

MISSOURI Conservationist

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Apprentice Hunters

Last November, I experienced a memorable afternoon in a deer stand with my son, Jay. The temperature was comfortable, the deer were active, and we each passed up shots at several deer.

There were plenty of hunting days left, so we just enjoyed the time together.

Listening to us describe our day caused Jay's wife, Kim, to express regret that she wasn't along. That was nice to hear. Kim did not grow up in a Missouri hunting family, so she is warming to our traditions at her own pace. I can see, however, a shift in her perceptions about what hunting means and a growing interest in hunting seasons.

Kim is one prime example of the audience the Department is trying to reach through the new Missouri Apprentice Hunting Authorization. The authorization allows Missouri residents 16 years of age and older to purchase two years of firearms hunting permits without obtaining hunter education certification. The "apprentice," however, is required to hunt in the immediate presence of a hunter education-certified adult age 21 or older, thus underscoring the importance of completing a hunter's true education.

We've learned that many people develop their outdoor interests because someone else shares the outdoors with them. The mentoring component of the youth seasons was established with this in mind and participation is steadily increasing, especially for deer and turkey. So what will it take to attract the participation of older Missourians who have more competition for their time?

Most of us hunters remain convinced that people will join our ranks if we can just get them to experience safe hunting first hand. Take Kim, she is a young mother and a professional

engineer—her time is precious. Carving out time for a hunter education class seems difficult, but necessary if she wants to hunt. The same is true of some of my son's business colleagues.

Jay would love to share the fun of the hunt, but will a person commit to a class before knowing they will actively participate in the future? Giving these adults a chance to try the sport under appropriate supervision may motivate them to continue on. Even if they don't, the mentoring experience will foster a better understanding of the role of hunting and its continued importance.

Our population is becoming more diverse and mobile than ever before. Understanding different motivations for engaging nature is critical to reducing barriers that keep many from getting outside. Putting theories like the apprentice authorization into action can expand the number who carry a passion for the

natural world. And those who mentor an apprentice can instill an understanding of the ethics and biology that make hunting a core part of conservation philosophies.

Managing future wildlife populations, implementing productive habit measures and protecting healthy watersheds requires action from more than just current hunters and anglers. The Department is exploring several creative methods for engaging more citizens into a lifetime love of nature. I, for one, believe it will be an easy sell!

John Hoskins, director



OUR MISSION: *To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.*



On the cover: Photographer Noppadol Paothong captured this image of an Eastern bluebird, one of the bird species that will benefit from a new CRP practice the USDA unveiled called State Areas for Wildlife Enhancement. To learn more about how this practice benefits landowners and wildlife, read Bill White's article starting on page 20.

Left: Photographer David Stonner took this image of Nichole LeClair hunting turkeys for this month's feature article *Here for the Gobble*. To learn more about LeClair's experience with Missouri Outdoor Women's turkey hunting clinic, read her article starting on page 14.

NextGEN

This section reports on goals established in *The Next Generation of Conservation*. To read more about this plan, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/12843.

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OLD JOB...
Did this story bring back memories of my younger life on the Petite Saline Creek [December; Page 20]. And Jack Veirs was part of it.

He bought furs off my great uncle and drove horse and wagon to Gootchers Mill to pick up furs. And when I was first married in the early '70s and renting a place for \$35 a month on the creek just south of Boonville, I trapped and continued to sell furs to Jack.

I remember my young wife going with me to sell in Fayette. She was pregnant with our second son. Even though she had helped with my furs, this was a bit much for her. The smells were overwhelming, so she stayed in the pickup. I told her it smelled like money to me. We managed to save enough fur money to buy our own place.

My grandfather was also selling furs to Jack. He would make enough to buy stuff for the kids,

grandkids, and great-grandkids for Christmas. I learned from my grandfather how to make every penny I could. Like you could make 50 cents more on skins just by skinning and stretching them. We even used the meat from several of the animals.

Thanks for taking me back a few years.
David Chenault, via Internet

FROST FLOWER FACTS
Your November issue contains an item about frost flowers [Page 5], which I believe is in error on one small point. If the plant were truly dead, there would be no sap action to produce the



Frost flower

frost flower. This phenomenon occurs when top growth has been killed back by cold air, but the root system remains active in the warmer ground. I enjoy the magazine enormously; my thanks.

Constance Tyndall, Springfield

Editor's note: Conservation Department botanist Tim Smith agrees that the roots must still be active (alive); only the above-ground parts of the plants are dead.

WHO IS CHMIELNIAK?
I have been receiving the *Missouri Conservationist* for well over 15 years, and I just wanted to let you know that I thoroughly enjoy it. I am a born-and-raised city girl, and wildlife and conservation matters have always fascinated me. I get a good chance to sneak away from the hussle and bustle of city life and just drift away seeing and reading about another relaxing part of the world (animals in the wild, trees, flowers, lakes, streams, fish, etc.). And the first thing I do when I get my mag is go to the back and read the cartoon . . . it is always so good and funny!
Cynthia Henderson, St. Louis

I loved the cartoon in the September issue, "Thinking outside the box," [Page 32] by Chmielniak. Her cartoons add a very special touch to the *Missouri Conservationist*.
Would it be possible to share with us a little something about the cartoonist?

Thelma McKim, New Bloomfield

Editor's note: Betty Chmielniak Grace has always liked cartoons. She worked them into assignments in school and produced them for displays when she was a naturalist for the National Park Service and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Her work has appeared in many state and national publications, including the Missouri Conservationist, Ranger Rick, Country Woman, Summit and King Features Syndicate's "The New Breed." She lives on a farm near Albany, Missouri with her husband, son and daughter.



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Reader Photo **ICY INSPIRATION**

Reader Nancy E. LaGree submitted this photo she snapped of the Gasconade River valley from Inspiration Point at the Laclede Baptist Camp near Stoutland. LaGree lives near the spot and took this photo last year during the ice storm. "The electricity was off for over a week here and in the surrounding area," said LaGree. "I bundled up and walked out to Inspiration Point and took several shots of that valley. The ice was so beautiful but so dangerous!"



Species of Concern **Lake sturgeon**



Common name: Lake sturgeon
Scientific names: *Acipenser fulvescens*
Range: Missouri and Mississippi river basins
Classification: Critically imperiled in Missouri
To learn more about endangered species: www.MissouriConservation.org/8227

IT IS REMARKABLE that an animal that has been around since dinosaurs lived, a robust creature whose lifespan can exceed 100 years and that can top 300 pounds, went from seemingly limitless abundance around 1890 to being insignificant for commercial purposes in Missouri waters by 1910. One of the causes—over-harvesting—ended with sensible fishing regulations in the 20th century. Cleaning up pollution also helped. However, channelization and changed seasonal flows on the Missouri River and damming of the upper Mississippi River have dramatically affected this species' habitat and limited the movement of the fish, which can travel hundreds of miles a year in unaltered rivers. State and federal wildlife agencies are trying to boost wild populations with hatchery-reared fish, and recent changes in management of the Missouri River are a step in the right direction. Lake sturgeon sightings remain rare, however. For more information about sturgeons in Missouri, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/7244.

Blooms in February?

Yes! Witch hazel flowers show now through April.

Vernal or Ozark witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) is Missouri's earliest-flowering woody plant, sending forth fragrant, yellow to dark red, X-shaped flowers from January through April. This plant has the spooky habit of firing seeds as far as 30 feet from woody pods in the fall. An extract from its leaves and bark is used in shaving cream and medicinal lotions. It grows along rocky stream beds in the southeastern third of the state. Wild turkeys eat its seeds.



What's in the shed?

Most trophies end up rodent dietary supplements.

AFTER mating season, mostly in January, male deer lose their antlers. Why shed something that requires so much nutritional investment? It could be so they can replace points broken while sparring. Maybe it's to save the energy it would take to haul around several pounds of extra weight the rest of the year. Perhaps antlers get in bucks' way when fleeing predators, so they keep them only as long as they are useful in competing for does' attention. Or maybe shedding guarantees that bucks always have headgear proportional to their growing bodies. Whatever the reason, antlers don't go to waste. Squirrels, chipmunks and mice begin gnawing on them almost as soon as they hit the ground, recycling their calcium content... unless you find them first!





NextGEN

Fox Valley Range

Hone archery and rifle skills at this Clark County range.

Northwest Missouri residents can sight in firearms or hone archery skills on two Conservation Department ranges at Fox Valley Conservation Area in Clark County. This area off Highway NN northwest of Kahoka has a walk-through type archery range with two loops, one with targets provided. The rifle/pistol range has shooting benches facing earthen berms at 25, 50 and 100 yards. The ranges are in the central tract of Fox Valley's three parcels. Neither range is staffed, and range use is free. For more information, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a8004 or call 660-785-2420.



craggy bluffs where gnarled, thousand-year-old red cedars cling to life. Microhabitats ranging from spring-soaked valleys to baking glades host an array of animals and plants from lush green mosses carpeting stone outcrops to ghostly Indian pipes sprouting mushroom-like from decaying plant matter. Fishing, hunting and primitive camping in designated areas all are available on this area. For more information, call 573-884-6861 or visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a8145.

Painted Rock CA

Made to order for photographers.

Photographers and history buffs find fuel for their passions at Painted Rock Conservation Area, 7 miles southwest of Westphalia on Highway 133. This wooded, 1,490-acre area is perched on limestone bluffs overlooking the Osage River. Wooden viewing platforms on the 1.6-mile Osage Scenic Bluff Trail offer panoramic views, including Bloody Island, where Spanish conquistadores are rumored to have buried golden treasure. Indian burial cairns date back as much as 1,500 years. Look for bald eagles, hawks or vultures soaring over the

Trail Guide



HAPPY TRAILS IN BUCHANAN COUNTY



MARK YOUNGDAHL URBAN Conservation Area is small compared to many other CAs, but this area in the heart of St. Joseph packs a lot into 85 acres. The area occupies one of the highest spots in St. Joseph and offers a commanding view of the surrounding cityscape. The Marsh and Ridge trails connect to form a 1.4-mile loop that passes through prairie and savanna plantings that are awash in color in the spring and early summer. They also meander through 20,000 planted trees representing 75 species. The Pond Trail circles a small wildlife watering pond. Wildlife you might glimpse include ducks, hawks, deer, foxes, raccoons, rabbits and a wide variety of songbirds. The Marsh Trail is covered with gravel. The Ridge Trail and the Pond Trail are asphalt-covered to make them wheelchair accessible. The area also has two pavilions with charcoal grills, picnic tables, a drinking fountain and men's and women's restrooms.

Area name: Mark Youngdahl Urban CA
Trails: Ridge Trail, .8 mile; Pond Trail, .6 mile; Marsh Trail, .7 mile
Unique features: Glade and prairie plants, 75 tree species
For more information: Call 816-271-3100 or visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a8330

PAINTED ROCK: JIM RATHER; TRAIL GUIDE: DAVID STONNER



TAKING ACTION

Celebrate the Year of the Frog



Green treefrog

Bluebird Boxes

Build or refurbish and place.

Signs of the approaching spring soon will be popping up all over. One of the most welcome sights is bluebirds building nests. With just a little preparation you can draw the cheerful symbols of happiness to your yard.

Bluebird boxes should be in place by March 1. That makes February the perfect time to clean out, refurbish or build boxes. Bluebird boxes put out in previous years should be checked for damaged roofs, split posts, exposed nails or other flaws that could injure birds. Old nests and other debris that might be inside the boxes should be removed and properly discarded to prevent birds from reusing it. Those items can be breeding grounds for parasites that can kill young birds. Instructions for building bluebird boxes are available online at www.MissouriConservation.org/8434.

For best results, mount each box on a lone post. Posts can be fitted with a 24-inch-long metal sleeve to discourage climbing predators. Posts in fence rows can become overgrown with brush, enabling black rat snakes and mice to enter the box. If you put out several boxes, place them 300 feet apart to accommodate the bluebird's sizable territory.



Eastern bluebird

JUMP INTO ACTION to help imperiled frogs by participating in the Year of the Frog celebration. The Amphibian Ark, a worldwide coalition of amphibian experts, will work throughout this leap year to raise awareness about threats to frog survival and funds to help frog species in jeopardy. Many frog populations are declining due to environmental contaminants, diseases and habitat destruction. The Year of the Frog conservation efforts will include a captive breeding program to save approximately 500 species that cannot be protected in the wild.

On leap day, Feb. 29, Department of Conservation Nature Centers will offer free frog stickers and *Missouri Toads and Frogs* brochures. The St. Louis Zoo Leap Day celebration will include 10 exhibits featuring the diversity of amphibian life, games and other frog activities for kids. To learn about Year of the Frog events and activities visit www.amphibianark.org/yearofthefrog.htm.

PHOTOS: JIM RATHERT



NextGEN

Trout Season

Plan now for the season opener on March 1.

Expect big fish and big fun on the March opening day of the state trout park catch-and-keep fishing season.

About 11,000 anglers are expected to fish. A combination of good weather and a Saturday season start could push attendance to a record high. A total of nearly 33,000 rainbow and brown trout will be stocked at Bennett Spring, Montauk and Roaring River State Parks and Maramac

Spring Park. To fish you need a fishing permit and a daily trout tag. The daily limit at the park is four fish. Get details on trout permits and regulations at www.MissouriConservation.org/13265.



2008 Fishing Prospects

Get a copy now to start planning.

Enjoy a little winter reading and spring planning by perusing *The 2008 Fishing Prospects at Selected Lakes and Streams*.

The report includes the most current information about the sizes, numbers, and species of fish you can expect to find in selected streams and lakes managed by the Department of Conservation. It is based on the most recent fish population samples taken by fisheries management biologists and includes some tips

on gear and methods to help make your fishing trips enjoyable. To receive a free copy of the fishing prospects booklet, write to: Missouri Department of Conservation,

Fisheries Division, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180.



Fishing for Trout

Scout it Out



Area Name: Mill Creek on the Bohigian Conservation Area

Location: Take the Doolittle exit off I-44, go south on Highway T for 3 miles through Newburg, then right on Highway P for 4 miles, then left on Highway AA for 1.25 miles and look for the welcome sign.

For more info: General information on trout fishing is also available online at www.MissouriConservation.org/7248.



ANGLERS WHO CANNOT resist the lure of trout fishing should check out the Mill Creek Blue Ribbon Trout Area on the Bohigian Conservation Area. Located about 8 miles southwest of Rolla, the 1.26-mile stream section provides public access to excellent trout habitat which supports naturally reproducing rainbow trout populations.

Mill Creek fits the bill for those who enjoy a challenge and prefer fishing in solitude. You won't see the huge crowds and huge trout populations in this small creek like you do at state trout parks. Wild trout are cautious, so look for them darting in and out of rootwads. Approach a wild trout slowly and cautiously from downstream. Keep your cast to a minimum and stay low and out of sight as much as possible. The fish you catch likely will be under the 18-inch minimum length for keeping trout hooked in a blue ribbon trout area.

At Mill Creek only artificial lures and flies may be used. A Missouri fishing permit is required. A trout permit also is required to harvest a fish.

PHOTO: DAVID STONNER; ART: MARK RAITHEL



Winter Chorus

Coyote howls and cardinals singing are treats for the ear.

February offers many nature treats for the ears. Coyote howls and the melodic territorial singing of Northern cardinals let you enjoy nature sounds both night and day.

In Missouri coyotes are found in all types of habitat throughout the state. Those who step outside at night, when coyotes are most active, have a good chance of hearing the very vocal animals. Listen for a high quavering cry followed by a series of short, high-pitched yips. Howling is how a coyote communicates. Sometimes howls serve as a way to call the pack, or family group, together. Howls also let other family groups know where a pack's territory lies.

To enjoy the sights and sounds of Northern cardinals, head to shrubby areas, especially near water. The cardinal song is a series of high, clear and sharp, mostly slurred whistles. It's always a treat to view cardinals. The bright red body, black facial mask and tuft of feathers that looks like a crest on the head make the male cardinal one of the easiest birds to recognize.



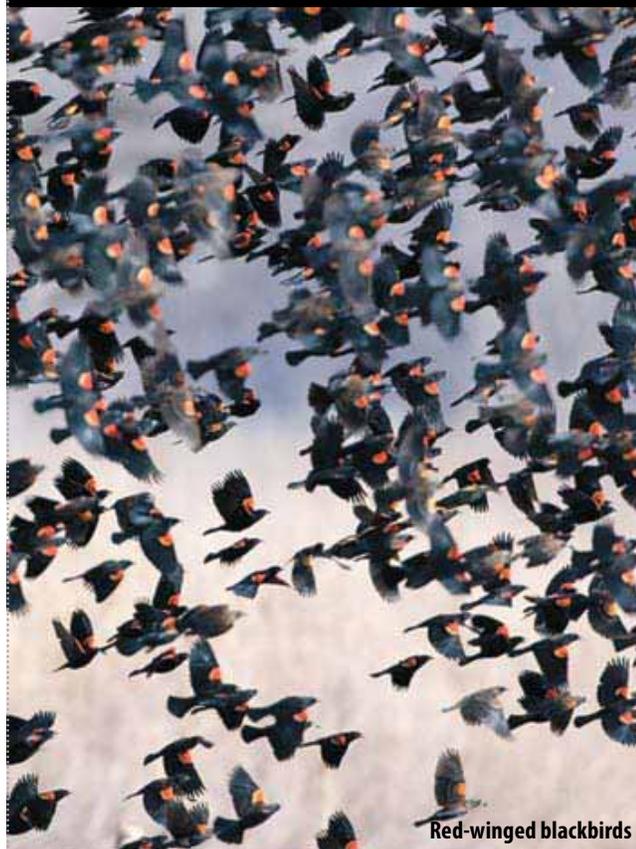
Cardinal

Gobble Counters Needed

Aid turkey research, take part in the gobbling survey.

Wild turkey enthusiasts lend us your ears. The Department of Conservation and National Wild Turkey Federation need additional volunteers to participate in the second year of a gobbling survey. The survey, conducted March 15 through May 15, helps track daily and seasonal trends of gobbling by wild turkeys throughout the state. For two days per week during the study period volunteers will document the total gobbles heard and the number of individual gobblers heard during a 20-minute period starting at 45 minutes before sunrise. New volunteers can sign up for the survey by contacting Tom.Dailey@mdc.mo.gov.

FEATHERED FASCINATION



Red-winged blackbirds

Bird flocks

THE OLD SAYING “birds of a feather flock together” implies the animals simply want to be with their own kind, but research indicates being a member of a flock can affect a bird's chance of survival.

Birds often flock to avoid being eaten. With more eyes, they can better detect predators. Also being part of a group reduces each member of the group's potential of becoming prey. The *Cornell Lab of Ornithology Handbook of Bird Biology* reports that groups of birds, especially while in flight, are better than a lone bird at avoiding predators. When a predator advances, the group gathers into a tight cluster and makes several swoops and turns to confuse the predator. The movement of the flock makes isolating and capturing a single bird difficult.

Flocks also share information about food sources. Sometimes the more successful members inform the others of the best places to find food. It is a misconception that birds flock only with members of their own species. Sometimes two or more kinds of birds join in a feeding flock for mutual benefit. The more vigilant species acts as a sentinel against predators, while the other species detect food for the whole flock.

Some birds group together in preparation for the fall migration. In August, flocks of purple martins can approach one-half million individuals.



NextGEN

Stop Stream-Bank Erosion

Now is the best time to build tree revetments.

Stream-bank erosion robs landowners of acreage and harms fish habitat. An inexpensive and effective way to stop erosion is placing bushy tree tops along the faces of eroding banks.

Such "revetments" work three ways:

- 1) They slow water currents that carve away at exposed soil.
- 2) They force water to drop gravel, sand and soil particles among the tree branches, building banks instead of removing them.
- 3) The accumulated soil permits sprouting of trees and other plants, whose roots strengthen the bank.

Late winter to early spring is the best time to build revetments. Choose trees whose tops are approximately two-thirds as wide as



the eroding bank is tall. Cedar trees work best, because they have lots of branches and are naturally rot-resistant. Use freshly cut, live trees, which last longer.

Large trees cover more bank than small ones, and they are not much harder to move. They save work and expense, because they take fewer anchors. Cut off tree trunks where the branches end.

When installing a revetment, start at the downstream end of the eroding bank, positioning trees with butt ends upstream. Secure each tree with cables attached to anchors set in the bank. The top of each tree should overlap the butt of the previous one. This prevents erosion

between trees and reduces the number of anchors needed.

Federal regulations require permits to place tree revetments in some streams. Call the nearest Conservation Department office before starting to find out if you need a permit. For detailed information about building cedar tree revetments, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/7259.

Stream Team



Brush Creek Mid-Shed Project



KIMBERLEE FOSTER *understands synergy*. The program coordinator for the Platte Land Trust wanted to gather data about water quality and promote stream-friendly development around Brush Creek north of Kansas City. The

Brush Creek Mid-Shed Project focuses its attention on the middle portion of the watershed, just downstream from the Kansas City International Airport. "We wanted to develop a management plan that would permit development while protecting the stream corridor," said Foster. "We had a grant for water-quality monitoring, but we didn't have sampling equipment and trained people, so I said "What about having a volunteer Stream Team? That would give us high-quality data and get the community involved, too." Three years later, the group conducts monthly monitoring and gives public programs to build support for maintaining the stream's high quality. They are especially interested in how storm water runoff affects water quality.

Stream Team Number: 2264

Date formed: April 16, 2003

Location: Platte County

For more info about Stream Teams: www.mostreamteam.org

ART: MARK RAITHEL; STREAM TEAM: DAVID STONNER



Our Glorious Forests

ALLRED LAKE NATURAL AREA



Size: 160 acres

Location: In Butler County, 5 miles east of Neelyville on Highway 142 and 2.5 miles south on Route H to a southbound gravel road

Highlights: 53 acres of bottomland forest and the Allred Lake Natural Area; a quarter-mile trail ending in a short boardwalk, viewing deck and Allred Lake

Find more info: www.MissouriConservation.org/a7946



ALLRED LAKE NATURAL Area exhibits one of the highest quality examples of lowland swamp and bottomland forest in Missouri. Within the area, the Department manages a 76-acre designated Missouri Natural Area for outstanding educational and scientific values. The area's bottomland forests support bald cypress, swamp tupelo, water locust, sweetgum, willow oak, overcup oak, water hickory, swamp chestnut oak, water elm, swamp privet and many other species. A cypress-tupelo swamp rings the natural lake near the center of the area. Some of the bald cypress trees are more than 500 years old. The lake supports swamp species, including the endangered taillight shiner and swamp darter. A boardwalk and platform on the western side of the lake facilitate nature viewing and photography. To help restore the land's once-diverse forest communities, the Department has planted tree seedlings and acorns. Over time, these areas will increase our dwindling supply of lowland bottomland forests.

Fire Season Imminent

MDC helps local fire departments prepare.

As spring's warmer, windier days approach, the threat of wildfire increases. In Missouri, more than 800 fire departments holding Mutual Aid Agreements with the Department stand ready for initial attack on wildfires. The Department helps these fire departments prepare for rapid response with wildfire training, matching grants and excess federal property. Local fire departments interested in entering into Mutual Aid Agreements with the Department and benefiting from the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program can contact their regional foresters for more information.



We All Live in a Forest

Publication helps you protect your home against wildfire.

Fire season is coming, it's a good time to assess and minimize your home's vulnerability to wildfire damage—especially if you live in a forest or grassland. The Conservation Department offers a free publication to help you do this. *Living With Wildfire* shows you how to create defensible space around your home and to landscape it with fire-resistant plants. It also overviews fire-resistant building and remodeling materials, and it provides a checklist of 20 things you can do to keep your home safe from wildfire. To request this free item, write to MDC, *Living With Wildfire*, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180 or e-mail pubstaff@mdc.mo.gov.





NextGen

Got Goose Problems?

Web site covers methods for controlling them.

Once endangered, giant Canada geese have made a phenomenal recovery. In Missouri, the breeding population can soar to 75,000. Although most people enjoy seeing Canada geese, these waterfowl can cause hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage to property and crops each year. Aside



from hunting geese to control their numbers during the established goose hunting seasons, you can find help preventing or controlling goose damage at

www.MissouriConservation.org/16322. This mini-site covers topics from goose biology to control methods and permits.

Grazing for Wildlife

Rest a new paddock every year to add nesting habitat.

Although most Missouri producers graze their animals on one or two pastures from May through October, some are turning to rotational grazing. This practice of dividing large pastures into small paddocks to keep livestock bunched up maximizes forage use. Unfortunately, short forage doesn't always help grassland birds. To improve nesting habitat and brood cover, leave one paddock ungrazed for a year. The following year, add the rested paddock to the rotation sequence and take a recently grazed paddock



out of use. State and federal financial assistance is available to help offset the loss of income from the rested paddock.

To learn more about these or other conservation grazing practices and cost-share programs that support them, call your local private land conservationist.

Critter-Proof Your House

On the Ground



PAT WALL OF California, Mo., loves to watch the squirrels, but she's not keen about having them in her attic. "I was afraid they'd chew the electrical wires and cause a fire," she said. After several failed attempts to oust the squirrels, she called Rex Martensen of the Private Land Services Division. He discovered where they had been nesting when he pulled down the attic ladder—and received a shower of black walnut hulls, insulation and feathers! Rex has this advice for keeping critters out of your house: First, inspect the perimeter for openings. If you find them, make sure all animals are out of your attic, crawlspaces, etc. You might have to use a live trap to do this. Finally, when you patch the openings, use sturdy material such as tin, because animals will try to get back inside. This approach will keep fun-to-watch wildlife where they belong—outside!

PHOTO: DAVID STONNER ART: MARK RAITHEL



Grow Native! Workshop

Feb. 22 and 23 "Landscape Design With Missouri in Mind"

Winter is a great time to plan native-plant landscaping projects. To help you succeed, the Department's Grow Native! program has scheduled a workshop about using native plants successfully. At the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art in St. Joseph, Feb. 22 and 23, St. Louis author Dave Tylka will start the program with "Native Landscaping—A Natural Way to Spice up Life." Other topics include "Know the Lay of Your Land," "Put Plants in the Right Place," "First Hand Experience," "Reconstructing Prairie," "Native Trees for Landscapes Large and Small" and "Putting it All Together."

Topics are the same for both days, with slight variations for landscape professionals on Friday, and home gardeners and small acreage owners on Saturday. Registration is \$35 and includes a copy of *Tried and True: Native Plants for Your Yard*. To register, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/16263, or call LuAnn Cadden at 816-271-3100, ext. 235.



Purple poppy mallow

Find an Activity Near You

Online calendar lists nature events around the state.

Whether you're an avid hunter or casual nature observer, you'll find your favorite outdoor pursuit represented in the Department's Calendar of Events. Designed for every age, interest and ability, this online resource includes events and programs offered at your local nature center, conservation area or range and outdoor education center. Families will find nature activities for kids, hikers will find organized hikes, and hunters and anglers will find programs and clinics. Department events are a great way to reconnect with nature and get involved with conservation efforts. Search for programs near you at www.MissouriConservation.org/4163.

NATURE ACTIVITY



Black vultures

GROW NATIVE: DAVID STONNER; NATURE ACTIVITY: NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

Vulture Venture



SINCE 1996, THE Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson has hosted Missouri's award-winning Vulture Venture program. Our 12th annual event will be Saturday, Feb. 16, from noon to 6 p.m. Vulture Venture focuses on one of Missouri's most often misunderstood and highly beneficial birds.

Inside the hatchery, you'll see a live vulture from the Wonders of Wildlife Museum in Springfield and enjoy a vulture video, games, stickers and crafts. Outside, you can view one of Missouri's largest vulture wintering roosts, including a rare opportunity to see both black and turkey vultures in the same location. As the sun begins to set, you'll get an up-close view of vulture "kettling"—a circling swarm of birds swooping in to roost for the night. Vulture Venture is free and requires no reservations.

Program: 12th Annual Vulture Venture

Where: Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery, 6 miles southwest of Branson off Highway 165, near Table Rock Dam

When: Saturday, Feb. 16 from noon to 6 p.m.

For more information: 417-334-4865, ext. 0

Here *for the* GOBBLE

MISSOURI OUTDOOR WOMEN
TAKE ON THE TURKEY WOODS.

by Nichole LeClair

I was just a little late. There was some trouble with the coffee pot and then the gate. ...

I got raised eyebrows over this, but not much else. Eddie did make me do double time to catch up, however. He was going to make my hunt as easy as possible, but he certainly wasn't going to let me sabotage my chances.

I'd learned a lot about Eddie Hovis, my clinic-appointed guide, in the past 24 hours. Foremost was that he was an exceedingly proud grandparent. Second was that I could trust him to steer me kindly, if not subtly, through this adventure.

There was a hint of pink on the horizon as we pulled up to the property we would be hunting. This was a terrific spot, Eddie assured me, and it was a particular treat to be given permission to hunt here. The property owner, who normally did not allow hunting on her property, made exceptions only for participants in the women's turkey clinics.

I knew we would have a bit of a walk. All of the clinic's participants are asked about preferences and physical abilities before they are assigned to a guide and location. I had told







Strategy and stealth are the greater part of turkey hunting. Eddie explains how we can best approach a distant gobbler.

them I'd go whenever, wherever and with whomever they assigned me. I fell in behind Eddie and started crunching through the frozen grass.

I stopped when Eddie's silhouette stopped, and walked when it did. He gave a few calls on the way to the spot he had chosen, but we didn't hear a sound but our footsteps and breathing until we were about halfway there. When the gobbler finally came, it was just light enough to see the satisfied smile on Eddie's face.

The woods were waking up, and unseen birds chirped and creatures scampered as we made our way through a grove of pine trees. We stopped and cleared a spot at the base of an oak near a break in the trees. I waited while Eddie set out his decoy.

The air was cool, but I wasn't cold after our brisk walk. Everything sparkled as the sun rose on the frost, and I tried to justify my racing heart with the calm setting. We sat quietly for about 20 minutes, and then Eddie made a few calls.

No answer.

We moved a little further into the woods and toward a

small ridge. As we walked, Eddie called some more.

Another gobbler wafted from the distance. My heart skipped. Then we heard the gobbler come closer, and I was sure that my heart had simply stopped. I had no idea that a turkey's none-too-melodic voice could affect me this way.

"Find a spot!" Eddie whispered, sounding as excited as I felt.

We scurried to a tree behind a crumbling pile of logs and brush and waited a few moments. Then the gobbler sounded, maddeningly, from further away.

And so began our dance of call, move, call, move, back and forth with an indecisive bird. Our spirits soared each time Eddie lured the gobbler closer, and crashed each time it moved away. Then I heard the unmistakable spit-drum sound of our tom puffing out his feathers and breast.

"Gun up, get your gun up," said Eddie, barely mouthing the words and gesturing with his eyes at the 20-gauge across my knees. I got in position. "He's right there, can't you see him?"

I could not. I had a log too close to my eye level.

I'd just have to follow Eddie's direction.

For more than an hour, Eddie coached me which way to swing my shotgun, when not to move, and when to get ready. When he was sure the bird couldn't see us, he advised me to rest my arms.

"Oh, he's a tough old bird, and he's been educated," said Eddie, in a tone both frustrated and appreciative.

I was getting tired, but Eddie whispered constant encouragement. "I know you're tired, I know this is tough, but if you can hold it just a moment longer, just a moment ... if you're really uncomfortable, it's okay to put the gun down, but if you can just hold out ... one ... more ... minute."

I was about done for, and then I saw him. He was huge and pompous and vibrantly redheaded. He was in full strut, and I never thought a turkey could look so impressive.

"Take the shot if you want to," whispered Eddie. "Go ahead."

But it wasn't a good shot, and I knew it. My angle wasn't as clear as Eddie's. I couldn't justify wounding this bird. So I waited.

The tom turned toward me then and my tired arms finally betrayed me. I know the end of my barrel wiggled. The tom sounded his alarm and melted back into the trees.

I didn't even care.

We had seen a big, beautiful turkey, and had spoken his language. We played the game and lost, but it was such an engrossing exchange. And here I was on a gentle, warm spring day, on what I could now see was gorgeous property, and this was more than enough success for me on my very first day out.

"I'm in it for the gobble, not the gobbler," said Julia Kitchen, the first woman to take a turkey through the Missouri Outdoor Women program in 2003. Suddenly, I knew exactly what she meant.

I could have returned home happy and victorious, with or without a bird in my cooler.

"So, do you want to try again tomorrow?" asked Eddie.

"Ab-so-lutely," I answered, without hesitation.

Eddie laughed, shook his head and told me he'd see me in the morning. "On time!" he called out, as I, grinning madly, ducked into my car.

Does this make me bilingual?

I liked the idea of it. Time outdoors, a personal challenge and a new reason for fun with the people I cared about. And if I happened to secure a tasty dinner along the way, well, I wouldn't complain.

It didn't require a lot of specialized equipment. It didn't require great physical strength or endurance. Most importantly, it didn't require that I subject myself to anything more grueling than an early morning. Nearly anyone should be able to hunt turkeys.

It would, however, require a little training and some humility.

The humility was a problem.

My stepfather and fiancé were dedicated turkey hunters. I worked with turkey hunters. They were all very keen on the idea that I could and should give it a try. Anytime I wanted to learn, they said ...

But I couldn't. I was too self-conscious. Afraid of making a fool of myself, I wasted two spring seasons making excuses.

I had nearly resigned myself to giving up the idea, when I saw a notice for a Missouri Outdoor Women turkey hunting clinic. It was free, it was run by experts, and, best of all, I didn't know anyone there. I called to sign up that day.

I felt a bit guilty. I had capable instruction at home, but here I was going to strangers. I was sure that the other women attending the event lacked such resources.

Then I arrived at the clinic and met a group of women who were just like me. Though some of them didn't know anyone that they could ask for guidance, many had relatives, friends and spouses who were turkey hunters. They just felt more comfortable with the idea of learning with other women who were at the same skill level. There were even a couple of women who were already competent deer and waterfowl hunters.

The instructors were funny, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Though we heckled them mercilessly and made a torturous racket practicing turkey calls, they were never patronizing or impatient, and they made sure that we were never embarrassed by our novice skills. "Some of

We heard the gobble come closer, and I was sure that my heart had simply stopped. I had no idea that a turkey's none-too-melodic voice could affect me this way.

the worst turkey calls I ever heard were made by turkeys,” encouraged instructor Kent Bridges. “You don’t have to be great to get results.”

According to conservation agent Mic Plunkett, one of our clinic’s coordinators, “The good old days of turkey hunting are right now,” and we were looking forward to meeting our guides and finding out for ourselves.

Meeting Eddie

“Don’t tell Eddie I said this, but you’re getting the pick of the litter as a turkey hunting guide,” wrote Mic.

Eddie Hovis, a resource technician for the Department, was a volunteer guide for our turkey clinic, but we hadn’t met. I e-mailed Mic my effusive thanks and a rambling note about my nervousness.

“Just do me one favor,” replied Mic. “Come down here

You’ll find much to wonder and laugh at in the spring woods (including yourself). Bring your sense of humor.



and wallop some big old longbeard!”

So I called Eddie to set up our meeting. It was a pleasant, but whirlwind, conversation that I could barely recall once I hung up. I had the impression that I was just sucked in and spit out by some sort of energy vortex. I sat dazed for a moment before I checked the directions he had given me. I wondered if he was as energetic in person.

I met Eddie at his home near Piedmont. He gave me a warm hello and a bright smile, pumped my hand, introduced me to his son, Andy (also a volunteer guide), and invited me inside. We talked for a moment about the next day’s hunt, made sure that my clothing would make me look sufficiently shrub-like and stealthy, and then we were off again for a brief tour of the area, a stop to see his new grandbaby and then to check out the camp where I would be staying the night.

Eddie, extraordinarily, was actually more energetic in person. He was also funny, casual and confident, and he treated me like family throughout my visit. Even if I never saw a turkey, Mic was right, Eddie was the guide for me.

Eddie’s final advice before we parted was, “Call if you need anything, whatever the time. Don’t forget to set that gun down tomorrow as soon as you shoot that big gobbler, because all you’re going to see of me is my butt and elbows flying across the field. And do not, I repeat do not, be late in the morning.”

More than the gobble

I was very close to being precisely, almost, on time our second morning.

We had decided to revisit the scene of our previous encounter with the big tom. As Eddie rarely paused to call and listen this time, we made quick progress toward the ridge.

I was enjoying our spirited pace and the bouncy carpet of pine needles beneath my boots, when Eddie startled me with a seemingly loud and random call to my right.

My pleasant mental fog was shattered, but my ears perked as a gobble sounded thinly somewhere in the distant trees.

Eddie and I stopped and glanced at each another. He gave another call.

The gobble seemed to be significantly louder this time, and it was accompanied by frantic rustling.

Eddie’s eyes grew wide and he motioned sharply for me to sit down.

“Where?” I whispered, confused. “You don’t mean here, do you?” I was in the middle of a cleared path and quite exposed.

He did. He pointed to the tree behind me. “Quick!”

We stepped backward in tandem. My butt had barely



Though the experience far outweighed my prize, I couldn't have been happier with my first gobbler.

met bark when the love-crazed gobbler thrashed his way through the forest debris and skidded to a stop at the sight of me.

He half-turned to retreat as I checked that the landscape beyond him was clear. The ruse was up, and I'd only have a moment.

I slipped off the safety, let out my breath, and took the best shot that I could.

All I saw after that was Eddie's backside and elbows bouncing through the brush.

First of many seasons

Eddie and I replayed every detail of our brief hunt on the way back to his house, where he and Andy helped clean the bird and bundled it into my cooler. My second outing had lasted less than an hour.

In two days, I had been lucky enough to experience an

OUTDOOR WOMAN IOI: *Your one-day, kick-start clinic*

"Women haven't necessarily been encouraged to hunt," opened instructor Kent Bridges, invoking our pioneer spirit. "I welcome you all."

Though he did not speak to my own experience, his words were a reminder that we had all accomplished something already—we had moved beyond our comfort zones to try something new.

Our clinic was held at the Duck Creek Conservation Area near Puxico, and the room pulsed with an incongruous array of chatting, laughing women. There were young women, seniors and all ages between. With outfits, personalities and outdoor experience at least as varied, it was hard to feel out of place.

We learned about the history and biology of the eastern wild turkey, hunting strategies and techniques, and safety. We also learned the best ways to handle shotguns and practiced shooting them—some of us for long after the clinic "officially" ended.

We left with lots of information, new contacts and coveted goodies from the sponsors of the clinic, including turkey calls and padded hunting seats. Most of all, we left with the confidence that we could go out there and hunt turkeys.

And when turkey season finally arrived, they paired us with volunteer guides to go out and prove it.

If you're ready to kick-start your own adventure, the Missouri Outdoor Women program is designed to give women 14 years and older the skills and confidence to pursue a wide range of outdoor activities alone, with friends or with their families. To learn more about upcoming workshops, including spring turkey hunting, visit their Web site at www.MissouriConservation.org/13108 or contact your regional Conservation Department office (see page 3 for phone numbers).

exquisite range of turkey hunting experiences, from how engrossing and thrilling a hunt can be, even if you never pull the trigger or bag a bird, to how fast and crazy the action can be at other times. I was officially hooked.

My turkey weighed around 19 pounds, had an 8½ inch beard and spurs well under an inch. He was a young gobbler, and he had obviously made his rounds before submitting to Eddie's siren song. His wingtips were worn, he had been spurred in the breast by another gobbler and he was, to all appearances, a bit disheveled. Of course, he was still a very fine and handsome fellow to me.

Twenty-two women participated in our clinic last spring. Though some of them were unable to hunt this year, I hope they will make their debut next season. Six of the women brought home a bird in addition to a great experience.

I can hardly wait to congratulate them in the turkey woods next spring. ▲



SAFE for Wildlife

A new CRP practice will help restore quail and other grassland birds.

by Bill White, photos by Noppadol Paothong



My favorite melody has only two notes. It isn't played on the radio or CD player. It comes to me best through open windows on bluebird spring days, the kind of days that you wish every day could be like. The melody is the whistle of the bobwhite quail.

I grew up on a dairy farm in quail country during what we consider the boom years for quail. Those boyhood experiences have always made me want to live in the country and have my own small farm on which to "cultivate" my family as well as wildlife, especially quail.

Thanks to the Conservation Reserve Program, I was able to create great quail habitat on a farm my family owned in northwest Missouri. CRP is the nation's largest private-lands conservation program, with more than 1.5 million acres enrolled in Missouri alone.



ART: MARK RATHIEL



Through this U.S. Department of Agriculture program, farmers enroll land in 10- to 15-year contracts and agree to plant grasses or trees in crop fields and along streams. The plantings help prevent soil and nutrients from running into streams and affecting water quality while providing wildlife habitat.

I managed the CRP land with food plots, burning and light disking. My sons and I edge-feathered the wooded fencelines and sprayed out invading fescue and smooth brome.

The CRP on that farm helped produce some of the most memorable quail experiences of my life, including one particular summer walk, when we discovered 70 to 75 baby quail scattered in groups along the trail. Imagine trying to take a bird dog on a leisurely summer morning walk with that many quail around!

If one of your favorite melodies is the bobwhite-quail whistle or, perhaps, the resonating booming of prairie chickens, you have a new opportunity to restore these declining wildlife species to your land.

State Areas for Wildlife Enhancement, a CRP practice just unveiled by the USDA, seeks to make CRP a more targeted and focused program in addressing high-value wildlife-habitat restoration. SAFE also enables conservation partners in Missouri to propose areas where new CRP acreage may be established to fulfill the habitat needs of quail, prairie chickens and other high-priority wildlife species.



The SAFE programs are designed to benefit many different grassland-dependent birds, such as this Dickcissel.

SAFE Sign-Up

The sign-up for SAFE should begin in late winter or early spring at your local USDA-FSA office.

Eligible producers in these areas may enter into new CRP contracts with the USDA Farm Service Agency. FSA will offer participants an annual CRP rental rate equivalent to soil rental rates for the county plus an annual maintenance payment. Also, the producer is eligible for cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of eligible practice installation costs.

Lands Eligible for SAFE

With limited exceptions, land must be owned or leased for at least one year prior to enrollment to be eligible for SAFE. The acres offered must be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner.

Land must also meet cropping history and other eligibility requirements. SAFE enrollment is on a continuous basis, permitting farmers to join the program at any time, rather than waiting for a specific sign-up period.

More information about FSA's conservation programs is available at local FSA offices and online at www.fsa.usda.gov. Click on "Conservation Programs."

For the landowner, SAFE can be more than just a way to address specific wildlife habitat needs; it also can provide a viable supplement to farm income. CRP rental rates were increased an average of 16 percent in Missouri during 2007.

In addition, producers will be eligible for a one-time sign-up incentive payment of \$100 per acre. Producers may also receive a practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible establishment costs of the practice. The two incentive payments will not be offered during regular CRP signups.

SAFE in Missouri targets three specific wildlife habitats and customizes the practice to optimize wildlife benefits.

Sand Prairie Restoration

The goal of this SAFE is to restore sandy cropland in southeast Missouri with grassland projects that will provide unique vegetation restoration opportunities. The practice will benefit bobwhite quail and species unique to sand prairies, such as the eastern spadefoot toad and the Illinois chorus frog.

Sand prairies are one of the most endangered habitats in the state. More than 99 percent of sand prairie habitat has been destroyed by urbanization and conversion to



pasture, sod farms and row-crop agriculture. Remaining sand prairies are being further degraded by activities such as sand mining and application of sewage sludge. The shallow groundwater aquifer is very susceptible to contamination from these and other land uses.

Sandy cropland is marginally productive due to the droughty conditions of the soil during the summer. These sandy cropland areas will be replanted to a mixture of short-growing native grasses and wildflowers. Shrubby covey-headquarters plantings also are required. Wet areas can be further restored and enhanced to provide habitat for amphibians.

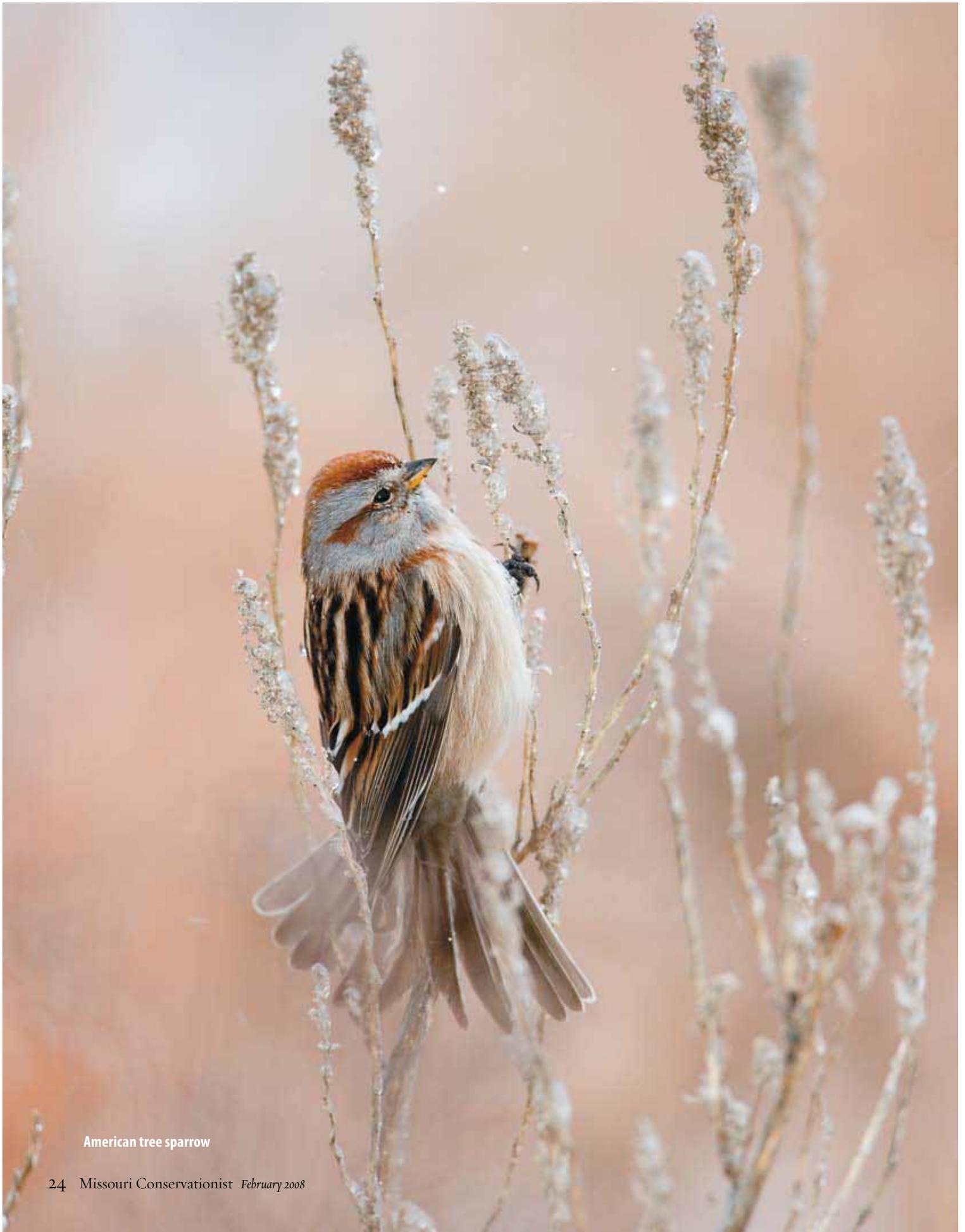
Not only will this project restore habitat for quail and other declining species of wildlife, it will protect shallow aquifers from contamination by urban runoff, agricultural fertilizers and pesticides.

Missouri's state bird, the bluebird, will also benefit from grassland practices aimed at quail and prairie chickens.

SAFE increases hunting and nature viewing opportunities and should provide the habitat necessary to ensure the success of recent wild turkey stocking efforts in extreme southeast Missouri. The restoration of sand prairies in southeast Missouri has the support of a number of state and local conservation partners.

Nesting Habitat for Grassland Birds

The goal of this SAFE is to significantly increase available nesting habitat to benefit the state-endangered greater prairie chicken and other grassland-dependent birds within six Missouri Grassland Focus Areas and a portion



American tree sparrow

of Ringgold County, Iowa. This joint effort with our conservation counterparts in Iowa was developed in cooperation with the Missouri Grasslands Coalition partners.

Prairie chickens require large parcels of nesting cover within large, open landscapes. Hens prefer to establish nests in vegetation that is roughly knee-high and located near an edge with less dense cover, such as well-managed pasture, wheat stubble or no-till soybeans, so newly hatched chicks can move freely to escape predators and catch insects for food. Most current CRP grasslands do not provide this kind of habitat because they are too tall or too thick.

A variety of grass mixes with legumes or wildflowers may be planted. The minimum enrollment is 20 acres because prairie chickens and many other grassland birds require large tracts of grasslands. Trees along the perimeter of the planting must be cut down to restore an open landscape. Non-CRP incentive programs may be available to defray the cost of tree removal, if it is necessary.

In addition to the extra incentives provided by USDA for this practice, the Missouri Department of Conservation will add a one-time payment of \$50 per acre after enrolled acres are planted. MDC also plans to help landowners identify and enroll less productive fields or portions of fields in this practice. This approach allows farmers to focus crop production efforts on their best land, while

receiving SAFE payments for less productive acres and adding much-needed grassland bird habitat.

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Restoration

The Bobwhite Quail Habitat Restoration SAFE was developed in cooperation with Quail Unlimited and Quail Forever. Its goal is to provide the nesting and brood-rearing habitat necessary for bobwhite quail by creating diversity within a CRP field.

To thrive, bobwhite quail require at least 25 percent bare ground under the plant canopy. However, most older CRP grasslands have well below 10 percent bare ground. This practice is designed to produce and maintain additional bare ground.

The practice is offered statewide on all cropland fields. CRP contracts expiring in 2007, 2008 and 2009 will also be eligible. Landowners may enroll entire fields or partial fields, including field borders and contour buffer strips.

Landowners will be required to establish at least 10 percent of the contract in food plots and provide edge-feathering or covey-headquarters shrub plantings. Native grass mixes with wildflowers must be established.

With SAFE, you, too, have a new opportunity to open up a window on a bluebird kind of day and hear the melody of bobwhites. No batteries, electricity or audio equipment is required. ▲



One goal of the SAFE programs is to increase habitat to benefit the state-endangered greater prairie chicken (above).

Regulations Update

Changes to the *Wildlife Code* in 2008 continue efforts to promote outdoor recreation.

by Dave Erickson

Missouri offers a wealth of outdoor opportunities, and the Missouri Department of Conservation continues to look for ways to make it easier for people to enjoy our fish, forests and wildlife. Citizens who engage in outdoor activities, whether it is bird watching, hiking, nature study, hunting, fishing or photography, are more likely to take meaningful action to protect those resources. Hunters and anglers have traditionally played an important role in supporting conservation efforts by purchasing permits, insisting on the effective management of harvest and populations, and complying with bag limits and seasons.

Regardless of the number of new young hunters and anglers, the total number of these groups will decrease as the baby boomer population grows older. To help skilled hunters share their knowledge, the Conservation Commission approved the Apprentice Hunter Authorization. By purchasing the Apprentice Hunter Authorization for \$10, an adult novice hunter can purchase firearms permits without investing the time to take a hunter education course. In return,



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG



New standards for holding captive-reared mallards on privately owned hunting preserves allows hunters more opportunities to hunt ducks, while minimizing contact between captive and wild birds.

the apprentice, age 16 and older, must hunt in the immediate presence of a properly licensed hunter 21 years old or older who is hunter-education certified. The mentor must have a filled or unfilled permit for the prescribed season.

The Apprentice Hunter Authorization allows the holder to purchase firearms permits throughout the permit year, and it can be purchased for two consecutive permit years. After the second year, the apprentice hunter will be required to become hunter-education certified if he or she wants to continue hunting on a firearms permit. Currently, Conservation Department staff is developing an online hunter education course, which will help adults work this important safety tool into their schedule. The online

course will be available this summer.

The Apprentice Hunter Authorization, along with the Youth Firearms Deer & Turkey Hunting Permit and the Youth Firearms Antlerless Deer Hunting Permit, provide additional opportunities for experienced hunters to share their knowledge and love of the outdoors with their friends and family who may not have been introduced to hunting and are not yet hunter-education certified.

In another effort to make hunting more accessible, the youth spring turkey hunting season April 12 and 13 will allow youth age 15 and younger to pursue turkeys from 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset. The regular 2008 spring turkey hunting season will continue to end at 1 p.m.



NOPPADOL PACHONG

The additional time in the afternoon on the youth weekend should help these young hunters have a successful hunt. According to biologists, all-day hunting should have little effect on the turkey population. Studies in states with all-day hunting have shown that hen disturbance by hunters is not a problem. The theory that more disturbance by hunters may decrease gobbling has not been scientifically tested, but Conservation Department scientists are conducting preliminary data on gobbling rates so they can study changes in the future.

Protecting migratory birds

Many hunters enjoy hunting on privately owned hunting areas, and many hunting preserve operators want to include mallard duck hunting on their licensed game bird hunting preserves. The Conservation Department wanted to allow people this option, but biologists were concerned with the threat of disease from the captive birds spreading to wild populations. Wildlife managers in other states have reported cases of disease transmission associated with releasing captive-reared mallards, and some states restrict the locations where these ducks can be released to limit their interactions with wild birds.

To protect wild mallards, the Conservation Department worked with preserve owners to establish regulations that would permit the hunting of captive-reared mallards on licensed hunting preserves in a manner that is consistent with sound management of native wildlife populations in Missouri and North America. To keep wild and captive ducks separate, holding facilities must be designed to re-capture captive-reared birds after a hunt, and a reasonable effort must be made to re-capture them each day to prevent their escape to the wild. Captive mallard ducks also may not be used on preserves that are located within 5 miles of conservation areas and wildlife refuges that have wetlands frequented by wild mallards.

As with many regulation changes, not everyone was completely satisfied. Some operators would prefer to release captive-reared waterfowl without being required to re-capture them daily. However, the Commission felt this compromise would provide more opportunities for people to hunt mallard ducks, while minimizing contact between captive ducks and wild migratory birds.



Safety

Because of the inherent danger and potential liability associated with the possession of bears, mountain lions, wolves and their hybrids, the Conservation Commission now requires owners of these animals to identify each individual with a microchip embedded under the animal's skin. The owners also must submit a blood or tissue sample for DNA analysis. All animals must be registered with the Department when acquired, born, at death, or when sold. This will aid enforcement of illegal sales of these animals and will help Department biologists distinguish escaped and released captives from wild animals.

The Apprentice Hunter Authorization provides a way for adults, who are not yet hunter-education certified, to share a hunt with an experienced friend.

Fishing

- Everyday Pond at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph is the latest addition to the popular winter trout fishing program that now includes more than 25 lakes around the state. It offers catch-and-release trout fishing from Nov. 1-Jan. 31. Only flies, artificial lures and unscented soft plastic baits may be used. The rest of the year, statewide methods and limits apply. Trout permits are required if trout are kept.
- According to electrofishing samples on the Meramec River, the annual mortality of goggle-eye is over 70 percent and few reach 8 inches in length. Because these fish are highly sought in the Meramec River basin streams and to accommodate anglers who want to catch larger goggle-eye, an 8-inch minimum length limit is in effect on Courtois Creek from the Highway 8 bridge in Crawford County to its confluence with Huzzah Creek, on Huzzah Creek from Willhite Road in Crawford County to its confluence with the Meramec River and on the Meramec River from the Highway 19 bridge in Dent County to Pacific Pallasades Conservation Area.

An 8-inch minimum length limit on goggle-eye in the Meramec River basin will allow anglers to catch larger fish in the future.



- On Blind Pony Lake, Hunnewell Lake, Lake Paho conservation areas, only Department-owned boats may be used and only electric motors are permitted. Waters from these areas are used to supply hatcheries. Due to the recent spread of zebra mussels into more areas of Missouri, this regulation change will help protect hatchery equipment from the damage caused by these exotic mussels and avoid spreading the mussels to other lakes where hatchery fish are stocked. Because boats and motor use will be restricted, the daily rental fee will be eliminated for Department-owned boats. In another effort to stop zebra mussels spreading to hatchery waters on these conservation areas, bait transported or held in containers with water also will be prohibited.
- From Feb. 20 through April 14, walleye and sauger can be taken and possessed only between 1/2 hour before sunrise and 1/2 hour after sunset in the unimpounded portions of all streams, except the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. The regulation previously stated that these fish could be possessed from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. Referencing legal fishing hours to sunrise and sunset is a more accurate way to define daylight hours. Allowing anglers to possess walleye and sauger during daylight hours enables them to fish for these species while protecting spawning walleye at night when they are easy to locate.
- On the Osage River within 225 feet below Bagnell Dam in the no-fishing zone, live bait may be taken by dip net and throw net only. This allows anglers to take live bait while protecting game species in this no-fishing zone.
- The 1 fish daily limit and 24-inch minimum length limit on flathead catfish on Longview Lake have been removed. The restrictions were put in place three years ago to protect stocked flathead until they became established in the lake. The initial flathead stocking has resulted in a reproducing population, and sampling the last two years has revealed good numbers of naturally reproduced fish.
- The length limit of 12 inches has been removed on gizzard shad taken by live bait methods. These fish commonly reach lengths greater than 12 inches, and are highly desirable as bait. Removing the length limit allows anglers to use this abundant resource.

Trapping

- Holders of the Resident Fur Handlers Permit can now possess, process, transport and ship their own pelts starting Feb. 16. The date was changed from March 2 to coincide with the furbearer hunting and trapping seasons.
- The Resident Trapping Permit, the Resident Cable Restraint Permit, the Resident Fur Handler Permit and the Nonresident Furbearer Hunting and Trapping Permit all are now valid from date of purchase through June 30. This change makes all these permits valid for the entire trapping season.

Hunting

- Starting this fall, firearms deer hunters will be able to use air-powered guns, .40 caliber or larger, charged only from an external high compression power source (external hand pump, air tank or air compressor). This change was the result of a suggestion from the public. Before it was passed, staff members tested large bore air rifles powered by compressed air and found them suitable for hunting deer.

Citizen input

Every day, the department receives letters, e-mail messages and phone calls about regulation changes. Each idea is recorded and sent to the Regulations Committee for review to see how it will affect the resource and how other Missourians use that resource. The Department also surveys Missourians to see if the regulations are fitting their needs. Not all suggestions can stand up to review. For example, in a 2002 statewide catfish angler survey, 55 percent of Missouri River anglers said they favored some form of harvest restriction so larger catfish could be harvested, although the portion of the river to be regulated was not specified in the questionnaire.

Based on harvest and population research, staff biologists recommended a portion of the



DAVID STONNER

Missouri and Lamine rivers for restrictions that would promote the growth of larger catfish. After a series of meetings held in the areas near those rivers, the Department decided not to pursue special regulations due to the negative response to the proposal.

Your opinion counts!

Since December, we have been asking for Missourians opinions on deer seasons. We are looking at possibly changing the dates of firearms season and either expanding or eliminating the antler-point restriction. If you aren't able to attend a meeting, you can view the presentation and give your opinion online at www.MissouriConservation.org/16184.

Missourians voice their opinions on regulations through public meetings, surveys, letters, e-mail and phone calls. Currently the Department is seeking public input on deer regulations.



DAVID STONNER

Privately owned boats are prohibited on conservation area lakes that supply water to fish hatcheries in an effort to keep exotic zebra mussels from spreading and damaging the hatchery system.

Hunting and Fishing Calendar

FISHING

	OPEN	CLOSE
Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the <i>Wildlife Code</i>)	5/26/07	2/29/08
impoundments and other streams year-round		
Bullfrog	Sunset	Midnight
	6/30/08	10/31/08
Nongame Fish Snagging	3/15/08	5/15/08
Paddlefish	3/15/08	4/30/08
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/08	5/15/08
Trout Parks Catch and Release	11/9/07	2/11/08
Friday–Monday at Bennett Spring, Montauk and Roaring River and daily at Maramec Springs		
Trout Parks	3/1/08	10/31/08

HUNTING

	OPEN	CLOSE
Coyotes	5/7/07	3/31/08
Crow	11/1/07	3/3/08
Deer		
Firearms	11/15/08	to be announced
Groundhog	5/12/08	12/15/08
Rabbits	10/1/07	2/15/08
Squirrels	5/26/07	2/15/08
Turkey		
Youth (resident only)	4/12/08	4/13/08
Spring	4/21/08	5/11/08
Light Goose Conservation Order	1/31/08	4/30/08
please see the backcover of the <i>Waterfowl Hunting Digest</i> or download the PDF at www.MissouriConservation.org/777		

TRAPPING

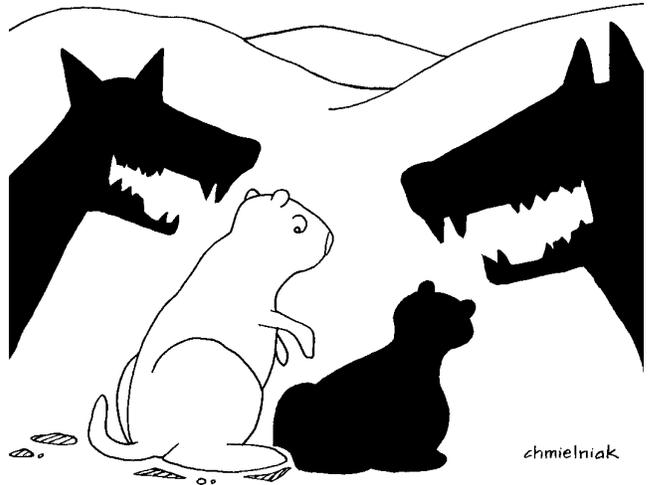
	OPEN	CLOSE
Beaver and Nutria	11/15/07	3/31/08
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/07	see <i>Wildlife Code</i>

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, the *Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest* and the *Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit www.MissouriConservation.org/8707 or permit vendors.

The Department of Conservation's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800-392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/.



Don't miss the trout parks season opener March 1.



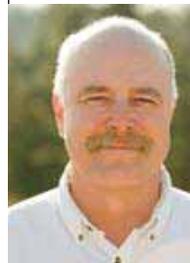
When the groundhog saw his shadow, he realized he had more than "six more weeks of winter" to worry about.

Contributors



Assistant Director DAVE ERICKSON supervises the resource divisions of the Department: Fisheries, Forestry, Private Land Services, Protection, Resource Science and Wildlife. As chairman of the Regulations Committee, he helps develop *Wildlife Code* changes for Commission approval. He lives with his wife, Janice, in Columbia.

NICHOLE LECLAIR, neophyte turkey-hunting enthusiast, is an indebted and dedicated fan of the Missouri Outdoor Women program. She hopes to explore more courses in 2008. Nichole lives in Osage County with her fiance/hunting buddy, Travis, and their two corgis. She is the managing editor of the *Conservationist*.



BILL WHITE is a private land programs supervisor for the Department of Conservation in Jefferson City. He coordinates Department efforts to implement fish, forest and wildlife aspects of USDA Farm Bill Programs. His interests include quail hunting, camping and keeping up with four sons and a grandson.

TIME CAPSULE

February 1968

The Nature of a Trout Stream was written by David W. Bridges about the factors that determine suitability of a stream for trout habitat. Missouri has many streams, but only a few have all the requirements to support enough trout for good fishing. One important requirement for trout is temperature range. The best temperature for adult trout is below 70 degrees, and for eggs around 50 degrees. Other important requirements are oxygen and food. Trout require more oxygen than most of Missouri's fishes and they seek out well-oxygenated areas of streams such as riffles. Riffles agitate the water, enriching oxygen content, and they provide good habitat for oxygen-producing algae. Conveniently, they also provide habitat for the insect larva and minnows on which trout prefer to feed. —Contributed by the Circulation staff



behind the CODE

Trout park opener dates back more than 80 years.

BY TOM Cwynar

Trout fishing in Missouri is open year-round in streams, but Missouri's trout parks are open for harvesting trout only from March 1 through October 31. Opening day at the trout parks dates back to 1926, when trout anglers began this tradition at Bennett Spring State Park.

Records are incomplete, but the season dates likely were set that first year and have remain unchanged.

March 1 coincides generally with the first hints of spring and the peak of fishing zeal. The season ends about the time when hunting coats start to replace fishing vests.



Opening day at the trout parks has become an annual pilgrimage for many Missouri families. Chris Vitello, fisheries field operations chief for the Conservation Department, said he started fishing opening days at Meramec Spring Trout Park in 1959, the year after the tradition started there. Both Montauk and Roaring River state parks held their first opening days in 1938.

Anglers can now fish the four trout parks almost year-round. A catch-and-release fly fishing season runs from the second Friday in November through the second Monday in February. At the three state trout parks, anglers can fish from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays through Mondays. Meramec Spring Park is open every day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

At all four trout parks, however, the best day of the year is always March 1, when as many as 10,000 anglers may linger streamside as they wait for a siren to sound the beginning of fishing—and of spring.

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Shawn Cunningham

“I AM CONSERVATION”

Charlie Thurman loves feeding the birds in the backyard of his Cape Girardeau home. “My wife, June, and I both enjoy nature,” says Charlie. “What could be more pleasant and refreshing than watching the birds in our backyard go about their lives, busily providing food and shelter for themselves and their families?” Charlie maintains numerous feeders and houses in his backyard, including bluebird houses and a large collection of purple martin houses. To learn more about conservation activities, visit www.MissouriConservation.org—PHOTO BY CLIFF WHITE



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