

HUNTING, FISHING & OUTDOORS GUIDE

Spring Fever

MDC reports young hunters took 3,721 turkeys over youth weekend

by Joe Jerek
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

Young hunters checked 2,550 birds during the 2023 spring youth weekend. "Favorable morning weather appears to have more than made up for some windy afternoons this year," said MDC Turkey Biologist Nick Oakley. "Youth harvest increased by more than a thousand birds compared to the 2023 youth season and was the highest harvest total since 2017. Successively better hatches over the last several years have helped the turkey pop-

ulation stabilize and hunters are starting to see the results of that in the field. Get more harvest information by county at extra.mdc.mo.gov/widgets/harvest_table/. The regular spring turkey season runs April 15 through May 5. For more information on spring turkey hunting in Missouri, visit mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/turkey.



ASPEN VANDEGRIFFE poses with her first 25 pound turkey taken in during Spring Youth Turkey Season. Aspen is 8 years-old. She is pictured with Trent Kinsey, her uncle. She is the daughter of Jeremy and Tiffany Vandegriffe from Belle.

MDC changes turkey regulations for fall hunting

BY JOE JEREK
MO. DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) announces changes to turkey hunting regulations for the fall seasons. The Missouri Conservation Commission gave final approval to the changes at its April 5 open meeting in Rolla.

The approved changes to fall turkey hunting will reduce the harvest limit from four to two birds of either sex and will now require both fall firearms turkey hunters and fall archery turkey hunters to purchase a fall turkey-hunting permit. Turkeys will no longer be included in the archery-deer permit.

According to MDC, the changes to fall turkey hunting regulations aim to reduce the fall harvest while maintaining as much

opportunity for hunters as possible. The Commission gave initial approval to the regulation changes at its December open meeting. The changes were then open for public comment from Feb. 2 through

March 2. MDC received about 40 comments with most pertaining to the removal of turkeys from archery hunting permits. The Commission previously approved MDC changes to shooting hours for the regular spring turkey season. Shooting hours are extended for private land only from a half-hour before sunrise to sunset. Shooting hours on public land will remain a half-hour before sunrise to 1 p.m. These changes are effective for the Spring 2024 turkey season. The annual youth spring turkey hunting portion will continue to have extended shooting hours from a half-hour before sunrise to sunset for both public and private land.

Learn more about turkey hunting in Missouri at mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/turkey.



SEVEN YEAR old sisters, **ARIEL AND AMANDA MOORE** pose with their turkeys they harvested during the opening day of this year's Youth Turkey Hunt, April 6. Ariel's turkey was 20.5 lbs. with a beard length of 10". Amanda's bird weighed 15 lbs. with a 1.5 in beard. They are the children of Wesley and Alex Moore of Belle.



HANK STRATMAN, left, photo above left, took **JASETON RODGERS**, 11, hunting during the Spring Youth Turkey Season over the weekend. Jaseton harvested this 15.5 lb. jake with a 3.3 inch beard. He is the son of Adam Rodgers and Jamie Struempf of Belle.

ALEX WIEBERG, (above)12, of Meta killed this 18.5 lb. jake during youth hunting season on April 6 while hunting with his grandfather, Bobby Wilson in western Maries County. Alex is the son of Crystal and Tim Wieberg.

KWINTON GREEN, (left) of Belle took 3rd place in the Owensville area youth turkey hunt with his first double beard gobbler.

"I only make movies to finance my fishing."
—Lee Marvin, American actor

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DRIFTWOOD OUTDOORS

Catch spring slabs when crappie come shallow

Crappie fishing is a signal spring is upon. When “slabs”, as big crappie are called, are found close to shore, you should also expect turkeys to be gobbling and morel mushrooms to be popping. I’ve often said, if I were in charge, we’d have 10 Octobers and two Aprils. In my book, were entering the second best outdoors month of the year.

Crappie are a common panfish. They’re fun to catch and great to eat. Using minnows under slip-bobbers is a common tactic for catching crappies, but jigs often work just as well. This time of year, you’ll catch crappie shallow. I’m talking in less than 10-feet of water. You’ll want to find solid bottoms around brush or near drop-offs on ledges. The crappie bite might be strong, but you



by **BRANDON BUTLER**

still must know where they’re at. If you don’t have a boat, there are many options for fishing from shore.

As water temperatures continue to rise, crappie are drawn to the warmer shallow water along the shore and in the back of bays. Standing timber in shallow water should be one of your key targets. Fallen trees, brush piles and man-made structures, like docks or water intakes, are also prime locations to find shallow water crappie.

I’ve been fishing the same lake for a few weeks waiting on the crappie to move shallow. Just the other night, they finally showed up where I’ve been waiting for them. When I pitched my bait to the end of a fallen tree, a beautiful 11-inch crappie slammed my minnow. I couldn’t believe how aggressive the bite was. I dropped the fish in my basket and put on

another minnow. A minute later, I was dropping in another keeper.

Personally, I’m a bobber man. Grandpa used to get all fancy with his slip bobbers. He’d use these long, tall pencil bobbers. I believe he thought of himself as some sort of panfish master, making his own jigs and all, but I don’t think one needs to make it so complicated. Just stick with a nice, simple slip bobber.

My preferred bait for targeting crappie is minnows. I usually fish them between two and four feet deep. Many crappie anglers swear by jigs. For me, there’s just something about watching a bobber dance. So, whether you like casting or you like pitching minnows under bobbers, both methods work extremely well when the bite is on.

To find big crappies, even in the spring, you’re going to have to do some exploring. A tip I tend to follow when targeting a big body of water is to break the lake down into smaller lakes. There are crappie all over on big reservoirs, so what you want to do is pick a cove or a finger and dissect it. Learn it. Know it. You’ll be way better off having a thorough knowl-

edge of a particular area than a general knowledge of the whole lake.

While you’re fishing this time of year, keep in mind you may also luck into a find of morel mushrooms. Good areas to look for morels include south-facing slopes, around fallen logs and around the bases of elm trees, especially dead ones. South-facing slopes are prime spots early in the season because they warm up first.

The spring trifecta is to kill a turkey, catch a crappie, and find a morel mushroom in the same day. If you can pull this off and put all three of these gifts from nature on a dinner table at the same time, then my friend, you will be experiencing a meal money can’t buy. Forget eating like a king or queen. Royalty wouldn’t know what to do with a Midwestern meal this good.

See you down the trail...
For more *Driftwood Outdoors*, check out the podcast on www.driftwoodoutdoors.com or anywhere podcasts are streamed.

Mushroom hunting tips available April 11 in person or on line

BY FRANCIS SKALICKY
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

ASH GROVE, Mo. – Morels and some other types of mushrooms that are found in the outdoors can be a tasty addition to the dinner table. However, there are also mushrooms that should be avoided.

People can get information on how to tell edible mushrooms from mushrooms you should steer clear of at the Missouri

Department of Conservation (MDC) program “Learning to Hunt: Mushrooms.” This program will be 6-7:30 p.m. on April 11 at MDC’s Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center and will have virtual and in-person options for attendance. MDC’s Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center is located at 4897 Greene County Farm Road 61.

People can register for the virtual attendance option at:

<https://mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/197170>

People can register for the in-person attendance option at:

<https://mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/197168>

At the April 11 program, MDC Outdoor Education Center Specialist Ali Cannefax will provide tips on how to find and identify edible mushrooms. Morel mushrooms are a popular spring mushroom and will be

included among the mushrooms Cannefax will discuss.

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

People can stay informed about upcoming programs at MDC’s Andy Dalton

Range and Outdoor Education Center and other nearby MDC facilities by signing up for text alerts and e-mail bulletins. People who have questions about upcoming events or how to sign up for text alerts from the Dalton Range can call 417-742-4361.

Staff at MDC facilities across the state are holding in-person and virtual programs. A listing of these programs can be found at mdc.mo.gov/events.



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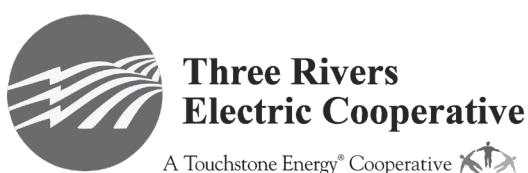
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OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

An enticing skirt, a deadly blade

It was two o'clock in the afternoon before we got to the lake, and it was up a little but not much. The water was just a little murky, but there was still a few feet or so of visibility in it. That's about perfect for a big spinner-bait. If you fish small spinners and light line, clear water is fine, but if you are after a brawling, broad-sided bass, and the spinner blade is about the size of a spoon you use to serve mashed potatoes with, a little bit of murkiness in the water is fine.



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

I pulled a yellow and white skirt with two large gold willow-leaf spinners out of my tackle box, and I put a trailer hook on the main hook. I added a strip of white pork rind on the main hook below the trailer, so the trailer hook wouldn't come off, and it made the whole thing look even more delectable. When you get through with that you have about three-quarters of an ounce of lure to cast. With that I was using an Ambassador 4500 casting reel and 14-pound line, on a medium-heavy graphite rod. Of course, such a rig isn't meant for enjoying the resistance of small fish. You are hoping to attract a largemouth of lunker proportions, and you are looking for him in brushy water, back up in a cove which is full of timber, or maybe in that cove halfway out to the main lake.

And of course, I caught five bass in the first hour from 12- to 15- inches long. That is better than nothing, but I am one of those lunker-busters. I want a hog... a slab-sided frog eater! Smaller bass would have been great fun on a spinning outfit with eight-pound line but in the brush we were fishing, that kind of gear is too light. They were out away from the bank in six or eight feet of water, and to get to

them, I was hanging up on occasion, then working to get that lure loose.

It happens that way when you fish a spinner-bait the size of a bird's nest in that kind of water. You don't just cast it and retrieve it. You vibrate that blade, you lift it and you drop it and you let it fall and flutter into water where there are logs and limbs. You try to tantalize a bass, get him to rise up from the brushpile hideout where he lurks and come after that spinner bait. You use your rod tip, you feel your lure through places where you can't actually see what is there. I don't know what a bass thinks that spinner-bait is, but you make him like the idea of eating it, by causing the blade to throb and the skirt to undulate. You make it look alive, like something with a fishy taste to it.

There are all kinds of spinner-baits today, and blades of a variety of colors and shapes. Apparently my gold willow leaf variety was what they wanted that day last week. I had just retrieved the lure from an underwater limb, and made another cast ahead of me, when between two upright trees, I felt it hit another limb. I lifted it quickly and felt it stop and give just a little. Then in a split second I saw it move, away and down. I set the hook hard and the bass, only eight or ten feet from the boat, didn't give an inch. A hog! Finally I had attracted a bass worthy of the gear I was using. He just stripped a foot or so of line against my drag, then came back below me, arcing the rod like a catfish on a cane pole. It was fun... at times like that I remember why I like to fish for bass.

No, it isn't quite along the lines of dueling a four-pound smallmouth in a current below a river shoal, but a big largemouth bass with a mouth that will easily hold a softball, and a belly wide and heavy with eggs, will make you forget there is any work left undone at home. I fought him, and I won. Many times I have hooked bass of that size and they have won the struggle, but last week it was my turn. I hefted him, actually a 'her' and my partner took a

couple of pictures. The bass was a little better than 21 inches long, and you can guess it's weight by going to my website (www.larrydablemontoutdoors.blogspot.com) and looking at the photo.

The lake was a place of solitude that day in midweek. There wasn't a boat to be seen, not an unnatural sound to be heard. I don't fish lakes which are heavy on development, and I don't fish on weekends because there are too many boats on the water, often because of the tournament crowds. I like being out there alone when I can be, where you can't see

anything but water and woods around you. And with those conditions, every now and then...

Read more of my outdoor news and columns on larrydablemontoutdoors. Email me at lightninridge47@gmail.com. Our river trip on the Big Piney will be April 20 and the Truman Lake pontoon trip will be April 27. Call and talk to my secretary, Ms. Wiggins, if you want to go along, or get more information. The office phone is 417-777-5227.

Missouri angler catches world record-sized bighead carp

JILL PRITCHARD
MO. DEPT. OF CONSERVATION

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.—The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) confirms George Chance of Festus is the latest state record holder after catching a massive 97-pound bighead carp from the Mississippi River. Chance was bank fishing for catfish with a bottom-bouncing crankbait when he hooked into the fish March 19. The previous pole-and-line state record was an 80-pound fish caught from the Lake of the Ozarks in 2004.

"You kind of know what a fish is once you hook into it based on how it fights," Chance said. "It was moving pretty slow and I originally thought it could be a flathead."

Chance was fighting with the fish for around 20 minutes before

he finally got it onto the shore.

"The more it fought, I saw it's tail and knew it was some type of carp," he recalled. "I was able to hook him with a hay hook in order to get him out of the water. It looked to be 50 or 60 pounds at least."

Chance took the monster fish to a nearby recycling center to use their scale, which prompted him to call his local conservation agent.

"They told me it was a state record, and I said, 'You've got to be kidding me!'", he laughed. "Then later they said 'It's not just a state record, it's a world record!' and I said 'You've got to be kidding me!' I had no idea this would happen would I woke up that morning."

Chance's catch is the third state record fish recorded for 2024. The fish also beats the current bighead carp pole-and-line world record of

90-pounds.

"I chopped up the fish and put it in my garden," Chance said. "I'm going to eat it in the form of tomatoes and cucumbers."

Chance also noted the carp was full of eggs and likely would have spawned this spring. Bighead carp are an invasive fish from Asia. MDC encourages people to harvest carp to help remove them from Missouri waters.

Missouri state record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods.

Alternative methods include trotline, throwline, limb line, bank line, jug line, gig, bow, crossbow, underwater spearfishing, snagging, snaring, grabbing, or atlatl. For more information on state record fish, visit <http://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZCp>.



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GEORGE CHANCE of Festus was bank fishing from the Mississippi River March 19 when he reeled in a monster 97-pound bighead carp. The fish not only beats the previous state record of 80 pounds, but beats the current pole-and-line world record weight of 90-pounds.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE CHANCE

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