

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 85, ISSUE 6, JUNE 2024
SERVING NATURE & YOU



KEEP WILD ANIMALS WILD



City or countryside, Missouri's wild animals are your neighbors, and finding a young animal alone doesn't mean it needs help. In spring and early summer, deer and other wild animals are sometimes left alone for long periods while their parents look for food. If you see young wildlife in the outdoors, don't assume it is abandoned or hurt.

LEAVE YOUNG WILDLIFE ALONE.

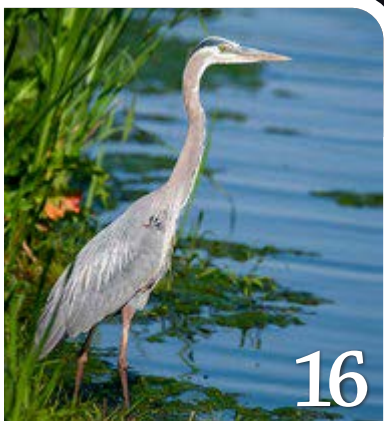
If you believe an animal is in distress,
notify the closest Missouri Department of Conservation office.

mdc.mo.gov/contact-us



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MISSOURI
CONSERVATIONIST



ON THE COVER

Summer wildflowers

NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

400mm lens, f/5.6
1/200 sec, ISO 800

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Inbox



Letters to the Editor

Submissions reflect readers' opinions and may be edited for length and clarity. Email Magazine@mdc.mo.gov or write to us:

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LOVE FOR THE BIRDS

I love this magazine and hope you will continue to send it to us. The picture of the red-bellied woodpecker on the April cover was nice and bright.

Mahlon N. Schwartz
Seymour



LEAVE WILDLIFE WILD

I am writing as I appreciated the recent article *Leave Wildlife Wild* [In Brief, April, Page 5]. It was correct in telling adults and children that oftentimes the best thing one can do for baby animals (or grown ones that seem injured) is to leave them alone as most likely they are not truly "alone."

The one thing I would add is that this rule also applies just as much to those who attempt to capture images on social media of themselves standing by (or even handling) wildlife.

Whether you think you're helping a baby critter or just trying to get a good Instagram picture, neither one is an excuse for disturbing wildlife.

David Bitterbaum Ballwin

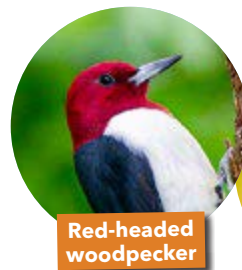
WHICH WOODPECKER IS WHICH?

I look forward each month to receiving your wonderfully informative magazines. The articles are well-written and the pictures — particularly those by Noppadol Paothong — are spectacular.

The cover photo for the April issue is identified as a red-bellied woodpecker. I had been taught that this bird is a red-headed woodpecker. Which name is correct?

Marialiee Enghauser St. Louis

The closely related red-bellied woodpecker, which was on our April cover, and the



Red-headed woodpecker



Red-bellied woodpecker

red-headed woodpecker are often confused in name only. The red-headed woodpecker has an all-red head, throat, and nape of neck. The red-bellied woodpecker, in contrast, only has a wide band of red from its bill over its crown to the nape. It also has a reddish lower belly, giving the bird its name.

FUTURE OF TURKEY HUNTING

I was heartened to read the account of Cara Coates' burgeoning interest in turkey hunting under the mentorship of her spouse, Ryan, because such young hunters are the future of our sport [A Hunter's Journey, April, Page 10]. With her enthusiasm and fortitude, I'm sure her future will provide many gobble-filled mornings — and eventually a punched tag.

John Erkmann Alaska

LOVE FROM JAPAN

My wife and I live in Japan now, but we enjoy so much the *Missouri Conservationist*. It is nice to see the photos of places we used to visit when we lived in Missouri, and the articles are so informative. The photography is breath-taking. The *Missouri Conservationist* is a real treasure.

Greg Hadley Japan

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Have a Question for a Commissioner?

Send a note using our online contact form at mdc.mo.gov/commissioners.

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The Missouri Department of Conservation protects and manages the fish, forest, and wildlife of the state. We facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.



Want to see your photos in the Missouri Conservationist?

Share your photos on Flickr at [flickr.com/groups/mdcreaderphotos-2024](https://www.flickr.com/groups/mdcreaderphotos-2024) or email Readerphoto@mdc.mo.gov.

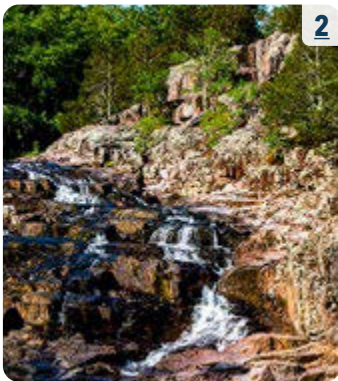


1

1 | Kayakers by **Jeremy Kellhofer**, via email

2 | Rocky Falls by **Tony Cook**, via Flickr

3 | Chipmunk by **Kathleen Brauer**, via Flickr



2



3



Want another chance to see your photos in the magazine?

➔ In the December issue, we plan to feature even more great reader photos. Use the submission methods above to send us your best year-round pictures of native Missouri wildlife, flora, natural scenery, and friends and family engaged in outdoor activities. Please include where the photo was taken and what it depicts.



Up Front

with Sara Parker Pauley

✘ I have anticipated and dreaded this column for nearly a year now. It was last summer that I shared with the Conservation Commission my plans to retire after more than 30 years in the natural resource profession. It was not an easy decision, but the right one as I considered personal priorities, such as caring for family.

Never in a million years would I have imagined becoming the director of MDC when I started my first job here more than 30 years ago. Now decades later, I'm filled with such gratitude for the past and confidence in the future.

It has been such a privilege to serve Missourians in this role. Our agency is second to none nationally — the Missouri Model of conservation standing the test of time. And what makes this model so unique? The independence, the source of funding, the strong and diverse partnerships, but the secret sauce? Strong public support. Thank you, Missourians, for championing MDC and its invaluable mission.

My heart is full of gratitude for our time together — not only for the supportive citizenry, but for the amazing staff that carry out the mission every day. I'm also full of confidence in the future with the commission's naming of Jason Sumners as your next director.

Sometimes I'm asked if there would be a job I would enjoy more than this one, or would I change anything about the circuitous path my life has taken to get here. My response? "Not in a million years."

SARA PARKER PAULEY, DIRECTOR
SARA.PAULEY@MDC.MO.GOV

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Nature LAB

by Dianne Van Dien

Each month, we highlight research MDC uses to improve fish, forest, and wildlife management.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Show-Me Snails

✳️ **Tiny snails that many of us overlook have become the focus of a joint project between MDC, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Missouri Stream Team. The reason? Snails are sensitive to pollutants, which makes them excellent indicators of water quality.**

“Ammonia is highly toxic to mussels and snails,” says MDC Scientist Steve McMurray. “But snails can be even more intolerant of ammonia than mussels can be, and they can be found in streams that are too small to support mussels.”

Under the Clean Water Act, states are required to review their water quality standards every three years, and DNR is reviewing the standards for ammonia. Some ammonia occurs naturally in streams, but too much can cause problems. Knowing which streams have snails and mussels is key for knowing which areas need greater protections. While surveys for mussels have already been done, studies on snails in Missouri are few, so in 2020 when DNR reached out to MDC for snail data, MDC scientists called on the Stream Team for help, and the Show-Me Snails project was born.



Freshwater snails are the most critically imperiled group of animals in the U.S., with 75 percent of species at risk. Snails eat algae, are food for many crayfish and fishes, and are important indicators of water quality.

Volunteers collect snails from streams for water quality and distribution data

“They reached out knowing that we have thousands of active water quality volunteers around the state,” says April Sevy, MDC’s volunteer programs coordinator.

Stream Team volunteers were already visiting streams, so putting snails into collection vials and sending them to MDC staff for identification was a simple task to add. “And if they don’t find any snails,” says Sevy, “that’s also very helpful data for us.”

Snails can live in the tiniest of streams, and “therefore those smaller water bodies deserve protection,” says McMurray. “This data will help DNR more confidently set the standards for ammonia.”

At a Glance

Missouri has 52 species of aquatic snails. They are divided into two main groups: gilled and pouched.

- Gilled snails absorb oxygen from the water through their gills, like fish.
- Pouched snails gulp air at the water’s surface and bring it down into the water with them (similar to holding air in lungs).
- Gilled snails are more sensitive to pollution.
- Show-Me Snails volunteers collect both types.



Thank you, volunteers!

The Show-Me Snails project wouldn’t be successful without volunteers. If you’re interested in volunteering, sign up for the Stream Team at mostreamteam.org and email StreamTeam@mdc.mo.gov to say you’d like to help with snail collections.

In Brief

News and updates from MDC



Summers assists with lake sturgeon tagging efforts on the Osage River earlier this year.

"The commission did a national search for the director position because we knew we had tough shoes to fill with Sara leaving," said Missouri Conservation Commission Chair Steven Harrison. "Jason is uniquely poised for this director role with his background, experience, and national connections in conservation. We are looking forward to a smooth transition with Jason at the helm with high expectations with him as the next director."

As deputy director of resource management, Summers oversees the resource management efforts of the agency, including statewide resource management, regional resource management, and protection. He also leads the regulations committee. Prior to his deputy director role, Summers served as Science Branch chief, leading a team of more than 80 scientists that specialize in fish, forest, and wildlife research and management. He began his career at MDC in 2008 as a private lands deer biologist and later became the head of the state's deer management program.

During Summers' tenure at MDC, he has been instrumental in developing the agency's strategic and operational direction, served as Wildlife Division chief, led the state's white-tailed deer management program, took part in Missouri's elk reintroduction efforts, developed a private lands deer management program, and led the department's effort to develop and implement a chronic wasting disease management and surveillance strategy. He also worked at the national level on the Relevancy Roadmap for state fish and wildlife agencies to enhance conservation efforts through broader engagement.

Summers received a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries *continued on Page 6 »*

JASON SUMMERS NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

MDC DEPUTY DIRECTOR TAPPED TO SUCCEED SARA PARKER PAULEY

➔ The Missouri Conservation Commission has selected Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Deputy Director of Resource Management Jason Summers as MDC's next director, effective June 1. Summers will succeed MDC Director Sara Parker Pauley, who announced her retirement this spring after 30 years of public service. With this appointment, Summers will become the 10th director in the department's 87-year history.

"I am excited and humbled by this opportunity the commission has entrusted me with and the conservation team I get to work with across the state and country," Summers said. "The Missouri outdoors have defined my personal and professional life, so getting to serve in this capacity and continue to tackle the ever-evolving challenges in conservation is an exciting endeavor."

MDC protects and manages the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state, and provides opportunities for citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.

NEW DIRECTOR *(continued from Page 5)*

and Wildlife from the University of Missouri and a Master of Science in Biology from Mississippi State University. He is a National Conservation Leadership Institute fellow, professional member of the Boone and Crockett Club, active with many non-government organization partners, represents MDC on numerous regional and national committees, and has been recognized by the Conservation Federation of Missouri and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for his leadership in science-based approaches to wildlife conservation. He has published popular and scientific articles on wildlife, natural resources management, and conservation relevancy.

Summers grew up in the small town of Lincoln, Mo., where his love for the outdoors began. His interests include hunting, fishing, and camping. He and his family live in Hartsburg.

FREE FISHING DAYS

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to fish, and MDC invites everyone to experience it during Free Fishing Days, June 8 and 9. During Free Fishing Days, anyone may fish in the Show-Me State without buying a fishing permit, trout permit, or trout park daily tag.

Aside from not needing permits, other fishing regulations remain in effect, such as limits on size and number of fish an angler may keep. Special permits may still be required at some county, city, or private fishing areas. Trespass laws remain in effect on private property.

For information on Missouri fishing regulations, fish identification, and more, get a copy of the 2024 *A Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations*, available where permits are sold or online at short.mdc.mo.gov/4gy.

Want to learn to fish? MDC's Discover Nature — Fishing provides a series of free lessons throughout the state. All fishing gear is provided. Learn more at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zty.

Need fishing gear? MDC works with numerous libraries and other locations around the state to loan fishing gear for free. Loaner gear includes fishing poles and simple tackle boxes with hooks, sinkers, and bobbers. Worms, minnows, or other bait are not provided. Find MDC Rod and Reel Loaner Program locations at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZVc.

Need a fishing spot? MDC's free MO Fishing app helps anglers find the best places to fish in Missouri, access regulation information, identify fish by species, and more. Anglers can also buy, store, and show fishing permits right on their mobile devices. MO Fishing is available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices. Learn more at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZJZ.

Ask MDC

Got a Question for Ask MDC?

Send it to AskMDC@mdc.mo.gov
or call 573-522-4115, ext. 3848.

Q: These birds perched in a small opening in bluffs overlooking Lake of the Ozarks. Can you help identify them?

➔ These are black vulture chicks. Their natal down is a buffy, sometimes pinkish color, whereas turkey vultures have fluffy white down. As this species expands its range northward, we can expect to see more black vultures statewide. For more information about black vultures, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/46S.

Q: In recent years I've noticed holes in the leaves of my maple tree. The tree also is turning yellow earlier than normal. Now, several branches are not growing leaves. Any guidance to help me care for this tree?

➔ The holes in the leaves were caused by insects feeding early in the growing season. Generally, this does not harm the tree. And since insects feed baby birds and other animals, conservationists do not recommend spraying insecticides.

However, the early fall color and leaf drop is likely due to the severe drought Missouri has been experiencing multiple seasons in a row. Through mid-April, most of Missouri was



Black vulture chicks

undergoing abnormally dry to severe drought conditions.

Yard trees that don't get a good, soaking rain every two weeks should be watered, according to MDC foresters. Without water, trees are at risk of dying. Water should be applied across the soil surface and allowed to soak into the soil. Surface soaking allows tree roots more chances to absorb any water, helps maintain soil health, and helps maintain essential element cycling and transformations in the soil. A soaker hose or drip irrigation system — which a homeowner can turn on and off — are the best ways to water trees. Even a garden hose, moved often, can provide a good soil soaking. Take care to water the surface beneath the tree's canopy but keep water off the leaves. Foliage that is watered can be sun-scalded or develop fungal foliage disorders.

For more information on how to properly water trees, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/46q.



Gray bats

Q: We think we have a maternity colony of 50 bats nearby. We would like to provide a water source for these local bats and birds, too. Does MDC have any tips?

➔ Bats typically like to roost about 160 yards from a reliable water source. If you already have a sizeable roost that returns consistently, it's likely the bats already are using a water source regularly nearby.

Bats drink water by skimming the surface, lapping water as they go. This means a body of water must be at least 2 to 3 yards across to provide space for this behavior. If

you do install a cattle trough, pool, or small pond, MDC's bat scientists recommend placing something along the edge to allow bats to climb out if they misjudge their approach and fall in. (Sometimes people find bats in their swimming pool filters for this reason.) Also, to keep mosquito reproduction in check, it may be a good idea to stock the water source with native fish or install a moving water feature, such as a waterfall, fountain, or aerator. While bats do eat mosquitoes, they are generalist predators capable of eating a variety of other insects, including moths and beetles.



Kyle Dick
POLK COUNTY
CONSERVATION AGENT
offers this month's

AGENT ADVICE

There are few things more refreshing on a hot summer day than a trip to the water. June is a popular time to get out on the water in a boat, kayak, or canoe. Regardless of the vessel you choose, always abide by Missouri's boater safety laws. You must have U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFD) available for every person on your vessel. These devices must be easily accessible and in good working condition. Anyone under the age of 7 must always wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved PFD while on a boat, kayak, or canoe. Make sure PFDs properly fit your passengers. For more information on Missouri's boater safety laws, visit the Missouri Highway Patrol's website at short.mdc.mo.gov/46s. Be safe and have fun!

What IS it?

Can you guess this month's natural wonder?

The answer is on Page 9.



INVASIVE SPECIES

MISSOURI'S LEAST WANTED

Invasive nonnative species destroy habitat and compete with native plants and animals. Please do what you can to control invasive species when you landscape, farm, hunt, fish, camp, or explore nature.

Northern Snakehead Fish

by Angela Sokolowski

The northern snakehead fish (*Channa argus*) is a long bodied, predatory fish that is not native to the U.S. Considered an injurious species and known invader, it cannot be possessed alive in Missouri.

This fish's head resembles a snake, thus its name. Its body can grow up to 3 feet long with python-like coloration and pattern. The dorsal fin is long, and the anal fin is about half its body length. They are voracious predators with sharp teeth. Unlike most fish, they can breathe air, which allows survival in poorly oxygenated water or out of water for several days if their skin stays moist. Snakeheads can slither across land to return to water.

Snakeheads can live in rivers, reservoirs, and wetlands, but prefer shallow, still water with mud bottoms and vegetation. The only confirmed locations in Missouri have been in the Bootheel region.

Why It's Bad

Snakeheads do not have a natural role in our aquatic habitats. They are aggressive predators with high reproduction rates that pose a serious risk of outcompeting and preying upon our native fish, including bass, and threaten aquatic species of conservation concern.

What to Do if You Catch One

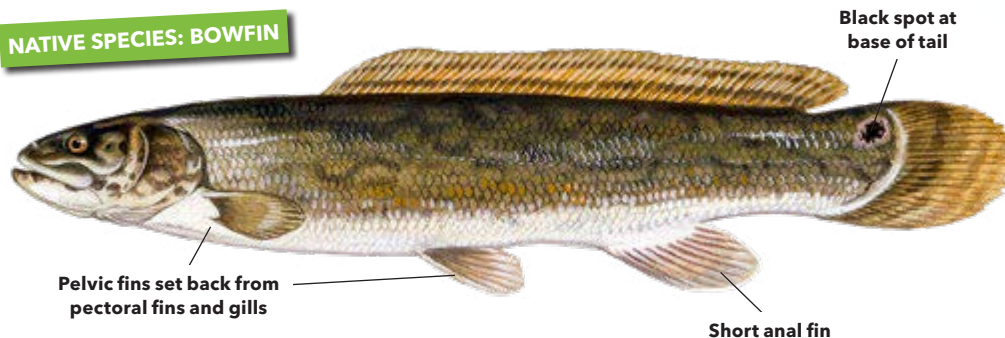
- Make sure it's a snakehead and not a native bowfin. Snakeheads have an anal fin almost as long as the dorsal fin while bowfin have a short anal fin.
- Photograph the fish and note the location of the catch.
- Do not release it or throw it on land, as it could move back to the water. Remember this fish is an airbreather and can live several days out of the water.
- Kill the fish by severing the head, gutting it, or placing it in a sealed plastic bag.
- Report any catches and sightings of the fish to MDC's Southeast Regional Office at 573-290-5858.

INVASIVE SPECIES: NORTHERN SNAKEHEAD



- ✘ Native to parts of Asia
- ✘ Can grow about 33 inches long and are generally tan with dark brown mottling
- ✘ Jaws contain many small teeth similar to pike and pickerel
- ✘ Capable of breathing air, can go dormant in the mud during drought, and can move short distances on land using their pectoral fins
- ✘ Can live out of water for up to three days in moist environment

NATIVE SPECIES: BOWFIN



- ✔ Typically found in swamps and backwater of sluggish rivers
- ✔ Can grow to about 32 inches long and are tan-olive with dark olive patterning
- ✔ Jaws contain peg-like teeth
- ✔ Can also breathe air and withstand droughts by going dormant in the mud

To learn more, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4X6

NEW CASES OF CWD

After sampling and testing more than 37,000 deer for chronic wasting disease (CWD) during the 2023 surveillance year, MDC found 162 deer that tested positive for the disease.

Those 162 deer bring the total number of CWD cases found in the state to 572 since the first case in wild deer was confirmed in early 2012. Including recent sampling efforts, more than 280,000 tissue samples from wild deer have been collected for CWD testing in Missouri since MDC began CWD surveillance in 2002.

Of the deer tested during the 2023 surveillance year, CWD-positive deer have been found in 27 counties: Adair (3), Barry (1), Barton (15), Carroll (2), Chariton (4), Clark (1), Crawford (3), Dallas (4), Franklin (23), Grundy (1), Jasper (1), Jefferson (15), Linn (9), Macon (7), Maries (1), Oregon (4), Osage (3), Perry (3), Polk (2), Pulaski (1), Putnam (3), Randolph (4), Scotland (3), Ste. Genevieve (31), Stone (7), Sullivan (2), and Taney (9).

CWD is a 100 percent fatal disease in white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family. The disease has contributed to population declines in other states and threatens Missouri's deer population, hunting culture, and economy.

The goal of MDC's CWD management in Missouri is to slow the spread of the disease while researchers work to develop a cure and additional management tools, and to keep the percentage of infected deer low. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/cwd.



GIVE TURTLES A BRAKE

Be cautious on the roads this spring and give turtles a brake. These reptiles are often hit by cars during the warmer months but are at special risk this time of year because they are more active. Common turtles spotted crossing Missouri roads include three-toed box turtles, ornate box turtles, and snapping turtles.

Vehicles are one of the leading threats box turtles face in Missouri, and MDC urges motorists to be cautious and slow down if they see a turtle in the road. If helping a turtle make it safely across, check for traffic and always move the turtle in the direction it is traveling.

Additionally, MDC urges the public to leave turtles in the wild. Taking a wild animal — whether a turtle or other wildlife species — and keeping it as a pet normally ends in a slow death. Leave turtles in the wild, follow the speed limit, keep your eyes on the road, and watch out for turtles.

WHAT IS IT? PURPLE PRAIRIE CLOVER

Purple prairie clover have unusual flowering heads, ringed with rose-magenta flowers and attractive foliage. Considered a perennial legume, it is often found in prairies, glades, and other open places. With its ease of care and lengthy blooming period — June through September — it's becoming increasingly common in landscape plantings and home gardens. It also tolerates drought conditions, which makes it ideal for hot Missouri summers.



MIGRATORY GAME BIRD AND WATERFOWL SEASONS

The Missouri Conservation Commission approved recommendations at its April meeting for the upcoming 2024 migratory game bird hunting seasons and 2024–2025 waterfowl hunting seasons.

✘ 2024 Migratory Game Bird Hunting

Mourning Doves, Eurasian Collared Doves, and White-Winged Doves

Season: Sept. 1–Nov. 29

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession combined total for all three species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Sora and Virginia Rails

Season: Sept. 1–Nov. 9

Limits: 25 daily and 75 in possession combined for both species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Wilson's (Common) Snipe

Season: Sept. 1–Dec. 16

Limits: 8 daily and 24 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

American Woodcock

Season: Oct. 18–Dec. 1

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Coots

Season: Same as duck season dates in the respective zones (See dates under Waterfowl Hunting for Ducks)

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Change to Federal Duck Stamp

Per the Federal Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, the Federal Duck Stamp has been converted to a digital version and hunters are no longer required to carry a paper copy. Hunters must have a digital version in their possession.

For more information on migratory bird and waterfowl hunting, visit MDC online at short.mdc.mo.gov/4J9, or get MDC's *Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Hunting Digest 2024–2025*, available in July, online and where hunting permits are sold.

✘ 2024–2025 Waterfowl Hunting

Teal

Season: Sept. 7–22

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in possession

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Ducks

Season:

- North Zone: Nov. 2–Dec. 31
- Middle Zone: Nov. 2–10, 2024 and Nov. 16, 2024–Jan. 5, 2025
- South Zone: Nov. 28–Dec. 1 and Dec. 7, 2024–Jan. 31, 2025

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

- 4 mallards (no more than 2 females)
- 3 wood ducks
- 2 black ducks
- 2 canvasbacks
- 2 hooded mergansers
- 2 redheads
- 2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days
- 1 mottled duck
- 1 pintail

Possession Limit: Three times the daily bag or 18 total, varies by species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Canada Geese and Brant

Season: Oct. 5–13 and Nov. 11–Feb. 6, 2025

Limits: 3 Canada geese and brant in aggregate daily, 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Snow Geese (White and Blue Phases) and Ross's Geese

Season: Nov. 11–Feb. 6, 2025

Limits: 20 blue, snow, or Ross's geese daily with no possession limit

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

White-Fronted Geese

Season: Nov. 11–Feb. 6, 2025

Limits: 2 daily and 6 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Light Goose Conservation Order

Season: Feb. 7–April 30, 2025

Limits: No daily or possession limits

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

Methods: For the taking of blue, snow, and Ross's geese, hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shells and recorded or electronically amplified bird calls or sounds or imitations of bird calls or sounds.

✘ Youth Hunting Days

North Zone: Oct. 26–27

Middle Zone: Oct. 26–27

South Zone: Nov. 23–24

Limits: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Hours: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Requirements: Any person 15 or younger may participate in youth waterfowl hunting days without permit provided they are in the immediate presence of an adult 18 or older. If the youth hunter is not certified in hunter education, the adult must have the required permits and have in his or her possession proof of hunter education, unless exempt. The adult may not hunt ducks but may participate in other seasons that are open on youth hunting days.

✘ Falconry Seasons

Falconry Season for Doves

Season: Sept. 1–Dec. 16

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession, singly or in the aggregate (any ducks, coots, or mergansers taken by falconers must be included in these limits)

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Falconry Season for Ducks, Coots, and Mergansers

Season: Open during waterfowl seasons (teal, youth, duck) and Feb. 11–March 10, 2025

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession, singly or in the aggregate during the regular duck hunting seasons (including teal and youth seasons) and extended falconry seasons (any doves taken by falconers must be included in these limits)

Hours: Sunrise to sunset during the September teal season, one-half hour before sunrise to sunset during the remaining seasons



MORE THAN THE HARVEST

HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES CONNECT WITH NATURE

by Kristie Hilgedick



At hunting events held across Missouri, people with disabilities come together to forget their challenges, enjoy nature, forge friendships, and find camaraderie with other hunters.

CENTER BOTTOM: RANDY WALKER, CENTER MIDDLE: KRISTIE HILGEDICK, OTHERS: NOPPAOOL POTHONG

On an early December morning in Mingo National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the world was quiet in the way only a deer hunter's encampment can be quiet. Even the simple shifting of one's weight in a chair, the hushed rustle of Carhartt overalls, or the unintended shuffle of leaf litter underfoot sounded like noisy explosions in the small deer blind.

But 36-year-old Justin Montgomery of Poplar Bluff has mastered the art of perfect stillness. Of the people sitting in the blind with him, including his father, David Montgomery, and family friend James Cody, Justin was the stealthiest and least fidgety by far.

"I do still get anxiety," he confessed. "But I was intentionally trying to be calm and remain still."

Born with spina bifida, a birth defect caused by the incomplete closure of the spinal column, Justin's mobility is limited. But he hasn't allowed his circumstances to keep him from living a full and interesting life. And part of that zest for life is his love of the outdoors and a passion for deer hunting.

A SENSORY EXPERIENCE

True: He needs help to hunt. But equally true: Preparing him for a successful hunt is a labor of love for his father and Cody — a task the two men undertake with equal parts enjoyment, devotion, and copious amounts of good-natured ribbing.

Seasoned hunters know the beauty of the experience is so much more than the fleeting, isolated moment of a successful harvest. Hunting is a complex sensory immersion. It's the earthy smell of the forest floor. The first sip of hot coffee from a thermos. The coziness of winter weather gear contrasted with the cold, damp air. The thrill of seeing the sun rise over the cypress-tupelo swamp. The sounds of the forest waking up.

But mostly, it's an opportunity to see wildlife in its natural element. And this morning was off to an auspicious start when a large flock of turkeys — 36 in total — left their overnight roost. After an hour or more of noisy and persistent gobbling, the birds crossed directly in front of the blind.



Volunteer Jeff Roth helps hunter Matt Woodson into a UTV at a Missouri Disabled Sportsmen event.

"It was incredible," Justin said. "We also saw some deer, but they were out of range that day."

Although the men were diligent from sunrise to sunset in hopes of harvesting a deer, luck wasn't with them that day. To the unobservant, some might consider the day unsuccessful. But not Justin's crew.

"It's not about harvesting a deer," he explained, with a shrug. "That's why they call it hunting. The true meaning of a successful hunt is seeing wildlife in their natural habitat. Sure, it's a great and worthwhile experience to take a deer. But you can have a 100 percent successful day and not harvest a thing if you have an interesting wildlife encounter."



No challenge is too great: More and more adaptive ideas — like this hunting blind mounted on a trailer (top right) — are making it possible for hunters with serious mobility challenges to access and even traverse difficult outdoor terrain.



CONNECTING WITH NATURE

On the same day at Mingo NWR, another hunter, William Hall, was equally challenged by the damp and foggy conditions that muffled the sounds of nearby deer.

Hall agreed, it's healthy for all people, disabled or not, to find ways to connect with nature.

Hall was a lifelong passionate and devoted outdoorsman when he was permanently disabled in a 2002 construction-related work accident.

"When the injury came about, I didn't know if it was going to be possible for me to continue hunting," he said.

But eventually he found hope in an organization that was beginning to coalesce in Missouri: Missouri Disabled Sportsmen. Other opportunities — such as the MDC's managed hunt program — also helped Hall get outdoors.

Today, Hall spends most of his winter weekends in the woods pursuing big game all over the state. He does this with the assistance of a close friend, a wheelchair lift attached to his pickup, a supportive wife, and an indomitable will.

Hall is an accomplished hunter who passes on more quarry than he harvests.

The ability to go hunting not only changed Jamie Hollingshead's outlook and demeanor, but it also incentivized him to regain the motor and verbal skills he lost after a serious stroke. Volunteers Chris Pardue (left) and Tom Modine (right) lend him a helping hand.

"My goal, whenever I hunt, is to harvest bucks that are three-and-a-half years or older," he explained.

He sets the bar high for himself, but he's careful to explain the pursuit of a trophy animal isn't his sole motivation.

"My family and I consume every deer I harvest," he said. "We haven't bought ground beef from the grocery store in 10 years."

Just like Justin, hunting is more than just an opportunity to take a trophy.

"I've driven across the state, hunted all weekend without taking a deer, and returned home without an iota of regret," he said. "Yes, I have felt a little bit disappointed on the way home. But that's part of the experience."

It's the connection to nature — a connection he can't fully articulate — that keeps him coming back to the woods.

Hall works full-time in the freight transportation industry.

"You're working towards that weekend. Once the workweek is done, this is what I call 'my office,'" he said, gesturing to the surrounding woodland. "Nothing is more fun than watching two fawns play."

The true meaning of a successful hunt is seeing wildlife in their natural habitat.

Justin Montgomery

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Twenty years ago, opportunities to hunt for people with disabilities were few. People were limited to the abilities and willingness of family and friends to assist. Today, more and more opportunities are available.



Pete Eisentrager first volunteered with Missouri Disabled Sportsmen (MDS) in 2009. He joined its board in 2011 and has served as president since 2017. Those early volunteer experiences opened his eyes to challenges that people with mobility impairments face, he said.

During a mid-December MDS hunting event at the Leonard, Mo., farm of Randy and Jenny Walker, Eisentrager joined more than 50 volunteers to assist 16 hunters.

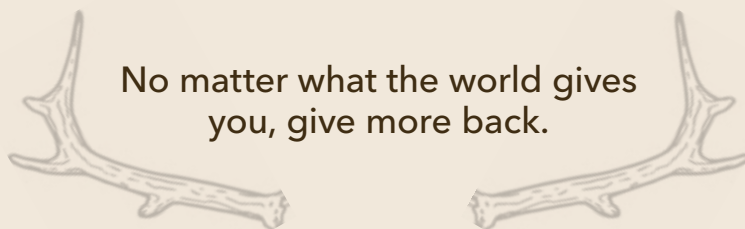
“I’ve had a lifelong passion for hunting, fishing, and the outdoors, but I took being able to do it for granted,” Eisentrager said. “MDS gives other people an opportunity to do what I love so passionately.”

MDS’s mission is to help mobility-impaired people, young hunters, and terminally ill youth. No one has ever been turned down for being too disabled, although sometimes the needs are significant, he said.

“We can overcome the vast majority of challenges,” he said.

MDS is increasingly using a variety of innovative technologies and specialized equipment to address the needs of people with disabilities. These technologies include motorized track chairs, tripods to support firearms, smart phone-assisted eye scopes, and sip-and-puff guns, to name a few. The nonprofit organization has five track chairs, 12 mobile hunting blinds, and 18 Bog chairs available to help get people into the field.

And every year, with practice and experience, more solutions and refinements are discovered.



No matter what the world gives you, give more back.

UPLIFTING AND MOTIVATIONAL

Randy Walker said the idea for his family’s event started about 15 years ago with an impulse to help a disabled friend, Rick Van Dyke, he’d met through an online deer hunting forum. Today, the inclusive, weekend-long event — named in memoriam for Timmy “Taters” Smith, an early participant — is hosted in a shop building that normally houses the family’s woodworking business. Nearby farmers contribute 3,000 acres of private land to the hunters. A long trestle table serves as a buffet. And tents for overnight stays sit at the room’s edge.

“We ended up with 25 deer harvested in 2023,” he said. “Of the 16 hunters, three of the four first-time hunters harvested their first deer. All but one got shots at deer, and that one hunter had many sightings and good opportunities. We feel blessed and it’s nice to be able to share.”

Jenny Walker said it’s been gratifying to see people who were depressed and struggling find new reasons to be uplifted and motivated. Sometimes people are moving through a stand of timber for the first time in their lives.

Planned hunts for people with disabilities function like family reunions for volunteers and participants alike.

“It’s a gratifying feeling, knowing they appreciate it so much,” she said.

At the end of the long, busy, and cold days, the room is filled with a sense of fellowship and camaraderie rarely experienced in today’s modern world. That sense of communal joy is the real motivation, Eisentrager said.

“While we are extremely successful in helping people harvest game, it’s not the primary focus. Experiencing nature, creating and strengthening friendships are the real goals,” he said. “We are making a meaningful impact on every corner of Missouri through partnerships with private landowners and other like-minded outdoors organizations.”

GIVING MORE BACK

Fourteen-year-old Hannah Montgomery (no relation to Justin) harvested a buck last fall at a Missouri Disabled Sportsmen’s hunt. She tried again a few weeks later at a doe-only hunt, but her quarry eluded her. It didn’t matter; she said both

experiences were amazing. At the latter hunt, she relished the freedom of operating a track chair over the steep terrain and loved slaloming her volunteer aide, Jake Williams, on a sled past mud puddles even more. (They were testing to see if the track chair could handle the weight of a deer. It could.)

“We saw bucks fighting three times,” she said. “You could hear the antlers clacking. They were so close you could spit on them.”

Coping with acute transverse myelitis — which has left Hannah with two metal rods and a few dozen metal screws near her spine since 2020 — has been a tough blow, but this outdoorsy FFA student from Memphis, Mo., seems determined to live her life. Quoting her favorite paralyzed barrel racer, Amberley Snyder, Hannah said: “No matter what the world gives you, give more back.” ▲

Kristie Hildgedick serves as the MDC ombudsman, writing responses to Ask MDC. She also writes the Ask MDC column for Missouri Conservationist.



RESOURCES

Are you disabled and looking for ways to get involved in exploring the outdoors? Here are some organizations and programs that may be able to assist you:

Duckhorn Outdoors
duckhornoutdoors.com


Missouri Disabled Sportsmen
missouridisabledsportsmen.org
facebook.com/missouridisabledsportsmen

Missouri State Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation Wheelin’ Sportsmen
nwtf.org/programs/wheelin-sportsmen

MO Vets Outdoors
facebook.com/MoVetsOutdoors

The Missouri Department of Conservation’s Managed Hunt Program
short.mdc.mo.gov/48F

Peterson Outdoor Ministries
petersonoutdoors.org

A photograph of a great blue heron standing in a wetland. The heron is the central focus, standing on a thin wooden stake in shallow water. It has a long, slender neck, a sharp beak, and a blue-grey head. Its body is covered in blue-grey feathers with some reddish-brown patches on its wings. The background is a dense thicket of tall green grasses and other vegetation. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

A 5-foot-tall great blue heron with its softly beautiful blue-grey plumage, long sinuous neck, and piercing gaze is a head-turner in Missouri wetlands.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
NOPPADOL PAOTHONG



A GOOD PLACE TO BE A HERON



MISSOURI'S WETLANDS
OFFER ATTRACTIVE
HABITAT FOR THE
GREAT BLUE HERON

by Jan Wiese-Fales

A chance encounter with a nearly 5-foot-tall great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), standing still as a statue as it waits for its next meal to swim, hop, or wriggle by, is a marvel.

As its name implies, this beautiful bird is the largest heron in North America. Slate blue feathers cover its large body, accented by pale plumed chest feathers. A long, sinuous neck is tinged a chestnut color and striped black at the front. The great blue's white feathered head with its daggerlike orange-yellow beak is topped with a distinctive black stripe that extends from its piercing golden eyes to the back of its head, ending in an elegant plume.

When the big bird takes off with its two-toned gray, 6-foot wing spread and its long wading legs extended behind it, it is a sight to behold.



GREAT BLUES IN MISSOURI

“Great blue herons are common and widespread,” said Missouri State Ornithologist Kristen Heath-Acre. “Wherever I’ve lived, including Missouri, they’ve always been there.”

“They are a wetland generalist and can thrive in marine or freshwater habitats, which helps bolster their populations. They’re very adaptable.”

The great blue has an over-wintering range that historically has stretched into the northern parts of South America, but climate change has affected its migratory patterns, Heath-Acre said.

“They have a mix of migratory and non-migratory behavior. Where they can find water that doesn’t freeze over, they sometimes stick around,” she said. “With climate change, they are able to stay farther north.”

HABITS AND HABITAT

Great blue herons frequently build nests in tall trees in wooded areas close to water. They avoid human interference and roadways, which explains why heron colonies, which can consist of dozens of nests, are not commonly observed.

A colony of heron nests high in the trees is an awe-inspiring sight. Heron homes are barely more than stick platforms but can reach 6 feet across, sometimes lined with leaves or moss. Nests are fortified and used year after year, though not necessarily by the same occupants. Birds choose new mates each year, often returning to the same colony.

Unlike many bird species with distinct male and female physical characteristics, great blue herons can be differentiated only by size. Females are slightly smaller.

A male great blue takes charge of choosing a nesting site and then defends it from interlopers as he works to attract a mate. His selection serves as his displaying platform where he puts on his best performance to woo an observant female, stretching, swaying, circling the nest, clacking his bill, and preening.

After successfully making the right impression and pairing, the female lays two to six pale blue eggs that are approximately 2-by-3 inches in size. Laid in intervals of up to two days, the eggs





Heron chicks are rarely seen because they spend two to three months in nests built high in tall trees. In addition to predation and other dangers, many juveniles do not survive because of the difficulty of mastering herons' stealthy feeding techniques.

fade to white by the time the chicks hatch in approximately 28 days. Parents take turns incubating the eggs and share the responsibility of feeding their nestlings by regurgitating their prey.

Great blue herons most frequently hunt by standing stock still or walking slowly in shallow water. Once a potential meal is spotted, with a lightning quick lunge the heron either grasps the prey in its beak or spears it with a beak-turned-dagger. Great blues eat fish, frogs, crayfish, turtles, and other aquatic animals, and will also go after small mammals, snakes, and insects. Excellent night vision allows them to feed in the dark.

Considered quiet birds, great blue herons have a variety of vocalizations used primarily to communicate during foraging and feeding. Their most common call is a loud, primitive, very dinosaur-like *Frawnk*, which serves as an alarm or a warning. Males vocalize most frequently.

Juvenile great blue herons are primarily grey. They do not exhibit their parent's attractive blue-gray plumage until their third year when they reach breeding age. Young chicks are rarely sighted as they remain in the nest for two to three months.

Approximately 70 percent of great blue herons do not live past their first year. In addition to predation and other fatal dangers, juvenile mortality rate has been linked to the difficulty of mastering stealthy heron feeding techniques.

From the mid-19th century to 1920, a leading cause of death for both herons and heron chicks was a human passion for feather fashion.



Herons Hunt with Tools

Rather than relying on stealth mode with eyes peeled to ambush passing prey, green herons have a little trick up their beaks.

They ingeniously pick up a feather, a small twig, a leaf, or even an insect and drop it in the water as bait to invite investigation by a potential meal. This tool-using behavior puts green herons in rare company with birds like crows, parrots, and a handful of other observant flying, feathered creatures.



Green heron

HERONS IN MISSOURI

There are about 60 heron species throughout the world and about a dozen are found in North America. Some are better known as bitterns or egrets. Missourians may be able spot up to 10 heron species in the state, some more commonly than others and almost always near water. These are herons to look out for in addition to the great blue heron. Note that bird size is measured from the tip of bill to tip of tail.



Least bittern



Great egret



Cattle egret



Little blue heron



Green heron



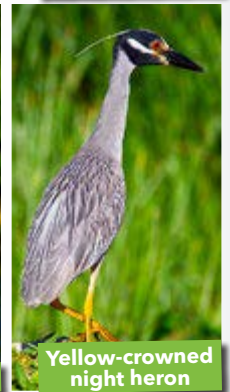
Black-crowned night heron



American bittern



Snowy egret



Yellow-crowned night heron

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*): The smallest heron in Missouri is the least bittern — a pigeon-sized bird with a long pointed yellow bill. Males have a dark green back and crown, and females have a dark purple-brown back and crown. It can be found statewide and because it is small, it can perch on foliage over deeper water to hunt.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*): Seen statewide as a visiting bird in the summer, the great egret is a striking 38-inch long-necked white bird with long black legs. It has a daggerlike yellow bill and tucks its neck when it flies, dangling its legs behind like the great blue heron. Quite stunning, during breeding season great egrets grow long feathery plumes — aigrettes — on their backs used for breeding displays.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*): Small with a compact, stocky body, adult cattle egrets have yellow bills and legs, both of which turn red in breeding season. Feathers on the adult heron's head, breast, and back are an orange-buff color. It is less seen along streams than in flooded crop fields, lawns, marshes, and roadsides. In pastures, it walks among livestock and even is seen perching on livestock backs. A nonnative species, it originated in Africa and is locally common in southeast Missouri in the summer.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*): During its first year, the juvenile little blue heron is completely white. Adults measure 26 inches and have slate-gray feathers and a maroon head and neck. Its two-toned bill is gray with a black tip. It is commonly seen in the southeast part of the state.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*): A compact bird at 19 inches, the green heron has a long daggerlike beak. Its back feathers are gray-green and its head and neck are a russet-brown except for a green-black head cap. It forages at dawn and dusk and stays out of sight during the day. Green herons are ambush hunters just like great blue herons and are reasonably common statewide.

Black-Crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*): Common in wetlands across Missouri, black-crowned night-herons are the most widespread heron in the world, but that doesn't mean it is commonly seen as it is most active at dusk and in the evening. It spends the day hiding in water vegetation. At 25 inches it is a small, stocky heron with a black back and head, a white belly and gray wings. It is most common in the southeast part of Missouri.

Sightings of these herons in Missouri are more rare: **American bittern**, **snowy egret**, and **yellow-crowned night heron**.



HUMAN PREDATION

Feathers most certainly have served as ornamentation for as long as humans have played dress up. Beginning in the late Victorian Era, hats with exotic feathers became all the rage for stylish women. Bonnets with plumage demanded higher prices and plumassiers — craftspeople who obtained, prepared, and supplied feathers — were happy to oblige milliners with the exotic adornments.

On a causal walk in New York City in 1886, Frank Chapman, the American Museum of Natural History's ornithologist, identified feathers from dozens of native bird species on hats of fashionable women strollers, including blue jays, cedar waxwings, and northern orioles. Some hats displayed entire stuffed birds perched on their brims.

In Herbert K. Job's 1905 *Wild Wings*, the author noted that at the turn of the 20th Century feathers used for adornment were twice as valuable as gold, selling for \$32 an ounce.

Heron head plumes, especially those of breeding males, were in high demand along with the feathers of ostriches, egrets, peacocks, lyrebirds, bower birds, and many other unluckily beautifully plumed birds. Adult birds slaughtered for their feathers meant a death sentence for their chicks. In the case of snowy and great egrets, feather harvest nearly resulted in extinction of the species.

In 1886, Boston cousins Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall rallied 900 socialite women to boycott feather-adorned headwear and organized the Massachusetts Audubon Society, which launched the National Audubon Society.

Congress passed the Lacey Act in 1900, prohibiting the transport of birds across state lines taken in violation of state laws. Largely ignored, a game warden in South Florida was murdered trying to enforce it.

In 1913, Massachusetts Representative John Weeks and Connecticut Senator George McLean passed the much-challenged Weeks-McLean Act, ending what they termed "millinery murder." Then in 1918 The Migratory Bird Treaty Act went into effect. Plumed birds finally prevailed when it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1920.

While some heron species are in decline across the country, primarily due to habitat loss, the great blue heron is listed as a species of least concern because of its adaptability.

"Missouri wetlands are diverse and widespread despite a loss of over three-quarters of their historic footprint," Heath-Acre said. "A lot of people here are really excited about and dedicated to wetland restoration and protection. Missouri is a good place to be a heron." ▲

Jan Wiese-Fales is a freelance writer from Howard County and enjoys camping, hiking, floating, and photographing Missouri's spectacular wild outdoors.





Black-Eyed Susans

Noppadol Paothong

14mm lens • f/8 • 1/250 sec



SUMMER'S BLANK SLATE

LONG, LAZY DAYS OFFER
OUTDOOR DELIGHT

Summer arrives like a blank slate. The warmth of the summer sunshine calls us outdoors to delight in all the bright colors — from the green, leafy trees to the flowers and fruits in full bloom. Butterflies are aflutter, flying from one nectar-rich flower to the next. Birds and other animals roam during these long lazy days, grazing and raising their young. Cool, clear waters of Missouri streams and rivers offer a respite during the dog days of Missouri summers, for animals and humans alike.

The days of summer are long, just waiting to be jam-packed with all nature has to offer. There truly is a story to be told in each and every day. What will your story say?

**Three-Toed
Box Turtle**

Noppadol Paothong
150mm lens
f/5.6 • 1/800 sec



**False Turkey Tail
Mushrooms**

David Stonner
100mm lens • f/25 • 8 sec



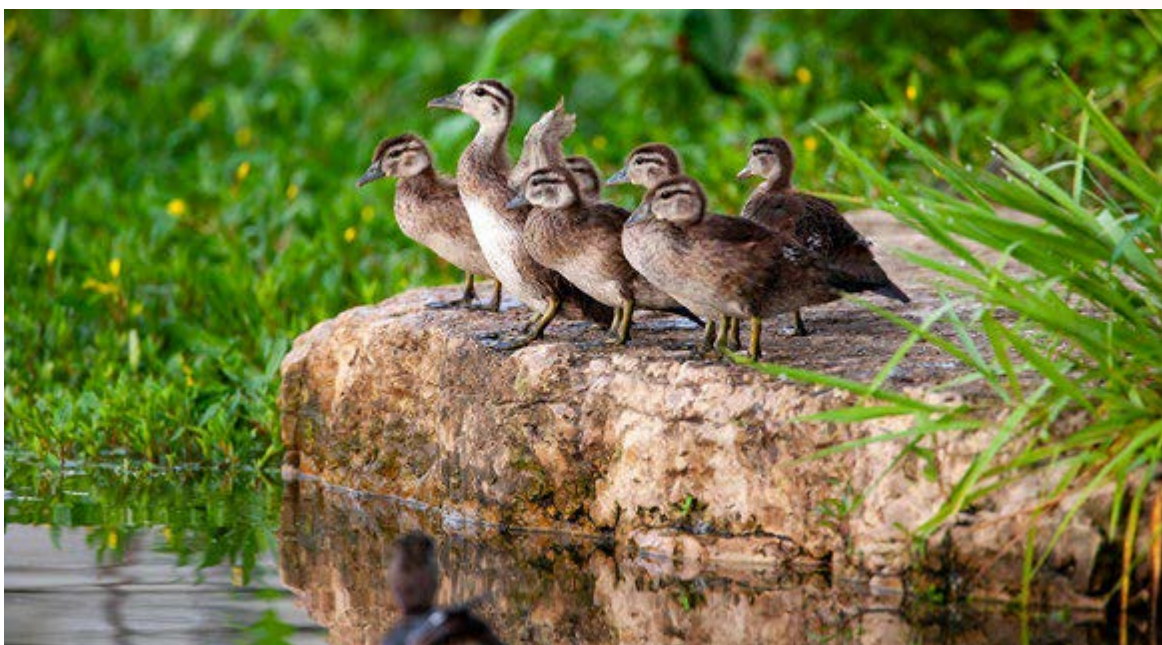
American Sycamore Leaves

David Stonner
200mm lens • f/5 • 1/500 sec



Giant Swallowtail Approaches Prairie Blazing Star

Noppadol Paothong
14mm lens
f/11 • 1/1000 sec



Wood Duck Family

David Stonner
700mm lens
f/5.6 • 1/400 sec

**Snowberry
Clearwing Moth**

**Noppadol
Paothong**

105mm lens
f/3.3 • 1/5000 sec



**White-Tailed
Deer**

**Noppadol
Paothong**

1000mm lens
f/8 • 1/40 sec



Alley Spring Creek

David Stonner

35mm lens • f/16 • 2 sec

EVERY
SUMMER HAS
A STORY.

—UNKNOWN



Red-Tailed Hawk

David Stonner

500mm lens • f/4 • 1/250 sec

Get Outside

in JUNE → Ways to connect with nature



Red-spotted purple butterfly



Carnivorous Plant

Common bladderworts begin to bloom in May. The flowers resemble tiny yellow snapdragons. Did you know bladderworts are Missouri's only carnivorous plants? Before you get too excited, these are not something out of *Little Shop of Horrors*. The baglike bladders that constitute the trap are only about the size of a pinhead, so the animals they trap are quite small — minute aquatic organisms such as tiny crustaceans, aquatic insects, mosquito larvae, and newly hatched tadpoles and fish fry. For more information about the bladderwort, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4BL.

VIRTUAL

Nature Rx: Where Can I Float?

Wednesday • June 12 • 12-12:30 p.m.

Online only

Registration required by June 11. To register, call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4Bz.

All ages

It's summer and a good time to get out and relax on our rivers and streams. We will look at some of the best Missouri rivers for floating and the equipment you should take with you.

When Cicadas Sing

Cicadas are the undeniable soundtrack of summer. This year will be especially melodic — or noisy — as two separate broods will emerge. Brood XIX — or 19 — will emerge into June 2024 and comprises four species of 13-year cicadas. Brood XIII — or 13 — consists of 17-year cicadas. This is considered a rare natural event — one that hasn't occurred in over 200 years. In fact, the last time these broods emerged in the same year, Thomas Jefferson was president! To learn more about periodical cicadas, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/462.



Periodical cicadas

Natural Events to See This Month

Here's what's going on in the natural world.



Bluegill nest.



Trumpet creeper blooms.



White-tailed fawns are born.

DOWNY SERVICEBERRY FRUIT: PAUL WRAY, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY, BUGWOOD.ORG

Butterfly Garden

Summer is a great time to appreciate butterflies, and there's many ways to do so. There's butterfly gardening, butterfly watching, butterfly photography, caterpillar rearing, butterfly organizations, citizen science opportunities, and more. If you would like to spend more time with butterflies this summer, learn more at short.mdc.mo.gov/4Qt.



RECONNECT WITH NATURE

Adventure can happen anywhere. Download the free **MO Outdoors** app for great places to go and capture memories near you.

VIRTUAL

Thinking About Plotting for Deer?



Friday • June 7 • 12-1 p.m.

Online only

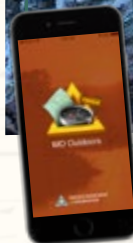
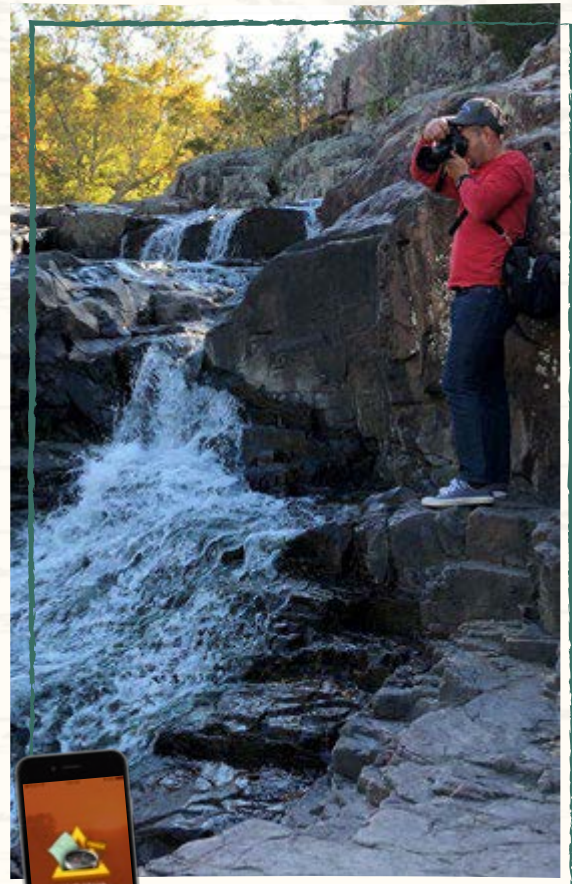
Registration required by June 6. To register, call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4BR.

All ages

Does your neighbor always seem to fill their deer permits when you don't? Are squirrels the only thing you see when you're in the stand? A food plot may be the answer. Learn about the basics of putting in food plots for deer and how you can still actively prepare for deer season during the summer.

Alternative to Callery Pear

Downy serviceberry is one of the most popular native small trees for landscaping in Missouri due to its pretty white springtime flowers, attractive summer foliage, and handsome bark. It is also the perfect alternative to the invasive Callery or Bradford pear tree. Serviceberry fruits ripen this month. They are edible, but you better act fast. About 35 species of birds and dozens of mammals feed on the berries. For more information about downy serviceberry, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4B6.



Places to Go

KANSAS CITY REGION

Chapel View Prairie Conservation Area

It's all in the name

by Larry Archer

✦ Some conservation areas are named after donors, famous conservationists, nearby communities, or interesting natural features. Some names remain a mystery even to the people who work them, while others, like Chapel View Prairie Conservation Area (CA), have names that are beautiful in their simplicity.

"There's a hilltop piece of that conservation area, and if you look to the west, there is an old, abandoned chapel you can see," said MDC Wildlife Biologist Tom Foster.

Located on 384 acres of Henry County, Chapel View Prairie CA — as the beautifully simple name implies — is primarily native tallgrass prairie, which includes all the wildflower and grassland bird species associated with that habitat, Foster said.

"It's a dry-mesic sandstone and hardpan prairie," he said. "The populations are pretty vast and pretty diverse."

In June, don't be surprised to run into other visitors with binoculars and cameras.

"Birding would be big in June," he said. "And then also, any wildflower enthusiast would go there."

And spotting a fishing pole or two would not be out of the question, either.

"There are three pretty good-sized ponds on the prairie," he said. "And I know that people fish at least two of them."



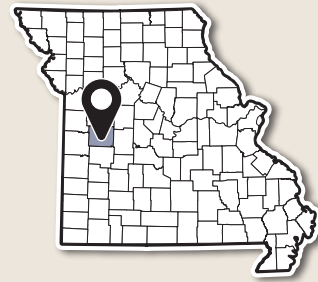
"There's a pretty decent creek, and there's actually a beaver slough near the south side of area. It's a pretty unique little slough down in there, little wetland, completely naturally made by beaver, which is pretty neat."

—Wildlife Biologist
Tom Foster

NOIPADOL PAOTHONG



Many flowers, including this foxglove beardtongue, are in bloom in June at Chapel View Prairie Conservation Area, attracting pollinators like this black and gold bumblebee.







CHAPEL VIEW PRAIRIE CONSERVATION AREA

consists of 384 acres in Henry County. From Deepwater, take Hwy. 52 west 2.5 miles, then Rte. F south 2 miles, and County Road SW 1000 west 0.5 mile.

38.2231, -93.8452

short.mdc.mo.gov/4Be 660-885-6981

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT

-  **Birdwatching** The eBird list of birds recorded at Chapel View Prairie CA is available at short.mdc.mo.gov/4Bm.
-  **Fishing** Black bass, catfish, sunfish.
-  **Hunting Deer and turkey** Regulations are subject to annual changes. Refer to MDC's regulation page online at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zjw.
Also **bear, dove, quail, rabbit, and squirrel**
-  **Trapping** Special use permit required.

DISCOVER MO OUTDOORS

Users can quickly and easily find outdoor activities close to home, work, or even while traveling with our free mobile app, MO Outdoors. Available in Android or iPhone platforms at mdc.mo.gov/mooutdoors.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU VISIT



Ornate box turtle



Spicebush swallowtail



Prairie kingsnake



Scissor-tailed flycatcher



Longear Sunfish

Lepomis megalotis

Status

Nongame fish

Size

Maximum length: 7 inches, weight 4.5 ounces

Distribution

Southern Missouri



Did You Know?

Longears commonly gather about the nests of smallmouth bass and other sunfishes — including their own species — rushing in to feed on eggs or fry if the guardian male is momentarily distracted or frightened away. They are most active during the day.

Longear sunfish are blue green on the back and sides, speckled with yellow and emerald. Their bellies are yellow or orange. They favor clear, permanent-flowing streams with sandy or rocky bottoms and aquatic vegetation, avoiding strong currents. Like smallmouth bass, longear sunfish follow turtles and large suckers about as they forage over the bottom, feeding on insect larvae and small crayfish that are exposed.

LIFE CYCLE

Longear sunfish nest in colonies from mid-May to mid-August. The evenly rounded nests, formed over chert gravel, are often so close they nearly touch. As a courting ritual, males tilt to display their brightly colored sides. After spawning, the male swims low over the nest, fanning the eggs with his fins and chasing away intruders. He stays with the nest for more than two weeks, until the fry have hatched and dispersed. Individual sunfish can live for six years.

FOODS

Longear sunfish are carnivorous, feeding on insects, small crustaceans, and some small fish.

HUMAN CONNECTIONS

Despite their small size, longear sunfish are an important panfish in Ozark streams because of their abundance and willingness to bite. They provide excellent sport when taken on light tackle.

Outdoor Calendar

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



FISHING

Black Bass

Impounded waters and non-Ozark streams:
Open all year

Most streams south of the Missouri River:

- ▶ Catch-and-Keep:
May 25, 2024–Feb. 28, 2025

Bullfrog, Green Frog

June 30 at sunset–Oct. 31, 2024

Nongame Fish Gigging

Impounded waters, sunrise to sunset:
Feb. 16–Sept. 14, 2024

Streams and impounded waters,
sunrise to midnight:
Sept. 15, 2024–Feb. 15, 2025

Paddlefish

On the Mississippi River:
Sept. 15–Dec. 15, 2024

Trout Parks

State trout parks are open seven days a week
March 1 through Oct. 31.

Catch-and-Keep:

March 1–Oct. 31, 2024



Free MO Hunting and MO Fishing Apps

MO Hunting makes it easy to view permits, electronically notch them, and Telecheck your harvest. MO Fishing lets you view permits, find great places to fish, and ID your catch. Get both in Android or iPhone platforms at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zi2.

HUNTING

Black Bear*

Oct. 21–30, 2024

Bullfrog, Green Frog

June 30 at sunset–Oct. 31, 2024

Coyote

Restrictions apply during April, spring turkey season, and firearms deer season.

Open all year

Crows

Nov. 1, 2024–March 3, 2025

Deer

Archery:

Sept. 15–Nov. 15, 2024

Nov. 27, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025

Firearms:

- ▶ Early Antlerless Portion (open areas only): Oct. 11–13, 2024
- ▶ Early Youth Portion (ages 6–15): Nov. 2–3, 2024
- ▶ November Portion: Nov. 16–26, 2024
- ▶ CWD Portion (open areas only): Nov. 27–Dec. 1, 2024
- ▶ Late Youth Portion (ages 6–15): Nov. 29–Dec. 1, 2024
- ▶ Late Antlerless Portion (open areas only): Dec. 7–15, 2024
- ▶ Alternative Methods Portion: Dec. 28, 2024–Jan. 7, 2025

Doves

Sept. 1–Nov. 29, 2024

Elk*

Archery:

Oct. 19–27, 2024

Firearms:

Dec. 14–22, 2024

Groundhog (Woodchuck)

May 6–Dec. 15, 2024

Pheasant

Youth (ages 6–15):

Oct. 26–27, 2024

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025

Quail

Youth (ages 6–15):

Oct. 26–27, 2024

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025

Rabbits

Oct. 1, 2024–Feb. 15, 2025

Sora, Virginia Rail

Sept. 1–Nov. 9, 2024

Squirrels

May 25, 2024–Feb. 15, 2025

Teal

Sept. 7–22, 2024

Turkey

Fall Archery Portion:

Sept. 15–Nov. 15, 2024

Nov. 27, 2024–Jan. 15, 2025

Fall Firearms Portion:

Oct. 1–31, 2024

Waterfowl

See the Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Hunting Digest or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZx for more information.

Wilson's (Common) Snipe

Sept. 1–Dec. 16, 2024

Woodcock

Oct. 18–Dec. 1, 2024

*Only hunters selected through a random drawing may participate in these hunting seasons.

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods, and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zib. Current hunting, trapping, and fishing regulation booklets are available from local permit vendors or online at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZf.



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Gray treefrogs add to the natural chorus of summer with their musical, birdlike trills. Gray treefrogs are just one of many animals that perform in summer's symphony of sound. Get outside and experience it! What sounds will you discover?

📷 by **Noppadol Paothong**

Free to Missouri households

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