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Small Acres Can Be a Big Help for Wildlife

AUGUST 06TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Small Acres Can Be a Big Help for Wildlife

Dexter, Missouri - It doesn't take a lot of land to have a big impact on local wildlife populations according to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Though the words "wildlife habitat" may bring to mind vast forests, tall timber and massive wetlands, MDC Private Lands Conservationist Kara McSpadden says setting aside low production areas like field borders can make a big difference for wildlife.

"Small areas like pivot corners and field borders are good places for farmers to develop habitat for quail, rabbits and even deer," McSpadden said.

McSpadden's been working with Steve Jackson, a row-crop producer from Cardwell. Jackson has numerous field borders and odd field corners that he's transitioned into wildlife habitat. He's planted native broadleaf plants, native grasses and scattered clumps of brush in these small areas.

"I have seen more pairs of quail and rabbits this spring than I have in years," Jackson said, adding that it's his goal to take his grandson on a successful quail hunt on the Cardwell farm someday.

"Many Bootheel landowners wish they had quality small-game hunting on their own family farm," McSpadden said. "Steve has proven that even with a few acres, it is very possible."

McSpadden added that the MDC has various programs to help fund wildlife habitat development on private land.

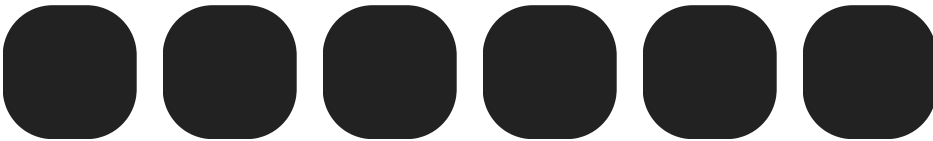
“Most of the land in Missouri is privately owned, so if wildlife habitat was only developed on public land, our wildlife wouldn’t have enough,” she said. “That’s why is so important that we work with private landowners on the ground and financially to help transition land into areas where wildlife can thrive.”

More information on financial and technical assistance for private landowners can be found online at mdc.mo.gov or by contacting a Private Lands Conservationist. McSpadden can be reached at (573)624-5939, extension 136.

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Help Band Hummingbirds at Cape Nature Center

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - It's nearly time for ruby-throated hummingbirds to depart on their annual fall migration to Central America. Before these tiny birds leave the area, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center will host a hummingbird banding event Saturday, Aug. 29, from 8 a.m. to noon.

“This event is truly a special opportunity for children and adults to get up close to a hummingbird,” said Sara Turner, manager of the center. “If you’ve not had the opportunity to see these fragile little birds when they’re banded, then this is something that you won’t want to miss.”

Cathie Hutcheson of Makanda, Ill., will be capturing, banding, and releasing hummingbirds. She will record important information that can be used to track the annual migration of these small birds.

Many people provide needed energy for hummingbirds by growing native plants and hanging out feeders. Participants will learn how to attract hummingbirds as well as how to choose and maintain feeders which give the busy birds the needed boost for their long journey. Those who wish to attract hummingbirds to their own garden will be able to pick up free seeds for native plants that provide the preferred nectar for hummingbirds.

Doors will open at 8 a.m. with banding beginning shortly after. The Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center is located in Cape County Park North, just off I-55 at exit 99. No advance registration is required for this program. For more information, call the nature center at (573)290-5218.

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Poplar Bluff Schools Awarded \$250k Preschool Grant

AUGUST 06TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A \$250,000 grant has been awarded to Poplar Bluff Schools to add a preschool program that will further help serve the needs of the community in getting district children school-ready.

The funding through the Missouri Preschool Program will allow the Early Childhood Center to enroll 60 students ages 3-5, and employ six staff members to manage three classrooms. Pending licensing by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, the plan is for the preschool to be operational by Monday, Sept 21.

Enrollment will take place on a first come, first serve basis. Cost of tuition will be set on a sliding scale based on the income levels used for the free and reduced lunch program.

“Studies have shown over the years that when students enter kindergarten, there is a marked difference in skill levels from students who have or have not participated in preschool education,” said JoAnne Westbrook, Early Childhood Center director.

“Currently our highly qualified staff at Early Childhood is only able to serve a fourth of our kids entering the Kindergarten Center.”

Westbrook, who wrote the grant, has been employed by the R-I school district since 2005. For the needs assessment component of the proposal, she solicited AmeriCorps Director Becky Winters to enlist an advisory committee consisting of parents, educators, child care providers, civic leaders, officials from the social services sector and members of the faith-based community.

“When students do not receive that jumpstart on their academic careers at an early age, they’re more likely to wind up in remedial programs in the upper grades,” Winters stated. “In recent years, the community has lost multiple child care facilities for different reasons, and our committee wants to help fill that void.”

According to their research, 568 district children are not receiving a preschool education. The area child care facilities available are presently serving 610 children with only 36 openings. Of those children, the Early Children Center is at capacity with 250 students registered in two half-day sessions based on family needs determined by the federal Title I and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

R-I was among 20 schools the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced would be awarded the five-year MPP grant on July 13. The money will go toward start-up costs with the goal of self-sustainability upon conclusion. By year four, the preschools will be accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

A waiting list is currently being compiled at the Early Childhood Center located at 1235 N. Main St. For consideration, a child must be 3 years of age but not older than 5 as of July 31. For more information, call 573-785-6803.

(From left) Jacob Woodruff, Ja’Meir Hood-Daniels and Logan Keown of the Poplar Bluff Early Childhood Center pose in their dream job attire during Career Day this past

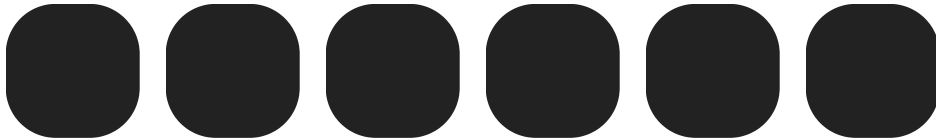
May.

*Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Coordinator
Poplar Bluff R-I School District*

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Dexter Chamber's July Jubilee Successful

AUGUST 04TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Dexter Chamber's July Jubilee Successful

Dexter, Missouri - The Dexter Chamber of Commerce recently hosted their July Jubilee at the Chamber office. The event is held each year in appreciation of the Chamber's members.

Several members of the Chamber and business professionals from around the area came to taste the delicious foods prepared by Coleman.

Janet Coleman, Executive Director, spent numerous hours the night before preparing the food for the Jubilee. Several board members and directors helped serve at the event. The theme was a Mexican Fiesta with a few folks trying on the sombrero!

An ice cream bar with all the toppings was available to cure your sweet tooth. On the Go fixed the chicken. Janet prepared the rest of the taco delights.

Thank you for cooking all night long Janet!!

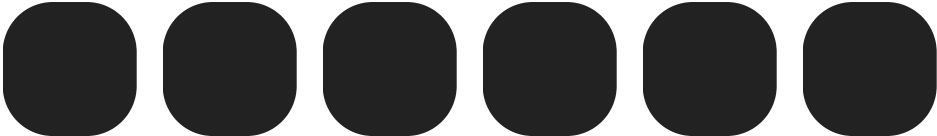
Schlieff Chiropractic & Wellness was the winner of the \$100 Dexter Dollars. Others who won \$25 were Charlie Flannigan, Dina Grubbs, Bennetta Harrellson, Robert Monroe, Kenny Pope, Peggy Potts, Lisa Thrower, and Justin Trammell.

Janet will be retiring from the Dexter Chamber of Commerce at the end of December 2015.

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Monday is National Watermelon Day!

AUGUST 03RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Monday is National Watermelon Day!

National Watermelon Day is observed annually on August 3rd. Watermelon is a fruit enjoyed by many and is a favorite of summertime events such as picnics and fairs.

Watermelon is 92% water, which is why it is so refreshing.

Watermelon is a vine-like flowering plant originally from southern Africa. Its fruit, which is also called watermelon, is a special kind referred to by botanists as a pepo, a berry which has a thick rind (exocarp) and fleshy center (mesocarp and endocarp). Pepos are derived from an inferior ovary, and are characteristic of the Cucurbitaceae. The watermelon fruit, loosely considered a type of melon – although not in the genus Cucumis – has a smooth exterior rind (usually green with dark green stripes or yellow spots) and a juicy, sweet interior flesh (usually deep red to pink, but sometimes orange, yellow, or white).

Watermelons can grow very large and you will find competitions across the country which award prizes each year for the largest one. The Guinness Book of World Records states that the heaviest watermelon weighed 262 pounds. To learn more interesting watermelon facts, check out www.watermelon.org.

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