

## Area Bloggers



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### Conservation Notes With Mark Reed

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MAY 22ND 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

#### Conservation Notes With Mark Reed

*Submitted by  
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*Stoddard County Conservation Agent*

**Dexter, Missouri** - The 2013 spring turkey season is in the books here in Missouri. Statewide hunters harvested 42,220 turkeys, which is an increase of 1,773 from 2012. Stoddard County turkey hunters bagged a total of 304 birds in 2013 compared to 302 last year. The county total includes turkeys harvested during the two day youth seasons. Statewide the Missouri turkey population is strong and surveys show our bird numbers are doing well on the heels of a couple good hatches.

Crappie fishing has been spotty. Weather fronts can make crappie fishing unpredictable as water temperatures fluctuate. Crappie tend to become more active and spawning behavior begins once water temperatures reach the mid 50's.

Otter Slough anglers have had more consistent success while crappie fishermen at other area lakes report tougher conditions. Anglers should note that the crappie length limit has been eliminated on Otter Slough. All other Otter Slough fishing regulations remain the same and length limits on other area lakes are still in place.

Before a crappie length limit is put in place, biologists must determine the rate of growth on a given lake. Crappie must reach the proposed size within four years or a length limit will not be established. Otter Slough crappie were hitting nine inches in their third year which is excellent growth, however, not many lived long enough to reach that size. Crappie harvest on Otter Slough is so heavy that before the length limit few fish lived long enough to reach quality size. The first couple years the length limit was in place, anglers were able to harvest larger fish, however,

crappie have become stunted and very few fish now reach the nine inch length limit.

Biologists believe competition is too great in the lake and too many small crappie are now present. Crappie growth rates will not improve until some are harvested. Hopefully we will see some larger fish within a year or two.

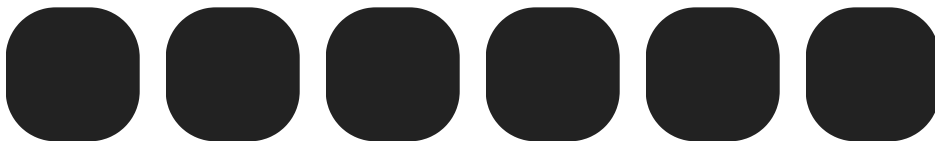
Our cool, wet spring has been a boon to morel hunters. Mushrooms need a little moisture followed by sunny days with night temperatures above 50 degrees. Many folks report this spring as the best mushroom year they can remember. Mushrooms can be harvested on most Department of Conservation areas but remember to ask before entering private land. Trespassing is a crime regardless of why you enter private property. Also remember that private land does not have to be posted in order for a person to be charged with trespass.

If you are not certain of how to identify morels, the Missouri Department of Conservation has an excellent publication, which can help you identify several types of edible mushrooms found in Missouri. To receive a copy of the publication, contact any Missouri Department of Conservation office.

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