



News

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Arkansas Outdoors for December 03, 2008

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Nature center to open in Little Rock Dec. 17

LITTLE ROCK - The Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center will open with a ceremony at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 17. It is the fourth and final Arkansas Game and Fish Commission nature center made possible by the 1/8th-Cent Conservation Sales Tax.

Witt Stephens Jr. of Little Rock has been a long-time advocate for Arkansas wildlife and conservation. He served on the AGFC from 1993-2000 and helped champion the sales tax, which was approved by voters in 1996.

"I think I speak on behalf of many individuals when I say that the opening of this facility is a truly great event for Little Rock, this region and the entire state of Arkansas," Stephens said. "I am certainly proud and very honored to be associated with such a remarkable resource for our state."

The dedication ceremony will feature Gov. Mike Beebe, AGFC Director Scott Henderson, Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola, Pulaski County Judge Buddy Villines and AGFC Chairman Freddie Black. Six Arkansas professional anglers also will be in attendance: George Cochran, Rob Kilby, Mike Wurm and Penny Berryman, all of Hot Springs; Larry Nixon of Bee Branch, and Scott Suggs of Bryant.

The center, at 602 President Clinton Ave., will focus on the wide variety of outdoor recreation, conservation issues and the state's fish and wildlife resources, according to Henderson.

"The nature center is designed to host school groups and engage children and adults in active learning experiences,"



Henderson said. "We expect to see approximately 300,000 visitors a year.

"There are so many unique and interesting features to our state. Our goal is to provide an environment that will educate individuals with casual interest and those individuals who want to explore deeper into its history. Plus, we've really worked hard to make it fun for all ages."

The 16,232-square-foot facility is on 3.4 acres on the bank of the Arkansas River in Little Rock's River Market District. The diversity of Arkansas's natural landscape, habitats and wildlife will be featured through the six natural regions of the state: Ozark Plateau, Ouachita Mountains, Arkansas River Valley, Coastal Plain, Mississippi Delta and Crowley's Ridge.

A dynamic, 10-minute multimedia presentation filmed in high definition – is one of the center's highlights. It will appear on a large screen that 60 people will be able to view. Each member of the Arkansas Outdoor Hall of Fame will be featured between showings. The show also focuses on the AGFC and the role it plays in conservation.

When the show's over, visitors will pass through an old trapper's cabin, which appears nestled in the woods.

Visitors will follow water as it passes through a continuous series of living habitat exhibits – from a replicated mountain spring into the river's main channel cypress swamps, delta marshlands and a bottomland hardwood forest. Each segment has been isolated with flow-through barriers that contain each habitat's population of fish.



- **Ozark Plateau** – Since this area is rural and includes the Ozark National Forest, the region will be represented with a pool with large rocks and river-bottom pebbles at the base of a series of springs and falling water. Visitors will hear the natural sounds of the region, including elk bugling, turkeys gobbling, squirrels barking, whip-poor-wills and wood thrushes.
- **Ouachita Mountains** – Geologic forces crushed the mid-continent region in Arkansas, forming one of few east-west ranges in North America. Because of this orientation, pine and hardwood forests alternate on the north and south faces of ridges. These trees will be represented with a stream along a rock-lined course.
- **Arkansas River** – A large aquarium with moving water will display larger fish found in the river. The river itself will be seen just yards from the center. The site has great blue herons, belted kingfishers and waterfowl as regular visitors. White pelicans stop by during fall migration.
- **Coastal Plain** – Cypress tree bases and knees will recreate a swamp and bayou environment.
- **Mississippi Delta** – Visitors will first be engaged in this vast bottomland forest region by a large, fallen tree with a snake among its roots. Large fish, turtles, ducks and geese will be featured in this wetland marsh region. Natural sounds of the delta – such as Chuck-will's-widows call and frogs – will be heard.
- **Delta Country/Big Woods** – Interpretation of the Big Woods conservation story will be incorporated into this exhibit with information about the AGFC's role in preservation and management.
- **AGFC Divisions** – The AGFC's three major divisions – Law Enforcement, Wildlife Management and Fisheries – will be highlighted in display cases where visitors may learn about the roles of agency personnel through interactive components.

A lounge area will offer visitors a chance to pick up a map, select brochures and sit down with a view of the Arkansas River. Outside is a variety of bird-feeding stations set among shrubbery and a gently flowing seep. An interactive state map will highlight Arkansas's natural resources using a laser projector system. The system is funded in part by a grant from the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

"There's something for everyone to enjoy at the nature center," Henderson said. "One of the things we've really strived to do with our exhibits and our curriculum is provide an atmosphere and experience that interests all people who are intrigued by the geology, wildlife and natural history of Arkansas."

“Arkansans told us in 1996 that they wanted more educational opportunities and experiences for wildlife-related and other outdoors topics,” Henderson said. “Thanks to the passage of the 1/8th-Cent Conservation Tax, we were able to give Arkansans wonderful facilities like the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center.”



The center will be open 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and Sunday 1-4:30 p.m. Admission will be free. For more information, visit www.centralarkansasnaturecenter.com or call (501) 907-0636.

The other three nature centers are the Gov. Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center, which opened in 2001 in Pine Bluff; the Forrest L. Wood Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, which opened in 2004 in Jonesboro, and the Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center, which opened in 2006 near Fort Smith.

Sheffield Nelson Dagmar WMA: Big deer, dazzling ducks, ancient trees

BRINKLEY – To quickly dispel an erroneous notion of some Arkansans, Sheffield Nelson Dagmar Wildlife Management Area was not named for a popular blonde television personality of the 1950s. The name came from a small Monroe County community wiped out by the Great Flood of 1927.

In recent times, the name of Sheffield Nelson was added, recognizing the prominent Little Rock attorney and business leader who served a seven-year term on the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

The bottomland and swamp area just west of Brinkley covers 9,170 acres. Some of Arkansas's consistently largest deer come from Dagmar, and scientists have aged some of its cypress trees at 1,200 years old. They were growing at Dagmar when William the Conqueror prevailed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.



Lumbering in earlier days took out some of Dagmar's trees, but plenty were left to form the base of a productive wildlife habitat for many hunted and nongame species.

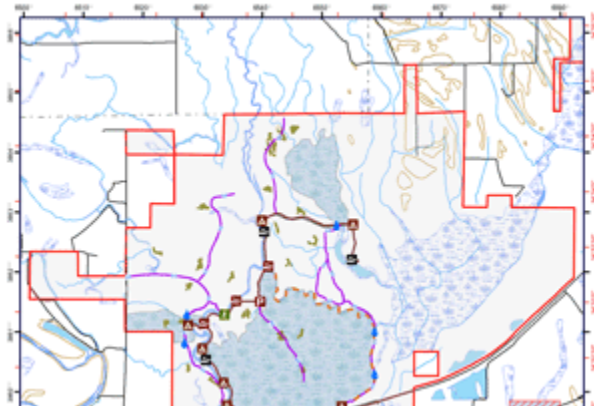
“We checked a 300-pound buck from Dagmar not long ago,” said biologist Jim Sullivan, now retired from the Game and Fish Commission. “Most of the bucks are two and a half years and older. We see Boone and Crockett deer on the area.”

Deer and waterfowl are the hunting kingpins on Dagmar, but the fishing outnumbers hunting in the over-all numbers, Sullivan said. Oxbow and cutoff lakes have good assortments of game fish, along with the streams – Bayou deView in the east and Cache River just outside the management area to the west. Robe Bayou flows through the area to join Bayou deView just above the latter's junction with the Cache.

Crappie may be the leading fishing magnet for Dagmar's anglers. Hefty strings of crappie, from “good pan-size” to “slabs,” are landed on the waters hard to reach some times of the year, especially wet weather. There cypress is plentiful, goggle-eyes (warmouths) are likely to be numerous, too, and this is the case on Dagmar. Work the cypress trees, especially the water-filled hollow ones, and you're apt to pull out some frisky goggle-eyes.

Another element working Dagmar frequently is the raccoon hunting fraternity. There is no shortage of raccoons on the area.

When ducks head south in late fall, Dagmar is a convenient stopping point. Food, water and cover are



nearly always ready. The management area is surrounding by farming operations, mostly rice and soybeans but also including grain sorghum. Ducks love the leftovers after harvesting then move short distances to Dagmar to spend nights.

Apple Lake Waterfowl Rest Area on the management area covers 400 acres and is heavily used by ducks. This is also a handy area for viewing a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds.

Dagmar WMA was created by the Game and Fish Commission in 1952 with a purchase of 5,265 acres from the Dacus Lumber Company, headquartered in West Memphis. Three years later, another 1,209 acres was bought from Townsend Lumber Company, and in 1971, an additional 1,262 acres was obtained from the DeView Water Company. Several small acquisitions were made later then about 2,000 more acres were added in 2002 with mitigation lands obtained through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Management work on Dagmar's habitat includes maintaining wildlife openings by rotated disking, controlled burning, planting food crops and mowing. Hunters, fishermen and other visitors can use 14 primitive camping sites on the management area.

The big cypress trees take care of themselves. They've been around a long time.

Overlooked hunting opportunities include late-season doves

LITTLE ROCK - Whether it is lost in the Christmas excitement or just finds many outdoors people sated with hunting, the late dove season in Arkansas is greatly underutilized.

Some dove enthusiasts know first hand, though, that the Dec. 13 to Jan. 2 season, last of three segments, offers exceptionally opportunities for shotgunners who get out and get after the challenging birds.

Just as in that early September opening, doves are found nearly everywhere in Arkansas. But there are some differences from the hunts three months previously.

Food for doves is scarcer in December, mostly because planted crops like sunflower, soybeans and even corn are gone or nearly so. The doves resort to natural food, primarily weed seed. Hunters aren't able to pinpoint these food sources as readily as with the planted fields.

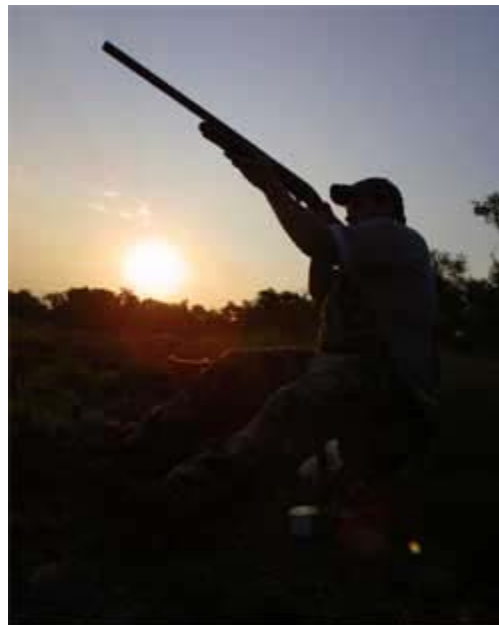
Offsetting this factor is the tendency of doves to bunch up late in the year. The flying singles and doubles of early September become groups of 20, 30, sometimes as many as 60 doves together. With several hunters spread out in an area, this has the potential of some hot and heavy shooting.

Mourning doves are migratory, so the bunches of birds seen in Arkansas in December may be from places to the north where snow has blanketed the ground and the available food.

One of the better places to seek December doves is along the Arkansas River. Brushy areas on the banks and on islands provide the weed seeds needed for food, and the river itself is a migration route for many varieties of wintering birds, doves included.

A productive technique for hunters is to have several spread out and slowly work an area. The walking hunters likely won't get within shooting range of a group of doves, but the birds will often fly only a short distance before settling again. Or birds fleeing one hunter may come within range of another.

A doubleheader of duck hunting early and dove hunting later in the day is feasible in December. Hunters will change out their shoguns shells, of course, swapping the heavy duck loads for lighter dove shells. Be aware that having lead shot on your person while hunting ducks is a violation of federal and state regulations. Carefully check pockets and containers before going after ducks. Having steel shot while hunting doves is not a problem.



Another regulation to keep in mind is hunter orange is required for dove and other upland hunting when it's during the muzzle-loader deer season. These dates vary by deer zones. Check a 2008-2009 Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Hunting Guidebook for specifics.

If you haven't hunted doves or ducks this season, be sure that you are registered for the required Hunter Information Program (HIP). This is free at any license outlet or AGFC office.

Stocking restriction lifted on Bull Shoals and Norfolk tailwaters

BULL SHOALS - Due to improved dissolved oxygen conditions on the Bull Shoals and Norfolk tailwaters, the stocking restrictions have been lifted.

Matt Schroeder Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Trout Management Biologist explained that destratification is a result of decreasing temperature and increasing density of the top layer (epilimnion) of Bull Shoals Lake. "When surface temperature and density of the epilimnion reach that of the bottom layer (hypolimnion) the lake mixes or turns over," Schroeder said. "Once these two layers are mixed with the aid of wind, the bottom layer of the lake is again recharged with dissolved oxygen," he added.



Because the intakes of the dam are located in the same area, dissolved oxygen in the tailwater discharge improves as well, Schroeder said. "Around the same time Norfolk Lake also began to destratify. However, this process is taking longer to develop and at times the dissolved oxygen levels in Norfolk Tailwater is still below state mandated level 6.0 parts per million," he said. "As of Nov. 22 the level has consistently been around the 6.0. If this trend continues for the rest of this week, we can infer that Norfolk Lake has also destratified," Schroeder said.

Greers Ferry Lake, however, is further away from destratification. The dissolved oxygen level in the Greers Ferry Tailwater has continued to fluctuate with patterns of generation and has continued to decline overall during periods of non-generation. "The Trout Program along with AGFC District Biologists will continue to monitor the dissolved oxygen levels of Norfolk and Greers Ferry tailwaters with direct measurements and readings of USGS gauges. Once it has been determined that these lakes have destratified and the resulting D.O. conditions have improved the stocking restrictions will also be lifted from Norfolk and Greers Ferry tailwaters," Schroeder stated.

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

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: Dec. 13-15.

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

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

The statewide Christmas holiday modern gun deer hunt will be Dec. 26 to 28.

Duck:

Dec. 6-Dec. 24 and Dec. 26-Jan. 25.

The youth waterfowl hunt will be Jan. 31-Feb. 1.

Statewide Canada goose season:

Jan. 10-Feb. 1 (bag limit two).

White-fronted goose season:

Dec. 6-Dec. 24 and Dec. 26-Jan. 30 with a bag limit of two.

Snow, blue and Ross' goose season:

Nov. 8-Dec. 24 and Dec. 26-Jan. 30 with a bag limit of 20.

Snow goose Conservation Order:

Feb. 2-April 25 with no bag limit.

Dove:

Dec. 13, 2008-Jan. 2, 2009

Spotted Skunk, Weasel Hunting:

Closed

Fall Turkey:

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

Bear:

Modern Gun: Zone 5: Dec 6-14

Zone 5A: Nov 29-Dec 14

Zones 3, 4, 6 and 7: closed

Furbearers:

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, A and B: Dec. 8-12.

Zone 4 private lands: Jan. 12-16. The quota is five antlerless elk; two either-sex permits also will be issued.

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

Dec. 6 – Poinsett County Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Trumann Recreational Complex. For more information contact Chris Gairhan at (870) 530-2899 or cgairhan@yahoo.com.

Dec. 6 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Christmas Gift Ideas." The Grand Prize will also be awarded to some lucky viewer.

Dec. 6 – Cypress Bayou Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Beebe National Guard Armory. For more information contact Barry Wolfe at (501) 681-4286 or wolfe.barry@gmail.com.

Dec. 9 – Roland Martin at New Life Church in North Little Rock. For more information call Bruce Waters at (501) 766-5775 or bruce-waters@sbcglobal.net or John Craft at (501) 851-1408 or craft@craftveach.com.

Dec. 12 – Hughes Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Hughes Fire Station. For more information contact Bobby Cupples at (901) 489-7263.

Dec. 13 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "The Art of Carving."

Dec. 13 – East Arkansas Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Southland Greyhound Park. For more information contact Jason Rodgers at (870) 225-6642 or agoinc4450@aol.com.

Dec. 17 – Grand opening of the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center in downtown Little Rock.

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

Dec. 20 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "The Trout Magnet."

Dec. 20 – As part of the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center grand opening ceremonies, six professional anglers will be on hand from 1 to 4:30 to meet and greet fans, sign autographs, take pictures and interact about fishing. Larry Nixon, George Cochran, Scott Suggs, Rob Kilby, Mike Wurm and Penny Berryman will be on hand for the festivities. The newest nature center is located in the River Market District in downtown Little Rock.

Dec. 27 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Holiday Squirrel Hunt."

Dec. 31 – Razorduck Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Foothills Indoor Arena in Clarksville. For more information contact Cheryl Feikema at (479) 754-3924 or cherdene@suddenlink.net.

Jan. 6, 2009 – AGFC hunting regulations meetings, 7 p.m.

Jan. 9-11, 2009 –Marine Expo at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock.

Jan. 10, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Bald Eagle."

Jan. 10, 2009 – Booneville Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, First Baptist Church in Booneville. For more information contact Josh Boersma at (479) 518-4250 or boersma66@yahoo.com.

Jan. 17, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Watchable Wildlife and Outdoor Photography."

Jan. 17, 2009 – Black River Chapter of Ducks Unlimited membership banquet, Rolling Hills Country Club in Pochontas. For more information contact Joey Pfeffer at (870) 378-1926 or joey.pfeffer@afbic.com.

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

Jan. 24, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Ladies Only Duck Hunt."

Jan. 31, 2009 – Outdoor Sportsmen Banquet, Greenwood High School basketball arena, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Jan. 31, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Late Season Duck Hunt."

Feb. 6-8, 2009 – Arkansas Sportshow presented by the Rotary Club of Jonesboro. The Sportshow will be held at the Convocation Center on the campus of Arkansas State University. For more information, go to <http://www.arsportshow.com/home.php>.

Feb. 7, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "The Art of Knife Making."

Feb. 14, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Run, Rabbit, Run."

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.

Feb. 21, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Bringing Back the Bobwhite Quail."

Feb. 28, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Zig-Jigging for Trout."

March 7, 2009 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Raccoon Hunting."

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 www.agfc.com or call the Wildlife Information Hotline, (800)440-1477.

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