

March 2019

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Field to Fork
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Conservation officers boat supplies to stranded residents in Leslie County

In February, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources conservation officers teamed up with The Servant's Closet and Leslie County government to deliver supplies to residents stranded by flooding in the headwaters of Buckhorn Lake.

"The county was just overwhelmed. They didn't have any boats or any way to get supplies to people, so we were happy to help them out," Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Lt. Greg Watts said.

The Servant's Closet, a Leslie County-based charity founded by Dana Watson, had collected supplies but couldn't deliver them.

"Our employees don't just live in a community, we are part of the community," said Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Rich Storm. "We knew we could help, so we deployed the people and equipment needed to assist those in trouble."

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife responded with boats and conservation officers to navigate through the timber-choked floodwaters to reach approximately 50-100 households along KY 257. While some residents managed



Photo courtesy The Servant's Closet

to leave before the floodwaters blocked the road, many remained behind.

In addition to delivering supplies,

conservation officers evacuated a person who had medical conditions and did not wish to remain stranded at his house. Officers and county officials used department boats and a boat loaned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers delivered some 70 boxes of food and water to residents. Conservation officers also boated employees of Kentucky Power to check electrical stations affected by the flooding.

"The people were really thankful," Watts said. "They were glad to get any help that they could get."

Conservation officers have special equipment and training to help people affected by natural disasters. Whether it's pulling cars out of ditches in winter or traveling to Louisiana to help victims of Hurricane Katrina, officers have a history of helping others.

"It's just what we do," Watts said. "It's why we're conservation officers. We're there to serve the people of the commonwealth."

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WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner's Office

This letter came from Rose Spalding, Bardstown, KY. "Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity you gave me for duck hunting. If it was not for that opportunity I would never have duck hunted. I have also learned so much, like how to clean a duck and how to do a duck call. I will now continue to be a hunter/conservationist. If I ever have children of my own I will raise them to do the same and be a conservationist. I also request that you continue funding for the Greenwing program.

I also won the duck call competition and I wanted to thank Bruce for purchasing the watch that I won. He truly cares about the kids who go there."

The seventh annual Kentucky Utilities – Woodford Warriors Deer Hunt invited 18 participants to hunt the second weekend of modern firearms season. To make this possible, local landowners volunteer areas for hunting on their property. The letter below is written by one of the participants to one of the landowners (Robert Richardson) who donated the use of their property for this worthwhile cause. The letter writer's name has been omitted to protect his privacy.

"I am writing this letter to thank you for participating in the Woodford Warriors Hunt, with Byron Marlowe, Steve Anderson, Joe Lacey and others. I know several of your family members are involved with the hunt and I spoke with

Dillon, who I believe is your nephew. You are all great Americans, patriots and I am a richer person for the friendships I made during the hunt.

I am so grateful for you generously letting me come on your farm and harvest one of your deer. I have been shooting and hunting almost my entire life. I grew up with a gun in my hands and later became a pretty serious bow hunter. I have killed dozens of deer and the buck I harvested on your farm was by far the biggest of my life.

Like so many of my friends in the Army, I grew up as an outdoorsman, and this, at some level influenced my decision to join the military. Many of the skills I learned as a sportsman (walking quietly through the woods in the dark, sitting patiently in the cold, observing the natural environment around me, etc.) served me well in my training, and helped me to earn my Green Beret.

Sadly, like many soldiers I didn't get to hunt nearly as much as I did growing up, after I joined the military (I spent more than one hunting season in a war zone). Hunting was one of the things I really looked forward to when I thought about my life after the Army, and the hunt on your land was one of the most memorable of my life. With that said, I really don't think the true value of the Woodford Warriors Hunt is in the actual hunting. Yes, the job of being out there, with the opportunity to harvest the buck of a lifetime is great, and adds to the experience,

but I think the real value to the veterans, like myself, is the camaraderie.

I read a book last year, "Tribe," by Sebastian Junger. At the time I was still in the Army (I did over 12 years in special operations), and I enjoyed the book but didn't have the same frame of reference as I do now that I am a civilian. In the book, Sebastian talks about veteran suicide and depression, and how a lot of it isn't from the scars of war and PTSD. His theory is that what a lot of veterans are suffering from is the loss of a social network, their brothers in arms, people with shared experiences and a common bond. I have always been a pretty happy person, I have a good job, a great wife and three beautiful daughters; after I left the military I moved back home, close to my mother, father, sister and extended family. I am blessed in many ways and even I felt the loneliness, and missed the camaraderie of the Army. The Woodford Warriors hunt is definitely a place that brings veterans back together in a fun environment to share stories and experiences like they did when they were in uniform.

The time I spent on your farm was a hunt I will never forget, sitting in a beautiful old oak, with a babbling brook behind me, you have an amazing place and thank you for sharing it with me. Hopefully, I will see you next year or the year after. I want to come down and volunteer my time to help with the hunt.

May God bless you and your family."

New Fisheries Division employees

The Fisheries Division has recently welcomed several new employees to positions at the Department's two hatcheries that resulted from the reorganization of the Transportation Branch.

Clay Johnson and Zack Messer were appointed to Fish and Wildlife Techni-

cian I positions with Minor E. Clark Fish Hatchery in 2018. Clay and Zack previously worked as interim employees with the hatchery in Morehead. Clay was a seasonal employee over parts of seven years while simultaneously taking classes at Morehead State University majoring in

Applied Science/Electrical Engineering. Clay is from Morehead but lives in West Liberty with his wife, Teretha. He enjoys hunting and fishing in his spare time. Zack also attended Morehead State Uni-

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Above: A young angler fights a big Wells Catfish and tests out a new catfish rod on a fishing simulator at the 2019 Catfish Conference. Right: Fisheries Biologists from KDFWR attended the 2019 Catfish Conference to educate the public on recent surveys and answer questions regarding catfish in the Commonwealth.

KDFWR biologists attend 2019 Catfish Conference

Biologists from the Department's Stream Fisheries Investigations Research Branch attended the 2019 Catfish Conference, the nation's only fishing and boating show aimed directly toward catfish. The conference, in Louisville, provides the public with data from sampling activities as well as responds to angler questions and concerns.

In its fourth year, the Catfish Conference reached new heights as it continued

to grow. The inaugural Catfish Conference in 2016 was at Jeff Jones Marine in Versailles, Kentucky. It has grown so rapidly that in 2019 it was forced to change venues for a second time and was hosted at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

This year's conference catered to a wider group of catfish anglers with countless vendors offering rods, reels, terminal tackle, apparel and more. Boat reps from many well-known companies were there

to showcase their newest models made specifically for catfish anglers. Additionally, kayak companies were there for the first time as the paddling industry continues to grow.

Anglers also had the chance to take part in a fishing simulator, catfish cook-off, and fishing seminars with topics covering tournament tactics, electronics and how to target certain species of catfish.

"Employees," continued

versity and received a BS in Agriculture in 2016. He lives in Morehead with his wife, Megan, and spends his free time hunting and fishing.

Ryan Rayburn started in March at Clark Hatchery as a Fish and Wildlife Technician I. Ryan has an Associate's Degree in Environmental Science and has worked as a sales representative in the outdoor industry and is a fishing and hunting guide in eastern Kentucky. He was most recently working as a seasonal employee with the Wildlife Division at Yatesville Lake WMA. Ryan lives in Elliott County with his wife, Amanda. He enjoys spend-

ing time outdoors hunting and fishing in his free time.

Josh Bishop was hired as a Fish and Wildlife Technician I at Peter W. Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery in February. Josh comes to the Department from Cleveland, Tennessee, where he worked as a seasonal Forestry Aide with the Division of Forestry. He earned a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Tennessee Technological University in 2017. Proving he can handle change, Josh married his wife, Morgan, and moved to Frankfort just prior to starting his new position. Josh enjoys fishing, hunting and hiking in his spare time.

Willie Clifton will join the staff at Pfeiffer Hatchery as a Fish and Wild-

life Technician II in March. Willie has worked for the Engineering, Infrastructure and Technology Division on the Fishing and Boating Access crew. Willie lives in Owenton with his wife, Cyndi, and two children. Brandon is on the Owen County High School football team and Kaylee Snell will graduate this spring and attend dental school in the fall. Willie enjoys hunting and fishing.

All of the above employees will be tasked with supporting all fish culture activities at the Department's two state hatcheries, which includes hauling and stocking fish produced at the hatcheries and also trout produced at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery.

Commissioner, commission member meet with stakeholders, public around the state

One of Commissioner Rich Storm's top priorities for the Department is improving two-way communications with the public and with key stakeholder groups. He has already attended several stakeholder meetings around the state, including League of Kentucky Sportsmen district gatherings, hunter education instructors and local sportsmen's clubs.

Ralph Swallows, Fish and Wildlife Commission member for the 3rd District, recently met with multiple groups of sportsmen and sportswomen to engage with stakeholders and promote mutual understanding and trust. Based on significant recent call volume he received regarding questions about proposed regulation changes, he initiated a town hall meeting at Cabela's in Louisville. Commissioner Storm and representatives from several of the Department's divisions joined Swallows to explain details of the proposed changes and to help answer in-depth questions. Those in attendance included director Lisa Cox and assistant director Melissa Trent of Administrative Services; Major Shane Carrier and Captain Rick Mehlbauer from Law Enforcement; Brian Clark, assistant director of Marketing; and Ben Robinson, assistant director of Wildlife.

Swallows was also invited to attend the monthly meeting of the Long Run Sportsman's Club, similarly based in the Derby City. Brian Clark joined him to help answer questions and relay information requests to particular KDFWR staff. One of the club members remarked in reference to the town hall meeting the previous week at Cabelas: "In 20 years of attending public meetings with KDFWR, I've never seen a better cross-section of divisions represented and openness to communicating with the public."



Commissioner Rich Storm and 3rd District representative Ralph Swallows answer questions at the recent Louisville town hall meeting.



Ralph Swallows reviews recent actions of the Commission with members of the Long Run Sportsman's Club.



Chace Wallen demonstrates how to breast out a turkey after harvest. These turkeys were donated to the Field to Fork class by a farm in Springfield, Kentucky, so participants could see firsthand how to field dress a turkey.

Field to Fork classes focus on spring turkey hunting

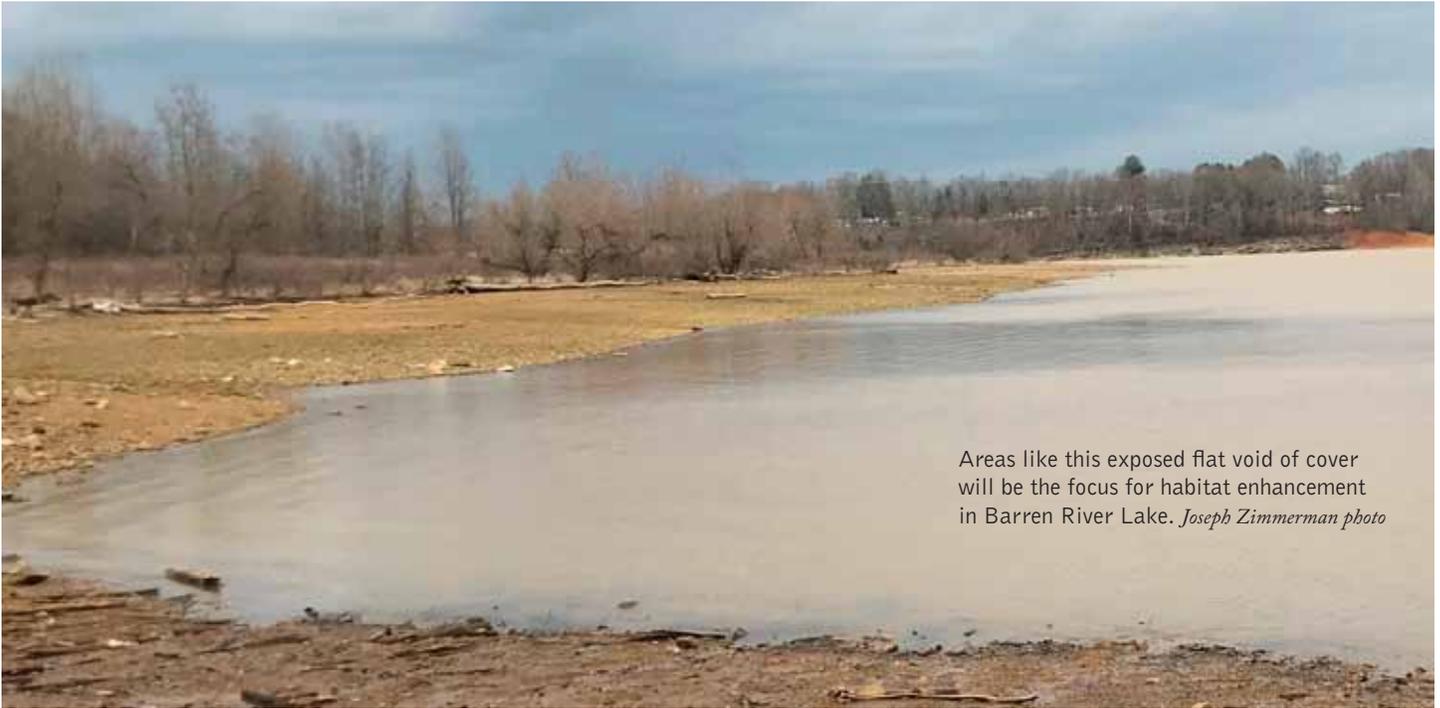
The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife’s R3 group had two Turkey Field to Fork classes in March. Both classes, one hosted by the Fern Creek Sportsman’s Club in Jefferson County and the other hosted at the Bluegrass Stockyards and Buds Gun Shop and Range in Fayette County, were full before registration closed. The workshops, which are designed to bring new hunters afield, cover everything a new hunter would need to know about spring turkey hunting in Kentucky. Topics included: history of wild turkey; seasons and regulations; turkey biology and habitat; scouting techniques; sex and age identification; calling; hunting equipment; hunting strategies; field dressing; and cooking wild turkey meat. Participants learn from experts in the field from across Kentucky.



Above: Field Hudnall, CEO of Field Proven Calls, demonstrates how to use a striker turkey call. Right: Scott Crume explains why it is important to pattern your shotgun and where you want to aim on the bird for an ethical, clean shot.



Participants received new Field Proven turkey calls.



Areas like this exposed flat void of cover will be the focus for habitat enhancement in Barren River Lake. *Joseph Zimmerman photo*

Habitat improvements coming to Barren River Lake

The Fisheries Division has been busy planning a multi-year fisheries habitat project for Barren River Lake. Staff have worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wildlife Division, Law Enforcement, Friends of Barren River Lake, local anglers and several bass tournament organizers to establish the Barren River Lake Fish Habitat Committee. Meetings this winter focused on various project issues from material staging areas to habitat structure types.

The primary goals of the project are to increase structural cover for fish and to increase angler success. "Addition of the proposed habitat will be well received and utilized by our anglers," said Southwestern Fishery District Coordinator, Eric Cummins.

The Committee has been busy researching locations for habitat enhancement. Seven areas of the lake are selected, including lower Peter Creek, Skaggs Creek, lower Beaver Creek, Finney, Narrows, Peninsula, and Hurricane Creek/State Park. Lower Peter Creek will be



Eric Cummins presents fisheries data to the Barren River Lake Fish Habitat Committee. *Mike Hardin photo*

the focus for the first phase scheduled for summer 2019.

Staff have worked with the Wildlife Division on obtaining trees from the Barren River Lake Wildlife Management Area for brush pile material. Other material types to be used will include commer-

cially-made habitat products, pvc, stake beds and rock. USACE Park Ranger Alicia Cannon said, "We are really looking forward to the addition of fish habitat to the project, as it will be a great asset for our fish population and the large number of anglers that utilize Barren River Lake."



Above: KDFWR staff and BSA Troop 270 members ready to place the wood duck box up. Right: Scouts fill the wood duck boxes with cedar shavings for durable nesting material.



Lending a hand for wood ducks

Scott Ferrell, wildlife management foreman who oversees several WMAs in north-central Kentucky, and wildlife technician Lanny Claxon recently worked with Scouts and leaders from BSA Troop 270 (chartered in Bagdad in Shelby County) to try out an experimental new nest box placement system using perforated sign post materials together with a standard box design. The project was undertaken on Benjy Kinman Lake on the Kentucky River WMA in Henry County. Although they experienced difficulty in finding sites with suitable substrate on the lake floor, the new design being piloted worked very well; the trial-and-error of the project was a great learning experience for the Scouts about how challenging field work can be.

KDFWR Wildlife Division staff members went above and beyond by not only facilitating the volunteer conservation project on a Saturday morning to help two of the scouts meet their requirements for Life Scout (rank immediately preced-

ing Eagle) while capitalizing on the volunteer labor, but they also spent some time introducing the biology, ecology and recent history of wood ducks to help put the importance of nesting boxes into perspective. Because of historic losses in wetlands and reduction in availability of large-diameter trees to serve as nesting sites, the species had sharply declined in the early-mid 1900s. However, through research and conservation efforts led by state fish and wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and partnering organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, effective strategies were developed in the late 1900s that fostered recovery of the species to sustainable and huntable population levels. To contribute to the ongoing conservation of this species, KDFWR staff and volunteers survey wood duck populations with brood surveys on Kentucky waters; capture,



The post is first driven into the lake floor at a selected site, then a predator guard is fastened below the box location, and finally the box is bolted to the post.

leg-band and release hundreds of woodies each summer-fall statewide; and place and maintain hundreds of nest boxes on public and private lands to help ensure successful reproduction each year.

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill prescribed fire



A loggerhead shrike hunts in the burned areas of Shaker Village.

Kyle Bixler photo

The morning air held a chill on a clear and dry day in February at Shaker Village as the hum of UTVs and banter set the stage for a great day for prescribed fire. As a Quail Focus Area, Shaker Village has been managed to favor native early successional plants and the animals that thrive in this habitat. One key management practice for these habitats is prescribed fire. Since 2009, Shaker Village has utilized prescribed fire on a large scale to facilitate quality native grasslands for a multitude of species. The prescribed fire at Shaker Village has been a great opportunity for collaboration among biologists from different entities. With around 30 participants, potentially the most ever, this burn included individuals from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, Shaker Village, Berea College, University of Kentucky Arboretum and students from Eastern Kentucky University. The burn was also used to facilitate training for five apprentice burn bosses in compliance with the Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council.

The prescribed fire went off without issue, with more than 420 acres burned. The following weekend, a local birder visited the site and recorded an impressive list of almost 40 bird species, most

using the newly burned areas to forage. The birder also reported a rather rare sight in Kentucky, a loggerhead shrike hunting in the blackened, burned areas. Loggerhead shrikes are listed as a species of greatest conservation need in KDFWR's state wildlife action plan, estimates place the shrike population in Kentucky to be around 50-100 individuals. Shrikes regularly hunt small mammals during the winter months when other prey availability is low. Raptors and other predators are attracted to fires or recently burned fields,

because their prey is much easier to find and catch with the significant reduction in cover. Upon this discovery, biologists from KDFWR were soon onsite to attempt capture of this rare bird.

KDFWR is participating in an international effort to study the eastern population of loggerhead shrikes. Biologists are still unsure what is driving the range wide decline of this once abundant species. Part of KDFWR's effort to study shrikes includes trapping and color banding individuals. By doing this each bird can be identified and monitored throughout their life cycle, providing valuable information that could help researchers determine what is fueling this decline. Several shrikes have been banded in central Kentucky, if anyone sees a banded shrike please report your observations to loren.taylor@ky.gov.

The prescribed fire at Shaker Village has been a huge success in the management of quality native grasslands and the facilitation of partnership across many entities. The burns this year also had two more great benefits: the training of future Fire Bosses through the Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council and biologists were able to successfully trap and band two new loggerhead shrikes. Thanks to everyone that made the burns possible.





Above: Major Shane Carrier spoke during a break out session of the Kentucky Magistrates and Commissioners Association 2019 conference. Ben Robinson and Paul Wilkes were also available to answer questions. Right: Marketing Director Brian Blank was a keynote speaker.

Improving KDFWR's grassroots connections

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife staff shared information at the recent Kentucky Magistrates and Commissioners Association (KMCA) 2019 conference, in Louisville. Marketing Director Brian Blank was a keynote speaker, and shared background and priorities

for KDFWR's new Commissioner, Rich Storm. Other KDFWR staff teamed up in break-out sessions with rotating groups of the local officials; they shared information about key department programs ranging from combating invasive species such as carp and bush honeysuckle to assistance

available to landowners, and highlighted how to find local KDFWR contacts using fw.ky.gov. Staff who contributed were: Major Shane Carrier (Law Enforcement), Brian Clark (Marketing), Kevin Kelly (Information & Education), Ben Robinson (Wildlife) and Paul Wilkes (Fisheries).

Repairs made at General Butler's lake, fishing pier restored

General Butler State Resort Park's lake reached a full pool on Jan. 25, 2019, after park maintenance staff closed the slide gate on Jan. 18.

Kentucky State Parks had to make repairs to the 24-inch pipe in the dam that was collapsing. The construction contract is not complete, as the road access still needs to be paved in the spring and the contractor needs to finish the concrete surface in the emergency spillway, but the water level will remain at normal pool.

Fish and Wildlife has an ADA fishing pier on the lake that had been removed in 2012, when initial repairs to the dam began. Fish and Wildlife EIT Division crew members William Clifton, Johnny Bohannon, Joe Cook, Rodney Smith lead by Paul Brewer completed the reinstalled of the fishing pier on Feb. 27.

