

I didn't return till after dark on Tuesday. Wednesday morning the temperature on my back porch was 33 ° F. The birdbath had a skin of ice, but I caught a brief view of a dark bird at the nectar feeder. Surely this is some rare stray! Wed. evening that I saw the bird again, and was shocked to see that it looked exactly like a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird! Ruby-throats are the only hummer normally present in our area, but they should be gone by October 10 or so. Males migrate earlier than females and juveniles. I don't remember *ever* seeing one after mid-September.

I didn't get to study the bird long before the light was gone. That's when I checked my email to find Margy's wonderful photos of Lanny examining the bird in hand. It was indeed a male Ruby-throat. It may not be the latest Ruby-throat ever, but it's likely to be the latest confirmed adult male record. As you can see in the photos, he is a worn individual. His weight was good however, and Lanny saw no reason that the bird would have trouble migrating to his [winter home in southern Mexico or even Panama](#).

I spotted the bird again Thursday and Friday mornings and evenings, still visiting the last of my Big blue sage (*Salvia guaranitica*) and Mexican bush sage (*S. leucantha*). The sages and the bird had weathered near-freezing temperatures for 3 nights.

Saturday we warmed up to 60°, but I didn't see the bird again until Nov. 23. He remained until Nov. 26. Let's hope that soon he'll be rubbing shoulders with Violet Sabrewings. Thanks to Margy Terpstra for the use of her photos and to Lanny Chambers for enabling us to play a role in the study of hummingbird migration. You can see more of Margy's photos on my blog, [Gardening with Binoculars](#).



## Isn't She Splendid?!

### *Ted C. MacRae*

This gorgeous female *Cicindela splendida* emerged recently from one of my rearing containers. She was one of several 3rd instar larvae that I collected this past June from their burrows in a dolomite glade in southeastern Missouri. I had suspected



*Cicindela splendida* (Splendid Tiger Beetle), Bald Hill Glade Natural Area, Ripley Co., Missouri.

they might represent this species because of the bright, metallic sheen on their heads and decided to rear them out to find out for sure. Rearing tiger beetles is fun and easy—all you have to do is fill a container with native soil, make a “starter” burrow<sup>1</sup> and drop them in. In this case, I also partially sunk a native rock into the soil in the center of the container, something I have started doing recently as it gives the emerged adult an elevated and more visually appealing surface on which to perch than the soil should I desire to take photographs.

With tiger beetle rearing, feeding time is fun time! Our lab rears insects for testing in abundance, and there are always leftovers. Really just about any insect that can be pulled into the burrow will be acceptable as prey, but lepidopteran caterpillars are my favorite. I use mostly early instar tobacco hornworm larvae, choosing the size as appropriate for the size of the tiger beetle larva—the big ones (e.g. 3rd instar *Tetracha*) can handle caterpillars 35-40 mm in length and 6-8 mm in diameter, while neonates must be used for the smallest ones (e.g.

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<sup>1</sup> Larvae will dig new burrows on their own, but starter burrows allow you to place the burrow where you want it. They are essential if more than one larva is introduced to the container, as wandering larvae will fight when they encounter each other. I like to start the burrow in a corner of the container (a pencil works great for this) and push down to the bottom of the container so I can see into the burrow from outside to monitor the larva as it develops. After introducing the larva to its burrow, I push the soil around the entrance to seal it lightly to keep the larva from immediately crawling back out. The larva will eventually reopen the burrow but generally accepts it, digging it out further to its liking and shaping the entrance to precisely fit the size and shape of its head.



Reared from 3rd instar larva, burrow in sparsely vegetated clay exposure of dolomite glade.

1st instar *Cylindera celeripes* and *C. cursitans*). I find it endlessly entertaining to sneak up on the larva sitting at the entrance of its burrow, slowly position a caterpillar above the burrow entrance with forceps, and dangle it to entice the tiger beetle larva to lurch out, grab the caterpillar, and drag it down into its burrow—all in a split second! If the larva drops down from the burrow entrance during my approach I just drop the caterpillar into the burrow (though this isn't nearly as much fun).

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## “Paint the Parks” Exhibit

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### *George Yatskievych*

The Paint America Association organizes two of the largest juried annual art competitions in the country. One of these is known as the “Paint the Parks” exhibit and is open to entries from painters in a variety of media, with the only restriction being that the subject matter must be based on a unit of the National Park Service. The top 100 paintings each year are displayed at various sites across the country. It is a well-kept secret that this traveling show has appeared in St. Louis during most years. The Old Courthouse downtown is part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, which includes the Gateway Arch. Its central rotunda is the place to see these amazing works of art. The show opened October 7 and runs through January 9, 2012. Admission is free and the Old Courthouse is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, please consult the following web page: <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/parknews/paint-the-parks-exhibit.htm>.

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## Nature Walks at Emmenegger Park

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### *Anne McCormack*

Walks meet at the trailhead shelter by the creek. Sponsored by Kirwood Parks and Recreation.

- **Saturday, January 21.** “Cabin Fever” Bird Walk. Leader Sue Gustafson. Walk begins at 9:30 a.m.

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## Nature Classes at St. Louis Community College—Spring 2012

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### *Nels Holmberg*

Attached is a list of nature classes offered by St. Louis Community College for Spring 2012.

#### **Grass Identification Workshop NATR 723 600] May 18 & 19, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Meramec campus.**

This class will cover grass identification and the appreciation of grass diversity from one of Missouri's experts on grass identification, Paul McKenzie of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and will include both classroom and field instruction. Offered in cooperation with Missouri Native Plant Society. Text book required: Steyermark's Flora of Missouri, Vol. 1; George Yatskievych author.

#### **Feeder Watch Program: Great Backyard Bird Count and Identification [NATR 709 650]**

**January 24, 7:00–09:00 p.m., Meramec campus.**  
**January 28, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m., off campus.**

This class is a citizens' science course joining in cooperation with fellow bird enthusiasts across the country to help track the migration of birds across North America. This course includes bird identification, computer input and preparations for the February event run by Cornell University, and The Backyard Bird Count. Great for classroom teachers! Offered in cooperation with the St. Louis Audubon Society.

#### **Warblers [NATR 709 651]**

**March 27, 7:00–09:00 p.m., Meramec campus.**

Learn about the colorful spring migrant birds known as the warblers. Which are year-round residents in our area? Which breed in our area?