

Spring Fever

HUNTING, FISHING & OUTDOORS GUIDE

MDC forecasts challenging spring turkey hunting season

MDC reminds people to follow health precautions while outdoors

MDC offers free nature-focused online learning resources

Plus outdoor columns by Brandon Butler on page 4 and Larry Dablemont on page 10

April 8, 2020 | Pages 1B-12B
A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

GASCONADE
COUNTY

Republican

MDC forecasts challenging spring turkey hunting season

BY JOE JEREK

Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Missouri turkey hunters can expect a challenging spring season according to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). The regular spring turkey hunting is April 20 through May 10.

MDC Turkey Biologist Reina Tyl expects spring turkey hunting to be challenging.

“A great deal of what makes for a good spring turkey season depends on the hatch two years prior because it affects the number of two-year-old gobblers on the landscape,” Tyl said. “These young gobblers are not associated with hens as often as older, more dominant birds and are the most likely to respond to hunters’ calls.”

Poor production statewide during 2018 will result in fewer two-year-old gobblers available for harvest during this year’s spring hunting season. Tyl added that in 2018, the best production at the regional scale occurred in the northern half of the state. This could potentially translate to relatively more two-year-old gobblers on the landscape north of the Missouri River.

Considering the prospects for the 2020 spring season, hunters should be prepared to put in a bit more effort to be successful this year.

“When turkey numbers are down, it becomes even more important to spend time scouting for flocks before the start of the season,” said Tyl. “Hunters should get out to their hunting areas as much as possible to listen for birds gobbling at daybreak.”

Tyl noted that hunters should also take the time to learn where turkeys are spending most of their time after they fly down from the roost.

“Use binoculars to spot turkeys feeding in open areas or look for signs of where turkeys have been feeding in the timber,” she said. “This will help hunters be in the right area when the hunting season gets here.”

Although the prospects for this year’s spring season aren’t encouraging, this isn’t the first-time poor turkey production has reduced turkey numbers in Missouri. After reaching a population peak in the early-to-mid 2000s, Missouri’s turkey population experienced four years of poor production from 2007–2010, causing the population to decline. However, Tyl noted that turkey numbers rebounded following several years of improved production.

“In much of the state, we observed improved production during 2011, 2012,

and 2014,” said Tyl. “As a result, turkey numbers increased, and hunters generally had better hunting seasons in the years that followed.”

“We are again in a period of poor production and lower turkey abundance,” said Tyl. “We can expect to see the effects on harvest for several years until production improves and turkey numbers rebound.”

GET MORE INFORMATION

Get detailed information on spring turkey hunting from MDC’s 2020 Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet, available from MDC offices and nature centers, other places where permits are sold, and online at huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/spring-turkey-hunting-regulations-and-information

For more information about spring turkey hunting, visit MDC’s website at huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/

turkey

HUNTER SAFETY

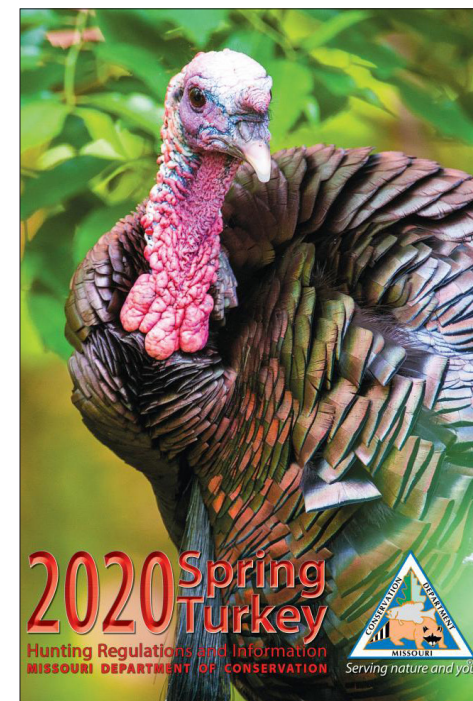
Tyl stressed that hunters can easily avoid the main cause of turkey-hunting incidents — mistaking or being mistaken by another hunter for wild game.

“Each year, most turkey hunting incidents typically involve hunters who fail to identify their targets,” said Tyl. “Unless you are certain that what you’re looking at is a wild turkey, remember that any movement you see or any sounds you hear while you’re hunting could be another hunter.”

She also advised hunters to wear some hunter-orange clothing when moving through the woods or fields, particularly when hunting public land.

“Bringing along an orange hat or vest is an easy way to stay safe”, said Tyl. “Wear

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GET INFORMATION on spring turkey hunting from MDC’s 2020 Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet, available from MDC offices and nature centers, other places where permits are sold, and online at huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/spring-turkey-hunting-regulations-and-information.

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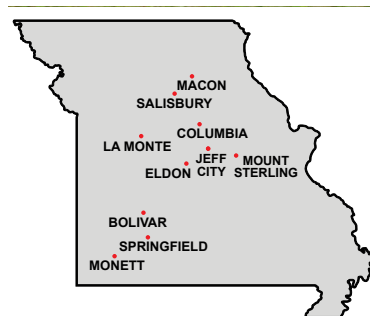
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MDC CONGRATULATES Justin Lakey for holding the latest state-record for white sucker. Lakey was bowfishing at Lake Taneycomo Feb. 22 when he shot the 5-pound, 1-ounce fish.

PHOTO BY MDC STAFF, COURTESY MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION.

Douglas County man shoots new state-record sucker

BY JILL PRITCHARD
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) congratulates Justin Lakey of Ava for shooting a new state-record white sucker. Lakey was bowfishing Feb. 22 when he shot the 5-pound, 1-ounce fish in Lake Taneycomo. The previous record under alternative methods was caught in 2010 and weighed 4-pounds, 5-ounces.

Suckers are one of the dominant groups of large fishes in Missouri waters. They feed mostly by sucking up material from

the bottom. White suckers are found nearly statewide, but are absent from the Bootheel lowlands and southeastern Ozarks.

MDC staff verified the white sucker's weight using a certified scale at Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson. This is the fourth state-record fish of 2020.

Missouri state-record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Alternative methods include: trotlines, throwlines, limb lines, bank lines, jug lines, spearfishing, snagging, snaring, gigging, grabbing, archery, and atlatl.

For more information on state-record fish, visit <http://bit.ly/2efq1vl>.

Spring Turkey from page 2B

one when you're moving and put it away when you sit down to work a bird."

Tyl also noted that many turkey hunting incidents involve members of the same hunting party.

"If you're hunting with someone else and you split up, be certain you know where your hunting partner will be at all times," she advised.

BRAG A BIT

MDC hunting certificates are great ways to memorialize a hunter's first turkey harvest. To create free MDC commemorative certificates, go online to huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/trophies-certificates/certificates.

Hunters can share photos of their harvests through MDC's Hunting Bragging Board by using #mdcbragboard when posting pictures to their social media accounts. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/huntingbragboard.



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DRIFTWOOD OUTDOORS

Spring turkey season needed now more than ever



by **BRANDON BUTLER**

Two miles of hiking along a forested ridge top logging road put me on top of the tallest mountain around an hour before sunrise. Nestled up next to a blowdown oak, I poured a cup of coffee from grandpa's old Stanley thermos and waited on the first gobbler of the morning. It came soon after. For the next hour I sat audience to an ensemble of birds bellowing from every ridge and every holler for miles around. I was front row as nature's symphony de-

livered a reprieve from the current anxiety gripping the globe.

The plan was only to listen. And to strike a gobbler in a few different locations. One of those being a powerline crossing with deep drainages on both sides. When I hit my box call, a gobbler thundered back. I would have left him alone after making mental note of his location, but he had to step out into the open and go into full strut. He wanted to play. I obliged.

Wearing blue jeans, a green sweatshirt and no gloves or facemask, I sucked into the base of forked tree. He had started up the two-track coursing the powerline cut. If he followed that path, he'd end up right next to me. But he didn't. Because a band of jakes came rolling in from the opposite direction. They were chattering about in the woods across the powerline opening from me. Before coming to find his lady, the gobbler headed straight for those jakes and laid down a beating. He jumped on the them and pounded them with his wings. It all took place 20 yards from me.

After running them off a little ways, he

came looking for me. Filming on my phone with my right hand, I did my best to work a box call with my left hand while it was on the ground next to my leg. It didn't sound like anything you'd want your buddies to hear, but it worked. He ended up 10 yards to my right and ripped out a fierce gobbler. Then moved around me and took the high ground, where he spit and drummed and strutted for 15 minutes just out of sight. Occasionally, I could catch a glimpse of him. The jakes stayed 30 yards or so away the entire time. Eventually, he walked off and I let him go. He never spooked. Just moseyed away. For me, this interaction was better than any therapy money could buy. If you want to see this turkey video, it's on my website, www.driftwoodoutdoors.com.

Youth Season kicked off Missouri's spring turkey season on Saturday, April 4th. I'm writing this from my cabin the day before. All is prepared and my daughter, Bailee, is ready to go. I hope we have a good story to share in a future column. I hope all the other youth hunters out there, and their mentors, had an incredible time outdoors.

The regular spring season runs from April 20 until May 10. Hunters are allowed to kill two bearded or male turkeys, but only one may be taken during the first week. If you don't take one during the first week, then you can take two during the second and third weeks, but only one per day. Hunting hours are ½ hour before sunrise until 1 p.m. You must telecheck your turkey by 10 p.m. the day you kill it. Hunters born before January 1, 1967 must complete an approved hunter education course to purchase a license.

Finding a place to turkey hunt in Missouri isn't difficult. Most public land in this state has a healthy population of birds. The Mark Twain National Forest consists of nearly 1,500,000 acres of public hunting ground and has a ton of turkeys roaming all across it. Conservation Areas scattered throughout Missouri are also prime turkey hunting destinations. They collectively offer nearly 1,000,000 acres of public land. Hunting Army Corps of Engineers land by water is

See **Driftwood**, Page 5B

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NO Derby on May 25 & Sept. 7 • Field Captain: Glenn Oder 573-301-6475

Trap Practice—Tuesday, 4:00PM ~ Field Captain: Glenn Oder 573-301-6475

Skeet Practice—Thursday, 5:00PM ~ Field Captain: John Kansteiner 315-651-0725

(Dates may be rescheduled due to weather) No practice on National Holidays or during the Hunting Season and Gasconade County Fair weeks.

Sporting Clays: 9AM-2PM

Field Captain: Shane Achterberg 573-263-0021

Sunday, June 7
Sunday, July 12
Sunday, Aug. 2
Sunday, Sept. 6
Sunday, Oct. 4

Shotgun Triathlon: 9AM-2PM

Sunday, May 3
Sunday, Oct. 25

Work Days

Postponed

Volunteers needed and appreciated.

NRA HP Rifle Match: ; Sign up

8AM Start 9AM; 8

Sunday, June 12
Sunday, July 19
Sunday, Oct. 11

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Vice Pres.: Jim Lairmore 573-619-5696

Secretary/Treas: Linda Thiedke

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& Carbine: 9AM-3:30PM (Field Captain, Jim Miller 636-583-8613):

Appreciation and awards day.

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Sunday, May 17*
Sunday, June 14*
Sunday, Aug. 16*
Sunday, Sept. 20*
Sunday, Oct. 4*

***M1 for Vets Presentation at 08:00 AM;**

Field Captain: John Colombo 314-604-3005

ARA Rim Fire Bench Rest Dates: ;

Sign up 8AM Start 9AM; Field Captain: Dennis Sallin 573-619-4578

Saturday, April 25

Saturday, May 30

Saturday, June 20 - tournament

Saturday, July 18 - tournament

Sunday, July 19

Saturday, Aug. 29

Saturday, Sept. 19

Saturday, Oct. 3

CHECK OUR WEB SITE

FOR UPDATES: www.OwensvilleGunClub.org

NOTE: The Club requests that members who have moved or changed their mailing address to please notify the club by mail at: OGC, PO Box 518, Owensville, MO 65066

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MDC reminds everyone to follow health precautions while outdoors

BY JOE JEREK

Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – With many people in Missouri heading outside to enjoy the spring weather, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reminds people that it is still critical for everyone to continue to heed all recommendations for physical distancing, avoiding overcrowding, hand-washing, and other public-health measures during outdoor activities.

“The current public-health emergency caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) has many Missourians and others looking for safe ways to get outside in nature,” said MDC Director Sara Parker Pauley. “Visiting conservation areas, hiking area trails, fishing, and other outdoor activities are great ways for people to connect with nature while still complying with all health and safety recommendations. Outdoor activities are also great way to get some much needed physical and mental health benefits during this stressful time.”

MDC advises people to make outdoor activities as safe and enjoyable as possible by taking the following actions:

If you have been sick in the last two weeks, please stay home for your health and the safety of others.

Travel in a small group of 10 people or fewer.

If a conservation area looks crowded or an area parking lot is full, please do not stop and find another less-crowded location.

Keep a proper physical distance of at least six feet while visiting areas and especially on trails.

Avoid popular spots where people congregate, such as scenic overlooks, fishing

docks, etc.

Pack water, soap and/or hand sanitizer.

Get more information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on best practices for keeping you and your family safe at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

STAY SAFE WHILE FISHING FOR FREE

MDC and the Missouri Conservation Commission have temporarily waived permit requirements for sport fishing and daily trout tags for Missouri residents and nonresidents whose fishing privileges are not otherwise suspended. The waiver of needing a permit or trout tag to fish will run through April 15. Seasons, methods, and limits still apply and will be enforced. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/newsroom/mdc-temporarily-waive-fishing-permits-starting-friday.

MDC emphasizes that it is still critical for everyone to continue to heed all recommendations for physical distancing, avoiding overcrowding, hand-washing, and other public-health measures while fishing.

SPRING TURKEY SEASON AND SEMO FLOODING-CLOSURE NOTICE

Spring turkey season in Missouri remains open and as scheduled. For more on spring turkey hunting in Missouri, visit mdc.mo.gov/newsroom/mdc-forecasts-challenging-spring-turkey-hunting-season-0.

Flood-prone areas in southeast Missouri will be closed to all hunting during spring turkey season when river levels exceed certain limits on local river gauges. To see if an area is closed for hunting, visit mdc.mo.gov/semofloods.

Driftwood from page 4B

favorite tactic of mine. Not many hunters go to this length to locate birds. Around many reservoirs, you can find secluded areas and have them all to yourself. Plus, if the hunting is tough, you can go fishing.

It is always important to keep in mind when turkey hunting, especially on public land, that some of the turkey sounds you hear may actually be other hunters using calls to sound like a turkey. Always be 100 percent positive of your target before pulling the trigger. A dark-brown, fanned out gobbler and a camouflage clad hunter who's sitting down can look a lot more alike than you might imagine, especially in the heat of the moment when adrenaline may cause your mind to play a trick.

Turkey season offers sportsmen many opportunities to enjoy nature. The weather is finally warming up, mushrooms are popping, and fish are biting. It's pretty easy to turn a weekend of turkey season into a serious outdoor adventure. Crappie, bass, and white bass are all being caught in good numbers and size. I can't think of a better way to spend a weekend than turkey hunting and catching some fish. Throw in some cast iron cooked biscuits, a little ham and bean soup, a few fried morels, and my personal paradise has been defined.

See you down the trail...

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MDC encourages you to enjoy Missouri's flowering trees and shrubs

BY JILL PRITCHARD
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages people to unwind in nature by enjoying Missouri's flowering trees and shrubs. Many of Missouri's native trees and shrubs bloom in spring, putting on dazzling displays that attract native wildlife such as birds and pollinators. Flowering spring trees and shrubs can be enjoyed while out in the yard, out on a walk, or even from the indoors while social distancing. In order to make enjoying the outdoors as safe as possible, it's critical for the public to maintain physical distancing, avoid overcrowding, and continue hand-washing or sanitizing.

Early-bloomers in the coming weeks include:

- **Serviceberry** with clusters of white

flowers that appear before other native trees put on leaves, allowing this often-overlooked tree to stand out in wooded areas. When you spot a blooming serviceberry, take note of the location. You can return in early June to enjoy the serviceberry's delicious, blueberry-like fruits. Learn more at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/downy-serviceberry

- **Spicebush** is a small shrub that commonly grows in moist wooded areas and along streams. It produces petite clusters of pale yellow flowers in early spring. As the host plant of the beautiful spicebush swallowtail butterfly, this shrub makes an attractive, wildlife-friendly addition to home landscaping. Learn more at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/spicebush

- **Redbud** is celebrated each spring for See **Flowering trees**, Page 7B



MISSOURI'S EARLY spring-flowering trees and shrubs include serviceberry (1), spicebush (2), redbud (3), and wild plum (4).

PHOTO BY MDC STAFF, COURTESY MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION.

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How to make the most of kids' first fishing trips

Fishing provides a great way for parents to bond with their children in the great outdoors. The value of first impressions has been well-documented, and parents who want their kids to inherit a love of fishing can take the following factors into consideration so their youngsters' first fishing trips are successful.

LOCAL PROGRAMS

Fishing need not be an expensive hobby, but the costs can add up. Parents who are not sure if their kids will embrace fishing should look into local programs. Many towns, especially those with reputations for fishing, host free family fishing events. These events give parents an opportunity to see if their kids enjoy fishing before they start buying them gear.

STARTING SIMPLE

Any fisherman would love to snag a trophy fish such as a largemouth bass on his or her first trip. And while that's possible, it's unlikely, especially for youngsters. Such fish tend to be difficult to catch, even for seasoned fishermen. When taking kids fishing for the first time, fish for something that's somewhat simple to catch and capable of being caught throughout the day. If you aren't familiar with your local rivers or lakes, visit a local outdoors store and ask for advice about which local bodies of water are home to fish that kids might be able to snag. Though it's not imperative that kids catch a fish on their first trip, doing so might make them more

Flowering trees from page 6B

the vibrant pink-purple flowers encircling the trees' leafless branches. Fun fact: Redbud flowers are more than eye candy. They're edible and make a tasty and colorful addition to salads and desserts! Learn more at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/eastern-redbud

- **Wild plum** produces clusters of delicate white flowers that are visited by several species of bees. This small, thicket-forming tree is common along roadsides, in old fields, and on the edge of woods. Wild plum is a valuable food source for wildlife, but people can also enjoy the small, edible plums that ripen in late summer. Learn more at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/wild-plum

MDC encourages people to plant native trees and shrubs and replace non-native varieties such as the invasive Bradford or Cleveland Select ornamental pear trees. Visit grownative.org for a list of vendors that sell Missouri native plant species.

Wherever the location in Missouri, take time to enjoy the natural beauty of spring-flowering trees and shrubs.

With the current public-health emergency caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19), MDC reminds people to continue to heed recommendations for hand washing, physical distancing, and all other public-health measures during outdoor activities. Find more information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on best practices for keeping you and your family safe at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.



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Protect natural bee habitats

Honeybees are humble insects that benefit the environment in various ways. Unfortunately, many people lump bees in with wasps and other seemingly “harmful” insects and do whatever is necessary to remove them from their properties. But it’s important to be mindful of the beneficial roles bees play and to take steps to maintain healthy habitats so they can thrive.

Bees are one of the most important pollinators of flowers, crops and fruit trees. These small insects can make or break entire food supplies. They also pollinate clover and alfalfa that provide feed for cattle. Some experts place the economic value of bees at roughly \$15 billion per year.

A consortium of universities and research laboratories that reported to The White House in 2015 found that beekeepers lost 42.1 percent of their colonies between 2014 and 2015. Bee populations continue to decline. According to the conservation organization Save the Bees, recent surveys suggest close to a 99 percent loss in bees over the last 150 years, primarily due to increasing agricultural intensification.

To combat this sharp decline in bee populations, people from all walks of life can do their part to help bees thrive once again. And by helping bees, individuals also may indirectly help other beneficial pollinating insects, such as butterflies.

BE AWARE OF THE LANDSCAPE

Not all bees build the wax or paper structures associated with traditional beehives. Those hives may not be readily visible even for bees that do build them. Wood-nesting bees can nest in twigs or dead trees. Bees may nest underground or use the burrows abandoned by small rodents. Before excavating or disturbing more remote areas of the yard, check to see if it is a habitat for bees. Leave some natural areas of the landscape untouched and do not remove twigs, mounds of dirt and native flowers to attract more bees.

Plant native flowers and flowering trees. Offer bees plenty of flowering choices so they’ll be happy to come investigate. Native flowers are best because they will be most familiar. Try to plant an array that will flower at different times of the year. Simple flowers will offer more readily available access to pollen than hybrid or exotic varieties bred to produce mounding petals.

LEAVE SWATCHES OF NATURAL LAWN

Instead of properties featuring an entire manicured lawn, set aside an area that is

encouraged to overgrow with dandelions and clovers, which are good nectar sources for many bees.

SUPPORT LOCAL BEEKEEPERS

If you find a honey bee swarm on your property, contact a local beekeeper who may be able to safely collect and relocate that swarm so it will produce honey and provide the additional benefits associated with healthy bees. People can also support beekeepers’ work by purchasing local honey. Not only does it keep jobs in the area, but some research also suggests that consuming local honey can help reduce seasonal allergies. WebMD says the practice is based on immunotherapy. Local honey contains traces of local pollen that may be responsible for seasonal allergies. Repeated exposure to small doses of this pollen might help bodies develop natural immunities.

Bees can be quite beneficial to have around, and it can be an enjoyable venture to customize landscapes to support the propagation of wild bees.



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Missouri moments in nature

BY PEG CRAFT

Mo. Dept. of Conservation

Note: While conservation facilities including Nature Centers and offices have been closed due to the Covid-19 virus, conservation areas, nature center trails, and boat accesses remain open to the public. Please consider all health and travel advisories before social distancing in nature. You can enjoy the beauty of Missouri's natural places in pictures and video in the Media Gallery below. And learn some fun facts about our two biggest rivers.

The name, Missouri, comes from a Native American tribe and means “town of the large canoes”. Our state’s history and nature can be explored by water or on land. Below is a highlight of some areas around the state that may be close to home during this time, or planned for a later date.

Near the gateway, St. Louis, guided tours paddle through the confluence of the two biggest rivers in the country, where Lewis and Clark made passage. You may want to plan for a group paddle later in the year and visit the point of confluence on a solo or social distancing trek. For now, you can watch the video below on the journey with an expert guide.

In the Southeast, near Saint Genevieve, the oldest community in the state, are natural areas with canyons and eagle watching along the Mississippi. Hickory Canyons and Pickle Springs Natural Area are rich in plant diversity and scenic beauty.

Bikers cross the middle of the state on the Katy Trail, an old railroad line. Off the Kansas City boulevard path, are miles of trails through woods and waterfalls. Maple Woods Conservation Area has trails through blazing colors in the fall.

Down Branson way, you can catch rainbow trout below the Shepherd of the Hills fish hatchery. You can explore glades once used by baldknobbers at the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area. Fun fact: This land was donated by Paul Henning, creator of the Beverly Hillbillies, and his wife Ruth, whose family business in Eldon, Missouri, was the inspiration for the television show, Petticoat Junction.

For help exploring Missouri, download the Mo Outdoors app and check out some areas for future trips below.

THE BIG RIVERS

Missouri boasts two major world-class,

continent-draining rivers: the Missouri and the Mississippi.

THE MISSOURI RIVER

The Missouri River forms the northern part of our state’s western border, then crosses west-to-east through the center of the state to join the Mississippi at St. Louis.

Between its headwaters in Montana and its confluence with the Mississippi at St. Louis, it is 2,341 miles long — the longest river on the continent.

It drains more than 500,000 square miles, including all or parts of 10 states and 2 provinces about one-sixth of the United States.

The Missouri was nicknamed the Big Muddy before there were channels, dams, and reservoirs, back when it carried huge amounts of sediment hundreds of millions of tons per year. Today, the amount is “only” 20 to 25 million tons, as the river is not allowed to change its course and because dams arrest its flow, making silt fall to the bottom of reservoirs.

Today it’s still muddy-looking, and the Missouri River contributes more than half the silt that arrives in the Gulf of Mexico, forming the Mississippi Delta, so the Big Muddy nickname is still apt.

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

The Mississippi River forms the eastern border of our state.

It is 2,320 miles long, the fourth longest river in the world.

Counting its many tributaries, including the Missouri River, it drains all or parts of 31 states and 2 provinces, between the Rockies and the Appalachians, more than 1,245,000 square miles.

From its upper reaches in Minnesota to St. Louis, the Upper Mississippi is controlled by locks and dams, channels, and wing dikes. The Upper Mississippi is essentially a series of human-made lakes convenient for river transportation, hydroelectric power, and recreation.

South of St. Louis, where the Missouri joins it, the Mississippi widens and flows more freely. The section between the confluences of the Missouri and the Ohio rivers is called the Middle Mississippi.

The portion of the Mississippi that flows south of the confluence with the Ohio at Cairo, Illinois, and Birds Point, Missouri is the Lower Mississippi. A thousand miles downstream from this point, the mighty river meets the Gulf of Mexico.

Learn more about the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in MDC’s Field Guide.

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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

Another kind of hunting

It is 'mushroom' week here in my area of the Ozarks. I found the first ones on the second day of April, which is unusual because the average time of eruption over the years has been about 10 to 14 days into the month. I have what I call an 'indicator tree'. It is a big ash tree on my place where the very first mushrooms appear each spring, and over a two-week period in past years it has produced from 20 to 35 mushrooms.

I found three there a few days back and I know that it will have more. Then about a week later there will be mushrooms sprouting up on Truman Lake, about 30 miles north of me as the crow flies. A week or so later there will be mushrooms to find in north Missouri.

Folks get excited about finding extremely large morels. I have found one about 12

inches tall with a diameter of nearly 4 inches. BUT... I am usually in southern Canada on some lake that first week of June, and there, when you find morels, they AVERAGE 10 or 12 inches. I have found morels there that were 15 inches tall. I never look for them in Canada; you just find them along the lake-shore here and there. Some years though you never see one. But when they are there,

they are very big.

I recommend that if you have never found morel mushrooms, you begin looking for them around very large ash trees. Ash trees send out long large roots which may curve around as far as 15-feet from

the trunk. The tops of those roots stick up out of the ground. Mushrooms grow up all around those roots. But over the years I have found morels in cedar groves where larger cedars grow, around big sycamores along waterways, around open areas where May apples bloom, under dogwoods, and... well heck, I have found them in what we jokingly refer to as a 'lawn' around my house up here on Lightnin' Ridge.

They grow where nature puts them. Along small streams I have found them on gravel bars and on a sand bar beneath maple trees. Those sandbar morels are worthless because there are tiny grains of sand all throughout the indentions and actually inside the meaty part of the mushroom, and you cannot get them out. When you fry them and bite into one, you are chewing on grains of sand.

The funny thing about finding morels a little early this spring is that everything that blooms is blooming a little later than usual. But I am not just going to look for and eat mushrooms around my wooded ridgetop in April. I will fry up some pokeweed leaves, (only the young small ones) and some cow

pasley (parsley to educated folks) lamb's quarter and crows foot, and make some sweetened sassafras tea out of the roots of small sassafras saplings. If you want to try those plants, look them up on a computer or in a book so you can identify them and learn how to eat them. If you get a hold of hemlock, which is similar, it can kill you!

Later in the summer there will be raspberries, and blackberries and mulberries up here within a hundred yards of my home and office, and then in the fall, persimmons, pawpaws, walnuts, and more mushrooms of one type or another. I built a pond twenty-five years ago to water ridge-top wildlife and it is full of fish and bullfrogs. All around me there are squirrels, rabbits, quail, turkey and deer. If the time comes that city supermarkets don't open or they don't have food, the natural market allowing survival is right outside the door. Many country people can say the same thing.

This week I will eat fried mushrooms until I get sick of them. And I will give

See **Dablemont**, Page 11B



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

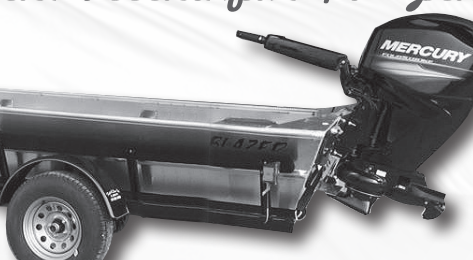
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Dablemont from page 10B

away a bunch as well. If you want to come and hunt them with me you can, as long as you wear a mask and raincoat and stay 10 feet from me!

I might mention that in May and June, when those orange day-lillies are blooming everywhere, that if you collect a bunch of the buds before they bloom, you can roll them in egg and flour and fry them like mushrooms.

Great eating! They are known by country folks as 'poorman's asparagus'. Which means, I guess, that you can fix them like you fix asparagus. I ain't never done that... but I may try it this summer.

I want to caution prospective mushroom hunters that there is a large rusty-red mushroom known as beef-steak mushrooms that are often found even earlier than morels, and many people slice them and fry them too. They may be found as big as a basketball and even bigger. But while some folks eat

them with no problem, others get very sick from them. I don't know why. But heck, there are some folks who get sick from eating too many morels, so if you are a first time mushroom hunter, do this... eat only a small amount of either at first. Find out if you have a mushroom tolerant system.

Some folks is different than us normal folks, I've heered. I once knew an old boy at the pool hall that got sick ever'time he ate baked 'possums and another feller who was allergic to peeks and wal-

nuts!
Please go to my website, www.larrydablemont.com to order some of my books or magazines, or see photos taken each week in my forays into the outdoors. There, you can read columns many newspapers cannot publish. My email address is lightnridge47@gmail.com or mail correspondence to me at Box 22, Bolivar, MO. 656613

"This week I will eat fried mushrooms until I get sick of them"



THERE IS A LARGE RUSTY-RED MUSHROOM (LEFT) KNOWN AS THE BEEF-STEAK MUSHROOM OFTEN FOUND EARLIER THAN MORELS (RIGHT).

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MDC offers free nature-focused online learning resources

BY JOE JEREK
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – With so many Missourians stuck at home, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is offering teachers, parents, students, and others its free Discover Nature Schools (DNS) nature-based curriculum for pre-kindergarten through high school online.

Find DNS information and curriculum for pre-kindergarten through high school online at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/teacher-portal/discover-nature-schools.

MDC also offers other nature-based learning resources at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/teacher-portal/nature-based-resources-during-school-closures.

Find a variety of nature-based video segments from MDC at nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/teacher-portal/video-segments.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers tips on how to support student learning at home at dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/curr-c19-support-for-families.pdf.

Get more nature-based info from the MDC website at mdc.mo.gov.

With the current public-health emergency caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19), MDC reminds people to continue to heed recommendations for hand washing, social distancing, and all other public-health measures during outdoor activities.



WITH SO many Missourians stuck at home, MDC is offering teachers, parents, students, and others its free Discover Nature Schools (DNS) nature-based curriculum for pre-kindergarten through high school online – including Nature Unhooked materials for grades 6-8.

PHOTO BY MDC STAFF, COURTESY MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION.



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