

Wednesday, September 16, 2020
A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

Unterrified Democrat

Fall Conservation



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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

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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 res-

toration 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. “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 — research 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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DRIFTWOOD OUTDOORS

Traveler fears too much time in one perfect place

by **BRANDON BUTLER**

With Labor Day behind us, and cooler temperatures setting in, it's time to start the process of reflecting on another summer gone by. Plenty of trips were taken, and many memories were made, but now having been the proud owner of a rural retreat for three summers, I'm beginning to wonder if some of the warnings I was given by other lucky retreat owners hold more merit than I suspected.

I call my place Driftwood Acres. It's only 43 acres, but the surrounding expanse of public lands lends to a freedom I've found in few other places. One can walk out of the county 20 miles away without fear of stepping foot on a piece of privately owned dirt. The crystal clear creek at the base of my mountain is the greatest place I have ever found for simply sitting in the water with a cold beer in hand while the entire world flows by.

The lodge is a testament to the love of family and friends. So many people I care about have left their mark on the place. Shags and Paddle Don hung countless board feet of rough cut cedar on the walls. Frank Oberle handcrafted the cherry wood island top. My cousin, Derek, has personally cleared acres of land and cut substantial amounts of brush. My uncle and Pete put in hours of work. Bruce Sassmann taught me how to burn the hillside. So many more have contributed. And then there is my dad. He's given so much time and effort to help make my dream, one he knows I have harbored all my life, a reality. Grateful is not a strong enough word.

By all accounts, the place perfect. But perhaps too perfect. My girls are nearly grown. We are rapidly running out of summers before they leave for college, then headed off to whatever corner of the world beckons. So many plans to visit places I know they would appreciate have failed to come to fruition. Of course, this summer was different. Having a wilderness retreat where we could isolate was a gift. But still, another summer slipped by without a journey to a destination on the bucket list. A big part of the reason is most travel has been tabled while our property has been developed.

Coming to own a second home, especially one that serves as a camping, fishing, hunting and floating destination, has been one of the great blessings of my life. Yet, it hasn't come without a cost. Travel brings my greatest joy, and for the last four years, most of my travel has been to Driftwood Acres. Others I know who have been lucky enough to own similar properties warned me that having one home is more work than most diehard sportsmen can handle. Two will leave

you fraught with anxiety as you struggle to find time for anything but maintenance. While that's not been exactly true, it's not far off.

I need to find a better balance. I need to force myself to relinquish weekends and longer blocks of time to visiting places I hope to take my girls before it is too late. Alaska has somehow eluded me for 41 years. I really hope to take the girls up there soon to explore Denali National Park and see the glaciers before they are gone. I also want to fly to Rome, drive to Venice and take a boat across the Adriatic Sea to meet up with a distant cousin who lives in Croatia that I have come to know through the good side of social media.

Driftwood Acres is a dream come true, but how many other dreams are going unfulfilled because of too intense of a focus on this one. So to all of you wanderers who live to leave boot leather on the ground, yet dream of having your own special destination, heed my warning, you may find yourself over committed to a single destination. Before you know it, other dreams will seem distant.

I certainly encourage you to buy that property and build your cabin. Just don't lose sight of how big the world is. Keep those travel plans front of mind and strike a balance. No matter how many stars we wish upon, we're never going to have more time than we do at this moment. Use it wisely.

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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Enjoy a Missouri autumn with MDC's fall color forecast

Missouri will continue to offer beautiful views for outdoor social distancing as the fall season gets underway. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) offers weekly online fall color updates from agency foresters all over the state at mdc.mo.gov/fallcolor.

"The fall color report is a great resource for those wanting to enjoy the changing foliage," said MDC Community Forester Ann Koenig. "It shows users where trees are beginning to turn and also suggests the best places to view the changing leaves."

Generally, the changing of the leaves is predictable, but it can vary from year to year depending on the weather. Koenig explained that a windy fall or early hard freeze can dampen the fall color in trees due to the fact the leaves blow off

the trees or freeze.

Chilly autumn nights are key to leaves changing color. Sugars produced by photosynthesis become trapped inside leaves. Those sugars are the building blocks for the rich red, yellow, orange, and purple pigments. Cooler 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 across the state. Sassafras, sumac, and Virginia creeper are some of the earliest to change in mid-September. In late September, black gum, bittersweet, and dogwood begin turning.

"Bright, cloudless autumn days are ideal for a good display of fall color,"

Koenig noted. "And, as a general rule, I mark about the third week in October as a good time to be paying attention to fall color for Mid-Missouri. Colors are usually fading and leaves are falling by the end of the month."

BEST VIEWS

Missouri's fall color can be enjoyed from almost anywhere.

"MDC's conservation areas or Missouri state parks offer great scenic views for the public to enjoy the changing leaves," said Koenig.

The public can enjoy fall foliage through camping, driving tours, hiking, or even canoeing or floating. And fall color isn't limited to trees. Prairies and roadsides display beautiful shades of gold, purple, olive, and auburn with autumn wildflowers, shrubs, and grass-

es. In cities and towns, enjoy places with mature trees, such as older neighborhoods, parks, and even cemeteries.

MDC's weekly fall color update, available at mdc.mo.gov/fallcolor, includes what kinds of trees are turning and suggestions on the best places to view them. The updates run September through November.

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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.

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



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

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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MDC offers a number of hunter education opportunities in upcoming weeks

Individuals needing hunter education have classroom and online options.

WESTPLAINS, Mo. – The calendar may still say “summer,” but many people are starting to prepare for this fall’s hunting seasons. If taking hunter education is one of the things you need to do to enjoy firearms hunting opportunities this year, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has several options available.

Individuals born after Jan. 1, 1967 hunting in Missouri during a firearms season or acting as an adult mentor to another hunter must have hunter education certification unless exempt (see exemptions listed below). MDC offers two hunter education options; an all-online format and a blended format.

The all-online format may be completed by Missouri residents age 16 and older. It consists of an online course and requires a fee paid to the online course provider (not MDC). The all-online option requires the passing of a final exam, but has no skills portion.

The blended format has two parts. The knowledge portion provides information to participants on all aspects of hunter education and can be taken online, through a free self-study guide, or in a classroom setting.

Participants must also complete a four-hour skills session that includes a multiple-choice final exam. The skills portion is a hands-on demonstration of skills learned by participants. Participants must complete and pass both portions to earn certification.

For individuals participating in the blended format, here is a list of skills sessions coming up in south-central Missouri:

Sept. 17 – 6-8:30 p.m., MDC Twin Pines Conservation Education Center

Sept. 21 – 5:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Waynesville Rural Fire Protection District Emergency Services Training Center, 25785 Red Oak Road, Waynesville (Pulaski County)

Sept. 28 – 5:30-9:30 p.m., open pavilion and meeting hall northeast of Vienna Senior Center, 210 Ballpark, Vienna (Maries County)

Oct. 5 – 5:30-9:30 p.m., Bray Conservation Area, 14220 CR 7000 (Bridge School Road), Rolla (Phelps County)

Oct. 20 – 5-7 p.m., MDC Ozark Regional Office, 551 Joe Jones Blvd., West Plains (Howell County)

Oct. 20 – 7:30-9:30 p.m., MDC Ozark Regional Office, West Plains

Oct. 27 – 5-7 p.m., MDC Ozark Regional Office, West Plains

Oct. 27 – 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., MDC Ozark Regional Office, West Plains

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In Missouri, individuals have several options for taking hunter education. Individuals born after Jan. 1, 1967 must have hunter education certification to purchase a firearms hunting permit unless they are exempt.

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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.

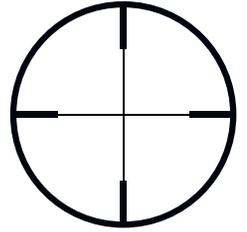
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MDC invites youth, families to free fishing classes in Columbia

Four-part Discover Nature - Fishing courses offered over two evenings in September.

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) invites kids and their families to a free, four-class series of fishing workshops in Columbia. The Discover Nature - Fishing (DNF) workshops will cover the basics of fishing from tackle to knot-tying, and participants will gain the skills and confidence to go fishing on their own.

Each of the four lessons will focus on a different topic:

Lesson 1 - Equipment, casting, and proper fish handling

Lesson 2 - How to tie a knot and bait a hook

* Participants must attend lessons 1 & 2 in order to attend lessons 3 & 4

Lesson 3 - Five common Missouri fish: anatomy, habitat, and lifecycle

Lesson 4 - Fishing with lures and fishing regulations

Lessons 1 and 2 will take place from 6-8 p.m., on Sept. 22, at Bass Pro Lake, 3101 Bass Pro Drive in Columbia. Lessons 3 and 4, which will be offered at the same time and location on Sept. 24

"This is a great way for kids and their parents to learn the basics of fishing," said MDC Angler Education Assistant Ashley Edwards. "Fishing is a great way to get outdoors and have some fun! I encourage anyone who has enjoyed fishing but never really learned how to fish, and also people who have no idea what they are doing at all, to come join me at the Bass Pro Shops in Columbia for these DNF programs. We will have lots of fun, there will be lots of learning and fishing and even some prizes at the end."

DNF programs focus primarily on reaching kids 6 - 15 years of age and emphasize family involvement. All children must be accompanied by an adult and participants age 16 and older must possess a valid fishing license.

To ensure public health amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, all participants must practice physical distancing and wear a mask covering their mouth and nose when unable to maintain at least six

feet between each other.

Space is limited for these classes, and all participants must preregister by Sept. 22. Register for lessons 1 & 2 at mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/174229. Register for lessons 3 & 4 at mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/174230.

All DNF classes are free for registered participants and MDC will provide all needed fishing equipment and supplies.

Participants should bring their own bug repellent and sunscreen if they wish.

For more information about these

classes, contact Edwards at Ashley.Edwards@mdc.mo.gov, or (573) 815-7901, ext. 2968.



MDC will offer a four-part Discover Nature - Fishing series over two evenings this month in Columbia. These free clinics will cover an introduction to equipment and hands-on skills practice. Register today to attend these workshops for ages 6 and older.

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Upcoming Hunter Education courses

continued from page 7B

To register for these skills sessions, visit mdc.mo.gov/huntereducation.

To help keep participants, instructors, and others safe during the ongoing COVID-19

pandemic, MDC will limit in-person class sizes to small numbers so social distancing can be practiced. Class availability will also be limited due to smaller class sizes and limited availability of venues. MDC will abide by applicable local health requirements and strongly encourages participants to bring and wear masks. Hand sanitizer will be available to participants, but masks will not be provided by at the above-listed classes.

“To help staff, volunteers, program participants, and others stay safe, MDC has changed the format and structure of some of our programs, including hunter education,” said MDC Hunter Education and Shooting Range Coordinator Justin Mc-

Guire. “Opportunities to attend an in-person hunter education class or skills session are available, but limited, at this time. MDC still offers ample opportunities for people to legally hunt in Missouri through youth exemptions, our apprentice hunter education authorization, and online hunter education.”

EXEMPTIONS TO MISSOURI'S HUNTER EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS ARE:

Hunters born before Jan. 1, 1967

Hunters age 15 or younger who will be hunting with an adult mentor age 18 years or older who is certified in hunter education.

Hunters with a disability exemption from MDC

Hunters age 16 or older who have purchased an apprentice hunter authorization and will be hunting with a properly permitted adult mentor age 18 or older

Hunters who are landowners hunting on land they own.

Hunters who can prove completion of an approved hunter education course in another state

More information about hunter education opportunities in south-central Missouri can be obtained by calling MDC's Ozark Regional Office at 417-256-7161 or going to mdc.mo.gov.



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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 archery 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



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

continued on page 13B

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Bear-Hunting

continued from page 12B

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. Com-

ments 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.

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.

Buy native trees and shrubs from MDC State Forest Nursery

Order are being taken now through April 2021.

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MDC's George O. White State Forest Nursery near Licking offers a variety of low-cost native tree and shrub seedlings for reforestation, windbreaks, erosion control, wildlife food and cover, and other purposes. The nursery provides mainly one-year-old, bare-root seedlings with sizes varying by species. Seedlings varieties include: pine, bald cypress, cottonwood, black walnut, hickory, oak, pecan, persimmon, river birch, maple, willow, sycamore, blackberry, beautyberry, buttonbush, deciduous holly, hazelnut, redbud, ninebark, spicebush, elderberry, sumac, wild plum, witch hazel, and others.

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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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

Storms

Some years back I took a pair of northerners on an Ozark float trip and in mid-afternoon dark clouds began to form to the west, with the ominous roll of thunder in the distance. I knew of a big, deep cave nearby with a dry floor,

got to us.

I told him that when on the river in a coming storm, I live by the rule, "It is better to sit in a cave and wait for the storm than to sit in the storm and look for a cave!" We spent about an hour and a half in the cave that afternoon listening to a raging electrical storm with heavy winds, rain and even some hail. When we left, the skies were clearing and the afternoon calm again.

A strong fear of lightning is known as keraunophobia, which makes me a keraunophobic. I can endure the rain, and you can prepare somewhat for a tornado no matter where you are, but lightning is unpredictable and awesome in its power. People who ignore the danger of lightning often become part of the statistics.

For instance, statistics show that lightning kills more people than hurricanes tornados or floods. Death from lightning does not always come from a direct strike; it can happen as a result of the spread of voltage through the ground

or water. People in boats on lakes or rivers are perhaps in the greatest danger from lightning, especially if the boat is metal. But there is also great danger to anyone holding a fishing rod or firearm, or anyone taking shelter beneath high trees. A lightning bolt can be two miles long, and travel at speeds of 400,000 miles per hour, with 100 million volts of electricity and temperatures of 30,000 degrees. I read that somewhere... I didn't come up with it through any scientific investigation on my own.

A half dozen times in my life outdoors I have been within 100 yards of powerful lightning bolts, and when I was a teenager I was flattened by a lightning strike beneath a river bluff as I was heading for its protective shelter. Authorities say that too many people wait for the main burst of the storm before taking shelter from lightning. Casualties seem to be greater during the weaker storms and at the beginning or end of heavier storms, suggesting that less caution is taken when it appears the danger hasn't yet arrived, or has passed.

So don't fool around when you see a storm approaching. Get to the best shelter you can find and don't "make a run for it" across an open lake or down a river. Lightning does have a good side. It converts nitrogen in the air to an oxide that falls to the earth with the rain and fixes nitrogen in the soil, without which, there would be no green growth.

I often tell the story of my admiration for Mark Twain, who was born under the passing of Haley's Comet, and then died about 80 years later when Haley's Comet passed a second time, he passed away. I would like to think he and I had much in common, except for the fact that he never was as good a duck hunter and smallmouth fisherman as I. But on the night I was born, in a little farmhouse way out in the sticks near Yukon Missouri by the light of a kerosene lantern, a raging thunderstorm was going on and lightning hit the farmhouse just when I came into the world, killing a couple of chickens in the other room! So, with my figuring that my life parallels Mark Twain's as it does, I fear that I will leave this world riding a bolt of lightning. When I see a dark cloud, I marvel that one has not already nailed me, and wonder if that brewing storm may be the one with my name on it. Mark Twain didn't have to worry like that because back then; no one had the slightest idea when Haley's comet was coming back!!

If you aren't a subscriber to my magazine, the Lightnin' Ridge Outdoor Journal, you are missing some great reading. Call me at 417 777 5227 and I will sign you up. To see it and all of my books, (ten in all) visit my website if you haven't already... www.larrydablemont.com. Write to me at Box 22, Bolivar, Mo 65613 or email me at lightninridge47@gmail.com



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

so I secured the boat in a protected spot and we carried our gear up to the cave.

One of the men wanted to keep floating, thinking the storm might miss us, and confident that if it didn't, we could be at least a mile or so downstream before it

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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

An odd river creature

by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

I volunteered to fry fish for those who come to a class reunion at Houston, Mo in mid-September, so this past week my daughter and I took the old johnboat down to the river not far from Lightnin' Ridge and set a short trotline. We baited about 20 hooks with green sunfish Christy caught from my pond. We only caught a couple of catfish, but we hooked a huge soft-shell turtle that we initially thought was dead. He was likely 10 or 12 pounds, with a carapace (shell) about 18 to 20 inches in length.

When you set trotlines in just about any Ozark river, soft-shell turtles and hard-shell turtles are a problem. They are good about taking your live bait off a hook without getting hooked themselves. I don't know how many times you catch them though because they get hooked by the leg or foot as they swim away. The one we caught the other night was hooked by the loose skin on his neck. The carapace on a soft-shell turtle isn't really soft, it is pliable and leathery, different than the shell of any other water turtles. Therefore it is a turtle which is easier to clean than the big hard-shell snappers.

My grandfather, a riverman who didn't often pass up anything good to eat no matter what it looked like or where he found it, could clean either type of turtle and he ate both, but the soft-

shell was easier to clean and better tasting. He set lots and lots of trotlines and caught thousands of catfish up to 70 pounds, and sold and gave away lots of catfish meat in his life. But he never gave away turtle meat.

I never cleaned one, but watched and helped Grandpa and my dad do it. When I told my daughter, who is a fine naturalist and a science and high school biology teacher, how it was done, she decided to continue the tradition of her grandfathers and she cleaned it and kept the meat. It is said that there is seven types of meat on one of them, and while a soft-shell turtle has a variety of meat on it, I don't know if I'd say there are that many. There is white meat and dark meat both. Christy is making several meals of it, and is very impressed about how good it is on the table. Many of her friends are repulsed by that, none of them inclined to look at the repulsiveness of a barnyard chicken or pigpen hog, which provides most of them a great meal quite often.

I was inclined to be that way as a 6- or 7-year-old boy helping Dad clean a turtle, or a duck or a squirrel, but I remember well my Dad telling me, "Son, there is nothing God created that is dirty inside. Most everything that is cleaned to eat has blood and entrails, and it is only objectionable if you don't understand the natural way of life."

Christy said that the turtle was about the most difficult thing she ever had to clean, but the meat is exceptionally good.

Soft shell turtles have a pointed snout and a reptilian eye that looks kind of evil. It is said one can live 50 years or so, but who knows for sure. It is also said they sleep at night and feed during the day. I KNOW that's a bunch of baloney because we have caught many at night on night-crawlers via rod and reel. Their long necks and powerful jaws and long claws make them a problem if you don't handle them with caution. If anyone were going to get bit by a turtle, it would have been me as a kid on the river. I did get bit by a couple of hard-shell snappers, but never a soft-shell. I never saw a soft-shell over 20 pounds either, if I can estimate weight accurately. But I could be wrong about that. Quite often I estimate a three-pound bass to be a five-pounder! The soft shell turtles I

knew best laid a whole bunch of fairly hard, tough, round white eggs in the sand and lots of them got dug up and ate by things like raccoons and mink. The ones that hatched made great pets in a big fishbowl until my mom found them. I think it is likely that you won't read much about softshell turtles, as rivermen like me that set trotlines are a vanishing breed, and suburban outdoor writers of today don't fiddle around much on rivers at night in the summer. But if you want to read about how to set trotlines and experiences I have had with trotlines over the years, you should get ahold of my 300 page book, recently published, entitled, "Recollection of an Old-Fashioned Angler". You can see it, and order it, on my website, www.larrydablemont.com.



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Chad Gray, Conservation Agent - Osage County
Missouri Department of Conservation

Wildlife and human conflicts are as old as time. Every year I receive many calls regarding problematic wildlife. Most of the time, raccoons and opossums are the culprits. Wildlife and human interaction increases as humans develop more habitat. Issues also arise from pet food, dilapidated buildings, and disease. The wildlife code of Missouri allows landowners to remove wildlife that are damaging property with exception to some animals. The wildlife code of Missouri states in CSR 10-4.130,

“(1) Subject to federal regulations governing the protection of property from migratory birds (including raptors), any wildlife except white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, turkeys, black bears, mountain lions, and any endangered species which beyond reasonable doubt is damaging property may

After Harvest Procedure Reminder

Chad Gray
Conservation Agent - Osage County
Missouri Department of Conservation

Congratulations! You have harvested your deer...now what to do with it. Regulation requires a deer permit to be notched immediately after harvesting your deer. If you are using traditional paper permits printed at home tear or cut a small notch on the day and month of harvest. If using the new MOHunt application on your cell phone you will tap the permit you wish to notch. In the lower center portion of your screen, you will see the word “notch” in a green in color bubble. Tap notch. Then you have successfully notched your permit.

The final action that a hunter needs to take is tele-checking your animal. This is a very crucial part to the harvesting process. This action allows us to determine how many deer

are being harvested and gives us crucial data to manage the deer herd of Missouri. We cannot do it without you, the hunter. Tele-checking your animal must take place by 10 pm on the day of harvest. If using traditional permits, you may utilize the phone number on your permit or go online to www.mdc.mo.gov and search how to tele-check your animal. If using the new MOHunt application, you can immediately tele-check your animal if you choose to do so. After notching, you will notice the word tele-check in the same location that notch was previously. Click on tele-check. The screen will prompt you through the tele-check process. You will receive a confirmation number at the end of the tele-check process. You have now completed the harvest reporting process and no other reporting is required. I wish a safe and enjoyable deer season for all this year! Good Luck!

be captured or killed by the owner of the property being damaged, or by his/her representative, at any time and without permit, but only by shooting or trapping except by written authorization of an agent of the department but, for avian control, only by written authorization of the director or his/her designee. Wildlife may be so controlled only on the owner’s property to prevent further damage.”

As mentioned above, there are a few animals that have some exceptions. Raccoons are the most common problematic animal in Osage county. Unfortunately, I am receiving an increasing number of calls. Try this remedy, if you are noticing that you have a raccoon problem. First, remove all pet food from the immediate area. Pick up or close any trash cans or lids to prevent the animals from getting into the trash can. Then, borrow a live trap from a neighbor or purchase a new one. Trap 1-3 raccoons and remove them from the property in an ethical manner.

The idea is that you will have removed the individuals that are habituated on human food. Thus, removing your raccoon problem. Wildlife can be an issue when it comes to interactions around the home. Feel free to give me a call when you are seeking ideas for solutions

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