



The Missouri Ozarks Campaign for Conservation

The place: An ancient, unglaciated landscape, the Ozarks is home to 407 species of global conservation significance with more than 160 species that are endemic, occurring nowhere else in the world.

The issue: According to Conservancy scientists, nearly half of the best rivers in the Ozarks are highly threatened. If inappropriate development and damaging land management practices continue at the present rate, these watersheds will be irreparably degraded within the next 10-20 years.

Threats: Altered water flows, loss of forest and woodlands, changes in water quality, unsustainable development, invasion of harmful, non-native species and altered fire regimes.

Conservancy ownership: more than 15,000 acres

Conservation easements: 435 acres

What's new? The Conservancy recently purchased more than 7,000 acres in the Current River watershed with the intention to resell with a conservation easement.

What's next? With support from donors and partners, the Conservancy will continue to acquire targeted lands when they come on the market and create permanent conservation easements on the land to sustain water and timber quality and important natural features.

Action needed: A donation to the Howard and Joyce Wood Conservation Buyer Fund will be matched 1:1, up to \$2 million. An unrestricted gift will go into three funds: \$815,000 for program management and implementation, \$1 million for stewardship endowment and \$200,000 for easement defense.



Late afternoon on the Current River © Byron Jorjorian

The origin of the Ozarks can be traced back 1.5 billion years to a volcanic mountain range. These rocks are exposed today in the St. Francois mountain area of southeast Missouri. Evidence of these ancient mountains can be seen in the red volcanic rocks of Elephant Rocks and Johnson's Shut-Ins state parks. Shallow seas covered the Ozarks from 500 to 100 million years ago, depositing sand and limestone sediment seen in the bluffs along scenic Ozark rivers and streams. During the last 225 million years parts of this landscape have been the only area in the central United States continuously inhabited by plants and animals, not touched by glaciers or oceans, which explains the rich diversity of life in the Ozarks.

The Ozarks are a geologically remarkable place with caves and springs that produce hundreds of millions of gallons of water daily. The Ozarks also include an incredible variety of landscape and habitat types, from oak woodlands and savannas to pine and glade landscapes. Fen communities, specialized wetlands with highly mineralized groundwater, harbor rare salamanders, orchids, wood frogs and dragonflies.

The region also provides critical breeding habitat for migratory birds and has many rare aquatic species, including fish, mussels and crayfish found nowhere else on earth.



Sunrise on the Current River © Byron Jorjorian

The Current River

The Conservancy's efforts in the Ozarks focus on preserving the Current and Meramec rivers. The Conservancy is purchasing strategic tracts within the Current River watershed and reselling them to private landowners who agree to conservation easements for sustainable forestry. Using these successes as a foundation, the Conservancy will expand the project to preserve and restore freshwater systems through the region.

In addition, canebrakes and shortleaf pine habitats are being restored. Canebrakes are native bamboo stands that grow along the Current River. These endangered habitats are home to the world's largest population of Swainson's warblers. Most of the original four million acres of shortleaf pine in the Ozarks were logged by 1920. However, the remaining pines are threatened by fire suppression, logging and land conversion for pasture and development. The Conservancy is partnering with federal agencies and partners, including the Mark Twain National Forest and the National Park Service, to restore canebrakes, native trees, shortleaf pine habitat and other natural systems in the area. With diligence, sound science and donor

support, the Conservancy will help keep the waters clear and woodlands vibrant throughout the Ozarks by linking healthy economies and healthy ecologies.



Ozark Hellbender

The Ozark hellbender salamander, is a rare, 150-million year old species that has managed to survive several ice ages but may not survive the degradation of Ozarks streams. As the largest salamander in North America, a hellbender can grow to a length of 29 inches, weigh as much as five pounds and live for nearly 30 years. They prefer clear, cool streams and rivers with rocky bottoms. The Ozark hellbender is listed as endangered in Missouri and recent surveys show an alarming lack of young hellbenders.

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Controlled fire

Controlled fire is an effective management tool used in the Ozarks, which benefits deep-rooted grasses and flowers by removing dead vegetation, encouraging new growth and preventing the infiltration of brush, and non-native plants.

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