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This Fox Says Please Don't Litter

APRIL 11TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

This Fox Says Please Don't Litter

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) says there's always a price to pay when someone litters. In a case today, the price is a Red Fox's rear leg.

"It could be the price of a ticket for the person who litters, or something as serious as a limb in this case," said Bruce Henry, MDC's natural history biologist for the Southeast Region. "There's always a price for littering, it's just a matter of who pays."

Henry responded to a call today to a Cape Girardeau neighborhood, where a den of foxes had settled in under someone's porch. When he arrived, he and the residents found a young red fox, about six to eight weeks old, under a nearby bush with a plastic bag wrapped around one of its rear legs.

"The plastic bag had wrapped so tightly, it was wound like twine around that leg," Henry said.

Henry removed the bag from the leg and delivered the fox to Skyview Animal Clinic for treatment.

"In this case the leg must be amputated," said Dr. Sean Byrd, a veterinarian at the clinic. "Because of the nature of the injury, it will heal very quickly."

However, Dr. Byrd said the hard part for the young fox will be rehabilitation. It will transfer to Watkin's Wildlife Rehab in Sedgewickville after surgery.

"We worry if it will be able to jump in order to catch its prey, because that's an essential motion that a fox must be capable of," Dr. Byrd said, adding that the young age of the fox is in the fox's favor, because it is still in the learning stage and it may be able to adapt.

"The chances of it being released back into the wild aren't great, but that's what we hope for," Dr. Byrd said. "If not, it might be used as an education animal to serve as an example and educate people about the dangers of litter."

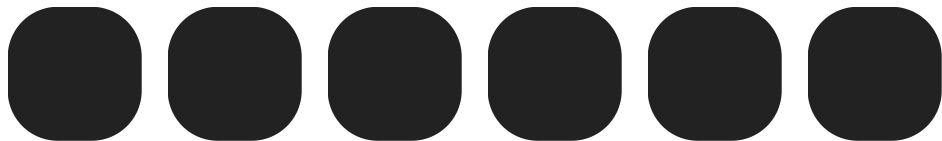
Henry said the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center needs volunteers this Saturday for a Riverfront Cleanup, which will directly help other local wildlife like the red fox. The cleanup is from nine to 11 a.m. at the Mississippi Riverfront in downtown Cape Girardeau, Cape Rock and Red Star Access. Another cleanup event is scheduled for Cape LaCroix Creek in Cape Girardeau April 23, from nine a.m. to noon.

"People don't realize how important these cleanup events are until we look at an animal like this that gets caught in our mess," Henry said. "He just paid an expensive price for someone else's littering."

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Spring Turkey Season Looks Good for Hunters

APRIL 07TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Spring Turkey Season Looks Good for Hunters

Missouri turkey hunters can expect a good spring season overall according to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). The spring turkey hunting season starts with a youth-only weekend April 9-10. The regular spring season runs April 18 through May 8.

Although turkey abundance in most of the state remains below the peak that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s, turkey numbers in many areas have begun to rebound from the poor hatches that plagued the population from 2007-2010.

“Spring turkey harvest has increased each year in Missouri for the past four years and this year’s harvest is expected to continue this trend,” MDC Turkey Biologist Jason Isabelle said. “A good number of two-year-old gobblers from the 2014 hatch should result in good hunting opportunities for this year’s season.”

Isabelle noted that MDC offers turkey hunting opportunities on more than 500 conservation areas and the state’s diverse landscapes mean turkey numbers often vary by region.

Regional Forecast

Northwest and northeast Missouri had the best turkey production in 2014, so hunters should encounter more two-year-old gobblers in both regions this spring.

“This year’s spring turkey harvest should be up in northern Missouri compared to the 2015 harvest total,” Isabelle said. “Although turkey numbers in most of northern Missouri remain well below the population peak that occurred 10–15 years ago, turkey populations have begun to rebound in portions of the region during the last several years.”

Isabelle added that the spring season should be good for hunters in the Ozarks as well, especially in the eastern Ozarks where turkey production has been the highest in the state in three out of the last four years. For several counties in the central portion of the region, the 2016 spring harvest could be among the highest on record.

“Increasing turkey numbers throughout much of the Ozarks, coupled with an abundance of public land, make this region a great choice for hunters this year,” he said.

Turkey harvest should also be up in the Ozark Border and West Prairie regions of west-central and southwestern Missouri.

“Many of the counties in these regions typically rank among the highest in the state for spring turkey harvest, and this year should be no exception,” he said. “The turkey population in southwestern Missouri in particular has experienced considerable growth in recent years, and county-level spring harvests in 2016 are likely to meet or exceed previously-established records.”

Prospects are also good for the River Breaks regions of central and east-central Missouri.

“Similar to counties in the Ozark Border and West Prairie regions, many of the counties in the Union Breaks region from Osage east and south to Ste. Genevieve typically rank among the highest in the state in spring harvest, and these counties are likely to do so in 2016 as well,” Isabelle said.

Find detailed information on harvest limits, allowed hunting methods, hunter education requirements, permits, MDC hunting areas, tagging and checking procedures, regulations and more in MDC’s 2016 Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet available from MDC offices and nature centers, other places where permits are sold, and online at <http://on.mo.gov/1R3JTbH>. For more information about spring turkey hunting

visit MDC's website at <http://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/turkey>.

Hunter Safety

Isabelle stressed that hunters can avoid the main cause of turkey-hunting incidents—mistaking or being mistaken by another hunter for game.

“Most turkey hunting incidents typically involve hunters who fail to positively identify their targets,” said Isabelle. “Before pulling the trigger, be absolutely certain that what you are shooting at is not only a turkey, but a legal turkey, which would be a male turkey or a turkey with a visible beard during the spring season.”

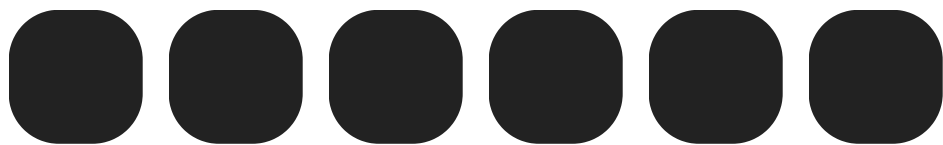
He also advised hunters to wear some hunter-orange clothing when moving through the woods or fields, particularly when hunting public land, and to always know the locations of all members of a hunting party.

“Many turkey hunting incidents actually involve members of the same hunting party,” said Isabelle. “If you're hunting with someone else and you split up, be certain you know where your hunting partner will be.”

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Welcome Back Hummingbirds!

APRIL 06TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Welcome Back Hummingbirds!

Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages people to discover nature this spring by learning about the ruby-throated hummingbird. Missourians will be seeing this delightful bird this time of year a lot more now due to migration. In an average year, ruby-throated hummingbirds arrive in Missouri around early to mid-April.

“Hummingbird migration all depends on the weather,” MDC Wildlife Ecologist Brad Jacobs said. “This year’s migration should be about average for hummingbirds and they should be increasing in numbers over the month of April.”

Jacobs noted a great website map from hummingbirds.net to visit to see when and where hummingbirds are migrating: <http://bit.ly/1cCTWae>. The hummingbird migration map shows locations of where ruby-throated hummingbirds have been spotted already this year in North America. The website allows visitors to help out with this by entering the dates and exact locations where people have spotted hummingbirds.

Just like most birds, hummingbirds typically migrate south in early fall and migrate back north in the spring.

“Our hummingbirds begin their southward migration in mid-August and most are gone by early October,” Jacobs said. “A few overwinter in extreme southern coastal states, with most wintering from southern Mexico to Costa Rica. Migration means some of them fly

nonstop for 600 miles from the Gulf coast of the U.S. to the Yucatan Peninsula over the Gulf of Mexico. They often lose half their body weight during this trans-Gulf, 24-hour flight.”

Early spring migrant hummingbirds in Missouri rely on sap oozing from sapsucker-drilled holes and insects for food. With warmer weather they soon will switch to eating nectar from many different kinds of flowers later in spring, which gives them energy needed to catch insects all day long to feed their young.

Hummingbirds are more than just a delight to watch flying around, they also play a very important part in our ecosystem.

“Hummingbirds are important pollinators for many species of plants that require just such a long-billed pollinator,” Jacobs said. “Because of their small size, hummingbirds also risk ending up as food for many predators such as, large insects, spiders, birds, and frogs.”

Hummingbirds are summer residents throughout the state either around nectar feeders outside homes and in parks and gardens. Hummingbirds nest in wooded areas, and are frequently observed near forests, and streams.

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Buoy Near Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge Tests Water Quality

APRIL 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Buoy Near Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge Tests Water Quality

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - As people stroll along the riverfront in Cape Girardeau, they may notice a yellow buoy that arrived this week. It looks like a small boat floating near the Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge. According to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), the buoy is part of the MDC's cooperative effort with the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center's (Great Rivers Ecological Observatory Network (GREON) project to monitor water quality.

The local buoy is one of seven buoys placed in various places along the Mississippi River housing water quality and weather monitoring equipment. The Cape Girardeau buoy is monitored by Molly Sobotka, MDC resource scientist.

“This buoy allows us to monitor the water for oxygen, temperature, nutrients, and clarity and collects data on wind and sunlight,” Sobotka said. “All of this information helps us understand the water quality in the river, regional differences in river reaches, and how sediments and nitrogen flow through the system.”

Sobotka said data from the buoy will help scientists understand how major events like floods impact the river in real time.

“It takes hourly water quality and weather data and transmits it to the project server,” she said. “By using the buoy, we can collect data during floods or storms when we would otherwise have trouble collecting it ourselves.”

Ultimately, the GREON project has a goal of establishing a network of identical water quality monitoring buoys in great rivers around the world. The work in Cape Girardeau is an important preliminary step in establishing this network.

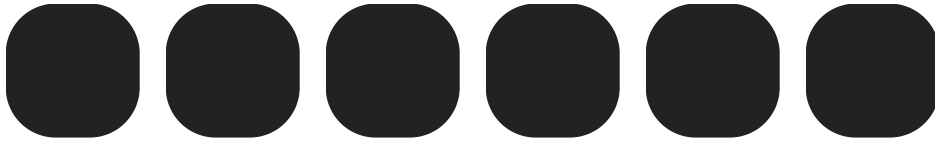
The monitoring station is marked with reflective tape and lights for nighttime visibility. The monitoring equipment is fragile and difficult to replace and the scientists request that boaters, anglers and hunters avoid disturbing this equipment.

For further information, contact Sobotka at the Big Rivers and Wetlands Field Station, at Molly.Sobotka@mdc.mo.gov or (573) 243-2659, extension 1048.

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Fisherman Takes State-Record Black Buffalo

MARCH 25TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Fisherman Takes State-Record Black Buffalo

MDC congratulates Travis Cardona on breaking state-record by shooting 74-pound black buffalo with bow and arrow at Duck Creek Conservation Area.

Hillsboro, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that Travis Cardona of Hillsboro became the most recent record-breaking fisherman in Missouri when he shot a giant black buffalo on a lake at Duck Creek Conservation Area using a bow and arrow. The new “alternative method” record black buffalo taken by Cardona on March 14 weighed 74 pounds. He shot the fish at 11 p.m. in one of his secret “honey holes.

“Believe it or not, once I shot the giant, I didn’t know it was that big of a fish until it started swimming back to the boat,” Cardona said. “Believe you me, after it swam towards the boat the fight was on.”

Cardona added that it took a total of four arrows to get the behemoth in the boat.

“It was a five minute battle that seemed like an eternity,” he said.

The new black buffalo broke the previous alternative-method state-record of 59-pounds-8-ounces taken on the same body of water three days prior by David Burle of Bloomsdale.

“The month of March has been full of potential record-breaking fish caught throughout the state,” said MDC Fisheries Programs Specialist Andrew Branson. “This just goes to show you that conservation makes Missouri a great place to fish.”

MDC staff verified the new record-weight fish using a certified scale in Fenton.

“Once my friends and I got the fish in the boat, we knew that it was a state-record fish,” Cardona said. “This is by far the biggest fish I have ever caught in my life, and I still can’t

believe it!”

The longtime angler said that the fish is in the freezer and will be sent off to be mounted very soon.

“I already have a place on the wall picked out for this once-in-a-lifetime fish. Now I’m ready to get back out on the water and try to take another giant,” he said.

Missouri state-record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Bowfishing is considered an alternative method and consist of a bow or crossbow that shoots arrows attached to a string so that the fish can be retrieved after they’re pierced. Other alternative methods include: throwlines, trotlines, limb lines, bank lines, jug lines, spearfishing, snagging, snaring, gigging, grabbing, and atlatl.

For more information on state-record fish, visit the MDC website at <http://mdc.mo.gov/fishing/state-record-fish>.

Shown in the photo: Travis Cardona of Hillsboro shot this 74-pound state-record black buffalo on a lake at Duck Creek Conservation Area on March 14, 2016.

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