

MDC Offers Hunters a Guide to Birding

Hunters spend a lot of time watching nature. The eyes and the mind wander while waiting to spot a deer or call in a turkey. Often, songbirds are what are seen moving about in the woods. Since hunters value variety in their connection with nature, many often wonder what name goes with the songbird sitting in yonder tree. The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Parma Woods Shooting Range is offering a class for the bird-curious hunter, Birding from the Blind.

The free Birding from the Blind program will be offered from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 10, at MDC's Parma Woods Shooting Range, 15900 N.W. River Road, Parkville.

"Hunter's spend a lot of time sitting in their blinds or hunting spots and they see all kinds of wildlife," said Nathan Woodland, supervisor at Parma Woods. "We're going to teach them some basic things about bird identification and bird behavior, especially about fall birds they may see when they're out."

Many birds are year-round residents in Missouri while others migrate through in spring and fall. Missouri's grasslands, forests, woodlands and wetlands are important stopovers for many migrating birds. Autumn and winter offer chances to see unusual birds, such as short-eared owls that prefer grasslands, especially native prairies.

A hunter may easily recognize a male cardinal by the red feathers. But they may not know a fall migrant such as the white-throated sparrow or the white-crowned sparrow. Colorful cedar waxwings nibbling berries from a shrub near a hunter's stand can arouse curiosity. Appreciating nature's diversity is one reason hunters enjoy time afield, whether they harvest game or not.

"It's really just a general class about songbirds and can be interesting for people who see them while doing all types of hunting," Woodland said.

Participants will learn fun facts about Missouri's unique fall and winter bird species. They will also receive some take-home materials to help with spotting and identifying birds. Registration is required by Nov. 9. The program is geared for ages 11 or older. For more information or to register, call 816-891-9941.

A reminder to those heading outdoors this fall: Buy hunting and fishing permits from vendors around the state, online at mdc.mo.gov/buypermits, or through MDC's free mobile apps -- Mo Hunting and Mo Fishing -- available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices. **NEW: SAVE TIME by buying permits for yourself, family, and friends in a single transaction. Select the "Additional Customer" option during your permit purchase.**