

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid RG 103.03

Missouri Department of Conservation Photograph Collection

Abstract: This photograph collection contains well over 125,000 images taken by Missouri Department of Conservation staff featuring Missouri wildlife, scenery, educational activities, and employees. The collection also includes a series of photographs donated to the Department by the Missouri Outdoor Writers Association, or MOWA, as well as a series of Stream Team events.

Extent: 41.88 cubic feet.

Record Description: Photographic prints, 35mm and 110mm slides, color transparencies, digital photographs, paper.

Alternative Formats: TIF images for the Photographic Prints, Slides – Processed, and Butterflies and Moths Series.

Location: Missouri State Archives.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions: Some 35mm slides are restricted due to the presence of endangered species locations, graphic, and sensitive images. See the spreadsheet index for details.

Publication Restrictions: Copyright is in the public domain. Items reproduced for online or physical publication should carry the credit line: Courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

Preferred Citation: [Item description], [Date]; [Box and Folder] OR [Image Number]; [Series]; Record Group 103.03 Missouri Department of Conservation Photograph Collection; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

Acquisition Information: Agency Transfers and Deed of Gift. Accession Numbers 2011-0051, 2019-0198, 2021-0020, 2024-0024, 2025-0017, 2025-0088.

Processing Information: For the Photographic Prints series: initial processing completed by Amy Moorman on 03/30/2012. Scanning completed by volunteer Lynda Stubblefield, late 2017. Final processing by Erika Woehlk on 04/16/2018. All other series processed by EW. Finding aid last updated by EW on 06/12/2026.

Historical and Biographical Notes

The voters of Missouri passed Constitutional Amendment No. 4 by initiative petition in November 1936 that created the Missouri Conservation Commission and the Department of Conservation (MDC). The Conservation Commission is a four-person board appointed by the Governor of Missouri. The Commission, in turn, appoints a director of the MDC. The MDC is run primarily by monies gathered through sales of hunting, fishing, trapping, etc. licenses and a 1/8th of 1% sales tax. Because the Department is not funded by the state through the state budget, it is referred to as a “non-political” organization.

Prior to 1936, the State of Missouri had a Game and Fish Commission. See the timeline below.

Timeline

Date	Event
04/17/1877	Fish Commission created by House Bill 412, signed on April 17, 1877, effective July 30, 1877. The law created a three-person Fish Commission whose sole duty it was to stock Missouri streams and lakes with “cheap and nutritious” fish to serve as food. A few thousand dollars were allotted to the Commission to begin its work. They established a hatchery to carry out their mission.
03/10/1905	State Game and Fish Warden position created by House Bill 15, signed on March 10, 1905, effective June 16, 1905, for “the preservation, propagation and protection of game animals, birds and fish.” This act was nicknamed “Walmsley Game Law.”
04/04/1907	The Walmsley Game Law is repealed with House Bill 55, signed on April 4, 1907, effective June 14, 1907.
05/14/1909	State Game and Fish Commissioner position created by Senate Bill 80, signed on May 14, 1909, effective August 16, 1909.
05/13/1919	House Bill 634, signed on May 13, 1919, effective August 7, 1919, transferred all the property and powers of the State Fish Commission to the State Game and Fish Commission.
11/08/1936	Constitutional Amendment No. 4 passed, creating the Missouri Conservation Commission and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Primary advocacy for this initiative came from the private Conservation Federation of Missouri.
02/25/1938	Missouri Attorney General Roy McKittrick attempted to oust newly-appointed Missouri Department of Conservation Director Irwin T. Bode. He failed. See Supreme Court case file SC35873.
05/17/1968	The MDC began research exploring new ways of funding and running the Department. A. Starker Leopold, Charles H. Callison, and Irving K. Fox were hired to write a report.
10/13/1971	The Citizen’s Committee for Conservation (CCC) launched its initiative petition to create a soda tax of 1 cent per can to benefit the MDC. Despite getting well over the requisite number of signatures, the petition was ruled invalid by the Missouri Supreme Court in September 1972. See case file SC58080 State ex rel. Theodore B. Scott and Ed Stegner vs. James C. Kirkpatrick and Thomas D. Graham.

Date	Event
11/02/1976	Constitutional Amendment No. 1 was passed, creating a 1/8th of 1% sales tax to help fund the Department. This initiative – as well as the soda tax (above) – was called “Design for Conservation.”

Additional Descriptive Information

Bibliography

Dufur, Brett. *The Promise Continues: 75 Years of Citizen-Led Conservation in Missouri*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation, 2013.

Heitzman, J. Richard and Joan E. Heitzman. *Butterflies and Moths of Missouri*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation, 1987.

Keefe, James F. *Missouri Department of Conservation: The First 50 Years*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation, 1987.

Nagel, Werner O. *Conservation Contrasts: Three Decades of Non-Political Management of Wildlife and Forests in Missouri*. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Conservation, 1970.

Other Finding Aids

Item-by-item listing of photographs in the Digital Only, Photographic Prints, Slides – Processed, and Butterflies and Moths Series is available in-house upon request.

Original table of contents by subject for the Slides – Subject Only Series is available in-house upon request.

Related Material

RG000.103 Missouri Department of Conservation State Documents
 RG103 Missouri Department of Conservation (archival records)
 RG103.01 Conservation Video Reel Content Listing
 RG103.02 Conservation Deeds
 RG103.04 MDC Leroy Korschgen Collection
 RG103.05 MDC William Pflieger Collection
 RG110 Missouri Department of Natural Resources Photograph Collection
 RG998 MS192 Gerald Massie Photograph Collection
 RG998 MS289 Conservation Federation of Missouri
 RG998 MS384 Missouri: Our Fish, Game, Song Birds and Forestry
 RG998 MS410 Edward Kopplin Conservation Collection
 RG998 MS500 Tom R. Johnson Conservation Collection
 RG998 MS520 Lee Redmond Conservation Collection
 RG998 MS531 Ed Ponder Diaries

Many images in this collection were printed in the Department's magazine, the *Missouri Conservationist*. Back issues of this magazine are available on Missouri Digital Heritage here: <https://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/moconserv>.

The Missouri Department of Conservation's website is <https://mdc.mo.gov>.

Series

The records are organized into the following series:

Butterflies and Moths of Missouri, 1986
Digital Photographs, 1986-2013
Photographic Prints, 1903-1995
Slides – Processed, c1953-1991
Slides – Subject Only, c1960s-2000s
Stream Team Photographs, 1934-2016

Butterflies and Moths of Missouri, 1986

Extent: 292 images, 0.09 cubic feet.

Arrangement: Original slide number.

Scope and Content

In 1987, J. Richard Heitzman and Joan E. Heitzman published a book with the Missouri Department of Conservation called *Butterflies and Moths of Missouri*. The publication included hundreds of photographs of the Heitzmans' butterfly and moth specimens taken by MDC photographer Jim Rathert. This series contains butterfly photographs used in the book on pages six and 101 to 199.

Photographs range from June to October 1986. The specimens were collected from the 1950s through 1980s primarily in Missouri with a few from Texas, Florida, and a handful of other locations. This series is not digitized.

See the spreadsheet "Butterfly Slides" tab for item-by-item descriptions, available in-house upon request.

Container List

Location	Folder	Sheet	Contents	Dates
	1	1-2	Family Pieridae: Sulphurs, Orange Tips, Whites	1986
	1	3-8	Family Lycaenidae: Blues, Coppers, Hairstreaks	1986
	1-2	8-9	Family Riodinidae: Metalmarks	1986
	2	9	Family Libytheidae: Snout Butterflies	1986
	2	9	Family Heliconiidae: Heliconians	1986
	2	9-13	Family Nymphalidae: Brush-Footed Butterflies	1986
	2	13-14	Family Apaturidae	1986
	2	14-16	Family Satyridae: Ringlets, Satyrs, Wood Nymphs	1986
	2	16	Family Danaidae: Queens, Monarchs	1986
	2	16	Specimen Processing	1986

Digital Photographs, 1986-2013

Extent: 43 images, 4.23 GB.

Arrangement: Alphabetical by image name.

Scope and Content

This series contains born-digital photographs and scans of 35mm slides transferred to the Archives by a request for images related to Missouri's official state symbols. Many state symbols represent Missouri's plants and animals. A full listing is on the Secretary of State's website here: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/symbols>.

This series is available online through [Missouri Digital Heritage](#). Some are also on Flickr.

See the spreadsheet "Digital Only" tab for item-by-item descriptions, available in-house upon request.

Container List

Location	Barcode	Contents	Dates
	0004282879	Processed access copy of 42 digital-only photographs (1.41 GB)	1986-2013
	0004570756	Original preservation copy of 42 digital-only photographs, second copy of processed images, and basic index (2.82 GB)	1986-2013
	0004282879	1 digital-only image of a turtle toy (1.12 MB)	2006

Photographic Prints, 1903-1995

Extent: 4,554 images; 19.5 cubic feet.

Arrangement: Alphabetical by subject.

Scope and Content

This photograph collection contains over 4,500 images taken by MDC photographers and others from 1903-1995. Primary photographers were Don Wooldridge, Jim Rathert, Russ Reagan, and Dawn Drainer-Stegeman; most are from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1990s. Topics include plants, wildlife, Department events, hunting, fishing, landscapes, and staff portraits. The collection also includes a series of photographs donated to MDC by the Missouri Outdoor Writers Association, or MOWA.

All prints are digitized as 300dpi tifs and are on DVDs in Reference and the Vault. They are also available online through [Missouri Digital Heritage](#).

A few prints are restricted due to sensitive content. See the spreadsheet index for details.

See the spreadsheet “Prints” tab for item-by-item descriptions, available in-house upon request.

Container List

Location	Boxes	Folders	Contents	Dates
	1-12		B&W Photographic Prints	1903-1995
	13-24		B&W Photographic Prints	
	25-36		B&W Photographic Prints	
	37-47		B&W Photographic Prints	
	OB1	1-5	Oversized B&W Photographic Prints	
	4	B	Oversized B&W Photographic Prints	

Slides – Processed, c1953-1991

Extent: 198 images; 0.04 cubic feet.

Arrangement: Image number.

Scope and Content

This series contains a set of 35mm slides used for a slide show dated around 1953-1955 as well as two 35mm color positive transparency strips from 1991. The slide show was jointly-produced by the Missouri Conservation Commission and the National Wildlife Federation. Unfortunately, the original order of the slides is lost and there is no transcript; slides appear in the order they were found.

Digital scans of this series are online through [Missouri Digital Heritage](#).

See the spreadsheet “Slides – Processed” tab for item-by-item descriptions, available in-house upon request.

Container List

Location	Barcode	Box	Contents	Dates
	0005122397	1	101 color 35mm slides and two color positive strips (10 images)	1991 and c1953-1955
	0005122398	2	87 color 35mm slides	1991 and c1953-1955
	0005241781		Preservation scans on DVD (970 MB)	1991 and c1953-1955

Slides – Subject Only, c1960s-c2000s

Extent: approximately 122,880 images; 17 cubic feet.

Arrangement: Original subject order maintained.

Scope and Content

The Department of Conservation employed many photographers over the years, and their catalogs are prolific. This series contains a wealth of color images featuring Missouri's animals, plants, natural areas, nature activities, employees, and more.

See an associated Word document for the original table of contents to get an idea of the slide subjects, available in-house upon request.

Preliminary processing of this series was completed on 06/12/2026. This series is not indexed at the item level, nor is it available online. Just over 100 select images are digitized and may be viewed in-house, available upon request.

A few 35mm slides are restricted due to the presence of endangered species locations, graphic, and sensitive images. See the spreadsheet index for details.

See the spreadsheet "Slides – Subject Only" tab for over 5,000 subject descriptions, available in-house upon request.

Container List

Location	Boxes	Contents	Dates
	1-664 & 666	35mm slides	n.d.
	665	110mm slides and two positive transparencies	n.d.

Stream Team Photographs, 1934-2016

Extent: 5.25 cubic feet.

Arrangement: Original order maintained.

Scope and Content

Notebooks containing photographs of Stream Team clean-up operations and related activities and personnel. Most are photographic prints, but some notebooks may include paper records or digital records (3.5" floppy disk, CD-R). Also includes a set of CDs containing .jpg and .tif photographs of Stream Team events and personnel.

This series has not been indexed at the item level, nor is it available online.

Container List

Location	Box or Barcode	Contents	Dates
	1	Photo Album 0 = Cape Girardeau County 4H Stream Team. Includes photographs, newspaper and other articles, project summaries and data reports written by the 4H students.	May-August 2001
	1	Photo Notebook 1 = photo nos. 714-1017	n.d.
	1	Photo Notebook 2 = photo nos. 1018-1290	1990s
	1	Photo Notebook 3 = photo nos. 1291-1546	1990s
	1	Photo Notebook 4 = photo nos. 1547-1767	1990s
	1	Photo Notebook 5 = photo nos. 1768-2450	1990s
	1	Photo Notebook 6 = photo nos. 2451-2650	1990s-2000
	1	Photo Notebook 7 = photo nos. 2651-3440	2001
	2	Photo Notebook 8 = photo nos. 3441-3700	1990s-2001
	2	Photo Notebook 9 = photo nos. 3701-4001	2002
	2	Photo Notebook 10 = photo nos. 4002-4209	2002
	2	Photo Notebook 11 = photo nos. 4210-4388	2002?
	2	Photo Notebook 12 = photo nos. 4406-4606	2001-2002
	2	Photo Notebook 13 = photo nos. 4607-4970	2002-2003
	3	Photo Notebook 14 = photo nos. 4973-5202	2003
	3	Photo Notebook 15 = photo nos. 5203-5400	2003
	3	Photo Notebook 16 = photo nos. 5401-5558	2004
	3	Photo Notebook 17 = photo nos. 5564-5885	2002-2005
	3	Photo Notebook 18 = photo nos. 5886-6072	2005-2006
	3	Photo Notebook 19 = photo nos. 6073-6338	2005-2007
	4	Photo Notebook 20 = photo nos. 6339-6463	2006-2007
	4	Photo Notebook 21 = photo nos. 6464-6632	2007-2008

	4	Photo Notebook 22 = photo nos. 6633-6732	1934-1965 & 2007
	4	Photo Notebook 23 = photo nos. 6733-6902	2008
	4	Photo Notebook 24 = photo nos. 6903-7070	2008
	4	Photo Notebook 25 = photo nos. 7071-7245	2006-2009
	4	Photo Notebook 26 = photo nos. 7246-7394	2008-2010
	5	Photo Notebook 27 = photo nos. 7395-7542	2002-2010
	5	Photo Notebook 28 = photo nos. 7543-7617	2002-2011
	5	Photo Notebook 29 = photo nos. 7618-7681	2006-2011
	5	Photo Notebook 30 = photo nos. 7683-7914	2010-2013
	5	Photo Notebook 31 = photo nos. 7915-8046	2010-2014
	6	Photo Notebook 32 = photo nos. 8047-8192	2013-2016
	6	Photo Notebook 33 = photo nos. 8193-8225	2014-2015
	0004773400	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 1 (655MB)	2001
	0004773401	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 2 – disk is corrupted and could not be read, as of 02/02/2021	
	0004773402	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 3 (283MB)	2001-2004
	0004773403	CD-RW, Stream Team Photos Disk 4 (237MB)	2003-2005
	0004773404	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 5 (171MB)	2001-2005
	0004773405	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 6 (136MB)	2002-2006
	0004773406	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 7 (291MB)	2005-2006
	0004773407	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 8 (226MB)	2001-2007
	0004773408	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 9 (531MB)	2003-2013
	0004773409	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 10A (463MB)	2002-2015
	0004773410	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 10B (532MB)	2006-2012
	0004773411	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 11A (666MB)	2006-2012
	0004773412	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 11B (114MB)	2010-2013
	0004773413	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 11C (670MB)	2010-2013
	0004773414	DVD+R, Stream Team Photos Disk 12 (420MB) – original CD-R disk was corrupted. All but one file recovered using FRED and a new disk was burned on 02/02/2021.	2008-2013
	0004773415	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 13 (380MB)	2008-2014
	0004773416	CD-R, Stream Team Photos Disk 14 (641MB)	2013-2015