A photograph of a winter forest. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, with some fallen logs and branches in the foreground. The trees are mostly bare, with some showing hints of autumn color. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

# MISSOURI. Conservationist

VOLUME 73, ISSUE 12, DECEMBER 2012 • SERVING NATURE & YOU

## [NOTE TO OUR READERS]

# Dedication

The point was classic. Head motionless, ears cocked, right front leg lifted and locked, and the stub of the tail sticking straight out. The bronze eyes were staring intently at the patch of brushy

cover hiding the birds and the only movement of Belle the Weimaraner was the occasional ripple of excitement that quivered through her body. Another day afield with a companion who lived to run, point, and retrieve. Belle and I had many adventures during those fall days that provide unlimited outdoor experiences and those early summer mornings when we would leave at daybreak for a sunrise run to greet the day. For 14-plus years, Belle played an integral part in many of my outdoor adventures and those of an active family that has lived in several places in this great state.

In July of this year, those days ended and Belle's ashes were spread across one of her favorite fields where she loved to hunt, run, and roam with me. As with any loss, it causes one to reflect upon the past and wonder about the future. In Missouri, natural resources abound. We are blessed with clean water and air, vibrant forests, lush grasslands, open fields, and productive farmlands. This is no accident. Missourians are committed to protecting and perpetuating these natural resources, and they understand that to conserve them, constant vigilance is required. The loss of Belle spurred me to think about what we would miss. What if we did not have clean water and abundant forest, fish and wildlife resources? What if Missouri's deer herd was no longer what it is today, but more like the early 20th century when deer were hard to find and came very close to disappearing from our landscape? How much poorer would Missouri's quality of life be?

Department staff and a group of interested stakeholders are working together to find common ground to ensure a healthy deer herd exists in Missouri's future. Finding Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Missouri's deer herd has served as a call to action. Citizens with a variety of interests, including landowners,



sportsmen, captive deer breeders, hunting preserve owners, and governmental bodies, are engaged in a dialog to ensure Missouri's deer herd remains strong for future generations.

The dialog has been frank and passionate at all ends of the spectrum. Interested parties do not agree on approaches to sustain each segment of Missouri's deer herd. Entangled in the discussion are the concepts of free enterprise, private property rights,

over-regulation by government agencies, and fear of a cultural heritage resource that may not be in the same condition for Missourians to experience in future years.

Wrestling with difficult conservation issues is embedded in Missouri's rich conservation legacy. As we celebrate 75 years of conservation action, I am confident that this group of concerned citizens can find common ground on appropriate measures that will sustain Missouri's deer herd. While many appear frustrated with the Department's efforts to protect Missouri's deer herd, I am hopeful that, in the spirit of Missouri's conservation past, all interested parties will stay at the table to find reasonable solutions.

Though Belle is gone, the memories of our many adventures remain and, at some point, another rambunctious Weimaraner will join the Draper household. Reflection and loss remind me of the importance of having a healthy deer herd on the landscape and provides the impetus to identify ways to ensure continued conservation success. As chairman of the Department's Regulations Committee, I pledge to remain engaged in this important dialog. Together, we will identify suitable solutions to sustain Missouri's deer herd for future generations.

Tom Draper, deputy director



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Outdoor adventure is a Rittel family priority.

Cover: Daniel Boone Conservation Area in Warren County, by David Stonner

📷 16–35mm lens • f/11  
1/80 sec • ISO 400

Above: Grey-headed coneflowers, by Noppadol Paothong.

📷 17–40mm lens • f/8  
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**HUNTING BUDDIES**

I am interested in learning more about the breed of dog pictured in Tim Ripperger's *Conservation Vision* article in the October issue [inside cover].

After 16 hunting seasons, our Brittany passed last year. We found her invaluable in a variety of Missouri upland and waterfowl conditions, save for late "Lab season" icy retrieves.

I'm now looking for my next pup, probably another type of spaniel, and one adept in water retrieves. A dog like the one pictured might just fit the bill.

Thanks for all the hard work the Department does, the vision for our future, and especially for bringing back our quail.

*David Ammons, St. Louis*

*Editors' note: Deputy Director Tim Ripperger's dog, Indy, is a field-bred English cocker spaniel.*

**TO BRIGHT FUTURES**

Even as a life-long hunter, I am delighted to see the nonconsumptive, family depiction of conservation on the back cover of the October *Conservationist* [*I Am Conservation*]. I envision those handsome youngsters looking through their binoculars not only for elk, but also into a bright future for Missouri wildlife.

*John Erkmann, Anchorage, Alaska*

**MDC ATLAS UPDATES**

Some family, friends and I just enjoyed a squirrel hunting trip to a conservation area. We had a great weekend, and we really appreciated all the work the Department put into the area. Also, the online atlas is a great tool [*mdc.mo.gov*]. One suggestion: Has the Department considered including the USGS 1:24,000 quadrant that an area is in? That would make finding extremely detailed maps of an area much easier.

*Christopher Speck, via Internet*

*Ombudsman's Note: We are in the process of producing an upgraded mapping of conservation areas that will make the online conservation atlas more useful. Instead of just the standard area maps that you find there now, there will be a more detailed, interactive tool that will allow you to add various layers, including aerial photography, parking lots and topography. Then you will have the information similar to what is on the 7.5 minute USGS quad maps without having to locate those hard-copy maps. The problem with just listing the topo quads that cover each area is that some conservation areas are large enough that the list of quad maps would be long. With a list, you wouldn't know which one applied to the particular area where you planned to hike. Another issue is that those USGS quad maps are often outdated and contain errors such as conservation area boundaries that are out-of-date.—Tim Smith*

**FROM FACEBOOK**

Can I remove antlers from a deer that has been struck by a car?

*Gary Ragan*

*MDC: You must first call the conservation agent for that county. Use the "Who's My Local Contact?" feature on the right-hand side of the website at [mdc.mo.gov](http://mdc.mo.gov) to find the agent.*

Is it illegal to field dress and/or butcher your deer in the woods and leave the remains? I hunt on a big conservation area out at Meramac Spring, by Steelville, and it is a long way to drag out a deer. I would like to carry out the meat and leave the rest in the woods.

*Justin Turnbough*

*MDC: It is legal to field dress your deer before dragging it out of the woods. However, if you intend to butcher the deer in the woods, you must first call and Telecheck the deer.*



**Reader Photo**    **ICEBOUND**

Jessica Corgan of St. Louis took this photo of icebound wild hydrangea at Pickle Springs Natural Area. "I was out for a winter hike with my friend Maggie when I took this picture," said Corgan. "It was my first trip to Pickle Springs. I have hiked many trails in Missouri, but my favorite trail is always the new one just because I haven't seen it before." Corgan says she enjoys anything to do with the outdoors, including backpacking, kayaking, and mountain biking.



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## MDC Online Discover more about nature and the outdoors through these sites.

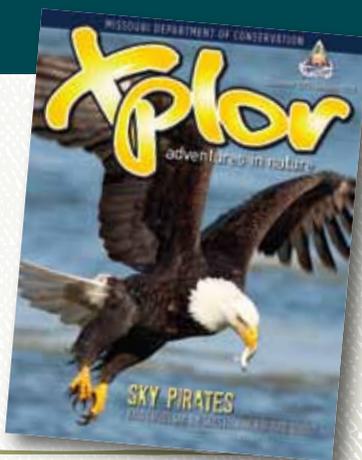
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**This year's early youth portion of firearms deer season harvest increased by more than 17 percent from last year. Missouri's hunting tradition is essential to managing deer and other wildlife populations.**

## Kids Swell Hunter Ranks

The harvest from this year's early youth portion of firearms deer season makes clear just how well MDC's hunter-recruitment efforts are working. Hunters age 15 and younger checked 19,277 deer during the early youth hunt Nov. 3 and 4. That is a 17.3-percent increase from the

previous high set last year. Not only has the number of deer harvested during youth seasons increased since the season was created in 2001, during the same period the number of hunters 15 and under has swelled from approximately 40,000 to 70,000. Youth seasons for deer, turkey,

waterfowl, quail, and pheasants are just one part of Missouri's multifaceted approach to hunter recruitment. MDC also uses outdoor-skills workshops, low-cost permits, partnerships with private mentoring programs and the Apprentice-Hunter Authorization to encourage Missourians to take up hunting. Missouri's hunting tradition is essential to managing deer and other wildlife populations. It also contributes substantially to the state's economy. Deer hunters alone spend approximately \$700 million on their sport annually in Missouri, generating \$1.1 billion in business activity and supporting 11,000 jobs.

## New Wildlife Chief

The Conservation Department's new Wildlife Division chief says she can't remember ever not wanting to be outdoors.

Jennifer Battson succeeded DeeCee Darrow, who retired in August. She traces her interest in nature to Osage County, where she spent lots of time helping her parents and grandparents with farm work.

"We spent so much time outdoors working that it seemed only natural to be outdoors playing," says Battson. "Our free time was spent exploring the woods and fishing on each of my grandparents' farms. My love and curiosity for the outdoors sprang from winter firewood cutting and summer fishing trips."

Her fascination with nature led Battson to earn a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her career included stints with the USDA Forest Service and the Missouri Department of Transportation. Since joining MDC in 1996, she has worked as an assistant resource forester, a management forester, a GIS specialist, an information technology trainee, a private land conservationist, a forestry programs specialist, a wildlife regional supervisor, and a wildlife management chief.

Battson's immediate goals include devising strategies for improving the Wildlife Division's ability to conserve and restore habitat. She hopes to inspire a closer connection between Missourians and the natural world through recreational opportunities on conservation areas.

Battson is a Fellow of the National Conservation Leadership Institute and a Conservation

Federation of Missouri Professional Conservationist of the Year. Her favorite outdoor activities include frogging with her kids and exploring new areas on farms or conservation areas. She doesn't get to turkey hunt as much as she would like, but what turkey hunter does?

## Discover Nature Schools Goes to the Fair

Are you or a student you know planning a great science-fair project related to nature? If so, we would like to know about it.

Recognition for outstanding science-fair projects now is available through the Discover

Nature Schools (DNS) program. No extra work or travel is involved. Teachers simply email photos and descriptions of projects for judging. Winners will receive ribbons, medals, or wooden plaques for their achievements.

Teachers, not students, must submit entries for the DNS Science Fair competition. To qualify, students must be enrolled in a class teaching a DNS unit. Entries must show a connection to at least one DNS activity. DNS does not have to be mentioned in the project. Entries must meet all criteria for display rules listed on the Academy of Science-St. Louis Science Fair website, [sciencefairstl.org](http://sciencefairstl.org).

The competition will take place in three

rounds. Round one will be judged by teachers at participating schools. Teachers will submit winning entries for round two by March 15. MDC education consultants will judge round two and send winners on to round three, which will be judged at MDC's Central Office in Jefferson City. Winners will be notified by May 1. Statewide winners and their schools will receive plaques and equipment for classroom use in teaching science.

Started in 2006, the Department's Discover Nature Schools Program is being taught in 51 percent of Missouri school districts. The program continues to grow every year. To learn more, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/19569](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/19569).



## ASK THE OMBUDSMAN

**Q:** I noticed a small tree in the woods with green twigs and unusual pink fruits hanging from the twigs. Can you identify it?

**A:** That small native tree is called wahoo; the Latin

name is *Euonymus atropurpureus*. It is not uncommon in Missouri, but it is often overlooked except when it is bearing

many small purple flowers in the spring or when it has the drooping pink fruits that you observed in the fall. The four-lobed pink capsules will dry and split open to reveal seeds with bright red coverings. Many types of birds eat the seeds and deer will browse the foliage and stems. Related native plants in the genus *Euonymus* include the rare strawberry bush and running strawberry bush, and the invasive exotics—winged burning bush and wintercreeper.

**Q:** On my property I found honeycombs hanging from a tree limb. What builds such an exposed hive?

**A:** I receive a few reports each year of honeycombs hanging from the undersides of tree branches or attached to the underside of overhanging roofs. Although they usually build hives in hollow trees or occasionally in the walls of houses, wild honeybees rarely will build those unprotected hives. It may be that a lack of hollow trees in the area causes the bees to build in such an unsuitable location. There is little chance that a bee colony will survive a Missouri winter in an exposed hive due to their inability to regulate the temperature in the hive. Beekeepers are sometimes willing to move honeybee colonies into hive boxes, but a colony moved late in the year is unlikely to survive the coming winter. The exposed hives are often not discovered until fall or winter when the leaves are off the trees.



Ombudsman Tim Smith will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Department of Conservation programs. Write him at PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573-522-4115, ext. 3848, or email him at [Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov).

## 2012 Fall Firearms Turkey Harvest Up

The 2012 fall firearms turkey season provided more good news for turkey hunters. This year's harvest was 8,498, up 20 percent from 2011. Meanwhile, sales of fall firearms turkey hunting permits were up 9.3 percent. Both increases indicate an increase in turkey numbers.

"With fall turkey hunting, permit sales tend to increase when folks see more turkeys," says Resource Scientist Jason Isabelle. "The increases in permit sales and the number of turkeys harvested mirror the results of this year's brood survey, which

showed production up for the second year in a row."

Isabelle says the improved production in 2011 means hunters next spring are likely to find the largest group of 2-year-old gobblers in quite a few years. Two-year-old gobblers are the most vocal, and hearing turkeys gobble is a significant factor in hunter satisfaction.

According to Isabelle, it is unlikely Missouri will ever again see the numbers of turkeys it had immediately following restoration. That high-water mark was the culmination of a restoration program in which turkeys were reintroduced into

areas where they had been absent for decades. Turkey populations expanded rapidly until they encountered "biological resistance" from factors that limit their numbers. From that peak, turkey numbers decreased to levels that are likely more sustainable in the long-run.

"In the coming years, fluctuations in our turkey population can be expected," says Isabelle. "We will have our higher years and we'll have our lower years. That's just the nature of a species like the wild turkey. As long as we have enough habitat, though, Missouri will have a great turkey resource."

Top fall firearms harvest counties were Webster with 225 turkeys checked, Laclede with 223, and Greene with 216.

## Commissioners Accept Conservation Kudos

At its meeting in Springfield Oct. 18 and 19, the Conservation Commission accepted accolades from Gov. Jeremiah "Jay" Nixon and State Rep. Sue Entlicher, Bolivar. Nixon and Entlicher each presented a framed proclamation congratulating the Conservation Department for 75 years of conservation leadership. Accepting the honors were Conservation Commissioners Don Bedell of Sikeston, James T. Blair, IV, of St. Louis, Don Johnson of Festus, and Becky Plattner of Grand Pass, and MDC Director Robert Ziehmer.

"Missouri is a national leader in conservation because of the work of the Department and the support and dedication of citizens," Nixon said. "Conservation efforts over the past 75 years have created healthy forests, abundant fish and wildlife, and productive waters. Conservation also benefits Missourians' quality of life. Millions of people in Missouri enjoy hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife watching, and other outdoor activities. These activities, along with forest industries, support about 95,000 Missouri jobs and generate more than \$11.4 billion annually to state and local economies."

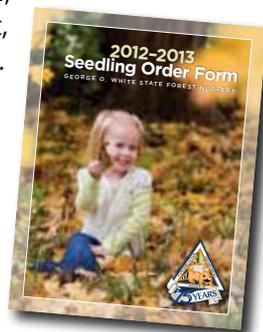
"On behalf of the Commission and Department of Conservation, we are deeply honored by this recognition," said Commission Chairman Bedell. "Over the past 75 years, Department of Conservation staff have worked with countless other Missourians to make the Show-Me State a great place to hunt and fish, to transform our



Washington hawthorn

## Order Tree Seedlings Now

With winter setting in, there's plenty of time to curl up on the couch and strategize about what trees and shrubs to plant from George O. White State Forest Nursery. The catalog and order form are easy to find at [mdc.mo.gov/node/4011](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/4011). This year's selections include 14 oak species, seven evergreens, black walnut, pecan, tulip poplar, bald cypress, black cherry, persimmon, pawpaw, dogwoods, holly, hazelnut, plum, ninebark, witch hazel, mulberry, elderberry, and much more. Several are offered in regular or extra-large sizes. Prices range from 16 cents to \$1.60 each, depending on species, size, and quantity. In the past, the nursery has offered special bundles with assortments of different species. This year, buyers will be encouraged to create their own bundles by combining seedlings that fit their needs. To make this easier, the nursery has reduced the minimum order from 25 seedlings per species to 10.



once-decimated forests into a sustainable industry, to help private landowners create and sustain wildlife habitat, to bring conservation to major urban areas, to develop public lands and facilities around the state, to encourage participation in the outdoors by all Missourians, and to partner the entire way with citizens, conservation-related organizations and communities.”

### “Missouri Monarch” Cast in Bronze

A limited number of bronze renderings of Missouri’s world-record, nontypical whitetail are available for purchase, thanks to a collaboration between renowned wildlife artist Glenn Chambers and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM). Chambers, who is a retired MDC biologist and award-winning filmmaker and artist, created the sculptures to celebrate 75 years of the Conservation Department and science-based deer management in Missouri. The 10-inch castings capture the deer’s massive, 333 7/8-inch antlers in minute detail, based on thousands of painstaking measurements. A maximum of 75 will be produced and sold for \$1,500 each. Proceeds from the sale will benefit CFM programs, such as Share the Harvest, Operation Game Thief, and the Conservation Leadership Corps. For details, call 573-634-2322 or visit [confedmo.org](http://confedmo.org).



TROUT: DAVID STONNER

## Did You Know?

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to fish.

### Winter Trout Fishing

» **There is great trout fishing around the state**, throughout the year. A trout lakes map and links to all trout area locations can be found online at [mdc.mo.gov/node/5603](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/5603).

» **The winter catch-and-release fishing season** at Missouri’s four trout parks is a good time to learn how to catch trout on a fly. Sharpen your skills at Bennett Spring State Park, Lebanon; Montauk State Park, Salem; Roaring River State Park, Cassville; and Maramec Spring Park, St. James.

» **Trout are stocked in 24 Winter Trout Fishing Areas**—mostly in or near urban areas—beginning Nov. 1. In addition to catch-and-release fishing through Jan. 31, many of these areas allow anglers to harvest trout as soon as they are stocked. Others allow harvest as early as February 1. The daily limit at these locations is four trout with no length limit. A Missouri fishing permit is required, and a trout permit also is required if trout are harvested.

» **Missouri hatcheries and trout parks** not only support our state’s great fishing, they’re also fascinating places to visit. Trout hatcheries are located at each of Missouri’s four trout parks and on Lake Taneycomo. They provide high-quality trout fishing on cold-water streams in Missouri. Learn more about hatcheries and trout parks at [mdc.mo.gov/node/4457](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/4457).



### Natural Events Calendars Make Great Gifts

Looking for an affordable item to fill the gaps in your holiday gift shopping list? Check out the *2013 Natural Events Calendar*. With eye-popping nature photos and daily nature notes, it provides a year’s worth of enjoyment for a

mere \$7. You can order copies through MDC’s online Nature Shop, [mdcnatureshop.com](http://mdcnatureshop.com), or by calling 877-521-8632. Or save shipping and handling charges by buying at a conservation nature center or one of the regional offices listed on page 3. Conservation Heritage Card holders get a 15-percent discount.



# NATURE in the NEIGHBORHOOD

by ERIN SHANK • photos by NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

The Community Stewardship  
Grant Program improves  
urban wildlife habitat.

Grey-headed coneflowers blossom  
over the summer at Bethany Peace  
United Church of Christ in St. Louis.

“I HAVE CLEAN AIR TO BREATHE BECAUSE someone somewhere manages a healthy forest,” explained the kindergarten teacher, as I walked through the nature center one morning.

I was struck by her insight and by how surprising the obvious can sometimes be. Kindergarten teachers have a way of putting things in terms that even, well, *kindergarteners* can understand.

Efforts in the Missouri Ozarks to manage for healthy forests benefit urbanites like myself, as does work throughout the state on prairies, wetlands, and glades. More of our growing urban public is recognizing the connection between conservation practices and their quality of life and are supporting land managers. It is this combination of citizen support and sound resource management that ensures conservation success.

## COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Natural communities are scarce in most urban centers. Where present, these small islands of the natural world possess a significance out of proportion to their size because of what they represent: the promise and presence of nature, however limited, in the midst of turf, concrete, and millions of people. Great efforts are undertaken to restore or reconstruct habitats on a small scale, to recreate a piece of that natural world, because of the importance of nature in our all-too-busy lives.

The Community Stewardship Grant Program, funded and administered out of MDC's Wildlife Division, has supported urban conservation efforts in the St. Louis area since 2007. The

### The Community Stewardship Program

Over the first six years of the program (FY07–FY12), MDC awarded a total of 47 projects in the St. Louis metro area. Through these projects we partnered with 95 organizations and agencies. Collectively these partners have contributed \$616,701 in matching funds and resources, including 12,510 volunteer hours on project planning, installation, and maintenance. On-the-ground accomplishments include the restoration or habitat improvement of 197 acres of forest, 24 acres of wetland, 186 acres of prairie/grassland, 5,600 feet of stream bank, 4 acres glade, and one cave.



Community Stewardship Program is a competitive grant opportunity for nonprofit and government organizations to receive restoration funds for urban habitat improvements in the metropolitan area, from bush honeysuckle control and replanting with native vegetation to wetland construction and cave restoration.

The three broad goals of the program are, in order of priority:

1. Provide support for terrestrial and aquatic habitat improvement and community land stewardship;
2. Build partnerships between MDC and similar organizations that share the common goal of improving urban habitats and supporting community conservation efforts; and
3. Engage urban residents in community conservation through volunteer efforts to improve habitat.



A 30-acre tract of land in the LaBarque Creek watershed was purchased by The College School, a small, nonprofit school, as an outdoor and conservation education site.

While the funds come from MDC, the real work for these projects is accomplished by partner organizations and their hard-working staff and volunteers—folks like Tim Wood and Paul Emily.

### THE COLLEGE SCHOOL

Tim Wood, a teacher by trade, is now the caretaker of a 30-acre tract of land in the LaBarque Creek watershed in Jefferson County about 30 miles southwest of St. Louis. The property was purchased by The College School, a small, nonprofit school for ages pre-K through eighth grade, as an outdoor and conservation



education site. “When our school acquired our LaBarque Creek Campus, we saw it as a tremendous opportunity to enhance our environmental and sustainability education programs,” says Tim.

**Pastor Paul Emily received a small grant to replant the vacant acre of land next to Bethany-Peace United Church of Christ in St. Louis with native Missouri grasses and forbs, and now a thriving prairie sits next to the church.**

The school's staff wanted to be good land stewards and turned to MDC for land management advice. "Grant funding was used to purchase tools to remove invasive species and purchase native trees, shrubs, and wildflower seeds to replace them," says Tim. "Our school community pitched in to plant trees, grow wildflowers, and cut down bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and eastern red cedars. The student, parent, and teacher support for this project has been phenomenal."

In order to care about something, we first need to feel some sort of attachment to it. It is hard to care about riparian corridors if you feel no connection with a river. But play in a creek, watch water striders skim the surface,

feel your bobber pulled under by a longear sunfish, and the river is suddenly and irreversibly relevant and valuable to you. Educators say children need to learn to love the outdoors before they can understand conservation problems or concerns. Adults are no different; as community members experience the wonder of the natural world, they value and support conservation more.

Tim's experience working with The College School community—teachers, parents, and students alike—exemplifies this connection. "The people who have come to work on the projects funded by MDC have not only helped to accomplish our goals, they have been enriched and changed by the work we have completed,"



he says. "As a group, we are forming a learning community that is committed to protecting and restoring the environment."

## BETHANY-PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Paul Emily is pastor of Bethany-Peace United Church of Christ in north St. Louis County. In 2008, some of his parishioners approached him about doing something about the vacant acre of land next to the church grounds. "The area was adjacent to the parking lot and caught all the runoff water from the lot and building," says Paul. "This produced an area that was of little use because of frequent standing water, and it was expensive to maintain through mowing. Reconstructing prairie on the site not only reduced costs of upkeep, but is a tangible way our congregation strives to be better stewards of our property."

Paul received a small grant to kill the existing turf grass and replant the acre with native Missouri grasses and forbs. Three years later, a bright and thriving prairie sits next to the church, buzzing with pollinators, soaking up runoff, and thriving even in the hot, dry summer of 2012. "The project would likely not have gotten beyond the visioning stage without a grant from MDC," says Paul. "We see the prairie not as where our congregation's ground ends, but where our role as stewards of creation begins."

## NATURAL CONNECTIONS

For many city residents, spending time outdoors means playing soccer or walking with the dog down concrete neighborhood paths. There is nothing wrong with this, but it is important to have more opportunities for urban residents to connect with Missouri's natural heritage. Imagine there was a rain garden downhill from the soccer field, soaking up the runoff from the turf, filtering out some of the fertilizer that keep the field thick and green. Imagine there was a patch of warm-season grasses and forbs along the walkway in a previously mowed section of a park. Imagine if those soccer players and morning dog walkers could enjoy the birds and creatures and other sights of nature, as well as the practical services. These projects could make a difference



in maintaining the health and diversity of our urban habitats and even influence perceptions of why conservation measures are important—large and small, rural and urban.

I see it as an important component of my job as an urban wildlife biologist to hold this optimism close, to cultivate it wherever I find it in volunteers and organizations who care about resources, who want to get their hands dirty and donate some sweat to urban conservation. If we make conservation relevant and valuable to urban residents, *in their own neighborhoods*, then we are accomplishing something great for fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the entire state. And that's exactly what MDC is trying to accomplish through the Community Stewardship Grant Program, which supports partner efforts to improve urban wildlife habitat.

The Department plans continued support for the Community Stewardship Grant Program in St. Louis and recently expanded the program to the metropolitan areas of Kansas City and Springfield. ▲

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*For more information about the Community Stewardship Grant Program, eligibility, and how to apply for funds, visit the MDC website at [mdc.mo.gov/node/7175](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/7175).*

**Jerry Hentschke, Pastor Paul Emily, Vernon Dill, and Beau Downing worked on the community garden at Bethany-Peace United Church of Christ.**



# Reservoir Blues

Blue catfish regulation changes could mean bigger fish and better tales

by MIKE BAYLESS • photos by DAVID STONNER



**Blue catfish are pursued because they can reach large sizes and are great to eat. However, it takes time for these fish to grow, and overharvest is keeping many blues from reaching a large size.**

**I**T WAS A WARM SUMMER MORNING and the three catfish anglers pulled their boat up to the trotline with great anticipation. They had caught several nice fish the night before, and numerous smaller fish, but this line would be different.

The boys grabbed the line while their grandpa drove the boat. “Grandpa, we have a good one!” one of them shouted. As they eased closer to the big blue catfish they could tell it was a giant. The fish fought hard as the three tried to get it in the net. At the last minute, the large blue made a hard run and broke the dropper line, leaving only a tale of the one that got away.

This might sound like a common fish story, but for Truman Reservoir and Lake of the

Ozarks, it’s not as common as it used to be. In the early years following the building of Truman Dam, Truman Reservoir and the area directly below the dam on Lake of the Ozarks became known as world-class blue catfish waters. The reservoirs combined span more than 100,000 acres and were once destinations for anglers wanting to catch a fish of a lifetime. Early on this was possible, but now blue catfish weighing 50 pounds or more are rare.

Blue catfish are Missouri’s largest catfish. The current alternative method state record was caught by Azel Goans in 1964 and weighed 117 pounds, a record that stands nearly 50 years later. The giant blue was caught from the Osage River near Osceola, an area that is now flooded by



Truman Reservoir. In 2010, the former pole-and-line world record, and current state record blue catfish, was caught from the Missouri River near St. Louis. That fish weighed 130 pounds. Blues are pursued because they can reach large sizes and are great to eat. However, it takes time for these fish to grow. Blues can live 20 to 30 years and, on average, take five years to reach about 1 pound and 15 years to reach about 12 pounds in Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks.

## A Common Concern

Truman Reservoir impounded the Osage River upstream from Warsaw in 1979. The dam became a barrier to blue catfish migrating upstream from Lake of the Ozarks and a concentration point for large blue catfish making their annual spring spawning runs. Truman was a new reservoir full of food and had plenty of water for blue catfish to roam and grow to large sizes.

Retired Department Hatchery Manager Gary Heidrich remembers those days. “I worked in the Truman basin before the dam went in,” he says. “Once the dam was built and the reservoir flooded, 50-pound blue catfish were very common. It was easy to go out and catch those fish, and many larger fish upwards of 80 pounds were caught each year.”

Fishing pressure increased once the reservoirs gained fame for producing heavy stringers of blue catfish. Department biologists and conservation agents noticed the increasing fishing pressure beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the number of anglers rose, the number of large blues fell.

Local angler Alvin Franklin has chased catfish on the Lake of the Ozarks for more than 50 years. “I can remember the days when we used to catch a lot of big ones,” he says. “I haven’t seen as many big ones as we used to. I think if they can come up with a slot limit or a length limit, that’s got to help things. And if we don’t have that, the younger generation won’t know what a big catfish is. That would be a shame.”

Biologists decided to take a closer look at catfish angler opinions and catfish populations. In Lake of the Ozarks below Truman Dam, biologists had concerns with declining numbers of larger, mature fish and determined that harvest was too high. Subsequent research



led to the implementation of a no-fishing zone directly below the dam, and protective regulations for catfish were implemented beginning in 1998.

In 2002, the Department conducted a statewide survey of catfish anglers and asked several questions of anglers who fished Truman Reservoir. Truman catfish anglers were asked whether fishing for catfish had improved, declined, or stayed the same for the 10-year period spanning 1992 through 2002. More anglers (35 percent) believed that the quality of catfish angling had declined, while only 11 percent believed that fishing for catfish had improved.

Between 2003 and 2005, the Department also conducted a Truman Volunteer Catfish Angler Creel. Catfish anglers (308) were asked to rate their fishing trips. The largest percentage (41 percent) ranked their trips as poor, while the smallest percentage (15 percent) ranked their trips as excellent. Combined, the categories of fair and poor accounted for 64 percent of the responses from anglers in this latter survey, suggesting that future management efforts should be directed at improving these fisheries.

In 2003, the Department drafted the *Statewide Catfish Management Plan* and dis-

**Department biologists and conservation agents noticed the increasing fishing pressure beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the number of anglers rose, the number of large blues fell.**

cussed its elements with anglers at six public meetings. Public response was gathered and the following key strategy was identified:

**Implement new regulations, based on sampling and creel data, to protect large catfish in Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks.**

Between 2004 and 2008, Department biologists tagged 300 blue catfish on Truman Reservoir using \$50 reward tags. At the end of the five-year period, the combined harvest rate on blue catfish 24 inches and larger, or about 5 pounds, was 92 percent. A 92-percent angler harvest rate for medium-size blue catfish does not allow blue catfish to remain in the population long enough to reach their growth potential. This “growth-overfishing” is recognized as a major contributing factor to the decline in blue catfish sizes.

The Department conducted further sampling of blue catfish during 2010 and 2011. During that time, 1,099 fish were sampled on Truman Reservoir, with an average weight of 4 pounds. A total of 869 fish were sampled on Lake of the Ozarks, with an average weight of 3 pounds.

**After hosting several open houses, the Department still wants public input on proposed blue catfish regulations.**

**Please share your comments online at [mdc.mo.gov/node/18097](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/18097).**

Meanwhile, blue catfish caught by anglers were showing the same trend.

Truman volunteer catfish anglers also shared information from their 2003–2005 fishing trips. The 3,760 blues caught using a full range of legal methods (measured by anglers) averaged only 3 pounds.

Finally, conservation agents began measuring angler catches on both reservoirs in 2010. Once again, the average size of fish that anglers have been catching on Truman Reservoir is 4 pounds, and the average size on Lake of the Ozarks is 3 pounds.

### **Citizens and Science Seek a Solution**

In 2006, the Department implemented changes to the statewide regulations for blue and channel catfish. Once combined in a daily limit of 10, blue and channel catfish were separated. The new regulations allow 10 channel catfish and five blue catfish daily statewide. Fisheries Division Chief Chris Vitello explains, “We made this change with future management in mind. We know that channel and blue catfish are very different and by separating the two, we would be able to better manage each in the future as we learned more about populations of these important sport fish.”

In 2009, the Department formed a working group to review available data and consider ways to reverse the decline of the blue catfish fisheries in Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks. The group determined that regulation changes would be necessary to recover the quality of the blue catfish populations in both reservoirs and developed four, primary objectives:

- Provide harvest protection for intermediate and larger blue catfish that studies found are being harvested at excessive rates, allowing more fish to reach larger sizes.
- Increase the harvest of small blue catfish, allowing anglers every opportunity to take fish home for the table, and reduce the number of small blue catfish to reduce competition for food. With less competition for food, blue catfish growth should improve.
- Retain the catfish angler base on both reservoirs and their tributaries.
- Maintain good relations with the angling and non-angling public while continuing to promote the local catfish fishing-based economy.





MDC fisheries biologists take samples of blue catfish on Truman Lake. Proposed regulation changes would protect medium-sized blue catfish so that more fish can reach a larger size.

## Weigh In on Regulation Changes

MDC is considering the following protective regulations for blue catfish on Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks and their tributaries, including the no-boating zone below Truman Dam, in an effort to improve quality and reverse the decline of larger blue catfish in these waters. Both reservoirs contain large numbers of smaller blue catfish, but numbers of large blues have declined.

- Increase the daily limit from five to 10 blue catfish.
- Add a protected slot-length limit for medium-size blue catfish of 26–34 inches (7 to 16 pounds).
- Allow the harvest of two blue catfish above the protected slot-length limit.

We are seeking public input. Please share your comments with us online at [mdc.mo.gov/node/18097](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/18097).

Numerous regulation options were considered. Protected slot-length limit regulations, where blue catfish within a prescribed size range must be released, were determined to be the best alternative. Protected slot-length limits allow intermediate-sized blue catfish, those being harvested at high rates, a chance to grow to larger sizes. At the same time, daily limits on fish shorter than the protected slot-length limit should be increased and larger fish above the slot would require some level of additional protection.

With a science-based roadmap in place, the Department gathered more public input. Three stakeholder meetings were held in 2010 to discuss several regulation options. The majority of attendees supported a regulation change. Some stakeholders, while supportive of a regulation change, believed that the changes might be too restrictive. Others indicated support for existing regulations. Additional comments were gathered using an online, public link.

This information was used to revise the proposed regulation changes and, in August 2012, an updated regulation proposal was discussed with the public at a series of three open houses. With science and public input as the driving forces, the Department is considering the following changes to blue catfish regulations for Truman Reservoir, Lake of the Ozarks, and their tributaries:



**Ten blue catfish daily limit:** This reflects an increase in the current daily limit for blue catfish and should help to improve blue catfish growth in both reservoirs.

**Protected slot-length limit of 26 to 34 inches, or about 7 pounds to 16 pounds:** Blue catfish from 26 to 34 inches would have to be returned to the water, unharmed, immediately. This protected slot-length limit protects blue catfish that are being harvested at rates too high to sustain a quality fishery and is intended to increase the number of larger fish in the population of each reservoir.

**Two blue catfish larger than 34 inches:** These fish would count toward the daily limit of 10. This would still allow anglers to take home larger blue catfish.

Predictive modeling indicates that, given the proposed regulation changes and adequate time, Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks



will support five times as many blue catfish 34 inches and larger than they do now.

If approved, the proposed regulations would be implemented on Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks and their tributaries and include the no-boating zone below Truman Dam. Regulations for channel and flathead catfish would remain unchanged except for the no-boating zone below Truman Dam where they would return to the statewide daily limit of 10 channel catfish and five flathead catfish.

All proposed regulation changes will be considered through the Department's standard regulation review process and are subject to approval by the Conservation Commission.

### **Better Blues for the Future**

Even with new regulations, it will take time to see improvements, perhaps as long as eight to 10 years to see the full effect of the proposed changes, because blue catfish are slower growing. Department biologists will track changes in the

blue catfish populations in both reservoirs and report their findings to anglers. We will continue to listen to the public. If substantial improvement in the quality of blue catfish populations in these reservoirs is not achieved, we will revisit the regulations and make adjustments as needed.

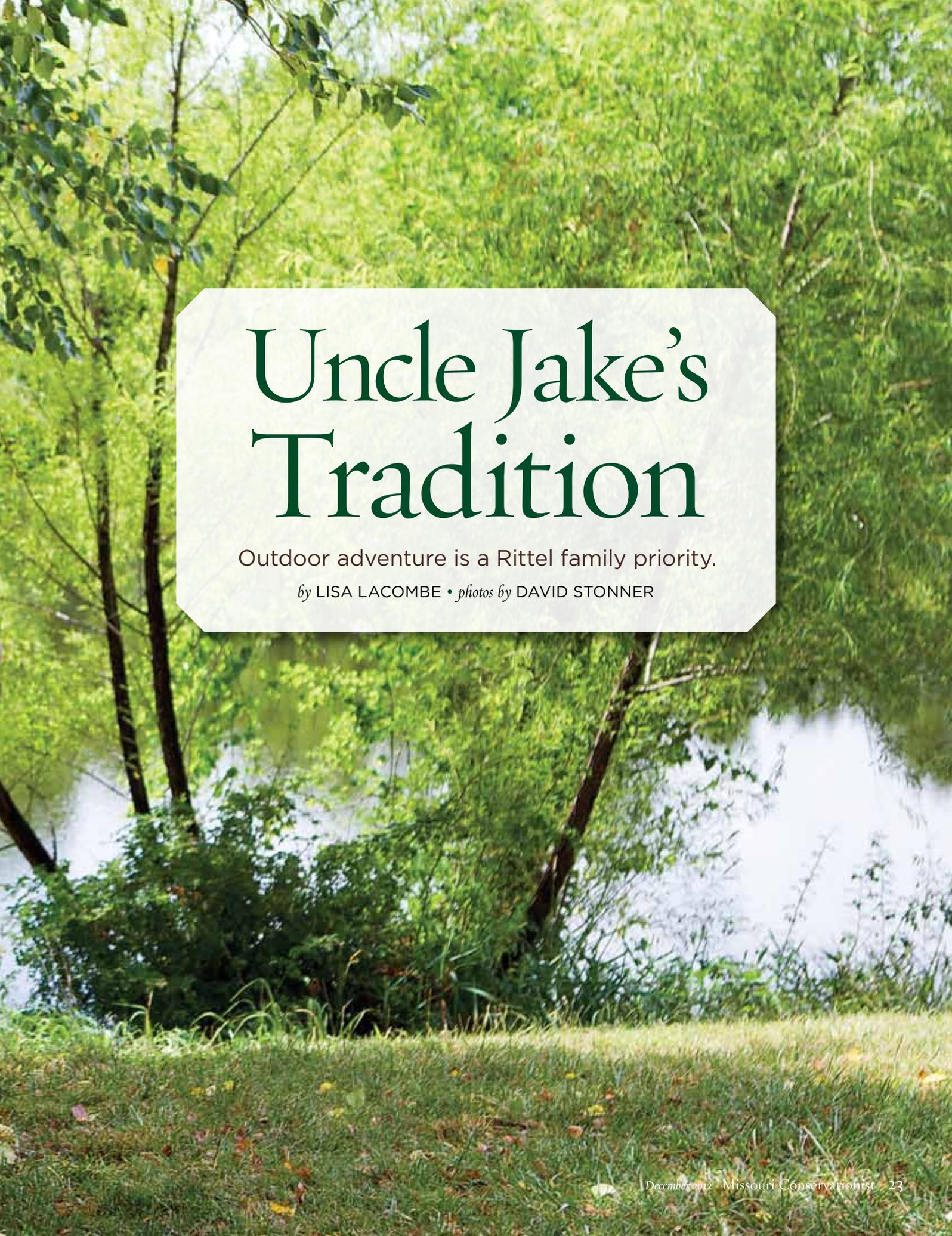
These big reservoirs were once home to large blue catfish. With sound science and public input, we could be on the verge of returning the big blue catfish of the past. A recent comment posted on the Department's website says it best: "My boys love to go out fishing with daddy and come back to tell me all their fishing tales. The best stories are the ones where they spread their arms open wide and say, 'We caught a fish this big, Mommy!' I want to ensure that they will always have those fishing tales to tell."

Missouri is a great place to fish. Efforts to improve blue catfish fishing on Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks will help to ensure that current and future generations can continue to stretch their arms open wide to the tune of reservoir blues. ▲

**With sound science and public input, we could be on the verge of returning the big blue catfish of the past to Truman Reservoir, Lake of the Ozarks, and their tributaries.**



The Rittel family: John, Deanna, Alex, and Andi.



# Uncle Jake's Tradition

Outdoor adventure is a Rittel family priority.

*by* LISA LACOMBE • *photos by* DAVID STONNER

**J**OHAN RITTEL GREW UP IN A TIME when children had more freedom to wander and explore. “Sugar Creek was semi-rural at the time. I grew up roaming along the Missouri River and stalking the local wildlife,” he says. John’s parents were not outdoor people, but he found a mentor in his Uncle Jake.

**John Rittel and his family volunteer at the Outdoor Skills Camp held at Burr Oak Woods. John is teaching techniques on how to canoe.**

Uncle Jake had no children of his own, but he was a dedicated hunter and angler. “It wasn’t just a sport to him, it provided the means to bring food home for his family,” says John. “He didn’t have to take me with him, he probably could have been even more successful if he hadn’t let me tag along, but he did.”

John’s favorite memory is the time his uncle taught him how to set limb lines for catfish,

baiting the lines with John’s hard-won bluegill. Another time, they cleaned a large flathead catfish and discovered a rapidly decomposing mallard drake in its gut. “That’s the stuff young boys’ dreams are made of,” says John. “I was fascinated, and I was hooked.”

Uncle Jake was one of the first deer hunters in Missouri the year MDC reopened deer season. He kept a journal throughout his life filled with detailed calendar entries that described each hunting or fishing experience with those he mentored.

These childhood experiences began an outdoor tradition in the Rittel family that continues to flourish today. Although Uncle Jake died a couple of years ago, his legacy is very much alive.



## Meet the Family

Allow me to introduce you to this amazing family. In 2008, John's son, Alex, completed the Missouri Department of Conservation's volunteer training. He was one of the first youth volunteers at Burr Oak Woods Nature Center in Blue Springs. Many of the adult volunteers were skeptical at first about having teenagers join their ranks, but, after working with them, all agree that it is a special treat to work side by side with these passionate and enthusiastic youth.

Since becoming a volunteer, Alex has contributed more than 743 hours to the Missouri Department of Conservation. His favorite activity is the Burr Oak Woods Outdoor Skills Camp because he sees the program involving so many kids in a wide variety of outdoor activities.

In 2010, Alex's little sister, Andi, wanted to become a volunteer. Many older brothers would have discouraged her participation, but Alex was thrilled to have his sister join the team. John and his wife, Deanna, then decided that volunteering was a great idea for the whole family and they joined in, too. John, Deanna, and Andi graduated with the volunteer class of 2010 and have since become an integral part of the Burr Oaks team. Cumulatively, they have shared 2,627 hours of their time and talents with this nature center and the citizens of Missouri. In 2011, Andi was recognized with the Volunteer of the Year Award for her work at the nature center.

## Sharing the Fun

The Rittel family loves to share their passion for exploring the outdoors with others. John and Deanna count fishing programs as their favorite activity at Burr Oak Woods. They say that they enjoy the opportunity to work with all ages, from small children to senior citizens, and that the reactions are always "pure excitement."

Andi's favorite event is the No Boundaries Fishing Event for anglers with special needs at Blue Springs Lake. She believes that is vital to our health and well-being to include outdoor experiences in our lives. "There is something for everyone out there. If a person has a good experience, they will want to do it again. Being outdoors has always brought me joy. I want to share that joy with others."



**Deanna Rittel teaches basic fishing skills at the Burr Oak Woods Outdoor Skills Camp. "Yes, you need patience when fishing with children," she says, and laughs. "There are always tangled lines, snags and embedded fish hooks."**



The whole family believes that their childhood experiences play a large part in their connection to the natural world today. Deanna's favorite memories include attending wild-game dinners with her dad and staying up late to see what fish or wildlife he brought home. Alex and Andi grew up sampling a variety of outdoor activities.

## Finding Balance

In this day and age of overscheduling and everyone going their own way, hunting, fishing, and the outdoor lifestyle help this family to remain close to one another. Technology is an important part of contemporary life, but the Rittels believe that a family must find a balance. So many families go separate ways in pursuit of personal interests. When one person goes on a hunting trip, another to the mall, and another to sports practice, it doesn't take long before a family loses touch.

Shared memories and traditions are important. Staying involved in each other's lives, sharing outdoor experiences and developing an understanding of the importance and value of the natural world ties them together. It doesn't matter if you live to hunt and fish or you love to canoe an Ozark Stream or go backpacking, as long as you do it as a family.

People are a part of the natural world. We need to be outdoors to be healthy and grounded, and it is a time to recharge, relax, and decompress. "I can concentrate and think more clearly after I have spent time outside," says John.

As a family, the Rittels most enjoy canoe trips and hunting. They all rank opening morning of deer season at the top of their list. Andi describes being filled with anticipation and the feeling of excitement in the air—and the importance of Deanna's biscuits and gravy to their tradition.

Every child needs a positive, enthusiastic mentor to help facilitate their connection to the natural world. Alex and Andi credit their parents as the most important mentors in their



lives. "My dad always encourages me to try new things, even when I don't want to," says Andi.

## Life Lessons

The development of a strong set of outdoor skills creates a heightened awareness and a willingness to try new things. It instills a sense of self-reliance and resourcefulness, and it teaches you to be patient. These skills enrich all aspects of our lives.

"Yes, you need patience when fishing with children," says Deanna, and laughs. "There are always tangled lines, snags and embedded fish hooks." But Alex counters with a family secret. "Mom, we've had to be patient with you, too. Remember when you lost my best fishing pole?" They all laugh at that. As the story goes, Deanna laid Alex's baited pole down and a fish hit the bait—taking off with the pole. John patiently rooted for the pole for two hours. Miraculously, he finally did snag the pole and reel it in, fish still attached.

You can't create family memories like these in front of a screen. They share a family tradition of outdoor exploration, the recognition of the importance of our connection to the natural world, and all the excitement those bring. Uncle Jake's tradition lives on in the hearts of John, Deanna, Alex, and Andi Rittel. Together, they continue to share this gift with each other and with the citizens of Missouri. ▲

**Cumulatively, the Rittel family have shared 2,627 hours of their time and talents with Burr Oak Woods and the citizens of Missouri. Missouri citizens volunteered nearly 250,000 hours to MDC programs last year. To learn more about volunteering visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/4678](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/4678).**

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**In 2011, Andi Rittel was recognized with the Volunteer of the Year Award for her work at the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Blue Springs, Mo.**

## Woodland Vole

*Look for this furry, rare Missouri resident in woodlands before daylight.*

I ARRIVED AT the woodland an hour before daylight and found a comfortable spot to watch the morning unfold. A prescribed burn had left the forest floor more open than the week before, providing an abundance of photographic shooting lanes. It was dead calm and pitch-dark as I plopped down on my camouflaged cushion, back against a familiar hickory snag. A great-horned owl began calling softly as I settled in. As the aroma of the charred forest floor wafted around me, I was reminded of why Robert Frost wrote so eloquently of “woods.”

As I began to doze, I was startled by rustling in the leaves, right at my feet. It was too dark to see anything so I just sat, curious. Soon the rustling was accompanied by grunts and squeaks. I eagerly waited for the forest floor to materialize. Minutes later, the first glow of morning illuminated the source of the racket: woodland voles (*Microtus pinetorum*). I watched as they scurried all around me, at least five, a colony. In the dim light, they seemed unconcerned with my presence and soon began racing back and forth beneath my slightly elevated legs. As I sat there, beguiled by these diminutive forest dwellers, I felt like Gulliver, surrounded by Liliputians, but of the rodent variety. Forsaking rationality, I moved my legs a bit to make sure the little scoundrels weren’t immobilizing me with spider silk. How could I be sure they weren’t conspiring to cart me off to deeper parts of the woods?

As the morning light began to paint the forest floor, my wee friends disappeared into underground runs. I wasn’t discouraged by their retreat because my 500mm lens was useless at such close range. I would return the next morning with appropriate gear. Over the next five days, I sat in the same spot each morning, my lens trained on one of the tunnel entrances. I never saw activity like on the first day and what I did see mostly occurred before daylight.

The woodland vole, a heavy-set rodent with a big head and short, furry tail, is considered rare throughout Missouri but is more common in the Ozark highlands. Reddish-brown in color and about 4 inches long, their tiny eyes and fur-covered ears make them perfectly suited for underground life, just beneath the forest litter. Woodland voles dig their own tunnels and dens with teeth and claws, and feeding occurs mostly underground on roots, tubers, seeds, nuts, and insects. Woodland voles typically live in colonies, ranging over less than a third of an acre, and a female produces several litters each year. Worthy opponents to a photographer, woodland voles are more active at night and spend most of their time underground.

By the fifth morning, I was still waiting for my first image, my gaze transfixed on the tunnel entrance. Suddenly, one of the tiny rodents revealed its face for what seemed only a second. Somehow, I managed a single click of the shutter, capturing the creature’s inquisitive glance before it retreated underground. Gratified at finally documenting my discovery, I relaxed for a while, content to be a part of the “woods so lovely, dark and deep.”

—Story and photo by Danny Brown

 300mm lens + teleconverter • f/5.6 • 1/25 sec • ISO 800

*We help people discover nature through our online field guide. Visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/73](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/73) to learn more about Missouri’s plants and animals.*





# Rocky Creek Conservation Area

Explore this vast piece of the Ozark outdoors, which showcases Missouri's diverse forests, wildlife, and karst topography.



YOU CAN'T FIND a more comprehensive example of Missouri's diverse Ozark landscape than Rocky Creek Conservation Area (CA). Encompassing more than 38,000 acres, this Shannon County conservation area features woodlands, forests, and limestone glades, characterized by caves, fissures, and underground streams.

The area's many streams, including its namesake, Rocky Creek, wind through woods containing black, scarlet and white oak, hickory and shortleaf pine. Rocky Creek CA contains two designated natural areas (NA)s, Mill Mountain NA and Powder Mill Cave NA, and two named glades, Open Hollow and Big Branch. The area's several igneous mountain glade woodland complexes include Barnett, Vance, Buttin Rock, and Peter Mooney mountains. These are some of the earth's oldest rock formations and are billions of years old.

The area encompasses a 9-mile portion of Missouri's Ozark Trail, as well as endless hiking opportunities on forest roads and interior trails throughout the area. Hikers can camp along trails or at Blue Springs Fields Camping Area. No camping amenities are provided. The area also provides access to the Current River for canoeing, boating, swimming, and fishing.

Rocky Creek CA is home to many forest bird species as well as seasonal neotropical migrants, which are best viewed from interior forest trails. Fishing for bass, goggle-eye, and suckers is available at the Current River and the nearby Jacks Fork River. Hunting for deer, dove, quail, turkey, and other small game is also an option. Dove and quail populations are limited but on the rise due to natural-community restoration projects including sunflower and millet food plots.

Rocky Creek CA is managed especially for habitat diversity in its forests, woodlands, and glades. The goal of the area's management is to provide a wide range of wildlife habitats that provide for the needs of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and others. Fire-dependent natural communities are being restored using methods such as prescribed fire and commercial timber harvests. Even-aged and uneven-aged management are both used as treatment options, while other areas are left for old growth habitat. Rocky Creek CA offers a 5-mile driving tour for visitors to learn about these projects firsthand.

Tracts of Rocky Creek CA can be accessed from Highway 19 and Highway 106. For more information including a map and brochure, visit the website listed below.

—Rebecca Maples and Gary Gognat, photo by David Stonner

 24–70mm lens • f/6.3 • 1/80 sec • ISO 200

**Recreation opportunities:** Bird watching, camping, fishing, hiking, hunting in season, nature viewing, restoration tours

**Unique features:** This area features vast woodlands, forests, glades and karst topography. It is also home to two large landscape scale restoration projects totaling more than 3,000 acres, as well as unique igneous mountain, glade and woodland complexes.

## For More Information

Call Rocky Creek CA Manager Gary Gognat at 573-226-3616 ext. 225 or visit [mdc.mo.gov/a4629](http://mdc.mo.gov/a4629)

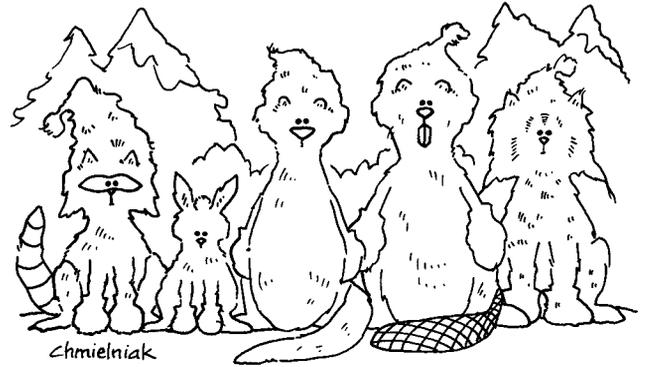




# Hunting and Fishing Calendar

FISHING	OPEN	CLOSE
Black Bass from Ozark streams	5/26/12	2/28/13
Nongame Fish Giggling	9/15/2012	1/31/2013
HUNTING	OPEN	CLOSE
Coyote	5/07/12	3/31/13
Crow	11/01/12	3/3/13
Deer		
Archery	11/21/12	1/15/13
Firearms		
Antlerless	11/21/12	12/02/12
Alternative Methods	12/15/12	12/25/12
Late Youth	12/29/12	12/30/12
Furbearers	11/15/12	1/31/13
Groundhog	5/09/12	12/15/12
Pheasant		
North Zone	11/01/12	1/15/13
Southeast Zone	12/01/12	12/12/12
Quail	11/01/12	1/15/13
Rabbit	10/01/12	2/15/13
Squirrel	5/26/12	2/15/13
Turkey		
Archery	11/21/12	1/15/13
Waterfowl	please see the <i>Waterfowl Hunting Digest</i> or see <a href="http://mdc.mo.gov/node/3830">mdc.mo.gov/node/3830</a>	
Wilson's (common) Snipe	9/01/12	12/16/12
TRAPPING	OPEN	CLOSE
Beaver and Nutria	11/15/12	3/31/13
Furbearers	11/15/12	1/31/13
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/12	2/20/13

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* or the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, *The Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, *the Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, *the Waterfowl Hunting Digest* and the *Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/130](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/130) or permit vendors.



This year, in addition to winter coats, the furbearers inexplicably grew winter hats and mittens.

## Contributors



MIKE BAYLESS is the fisheries management biologist for Truman Reservoir. Mike enjoys Truman as much on the clock as he does off. He and his family love the outdoors and chasing waterfowl, turkeys, deer, and fish.

LISA LACOMBE is the nature center manager for Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center. She lives in Adrian, Mo. In her free time she loves to scuba dive, canoe, trail run, bicycle, and camp with her family.



ERIN SHANK has worked as the St. Louis region urban wildlife biologist for the past 10 years. Besides administering the grant program, she manages eight urban conservation areas and handles community-wide wildlife issues such as urban deer management. She enjoys exploring Missouri's outdoors with her family.

## Operation Game Thief

Help put game thieves out of business. If you see a possible violation in progress, call your county conservation agent immediately or dial the toll-free number below:

**1-800-392-1111**

All information is kept in strict confidence. Desirable information includes names of violators, vehicle description and license number, as well as the violation location.

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Facebook is another great way to get information about nature and outdoor recreation in Missouri.

# AGENT NOTES

## *Investing in Our Conservation Futures*

THE START OF winter brings so many great opportunities for Missourians to step outside and experience the state's natural bounties. The colder weather brings the peak mallard migration, increased furbearer activity, and an opportunity to harvest a deer with a variety of new methods during the alternative methods portion of firearms deer season.

I've made many great memories braving the December cold. I can still vividly remember my first duck hunt at Otter Slough Conservation Area. Waking up at an hour I wasn't sure existed. The anticipation that coursed through my body as I stood in line for the draw. The happiness I felt when the number I pulled from the box had a 14 on it. The pain I felt in my hands and feet after breaking ice for an hour. The pride I felt when I saw my first bird crumple over the decoys, a drake pintail.

That maiden pursuit was undoubtedly life changing. The interaction with nature had a profound effect on me. That duck hangs from my wall as a reminder of

that day. It also reminds me of the friends who took me hunting, taking time to share their knowledge so I would enjoy my first experience in the field.

I'm confident that many of Missouri's citizens have stories similar to mine. As the Missouri Department of Conservation's 75th anniversary celebration of service to the citizens of this great state comes to a close, it's important to reflect on the joyous experiences the resource has brought us. There are many Missourians who have yet to catch a bluegill, bag a turkey, or even plant a tree. Let's make a point to share our love for the outdoors with others to ensure another 75 years of conservation success.



**Andrew Mothershead is the conservation agent for Saline County. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, phone your regional conservation office listed on Page 3.**



**A duck hunter waits for duck at Grand Pass Conservation Area.**



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## I Am Conservation

Icicles hang from the bluffs as canoeist Dave Tobey enjoys a winter paddle, in the rain, on the Current River near Blue Spring. Tobey, who lives on the Current River near Round Spring, enjoys floating Missouri's Ozark rivers year-round. Winter can be an excellent time for a float. You usually have the water to yourself, and it is easier to view wildlife. With some common sense precautions, winter canoeing can be safe and enjoyable. "The first time I put my paddle in the Current River was in the late 1950s when my family started camping at what was then called Round Spring State Park," said Tobey. "Today, after many years of twists and turns down the river, I appreciate the opportunity to share a deep appreciation for the river teaching outdoor education classes at Westminster College and serving as an Interpretive Park Ranger with the National Scenic Riverways. Now, more than ever, the water quality of the river, along with the quality of each person's experience in the park, is dependent on the behavior, skills, and habits of visitors and residents of the area." —*Photo by David Stonner*