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Wayne County Angler Catches World Record-Sized Spotted Gar

APRIL 23RD 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Wayne County Angler Catches World Record-Sized Spotted Gar

Devlin Rich of Williamsville caught a 10-pound, 9-ounce fish from Wappapello Lake.

Wappapello Lake, MO - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) congratulates Devlin Rich of Williamsville for catching a new state record spotted gar. Rich was fishing with a pole-and-line at Wappapello Lake Feb. 25 when he reeled in the 10-pound, 9-ounce fish. His catch is not only the latest Missouri state record, but it beats the current spotted gar world record of 9-pounds, 12-ounces set back in 1994.

Spotted gar is rather common and widely distributed in the Bootheel lowlands of southeastern Missouri.

“Because of the hard, bony jaws, gars are seldom taken on hook-and-line and are rarely used for food,” noted MDC Fisheries Programs Specialist Andrew Branson. “Special techniques are required to capture them consistently with rod-and-reel, but they do provide a ready target for the bow hunter because they often bask near the surface of the water.”

Gars are generally associated with warm, sluggish backwaters. They frequently rise to the water’s surface, opening and closing their jaws with a loud snap, then sinking below. This behavior allows them to swallow air into their swim bladder, which allows it to function much like a lung. This adaptation helps them survive in still or slow waters with relatively low oxygen levels.

MDC staff verified Rich’s record-breaking catch on a certified scale in Williamsville. This is the second state record caught in 2021.

Missouri state record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Alternative methods include: throwlines, limb lines, bank lines, jug lines, spearfishing, snagging, snaring, gigging, grabbing, archery, and atlatl.

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Osage County Angler Catches 112-pound Invasive Black Carp

MARCH 10TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Osage County Angler Catches 112-pound Invasive Black Carp

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Black carp is one of the few fish species listed on Missouri's Prohibited Species list.

An Osage County man got a surprise last week after catching a 112-pound invasive black carp from the Osage River. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has listed black carp on the Prohibited Species List – a list of species that may not be imported, exported, transported, sold, purchased, or possessed alive in Missouri without written approval of the director.

Jesse Hughes of Bonnots Mill was originally catfishing with friends March 4 when he

hooked into the fish.

“We hooked into it and knew it was something big, but I originally thought it was a catfish,” Hughes recalled. “It was the first I’d heard of a black carp. I didn’t know anything about it, so this has been quite the learning experience.”

According to MDC, black carp are an invasive fish from Asia that eat mussels and snails. The fish damage populations of native mollusks, many of which are critically endangered. There is a strong possibility the species is becoming established, with breeding populations, on our continent.

Black carp have been found in the Mississippi River system, including the Osage River, where in 1994 about 30 reportedly escaped from a fish farm during a high-water event and entered that river.

Most of the black carp in the United States were introduced to control problematic snail populations in commercial fisheries, and these individuals are presumably sterile. Yet fertile individuals can be present, too. Given that black carp can live for 15 years, even the sterile individuals can present a serious long-term problem for native mollusk populations.

“If anglers happen to catch black carp, or any invasive fish, while fishing in Missouri waters, it’s imperative to contact their local conservation agent,” explained MDC Fisheries Programs Specialist Andrew Branson. “That way, our Fisheries staff can be notified and monitor the spread of these destructive species.”

The black carp caught by Hughes is currently being studied by the United States Geological Survey.

“It’s a little disappointing, as I don’t think I’ll ever catch a fish that big again,” joked Hughes. “But at least it’s one less invasive fish in Missouri waters.”

Black carp appear similar to the common grass carp, but the black carp is darker, though not truly black, and some report the adult black carp have a relatively narrower snout. It also has large pharyngeal teeth, or throat teeth, that resemble human molars. These teeth are used to crush the shells of mollusk and prey.

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Otter Slough Conservation Area COVID Red Level

NOVEMBER 19TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Otter Slough Conservation Area COVID Red Level

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Otter Slough Conservation Area COVID Red Level

Attention Waterfowl Hunters:

Because of COVID-19 positives, the draw facility being closed, and staffing shortages because of being in quarantine, the managed waterfowl hunt at Otter Slough will operate in the Red Level on November 19, 20, and 21.

If you have drawn a reservation for the ADA Blind or the draw pools/blinds, go to this

page to find your specific hunting location and maps and to print your required Daily Waterfowl Hunting Tag (Green Card): <https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/waterfowl/waterfowl-managed-hunts/red-level-procedures-and-areas>

Please note these details for COVID Red Level Waterfowl Drawings:

Hunters DO NOT need to show up at the Draw Time, they can simply go to their hunting location.

No staff-hunter contact.

No facility use.

100% reservation allocation for residents only through in-season draw.

Hunt positions will be pre-assigned.

No poor line or vacancy filling.

MDC has designated the following staff to answer questions hunters may have:

Statewide -- Joel Porath at 573-522-4115 ext. 3188

North Zone -- Chris Freeman at (660) 646-6122 or Craig Crisler at (660) 446-3371

Middle Zone -- Luke Wehmhoff at 573-624-5821 ext. 4662, Gary Calvert at 636-441-4554 ext. 4180

South Zone -- Joel Porath at 573-522-4115 ext. 3188

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MDC Announces Plan for Missouri Elk Hunting

JULY 07TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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MDC announces plan for Missouri elk hunting

Limited season for Missouri residents could start as soon as 2020 if plan criteria are met.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) shared its initial plan for a limited elk-hunting season with the Missouri Conservation Commission at the Commission's public meeting June 28 at MDC headquarters in Jefferson City. The Commission gave its initial approval of the proposed plan, and MDC is asking for public comments.

According to MDC Elk and Deer Biologist Aaron Hildreth, who presented the elk-hunting plan at the meeting, MDC will begin offering a limited season for hunting elk once the herd of about 175 animals reaches a minimum of 200 with an annual herd growth rate of at least 10 percent and a herd ratio of at least four cow elk for every bull elk.

According to MDC research, the herd will likely reach 200 animals by 2020. With that in mind, MDC has designated a nine-day archery season for elk running Oct. 17-25, 2020, and a nine-day firearms season for elk running Dec. 12-20, 2020.

Hildreth noted that the number of permits for a possible 2020 hunt has yet to be determined.

“If the elk population is below desired numbers in early 2020, the Conservation Commission may choose to not open the online application process or issue any permits for a fall 2020 hunt,” he explained. “We will then focus on 2021.”

MDC hopes to eventually reach a target population of 500 animals and will use hunting to manage herd size and location.

Elk are a native species in Missouri but were hunted to extinction in the state through unregulated market hunting during the late 1800s. MDC worked with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to reintroduce the native species by capturing and transporting wild elk from Kentucky to a remote area of the Missouri Ozarks. The reintroduction effort took place in 2011, 2012, and 2013 with most of the 108 relocated animals being cow elk with some calves and immature bulls. Their numbers have grown, and their range has expanded in recent years to cover portions of Carter, Reynolds, and Shannon counties. The area consists of nearly 80 percent public land interspersed with tracts of private property.

Hunting Framework

Under MDC’s framework, elk hunting would be limited to Missouri residents at least 11 years of age who have their hunter-education certification or are exempt from hunter education by age (born before Jan. 1, 1967). Hunting permits would be assigned through a random lottery of all applicants. MDC will require a \$10 application fee to be eligible for the limited hunt with a \$50 permit fee for those selected through the lottery. MDC will limit the random lottery to one application per-

person, per-year with a 10-year “sit-out” period for those drawn for a permit before they may apply again.

The hunting zone will be limited to Carter, Reynolds, and Shannon counties, but will exclude the special refuge portion of Peck Ranch Conservation Area where elk were initially reintroduced.

“Permits issued each year will be valid for a nine-day archery season beginning the third Saturday in October and a nine-day firearms season beginning the second Saturday in December,” Hildreth explained.

He added that the timing of the seasons was designed to avoid the peak of elk breeding during late September and early October and to avoid the elk season coinciding with portions of the firearms deer season.

“The allowed hunting methods for each season will be the same as for deer hunting,” Hildreth said. “The permits will allow for the harvest of one bull elk with at least one antler being greater than six inches in length. Successful hunters must Telecheck their harvested elk, like for deer.”

Local Landowners Included

According to MDC, local landowners have been supportive of the reintroduction of elk to the area and local communities have benefited from an increase in tourism related to elk.

MDC will reserve at least one permit from the annual random lottery for resident landowners with at least 20 acres within a specified boundary within Carter, Reynolds, and Shannon counties. The special landowner permits will be nontransferable and may only be filled on the landowner’s property.

“Qualifying landowners will not be required to pay the \$10 application fee but will still pay a \$50 permit fee if selected,” Hildreth said. “If selected, they will not be required to wait 10 years before again applying for the landowner permit. Qualifying landowners may apply once each year for a regular hunting permit and for a special landowner permit but may receive only one permit annually.”

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Apply Online for MDC Managed Deer Hunts Starting July 1

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Apply online for MDC managed deer hunts starting July 1

Beginning July 1, deer hunters can apply online through the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) website for a shot at more than 100 managed deer hunts throughout the state for archery, muzzleloading, and modern firearms from mid-September through mid-January at conservation areas, state and other parks, national wildlife refuges, and other public areas. Some managed hunts are held specifically for youth or for people with disabilities.

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The managed deer hunt application period is July 1 - 31. Hunters are selected by a weighted random draw through Jan. 15. Applicants who are drawn are notified by mail.

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