



Arkansas Outdoors for April 30, 2008

Keith Stephens (501) 223-6342, e-mail: kastephens@agfc.state.ar.us

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Northern snakehead makes Arkansas arrival

BRINKLEY – Arkansas Game and Fish Commission fisheries biologists confirmed a breeding population of northern snakehead, an invasive species from Asia, in Lee County on April 28.

The population was discovered when a farmer found an unusual fish wiggling along a gravel farm road near a ditch and contacted the AGFC regional office in Brinkley. AGFC Fisheries Management Biologist Lee Holt identified the fish as the invasive species that recently made national headlines. Since the confirmation, fisheries biologists have worked to establish how far the population has spread and to control the population.



The species was banned in Arkansas in 2002 and placed under a federal importation ban the same year because of its potential to cause problems with native fish. However, biologists believe the species may have been brought to Arkansas before these regulations were passed.



“The northern snakehead is used as a food species in Asia, and we know some were brought to fish farms in the U.S. before 2002,” said AGFC Assistant Chief of Fisheries Mark Oliver. “Fish farmers in Arkansas realized the potential danger the species posed and tried to eradicate them even before bans were imposed.”

AGFC biologists are killing every snakehead they find in their research, but they're not optimistic that they can eradicate the population.

“We can't be sure exactly where this population came from and we just don't know how far they've spread,” added Oliver. “Their abilities to live in extremely poor water conditions and reproduce quickly make them a difficult target to completely eliminate.”

John Odenkirk with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has worked with the species since its discovery in the Potomac River in 2004. He said the fish are harmless to people, contrary to their vicious

reputation.

"The fish's name, appearance and ability to survive out of the water for short periods make it easy to sensationalize. They're nothing like the horror stories I've heard and seen."

Oliver agreed, "They're a top-shelf predator in our fisheries, but they aren't some kind of Frankenfish that will attack people or chase them on land. (AGFC Fisheries biologists) handled quite a few of them in the last few days, and no one has had any sort of injury or bite."

The largest fear biologists have concerning the species is its impact on native fish such as largemouth bass, bream and crappie. Snakeheads are very aggressive predators, attacking food species as well as fish their own size.

"Right now it's just too early to tell what sort of impact snakeheads may have on a fishery," said Odenkirk. "But invasive species rarely provide many benefits to systems where they are introduced. By the time the damage is seen, it can be too late to control."

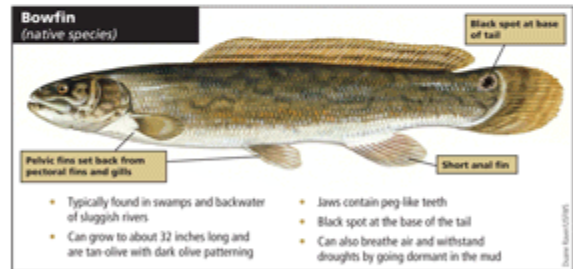
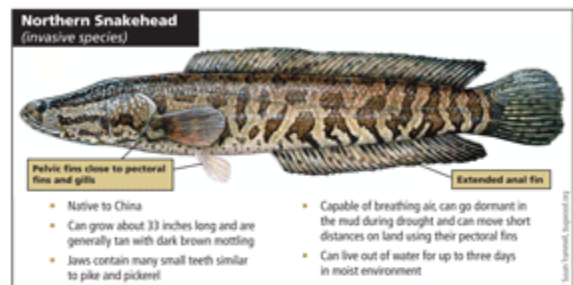
Oliver said that the sooner the AGFC knows about a population of invasive species, the better the chances for controlling their spread.

If you catch a snakehead or find one in your area, please immediately contact the AGFC Regional Office in Brinkley, (877) 734-4581, or the Fisheries Division in the Little Rock Office, (501) 223-6428.

Commission regulations prohibit the import, transport or possession of snakeheads in Arkansas, however snakeheads caught may be immediately turned in to the AGFC.

Sorting Out Snakeheads

COMPARING THE NORTHERN SNAKEHEAD TO THE NATIVE BOWFIN



Keeping the Natural State natural.

If you catch a snakehead or find one in your area, please keep the fish and contact the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Regional Office in Brinkley, (877) 734-4581, or the Fisheries Division in the Little Rock Office, (501) 223-6428.

Deer hunters, wildlife managers agree on enforcement



LITTLE ROCK – Listen in on a conversation about deer hunting in Arkansas, especially what is needed to improve it, and chances are about 9 in 10 that someone will comment, "They need more game wardens out there."

Wildlife officers, "game wardens" to much of the public keep busy in each one of Arkansas's 75 counties on deer matters, and it's year-round, not just during hunting seasons.

Enforcement is one consistency discussed at the citizens advisory group meetings that were a key part of the new Strategic White-tailed Deer Management Plan of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission that is now in effect.

The plan was developed by AGFC personnel with the several dozen private citizens who participated in idea and planning sessions. It was approved by AGFC's commissioners and plan supplants a 1999 deer management plan for Arkansas.

The plan says the enforcement goal is to "enhance enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with AGFC regulations."

It is much more involved than those few words, of course, and a key goal is to have the wildlife officers, the hunters and various organizations develop working relationships to cut down poaching and other illegal and clandestine activities.

The deer plan lists four strategies for enforcement.

One is to "maximize enforcement efforts to focus on the most severe violations by scheduling and prioritizing enforcement patrols during peak sportsman activity periods."

A second is to "promote communication between wildlife officers, local sportsmen and hunting clubs and organizations by using community-oriented police techniques and by presenting credible witness programs at deer management workshops."

The third is to "ensure that wildlife officers have the training and equipment to address concerns from citizens by maintaining maximum authorized enforcement staffing."

And the fourth is to "Maintain penalties that serve as deterrents to violations of deer regulations." These penalties can include fines, confiscation of equipment including vehicles and suspension or revoking of hunting licenses.

The enforcement goal is one of the six elements of the new plan. The other categories of the plan are Resource, Sociological,

Habitat, Education and Communication. The complete deer management plan can be found online at: http://www.agfc.com/hunting/deer/deerplan_revision.aspx.

More enforcement across Arkansas was one of the priorities voiced by Arkansas sportsmen a dozen years ago before the vote that resulted in Amendment 75 to the Arkansas Constitution, the Conservation Sales Tax. After the tax went into effect, more wildlife officers were added to the AGFC staff so every county has at least two stationed within it. Many counties have three officers.

Season for seeking elk permits is approaching

LITTLE ROCK – You've heard the old saying that if something's too good to be true, then it probably is. That's not the case with elk hunting in Arkansas. A free chance to hunt Arkansas' largest game animal is very real and it's coming up soon.

The month of May is application time for a chance to win one of the 26 permits to hunt elk in the Buffalo River country of Arkansas. The hunt dates this year are Sept. 22-26 and Dec. 8-12.

The applications are available on the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's website, www.agfc.com, at license dealers, AGFC offices and other outlets across the state. Applying doesn't cost anything, nor does winning one of the 24 available permits. Two other permits are issued through fund-raising activities of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, with 85 percent of the money received returned to Arkansas for elk habitat work.

The drawing for the public land permits will be Saturday, June 28, on the Newton County Courthouse Square in Jasper, near the Buffalo River and center of Arkansas's elk country. Persons applying for permits don't have to be present, but many attend each year, joining in the festivities and activities.

There is an added attraction again this year. One permit will be issued to someone who makes application at the Elk Festival in Jasper. Sign up, stick around and you may win a permit. For this one, you have to be present. And like the other public land elk permits to be drawn, you have to be an Arkansas resident.



Applications for Arkansas' 2008 elk hunt permits can be submitted any time during the month of May. Applications will not be accepted if postmarked past June 2.

The 2008 elk hunting will be in Elk Zones 1, 2, 3 and 4 along the Buffalo River in northern Arkansas. These zones are mostly public lands of the Buffalo National River and the Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area.

The dates for the Zone A private land hunt is Sept. 22-26 and Dec. 8-12 for lands in Boone, Carroll and Newton counties. The Zone B hunt will be held Dec. 8-12 only for lands in Madison and Newton counties. In these areas some landowners view elk as nuisances. These permits are issued in a separate process. They cost \$35, and hunters must have signed permission from a landowner in Zone A or Zone B in order to apply. The private land hunts will end at sundown when the quotas are reached. The application period for this permit must be postmarked by July 15 and are not available for online application.

For the free public land permits, duplicate applications will be thrown out. Persons who have accumulated 12 or more violation points in the AGFC point system for hunting and fishing violations are not eligible.

Two of the permits are earmarked for youths – boys or girls under 16 years of age.

Improving elk habitat in the Buffalo River country is another benefit of the permit process. Many Arkansans who apply for the permits send along voluntary donations to the elk program, and this money is used for food plots, prescribed burning and other work in the elk area. A donation to the AGFC for the elk program is not a requirement for permit application, nor does a donation improve chances of being drawn for a permit.

Public meetings set to hear angler comments on regulation changes

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will be holding 12 public meetings around the state to give anglers the opportunity to comment on the proposed fishing regulation changes for 2009.

The input meetings are part of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's regulations-setting process. All the public meetings will start at 7 p.m. Dates, locations and phone numbers are:

May 1

McMullan Lecture Hall
ASU Mountain Home Campus
1600 S. College
Mountain Home, AR 72653
(877) 425-7577

Monticello Regional Office
771 Jordan
Monticello, AR 71655
(877) 367-3559

Camp Robinson SUA Club House
331 Clinton Road
Conway, AR 72032
(877) 470-3309

May 6

Camden Regional Office
500 Ben Lane
Camden, AR 71711
(877) 836-4612

Russellville Regional Office
1266 Lock and Dam Road
Russellville, AR 72801
(877) 967-7577

May 8

Brinkley Regional Office
1201 Hwy 49 North
Brinkley, AR 72021
(877) 734-4581

Greenwood City Hall
City Office Building (Intersection of Center and Bell Streets)
Greenwood, AR 72936
(877) 967-7577

May 13

Hope Regional Office
P.O. Box 6740
7004 Hwy 67 East
Perry town, AR 71801
(877) 777-5580

May 15

Jonesboro Regional Office
2920 McClellan Drive
Jonesboro, AR 72401
(877) 972-5438

May 20

Beaver Lake Regional Office
455 Dam Site Road
Eureka Springs, AR 72631
(877) 631-6005

May 22

Andrew Hulseley State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center
350 Fish Hatchery Road



Hot Springs, AR 71913
(877) 525-8606

May 29

AGFC Main Office
C. Maurice Lewis Jr. Natural Resources Complex
#2 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205
(800) 364-GAME

Fishermen may bring their ideas to the meetings or they can send written comments to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, c/o 2009 Fishing Regulations, #2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205. Comments can also be sent by email to: information@agfc.state.ar.us. "The written comments should get to us by May 26," Armstrong said.

Boating education class schedule

Click here for boating education information: <http://www.agfc.com/education-class/boating-education.aspx>

Hunter education class schedule

Click here for hunter education information: <http://www.agfc.com/education-class/hunter-education.aspx>

What's open for hunting

Current and approaching seasons in Arkansas:

Deer:

Archery: All zones: Oct. 1, 2008 to Feb. 28, 2009.

Modern Gun: Zones 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11: Nov. 8-30.

Zone 4: Nov. 8-9.

Zone 5: Nov. 8-9 and Nov. 15-16.

Zone 4A, 5A, 13, 14 and 15: Nov. 8-Dec. 7.

Zones 4B and 5B: Nov. 8-16.

Zones 9 and 12: Nov. 8-Dec. 14.

Zone 16, 16A and 17: Nov. 8-Dec. 25.

Muzzleloader: Zones 1, 2, 3, 4A, 5A, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15: Oct. 18-26 and Dec. 13-15.

Zones 9, 12, 16, 16A and 17: Oct. 18-26 and Dec. 29-31.

Zones 4, 4B, 5 and 5B: Closed.

The statewide Christmas holiday modern gun deer hunt will be Dec. 26 to 28 with the special youth modern gun deer hunt in all zones (excludes certain WMAs where a modern gun or muzzleloader permit is required to hunt) scheduled for Nov. 1 to 2.

Spotted Skunk, Weasel Hunting:

Closed.

Snow Goose Conservation Order:

Feb. 4-April 27

Spring Turkey:

Zones 1, 2, 3, 4B, 5, 5B, 6, 7, 7A, 8, 9, and 10 - April 12-May 2

Fall Turkey:

Archery: All Zones: Oct. 1, 2008-Feb. 28, 2009.

Firearms: Zones 3, 5B, 6, and 17: Oct. 11-17.

Zones 1, 1A, 2, 4, 4A, 4B, 5, 5A, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 9A and 10: Closed.

Bear:

Archery: Zone 1: Oct. 1-Nov. 30

Zone 2: Sept. 15-Nov. 30

Zones 3, 4, 5, 5A, 6 and 7: Closed

Muzzleloader: Zones 1 and 2: Oct 18-26
Zones 3, 4, 5, 5A, 6 and 7: Closed

Modern Gun: Zones 1 and 2: Nov 3-30
Zone 5: Dec 6-14 Zone 5A: Nov 29-Dec 14
Zones 3, 4, 6 and 7: closed

Special Youth Modern Gun Bear Hunt - Zones 1 and 2 (does not include WMAs requiring a deer permit to harvest a bear):
Nov. 1-2
Zones 3, 4, 5, 5A, 6 and 7: Closed

Furbearers (2008 Season):
Raccoon night hunting July 1-Aug. 31.
Badger, spotted skunk and weasel hunting is closed.

Furbearers (2009 Season):
Trapping (other than coyote, beaver, muskrat, nutria): sunrise, Nov. 15-sunset, Feb. 22.
Coyote trapping: sunrise, Aug. 1-sunset, March 31.
Beaver, muskrat, nutria trapping: sunrise, Nov. 15-sunset, March 31.
Gray fox, mink, opossum, red fox, striped skunk hunting: sunrise, Sept. 1-sunset, Feb 28.
Raccoon day or night hunting: sunrise, Sept 1-sunset, March 31.
Raccoon night hunting: sunset, July 1-sunrise, Aug. 31.
Bobcat hunting: sunrise, Oct. 1-sunset, Feb. 28 and from the first day of spring turkey season through June 14.
Coyote hunting: sunrise, July 1-sunset, Feb. 28 and from the first day of spring turkey season through June 14.
River otter hunting: sunrise, Nov. 15-sunset, Feb. 28.
Muskrat, nutria, beaver hunting: sunrise, Sept. 1-sunset, March 31.
Badger, spotted skunk and weasel hunting: Closed.

Elk:
Zones 1, 2, 3, 4 and A: Sept. 22-26.
Zones 1, 2, 3, 4, A and B: Dec. 8-12.

Quail
Statewide: Nov. 1-Feb. 8.

Rabbit
Statewide: Sept. 1-Feb. 28.

Squirrel
Statewide: Sept. 6-Feb. 28 and May 16-June 14.

Crow
Statewide: Sept. 6-Feb. 23.

Projected opening dates for the 2009-2010 deer hunting season.

Archery:
Oct. 1, 2009

Muzzleloader:
Oct. 17, 2009

Modern Gun:
Nov. 14, 2009

Coming up in the outdoors

April 29-30 – Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Youth Expo at Lake Sylvia in Perry County, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information or to sign up a fifth-grade class, contact Eric DeVries at (501) 223-6402 or efdevries@agfc.state.ar.us or Mendy Boyles at 501-821-6884.

May 2 – Scout Night at the Travelers game at Dickey-Stephens Park in Little Rock. AGFC fish tank and Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs truck will be on display at the game. The first 500 kids will get a free keychain light. For more information, contact the Traveler's office at (501) 664-1555 or email at travs@travs.com.

May 3 - Johnson County Razorduck Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, sponsor meeting, Johnson County Fairgrounds in Clarksville. For more information call Cheryl Feikema at (479) 754-3924 or email at cherdene@suddenlink.net.

May 4 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 10 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Topwater Tactics for Bass."

May 8-9 - Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Youth Expo at the Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center in Fort Smith, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information or to sign up a class, contact Kelly Mulvihill at (479) 452-3993 or kjmulvihill@agfc.state.ar.us.

May 10 - Arkansas Catfishing Association Tournament at the Arkansas River in North Little Rock at the Alltel Arena access. For ACA members: rod and reel, catch and release, and alive and well. For an ACA application form, constitution and bylaws, local conditions and information along with the rules and regulations, contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net, or Ben Purtle of McRae at (501) 268-7263 or by email at benpurtle@yahoo.com.

May 10 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Black Bears of Arkansas."

May 13 – North Little Rock Chapter of Ducks Unlimited meeting, Hooter's in North Little Rock. For more information call Pat Mahan at (501) 743-6154 or email at pmahan000@centurytel.net.

May 17 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Fish Management."

May 22 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, 9 a.m.

May 24 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Boating Safety."

May 31 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 8:30 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Fishing Free for All."

June 7 – Marion Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, Motorcycle Poker Run, Barton Ag Center. For more information call David Jett at (901) 848-9720 or email at jfastlog@comcast.net.

June 7 - Arkansas Catfishing Association Tournament at Lake Norfolk at the Gamaliel Access. For ACA members: rod and reel, catch and release, and alive and well. Launching behind the Highway 101 Grocery and Bait and sponsored in part by the Lake Norfolk Chamber of Commerce. For an ACA application form, constitution and bylaws, local conditions and information along with the rules and regulations, contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net, or Ben Purtle of McRae at (501) 268-7263 or by email at benpurtle@yahoo.com.

June 7 - The Independence County Chapter of Ducks Unlimited is hosting their Waterfowl Hunter Party at the BUBBA Hut in Batesville. For more information please contact: Shannon Huff at (870) 612-3757 or by email at black_mallard@hotmail.com.

June 10 – Deadline for application for AGFC conservation scholarships. Considering a career in conservation? Many fields of study can lead to a career in conservation. Education in law enforcement, fisheries management, wildlife management, public relations, environmental education and interpretation and many other fields is always a benefit to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The Conservation Scholarship Program uses funds from the sale of conservation license plates to let students reach their potential and create tomorrow's conservation professionals. Minimum Requirements: Applicants must be Arkansas high school seniors or Arkansas college undergraduates pursuing a career in the field of natural resources conservation with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (4.0 scale) the first year. A 3.0 GPA will be required thereafter, beginning with 2009 fall semester renewals. Applicants must not have received a full scholarship or grant from another source. Only resident students paying in-state tuition may apply. Selections are based purely on merit, without discrimination to race, sex, religion, age, color or national origin. Minorities are strongly encouraged to apply. Completed applications must be postmarked by June 10, 2008, for the fall semester and by February 15, 2008, for the second semester. Successful applicants will be notified by July 15, 2008. Application forms and instructions may be downloaded at <http://www.agfc.com/education-class/programs/conservation-scholarship-program.aspx>.

June 19 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center in Fort Smith beginning at 10 a.m.

June 21 - The Paragould Chapter of Ducks Unlimited is hosting their Waterfowl Hunter Party at the National Guard Armory. For more information please contact: Bryan Murray at (870) 335-6049 or by email at bejmurray@grnco.net.

July 26 - Arkansas Catfishing Association (ACA) Tournament at Bull Shoals (night) for ACA members: Rod and Reel, Catch and Release, and Alive And Well. For an ACA application form, constitution and bylaws, local conditions and information along with the rules and regulations, contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net, or Ben Purtle of McRae at (501) 268-7263 or by email at benpurtle@yahoo.com.

June 28 - The Benton County Chapter of Ducks Unlimited is hosting their 11th annual David Bain Memorial Ducks Unlimited Golf Tournament, 1 p.m. shotgun start at the Kingswood Golf Course in Bella Vista. For more information please contact: Blayne Estes at (479) 721-3394 or by email at baestes@cox.net or Jay Johnston at (479) 531-7632 or by email at jkjohnston42@sbcglobal.net.

Aug. 23-24 - Arkansas Catfishing Association ACA Charity tournament at Lake Millwood and Lake Earling in southwest Arkansas. For an ACA application form, constitution and bylaws, local conditions and information along with the rules and regulations, contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net.

Sept. 20 - Delta Wings Chapter of Delta Waterfowl will hold it's third annual banquet on at Southland Park Gaming and Racing in West Memphis. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Contact Gary Harlow at gjharlow@aol.com for more information.

Sept. 20 - Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Youth Expo at the Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center in Jonesboro, For more information or to sign up a class call Shaun Merrell at 870-933-6787 or email at scmerrell@agfc.state.ar.us.

For the latest in Arkansas Game and Fish Commission information go to www.agfc.com or call the Wildlife Information Hotline, (800)440-1477.

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