



Arkansas Outdoors for June 25, 2008

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Today's Topics

[Commission hears proposal for early migratory bird seasons](#)
[Turbulent tailwaters present fresh perils to anglers, boaters](#)
[SWEPCO Lake Access dedication scheduled](#)
[Arkansas farm producers snap up available wildlife enhancement acres](#)
[Safety first for Fourth of July boaters](#)
[Boating education class schedule](#)
[Hunter education class schedule](#)
[What's open for hunting](#)
[Coming up in the outdoors](#)

Commission hears proposal for early migratory bird seasons

FORT SMITH – The unofficial opening of Arkansas's fall hunting season was one of the main topics at last week's meeting of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Dove season is the opening of the fall hunting seasons for many Arkansans.

Biologists presented two early season migratory bird frameworks for consideration. Approval for the seasons will take place during the Commission's meeting in July.

Two season proposals were presented to the commission:

Mourning Dove and Eurasian Collared Dove

Saturday opening:
Sept. 6-28
Oct. 4-19
Dec. 13-Jan. 2, 2009

Sept. 1 opening:
Sept. 1-23
Oct. 4-19
Dec. 13-Jan. 2, 2009

Season length and bag limit: 60 days, 15-bird daily bag

Special Early Teal Season

Option 1 (nine-day framework): Sept. 13-21
Option 2 (16-day framework): Sept. 13-28

Daily bag limit: 4 birds

The Commission also reviewed a proposal to open the special early Canada goose statewide season. If approved, the season would be Sept. 1-15 with a five-bird daily bag.

In other business, the Commission:



*Approved a regulation to address the issue with feral hogs on the state's wildlife management areas. AGFC Chief of Wildlife Management Doyle Shook said feral hogs are causing a number of problems on WMAs.

"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."

The regulation change requires that hunters kill hogs only during the day on WMAs during an open hunting season.

*Approved a regulation that a zone doe-quota permit not be required to harvest a doe during the Christmas holiday hunt in deer zones 2, 3 and 6. The regulation, which begins this winter, is a result of concerns about increasing numbers of deer in the area.

*Approved renaming Glenwood City Lake to honor former commissioner John Benjamin. The new lake will be called John Benjamin Glenwood Community Fishing Lake.

*Approved a project to improve the road leading to Potlatch Conservation Education Center at Cook's Lake near Casscoe in Arkansas County. The county will work on the roadbed and place culverts under the road; the AGFC will contract for the base material and asphalt. The 1.5-mile road will be 20 feet wide and will include paved parking lots at the facility. Projected cost is \$125,000.

*Elected Freddie Black of Lake Village chairman of the commission to replace Sonny Varnell of St. Paul. Varnell's term on the commission ends June 30. Brett Morgan of Scott was elected vice chairman.

Turbulent tailwaters present fresh perils to anglers, boaters

HEBER SPRINGS – Water is a wonderful commodity and an Arkansas asset – except when there is too much of it.

Weeks after the storms and heavy rains the state received earlier in the year, too much water remains here and there even as the traditionally dry summer is underway. The state's large lakes, which are reservoirs in actuality, are well above normal level, and discharges of water are continuing to lower these levels.

One result is large amounts of water coming through the dams, meaning the tailwaters just downstream tend to be turbulent and extremely dangerous.

Capt. Gary Mullins, a district enforcement supervisor with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, said, "We have had six accidents in about two weeks on the Little Red River (just downstream from Greers Ferry Dam). Luckily no one has been injured or worse, but there are presently two boats, one canoe and one jet ski, still in the river from capsizing."

Mullins said the high and swift water just below the dams may catch some fishermen and other water recreation enthusiasts by surprise, especially young or new users of personal watercraft (jet skis), kayaks and canoes.

Of the six Little Red River mishaps, five were due to trout fishermen throwing out anchors to hold their boats in place, according to Cpl. Shawn Smith, an AGFC wildlife officer stationed in Cleburne County.

Smith said, "A lot of trout fishermen are used to throwing anchors out of the back of their boats to hold them in place. But you can't do that in this swift water. The boat is just pulled under the surface when the anchor hits the water." Smith said the safe tactic is just not to use an anchor in swift water.

Another accident on the Little Red left a fisherman clinging to a tree in the water, where he was rescued. He had grabbed a cooler as a float when his boat went under.

Along with the churning water, another danger is that persons can't see obstacles like rocks and logs as well when water is frothing.

Smith said that just moving downstream for fishermen and boaters won't help much. "The river is high and swift for a long ways when the two generators are running (at the dam)."

Wearing personal flotation devices (life jackets) is essential also. Smith said that most of the people involved in the six recent accidents were wearing PFDs.



Water releases from the large lakes are expected to continue for several more weeks. Water flows also continue to be high on the Arkansas River, and this is complicated by the high Mississippi River, where flood waters are coming down from the devastated Midwest.

SWEPCO Lake Access dedication scheduled

GENTRY – The long-awaited completion of the access to SWEPCO Lake will be celebrated by a dedication at 1 p.m., June 26.

The popular fishing lake in northwest Arkansas is a largemouth bass fisherman's dream. The lake is cooling facility for a power-generating plant of South West Electric Power Co. and its warm water year round has brought bass action to anglers during even the coldest periods of the year.

Because of the year-round warmwater conditions, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission stocked the lake with Florida strain largemouth bass. Increasing angler use created a need for a larger access and parking lot.

SWEPCO Lake and the power plant were built in 1978 and are owned by SWEPCO, Carroll Electric Co-op Corporation and Ozarks Electric Co-op Corporation. The lake is used to cool water from a coal-fired electric plant. The three companies allowed public fishing on the lake, built a boat ramp, and donated land and access to the AGFC.

Construction started in fall 2007. The access had a one-lane ramp and 11,000 square feet of parking. Most anglers had to park across the road in a field. The finished access included a double-wide ramp, 23,000 square feet of asphalt parking lot, and handicapped-accessible fishing pier and courtesy dock. Total cost of the project was \$194,000.

Arkansas farm producers snap up available wildlife enhancement acres

JONESBORO – Beginning April 5, Arkansas farmers began taking advantage of a Department of Agriculture program known as SAFE.

The State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement program falls under the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program. SAFE has 9,700 acres statewide available for the creation of wetland (4,000 acres), tree habitat (2,000 acres) and grassland habitat (3,700 acres).

Producers from many counties have applied for this conservation and income opportunity. The program includes a \$100-per-acre signing incentive payment, annual soil rental payments (for up to 15 years) and covers about 90 percent of the costs for wetlands, trees or grass establishment.

According to David Long, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission private lands coordinator, more than 140 farm producers representing 9,000 acres applied by mid-June. "We knew many farmers had expressed high interest in the project before sign-up started, but never dreamed there was this much interest," Long said.



Producers are ready and willing to enroll cropland that is extremely difficult to farm and marginally productive, Long said.

"Positive producer feedback points to the high financial incentives and consistent annual guaranteed income available from the CRP SAFE program. These factors have become very attractive, especially in light of soaring crop production costs and weather extremes that are affecting crop yields and their ability to farm these acres."

According to Long, producers have a strong connection to wildlife on the farm, especially game such as deer, turkey, rabbits and quail.

"The SAFE practices are designed to provide premium habitat beneficial to these and a wide array of other wildlife species."

The SAFE tree habitat practice (CP38C) is the most popular. It has surpassed the 2,000-acre limit with 3,547 acres. Second-most popular is the SAFE grass practice (CP38E) with 3,345 acres in applications. This leaves 654 acres of the 4,000-acre cap for enrollment. Another 2,669 acres of applications have been received for wetland wildlife habitat (CP38B), which leaves about 1,000 acres for enrollment.

Arkansas Farm Service Agency has requested another 5,000 acres for both the SAFE tree and grass practices. Nationwide, 450,000 CRP acres were available for state enrollment; another 50,000 acres are in reserve for states that need additional acres once they reach their state acreage caps, Long said.



“The Arkansas enrollment now puts us in that category and I expect Washington FSA will provide Arkansas more acres above our cap to meet the continuing demand.”

Andy Johnson, Arkansas landowner relations manager for the Green Trees Program, agrees with Long.

“I have a number of landowners who have applied to place 50 to over 500 acres into SAFE, who have verbally committed to also enrolling into the Green Trees Program,” Johnson said. “The combined financial incentives of these programs add so much economic value to the trees they want to plant.”

Johnson also said that landowners he talks with enjoy the habitat and conservation purposes behind the SAFE initiative and certainly want to capitalize on the opportunity to gain short-term and long-term incomes from both programs.

“For producers interested in planting trees on acres with soils conducive to cottonwood/hardwood planting, Green Trees pays producers \$350 per acre plus other income opportunities in exchange for a long-term lease for the future carbon offsets produced from those trees,” Johnson said.

Long recommends farm producers continue to turn in applications even though they may exceed the Arkansas acreage cap in one or more of the SAFE practices.

“We expect to have our SAFE acreage cap increased. Since producers are interested and continually sending applications to their county FSA office, our chances will increase to receive additional SAFE acres. CRP SAFE is the perfect opportunity for producers to create premium wildlife habitat, at the same time secure income over a 15-year contract versus losing money on those marginally productive cropland acres.”

The CRP SAFE has an estimated value to Arkansas farm producers of more than \$8 million in federal conservation funding. In addition, since many of the SAFE acres are going to hardwood trees, there will be significant carbon sequestering, which may provide additional income to producers if the carbon credit market continues to develop.

Farm producers should go by their county FSA offices to enroll in the CRP SAFE program. They may call David Long at (877) 972-5438 for additional information about SAFE. Producers may learn more about Green Trees at www.green-trees.com or by calling Andy Johnson at (870) 403-3885.

Safety first for Fourth of July boaters

LITTLE ROCK - Family picnics, fireworks and being on the water all are things associated with the Fourth of July. One more thing should be added to that list – safety. According to Bob Cushing, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Boating Education Program coordinator, this is one of the busiest and most dangerous times on the water.

“Thousands of people hit the water on the Fourth for a day in the sun and fireworks displays, but many do so without fully preparing for the trip,” Cushing said. “The most important piece of safety equipment is a life jacket. More specifically, there should be a properly fitting life jacket for everyone on board. By law, all children 12 and under must have their life jacket secured any time they are on the boat, but everyone should wear them any time a boat is underway.”

According to Stephanie Weatherington of the AGFC Enforcement Division, life jackets aren’t the only items a boater needs to check while preparing for a day on the water.

“Prior to going out on the water, boaters need to check their navigation lights,” she said. “People are out watching fireworks displays at night, and do not think about needing lights until it is dark. Always take a spotlight or flashlight, just in case.”



Holiday Weekend Safety Tips

- Before going out on the water, check your navigation lights, fire extinguisher and safety gear.
- Wear a life jacket.
- Pay attention to other boaters.
- Don't drink and operate a boat. If there is going to be drinking, make sure there is a designated driver. Officers will be out in force.
- Lakes will be crowded. Slow down and be cautious.

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.

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, 2008-Feb. 28, 2009 and May 16-June 14, 2009.

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

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.

June 29 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 10 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Fishing Free for All."

July 17 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include: early migratory bird season approval, proposed late migratory bird seasons (waterfowl seasons) and proposed general fishing regulations.

July 26 - Arkansas Catfishing Association (ACA) Tournament at Bull Shoals (night tournament) for ACA members (\$20 annual membership) hosted by the Bull Shoals Lake Boat Dock, Steve and Ricky Eastward, www.bullshoalsboatdock.com, 140 Boat Dock Road off Highway 178: Rod and Reel, catch and release, and, alive and well. Catfishing site will be available for launching and familization between 3 and 9 p.m. Registration at 11 p.m. and launching at midnight, with check-in NLT 8 a.m. Visit our new website that's being updated daily with all the information/details hosted by godaddy.com with domain as ArkCats.Org: http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/8/4/1/0/841049/Home_Page.html , or contact ACA president James Freeman of Pochontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or, Coordinator Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net.

Aug. 21 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include: late migratory bird season (waterfowl season) approval and 2009 fishing regulation approval.

Aug. 23-24 - Arkansas Catfishing Association (ACA) Charity tournament at Lake Millwood and Lake Earling in southwest Arkansas. Two-day event. No entry fee and no payouts, double limit blues and channel. Catch to Hope in Action, Hope, Arkansas. Details at ArkCats.Org website hosted by godaddy.com:

http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/8/4/1/0/841049/Home_Page.html , or contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or, Coordinator Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net.

Sept. 13 - Arkansas Catfishing Association (ACA). Arkansas River, Cherokee Landing, Morrilton, launching from Cherokee Park. Registration at 5 a.m. and launching at 5:40 a.m. Check-in time is 3 p.m. Details at ArkCats.Org website hosted by godaddy.com:

http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/8/4/1/0/841049/Home_Page.html , or contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or, Coordinator 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. 18 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include the 2009 spring turkey season regulations proposal.

Oct. 18 - Arkansas Catfishing Association (ACA). Arkansas River, Ozark Taylor Lock and Dam. Registration at 5 a.m. and launching at 5:40 a.m. Check-in time is 3 p.m. Details at ArkCats.Org website hosted by godaddy.com:

http://app4.websitetonight.com/projects/8/4/1/0/841049/Home_Page.html , or contact ACA president James Freeman of Pocahontas at (870) 810-3294 or by email at big_vato98@yahoo.com, or, Coordinator Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or by email at leefields@centurytel.net.

Oct. 22 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting in Pine Bluff, beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include:the2009 spring turkey seasons regulations approval and special fishing regulations proposal.

Nov. 20 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include: special fishing regulations approval.

Dec. 18 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m.

Jan. 22, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m.

Feb. 19, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include the 2009-2010 general hunting regulation proposals.

March 19, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m. Topics include the 2009-2010 general hunting regulations approval.

April 16, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m.

May 21, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m.

June 18, 2009 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting in Lake Village. Topics include the early migratory bird season proposals.

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

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