



Arkansas Outdoors for December 19, 2007

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Today's Topics

[Biologists find varying waterfowl habitat across the state](#)
[Black bear adorns 2008 conservation license plate](#)
[Russellville man forming catfishing group](#)
[Eagle watching opportunities abound in coming weeks](#)
[Public meetings set for input on 2008-09 hunting regulations](#)
[Boating education class schedule](#)
[Hunter education class schedule](#)
[What's open for hunting](#)
[Coming up in the outdoors](#)

Biologists find varying waterfowl habitat across the state

LITTLE ROCK – Earlier this month, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission biologists took the skies for their monthly aerial waterfowl surveys. What they found was a variety of habitat conditions around the state.

The Arkansas River Valley remained dry while northeast Arkansas was wet in many locations and dry in others, according to AGFC waterfowl biologist Luke Naylor. "Conditions were normal or drier than normal in the east central, southeast and southwest survey regions," Naylor said. "Landowners had flooded more agricultural fields since the November survey but the acreage flooded appears to be less than most years, possibly because of high fuel costs," he explained.

The statewide total duck count of 550,905 was 65 percent increase from last year's count of 333,294 and the highest count since 2004. Although the numbers were high, they were still below the 1985–2007 December survey average of 828,988 ducks.



"This December's mallard count of 338,893 is a 95 percent increase from last year's count of 173,510 and, like total duck numbers, is the highest count since 2004 but remains well below the long-term average of 528,447 mallards," Naylor said. The majority of the mallards counted during this survey were in the northeast and eastcentral survey regions.



Snow goose numbers were nearly double last month's survey total and much higher than the December 2006 count. Counts of white-fronted geese declined since the November 2007 survey, but the December survey total of 36,750 is greater than the December 2006 estimate of 25,325 white-fronted geese.

Although the December 2007 survey totals are up markedly from 2006 they remain below long-term averages, Naylor noted. "The good news for waterfowl hunters is that mallard numbers increased substantially from last month and this month's survey total is the highest December total duck and mallard count since 2004. Several migration events have occurred in conjunction with cold fronts during the past month even though cold weather

has come and gone quickly,” he said.

Recent waterfowl counts conducted by Missouri Department of Conservation staff indicated approximately 750,000 mallards on surveyed public lands, so many birds remain just north of Arkansas, Naylor said. “Recent winter storms currently impacting Kansas City and St. Louis and more cold fronts that keep temperatures low for an extended period of time may provide the necessary incentive for some of these birds to move south,” Naylor predicted.

Black bear adorns 2008 conservation license plate

LITTLE ROCK - A leaping largemouth bass, a mallard drake in flight, a woodpecker listening for grubs.

Those are a few images on the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s license plates, which debuted with a popular white-tailed deer in 2000. The ninth plate in the annual series – a sow black bear with her cub in the Arkansas highlands – became available Jan. 1.

Proceeds from Arkansas’s conservation plates are used for conservation-related college scholarships and other conservation education needs. The scholarship fund that began in 1999 stood at \$1.4 million by October 2007.



Animals depicted on the plates have no connection to the use of money raised by the plates. Proceeds from the ivory-billed woodpecker plate, for example, are not used for ivory-billed woodpecker habitat.

The idea of specialty plates to raise money for causes has been around for decades, although Arkansas’s conservation series has taken off, perhaps because each year brings a new plate. Excellent artwork hasn’t hurt, either. Through last November, 31,259 plates had been sold.

In Arkansas, the money raised from the license plates goes to scholarships. High school seniors, college students and graduate students studying conservation or wildlife law enforcement may apply for a conservation scholarship. Applicants must be full-time students and Arkansas residents with a 2.5 grade-point average. Applications must be submitted by June 1 for fall semesters. For a list of all the requirements, call the AGFC Human Resources Division, (501) 223-6300.

Applying for a conservation license plate is easy. Start by downloading a form from the Office of Motor Vehicles specialty plates Web site, www.arkansas.gov/dfa/motor_vehicle/mv_plates.php. Read the instructions, fill out the form and proceed by mail or in person.

By mail – Send the form to the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, Special License Unit, P.O. Box 1272, Little Rock, AR 72203.

In person – Apply at any of these DFA offices: Fayetteville, Jonesboro, Texarkana, West Memphis, Harrison, Russellville, Conway, Mountain View, Van Buren, El Dorado, Magnolia, Monticello, Hot Springs (airport office) or the Charles Ragland Taxpayer Services Center, 1900 W. Seventh St., Little Rock.

A conservation plate may be purchased with a gift certificate available at AGFC headquarters, 2 Natural Resources Drive in Little Rock.

The license plates cost \$35 (\$25 goes to the AGFC Conservation Scholarship Education Fund; \$10 goes to DFA), above the cost of a current plate. Plate purchasers have the option of keeping the same expiration date as the plate being replaced or beginning the AGFC plate with a full year’s registration.

For more information, call (501) 682-4692.

Russellville man forming catfishing group

RUSSELLVILLE – Competitive catfishing may be coming to Arkansas. A Russellville man is trying to put together the Arkansas Catfishing Association with a “catch-and-release” format.

Lee Fields hopes the plan comes together early next year. He sees catfishing competition across state borders. “I would like to see



Arkansas compete with other states," he said. The Arkansas Catfishing Association, as it will be called, will be modeled after a similar program in Virginia. "I've already received the Virginia Catfish Association's full support along with their rules and regulations," Fields said.

The initial meeting for the group will be held Saturday, Feb. 16 from 4 to 8 p.m. in Russellville at the Lake Dardanelle Visitors' Center Conference Room. Fields would like to hear from all interested catfishing enthusiasts as soon as possible. He can be reached at (870) 577-7289, or email at lee_fields_1999@yahoo.com.

Eagle watching opportunities abound in coming weeks

LITTLE ROCK - Winter is eagle time for many Arkansans and for many visitors to the state. Migrating bald eagles along with a few golden eagles are in the state along with an increasing number of year-round resident eagles and commonly attract "oohs" and "aahs" from young and old viewers.

Where do you find eagles? Start your thinking with water. The big, majestic birds are usually found around water because fish make up a major part of their diet. The Arkansas River all the way across the state is prime eagle territory in winter. So are the big man-made lakes and even smaller lakes.

For beginners in the eagle viewing game, participation in a state park program can help. Some of these state park eagle events are long-running, annual activities. Dress warm, take the family and head out for a day of wildlife watching.

Samples of Arkansas State Parks eagle events:

Jan. 4-5, Eagle Awareness Weekend, Bull Shoals-White River State Park Over 100 bald eagles winter in the Bull Shoals area each year. This weekend features lake tours, guided bird walks, guest speakers, live bird demonstrations (including a bald eagle) and musical entertainment at Bull Shoals Theater of the Arts. All programs are free, except tours. <http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/bullshoalswhiteriver>.

Jan. 25-27, 26th annual Eagles Et Cetera Festival, DeGray Lake Resort State Park This is the longest running eagle awareness program in Arkansas. Lake tours, guest speakers, indoor and outdoor programs, live birds of prey shows with a bald eagle and other raptors. All programs, except tours, are free. <http://www.degray.com>.

The 15th annual Eagle Watch Weekend on Beaver Lake will be Jan. 25-27 aboard the Belle of the Ozarks, which will depart from Rocky Branch Marina. Departures to view bald eagles on Beaver Lake in their natural habitat will be at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. each day. Expert guides with help spot the eagles and provide educational narration. For more information, phone 800-552-3803 and visit www.estc.net/belle.

Some tips for eagle outings:

Look for flying eagles in the skies and roosting eagles in treetops. Eagles soar with wings straight out from their bodies; vultures soar with wings in a V shape. Scan the treetops carefully. Sometimes eagles will sit in dead or leafless trees, making them easy to spot, but at other times one may be tucked up in the boughs of a pine tree.

Use binoculars. Bring your own that you're already familiar with using. You can adjust the neck strap for yourself; focus the eyepieces for your own eyes, and practice finding objects while looking through them. If you don't have a pair of binoculars, call ahead to the park you're visiting; it's likely they'll have some you can check out or share.

Take along bird field guides. Even though you're planning to see eagles, you can also view other wintering birds during your outing. Different species are common in the natural divisions of Arkansas, and water areas give glimpses of loons, grebes, herons and a variety of ducks.



Photo by Steve and Wanda Nolte



Photo by Steve and Wanda Nolte

Public meetings set for input on 2008-09 hunting regulations

LITTLE ROCK - Hunters may voice their opinions about hunting regulations and seasons at one of 11 public meetings across the state Tuesday, Jan. 8.

The meetings are part of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's annual hunting regulations process. They are held to give hunters and other interested parties the opportunity to make comments and proposals for the 2008-09 hunting seasons.

Comments may be verbal or written. Written comments may be submitted at one of the meetings or mailed to the AGFC, Hunting Regulations Proposals, 2 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock, AR72205. Comments can also be made on the AGFC Web site at http://www.agfc.com/hunting/misc_hunting/public-meeting.aspx. The deadline for comments is Jan. 31.



The 11 meetings will be held from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. AGFC personnel will make an initial presentation and accommodate those wishing to speak. Visitors may arrive and leave at any time during the meeting. Meeting sites and AGFC office telephone numbers are:

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

Brinkley
AGFC Regional Office
1201 North Highway 49
(877) 734-4581

Monticello
AGFC Regional Office 771 Jordan Drive
(877) 367-3559

Camden
Camden Fairview High School Auditorium
1750 Cash Road
(877) 836-4612

Hope
FairPark Community Center
Fair Park Drive
(877) 777-5580

Hot Springs
National Park Community College Auditorium
101 College Drive
(877) 525-8606

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

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

Fayetteville
University of Arkansas
Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Arena
1335 West Knapp
(877) 967-7577

Mountain View
Ozark Folk Center Auditorium

Hwy 382
(877) 297-4331

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

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:

Squirrel:

Statewide – Sept. 8-Feb. 29.

Rabbit:

Statewide – Sept. 1-Feb. 29.

Spotted Skunk, Weasel Hunting:

Closed.

Dove:

Dec. 15-Jan. 4

Duck:

Dec. 26-Jan. 6, 2008 and Jan. 12, 2008-Jan. 27, 2008

Youth Waterfowl Hunt:

Dec. 22-23

White-Fronted Goose:

Dec. 26-Feb. 3

Snow, Blue, and Ross' Goose:

Nov. 8-Dec. 21 and Dec. 26-Feb. 3

Snow Goose Conservation Order:

Feb. 4-April 27

Statewide Canada Goose:

Dec. 26 – Feb. 3

Statewide Falconry:

Dec. 19-21, Jan. 7-11 and Jan. 28-Feb. 17

Common Snipe:

Nov. 1, 2007 to Feb. 15, 2008

Woodcock:

Nov. 10 to Dec. 24

Deer Archery:

Oct. 1-Feb. 29 statewide.

Deer Modern Gun:

Nov. 10-Dec. 25 for zones 16, 16A and 17.

Christmas holiday modern gun deer hunt is Dec. 26-28 statewide

Deer Muzzleloader:

Dec. 29-31 for zones 9, 12, 16, 16A and 17
Zones 4, 4B, 5 and 5B are closed

Turkey Archery:

Oct. 1-Feb. 29 statewide.

Quail:

Nov. 1-Feb. 10 statewide.

Crow:

Sept. 1-Feb. 17 Thursdays thru Mondays only statewide.

Furbearers:

Furbearer trapping Nov. 17-Feb. 17 excluding coyote, beaver, muskrat and nutria.

Coyote trapping Aug. 1-March 31. Beaver, muskrat, nutria trapping Nov. 17-March 31.

Gray fox, mink, opossum, red fox, striped skunk hunting Sept. 1-Feb. 29.

Raccoon day or night hunting Sept. 1-March 31.

Raccoon night hunting July 1-Aug. 31.

Bobcat and coyote hunting Oct. 1-Feb. 29.

River otter hunting Nov. 17-Feb. 29.

Muskrat, nutria and beaver hunting Sept. 1-March 31.

Badger, spotted skunk and weasel hunting is closed.

Coming up in the outdoors

Dec. 20 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, 9 a.m.

Dec. 22 - 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."

Dec. 29 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Winter Bird Feeding."

Jan. 5 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Winter Bird Feeding."

Jan. 8 – 2008-09 AGFC Hunting Regulations Public Meetings, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Jonesboro

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

Brinkley

AGFC Regional Office
1201 North Highway 49
(877) 734-4581

Monticello

AGFC Regional Office 771 Jordan Drive
(877) 367-3559

Camden

Camden Fairview High School Auditorium
1750 Cash Road
(877) 836-4612

Hope

Fair Park Community Center
Fair Park Drive
(877) 777-5580

Hot Springs

National Park Community College Auditorium
101 College Drive

(877) 525-8606

Fort Smith
Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center
8300 Wells Lake Road
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Russellville
AGFC Regional Office
1266 Lock and Dam Road
(877) 967-7577

Fayetteville
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Mountain View
Ozark Folk Center Auditorium
Hwy 382
(877) 297-4331

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

Jan. 12 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Youth Duck Hunting."

Jan. 18-20 - Arkansas Marine Expo, Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock. For more information, contact: Denton and Griffey Attractions, Ken Griffey, (501) 225-6177 or (501) 765-1423.

Jan. 19 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "All about Raptors."

Jan. 24 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, 9 a.m.

Jan. 26 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Canada Goose Hunting."

Feb. 1-2 - Quail and Songbird Habitat Workshop, Petit Jean Mountain. Registration for the workshop is available online at www.uawri.org or by calling (866) 972-7778. Overnight accommodations are available. The registration deadline is Jan. 28. For more information about the workshop, contact Sandy Davies by phone at (501) 215-7990 or by e-mail at sdavies@uawri.org.

Feb. 2 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Winter Trout Fishing."

Feb. 8-10 - Arkansas RV Show, Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock. For more information, contact: Denton and Griffey Attractions, Ken Griffey, (501) 225-6177 or (501) 765-1423.

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

Feb. 16 - Talkin' Outdoors at the Corner Café with Steve "Wildman" Wilson, 9 a.m. on KARK Channel 4. Topic of the show will be "Snow Goose Hunting."

Feb. 21 - AGFC Commission monthly meeting, Dumas.

Feb. 23 - 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 Squirrel Hunting."

Feb. 29-Mar. 2 - Hot Springs Boat Tackle and RV Show, Hot Springs Convention Center, Hot Springs. For more information, contact: Denton and Griffey Attractions, Ken Griffey, (501) 225-6177 or (501) 765-1423.

Mar. 20 - AGFC Commission monthly meeting, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, 9 a.m.

April 17 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting, 2 Natural Resources Dr., Little Rock, 9 a.m.

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

June 19 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting.

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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