

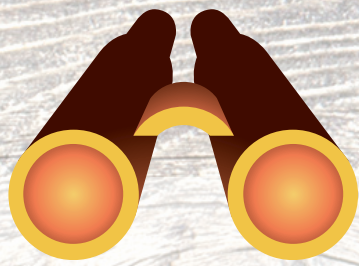
Fall/Winter OUTDOOR HUNTING GUIDE

A look at the contributions made by our nation's wildlife recreationists.

**101.6
Million**

The number of Americans who participate in hunting, fishing and wildlife activities

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016



**\$84.6
BILLION**

Total expenditures by recreationists on wildlife watching

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016



**\$46.1
BILLION**

Total expenditures by anglers in the U.S.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016



**\$26.2
BILLION**

Total expenditures by hunters in the U.S.

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016



Black Bass

The most popular game fish caught in America

Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016



Whitetail Deer

The most hunted animal in America

Source: americanhunter.org

**150,000,000
ACRES**

The size of America's National Wildlife Refuge System

53,000,000 PEOPLE

The number of people who visit America's wildlife refuges every year

\$8 MILLION A DAY

Contributions of sportsmen and women to support wildlife and wildlife agencies

Source: nhfd.org

680,000

The number of U.S. jobs supported by hunters and anglers

Source: nhfd.org

= \$2.4 BILLION in consumer spending & 35,000 LOCAL JOBS

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior

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OCTOBER 28, 2020



MDC reminds hunters of baiting regulations during deer and turkey seasons

JILL PRITCHARD
MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reminds hunters to be aware of baiting regulations during the fall deer and turkey hunting seasons. The use of bait, including grain or other feed placed or scattered to attract deer or turkey, while hunting is illegal. The regulations are in place to help limit the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in deer and to ensure fair chase.

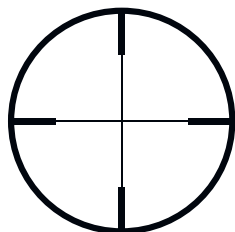
MDC Protection Division Chief Randy Doman notes that an area is considered baited for 10 days after complete removal of the bait.

“It’s important to note a hunter can be in violation if they take or attempt to take a deer or turkey by the aid of bait where the hunter knows or should know the area is or has been baited,” Doman explained. “It’s also illegal to place bait in such a way that it causes other hunters to be in violation of the baiting rule.”

Additional rules apply if hunting in a CWD Management Zone. There are 30 counties in the management zone for the 2020-2021 deer seasons. Due to COVID-19 concerns, MDC has transitioned its mandatory CWD sampling to voluntary sampling this year. For more information on CWD regulations, visit <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZL3>.

See **Regulations** page 3B

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MDC virtual program to provide deer processing tips

FRANCIS SKALICKY
MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

SPRINGFIELD — Once a hunter has bagged a deer, the work is only half over. How to field dress it, skin it, process the meat and store it for future tasty meals are skills hunters need to know.

Hunters who are interested in learning how to process their own deer will have an opportunity to get tips at a Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) “Field to Freezer” virtual program from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 29. This program is open to all ages. People can register for this online program at: <https://mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/174764>

At this free event, MDC Conservation Educator Greg Collier will provide tips on how to field dress, skin, and butcher a har-

vested deer. Field dressing is an important skill for hunters to have, even if they plan to take their deer to a processing facility. For those who want to butcher their own deer, this clinic will show how to turn a harvested deer into neat packages of lean and healthy meat. Other topics covered will be supplies needed and regulations that pertain to stored venison.

Though this program is free, registration is required to participate, using the link above. Registrants must provide an e-mail so a program link can be sent to them. This program will include a chat-based question-and-answer period where participants can interact with the presenters.

Staff at MDC facilities across the state are holding virtual programs. A listing of these programs can be found at mdc.mo.gov/regions.

Regulations • from page 2B

Doe urine and other scents, such as apple, acorn, and persimmon, are allowed to attract deer while hunting, as long as they are not used on or with grain and other food products.

Mineral blocks, including salt, are not considered bait. However, mineral blocks that contain grain or other food additives are prohibited. MDC notes that mineral and salt blocks are not allowed on conservation areas.

While it is legal to hunt over a harvested crop field, it is illegal to add grain or other crops, such as apples, to the field after it has been harvested.

Manipulating crops, such as mowing or knocking them down, is not considered baiting for deer and turkey.

“Having these regulations in place keep deer from concentrating in one small area, thus limiting the potential of CWD transmission,” said Doman.

Find more information on CWD and hunting regulations from MDC’s 2020 Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations & Information Booklet, available where permits are sold and online at <https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/fall-deer-and-turkey-hunting-regulations-and-information>.

Hunters are also encouraged to contact their local conservation agent or MDC regional office for additional questions or concerns. Find contact information at <https://mdc.mo.gov/contact-engage>.



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Nature's soundtrack returns after centurylong absence

MU researchers and partners reintroduce the brown-headed nuthatch to Missouri; The songbird disappeared from the state after the loss of its natural habitat



AUSTIN FITZGERALD,
fitzgeraldac@missouri.edu

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Bird calls can be iconic, and to many Missourians, some have come to define landscapes. Waking up to complex song of an eastern meadowlark in grassy fields at dawn, the gentle “coo” of mourning doves throughout the day, and rocking on front porch to the playful song of the whip-poor-will on a warm summer’s night. However, one iconic call has not been heard in Missouri’s landscapes for some time: the “rubber ducky squeak” of the brown-headed nuthatch.

The nuthatch was extirpated, or made locally extinct, in Missouri nearly a century ago due to the loss of their habitat. Millions of acres of shortleaf pine and oak woodland once covered Missouri’s Ozarks, but due to widespread logging and fire suppression, most of this ecosystem was removed by the early 1900s, eventually forcing the nuthatch out of the state.

However, some of those pine woodlands have now been intentionally restored to the Ozarks landscape by conservation partners in the region, such as the U.S. Forest Service’s Mark Twain National Forest. Tree harvesting has now become a tool for restoration and fire has returned to the land to maintain this ecosystem. With the habitat returned to its former state, University of Missouri researchers — working together with the forest service’s Northern Research Station and Mark Twain and Ouachita National Forests, along with the Missouri Department of Conservation — are releasing nuthatches back into Missouri.

“The brown-headed nuthatch is a tiny bird, but bringing it back to Missouri will have important benefits — not only for the nuthatch population, but for the overall ecosystem,” said Thomas Bonnot, an assistant research professor at MU’s College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

See **Nuthatch** page 5B

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Nuthatch • from page 4B

“They create cavities for their nests in dead pine trees, and those cavities continue to be used by other bird species after the nuthatch has moved on.”

As a wildlife ecologist, Bonnot works with natural resource agencies at all levels to help them sustain biodiversity in ecosystems and manage resources. But for Bonnot, this project goes deeper. Reintroducing the nuthatch to Missouri is a new opportunity to express a lifelong passion for science and the natural world. Growing up in rural Missouri, Bonnot always knew he wanted to be a scientist, but it wasn't until college that he decided he wanted to be in the field, working directly with the birds he wanted to protect. It was Bonnot's absence from the natural surroundings of rural life that led him to realize his calling.

“When I went to college, I wasn't able to be immersed in the outdoors the way I had been at home,” Bonnot said. “It wasn't until then that I really realized how much I love nature, and I wanted to make sure that the science I did would have positive benefits on the natural world. I haven't looked back since.”

Joining Bonnot in the songbird reintroduction effort is Frank Thompson — re-

search biologist for the U.S. Forest Service's Northern Research Station and cooperative professor at MU — and Sarah Kendrick, the Missouri Department of Conservation's State Ornithologist. They bring decades of experience researching songbird populations to the collaborative project, which involves tagging half the birds with tiny radio transmitters to track their movements as they adjust to re-entering their native habitat.

The songbirds were captured in Arkansas' Ouachita National Forest with the assistance of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and were brought to Missouri in transport tubes. As the capture site is only about 300 miles from the release site in Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest, it might seem surprising that the nuthatches did not repopulate the inviting pine woodlands on their own. But according to Bonnot, one characteristic these songbirds share makes such a trip highly improbable.

“The brown-headed nuthatch simply does not disperse far on an annual basis,” Bonnot said. “Given the habitat fragmentation that has occurred over the last 100 years, as well as the distance, our research shows it's unlikely that the nuthatch would colonize Missouri's restored pine woodlands any time soon without our help.”

Bringing the songbirds to Missouri also

presents an opportunity for researchers to examine the effects of assisted migration, a means of preserving populations that will continue to become more important as climate change forces birds northward, away from the pine woodlands of the south. With the restoration efforts of Missouri's pine ecosystem in the Mark Twain National Forest, the viability of rebuilding pine woodlands to support bird migrations will

be put to the test. On the northern edge of the shortleaf pine's range, Missouri is an ideal testing ground.

“This is a great example of ecosystem restoration — when you bring back the habitat, sometimes you can bring back the species that have been lost along the way,” said Sarah Kendrick, state ornithologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

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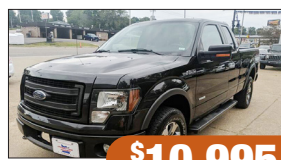
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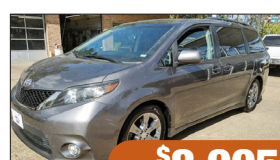
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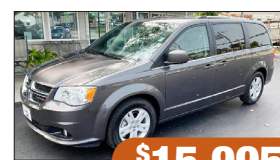
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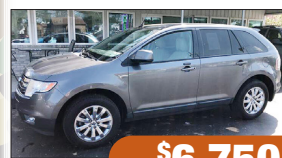
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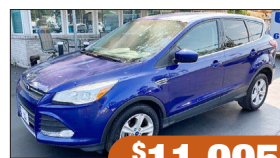
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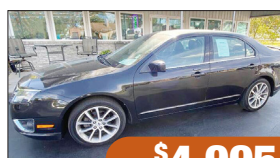
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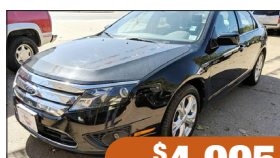
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MDC sets proposed bear-hunting framework for future seasons

JEFFERSON CITY—The Missouri Conservation Commission recently approved a proposed hunting framework by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) for a potential future black bear season in Missouri. The Commission approved the framework at its Sept. 4 open meeting in Jefferson City and is asking for final public input Oct. 16 through Nov. 14.

If the season framework is ultimately approved by the Commission and a permit and harvest quota is established, the earliest a season could occur is fall 2021 and would be limited to Missouri residents.

According to MDC, over the last 50 years bear numbers in the Missouri Ozarks have increased significantly and today Missouri is home to between 540 – 840 black bears. Missouri bear numbers are currently increasing each year by approximately 9%, bear range in the state is expanding, and Missouri's bear population is expected to double in less than 10 years. Additionally, Missouri's bear population is connected to a larger bear population in the surrounding states of Arkansas and Oklahoma.

"With Missouri's growing black bear population, a limited and highly regulated black bear hunting season will be an essential part of population management in the future as Missouri's bear numbers continue to grow," said MDC Furbearer Biologist Laura Conlee. "The timing and length of the season, restrictive methods, and permit allocation coupled with a harvest quota will initially be limited to ensure a sustainable harvest of our growing bear population."

Conlee noted that Arkansas and Oklahoma also have established bear hunting seasons.

HUNTING FRAMEWORK DETAILS

Most of Missouri's estimated 540-840 black bears are found south of the Missouri River, and primarily south of Interstate 44. With this in mind, MDC proposes to establish three Bear Management Zones (BMZ) in southern Missouri.

The limited hunting season would begin each year on the third Monday in October and run for 10 days or until BMZ-specific quotas are reached, whichever comes first. Hunting hours would be a half-hour before sunrise to a half-hour after sunset. The proposal would limit black bear hunting to Missouri residents.

Harvest quotas for each of the three BMZs would be determined annually each spring by the Conservation Commission based on recommendations by MDC. Quotas have not yet been established for the potential future season.

Once the specific harvest quotas are filled for each BMZ, the season for that BMZ would be closed. Hunters would need to call in before each morning they intend to hunt to determine if the BMZ-specific quota has been reached. If harvest quotas are not reached, the season would close at the end of the 10 designated hunting days.

Hunters would be allowed to use both ar-

chery and firearms equipment with allowable methods being the same as those for deer and elk, except the use of an atlatl. Baiting and the use of dogs would not be allowed at this time but may be considered in the future.

The harvest limit would be one bear per permit. Under the proposed regulations, bears may not be disturbed, pushed, harassed, or taken from a den. Only lone black bears may be taken. Hunters may not take bears that are known to be in the presence of other bears, including female black bears with cubs.

Bear hunters must wear hunter orange, make reasonable efforts to retrieve shot bears, and must use commonly edible portions.

All harvested bears would need to be telechecked by 10 p.m. on the day of harvest. Harvested bears would need to remain intact as a field-dressed carcass or quartered until the bear has been telechecked.

MDC would also require the submission of a tooth from each harvested bear within 10 days of harvest. This would help MDC staff with black bear research and management.

PERMIT PROCESS

MDC will offer an annual online permit-application period May 1-31 each spring with a

fee of \$10 per applicant. Individuals must be Missouri residents and would only be allowed to apply once per year to hunt in one of the three designated BMZs.

Permit selection would be determined by July 1 each summer through a random drawing of all eligible applicants. There would be no "sit-out" period for those selected to receive permits. There would be no preference points given, such as with managed deer hunts.

Those selected would be eligible to buy a permit at a cost of \$25. A person would need to be 11 years of age or older and have completed hunter education (or be exempt) by the time of the hunt to purchase a permit.

MDC would issue a limited number of hunting permits for each of the three BMZs. Each permit would be for a specific BMZ and could be used on public or private property within the BMZ. There would not be a separate, landowner-specific black bear hunting permit.

Black bear hunting permits would be awarded through a random draw with a minimum of 10 percent reserved for qualifying landowners. To qualify for the landowner allocation, landowners would need have at least 20 contiguous acres within the BMZ for which they are applying. Qualifying landowners must

first submit their property information through MDC's Landowner Permit Application at mdc.mo.gov/landownerpermits before completing a black bear hunting permit application.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

MDC proposed the limited and highly regulated hunting season framework for black bears following several years of public comment opportunities related to black bear management, including black bear informational open houses in 2019, and a public input process this spring to inform development of the proposed hunting season framework.

MDC is asking for final public comments. The Commission-proposed regulations for the hunting framework will be published in the Oct. 15 edition of the Missouri Register and open for public comments Oct. 16 through Nov. 14 at mdc.mo.gov/about-regulations/wildlife-code-missouri/proposed-regulation-changes. Comments received will then be summarized and presented for final consideration at the Commission's December meeting. If approved, the new regulations would become effective Feb. 28, 2021.

See **Black bear** page 7B

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THE MISSOURI Conservation Commission recently approved a framework from MDC for a future black-bear-hunting season for Missouri residents and is asking for public feedback on the proposed framework Oct. 16-Nov. 14. **PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC**

Black bear • from page 8B

BEAR BACKGROUND

The black bear is one of the largest and heaviest wild mammals in Missouri with some reaching up to 500 pounds. Black bears were historically abundant throughout the forested areas of Missouri prior to European settlement but were nearly eliminated by unregulated killing in the late 1800s, as well as from habitat loss when Ozark forests were logged. However, a small number of Missouri black bears survived and reintroduction efforts in Arkansas helped to increase bear numbers in southern Missouri.

Over the last 50 years, bear numbers in the Missouri Ozarks have been increasing. Today Missouri is home to between 540 – 840 black bears. Bear numbers are currently increasing, and bear range is expanding with the population expected to double in less than 10 years. Learn more about black bears in Missouri and MDC management efforts at mdc.mo.gov/bears.

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JEFFERSON CITY—Need trees and shrubs for your landscape? Go native with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Native trees and shrubs can help improve wildlife habitat and soil and water conservation while also improving the appearance and value of private property.

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Seedlings are available in bundles of 10 or increments of 25 per species. Prices range from 22–90 cents per seedling. Sales tax of 6.1 percent will be added to orders unless tax exempt. There is an \$8 handling charge for each order. Receive a 15% discount up to \$20 off seedling orders with a Heritage Card, Permit Card, or Conservation ID Number.

The nursery grows millions of seedlings each

year, but some species are very popular and sell out quickly. Occasionally the seedlings succumb to uncooperative weather or hungry wildlife, despite the nursery staff's best efforts.

"We had some late season cold weather this year, with nighttime lows in the 20s. Staff stayed up several nights in a row running the irrigation to keep the plants from freezing, but we still lost some. The hardest hit was a popular choice, the flowering dogwood," said MDC Nursery Supervisor Mike Fiaoni. "I would encourage people not to wait when placing their orders."

Fiaoni said that even if a species is listed as sold out, customers can still place an order for them. Sometimes orders get cancelled, freeing up inventory. Customers won't be charged for seedlings unless they are available to ship.

Learn more and place orders through MDC's "2020-2021 Seedling Order Form." Find it in the September issue of the Missouri Conservationist, at MDC regional offices and nature centers, online at mdc.mo.gov/seedlings, or by contacting the State Forest Nursery at 573-674-3229 or StateForestNursery@mdc.mo.gov. Place orders now through April 15, 2021. Orders will be shipped or can be picked up at the nursery near Licking from February through May.

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When I started hunting, I was fortunate to have two uncles that would each take me a few times a season. But by the time I was 14 and had become the proud owner of a 4-wheeler, I was out on my own. Back then gaining permission on private property was easier. Before the widespread adoption of leasing land took away most hunter's ability to secure a good place to hunt based on a handshake a little sweat equity. The number of mistakes I made, and the challenges I faced learning to hunt on my own, is what I attribute to the



by **BRANDON BUTLER**

lifelong passion I have for hunting. It was a learned skill. One I'll never perfect. I just hope to continuously evolve throughout my life.

There were no youth seasons back then. No one was trying to set us up for success. There was no R3 efforts, and conversation organizations weren't tripping all over themselves to take youth out for mentored opportunities. All of these advancements are great. I'm a huge fan. They get people out in the woods and often build hunters. And just as importantly supporters of hunting. Yet, when we make an experience unnaturally easy, we run

the risk of diluting the actual experience.

I've taken a number of people on their first deer and turkey hunts. More often than not, the hunters I was mentoring shot a deer or turkey, sometimes within the first hour of their first hunt. I can't imagine how easy hunting must seem to them. How unfilled they were by shooting something with such minimal effort invested in learning

about their quarry. The habitats they call home and the habits they possess which lead hunters to plan for success based on knowledge of how and why. Having someone else sit you in a tree and say the buck will come from that directions is still hunting, and again, it's great that person is hunting, but how deep is the learning? How thorough is the understanding? How lasting is the experience?

If you are new to hunting, forget about killing big bucks. That's not what hunting is about. Please don't look to "influencers" on Facebook and Instagram. This new influencer world we live in has had an incredibly negative effect of the merits of hunting, at least in my opinion.

What you want to focus on is learning. And to learn, you need to be out there. The more time you spend where deer live, the more you will begin to understand why they do what they do. The puzzle hunting is will become clearer until one day, you have most of the pieces put together. That's when you can elevate your game to pursuing older, harder to kill animals. Until then, get some experience under your belt. Hike ridges and look for sign, like rubs and scrapes. Don't know what those are? Look it up. There is a wealth

See **Rewarding** page 9B

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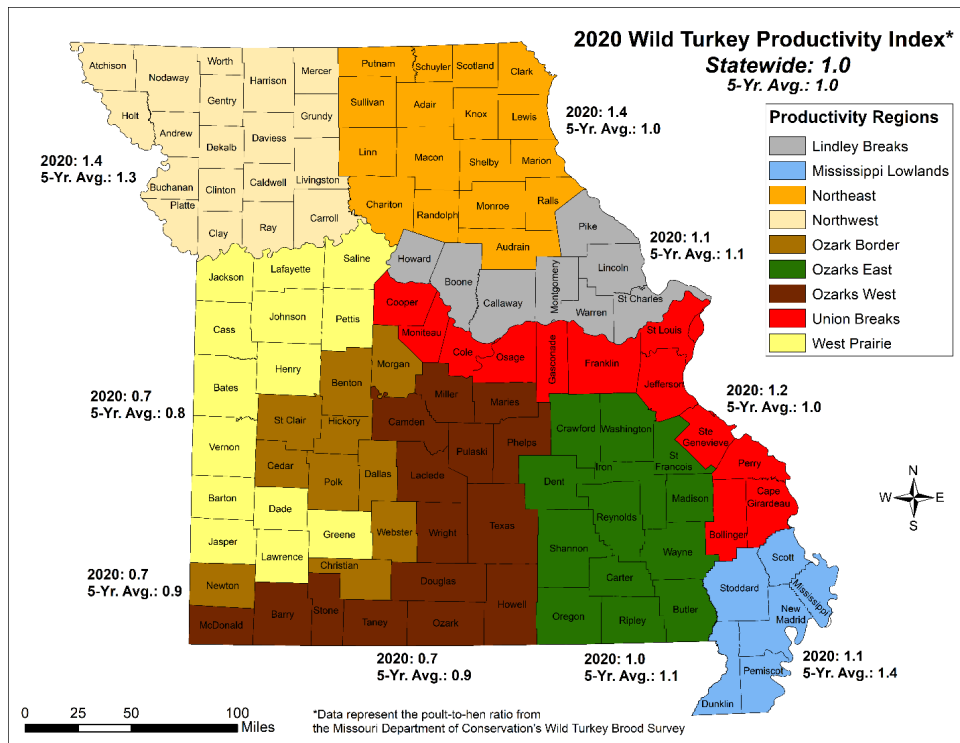
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THIS MAP shows an index (poult-to-hen ratio) of Missouri's wild turkey production by turkey productivity region. Data were obtained during MDC's wild turkey brood survey and are compared to the previous five-year averages.

MDC brood survey shows slight improvement in turkey production

JOE JEREK
MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

JEFFERSON CITY — This year's annual wild turkey brood survey by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) shows that turkey production was slightly better on the statewide scale this year and some regions saw significant improvements in productivity.

MDC's statewide poult-to-hen ratio (PHR) for this year was 1.0, which was 11% greater than the 2019 PHR and equal to the average production observed during the previous five years. However, when comparing the statewide PHR to the average turkey production observed over the last 10 and 20 years, production in 2020 was below-average.

Regionally, production varied quite a bit across the state. PHRs ranged from a low of 0.7 in the Ozark Border, Ozarks West, and West Prairie Regions to a high of 1.4 in the Northeast and Northwest Regions (see related map).

Compared to last year, the Northeast and Northwest Regions saw a greater than 50% improvement in turkey production. The Lindley Breaks and Union Breaks Regions saw a 20% or greater improvement in turkey production this year compared to 2019.

Several regions—Mississippi Lowlands, Ozarks West, and West Prairies—saw poorer production this year than what was observed in 2019. The Ozark Border and Ozarks East Regions saw similar PHRs this year as in 2019.

More on Poult-to-Hen Ratio

Since 1959, MDC has conducted an annual wild turkey brood survey where MDC staff and citizen volunteers record the number of hens and recently hatched turkeys, which are called poults, they see during June, July, and August. These observations are then tallied to determine the success of the hatch, which is most often reported as a poult-to-hen ratio, or simply the average number of poults per hen observed during the survey.

According to MDC Turkey Biologist Reina Tyl, poult-to-hen ratio is a good measure of nesting success and poult survival.

"Each year, thousands of citizens participate in the survey and we are grateful for their contribution," Tyl said. "During the three-month survey, participants reported sightings of more than 60,000 turkeys, which is a testament to the large number of dedicated volunteers that take time to participate in the survey each year."

To participate in the annual wild turkey brood survey, email MDC's Wild Turkey Management Program at wildturkeymgmt@mdc.mo.gov (link sends e-mail) with "Wild Turkey Brood Survey" as the subject of the email and include complete name and mailing address.

Rewarding • from page 8B

of information out there for you online, in books and magazines. There are even a few television and web shows worth watching. Not many, but a few.

You don't need someone else to take you hunting. You have access to public lands all around. What you must have in a desire to hunt to procure meat for your table. Patience to learn how to be a good hunter. Ethics to

follow the game laws. And the sort of persistent attitude that will drive forward after you encounter numerous failures. Like all things in life, the reward is sweeter when effort is maximized.

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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

Learning from a bushy-tailed teacher

Years ago when I was younger and a limit of squirrels seemed much more important than it does today, I was quietly sneaking along a creek bottom in late October, watching the treetops for any movement which might reveal a young squirrel.

There was a sudden commotion in the branches above me and a squirrel came tumbling out of the tree limbs overhead. He brushed against me and fell at my feet. I scarcely had a chance to get a good look at him before he was off and running as hard as he could run, his tail high in the air. He had been watching me so intently he had lost his grip on the branch high above.

I brought my shotgun to my shoulder, but I just couldn't squeeze the trigger. I knew that poor squirrel felt like a real loser falling out of that tree right on me, and I just couldn't take advantage of his bad luck. But the main reason I didn't shoot was... I had learned from



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

my dad and grandpa that if you shot a squirrel or rabbit running away from you with a shotgun, you'd ruin the meat in the loin and hindquarters.

I learned much of what I know about hunting from those first squirrel hunts when I was a small boy of only 11 or 12; patience and persistence and marksmanship, and the ability to stalk and to observe...to feel the ambience of the woods. Dad figured squirrels were just made for teaching a youngster how to hunt, and we went often. I learned much from those bushy-tailed teachers. But too, Ozark families depended on wild game to help keep grocery bills down.

Dad and I hunted squirrels along the river quite often too, from our old wooden johnboat. In October, the bass and goggle-eye were always hitting, and we could fish and watch for squirrels along the bank. Only trouble was, in slower eddies the leaves would get so thick you had to make several casts to keep from hauling in leaves on a hook. You couldn't use lures with treble hooks. We would use the small spinners to sink and bob up and down along a rocky substrate below shoals. Then

See **Teacher** page 11B

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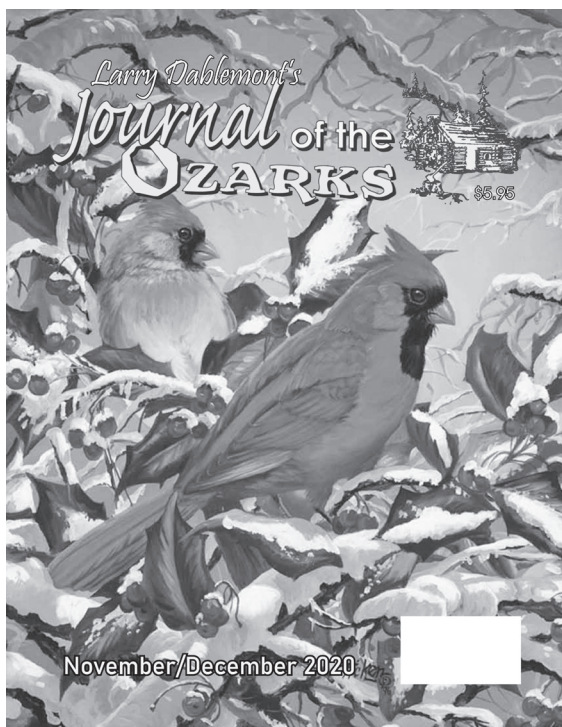
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Teacher • from page 10B

you would be fighting a 12-inch smallmouth and a fat young fox squirrel would be fleeing up a sycamore tree headed for a hole to escape in. Dad would often say that trying to do two things at once meant you would likely fail to do either efficiently. But back then I didn't learn that easily.

An experienced squirrel hunter will usually choose a .22 rifle with a scope, and make head shots which insure the meat is perfect. But I never had a scope to use. I only had my Iver-Johnson 16-gauge when I would go down to the bottoms just off the river and walk a faint trail where gray squirrels were abundant. Occasionally I'd spot one by moving slowly along, but when I'd reach a certain spot on a rocky hillside, I'd find a comfortable boulder and sit still enough to be taken for a part of the rock.

Within 30 minutes, gray squirrels would have forgotten there was an intruder, and begin moving about. When one presented a good shot within 35 yards or so, my shotgun would roar and then the forest would be still again. I learned if you stayed put, marking your downed quarry and leaving it, that in 10 or 15 minutes things would return to normal again and squirrels would begin to scurry about. But at that age, I couldn't sit still long.

I loved to explore new woods and there was always much more to see, as other wildlife passed through and birds flitted through the nearby branches and migrating waterfowl passed heading south. When things were slow, I'd lay back on some big flatrock and nap, dreaming of hunting moose and bear in Canada someday.

Later I learned that two hunters could effectively find squirrels if one hunter became the eyes and the other became the feet.

Hunter number one moves slowly along, watching the branches as best he can but traveling at a quiet snails pace. Usually he won't see squirrels that have already heard him. When he's well down the trail, he stops and waits and hunter number two advances in the same manner moving on past his partner to take a new position.

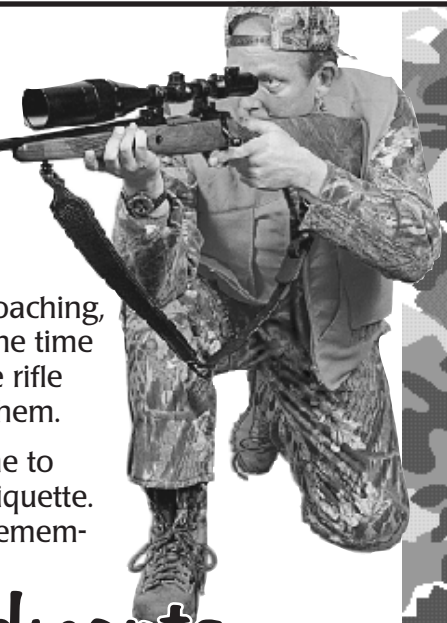
Squirrels react to a moving hunter by moving themselves, well concealed by a tree trunk or branch. And while they are concentrating on the moving hunter they expose themselves to the hunter who is still, and watching. When two hunters hunt together, that walk, watch and wait method is the best way to find squirrels in the foliage of the early fall... a perfect method for a father teaching a youngster to hunt.

Today I carry in my game vest a handful of freezer bags, and soon after a squirrel is dropped, I skin it with the old method of cutting just below the tail and then pulling the skin forward over the front legs and head by using the tail, then stripping the remaining skin back over the hind legs. Then I cut off all four feet and the head, remove the entrails and place the cleaned squirrel in the bag. You learn not to clean a squirrel hours after you kill it.

So here we are with a beautiful warm fall and plenty of squirrels. It is an opportunity to test your marksmanship with a small bore rifle, or the chance to take a youngster to the woods... where he can learn about a better way of life than most kids see in this day and time.

If you would like to learn more about my outdoor books (I have written ten of them) or my magazines, the Outdoor Journal and the Ozarks Journal, just call my office, 417 777 5227, or email lightninridge47@gmail.com. The mailing address is Box 22, Bolivar, Mo. 65613.

Firearm Safety



With fall firearms season approaching, now is an ideal time to spend some time with your hunting weapons at the rifle range getting reacquainted with them.

Now is also the appropriate time to stress firearm safety and range etiquette. When handling firearms always remember the

10 Commandments of Gun Safety:

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.
2. Firearms should be unloaded when not in use.
3. Don't rely on your guns "safety". Treat every gun as though it can fire at any time, regardless of pressure on the trigger.
4. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.
5. Always use correct ammunition.
6. If your gun fails to fire when the trigger is pulled, handle with care.
7. Always wear eye and ear protection when shooting.
8. Be sure the barrel is clear of obstructions before shooting.
9. Don't alter or modify your gun. Have it serviced regularly by a qualified gunsmith.
10. Learn the mechanical and handling characteristics of the firearm you are using before going afield with it. Not all guns are the same.

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Wetland conditions vary at MDC waterfowl areas this autumn

BILL GRAHAM
MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

Kansas City — Conditions vary this autumn at the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) wetlands. Some conservation areas with wetlands managed for waterfowl have ample water and good access for hunters. Some areas, however, have infrastructure issues or low water from a dry autumn. Waterfowl hunters will want to visit the web site for each area to verify changes and procedures in place for COVID-19 precautions or due to unfinished construction projects.

A dry autumn is causing low water conditions at some wetlands in northwest and west central Missouri. Autumn rains, however, can quickly improve wetland conditions, especially those with good growth of natural waterfowl foods through the summer. Scouting wetland conditions ahead of the season or before making a hunting trip can boost success.

Missouri's North Zone ducking hunting season opens Nov. 7 and ends Jan. 5. The Middle Zone will have a split season, Nov. 7-13, and Nov. 19 through Jan. 10.

Here's a look at wetland conditions as of mid-October.

Habitat conditions at MDC's Grand Pass Conservation Area are very good, said Chris Freeman, MDC regional resource management district supervisor. Moist soil food plant production and wetland habitat is excellent to very good. Agricultural crops are very good. Water levels will be normal.

The Fountain Grove Conservation Area has excellent to very good habitat. Agriculture crops are fair. Construction on a new pump station and problems with an old pump might hamper water levels until the old pump is repaired. Water management on the area's east side is expected to be on schedule and favorable. Crop harvest progress will determine when units on the east side will receive water.

An average waterfowl season is expected at the Nodaway Valley Conservation Area based on waterfowl food quality, said Craig Crisler, MDC wildlife management biologist. Wetland conditions and water levels are normal for early autumn, but weather conditions could help or hurt habitat. The draw for hunting positions will be conducted according to the new COVID-19 precautions.

MDC's Bob Brown Conservation Area suffered flood damage in 2019. There is no water on the area currently and Crisler does not expect conditions to improve this fall. Hunting will be allowed on the area via a self-check system.

At the Four Rivers Conservation Area, natural habitat is good to excellent in Unit 1 and Unit 2, the draw units. Crops are fair, hampered by a wet spring causing a late planting followed by a dry summer, said Chris Daniel, MDC district supervisor. Water levels in Unit 1 may be limited as low river conditions will restrict pumping. That could limit hunting positions. Water conditions could be normal in Unit 2 at Four Rivers because MDC can still pump water into that unit.

Units 3 and 4 at Four Rivers, the open units, are currently dry. Those units suffered flood damage in 2019. They are now functional, but they will need significant rains or a river rise to provide waterfowl habitat.

Wetlands at MDC's Schell-Osage Conservation Area were drained for a major renovation project that is ongoing. Preliminary brush clearing for the project is now complete. All hunting and refuge zones at the area will be in effect. The Waterfowl Hunting Only zones will be open through self-registration. Water will be held in wetlands if the area receives significant rains or a rise in the Osage River and Truman Lake.

Both water levels and waterfowl food are fair to good in wetlands at the Ralph and Martha Perry Memorial Conservation Area, said Joe Coy, MDC wildlife management biologist. Pools are 70 percent full of water. Levee conditions are adequate.

Natural habitat is poor at MDC's Settle's Ford Conservation Area. Late summer flooding caused delays in wetland work, said Brian Bokern, MDC wildlife biologist. Most pools are dry, including the waterfowl refuge pool. The area does not have the ability to pump water. Significant rainfall is needed to fill wetland pools. Hunting opportunities will be limited. Hunters will use self-registration. There is water in the pool with a blind open for use by hunters with accessibility issues. Hunters wanting to use that blind must register, and the blind is available on a first come, first serve basis.

At MDC's Montrose Conservation Area, natural vegetation is excellent but water levels are a concern. Waterfowl hunting centers on the area's Montrose Lake. Lake levels have dropped due to dry conditions. The lake needs significant rainfall or hunting opportunities will be reduced. Currently, conditions are dry at all hunting blinds on the west end of the lake, and access to all blinds will be difficult if dry weather persists.

For more information on waterfowl hunting in Missouri, visit <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZQg>. MDC has altered waterfowl hunting blind allocations to adjust for COVID-19 safety precautions. For updates on blind draws or reservations, visit <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z4W>.



WETLAND CONDITIONS vary this autumn at MDC conservation areas. MDC suggests that waterfowl hunters scout wetlands prior to a hunt, and check updates for conservation areas online.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC



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MDC CONTINUES to maintain its certification by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Forest Management Standard for 658,348 acres of state land it manages as sustainable forest areas. Shown is forest surrounding Gladden Creek in Dent and Shannon counties.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC

MDC maintains sustainable forestry certification

JOE JEREK
MISSOURI DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) announces it has maintained its certification by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Forest Management Standard for 658,348 acres of state land. The certification follows an annual audit of MDC forestry practices for those lands. MDC has maintained its certified status since 2017 with annual audits confirming its forest-management practices continue to meet the SFI® standard.

SFI is one of the world's most recognized, independent third-party for forest-management certification standards and certification provides assurances of responsible practices across the forest products supply chain.

"Certification to SFI considers all aspects of our forest management process, from our actions taken in the woods to the paperwork we keep in our files," said MDC State Forester Justine Gartner. "We are extremely proud to maintain this certification, which means we have outside validation that we are properly managing our forest resources to assure their health and sustainability."

SFI's Forest Management Standard is based upon principles, goals and performance measures that were developed nationally by professional foresters, conservationists and others with the intention of promoting sustainable forest management in North America. SFI and its many partners work together to balance environmental, economic, and social objectives such as conservation of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, harvesting forest products, protecting water quality, providing forest industry jobs, and developing recreational opportunities. The SFI Forest Management Standard is also the only standard that requires participants to support forestry research. Learn more at <https://www.forests.org/>.

"The Missouri Department of Conservation joins other progressive organizations that are demonstrating their leadership and transparency by certifying their lands to the SFI Forest Management Standard," said SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow. "It is especially important to differentiate the responsible actors who are managing forests to maintain conservation values, sustain communities, and support responsible supply chains given that forest products are traded internationally. In other nations there are high risks of illegal logging and forest products are coming under increasing scrutiny."

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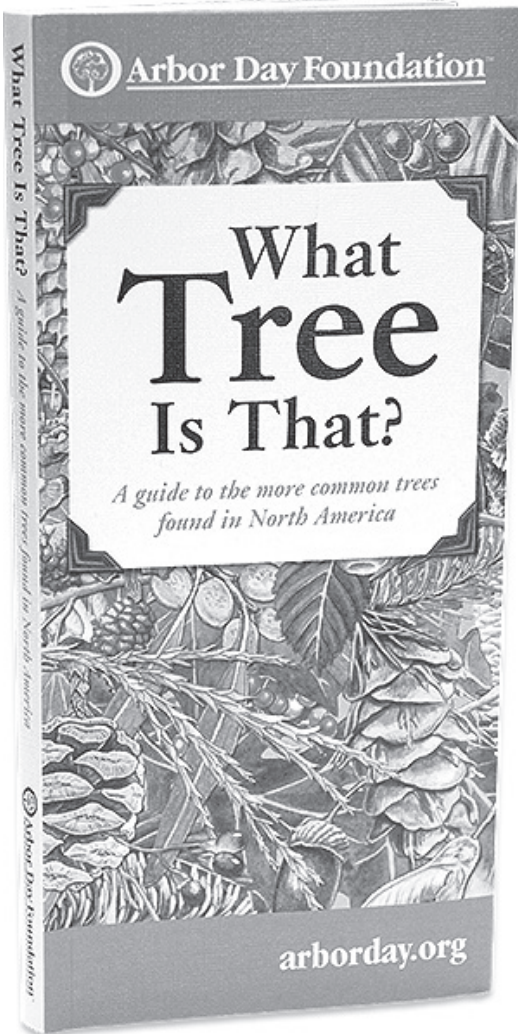
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Tree identification book from the Arbor Day Foundation

The Arbor Day Foundation has a book that helps people identify trees in a simple, step-by-step process. The book, *What Tree Is That?*, is available for a \$5 donation to the nonprofit tree-planting organization.

What Tree Is That? is a fun, easy-to-use tree identification guide that features hand-drawn botanical illustrations highlighting the distinctive characteristics of many tree species.

Nature lovers and professional arborists alike have called this pocket field guide a must-have, user-friendly resource. Its beautiful, full-color illustrations are in pre-

cise detail and depict natural colors, shapes and textures so users can make a positive species identification in a few steps.

The Arbor Day Foundation offers this book to help people identify trees throughout the Eastern and Central regions of the United States. *What Tree Is That?* uses a unique step-by-step approach for identifying the species of each tree, explaining what to look for in the shape and arrangement of the leaves, differences in the leafstalks and specific characteristics of fruits, flowers, buds and bark.

“Our *What Tree Is That?* Pocket guide

is an ideal resource for developing a greater appreciation for trees,” said Matt Harris, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. “The Arbor Day Foundation strives to help people enjoy and appreciate trees, and we feel our pocket field guide will do just that.”

What Tree Is That? is also available as an online interactive version at arborday.org.

To obtain a tree identification guide in full color, visit arborday.org or send your name, address, and \$5 for each guide to: *What Tree Is That?*, Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Ave., Nebraska City, NE 68410.

Treestand safety reminder!

**CHAD GRAY
CONSERVATION
AGENT**

Every year many hunters go to the field with anticipation on harvesting that big buck they have been watching for months. With all the excitement involved in pre-season preparation, many hunters forget to wear their tree stand safety harness come opening day. This can be a major problem in the event of a fall. Tree stands provide many advantages when it comes to hunting, but they also carry

a high-risk factor. Falling from 20 ft up in the air is the equivalent of being in a 30-mph car crash. I would also encourage hunters who hunt from tree stands to inspect all their tree stand equipment (straps, stirrups, welds... etc.) for defects or excessive wear. These failure points are often the cause of tree stand falls. Be safe this season and wear your tree stand harness. Bag that big buck and not a hospital bill.

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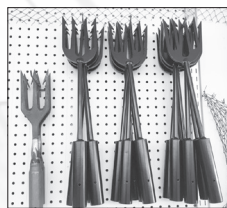
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MDC revises regulations regarding coyote hunting and invasive species control

JEFFERSON CITY—The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) updated regulations to the Wildlife Code of Missouri regarding coyote hunting and feral hog control at its Sept. 4 Conservation Commission meeting in Jefferson City. The change comes in response to citizen requests to the Regulations Committee to use night vision, infrared, thermal imagery equipment, or artificial light to hunt coyotes and from landowners to allow their authorized representatives to use night vision, infrared, or thermal imagery equipment without prior approval from a conservation agent to address damage caused by feral hogs.



MDC HAS updated regulations regarding the use of thermal imaging and night vision equipment to hunt coyotes and control feral hogs on private property.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC

The revised regulations allow landowners who own property of any size and their authorized representatives to possess, control, and use night vision, infrared, and thermal imagery equipment to kill feral hogs on the landowner's property while in possession of any implement where wildlife could be killed or taken. Landowners and their representative would be authorized to kill or take feral hogs using these methods without prior approval from a conservation agent throughout the year.

The regulations also allow properly licensed hunters to use artificial light, night vision, infrared, or thermal imagery equipment in conjunction with other legal hunting methods to pursue and take coyotes from Feb. 1 through March 31.

The regulations become effective Nov. 30.

MDC notes that property owners and their representatives can still use night vision, infrared, thermal imaging equipment, or artificial light to kill coyotes or other wildlife causing property damage at any time of the year with written authorization from a conservation agent.

For more information on nuisance and problem species, visit the MDC website at <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z5L>.

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