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Adventure  
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## New elk research launches

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, in collaboration with the University of Kentucky, assembled a specialized team of biologists, data analysts, regional wildlife management foremen and wildlife technicians in January to assist with a new project.

This marked the beginning of a three-year elk capture-and-release program, part of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's [2015-2030 Elk Management Plan](#), geared toward gathering as much data as possible on elk reproduction and population growth within Kentucky's 16-county elk zone. The department plans to use the data gathered throughout the year to anticipate the herd's needs and track its progress after the UK research team analyzes the results.

Recent trends in Kentucky's elk behavior suggest that the herd's favored habitat is beginning to shift, spurring the need for new data.

Kentucky's surface mining reclamation projects in the region first resulted in vast open fields full of nutritious vegetation, but as the area ages and elk hunting increases, the herd has noticeably spent more time in denser brush and young



*Gabe Jenkins photo*

forested areas that provide thermal and escape cover within southeastern Kentucky.

Kentucky's present elk herd is a free ranging, wild herd established from 1,550 wild elk captured out-of-state and released into southeast Kentucky between December 1997 and March 2002. Contributing states included Kansas, Oregon, North Dakota, Arizona and New Mexico, with the majority of elk captured in Utah.

In January, the collaborative crew fitted all captured elk with tracking collars to better gauge the species' survival and habits, and also fitted cow elk with special devices that will alert Kentucky Fish and Wildlife when and where a calf is born later in the year. Researchers will then be able to more effectively locate and study newborn elk calves.

The crew captured 72 elk in January 2020. Of the 56 female elk captured, vets determined 25 pregnancies, a goal both set and achieved for the department.

Throughout the week, biologists worked diligently to secure specific data on each animal, such as weight, age and county of capture, while focusing on releasing it as soon as possible. All captured elk wore large blindfolds

to help calm them during the process, and the team selected especially calm animals to temporarily sedate for further testing before releasing near the capture site.

Just as everyone froze in awe to watch the elk arrive, the same sense of astonishment settled in as the team silently watched each elk rise up, shake its blindfold off and trot away, returning to the wilderness from which it came.

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## WE GET MAIL

### *Letters to the Commissioner's Office*

The following note was sent to John Morgan, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources small game program coordinator, and others following the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) Ad Hoc Working Group meeting in January.

John,

On behalf of the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI), I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to you and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources for hosting a meeting of the NBCI Ad Hoc Working Group on January 8-10, 2020 at Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. I would also like to extend a very special thanks to our facilitators, Ben Robinson and Cody Rhoden, for providing such outstanding service to our working group. Their facilitation services allowed us to make great progress, as we spent three very productive days working together in Kentucky.

Finally, I wish to thank the entire working group for their active participation, careful deliberations and thoughtful contributions in support of the NBCI. We made significant progress in our efforts to chart a path forward for the NBCI. More work lies ahead; however, I believe we stand on solid footing, as we prepare appropriate options for discussion and consideration by the full NBCI Management Board in March at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Omaha, Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Johansen, Wildlife Resources Section Chief, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

Dear Mr. Bill (Fannin),

I wanted to write to thank you for the Greenwing Adventure that I was lucky enough to attend. I had a lot of fun at the Greenwing Adventure at Camp Currie,

where I killed my first duck. I love hunting but have never had a chance to go duck hunting before. This was a great first experience for duck hunting. I really had fun at camp and getting all the cool hunting stuff made it even better. I also enjoyed sharing a blind with you. You are a lot of fun to be around and I learned so much from everyone that was kind enough to share their time and funds to provide this opportunity to kids.

The first day was fun because we got to make and eat duck poppers and deer balls. We brought extra duck home so we could make it at home for my whole family. We are going to make some tonight. I don't like peppers so we are going to make it with onions and see how that tastes. It was fun to meet other kids from around the state who also enjoy hunting. We had a good time sharing our excitement while in the cabin getting ready for bed and getting ready in the morning. I talked to my mother each day to share what we were doing and what I learned.

On the day of the duck hunt, I got to show my dad around Camp Currie, where I spent a week with my friends earlier this summer. I enjoyed the skeet shooting to practice before we went on the duck hunt. I also was happy that I was able to ask for the last 12-gauge shotgun available for my hunt. It was the one I wanted to use.

On the last night, I had fun skinning ducks. I have never done that before, but I have dressed dove and it was pretty much the same thing. My grandfather will be proud that I was taught how to properly dress a duck. It was cool that I found out that the persons' land that we were hunt-



ing on was one of my baseball teammates' grandfather. We will have a lot to talk about during our spring baseball season.

I have been practicing with my duck call since I got it. I want to get better for the next time I get to duck hunt. I think my sisters are getting tired of hearing it. Maybe I should not practice first thing in the morning.

Thank you for taking me hunting on my first duck hunt. I don't know if I would have had a chance to duck hunt if it wasn't for the Greenwing Adventure. I would love to do it again sometime. I plan on mounting my duck as a special memory of this experience. I appreciate all the effort that went into planning and funding this trip for us. It was a really fun trip that I will not forget.

Thanks again,  
Sutton Richey

Dear Department of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife,

I had a great time. I loved it. I feel like you should make the duck poppers for summer camp. I had fun gutting the duck even though I don't like blood. I had fun with the archery shooting in the mess hall. Thanks for the great time.

Sincerely,  
Lilly Ladd



## OFFICERS HONORED

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Conservation Officer Jason Estes (middle, back row) was among more than 200 officers representing 175 agencies across the state honored at the 2019 Governor's Impaired Driving Enforcement Awards Ceremony on Dec. 5 in Lexington. Awards were presented to officers with the most impaired-driving arrests in each agency, and Highway Safety All-Star awards were presented to the top three in each division. There are six divisions, broken down by number of officers within the agency, and a division for Kentucky State Police and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

## NWTF OFFICER OF THE YEAR

In January, the Kentucky State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) honored Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Conservation Officer Steven Combs as its Kentucky NWTF Officer of the Year. Combs was presented the award at the NWTF state awards banquet by NWTF District Biologist Steve Beam (far right) and Joe Carpenter, NWTF state chapter president (far left).



## New hire

The Purchasing and Property Branch of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources would like to introduce its newest team member, Program Coordinator Jody Hellard Jr.



Hellard joined the department in December from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's Division of Equipment.

With Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, he will be responsible for fixed assets inventories, coordinator of the bi-annual surplus equipment auctions, liaison with Fleet Management, and the agency's insurance needs.

Hellard lives in Frankfort with his wife, Mysha, and family, Mykenzie, Remington, Stark, and Maverick. He spends most nights officiating or umpiring NCAA/KHSAA basketball and softball games to give back to the youth. If you need his assistance, he can be reached at (502) 892-4512.



## Youth waterfowl hunters experience annual Greenwing Adventure

Earning an Outdoorsman or Outdoorswoman patch at a Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources conservation camp this past summer was a ticket to an exciting waterfowl adventure for more than a dozen youth waterfowl hunters.

This year, 15 youths participated in the annual Greenwing Adventure Jan. 3-4 at Camp John Currie near Benton. Together, they harvested 26 ducks.

The event provides an outdoors learning experience that goes beyond hunting.

The evening before the hunt, participants took part in a cooking show where they helped prepare appetizers of venison meatballs and duck poppers using venison and duck provided by local hunters. The recipes were provided to the young chefs to duplicate at home.

Participants learned duck hunting



basics and were treated to a duck calling demonstration by Ducks Unlimited and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife staff.

They visited the shotgun range to practice before their hunts. Afterward, shooting staff and the young hunters went to the blinds and hunted from noon until

the end of shooting time. Parents who did not go to the blinds stayed at camp, spent time at shooting ranges, and enjoyed some quiet time.

Upon returning to camp for dinner and photos, the participants learned how to prepare a duck for the kitchen. A kids' duck calling contest crowned the top boy and girl callers.

The participating youth hunters were provided a duck to take home to prepare a meal. Many of the participants kept their ducks for taxidermy mounts.

Greenwing Adventure started in 1987 and Ducks Unlimited has partnered with the agency every year.

Blinds used for the hunt included Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Officer Capt. Tony Dunker's Blind, Shelby Lake Farms, Ricky Walden, HMS (Bob Allen), Goodman Farms (Jacob and Courtney Goodman), Shooter's Blind (Lynn and Clint McCutchen), Dr. Charlie Shields Blind and The Ford Place Blind (Eddie Jointer). Ducks Unlimited and the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation donated door prizes. David Curtis of Walker Hall Catering prepared dinners on Friday and Saturday nights.



## Groundbreaking held for Shawnee Park boat ramp project

One of Louisville's signature parks is adding a new feature certain to draw more visitors to the area and enhance the opportunity for recreational enjoyment of the Ohio River.

A public boat ramp and accompanying parking area planned for Shawnee Park will provide boaters with convenient river access below McAlpine Locks and Dam and the renowned Falls of the Ohio.

On Jan. 17, Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Secretary Mike Berry and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Commissioner Rich Storm joined Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and other city officials in breaking ground near the park's Louisville Loop trailhead for the joint project between Louisville Parks and Recreation and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

"This project shows the power of strong partnerships," Storm said. "Expanding access to the river is a win for the community and all anglers, boaters and hunters of the Commonwealth."

River-based recreation is important for many in Louisville, Jefferson County and the surrounding areas. That mirrors the interest in outdoor recreation across the state.

Each year, more than 2 million people fish, hunt, boat, or participate in other wildlife-related recreation in Kentucky.

"Fishing, hunting and boating are vital to Kentucky's adventure tourism industry," Berry said. "Together with wildlife watching, they contribute more than \$5.9 billion to Kentucky's economy."

The project is a key infrastructure investment supporting the West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative to improve



*Chase Winger photo*

equitable access to nature in the community.

Last year, the city's ECHO (Engaging Children Outdoors) program unveiled a new bicycle track near the planned boat ramp, and future plans include a modern outdoor education center to be nearby.

The Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) recently installed an underground water basin in Shawnee Park and has made several million dollars worth of improvements there. Those include new basketball courts at the site of the historic Dirt Bowl, new baseball fields, a new restroom and shelter, a new sprayground and updated walking path and a newly paved road through the park.

"The new boat ramp in Shawnee Park will provide a highly-sought-after recreational amenity in this historic Olmsted Park," Mayor Fischer said. "I look forward to seeing it used by anglers, canoers and those looking to simply get out on the water and have some fun. Our dive and rescue teams from the Louisville Fire and Louisville Metro Police departments also believe it will greatly enhance public safety with better access to the Ohio River. I want to thank Kentucky Fish and Wildlife for their partnership on this important project."

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife maintains more than 160 ramps statewide and its crews will build the two-lane concrete ramp at Shawnee Park. It also plans to create an area adjacent to the ramp for bank fishing access.

For its portion of the project, the department is using Sport Fish Restoration Program grant funds, which are derived from dedicated federal excise taxes on equipment used for fishing, and recreational boat motor fuels.

Louisville Parks and Recreation has contracted with private firms on the design and construction of an access road and parking area large enough to accommodate more than two dozen vehicles and boat trailers.

Construction could be finished this fall, barring inclement weather or other conditions that could potentially delay the project's completion.

Designed by landscape architect and conservationist Frederick Law Olmsted, Shawnee Park sits along the Ohio River in Louisville's west end just minutes from Interstate 264.

The new Shawnee Park ramp will

**See "Shawnee," page 6**



## Registration open for Kentucky's Conservation Camps

It's hard to believe it's that time of year again. Yep, that's right, it's time to register your camper for

**Conservation Camp!** Another week of adventure awaits at one of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife's three conservation camps; **Camp Currie**, **Camp Wallace** or **Camp Webb**. Registration is now open and remember, spots fill up quickly!

Your camper will again get the opportunity to earn their patches at the seven fun camp

activities. The early bird camp registration remains at last year's rate of \$225, which

includes: lodging, meals, transportation to and from camp and a Junior Sportsman's License (a \$30 value).

Camp is open only to those students who are in grades 4-6 (as of April 1) and not older than 13. Campers are picked up Monday and dropped off Friday at a predetermined location in their home or adjacent county. Transportation is arranged by KDFWR personnel through local school districts or by charter bus service.

**Register now** to reserve your child's spot by visiting [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov).



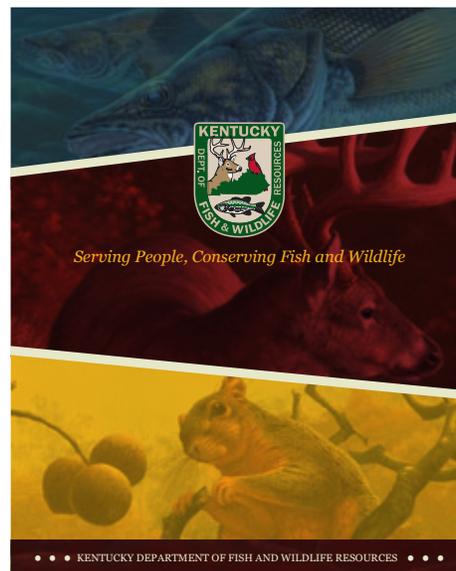
## Learn more about Kentucky Fish and Wildlife

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources recently updated some pages on its website and produced new documents to provide an in-depth look at the agency.

All of the information is available online at [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov) with a click on the "About Us" tab.

Under the "See Also" heading in the right margin, the **"All About Kentucky Fish and Wildlife"** document provides snapshots of the department's purpose, funding and expenditures, economic impacts, divisions and strategic plan goals.

Two other documents – **"Who We Are"** and **"Economic Benefits of Fish**



**and Wildlife"** – are essentially excerpts from the larger document.

The department is pleased to provide this information and appreciates its constituents and many partners for their continued support.

## "Shawnee," continued

provide a second Jefferson County location for boaters to enjoy the Cannelton Pool of the Ohio River, and it will be the closest Kentucky ramp downstream of McAlpine Locks and Dam and the Falls of the Ohio.

"The Ohio River is a tremendous resource for recreational boaters, and the Falls of the Ohio area offers some of the best fishing in the state, especially for sauger, catfish and striped bass," Storm said. "Beyond improving recreational access, this ramp also will help our conservation officers' efforts on the water and ongoing efforts to fight the spread of Asian carp. The Falls of the Ohio is a moderate barrier to these invasive fish, and the Cannelton Pool is the farthest pool upriver where we are seeing Asian carp in large numbers. We continue to work with our counterparts in Indiana to facilitate commercial removal of Asian carp in this area, and the Shawnee Park ramp will provide another access point to help make that happen."

## Bobwhite specialty license plate receives special recognition

The National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) was founded 25 years ago from the Southeastern Quail Working Group of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). The NBCI consists of state agency, non-governmental organization, and federal agency biologists from 25 states interested in the range-wide conservation of northern bobwhite.

Kentucky has been involved in this national effort for more than 10 years with agency personnel serving in leadership roles in the organization during this time.

Each year, the NBCI bestows the Fire Bird Conservation Award to allow State Quail Coordinators the opportunity to recognize an individual, a group or an entity that has made a significant contribution to bobwhite quail restoration in their state over the past year.

A recipient of the Fire Bird Conservation Award for the 2019 calendar year was the Kentucky Bobwhite Specialty License Plate Board consisting of Jack Porter, Ed Schumann, Richard Hines, Dave Howell, and Mac McCay.

The Bobwhite Specialty License Plate, designed with artwork by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife artist Rick Hill, was released in 2008 as a voluntary specialty license plate offered to drivers in Kentucky. Ten dollars of the initial and renewal of the registration fee becomes a voluntary donation for use in Kentucky for bobwhite projects.

The license plate board reviews grants for these projects on an annual basis and makes decisions on which grants to fund,



Pictured from left to right are Ed Schumann, Dave Howell, Richard Hines and Jack Porter.

up to \$5,000. To date, it has funded more than 50 projects totaling nearly \$250,000. Highlights of projects include seed programs with landowners, funding for research on Peabody Wildlife Management Area and Blue Grass Army Depot, Livingston National Bobwhite Focus Area, Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, and most recently funded two vehicle wraps of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife trucks.

The license plate board has been pivotal in funding projects that leverage other funds. Every grant requires contributions from other sources, increasing their impact. The board supports bold ideas especially highlighted by funding projects that benefit bobwhite through marketing and public relations efforts by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

Each board member has spent count-



less hours sorting through grant applications and awarding funds to deserving efforts on a volunteer basis. No other non-profit organization in the state has contributed more directed funding toward bobwhite projects outlined in Kentucky's Bobwhite Restoration Plan than the Bobwhite Specialty License Plate. The license plate fund continues to contribute \$30,000 annually to bobwhite projects, much if not all of which fall directly in line with the NBCI principles. Their vision, leadership, and volunteerism embody the spirit of the Firebird Award.