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Beat Black Friday Blues with Nature Shop Buys

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Cape Girardeau, Missouri - Are you dreading the crowds and conundrums of holiday shopping? Kick off your shoes, fire up the laptop or tablet, and take care of Christmas shopping with nature-themed gifts online.

The Missouri Department of Conservation's Nature Shop (mdcnatureshop.com) makes shopping for outdoorsy friends and family a breeze. The site even has a gift registry where you can leave hints about what you would like to find under the tree on Dec. 25. If you prefer not to buy online, you can call 877-521-8632. Conservation Heritage Card holders get a 15-percent discount. Mail, phone, and online orders are subject to sales tax and shipping and handling fees.

If you like to see and touch items before buying, or if you need an excuse to get out and about, visit one of the brick-and-mortar Nature Shop outlets at Conservation Department nature centers in Kirkwood, Cape Girardeau, Springfield, Kansas City, Blue Springs, and Jefferson City. They offer a surprising array of reasonably priced gifts, from butterfly pendants and bird calls to field guides and children's binoculars.

The Nature Shop's newest item is Waterfowl Hunting and Wetland Conservation in Missouri – A Model of Collaboration. This coffee-table book is an exhaustive compendium of every aspect of waterfowl conservation and hunting in Missouri. It is a sure hit for anyone who is intrigued with the history of decoys and calls, legendary duck hunters and retrievers, waterfowl art and the lore of private duck clubs. Copies of the 480-page book, illustrated with hundreds of historic photos, art and contemporary

photography, are available for \$40. Proceeds from sales of Waterfowl Hunting and Wetland Conservation in Missouri will be dedicated to wetland and waterfowl conservation.

One perennial favorite gift is the Natural Events Calendar, with 12 months of daily notes about everything from meteor showers to the hatching of bald eagle eggs. At \$7 each, it's the gift that keeps giving all year long.

Foodies on your holiday shopping list will love the book *Cooking Wild in Missouri*, a collection of recipes that incorporate wild fish, game, nuts, berries, and mushrooms. It has everything from creamed morels and pawpaw gelato to blackberry cordial. More adventurous cooks might want to try catfish tacos or venison moussaka. This lavishly illustrated book sells for just \$15.

For the paddlers on your list, there is the newly updated *Paddler's Guide to Missouri* (\$8). This 94-page book lists access and take-out points, landmarks, and other features of 58 streams in every corner of the state.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping permits are additional gift possibilities. At \$19, a Resident Small-Game Hunting and Fishing Permit provides a full year of outdoor fun. Giving a Nonresident Small-Game Hunting Permit (\$80) or a Nonresident Fishing Permit (\$42) encourages out-of-state family members to come home more often. Permits bought on Dec. 1 or later are good from the date of purchase through the following permit year, which ends on the last day of February. So recipients get 15 months of use out of them.

The Apprentice Hunter Authorization (\$10) is an affordable gift that can create memories for a lifetime. This item is not a permit, but rather an authorization to buy hunting permits without first completing hunter education. This is made to order if you have a friend or relative who is intrigued by the idea of hunting but doesn't want to invest time in hunter education to satisfy his or her curiosity. Not only will they get to experience your favorite outdoor pastime, you will share the experience, since hunters using the authorization must hunt with you or another hunter education-certified mentor.

The ultimate hunting/fishing gift is a Resident Lifetime Conservation Partner Permit. This entitles the holder to the privileges associated with a Resident Hunting and Fishing Permit, Trout Permit, Migratory Bird Hunting Permit, and Conservation Order Permit for life. The price varies from \$70 to \$800, depending on the recipient's age. Resident Lifetime Fishing Permits also are available.

Regular permits are available from vendors statewide or online at mdc.mo.gov/node/9258. Lifetime permits are available at mdc.mo.gov/8849, or by calling 573-522-4115, ext. 3574.

Friends and family who work to improve their land for wildlife will appreciate tree and shrub seedlings from the George O. White State Forest Nursery. It has dozens of species, including decorative trees and shrubs like the flowering dogwood and redbud as well as a wide variety of oaks, evergreens, and other forest mainstays. For prices and ordering information, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/3328, or call 573-674-3229. The nursery accepts orders through April. However, many tree and shrub species sell out before then. Orders are shipped starting in February.

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