



## News

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### Arkansas Outdoors for December 31, 2008

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### Commission renames Richland Valley property after former commissioner

LITTLE ROCK – During the December meeting of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, commissioners renamed a recently purchased section of Searcy County land after former commissioner Sonny Varnell of St. Paul. The Richland Valley property is now part of the Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area.

The property is southwest of the town of St. Joe near the National Park Service's Woolum Access to the Buffalo National River. The land is west of Richland Creek and encompasses a portion of the Ozark Highlands Trail. It will be known as the Sonny Varnell Richland Valley Elk Conservation Area. Varnell was appointed to the commission by former Gov. Mike Huckabee in 2003. His term expired July 1, 2008.



The Commission also approved the donation of two bull elk permits for the 2009 September elk season to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The permits are auctioned and the money returned to the AGFC to be used in elk habitat improvements, public education and research. More than \$450,000 has been raised since 1998 from the auction of the two permits, with 85 percent of that amount returned to the AGFC. One permit is auctioned during the annual Arkansas RMEF banquet, and the second is auctioned at the group's national banquet.

### Major news events sweep Arkansas outdoors during 2008

LITTLE ROCK – The year 2008 was a significant one for the Arkansas outdoors and the legions of enjoyers of its hunting, fishing and other recreation opportunities.

Individually, the catches of crappie, bass, bream and other challenging fish, the opportunities with duck hunting, deer hunting, rabbit hunting, squirrel hunting are the most widespread events in 2008 over the Arkansas countryside.

A number of happenings made major headlines, though. Here are a baker's dozen of the news-making events as selected by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Communications Division. Their listing is not in order of perceived importance or impact, though.

\* The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission signs a lease with Chesapeake Energy for \$29.5 million for natural gas drilling rights on Gulf Mountain and Petit Jean wildlife management areas.

\* The first property purchase using funds from gas leases on the state's wildlife management areas was for the Wallace Trust near Arkansas City in Desha County, with AGFC paying just over \$2.12 million for over 1,800 acres near the Choctaw Island WMA.

\* A new deer management plan was crafted by the AGFC's Deer Team with significant input from citizen's advisory committee members. Strategies in the deer plan were divided into categories of Sociological, Resource, Education, Communication, Habitat and Enforcement.

\* The fourth and final nature center opened in December – the Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center on the Arkansas River in downtown Little Rock. It bears the name of a former AGFC commissioner who has continued to make significant impact in Arkansas outdoor circles.

\* Heavy spring and floods wreak havoc on facilities and on wildlife habitat in several parts of the state. Turkey hunting is curtailed in several areas, and spring fishing is heavily impacted, especially on the Arkansas River.

\* An AGFC helicopter on night patrol seeking illegal hunters crashes in Cleburne County and takes the life of wildlife officer Monty Carmikle of Heber Springs

\* Eighteen young trumpeter swans are brought in from Iowa and released in Boxley Valley and on the Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge in an experiment to encourage winter migration of the large and stately birds from northern areas.

\* A ban on the use of spinning wing decoys for duck hunting is removed by the AGFC. It a controversial issue for duck hunters in the state, but other states in the Mississippi Flyway did not follow Arkansas' lead on banning the electronic devices nor have scientific studies showed that duck numbers are impacted by the decoys.

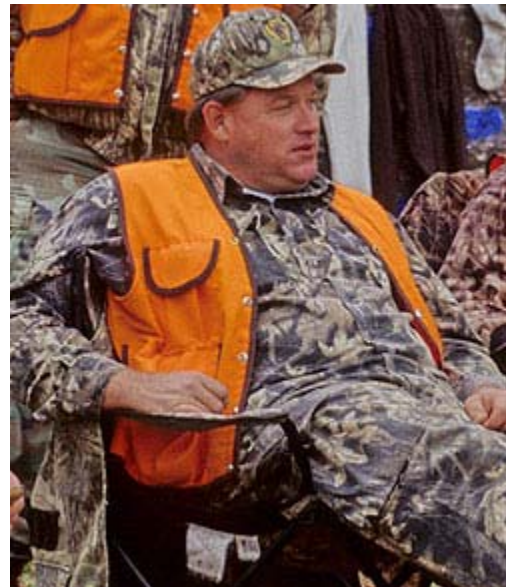
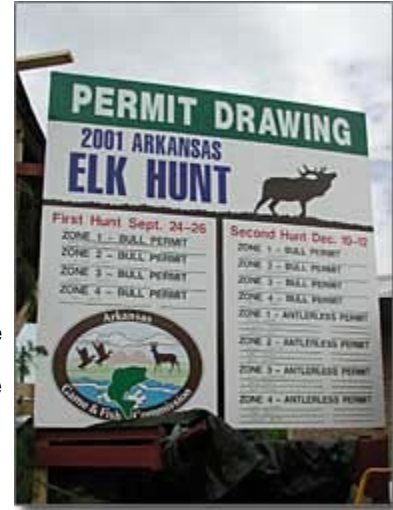
\* Arkansas high school trapshooters take gold and silver medals in national competition. Cord riley of Huntsville High is chosen for Olympic training, and Kayle Browning of Greenbrier High is selected for an international shooting team.

\* A number of invasive snakehead fish are found in an east Arkansas creek, and plans for a massive eradication project are laid but are postponed by extended high water conditions.

\* George Dunklin of DeWitt is chosen one of four national finalists for the prestigious Budweiser Conservationist of the Year Award. Dunklin, an AGFC commissioner, was chosen for his extensive habitat work in a prime duck wintering area of Arkansas County.

\* Elk hunters struggle in the two 2008 seasons with just half filling their permits in September, and women dominating the December successes. Less than half of the December permits were filled.

\* The AGFC's Conservation Scholarship Program, funded with sales of special license plates, is expanded to provide \$2,000 a calendar year for freshmen and sophomores, and \$3,000 a year for juniors, seniors and graduate students.



## Donated Christmas trees get second life as fish habitat

LITTLE ROCK – Ask any Arkansas fisherman and you'll get a multitude of answers about how they feel when it comes to underwater structure. Anglers may curse those logs and branches that snag their brand new lures, but they know that structure is a key to a successful outing.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is asking that those leftover Christmas trees be used to help improve the state's fisheries by dropping the trees off at several sites around the state. AGFC community fisheries biologist Clifton Jackson says that studies have shown that fish utilize underwater structure for cover. "These trees are some of the best natural forms of underwater structure. Crappie, bass, bluegills and other fish will often use the trees to hide in and around," Jackson said.

The Christmas trees provide cheap, but quality underwater structures. They are easy to place in ponds and lakes, and they last for several years, Jackson said. "More importantly, their limbs offer something to fish of all shapes and sizes," he explained. The Christmas tree drop-off is underway and will run through Jan. 23.



Trees can be dropped off at the following locations:

Lake Hamilton - Andrew Hulseley State Fish Hatchery Access Area.

Lake Chicot - Connerly Bayou Access Area.

Camden - AGFC Regional Office on Ben Lane.

Magnolia - Columbia County Road Dept Yard on Highway 371.

El Dorado - City recycling center drop-offs: one behind Arby's and one on South Jackson.

Smackover - recycling drop-off center (these will be transported to El Dorado).

Millwood Lake - Cottonshed, White Cliffs Recreation Areas and the Millwood State Park ramp on the point.

Dierks Lake - Jefferson Ridge South Recreation Area.

DeQueen Lake - Any Corps of Engineers boat ramp.

Gillham Lake - Any Corps of Engineers boat ramp.

Lake Greeson - New Cowhide Cove and Self Creek Recreation Areas.

Arkansas River - Alltel Access underneath the I-30 Bridge.

Greers Ferry Lake - Sandy Beach (Heber Springs), Devils Fork Recreation Area and Choctaw Recreation Area (Choctaw-Clinton).

Dardanelle Lake - Dwight Mission Access, Highway 64/Piney Access, Cabin Creek Slough Access.

Jack Nolen Lake- Largest access ramp on rip-rap near ramp.

Sugar Loaf Lake - Sugar Loaf Access Area near ramps.

Lake Conway - Lawrence Landing Access.

Harris Brake Lake - Chittman Hill Access.

Lake Overcup - Lake Overcup Landing.

Lake Barnett - Reed Access.

Jonesboro - Craighead Forest Park Lake boat ramp.

## **Arkansas 2009 state fish art contest begins** ***Students in Grades 4-12 Eligible to Win Scholarships, Art Supplies and Fishing Gear***

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is partnering with Wildlife Forever in a state fish art contest. Students across Arkansas have the opportunity to win recognition and prizes while learning about state-fish species, aquatic habitats and conservation. The Arkansas State Fish Art Contest uses art to catch the imagination of youth while teaching fisheries conservation.

Winning contestants from each state are honored in three grade categories, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. All contest winners will receive a gift certificate for art supplies from Cheap Joe's Art Stuff, fishing tackle from Rapala and many other great prizes. Winning designs will also be featured on the official State Fish Art Web site.

One gallery-quality winning entry will be used as the design for the 2009 Art of Conservation Stamp. Additional prizes up for grabs in 2009 include "Best of Show" and the Cheap Joe's Art Stuff, "People's Choice" awards. Honors for "Best of Show" will be given to one outstanding piece of artwork in each grade category.



To enter, artists must have their entries postmarked by March 31, 2009. Winners will be announced May 1, 2009. The 11th Annual Wildlife Forever State Fish Art Contest is open to all students in grades 4 through 12. Young artists must create an illustration of their chosen state fish. A written composition on its behavior, habitat and conservation is also required.

For more information on the contest go to <http://www.statefishart.com/> for complete details and to download the free lesson plan.

Students should mail entries to:

Arkansas State Fish Art Contest  
Education Division  
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
2 Natural Resource Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205

For more information, contact AGFC Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs program coordinator Dawn Cook by email at [ddcook@agfc.state.ar.us](mailto:ddcook@agfc.state.ar.us) or Pat Conzemius at Wildlife Forever, 2700 Freeway Blvd., #1000, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430, by email at [pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org](mailto:pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org) or call (763) 253-0222.

## **Biologists looking for help from dove hunters**

JONESBORO - This year's September dove hunt brought with it an interesting situation, and AGFC biologists would like hunter's help to determine where else in the state this might be occurring. Biologists in Jonesboro and Fort Smith have been notified that a few harvested doves were found with small snails attached to feathers and skin of the birds.

AGFC staff has received phone calls from sportsmen reporting



the incidences and suggesting other hunters they knew had also found snails attached to harvested doves. In Fort Smith, AGFC biologists found snails on a trapped dove.

"The dove hunters reported some of the harvested doves have snails on the feathers or buried in the skin. It appears these are dry land snails and were very common in a mowed sunflower field the sportsmen were hunting. These snails do not appear to be causing any problems for the birds" said Terrence Teel, Assistant AGFC Regional Wildlife Supervisor.

Catherine Rideout, an ornithologist with the AGFC, is working with Teel and David Hayes, a graduate student at Arkansas State University, to learn more about the species of snail and the relationship between snails and doves.

"In speaking with hunters and biologists from Arkansas and other states, it does not appear to be a common occurrence. We are interested in hearing from other dove hunters who might have experienced this, too. Although published papers report snails attaching to birds, I have not found any published information on relationships between snails and bird species in the southeastern U.S. We'd be interested in hearing from the public as we look into this a little bit more," Rideout said.

If you have information to report related to this issue, please send an email to [DoveNsnail@gmail.com](mailto:DoveNsnail@gmail.com). The AGFC is interested in hearing when and where you harvested doves with snails on them. The agency would also like to know details about the number of snails, where on the bird they were found (legs, skin, feathers). If you have photos of the snails, please attach them to your email or mail them, along with details and your contact information, to Terrence Teel, AGFC, 2920 McClellan Drive, Jonesboro, AR 72401.

## 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:

Dec. 26, 2008 - Jan. 30, 2009 (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. 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](mailto:cherdene@suddenlink.net).

Jan. 6 – Public meetings set for input on 2009-10 hunting regulations. Hunters may voice their opinions about hunting regulations and seasons at one of 11 public meetings across the state. 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 2009-10 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, AR 72205. Comments can also be made on the AGFC Web site at [http://www.agfc.com/hunting/misc\\_hunting/public-meeting.aspx](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:

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

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

Fayetteville  
University of Arkansas  
Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Arena  
1335 W. Knapp St.  
(866) 253-2506

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pine Bluff  
Gov. Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center  
1400 Black Dog Road  
(877) 367-3559

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

Jan. 9-11 – Marine Expo at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. Admission is \$5 for adults with children under 12 years admitted free. For more information contact Ken or Kelly Griffey at (501) 765-1423 or (501) 225-6177.

Jan. 10 - 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 – 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](mailto:boersma66@yahoo.com).

Jan. 17 - 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 – 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](mailto:joey.pfeffer@afbic.com).

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

Jan. 24 - 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 – Outdoor Sportsmen Banquet, Greenwood High School basketball arena, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Jan. 31 - 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 – 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 - 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 - 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 – 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 - 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 - 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."

Feb. 28 - Arkansas Catfishing Association yournament 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, visit our website at [http://arkcats.org/Home\\_Page.php](http://arkcats.org/Home_Page.php) or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or (870) 577-7289 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto:leefields@centurytel.net), or Paul Schweyer of Barling, [paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net) at (479) 452-1652 or (479) 719-0474.

March 7 - 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."

Mar. 14-15 – Arkansas Catfishing Association tournament at Lakes Millwood (Yarborough Landing) and Earling (Hwy. 53 to Lake Earling Park's Public Ramp) in southwest Arkansas between Hope and Texarkana. For ACA members: rod and reel, catch and release, and alive and well. This will our yearly charitable tournament whereas we suspend the normal rules and "go for the double catch" to donate to a local charity to help feed the hungry. For an ACA application form, constitution and bylaws, local conditions and information along with the rules and regulations, visit our website at

[http://arkcats.org/Home\\_Page.php](http://arkcats.org/Home_Page.php) or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or (870) 577-7289 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto:leefields@centurytel.net), or Paul Schweyer of Barling, [paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net) at (479) 452-1652 or (479) 719-0474.

March 19 – 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 – AGFC Commission monthly meeting at the AGFC Little Rock central office, 2 Natural Resources Dr., beginning at 9 a.m.

April 18– Arkansas Catfishing Association tournament at Lake Maumelle launching from the Jolly Roger Marina. 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 view our website at [http://arkcats.org/Home\\_Page.php](http://arkcats.org/Home_Page.php) or Lee Fields of Russellville at (479) 331-0399 or (870) 577-7289 or by email at [leefields@centurytel.net](mailto:leefields@centurytel.net), or Paul Schweyer of Barling, [paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:paulschweyer@sbcglobal.net) at (479) 452-1652 or (479) 719-0474.

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

June 18 – 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](http://www.agfc.com) or call the Wildlife Information Hotline, (800)440-1477.**

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