advocacy efforts! Soon we'll be transitioning from our old EMG page to a new EMG Group Page under the Missouri Sierra Club Chapter Facebook page. This will coincide with other state chapter groups. We'd love to see you there as part of our online community so stay tuned on the launch of our new group page! Like the Missouri Sierra Club Facebook page at www.facebook.com/mosierraclub

Remembering Missouri Sierra Club Leaders: Bob Gestel and Jack Harris



Photo contributed by George Behrens.

IN MEMORY OF BOB GESTEL By George Behrens

Bob Gestel, one of the most dynamic outings leaders the EMG has ever had, died January 21, 2021, the result of a broken hip. He was born December 22, 1928, in Dollar Bay, a town on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Bob was a hiker, a backpacker, a trailbuilder, a pet lover, a mountain climber, a shipwreck diver, a runner, a cross country skier and an excellent photographer.

In his second time around leading outings for the Sierra Club, Bob led his first hike in March of 1990. In January of 1991 Bob led the first of his many winter backpacks. In April of 1992 Bob, along with Paul Stupperich, started leading

their popular Beginner Backpacks. They also led many hikes. Bob also led many Outings on his own. He led hundreds of trips and spent thousands of hours leading them and serving on the Trails and Outings Committees.

In 1995 Bob, with George Behrens, started work on the video, How to Lead a Hike. The project was completed in 2002 and is still used to train outings leaders. From 2002 until 2013 Bob, with Paul, was Co-chair of the Trails Committee. Many trails were built and maintained in the Pioneer Forest and Hawn State Park. By 2017 Bob's hiking days were over. His last Sierra Club outing was a campout at Hawn in the fall of 2017. He was content to sit in camp and enjoy being outside. He continued as a member of the Outings Committee.

Everyone respected Bob. He was incredibly tolerant. We never heard him brag. Until he was in his early eighties we never doubted his capability on trips. He was totally self-reliant. If there was some way he could help, he did. We all hoped we could be kind of like Bob but we knew we could never be that capable.



Jack Harris (right) with fellow Sierra Club Members Dan Lehocky and Dana Barhard.

IN MEMORY OF JACK HARRIS By Francine Glass

A dear friend to many Sierrans, Jack Harris died February 14, 2021 at the age of 91. Throughout his life, he was a committed environmentalist. I was the

beneficiary of the environmental knowledge he shared with his friends.

Jack was an active Sierra Club member for over 50 years, having joined the organization in 1968. He served many roles within the Ozark Chapter, which prior to the Missouri Chapter, included Missouri and Arkansas, and 13 counties in southern Illinois. Over the years he volunteered as Chapter Chair and served as Editor for the Ozark Sierran Newsletter from 1976 through 1981. The publication was an extensive 8-page newsletter and Jack wrote many of the articles himself. His other roles included Chair for the Eastern Missouri Group, field trip leader, Delegate to the Citizens Committee for Soil and Water

Remembering Missouri Sierra Club Leaders, cont.

Conservation and MO State Parks, Ozark Chapter Conservation Committee Member. Throughout these years he demonstrated great leadership skills. I'm sure many of our chapter members recall fond memories of outings and Sierra Club meetings with Jack.

Jack's hobbies included bird watching, native plant study and wildflower photography. Jack kept bird feeders full of seeds and suet to attract the native songbirds to the backyard of the family home in St. Louis County for over 50 years. He also planted several species of

Missouri native plants in his front and back yards. Jack would take his family on frequent weekend hikes in the Ozark mountains, camping, and on float trips on several of the sparkling, clear and cold Ozark streams in the family's two canoes. He and his family traveled to all 50 states and 4 provinces and 1 territory in Canada. Jack passed away after a brief bout with cancer on February 14, 2021. His wife Pat Harris predeceased him in September, 2017. Jack and Pat were married 62 years at the time of her passing. I miss them both.

St. Louis taking part in research to reduce plastics

BY TIM ELWELL
EMG Executive Committee Member

Local officials, citizens, and community organizations gathered on Saturday, April 17, 2021 at North Riverside Park in St. Louis to combat plastic pollution along the Mississippi River. The initiative is led by a coalition of organizations including the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), the mayors of the Mississippi River in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme, National Geographic Society and the University of Georgia. It's an effort being done in three cities: St. Paul, St. Louis and Baton Rouge - tracking the beginning, middle and end of the Mississippi River. Pictured below (top left) is researcher Jenna Jambeck holding one of the tracking devices that

was deliberately placed in the river for analysis that will tell us more about the transport of plastic down the river. It's the first time this technology has been deployed in the United States.

In addition to the GPS tracker, they've launched a new app asking for help from the public to help track plastic. It's called the Debris Tracker and available for free on Apple and Android phones. Citizens can help just by downloading the app and logging the plastic they see in the designated spots. Once downloaded, click on MRCTI and follow the steps to start logging and picking up trash. With this data as a citizen driven audit, they will be able to make decisions on how to crack down on river pollution including holding companies accountable. Be a part of the solution to combat plastic pollution along the Mississippi River by helping to collect data on marine litter!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can find information about the project and how to use the Marine Debris Tracker app:
[mississippi.org/plastic-pollution-initiative/](https://www.mississippi.org/plastic-pollution-initiative/)



Photos from the April 17, 2021 cleanup at North Riverside Park by Tim Elwell.

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