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Deer Hunters Can Help with Save the Harvest Program

OCTOBER 05TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Deer Hunters Can Help with Save the Harvest Program

Missouri - Many Missouri families can't afford to put high-quality, low-fat red meat on the dinner table. Deer hunters can help by sharing their harvests through Missouri's Share the Harvest program. The venison-donation program connects deer hunters with hungry Missourians through participating meat processors and local hunger-relief agencies around the state.

In 1992, a group of bowhunters in Missouri began the program to share the deer they harvested with those less fortunate. Since then, Missouri hunters have donated more than 3.3 million pounds of venison to the needy through Share the Harvest. Last year nearly 4,000 hunters donated more than 212,000 pounds of venison.

The program is administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), and supported by numerous sponsors.

To participate, hunters simply take their harvested deer to one of more than 130 participating meat processors around the state and let the processor know how much venison they wish to donate to the program. Hunters can donate a few pounds to a whole deer. The processor will package the ground meat, which will be given to local charitable agencies for distribution to hungry Missourians.

The cost of processing is the hunter's responsibility, but funds are available to help with

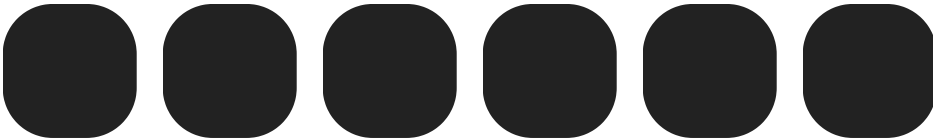
processing costs when a whole deer is donated. CFM reimburses processors a predetermined amount for each whole deer donated. This allows processors to reduce the processing fees to hunters. In addition, many processors have local funds available that allow deer to be processed for free or at reduced cost. Contact individual processors to determine if local funds are available.

To find participating processors pick up MDC's 2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet at MDC offices and nature center, where hunting permits are sold, and online at mdc.mo.gov.

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MDC Provides Accessible Duck Blind at Duck Creek

SEPTEMBER 23RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Provides Accessible Duck Blind at Duck Creek

New Duck Blind Built for Hunters with Disabilities

Puxico, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has installed a new accessible hunting blind at Duck Creek Conservation Area (CA) for waterfowl hunters with disabilities. The blind, which is ready for use in the upcoming waterfowl seasons, is a final piece of renovations to the area.

“We want to help all people discover nature and this accessible duck blind is part of making that happen,” said Keith Cordell, manager of Duck Creek CA.

The ADA blind is in the south central corner of position 16 in Unit A. A paved walkway starts at a parking pad and descends toward the blind, which reaches out into the pool. The structure took an MDC construction crew about six weeks to build.

To make a reservation to use the blind, hunters may call the Southeast Regional Office at (573)290-5730 on or after Oct. 1. Once the season starts, the Duck Creek Office will manage availability of the blind and can be reached at (573)222-3337.

During the waterfowl season, if the blind isn't reserved by a hunter with disabilities, the position/blind will go into the morning draw and may be used by other hunters.

More information on accessible conservation and hunting areas can be found online at mdc.mo.gov or by calling the MDC's Southeast Regional Office at (573)290-5730.

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Bollinger County Placed on Rabies Alert - Notifies Local Vets

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Bollinger County Placed on Rabies Alert - Notifies Local Vets](#)

Advance, Missouri - On September 2, 2015 Dr. Brett Ward of Helping Hands Veterinary Clinic received a letter from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

The letter states that an 8-week-old puppy from Bollinger County tested positive for RABIES on August 26, 2015. Because rabies in a domestic animal represents a serious and imminent public health threat, the Missouri Dept. of Health and Senior Services placed Bollinger County under a RABIES ALERT!

The puppy belonged to a resident of Bollinger County and was one of a litter of four. Around July 20th of this year a skunk was observed under the front porch of

the owner's home where the puppies and their mother were located.

Skunks are known carrier of Rabies in Missouri and it is presumed that's how the puppy was infected. The puppies were adopted to three families and on August 21st the puppy in question became sick, was subsequently euthanized and submitted to the Missouri State Public Health laboratory for rabies testing.

A positive rabies test resulted on August 26th whereby 12 people who had contact with the puppy were notified and are receiving anti-rabies series of shots.

The remaining puppies were euthanized and tested negative. As you know, these results do not mean that the puppies were not infected with the rabies virus.

Instead, the results indicate that since there was no rabies virus in the brain, there was also no rabies virus in the saliva. Therefore, these puppies could not have infected anyone who came in contact with them.

With that being said, the three puppies where not infectious when tests were performed, however they could have gone on to develop rabies over the next several months and become infectious at that time.

No one wants to have puppies euthanized, but this option must be employed at times to protect the health of the public according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services.

According to the MDHSS, RABIES occurs naturally in Missouri wild animals and occasionally in domestic animals. In 2014, a total of 27 rabid animals were detected. They included 9 skunks, 16 bats, and 2 cats. Missouri has averaged about 50 rabid animals per year over the past ten years. The main animals were bats and skunks. Statewide to date in 2015, a total of 21 rabid animals have been detected, including 13 bats, 6 skunks, and 2 dogs.

Please be responsible and vaccinate your dogs and cats against rabies. It serves as a buffer between the wildlife reservoir and the human population. Two individuals have died in recent years from rabies in Missouri.

See your local Veterinarian for RABIES vaccinations immediately. Most cities and counties have ordinances that require the vaccination annually.

If you need to get your pet vaccinated please contact your local Veterinarian. Dr. Brett Ward with Helping Hands Veterinary Clinic will be glad to schedule you an appointment as soon as possible. To contact them call (573) 321-2021.

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MDC Welcomes New Conservation Agent - Ben Stratton

SEPTEMBER 08TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[MDC Welcomes New Conservation Agent - Ben Stratton](#)

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - There's a new face of conservation in Cape Girardeau County. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports Ben Stratton is the new conservation agent for the county.

“Ben is a natural fit since he’s from the county and knows it well,” said Russell Duckworth, MDC Protection District Supervisor. “He’s got a great reputation throughout our region and we continue to expect great things out of him.”

Stratton graduated from the Conservation Agent Training Academy in Jefferson City in 2009 before working as the Mississippi County conservation agent for six years. He is a Cape Girardeau native and an alumnus of both Cape Central High School and Southeast Missouri State University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in biology with an emphasis in wildlife management. His minor was criminal justice.

For Stratton, the complexities of being a conservation agent are a positive aspect of the job.

“I like not knowing what I’ll be doing from one day to the next,” he said. “The job transitions with the seasons, so one day I’ll be working with dove hunters, another day we may do swift water rescue or teach hunter education.”

He also said the law enforcement role of a conservation agent is rewarding.

“I enjoy making a solid case against a perpetrator that’s stealing the wildlife resources from other Missouri citizens,” he said. “It’s my portion of protecting our resources for future generations.”

Stratton said being a conservation agent has given him exciting new opportunities that he never expected, including teaching people about conservation and sharing his love of the outdoors.

Stratton can be reached at (573)450-1763 or Ben.Stratton@mdc.mo.gov. For more information about conservation agents in Missouri, go online to mdc.mo.gov.

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Cape Nature Center Snake Gives Virgin Births

SEPTEMBER 07TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Cape Nature Center Snake Gives Virgin Births](#)

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center reports a resident female Yellow-bellied watersnake at the center is likely reproducing without contribution from a male. Intern Kyle Morton, who cares for the snakes at the center, didn't know what he was looking at when he went to clean the snake cage one morning.

"I thought, 'what joker put tomatoes in here for the snake'," Morton said.

It wasn't tomatoes, though; as Morton examined the round, soft, egg-like structures, he realized they were freshly laid membranes from the female snake.

"She had acted normal other than not eating for several weeks," Morton said. "So it definitely took me by surprise."

Morton reported his find to one of the naturalists at the center, who verified what it was. The snake did the same thing last summer, giving birth to two now healthy year-old watersnakes. Naturalist Jordi Brostoski found the membranes last summer, when it first happened.

“At first I thought the snake had regurgitated something until I looked at it closer,” Brostoski said. “That’s when I realized what had happened and then the hatchling snakes surprised me by slithering under the bedding in the cage.”

According to Jeff Briggler, MDC herpetologist, although it’s not heard of often, virgin births can be common in some species, through a process called parthenogenesis.

Parthenogenesis is a type of asexual reproduction in which offspring develops from unfertilized eggs. It occurs in many insect orders, most commonly with bees, wasps and stick insects and is also found in some species of fish, amphibians, birds and reptiles, but not in mammals.

“There are many types of parthenogenesis in which I will not go into great detail,” Briggler said. “In layman’s terms, parthenogenesis is a mode of asexual reproduction in which the offspring (babies) are produced by females without genetic contribution of a male.”

Briggler said parthenogenesis seems to occur in both captive and wild situations and it doesn’t seem to impact the health of the female snake. Additionally, this species of snake has not been documented as participants in parthenogenesis.

“For many years, it was believed that such birth in captivity was due to sperm storage,” Briggler explained. “However, genetics is proving a different story.”

This snake has been a resident at the nature center for nearly eight years, which is likely too long of a time for this to be a result of sperm storage.

Briggler said parthenogenesis is a common occurrence in many lizard species. Published accounts of this form of reproduction in snakes have included the Brahminy bind snake, Timber rattlesnake, Copperheads, Cottonmouths, Burmese python, Rainbow boa, Common boa, Green anaconda, several gartersnake species, Aruba island rattlesnake and Afarura filesnake. As more genetic work is conducted, Briggler believes it may turn out that parthenogenesis is more widespread than scientists have thought in the past.

One interesting result of the process is that in the majority of the species that participate in parthenogenesis, the offspring produced are all male, Briggler said.

“There is always a high proportion of infertile eggs due to chromosome combination, but a few can be successful and hatch if the mother has a dissimilar sex chromosome (ZW) compared to the male with copies of the ZZ chromosome,” he said.

In this case, the female ZW chromosome will produce egg cell with ZZ and WW via meiosis. The ZZ combination can form a male embryo cell that can begin to divide and produce a snake. The WW chromosome is not viable.

The Yellow-bellied watersnake’s offspring didn’t survive this year, possibly due to the combination of chromosomes. However, last year’s two young ones are thriving and serving as educational reptiles for the Cape Nature Center.

The Cape Nature Center is located inside Cape Girardeau's North County Park, just east of Interstate 55 (Exit 99) and Kingshighway (State Highway 61). More information about the center can be found at mdc.mo.gov/CapeNatureCenter.

Photo by Candice Davis.

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