

We Appreciate You!

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



Audubon Center
at Riverlands

Arm-in-Arm with Our Partners and Supporters

Giving for *environment and animals* was up about 8.2% in 2023 according to Giving USA <https://givingusa.org/>! Giving overall was relatively stagnant during this period when adjusted for inflation. Despite the increase in philanthropic support for the environment and animals, this category, our cause, rank last in philanthropic support once again.

Good news! Our supporters were very kind to us again this past year! You can read about just some of the results of their generosity in this Report. I am grateful to everyone who made the Audubon Center at Riverlands a philanthropic priority this past year!

Whether it is leading with science and collaboration to protect bird habitat, building lifelong stewards of nature, shaping the next generation of conservation innovators and leaders, or being the place in the St. Louis region to experience the spectacle of birds and the awe of our Great Rivers, our work would not be possible without you!

Nor is it possible without partnerships – true cooperation that brings expertise, ideas, and resources to bear for our conservation and community building mission. The latter is essential to creating the groundswell of energy, enthusiasm, and expertise necessary to bend the bird curve, reverse the decline of birds, and make our planet a place where birds and people thrive. There are several organizations we work with regularly to expand our impact. Notable among these are the Ferguson-Florissant School District, Green Teen Alliance, Missouri Department of Conservation, St. Louis Youth Jobs, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. We cherish these win-win relationships, and you will see the names of these vital collaborators and many others like them in this Report.

Lastly, we are making strides in extending our reach in and beyond the St. Louis Region to support the newly formed Audubon Upper Mississippi River Program that includes Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri, while lifting [Flight Plan](#), Audubon’s hemispheric strategic framework. More to come about this in the months ahead. Until then, please know how much we appreciate you!

Gratefully,



Ken Buchholz
Center Director



Former Education Manager Michelle Wiegand visiting the Center during Birds of Winter last January.
Photo: Staff

Cover Photo: American Kestrels in a nest box at Riverlands. **Photo:** Doug Hommert
18 American Kestrels were hatched and banded this past spring through the Riverlands Nest Box Program. While still considered common, North America’s smallest falcon is experiencing population decline. Programs like ours can help keep kestrel populations healthy while scientists search for conservation answers and solutions. We thank Ameren, World Bird Sanctuary and US Army Corps for being our partners in this effort.

HIGHLIGHTS

Making Riverlands Better for Birds Through Conservation and Collaboration

Vast, varied, and well-maintained habitat at the heart of the Mississippi Flyway is what makes Riverlands an Important Bird Area for myriad bird species. It's also why Riverlands is a perennial Midwest birding hotspot. Audubon has been supporting habitat improvement and restoration at Riverlands since 2011. This past year, thanks to a \$150,000 grant from Phillips 66, targeted areas at Riverlands were planted in native seed as part of the newly launched Great Rivers Pollinator Habitat Partnership (GRPHP). GRPHP is being spearheaded by the US Army Corps Rivers Project Office with support from our Center and other likeminded partners.

Most landscaping plants available in nurseries are poor food sources for birds and pollinators. More native plants mean more choices for food and shelter for native wildlife. The addition of the Corps' new Riverlands Greenhouse is now fueling native habitat restoration at Riverlands, pollinator demonstration gardens at the Center, Plant for Birds, and volunteer and education programs to promote the use of native plants in home, community, and commercial landscapes!

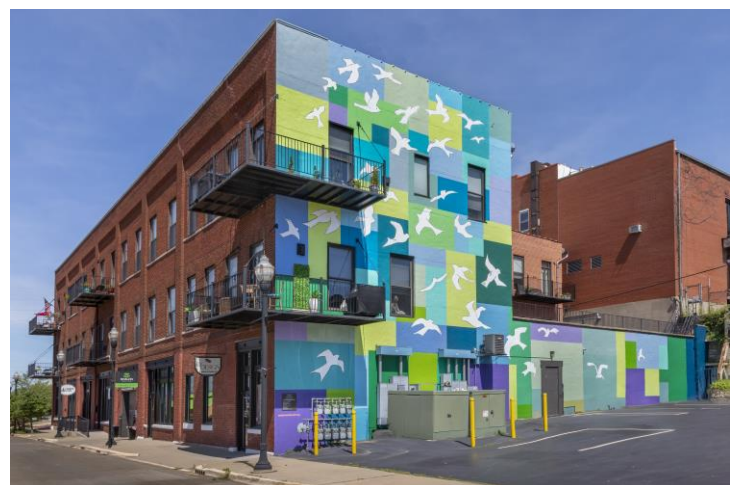
Loss of habitat and human development are key reasons for the lack of suitable trees for cavity nesting birds. Since 2019, we have been working with partners and volunteers to provide essential nesting habitat for American Kestrels, Eastern Bluebirds, Purple Martins, Tree Swallows and Wood Ducks. This past spring and early summer 18 kestrel chicks were hatched and subsequently banded, and 104 martins were hatched. Banding helps conservation scientists identify and track birds and provide clues to, among other things, understanding the birds' population health.



Ribbon cutting for the Riverlands Greenhouse in late November. Photo: Staff

Birds & Climate - Alton Flyway Mural

Community collaboration combined with the leadership of Audubon Center at Riverlands Advisory Board members Penny Schmidt and Susan Flader resulted in the Alton Flyway Mural, an Audubon Mural Project, in downtown Alton. This project represents the efforts of local partners to beautify Alton and raise awareness of the Mississippi River's importance to birds and the threat of climate change to many bird species. Thank you to Alton Main Street, Friends of Alton Main Street, Ruth Arts Foundation, Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, Pride Incorporated, Sierra Club Palisades Group, Erie Insurance, Penny Schmidt, Susan Flader, Audubon Center at Riverlands, Alton Foundation, Moon



Alton Flyway Mural. Photo: Rob Schultz

Beam Initiatives, Monica Bristow, and the Mississippi Landing Condominium Association. Learn more about the artists who designed the mural and the mural artist, and the Audubon Mural Project at <https://www.audubon.org/news/alton-flyway-mural-james-k-schmidt-and-robert-fishbone>

Center Named Outstanding Community Partner

The Audubon Center at Riverlands was recognized by the Ferguson-Florissant School District as the Outstanding Community Partner of the Year this past May! The award reflects our Center's commitment to collaborate at Little Creek Nature Area to provide high quality educational experiences that augment academic learning and STEAM skills while exposing students to nature and the outdoors and connecting them to the broader communities (natural and otherwise) around us. "We were grateful to be recognized among such an extraordinary group of faculty, staff, and students who were also being honored for their contributions to the Ferguson-Florissant Schools and community," said Ken Buchholz, Center Director.



Emily Connor, Jonah Eckels and Ken Buchholz on stage with Dr. Joseph Davis Superintendent of Ferguson-Florissant Schools and Board of Education Member Jillian Dunn. Photo: Staff

Partnership to Build Advocates for a Healthy Mississippi Rivers Grows Stronger

The Mississippi River is vital to millions of birds and people, but people care only about what they understand and appreciate. As such, several years ago, the Riverlands Paddling Partnership was established to connect people of all ages and abilities to the Mississippi River through safe and memorable paddling experiences. Today, the public, students, interns, and "decision-makers" routinely participate in authentic and safe paddling programs at Riverlands!



A Team River Runner prepares to board a kayak during the opening of the accessible dock and kayak launch last September. Photo: Staff

Last fall, the partnership was bolstered by the installation of an accessible kayak dock and launch just below the overlook at Ellis Bay near the Center. A gravel road leading to a small parking area allows for easy access to the dock and launch. We thank our Riverlands Paddling partners, the US Army Corps Rivers Project Office and the Mississippi River Water Trail Association (MRWTA), for successfully securing funding and the shepherding the efforts that brought this project to fruition.

Relatedly, the Center and MRWTA recently added four more kayaks with wider openings to accommodate people with varying abilities, shapes, and sizes to our shared fleet. Yes! We share the costs of boats and related equipment, which allows us to expand and improve our paddling offerings while maximizing donor resources!

Future Conservation Innovators and Leaders

Who will carry our important conservation mission into the future? That is the challenge being met by the Flight Crew and Conservation Leadership Crew internships for high school students from North St. Louis County. These internships also represent two significant components of Nature Education for Stewards of Tomorrow (NEST). This past year, 10 Flight Interns and 20 Conservation Leadership Crew (CLCI) interns gained exposure to conservation careers and professionals, performed hands-on conservation work, learned how to advocate for healthy air, land, and water in their communities, and developed career-building skills. Due to the demand, we increased CLCI to 20 interns last year from six the previous year!



CLCI Interns exploring and learning about local habitat and ecosystems. Photo: Staff

A Summer Nature Camp Like No Other

Exposing kids to the wonders of the outdoors is a gift that will serve them a lifetime. The ways young minds can benefit from exploring nature are virtually limitless. For one thing, countless studies tell us that being outdoors improves mental and physical well-being. Started in 2016, Little Creek Summer Camp continues to be a magical place and time where 100+ grades 3-5 students from Ferguson-Florissant School participate in archery, arts & crafts, bird watching, canoeing, creek exploration, fishing, geocaching, mapping and more! We offer this high caliber summer experience free to campers through a close collaboration with the school district with help from amazing partners like the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Conservation, St. Louis Youth Jobs and others. Even more! Our Flight Crew Interns train and serve as camp counselors gaining valuable teaching and mentoring experience.

MORE HIGHLIGHTS

The Center received the largest individual gift in our history \$300,000 NEST Program over three years from Dianna Adorjan.

Education Manager Emily Connor named the Tamar Chotzen Audubon Educator of the Year.

2000+ NEST students, their schools, and communities were served through inclusive, immersive, STEAM-based environmental education.

100 Ferguson-Florissant Schools 3-5 grade students participated in Little Creek Summer Camp.

30 North County Area high school students prepared for conservation and related careers through the Flight Crew and Conservation Leadership Crew internships

Secured \$150,000 from Phillips 66 for pollinator habitat restoration and related stewardship and education activities via the Great Rivers Pollinator Habitat Partnership (GRPHP).

The Center was awarded Certificate of Appreciation for outstanding educational and conservation programs by Colonel Andy Panier, Commander, US Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District.

18 American Kestrel chicks and 104 Purple Martin Chicks hatched through the Riverlands Nest Box Program.

7,000 people of all ages participated in Birds of Winter and MDC's Eagle Days at Riverlands!

Secured \$36,000 from the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) to help fuel bird habitat restoration at the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary over the past two years.

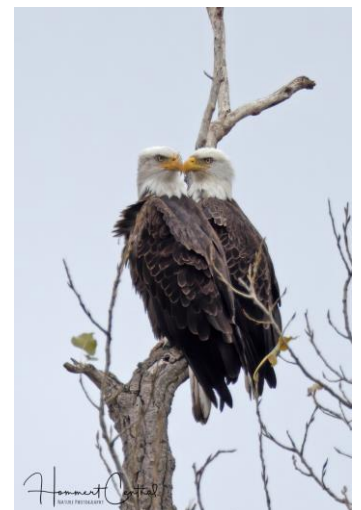
Thank you to the following contributors who made gifts, grants and pledges to the Audubon Center at Riverlands from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

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Ruth Foundation for the Arts
Trustee Discretionary Grant
Scott Schnuck



Trumpeter Swans at Riverlands. Photo: Madi Hawn



Bald Eagles at Riverlands. Photo: Doug Hommert



American White Pelican at Riverlands. Photo: Morris Finkelstein

Bald Eagle

Robert Horton and Anne Rankin Horton
Edgar Schmidt Charitable Fund of the St. Louis Community Foundation
Penelope Schmidt
Sarah Trulaske

American White Pelican

Widman Construction
Karen and Glenn Meyer

Great Egret

Anonymous
Dave Becher
Patrick Osborne & Nancy Birge
Dale and Ken Buchholz
Ron Wienstroer and Diane Compardo



Great Egret at Riverlands. Paul Moffett

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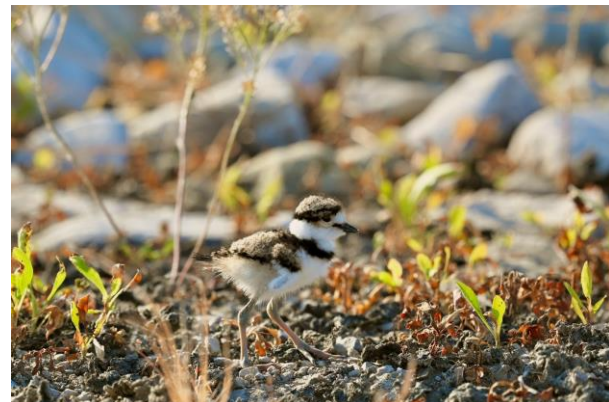
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Brigadier General Kimberly Peeples and Colonel Andy Pannier awarded the US Army Corps Certificate of Appreciation to Center Director Ken Buchholz and Conservation Science Manager Tara Hohman in September. Photo: Staff



Center Director Ken Buchholz serving on a Boeing Community Partners Panel last fall. Photo: Staff



One of several Killdeer chicks hatched at Riverlands this past spring. Photo: Paul Moffett

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Sustainer

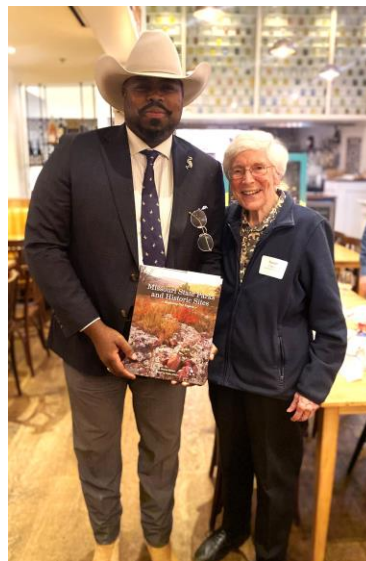
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Eric Hadley of Ferguson-Florissant Schools with Center staff and Advisory Board Member Jodi Welsh (fourth from left) at Little Creek Nature Area on Earth Day 2024. Photo: Staff



Center Advisory Board Member Susan Flader presented a signed copy of her book, Missouri State Parks & Historic Sites, to Audubon Chief Conservation Officer Marshall Johnson this past winter. Marshall spoke to local Audubon supporters about Flight Plan, our new strategic framework to bend the bird curve, and the Center's success efforts to advance the plan. Photo: Staff



Field techs were "knee deep" during point count avian surveys earlier this summer. Their bird monitoring efforts touched 49,000 acres of bottomland forest spanning 100 miles of the Mississippi River. Photo: Staff

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Bob Keller
Jan Koch
Patti Kolek
Patricia and Joseph Kovac
Kathy Krizec
Lorraine LaRose
Nadia Mahfood
Mary McIntyre



In Memoriam

Patty Hagen was our founding Director and a great friend to Audubon. Her positive impact is still being felt today through the wonder and joy of nature that greets each visitor who walks through our doors.

Memorial Donors

Aimee Bhasme
Ken and Dale Buchholz
Anna Chott
Aram and Claudia Karagoz
Tia Kropf-Beringer
Richard Pallardy
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Laura Reilson
Deborah Reiter
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Timothy Wycoff

In Memoriam

Dianna Adorjan cared deeply about our inclusive and immersive education to build new generations of conservation leaders and innovators and lifelong stewards of nature. Her foresight and generosity have allowed these programs to flourish for which we are forever grateful.

Memorial Donors

James and Elizabeth Berges
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More Tributes

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 Thomas Sanger
 Katharine Schneider
 Adrian and Ruth Sulser
 Katherine Swartzell
 Rheba Symeonoglou
 Valerie Treichel
 Lynn Valeri
 Stephen Wright
 Michael Zeloski



Pictured to the right holding the fish banner is Ivan Bossert, a USFWS Urban Fellow. He is learning and supporting conservation and education efforts at the Center and Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge for a year. His fellowship was made possible through the Mano Project (My Access to a Network of Opportunities) which partners with the USFWS to offer unique paid work experiences that develop young leaders.

In the photo Ivan is assisting with a NEST RiverVision Program at Riverlands, where high school students are learning about a vital component of the Mississippi River ecosystem, its fisheries. Photo: Staff

Thank you to our sponsors, and Give STL Day and in-kind donors!



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 Jonah Eckels, Education Coordinator
 Tarah Hohman, Conservation Science Manager, UMR
 Ashley Lockwood, Educator
 John McGrath, Weekend Assistant



Volunteer Dwight Curry sharing his love and knowledge of birds during Birds of Winter.
Photo: Staff

Hybrid sculptures by local artist Alana Tibbets are helping tell the story of the birds that “travel” through Riverlands during their incredible spring and fall migratory journeys. This site-specific art installation and companion programming is made possible by Ruth Arts Foundation Trustee Discretionary Grant.
Photo: Sydney Walsh



WHAT WILL YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

You don't have to be wealthy to make a significant gift to the Audubon Center at Riverlands for the conservation and education work you care about. You can stretch your giving ability by making us a beneficiary of your will or revocable trust. This one simple sentence can make a lifetime of difference for birds and people:

I bequeath (dollar amount or percent of estate) to the National Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, with its principal offices located at 225 Varick Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY, 10014, for its ongoing environmental conservation and education purposes at the Audubon Center at Riverlands.

Use this codicil in your estate planning and/or share it with your financial advisor then [let us know](#) so we can properly recognize you for your foresight and generosity.



A Northern Harrier soaring over Riverlands in November.
Photo: Debbie Downing