



## Arkansas Outdoors for May 28, 2008

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## Deer harvest up from previous year, Commission told

LITTLE ROCK – Commissioners from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission were briefed last week on the state's recent deer season harvest. Brad Miller, AGFC deer program coordinator, told the Commission the harvest was up almost 4,200 deer from the 2006-07 season.

The northwest part of the state saw the greatest harvest increase from the previous year, Miller explained. "I think that can be attributed to the Easter freeze of 2007." Zone 3 in north central Arkansas had the greatest increase in harvest with a 41 percent increase in deer taken as compared to the previous season. Deer harvest numbers also were up along the Mississippi River in extreme eastern Arkansas.

Last year's late April freezing temperatures damaged vegetation across much of Arkansas. Trees and shrubs began to produce tender leaves early because of record high temperatures, which were followed by the freeze. Miller said that the hard mast production, such as acorns, was reduced due to the Easter freeze. "Limited mast production often increases hunting success," he said.

Deer harvest numbers stayed essentially the same in the southwestern corner of the state. Harvest numbers were down in the northeast and southeast portions of the state. Zone 16A had the largest drop in harvest with a 39 percent decrease.

Miller also briefed the Commission on deer depredation issues to farmers in Chicot County. Deer near the Mississippi River were displaced by the April floods and were destroying crops in surrounding agricultural lands. "We received some complaints, primarily in fields near the Mississippi River Levee in Chicot County. We worked with the media, hunting clubs and landowners to address the problem," he said.

In other Commission business:

- Commissioners were presented with a proposal recommending a zone doe quota permit not be required to harvest a doe during the Christmas holiday hunt in deer zones 2 and 3. The proposal is a result of concerns about increasing numbers of deer observed in the area. If approved at the June commission meeting, the regulation would go into effect for the 2008 Christmas deer hunt in those zones.



- A proposal to address the growing concern with feral hogs was presented to the commission. Doyle Shook, the AGFC chief of wildlife management, said that feral hogs pose significant problems on the agency's Wildlife Management Areas. "They're causing widespread habitat damage and destruction. A recent survey of WMA managers highlighted the significant amount of effort that is being expended to attempt to control these animals," Shook explained.
- If approved, the regulation change would require a hunting license to kill hogs on WMAs and hogs could only be killed during an open hunting season or special permit hunt. The proposed regulation would also give 30 violation points to people who release hogs on a WMA.
- Approved a proclamation by Gov. Mike Beebe to start free fishing weekend at noon, June 6 to end at midnight, June 8. Licenses will not be required for fishing in Arkansas during that period.
- Approved a land exchange, with the State Land Commissioner, of an isolated 80-acre tract in Jefferson County. The tract is about six miles from Bayou Meto WMA, which is the closest public land owned by the agency. The AGFC received the land in 1949 after the owner forfeited it to the state for failure to pay taxes. The land was encumbered with a prohibition that prevents the AGFC from selling or trading the land. The AGFC has agreed to pay the back taxes on the land with the Land Commissioner then providing the AGFC with a reversion deed for the 80 acres. The new deed will then be clear of the restrictions on selling or trading the acreage.
- Approved the purchase of gravel and the cost of resurfacing the road accessing Mallard Lake and Big Lake WMA in northeast Arkansas. The project is expected to cost about \$110,000. Mississippi County has agreed to prepare the road bed and haul the gravel.

## Nature trail renamed to honor former AGFC employee

MAYFLOWER – Many years ago, Bell Slough was just the swamp across the highway from the Camp Robinson Wildlife Demonstration Area and was known as a problem for those Arkansas Game and Fish Commission employees that tried to manage it. One employee saw beauty in its murky water.

Kenny Vernon, who died in January, worked for the AGFC almost 27 years until his retirement in 2007. He had a unique vision for the area – an interpretive trail. Last week, a large crowd of friends, family and fellow employees were on hand to rename the area the Kenny Vernon Bell Slough Nature Trail.

AGFC Chief of Wildlife Management Doyle Shook said Vernon was a special person who took a lot of pride in educating people about the unique habitat on display at Bell Slough. "His motivation and determination resulted in the interpretive trail that we are standing on today," Shook said.

Bell Slough WMA is one of more than 115 WMAs in Arkansas. It is among 59 AGFC-owned WMAs across the state encompassing more than 350,000 acres. Shook said that each one of the WMAs carries the character and vision of AGFC employees. "It's the people of the Commission who make it such a great organization and make the WMAs such wonderful places to enjoy," Shook said.



Construction of the trail began in the winter of 1997 and is just over 2 miles in length. The trail features interpretive signs, two observation sites looking over open woodlands and two more looking over a waterfowl rest area. There also is a blind for photographing ducks on the waterfowl rest area.

### Wildlife Viewing

At least 35 resident bird species and as many as 75 species during the summer months have been seen at Bell Slough. Fall and winter are best for waterfowl viewing on Grassy Lake.

Summer is best for reptiles and amphibians, with numerous turtles, frogs and toads inhabiting the area. You'll also see white-tailed deer and other mammals such as beavers, muskrats and swamp rabbits.

Many blooming wildflowers can be seen from February until November.

### Description

Just over 2,000 acres make up the Bell Slough WMA. It is a mix of moist-soil wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, prairie and upland hardwood and pine forest. The wetlands are managed as a waterfowl rest area.

### Location

Faulkner County. From Interstate 40, take Exit 135 at Mayflower and turn south on Arkansas Highway 365. Go 3 miles to Grassy Lake Road, turn east and continue over the bridge to the WMA parking lot.

## Information

Bell Slough Wildlife Management Area (501) 470-1690 or (877) 470-3650.

## Young trumpeter swans venturing around Arkansas

HUNTSVILLE – The young trumpeter swans brought to Arkansas from their Iowa birthplaces haven't gone back to Iowa after all.

Most of them got together for a few days in a new Arkansas location, not far from Huntsville in Madison County and close to the War Eagle River. But they have scattered again.

Karen Rowe, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission nongame migratory bird program coordinator, said, "We need to know where these birds are and what they are doing. Reports from the public will help us in our work now and for the future with this project."

Rowe urged anyone seeing some of the young trumpeters to report it on the AGFC's website at: [http://www.agfc.com/wildlife-conservation/birds/trumpeter\\_survey.aspx](http://www.agfc.com/wildlife-conservation/birds/trumpeter_survey.aspx). Collar color and markings are desired if these can be obtained with the use of binoculars or spotting scopes. Also needed is date, time, exact location and any other details observed.

The 16 swans, now about a year old, are the focus of an experiment involving Iowa's Department of Natural Resources, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Buffalo National River. The aim is to see if migrating instincts can be restored to young trumpeters. Most of the mid-America trumpeter swan population does not migrate south in winter from homes in the upper Midwest



Eighteen swans were released in two areas, Boxley Valley and Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge, in January. Two of the young swans were killed by predators, perhaps coyotes, at Boxley not long after their release. Three others stayed at Boxley several weeks.

The other 13 were released at Holla Bend and separated in small groups but stayed in the general area for a while. Then all of the swans dropped from sight. Speculation was that their instincts had led them north towards Iowa and their origins.

But recently a citizen spotted three trumpeters in Madison County, and AGFC wildlife officer Jody Pendarvis was able to read their green neck collar markings with the aid of binoculars. These were the three Boxley Valley birds. Several days later, another report came in. There were now 13 swans at the site in Madison County, all with green collars.

Most of the Holla Bend swans had found and joined the Boxley Valley swans. Three others are being seen at Holla Bend.

Then the three Boxley Valley swans returned to Boxley, and the 10 Holla Bend swans moved somewhere else. It is not known if these 10 collared swans remain in Arkansas, or if they have moved north into Missouri or beyond.

It's another wildlife mystery – how the 10 Holla Bend trumpeters found the three Boxley birds more than a hundred miles away.

Current plans are for the Iowa wildlife agency to make another relocation of young swans to Arkansas next winter.

## 2008-09 deer permit application process begins soon

LITTLE ROCK - Permit applications will be available for zone and WMA doe quota, youth, archery, modern gun and muzzleloader deer hunts on several AGFC wildlife management areas and deer zones throughout the state.

Applications may be picked up at Arkansas Game and Fish Commission offices, license dealers around the state or by applying online at [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com) beginning June 1. The deadline for applications is July 1.



There are a few changes for the 2008-09 season:

\*Dagmar WMA is now Sheffield Nelson Dagmar WMA. Madison County WMA is now McIlroy Madison County WMA. Some application codes have changed because of these name changes.

- The number of permits for Winona WMA has increased to 200.
- A permit youth hunt has been added for Prairie Bayou WMA.
- A second hunt has been added to the Holland Bottoms WMA muzzleloader season with 100 permits available per hunt.
- The bag limits for Hope Upland WMA and Trusten Holder WMA have changed.
- The number of available Doe Quota Permits has been increased in zones 3, 6, 7 and 8.

## Free Fishing Days will be June 6-8 in Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK – Free Fishing Days of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission this year will be from noon Friday, June 6, through midnight Sunday, June 8. No sport fisherman, resident or non-resident, will be required to have a fishing license or a trout permit to fish anywhere in Arkansas during this time.

The Free Fishing Days are an annual tradition of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, with large numbers of citizens and even visitors getting chances to experience the highly popular pastime.

Free Fishing Days are part of the National Fishing Week celebration. Mike Armstrong chief of fisheries for the AGFC, said the annual event is a lot of fun for employees as well as the public. "We want to encourage Arkansas people as well as visitors who come to our state, who may not be fishermen, to give it a try. We especially encourage parents to go fishing with their kids. Young people under 16 don't need a fishing license anyway, and if their moms and dads will go along, it can make a family outing that they'll all enjoy," Armstrong explained.

How do you get into fishing? Armstrong suggested that beginners make a stop at a sporting goods outlet, a boat dock or one of the AGFC regional offices for pointers on the basics of fishing in Arkansas.

Open houses and fishing derbies for youngsters are planned at five state fish hatcheries in Arkansas Saturday, June 7 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. For more information, phone the AGFC Fisheries Division office at (501) 223-6371.

Youngsters 12 and under will be allowed to fish with the supervision of an adult. Children may catch and keep up to three catfish (or three trout at the Jim Hinkle Spring River State Fish Hatchery).

Derbies will be at:

- Andrew Hulsey State Fish Hatchery, Hot Springs, (877) 525-8606.
- Charlie Craig State Fish Hatchery, Centerton, (877) 795-2470.
- William Donham State Fish Hatchery, Corning, 877-857-3876.
- Joe Hogan State Fish Hatchery, Lonoke, (877) 676-6963.
- Jim Hinkle Spring River State Fish Hatchery, Mammoth Spring, (877) 625-7521.



## Elk application deadline is rapidly approaching

LITTLE ROCK – Time is ticking away for chances to win one of the permits to hunt elk in the BuffaloRiver country of Arkansas. The hunt dates this year are Sept. 22-26 and Dec. 8-12.

The most pressing date at present, however, is June 2. That's your last chance to apply for one of the coveted free elk hunting permits for the 2008 seasons. Mailed applications will not be accepted if postmarked after June 2. Online applications must be made before midnight June 2.

The applications are available on [www.agfc.com](http://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 available permits.

The drawing for the public land permits will be Saturday, June 28, on the Newton County Courthouse Square in Jasper, near the BuffaloRiver 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 bull 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 to win it. And like the other public land elk permits to be drawn, you have to be an Arkansas resident.

## 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, 4A, 5A, 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

### 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 8.  
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**

Spring 2008: May 10-June 8, 2008.  
Statewide: Sept. 6, 2008 - Feb. 28, 2009  
Spring 2009: May 16 - June 14, 2009 statewide

**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

**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 3** – Hunters can voice their opinions about the upcoming Arkansas waterfowl hunting regulations and seasons at one of 12 public meetings to be held around the state.

These meetings are part of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's hunting regulation setting process. They will be held to give hunters and other interested parties the opportunity to make comments and proposals on the 2008-2009 waterfowl hunting seasons. The meetings will be held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Comments may be either verbal or written. Written comments may be submitted at one of the meetings or mailed to the AGFC, attn: Hunting Regulations Proposals, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72205. They can also be emailed to [huntregs@agfc.com](mailto:huntregs@agfc.com). The deadline for comments is July 31.

Meeting sites, locations and phone numbers are:

**Little Rock** - AGFC Office  
2 Natural Resources Drive  
(800) 364-4263

**Nashville** - Carter Training Center  
200 Lake Nichols Drive  
(877) 777-5580

**Fort Smith** - Janet Huckabee  
Arkansas River Valley Nature Center  
8300 Wells Lake Road  
(877) 478-1043

**Brinkley** - AGFC Regional Office  
1201 Hwy. 49 North  
(877) 734-4581

**Jonesboro** - Forrest L. Wood  
Crowley's Ridge Nature Center  
600 East Lawson  
(877) 972-5438

**Stuttgart**- Phillips Community College  
2807 Highway 165 South  
(877) 367-3559

**Fayetteville**- U of A, Pauline Whitaker  
Animal Science Arena  
1335 West Knapp  
(877) 967-7577

**Russellville** - AGFC Regional Office  
1266 Lock and Dam Road  
(877) 967-7577

**Hot Springs** - AGFC Regional Office  
350 Fish Hatchery Road  
(877) 525-8606

**Calico Rock** - AGFC Regional Office  
Hwy. 56 North  
(877) 297-4331

**El Dorado**- South Arkansas  
Community College, West Campus  
Library Auditorium  
300 Summit  
(877) 836-4612

**Paragould** - Paragould Community Center  
3404 Linwood Drive  
(877) 972-5438

**June 6-7** - Arkansas Youth Hunter Education Challenge C. A. Vine 4-H Center in Ferndale. Competition starts at 8 a.m. on Friday and continues until 6 p.m. with dinner and the Arkansas Waterfowl Association Duck Calling Contest following. On Saturday, competition will start at 8 a.m. continue until completion. Dinner and awards banquet follows at 6 p.m. Make plans to attend the awards banquet, where over 300 trophies will be awarded plus door prizes. Scholarship winners to the International YHEC competition in Mansfield, Penn. will also be announced. For more information contact Gary Jobe at (713) 253-7914 [jobepack@hotmail.com](mailto:jobepack@hotmail.com).

**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](mailto: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](mailto:big_vato98@yahoo.com), or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto:leefields@centurytel.net).

**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](mailto: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. 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](mailto: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](mailto:big_vato98@yahoo.com), or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto:leefields@centurytel.net).

**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](mailto:baestes@cox.net) or Jay Johnston at (479) 531-7632 or by email at [jkjohnston42@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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](mailto:big_vato98@yahoo.com), or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto: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](mailto:gjharlow@aol.com) for more information.

For the latest in Arkansas Game and Fish Commission information go to [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com) or call the Wildlife Information

Hotline, (800)440-1477.

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