

Fall/Winter

OUTDOOR HUNTING GUIDE



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO

OSAGE COUNTY
Unterrified Democrat

SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

How to Score a Buck—the Right Way

BY SCOTT BESTUL
FREELANCE WRITER, FIELD & STREAM



A step-by-step guide to measuring that big whitetail you just tagged, from our in-house certified B&C scorer

So, you've just shot a nice whitetail buck, and after a few minutes of admiring your trophy, you do the thoroughly modern thing and whip out your cell phone, snap some pics, and text them to your buddies. Their immediately response: "What's that thing gonna score?" While everyone appreciates a well-embellished hunting story, an exaggerated Boone & Crockett score—even if it's just a guess—can quickly cause eyes to roll. This is something you want to get right, for your own sake as much as anyone else's. That said, it's not quite as simple as downloading a B&C scoring sheet and following directions. That's your first order of business, but there are a number of details along the way that hunters consistently get wrong. With that in mind, here's a step-by-step guide to getting an accurate B&C green score soon after your buck hits the ground.

Step 1: Measure the inside spread.

This is taken at the widest point inside the main beams. I use a steel tape, but a folding ruler (like carpenters use) can also work.

Step 2: Measure tine length on one side.

This is where a lot of guys give their buck a little too much credit, by measuring tine length from the wrong place on the main beam. To do it correctly, stretch

a piece of tape across the base of the tine so that the top of the tape aligns with the top edge of the main beam. Or you can use a pencil to mark the same. Now, start your tine length measurement (the "G" column on the B&C score sheet) from the top of the tape, or pencil mark, up to the antler point. Note that only tines that grow straight from the top of the main beam are measured right now; we'll cover other points in the "abnormals" section below.

Step 3: Measure the circumferences on one side.

Every whitetail rack, no matter how many

tines it has, gets four circumference scores ("H" on the B&C sheet) per side. Measure these with a flexible steel tape wrapped around the main beam. Take the first one at the smallest circumference point between the burr (the gnarly spot where the buck's rack emerges from the skull) and the brow tine, or G-1. Take the subsequent measurements at the smallest point between the tines. (If the circumferences look uniform between the tines, I just take the measurement at the halfway point.) In the case of an 8-point buck, take the fourth circumference measurement halfway between the last tine

(the G-3) and the end of the main beam.
Step 4: Measure the main beam length on one side.

You need a flexible cable for this measurement, which is another that many hunters get wrong, for a couple reasons. First, most people don't know where to start the measurement. Second, it can be tough to keep the cable in proper alignment as you stretch it along the length of the beam. Start from the lowest outside edge of the burr. I tape the cable to the beam at this spot then use additional pieces of tape to hold the cable in place as I work it along the outside contour of the beam. When the cable reaches the end of the main beam, mark that spot with an alligator clip. (If you're using a string, which can do in a pinch, you can mark the end with a pen or marker). Then remove the cable and stretch it alongside a tape measure laid on a flat surface to get the measurement.

Step 5: Repeat on the other side.

If you have an evenly matched typical rack like the one pictured, and for some reason you're in a hurry, you can score one side, multiply by two, and you'll be within a couple inches of the actual green gross score. But if you want to do it right, just repeat the process for the other side of the rack.

Step 6: Measure any abnormal points.

The rack pictured is a squeaky-clean

See **Scoring buck** on Page 3B

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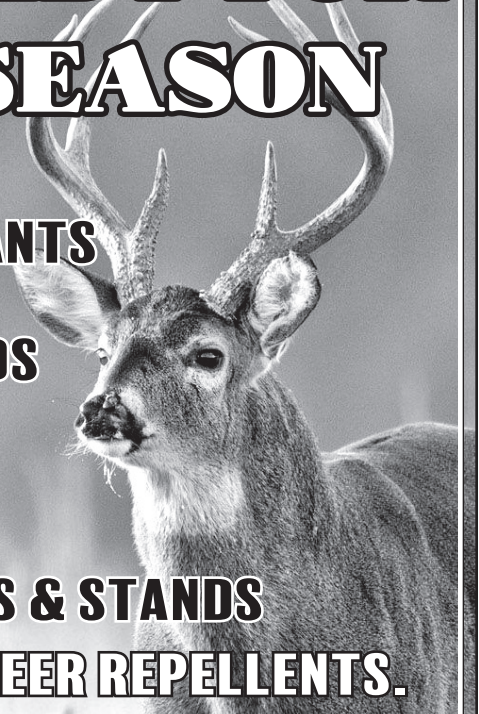
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Scoring buck

• from page 2B

10-point with no abnormal points. What's considered "abnormal"? Any tine or point that does not originate from the top of the main beam. This can include drop tines, kickers, stickers, and leaners. Abnormal points are measured separately from the main tines and are recorded in their own column on the scoring sheet. Note that in order to be counted as a point, a tine has to be at least 1 inch long, and greater in length than it is in width (which means that a 1-1/2-inch tine with a 2-inch base would not count).

Step 7: Add and subtract.

Add up all of your measurements and you have your buck's green gross score. This is the score that many hunters, myself included, mainly care about. You've heard that nets are for fishing, right? If you want to enter your buck in the record book, however, it's the net score that matters. To find that, you subtract the abnormal points, as well as any side-to-side differences. (If a buck's right G-2 is 10 inches and the left is 9-5/8, that's a deduction of 3/8 inch.) Now you have the green gross and green net scores; for an official net score, you'll need to measure again after a mandatory 60-day drying period. But for now, you can definitely text your buds back.

HISTORY

Elk ranged historically from Southern California, east to New York and south to South Carolina. Lewis and Clark reported elk in Missouri on their trip west in 1804, and explorer Henry Schoolcraft referenced elk when writing of his journey through the Missouri Ozarks in 1818-1819.

By the mid-1880s, however, market hunting had erased any trace of elk from the Missouri landscape. In 2011, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reintroduced the first group of elk onto Peck Ranch Conservation Area in south-central Missouri. These elk were captured in Kentucky and transported here after undergoing disease testing and a quarantine period. Additional elk were brought into Missouri in 2012 and 2013. These 108 elk formed the base for our Missouri elk herd in parts of Carter, Shannon, and Reynolds counties.

Biology Elk (*Cervus elaphus*) are in the deer family (*Cervidae*), and they are the second-largest cervid in North America. Bull elk (males) in Missouri can weigh more than 700 pounds and cows (females) can weigh more than 550 pounds. Elk have a brown to sometimes reddish coloration with a light-colored rump patch. Males grow a set of antlers every year and will use those during the breeding season to defend groups of female elk.

Elk can be found in herds year-round, but

Elk in Missouri

the size of the herd may change throughout the year. Adult males and females are often in separate groups for most of the year. Like other members of the deer family, elk are crepuscular, meaning they are most active during dawn and dusk.

HABITAT

Elk are habitat generalists and use many different types of habitat in Missouri. Elk spend much of the day in forests and glades, venturing out into more open habitats at dawn and dusk.

FOOD

Like deer and cattle, elk have a four-chambered stomach, which allows them to eat a variety of foods. Elk can feed on anything from forbs, grasses, and leaves to nuts, twigs, and lichen. In Missouri, elk prefer foraging in open areas with lots of grasses, forbs, and legumes. Their diet will change with the seasons as different foods become available. For example, as fall approaches and acorns start to fall, elk will incorporate them into their diet.

REPRODUCTION

Elk, like deer, go through a period called rut. During the rut, males will gather groups of females, called harems, and defend those females from other males. In theory, this means the most dominant males are the ones

who breed. Peak rut in Missouri typically occurs from late September to mid-October. Some breeding behavior can still be seen into late November.

Females can reach reproductive age within 18 months. A little before giving birth, they will leave the herd to find a calving area. Calves are born from late May to mid-August and weigh 30-45 pounds at birth. Calves are mobile within a few hours of birth and can get up and run quickly. Twins, unlike in deer, are a rare occurrence.

Antler Loss

Bull elk in Missouri will drop their antlers from late January through March. The timing of antler drop depends on several variables, including photoperiod (length of daylight), testosterone levels, body condition, and age. Older bulls typically shed their antlers earlier than younger bulls.

ELK MANAGEMENT

Research projects help MDC determine survival and reproductive rates of the restored elk population, with a goal of growing the state's herd to 400-500 head. As the herd grows, MDC will recommend to the Missouri Conservation Commission a carefully monitored hunting season. If approved by the Commission, hunting would begin prior to the population reaching the

See **Elk** on Page 4B

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Elk • from page 3B

goal, but not before the population reaches a number that can sustain annual harvest. Herd health and size will dictate how many elk can be sustainably harvested each year.

HOW DO ELK BENEFIT MISSOURI?

A species native to Missouri, elk provide a sense of natural history, unique wildlife viewing, and potential hunting opportunities. Grazing elk help maintain open spaces on the landscape. They are a large, highly visible, popular species that wildlife viewers are willing to travel to see. From the rut during late September and October to calving during late spring and summer, elk viewing opportunities abound. Local communities benefit from the ecotourism surrounding elk watching. Future hunting seasons could provide another economic boost to local economies.

Research in Missouri

MDC, working with partners including the University of Missouri and University of Montana, has studied elk in Missouri since reintroduction. Researchers use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, capture, aerial observation, and other methods to monitor elk movements, herd size, and herd health.

Researchers fitted the original elk herd with GPS collars, which helped them monitor elk locations and movements. Older GPS collars are replaced occasionally, and newborn calves are fitted with collars designed to expand as they grow. Researchers have also used GPS technology to determine how elk respond to human disturbance associated with deer hunting. Hunters participating in managed deer hunts on Peck Ranch CA between 2011–2013 were asked to carry GPS units. Comparing the GPS data from the hunters with data collected from the elk during the same time, researchers found that elk adapted to the hunters' presence. The study

confirmed MDC's ability to continue pre-elk reintroduction activities, including hunting, on local conservation areas with minimal disturbance to the elk population.

GPS collars also help MDC determine how elk use the landscape. Prior to the reintroduction of elk into Missouri, researchers were uncertain of how the elk would use the habitat within the Elk Restoration Zone counties. In preparation for the first group of elk, MDC, working with cooperating public and nongovernmental organizations, improved more than 1,000 acres of existing open public lands. Land managers planted elk-friendly grasses, forbs, legumes, and annual cereal grains; added new open land acres; and continued quality forest management practices. Many neighboring private landowners also worked with MDC, using federal and state habitat improvement programs, to make similar improvements to their property. These efforts proved successful, as most elk have remained in the reintroduction area, primarily within Peck Ranch CA and neighboring public lands. As the population grows, elk will continue to expand and use new areas within the Elk Restoration Zone counties. Continued habitat work, public support, and hunting will help us manage elk in Missouri into the future.

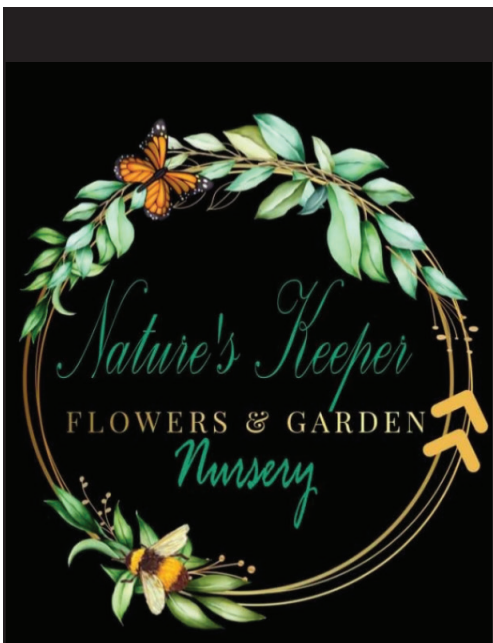
Researchers gauge herd health through a regular schedule of elk capturing, observation, and sampling. Captured adult elk are examined to determine their age and tooth wear. Researchers sample their blood and feces, collect ticks, and replace their GPS collars. They also measure the antlers of bull elk.

At the time of capture, cow elk are checked with an ultrasound to determine whether they are pregnant. If they are pregnant, researchers insert a vaginal implant transmitter (VIT). When a calf is born, the VIT comes out and sends signal that helps researchers locate the calf. Once located,



calves are weighed, and genetic samples are taken. They are also collared and tagged with a passive integrated transponder to aid future identification. MDC uses the information from this research to determine survival rates and estimate future population changes.

MDC also uses aerial surveys to help researchers track herd size and movement patterns, which will play an important role in setting harvest limits for future elk hunts.



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With the help of a grant from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Disabled Sportsmen was able to acquire four new all-terrain track-chairs and an enclosed trailer. The chairs and trailer will allow MDS to expand services and opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts.

MDC grant helps purchase track-chairs for Missouri Disabled Sportsmen

JEFFERSON CITY – Specialized track-chairs help the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) make nature and the outdoors more accessible to all outdoor enthusiasts. MDC recently awarded a grant to Missouri Disabled Sportsmen (MDS) to assist in the purchase of four track-chairs and an enclosed trailer. These all-terrain track-chairs will allow MDS to expand their services and create more opportunities for those they serve.

MDS is a non-profit organization with the mission of providing mobility-impaired, youth, and terminally ill youth outdoor enthusiasts with hunting, fishing, shooting sports, and outdoor educational opportunities in a safe and inclusive manner.

“Partnerships between MDC and organizations like MDS are integral to the Department’s outreach efforts,” said Education Outreach Coordinator Rob Garver. “We’ve partnered with MDS for several years and we’re confident this grant and the new track-

chairs will strengthen this relationship for years to come.”

Track-chairs are off-road, electronic chairs that are designed for all terrain mobility. The chairs make the outdoors accessible for those with mobility issues. MDC currently has 14 track-chairs in its Missouri Accessible Outdoors Track-Chair Program. The all-terrain track-chairs are utilized for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor education events sponsored by MDC or partnering organizations. Four are located in Springfield, four in Kirksville, two in Cape Girardeau, and four in Kansas City.

MDS works with volunteer mentors, agencies, private landowners, and like-minded organizations to create opportunities for participants to pursue deer, upland birds, turkey, waterfowl, and fish, as well as participate in outdoor educational events throughout Missouri. With the addition of their own track chairs, MDS has the ability to expand their program offerings.

Learn the basics of nature photography at Runge Nature Center Sept. 24

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) invites the public to spend the morning with local photographer and MDC staff volunteer, Dan Bernskoetter, to learn tips and tricks on capturing the best outdoor photos with both a digital camera and a smartphone. The free event will be from 10 a.m. until noon on September 24 at Runge Nature Center. Bernskoetter has a strong background in

nature photography, and his photos have been chosen several times to be featured in MDC’s Natural Event Calendar.

Dress for the weather as this event will be conducted both indoors and outdoors.

Registration for this event is required and can be done at <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4c7>. Attendees are required to be 18 years or older at the time of the event.

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Department of conservation offers backpack camping locations in Central, Northeast Region

Columbia -- Backpack camping is a great way to disconnect from the day-to-day and reconnect with nature. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) allows walk-in camping on over 100 conservation areas around the state. Here are six places to go backpacking in central and northeast Missouri. The following conservation area sites offer hiking trails and beautiful scenery among other things:

- *Deer Ridge Conservation Area (Lewis County) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4qt>*
- *Rudolf Bennitt Conservation Area (Randolph and Howard Counties) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4qv>*
- *Spring Creek Gap Conservation Area (Maries County) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4ck>*
- *Sugar Creek Conservation Area (Adair County) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4c2>*
- *Three Creeks Conservation Area (Boone County) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZDN>*
- *Union Ridge Conservation Area (Adair, Putnam, and Sullivan Counties) <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4cZ>*

Before traveling to a conservation area, here are a few things to remember:

Camping on these areas is free and does

not require a reservation. Groups bigger than 10 must apply for a special use permit. Go to <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/4q9> to learn more about camping on conservation areas.

Download the MO Outdoors app. Track locations on conservation areas with this free app. Downloading area maps on this app before exploring an area is a good idea in the event that cell service is lost. This app is available for Android and Apple devices. Learn more about MO Outdoors online at <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z7e>.

Bring a paper map of the area and a compass as a backup. Paper maps can be found at regional MDC offices and in brochure boxes on MDC areas, and maps for MDC areas can be downloaded by searching at <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z9o>.

Share all outdoor plans with other people.

Go with a friend or a group to learn the ropes.

Many conservation areas are in remote locations. Bring everything needed for the trip, including drinking water.

Check the area website to ensure there are no closures. Some of these areas are closed to walk-in camping during firearm deer and turkey seasons.

Stays are limited to a period of fourteen

(14) consecutive days in any thirty (30) day period.

Keep fire contained and attended. Know how to keep from starting a wildfire when camping.


Pack out all waste and practice "leave no trace" camping ethics.

Visit MDC's website at mdc.mo.gov to learn more about camping on conservation


areas.

Enjoy Missouri's nature this fall at MDC conservation areas. Shown is Union Ridge Conservation Area in Adair, Putnam, and Sullivan counties.

Enjoy Missouri's nature this fall at MDC conservation areas. Shown is Union Ridge Conservation Area in Adair, Putnam, and Sullivan counties.



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Enjoy the foliage of the season with MDC's fall color

JEFFERSON CITY – The temperatures are cooling down and trees are beginning to change color – a sure sign that fall has arrived. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages people to enjoy fall foliage through camping, driving tours, hiking, or even floating. To help, MDC offers weekly online fall color updates from agency foresters all over the state at mdc.mo.gov/fallcolor.

“Our fall color reports are such a convenient resource for the public,” said MDC Forestry Field Programs Supervisor Russell Hinnah. “The reports begin around mid-September and are updated weekly. They show users where trees are beginning to turn and also suggest best places to see the changing leaves.”

Predicting the peak of fall color can be difficult, but much depends on the weather. Hinnah noted the dry summer weather could affect this year's color.

“We had droughty conditions over the summer, which could cause trees to lose their leaves early or begin changing colors earlier than normal,” he explained. “This may affect the

amount of fall color we see later in the season.”

The season's chilly evenings are imperative for leaves to change color.

“Sugars produced by photosynthesis are trapped inside leaves by the chilly autumn nights,” Hinnah explained. “Those sugars are the building blocks for the rich red, yellow, orange, and purple pigments. Cool nights cause the breakdown of green pigments, allowing the fall colors to show through.”

Missouri trees first begin changing color in the northern part of the state, then move southward. Sassafras, sumac, and Virginia creeper are some of the earliest to change in mid-September. In late September, black gum, bittersweet, and dogwood are turning. The peak of fall color is usually around mid-October.

“Trees such as maples, ashes, oaks, and hickories are at the peak of their fall display by the middle of October,” Hinnah noted. “Normally by the end of the month, colors are fading and leaves are falling.”

Missouri's fall color can be

viewed and enjoyed from almost anywhere. For spectacular vistas, choose routes along rivers with views of forested bluffs, and along ridges with sweeping scenes of forested landscapes.

“We encourage everyone to visit MDC's conservation areas or Missouri state parks to enjoy a

scenic drive,” said Hinnah.

Fall color isn't limited to trees. Prairies and roadsides display beautiful shades of gold, purple, olive, and auburn with autumn wildflowers, shrubs, and grasses. In cities and towns, enjoy places with mature trees, such as older neighborhoods, parks, and even

cemeteries.

MDC provides its annual fall color update at mdc.mo.gov/fallcolor. The weekly reports include what kinds of trees are turning and suggestions on the best places to view them. The updates run September through November.

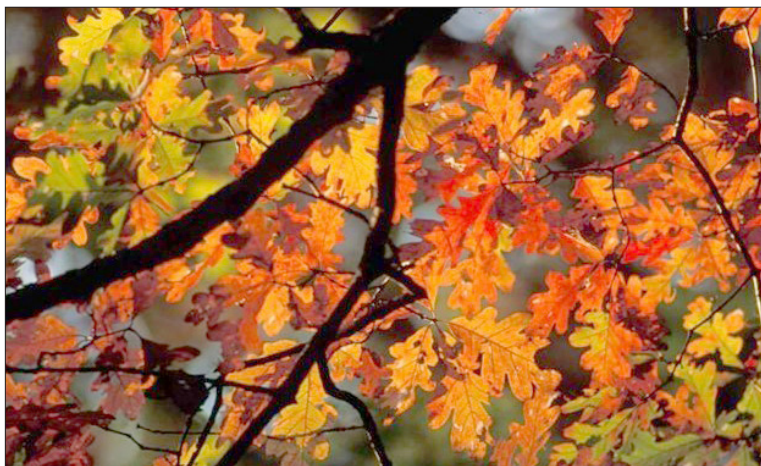


PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC

Six fabulous fall drives in Missouri

Trees drenched in shades of red, orange, and yellow make autumn one of the best times to explore Missouri. With an abundance of hardwood forests filled with oaks, hickories, maples and more, the Show-Me State is an ideal place to find fall color.

Leaf peeping-season usually peaks from mid to late October, depending on the weather. Check the Missouri Department of Conservation's Fall Color Forecast to get the latest updates September through November.

Here are six drives to help you discover the colors of autumn across the state:

HANNIBAL TO ST. LOUIS: HIGHWAY 79

In Hannibal, mix Mark Twain lore with the shades of fall. Take in the sweeping vista from Lover's Leap, a huge bluff just outside the city limits. Travel south along the Mississippi River, through Louisiana and Clarksville – both have expansive river views along

See **Fall drives** on Page 11B

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MDC shares key info for upcoming deer season

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) wants deer hunters to know some key information for harvesting whitetails in Missouri this season.

Deer hunting opens Sept. 15 with the archery season, which runs through Nov. 11 and then again from Nov. 23 through Jan. 15, 2023. The two firearms youth portions occur Oct. 29 and 30 and Nov. 25-27. The firearms November portion runs Nov. 12-22. The antlerless portion runs Dec. 3-11. The alternative-methods portion runs Dec. 24 through Jan. 3, 2023.

NEW THIS YEAR

Hunters who are 15 years or younger Sept. 15 are now exempt from the antler-point restriction during the archery season and all portions of the firearms deer season. The antler-point restriction has been removed for Barton and Vernon counties. Hunters may now fill additional firearms antlerless permits in a number of counties. Get details at mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer/deer-regulations.

SHARE THE HARVEST

MDC encourages deer hunters to share their harvests by donating surplus venison to the Share the Harvest program to help feed hungry Missourians. The program is administered by the Conservation Federation of Missouri and MDC and has provided nearly 5 million pounds of lean, healthy venison to help feed hungry Missourians since it was



started in 1992.

Donating is easy. Simply take harvested deer to an approved meat processor and let the processor know how much venison to donate. Meat-processing fees are covered entirely or in part by numerous local sponsors, along with statewide sponsors. The donated deer meat goes to local food banks and food pantries to help feed hungry Missourians all around the state. To get Share the Harvest venison, contact local food banks or food pantries.

The National Institutes of Health state that children need protein in their diets for proper growth and development, and adults need it to maintain good health. Yet many Missourians

can't afford or can't get to good sources of protein. Through Share the Harvest, Missouri hunters can help provide those in need with high-quality protein in the form of naturally lean, locally harvested deer meat. For more information on Share the Harvest, visit MDC online at mdc.mo.gov/share.

FOLLOW CWD REGULATIONS

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a deadly, infectious disease in deer and other members of the deer family (cervids) that eventually kills all animals it infects. There is no vaccine or cure. CWD is in Missouri and MDC continues its efforts to limit the spread of CWD by finding new cases as early as possible and managing the disease

to slow its spread to more deer in more areas.

MDC's CWD Management Zone consists of counties where or near where CWD has been found: Adair, Barry, Barton, Camden, Cedar, Chariton, Christian, Clark, Crawford, Franklin, Gasconade, Greene, Hickory, Howell, Jefferson, Knox, Laclede, Linn, Macon, McDonald, Mercer, Oregon, Ozark, Perry, Polk, Pulaski, Putnam, Ripley, St. Charles, St. Clair, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Stone, Sullivan, Taney, Vernon, Warren, and Washington. MDC notes that Barton, Greene, Ripley, and Vernon counties are new to the CWD Management Zone this year.

Special regulations apply in CWD Management Zone counties, including:

During Nov. 12-13, hunters who harvest deer in CWD Management Zone counties (except Gasconade, Knox, St. Charles, and Warren) must take the deer or deer head on the day of harvest to an MDC mandatory CWD sampling station.

The use of grain, salt products, minerals, and other consumable products used to attract deer is prohibited year-round in CWD Management Zone counties.

Deer harvested from CWD Management Zone counties must be reported through Telecheck before they can be removed from the county of harvest.

See **Deer season** on Page 11B

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Bowfishing in Missouri

Bowfishing is the pursuit of fish with a bow and arrow and is more like small game hunting than fishing. Bowfishing is a legal method for catching nongame fish, including: *bluegill, green sunfish, carp, carpsuckers, suckers, buffalo, drum and gar.*

Any species not defined as game fish or listed as endangered in the Wildlife Code of Missouri

Bowfishing offers an exciting way to pursue these fish that typically draw little interest with traditional methods.

A Different Kind of Challenge

Traditional fishing uses hooks, and fish aren't typically seen during the angler's pursuit of them. Bowfishing is quite different in that fish are first spotted and then shot at with a bow or crossbow. The bow or crossbow shoots arrows attached to a line so that the fish can be retrieved after they're pierced.

Because water refracts (bends) light waves, connecting with a fish is harder than you might think. The deeper the fish is in the water, the more distorted it will appear and the harder it is to tell its exact location. The angler must compensate for this refraction, making the shot more difficult. The tendency is to

shoot over the fish, so learning how to adjust the shot at a moment's notice on a moving target can prove quite tricky.

How to bowfish

Fish can be successfully pursued during the day, but many people bowfish at night when fish are often more active and more visible than in the daylight.

Light

To illuminate the water at night, bowfishers traditionally hung lanterns or oil lamps over a boat's bow. Today, halogen lights powered by a gas generator or LED lights are commonly used. Bowfishers without boats use handheld lights along the banks or other vantage points. Moonlight alone does not provide sufficient light for locating and properly identifying fish.

Moon phase and water clarity

The moon phase and water clarity play an important role in bowfishing. During a full moon, fish are typically more skittish because they feel more exposed, which can make it more difficult to get close to them. During a new moon it is often easier to get close to them as they feel more hidden in the dark. The same goes for water clarity — the clearer the water, the more difficult it can be to get close to fish

even though you can see them better. The opposite is true of murky or turbid waters.

Finding fish

Because fish are pursued by sight and most legal fish are bottom feeders, slowly cruising the shores and still backwaters are generally most productive for bowfishing. Fish will typically be seen feeding in the substrate, along the shore, or just loafing. Smooth, still water is most conducive for proper fish identification and shooting; choppy water makes it more difficult. During the day, the use of polarized sunglasses reduces glare on the water and enhances visibility.

More pointers

Staying on the move and covering a lot of water is more successful than staying in one spot.

If your mobility is restricted, try chumming the water with soured corn, canned corn, grain and molasses pellets, dog food, or cereal to encourage fish to come to you.

Cautiously closing the distance is the key to getting a shot, but fish can appear and disappear from anywhere in the water at any time. The action can be quite unpredictable.

See **Bowfishing** on Page 11B



SUBMITTED PHOTO

PETER BORGMEYER of Loose Creek going bowfishing.

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Bowfishing

• from page 10B

able to say the least!

Nongame fish are pursued and harvested at significantly lower rates than game fish, so their populations are typically abundant. MDC conducts some dedicated management for species like alligator gar, working to restore these fish to their former native habitat in southeastern Missouri in recent years.

Invasive species control helps to protect native fish species in Missouri waterways. These invasive species include: *Silver carp*, *Bighead carp*, *Grass carp*, *Common carp* and *Goldfish*.

Regulations and other public awareness initiatives to prevent invasive species from inhabiting new waters are ongoing. Regulations permit unlimited harvest with few restrictions on these invasive species since their total eradication would be ideal.

Featured bowfishing spots

Many conservation areas don't support adequate nongame fish populations or an area large enough to offer ample bowfishing opportunities and therefore don't permit bowfishing.

Access to large lakes, reservoirs, and rivers provide the best opportunity and success for bowfishing. Try large waters by way of MDC accesses.

Fall drives • from page 8B

with shops and restaurants. In St. Louis, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Forest Park and Gateway Arch National Park offer a kaleidoscope of colorful foliage.

Caledonia to Van Buren: Highway 21

In the tiny village of Caledonia, visit the old-fashioned mercantile store and antique shops before driving south on Highway 21. You'll find some of the state's most popular outdoor spots, including Elephant Rocks State Park, Taum Sauk Mountain State Park and Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, decked out in fall's finest colors. Further south, a few miles off Highway 21, explore the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Near Van Buren, stop at Big Spring, one of the country's largest natural springs.

**CUBA TO EMINENCE:
HIGHWAY 19**

Check out the Route 66 attractions and outdoor murals in Cuba before setting out on Highway 19. Steelville, located near the Meramec, Huzzah and Courtois rivers, is the self-proclaimed floating capital of Missouri. Further south, the road runs through the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, where Round Spring and Blue Spring sparkle in beautiful shades of blue in the middle of the forest. The Jacks Fork and Current rivers are favorite places for canoeing, kayaking and rafting. Once you reach Eminence, take a short trip up Highway 106 to see Alley Mill, one of Missouri's striking historic red mills, sitting at the edge of Alley Spring,

surrounded by gold- and copper-colored oaks and de green pines.

**LAKE OF THE OZARKS LOOP:
HIGHWAY 5, HIGHWAY 54,
HIGHWAY 52**

The hillsides surrounding the Lake of the Ozarks put on a colorful show when the weather begins to turn cool. Drive a loop around the lake by starting in Versailles and heading down Highway 5. Fall color is especially vivid along the shoreline—in full view where the highway crosses the lake at the Hurricane Deck and Niangua bridges. In Camdenton, travel a few miles south on Highway 54 to Ha Ha Tonka State Park where the foliage provides a perfect backdrop for deep ravines, towering bluffs and the ruins of a 1905 "castle." If you have time for a hike, miles of trails put you in the middle of it all. Turn north toward the bustling lake town of Osage Beach. Waterfront cabins and condos and numerous restaurants are located throughout the area. In Eldon, take Highway 52 for a trek through rolling farm country to return to Versailles.

**TABLE ROCK LAKE LOOP:
HIGHWAY 65, HIGHWAY 13,
HIGHWAY 76**

Deep in the Ozark mountains, travel a winding path around Table Rock Lake and Lake Taneycomo to see southern Missouri bathed in fall's warm colors. Explore the family friendly attractions and live entertainment in Branson before driving south on Highway

65 through the historic town of Hollister. Nearby Table Rock Lake State Park offers plenty of space to enjoy crisp temperatures and clear blue skies. Further south, take Highway 86 across the lake to Highway 13 and into Kimberling City. Continue north to Branson West where Highway 76 will take you back into Branson. Communities across the region offer hundreds of lodging and dining options.

WASHINGTON TO LINN: HIGHWAY 100

Follow the Missouri River for breathtaking views of fall's fabulous foliage as you go from one river town to the next. In Washington, visit Missouri Meerscham Company—the largest and oldest manufacturer of corn cob pipes in the world—and peruse the museum to learn about the history of corn cob pipes. Only 13 miles away is New Haven, a quaint town with delicious restaurants, artisan shops and numerous wineries. Speaking of wineries, you'll also hit Hermann along the route. Some of the state's oldest and most award-winning wineries can be found in this German town. If you plan to sample some wine, stay the night in one of the area's adorable bed-and-breakfasts. The final leg of the highway will take you south of the river through some beautiful wooded areas to Linn. While you're there, check out Serendipity Coffee & Tea for a caffeine boost before exploring Old School Antique Mall & Flea Market for one-of-a-kind finds.

Find more fall beauty at Missouri State Parks and Natural Areas.

Deer season • from page 9B

Hunters must follow carcass-movement restrictions for deer harvested in a CWD Management Zone county.

Hunters must also follow carcass-movement restrictions when bringing parts of harvested deer and other cervids into Missouri from another state. Learn more about CWD and related regulations and restrictions online at mdc.mo.gov/cwd.

CWD SAMPLING AND TESTING ALL SEASON

As part of its efforts to find cases of CWD early and help slow its spread, MDC is again offering free voluntary CWD sampling and testing of harvested deer during the entire deer season at select locations throughout the state, including some MDC offices and participating taxidermists and meat processors.

MDC also offers self-service freezer drop-off locations within the CWD Management Zone for hunters to deposit harvested deer heads to have tested for CWD. Instructions, packing supplies, and information tags are available at the sites. Get more information on voluntary sampling and drop-off locations online at mdc.mo.gov/cwd.

Hunters can get their CWD test results for free online at mdc.mo.gov/cwdResults. Results are usually available within four weeks or less from the time of sampling.

WATCH FOR CYCLISTS

MDC reminds hunters that bicycles and certain types of electric bicycles are now allowed on service roads and multi-use trails at about 300 conservation areas, including some also open for deer hunting. Approx-

imately 30 of these areas will be closed to bicycle and electric bicycle use during all portions of the firearms deer hunting season. Bicycle use on most of MDC's approximately 1,100 conservation areas is still restricted to roads open to public-vehicle traffic and some multi-use trails. Cyclists may not ride off-road or off-trail.

Find MDC multi-use bicycle trails and service roads online through the MDC webpage -- Find Places to Go -- at mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/places. Bike trails and service roads can be searched for by using the Advanced Search feature. Learn more about cycling on MDC areas at mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/activities/bicycling.

GET MORE INFORMATION

Get more information on deer hunting in Missouri -- including seasons, CWD restrictions and other regulations, permits, methods, where to hunt, and more -- from the MDC website at mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer and from MDC's 2022 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet, available where permits are sold and on the MDC website.

Buy Missouri hunting and fishing permits from numerous vendors around the state, online at mdc.mo.gov/permits, or through MDC's free mobile app, MO Hunting, available for download through Google Play or the App Store.

MDC offices will be closed for permit sales and other activities Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

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NWTF HAS completed 10 years of work to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRANDON BUTLER

DRIFTWOOD OUTDOORS

Turkey federation completes decade of Save the Habitat



by **BRANDON BUTLER**

Wild turkeys were as exotic as elk when I was growing up in Northwest Indiana in the 1990s. Turkeys were something my Kentucky family hunted down south. Not something we chased in the cornfields and small woodlots surrounding my home. Then, through the efforts of public/private partnerships, turkeys began showing up. Now that we had them, habitat had to be created and managed to keep them. For the last 10 years, the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has been working to do so with their initiative Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.

NWTF was founded in 1973. Since its inception, the organization has led the way

for turkeys. According to a recent press release, NWTF has poured over half a billion dollars into wildlife conservation and has positively impacted over 22 million acres of critical wildlife habitat. The NWTF has also invested over \$8.5 million into wild turkey research to ensure the wild turkey population remains healthy.

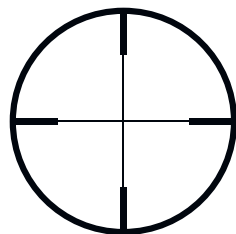
The initial goal of NWTF was turkey reintroductions and stabilizing populations. That mission was completed across most of the country. So the organization began working to protect what it helped restore. Today, NWTF continues to deliver its mission by delivering conservation improvements. Without clean and abundant water,

healthy forests and wildlife habitat, resilient communities, we won't have turkeys, so NWTF's army of volunteers and dedicated staff work to ensure we have those. They also work to ensure we maintain turkey hunting opportunities across the U.S.

The press release stated, in 2012, the NWTF set out to bolster its mission by creating the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative, a national campaign entailing three distinct goals: Conserve or enhance 4 million acres of wildlife habitat, recruit 1.5 million hunters and open access to 500,000 acres of public hunting land, all by the end

See **Driftwood** on Page 15B

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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

Incredibly large spotted bass

A couple of weeks ago a friend and I found a stretch of the Sac River we wanted to fish and a strange thing happened... we caught five incredibly large spotted bass on topwater lures. Often called Kentucky bass, they seldom are larger than 2 and 1/2 pounds in average waters of the Ozarks, even at four or five years of age. One of those last week



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

was the largest I have ever caught... right at eighteen inches, and close to four pounds, as fat as it was. The others were fifteen to seventeen inches, really large spotted bass. You can see several photos of those fish on the

computer at www.larrydablemontoutdoors.blogspot.com.

If you know fish, you can glance at a spotted bass and recognize it immediately. If you aren't sure you can tell one by a raspy, rough patch on its tongue. Smallmouth and largemouth have smooth tongues. The spotted bass gets its name from rows of spots on the lower section of the belly.

I keep all spotted bass and eat them because they compete with the smallmouth, native to Ozark streams. They diminish the smallmouth by eating the exact same prey, and living in the exact same habitat. And they cross with the smallmouth, producing the resulting fish that some bass-fishermen call a 'mean-mouth', a genetically inferior fish according to some fisheries biologists. Who knows if that hybrid can reproduce? I don't know but if they can't, but if they do not, bass numbers would decline. At any rate, I think that perhaps in a few decades spotted bass will crowd out smallmouth and maybe largemouth too.

We have fished areas of the Sac River often, and caught hundreds of spotted bass and largemouth, but only one smallmouth was ever taken by a fisherman from my boat, and it was a four-pounder. Where he came from I will never be able to figure out.

In earlier times, before the Stockton Lake dam, smallmouth did thrive in the upper half of the Sac River and I know from reading old outdoor magazines that spotted bass were heavily stocked in the river in the 1930's, long before the lake was constructed. They were not a native fish in any Ozark river. But they are thick now, and found in most Ozark reservoirs. The only place where they are known to be found as native fish is in a small pocket in east Arkansas along the Mississippi River

Reading fish scales under a microscope tells you the age of a fish and I think the bigger spotted bass I caught was likely eight to ten years old. The others were all surely over five years old. I hate it that they are so detrimental to smallmouth, and in years to come, some rivers and lakes that have smallmouth may see the two fish hybridize to a point where you no longer see smallmouth at all. I don't know, only time will tell. But I can say this, if the spotted bass continues to be as aggressive and easy to catch, and can grow to the sizes we caught last week, few anglers will complain about them.

They are much better eating than the smallmouth and seldom have the yellow grubs constantly found in the meat of the smallmouth. So it is a not-so-unpleasant



problem if they do crowd out the smallmouth. It is just that us Ozark fishermen who are older are entrenched in the belief that no fish can equal the brownies we chase and release. My advice has always been to keep all the spotted bass you catch and release the smallmouth. I will say this, the spotted bass, or Kentuckies if you want to call them that, put up a fight equal to the same sized brownies. And they love topwater lures.

If you have ever read my magazines, you will know I publish one on the Ozarks and one on the outdoors. I have done so for 20 years. Our fall magazine is an experiment I think all subscribers will like. We have combined the two, and what we send out in October will be a magazine of about 120

See **Dablemont** on Page 15B

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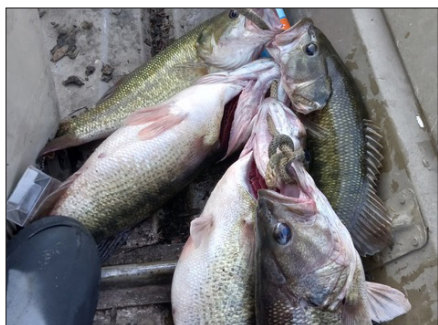
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Dablemont

• from page 14B

pages; the first half on the outdoors... hunting fishing, nature, etc, and the second half on the Ozarks people and history. The cost is eight dollars per magazine, due to the increases from printers, but then it is twice as large with as it always has been. If you want that fall magazine, you need to order before October because after October the postage is about two dollars higher. We need subscribers now to pay the cost of the printing, so if you want that new magazine send eight dollars to Lightnin' Ridge Magazine, Box 22, Bolivar, Mo. 65613. Or you can get the magazine via credit card just by calling our office, 417-777-5227. I will return your money if you aren't satisfied with the publication. See the magazines we have published over the years and all my books (12 total) on my website — www.larrydablemont.com.

Driftwood • from page 12B

of the NWTf's 2022 fiscal year. In 2020, the final metric of the initiative was surpassed thanks to the dedication of NWTf chapters, volunteers, partners and staff. As the 2022 fiscal year officially closed Aug. 31, the official totals for the Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative are:

- 5,216,914 acres conserved or enhanced (goal accomplished in 2020).
- 1,534,819 hunters recruited (goal accomplished in 2019).
- 700,041 acres opened to public hunting access (goal accomplished in 2018).

"The 10-year initiative rallied our membership, staff and partners to help deliver our mission on an unprecedented scale," NWTf co-CEO Kurt Dyroff said. "We faced many challenges over the last decade, but what we accomplished is a testament to our dedicated people who make the NWTf so special. We will look back 50 years from now and see that Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. served as a springboard for mission-focused delivery far into the future."

Saving the habitat to benefit the species is one aspect of preserving turkey hunting, making sure we have turkey hunters is another. In the same span of years, NWTf helped to recruit 1.5 million new or lapsed hunters was integral to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. The additional hunters represent the present and future funding source for conservation efforts. The education and

outreach efforts of NWTf work to ensure hunters and shooting sport enthusiasts are America's most stalwart conservationists.

"This is the beginning of a new era," Dyroff said. "There are still many challenges ahead, and we are not letting our foot off the gas. We will continue to increase the scope and scale of mission delivery so that we may have a positive impact for future generations."

Turkey hunting has become one of my greatest passions. There is nothing like

listening to a turkey gobble at dawn on a chilly spring morning. Giving back to this amazing species through volunteer work to Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. has been a rewarding undertaking on hundreds of thousands of sportsmen across the country. NWTf has led the way.

See you down the trail...

For more Driftwood Outdoors, check out the podcast on www.driftwoodoutdoors.com or anywhere podcasts are streamed.

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