



[TOP](#)

Free Fishing Days on Father's Day Weekend

MAY 21ST 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Free Fishing Days on Father's Day Weekend

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) announces several opportunities to enjoy fishing in June, which provides opportunity to celebrate Father's Day outdoors. Missouri's annual free fishing weekend is June 6 and 7, which allows Missourians a chance to try fishing without purchasing a permit first.

The annual Free Fishing Days give everyone the chance to fish in state waters without a permit, trout permit or prescribed area daily tag during those days.

The Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center has additional fishing opportunities in June. Ages 16 and up are invited to attend a fly fishing program Saturday, June 13.

The program is offered once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Participants will learn the basics of fly fishing and pick up new technical skills such as equipment selection and use, reading the water, matching the hatch, fly casting, fishing techniques and essential knots. A fishing permit is required for this course and registration begins June 2. Equipment will be available for loan during the program.

Fishing programs in June wrap up with the Father's Day Fish Fry at the Nature Center, Saturday, June 20, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Guests will learn the basics of fishing such as casting, tying a knot, baiting hooks and cleaning fish before sampling fish recipes. Adult supervision is required for ages 5 to 17. Attendees 16 and up must have a valid fishing permit.

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[Squirrel, Black-Bass Season Open Memorial Day Weekend](#)

[Turkey Harvest Up From Last Year in Missouri](#) [MDC Expands Pheasant Hunting to Statewide](#)

[Turkey Harvest Up From Last Year in Missouri](#)

[MDC Expands Pheasant Hunting to Statewide](#)

TOP

Spring Turkey Harvest Up for Fourth Year in a Row

MAY 13TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Top harvest counties during regular season were Franklin with 897, Texas with 858 and Saint Clair with 771.

Jefferson City, Missouri – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reported that turkey hunters checked 43,991 birds during Missouri’s 2015 regular spring turkey

season April 20 through May 10. Top harvest counties were Franklin with 897 birds checked, Texas with 858, and Saint Clair with 771. Young turkey hunters ages 6 – 15 years harvested 4,441 birds during the 2015 spring youth season, April 11 and 12, bringing the overall spring 2015 turkey harvest to 48,432.

The 2014 overall spring turkey harvest was 47,605 birds. The 2015 overall spring harvest is the fourth consecutive increase since 2011, when the combined youth and regular season harvest was 42,226. Spring turkey harvest totals by county are available at <http://mdc.mo.gov/node/30565>.

MDC recorded four firearms-related spring turkey hunting incidents during the 2015 regular season and none during the youth weekend. One of the incidents was fatal. Two involved shooters who mistook other hunters for turkeys.

Missouri's turkey harvest continues to be among the highest in the nation. MDC restoration efforts from past decades have taken this popular game bird from the brink of extirpation in the state by the 1950s to an estimated sustainable population of more than 300,000 birds today.

In addition to permit sales revenue, economic estimates show that Missouri turkey hunters spend more than \$125 million each year on travel, food, lodging and hunting equipment, which in turn generates millions in local and state sales tax revenue.

Turkey hunters can commemorate their first harvest by creating an MDC First Turkey certificate suitable for framing at <http://mdc.mo.gov/node/10469>.

Shown in the photo is Tonya Chapman with her first wild turkey kill.

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Squirrel, Black-Bass Season Open Memorial Day Weekend

MAY 07TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Squirrel, Black-Bass Season Open Memorial Day Weekend](#)

Missouri - Memorial Day weekend brings an extra-special celebration for squirrel hunters and bass anglers in Missouri. According to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), the Saturday of this fourth weekend in May -- May 23 this year -- is when squirrel season opens and when anglers can keep legal-sized bass in most southern Missouri streams.

SQUIRRELS

Hunters can pursue fox and gray squirrels from May 23 through Feb. 15, 2016, with rifles, shotguns, archery equipment, or atlatls. Summer foliage makes rifle shots more difficult than in late fall and winter, when leaves no longer obscure a shooter's view. As a result, shotguns are the preferred method for many hunters during the early part of the season.

Valid permits for squirrel hunting are: Archery Hunting, Daily Small Game, Small Game Hunting and Fishing, and Small Game Hunting.

Hunters with valid permits can also take squirrels with cage-type traps. Traps must be labeled with the hunter's full name and address, or Conservation Number. Squirrel traps must have openings measuring 144 square inches or less, for instance, 12 inches by 12 inches. Hunters must attend their traps daily. The same regulations apply to rabbits and groundhogs during their respective seasons.

The daily limit is 10 with a possession limit of 20. For more information, visit mdc.mo.gov/node/10810.

BASS

The bass catch-and-keep season in most southern Missouri streams applies to largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted/Kentucky bass and runs from May 23 to Feb. 29, 2016. Anglers may catch these species legally all year, anywhere in the state. They may keep legal-sized bass caught from impoundments all year long, statewide.

However, from March 1 through the Friday before the fourth Saturday in May, you may only keep black bass caught in streams if you are:

On the Mississippi River;

North of the south bank of the Missouri River;

In that portion of southeast Missouri south and east of Cape Girardeau following Highways 74 and 25, U.S. Highways 60, 67, and 160 and the west bank of the Little Black River to the Arkansas state line; or

On the St. Francis River downstream from Wappapello Dam.

In the rest of the state, black-bass fishing is catch-and-release only from March 1 through the Friday before the fourth Saturday in May.

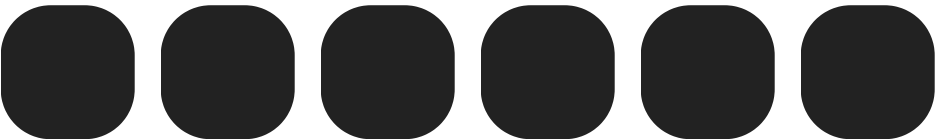
In most of the state's waters, the daily limit on black bass is six, with a possession limit of 12. Black bass taken from streams must be at least 12 inches long in most areas. However, many lakes and streams have special length and daily limits. To ensure that you keep only legal bass, you must check for special regulations on the waters you intend to fish. You can find these posted at areas with special regulations, in the 2015 Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations available where permits are sold, and online at mdc.mo.gov/node/10358.

All anglers must have an appropriate lifetime, annual, or daily fishing permit, or qualify for an exemption. Get more information on fishing permits at mdc.mo.gov/node/5006.

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--	---

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--	---

TOP

Turkey Harvest Up From Last Year in Missouri

APRIL 15TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Young Turkey Hunters Harvest 4,441 Birds During Youth Weekend

Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that young turkey hunters harvested 4,441 birds during the 2015 spring youth season, April 11 and 12. Top harvest counties were Franklin with 117 birds, Greene with 88, and Cedar with 87. For more harvest information by county, visit the MDC online harvest map at mdc.mo.gov/node/263.

Young hunters checked 4,332 turkeys during last year's spring youth weekend.

Hunters age 6 through 15 are allowed to take one male turkey or turkey with a visible beard during the youth season. Those who harvest a turkey during the youth season may not take a second bird until the second week of the regular spring turkey season, which runs April 20 through May 10.

Conservation makes Missouri a great place to hunt. For more information on spring turkey hunting, get a copy of the Department's 2015 Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet where permits are sold or online at mdc.mo.gov/node/4051.

Youth and adult hunters who harvest their first turkeys can have the accomplishment recognized through MDC's First Turkey certificate, complete with photo. Learn more to create the certificate at mdc.mo.gov/node/10469.

Shown in the photos is 12 year-old Lindsey McWaters with her first turkey. She is the daughter of Christina and Scot McWaters of New Madrid, Missouri. They used a hand crafted turkey call by Scot's Game Calls.

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MDC Expands Pheasant Hunting to Statewide

APRIL 03RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Expands Pheasant Hunting to Statewide

Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has expanded pheasant hunting in Missouri from only the northern half of the state and a portion of the southeast to statewide starting with this year's fall hunting season.

The new regulations are listed in the Department's recently released 2015 Summary of Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations booklet available at MDC offices, nature centers, other places where permits are sold, and online at mdc.mo.gov/node/3657.

Pheasant hunting starts with a youth-only weekend on Oct. 24-25 followed by the regular season of Nov. 1 through Jan. 15, 2016. Hunting remains limited to male pheasants only. The daily bag limit is two male birds and the possession limit is four. Valid permits are Daily Small Game Hunting, Small Game Hunting and Fishing, or Small Game Hunting.

Pheasant hunting in Missouri was previously limited to a North Zone consisting of all counties north of Interstate 70 and a portion of St. Charles County south of I70, and a Southeast Zone consisting of Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, and Stoddard counties.

According to MDC Resource Scientist Beth Emmerich, the expansion of pheasant hunting to statewide will simplify harvest rules for hunters across the state with minimal impact to the overall pheasant population.

“Hens are protected from harvest and one rooster often mates with multiple hens. Our rooster-only hunting season has very little impact on overall population size and growth,” Emmerich said. “Habitat is what’s key for developing and maintaining wildlife numbers, including game birds such as pheasants and quail. Pheasant populations improve with ample nesting and brood-rearing habitat, including open grassy and agricultural fields.”

She noted that not all areas of the state have pheasants.

“There is noticeable variation in pheasant populations around the state with northwest Missouri and portions of the northeast holding the most birds,” said Emmerich. “Many parts of the state do not have the type of habitat required to hold pheasants. Expansion of pheasant hunting to statewide does not imply that birds can be harvested or even observed in all areas of the state.”

She added that other game species also have statewide hunting seasons regardless of not having significant populations in all parts of the state, including quail, swamp rabbit, and woodcock.”

Visit the MDC website at mdc.mo.gov for more information on hunting pheasants and other game.

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