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MDC Asks Motorists to Watch Out for Turtles on Roadways

APRIL 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Asks Motorists to Watch Out for Turtles on Roadways

MDC asks motorists to watch out for turtles as they become active

Thousands of turtles are killed each year on roadways, others are taken captive by well-meaning people.

Missouri - As turtles become active in late March, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) asks people to watch out for them; don't hit them on the roadways and certainly leave them where you find them.

Spring rains and warmer weather encourage turtles to emerge from their burrows and begin to search for food and mates, which sometimes leads them across roadways.

“While we don't advise risking a wreck to avoid hitting a turtle, we do hope motorists will drive cautiously and avoid hitting a turtle if it's safe to do so,” said Jamie Koehler, assistant manager at MDC's Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center.

Koehler said turtles spend their lives on a very small portion of ground, but sometimes they'll wander bigger distances, as much as six miles. While most Missouri turtles live 15 to 30 years, box turtles can live 50 to 80 years, occasionally more than 100 years. They spend their quiet lives eating plants, earthworms and insects. Their shell provides a bony shield to protect them from most natural enemies.

Unfortunately, thousands of turtles are killed each year by cars, which is why MDC urges drivers to watch out for them. MDC also advises people to leave turtles wild. As people encounter turtles while outdoors, sometimes people pick them up and take them home, thinking they have a new pet. However, this usually ends in a slow death for the captive turtle.

“Turtles depend on knowing their surroundings,” Koehler said. “People may think they can keep a wild turtle alive, but a captive life is not best for any kind of wildlife.”

Koehler recommends leaving turtles where you find them when hiking, as well as following the speed limit and keeping a watchful eye on the road.

“Helping turtles is easy, if you follow those simple steps,” she said.

Pictured is Elvis, a blind box turtle owned by Jessica Loflin.

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MDC Encourages People to Help Hummingbirds

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Encourages People to Help Hummingbirds

***MDC encourages people to help hummingbirds
It's time to put out feeders! Their numbers will increase throughout the month of April.***

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages people to discover nature this spring by learning about the ruby-throated hummingbird. Missourians will begin seeing these birds this month as the tiny long-distance fliers return to the state as part of their spring migration.

“Hummingbirds will be arriving soon and a few have already been spotted in southern Missouri,” said MDC State Ornithologist Sarah Kendrick. “It’s time to put out feeders! Their numbers will increase throughout the month of April.”

Hummingbird feeder sugar water does not need to be colored red, added Kendrick. The birds will find it and drink it without coloring.

She noted hummingbirds.net/map.html is a fun and useful website to see when and where hummingbirds are migrating. The migration map shows locations where the birds have already been spotted this year as they migrate northward into the U.S. and Canada. The website also allows visitors to help out by submitting dates and exact locations of hummingbird sightings. Other online resources, such as eBird.org, also use birder-submitted information to track bird sightings as they move northward.

Like about 80 other bird species that breed in Missouri, hummingbirds typically migrate south in early fall and migrate back north in the spring.

“Hummingbirds arrive in Missouri in April and May to nest and raise their young. They then make their fall southward migration in mid-August with most leaving by early October,” Kendrick said. “A few birds overwinter in extreme southern coastal states, but most overwinter from southern Mexico to Costa Rica. These tiny birds are so amazing! During migration, they fly nonstop for 600 miles from the Gulf Coast of the U.S. to the Yucatan Peninsula over the Gulf of Mexico and then back on their return trips. They can lose half their body weight during this 24-hour flight.”

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

Hummingbirds are more than just a delight to watch zipping around at your feeder, they also play very important roles in our ecosystem.

“Hummingbirds are important pollinators for many plants that require a long-billed pollinator,” Kendrick said. “And because of their small size, hummingbirds can end up as food for predators, such as large insects, spiders, other birds, and frogs.”

She added, “Another great way to help hummers and other migratory birds is to grow native plants. Native plants attract native insects, which are a vital food source for breeding birds. Great native plants for hummingbirds include cardinal flower, jewelweed, and trumpet creeper.”

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[MDC Encourages People to Help Prevent Wildfires](#)

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MDC Encourages Turkey Hunters to Think Safety While Hunting This Spring

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

[MDC Encourages Turkey Hunters to Think Safety While Hunting This Spring](#)

*MDC encourages turkey hunters to think safety while hunting this spring
Be aware of all surroundings while hunting this time of year because the woods are full of outdoor enthusiasts.*

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages hunters to think safety while in the woods turkey hunting. Youth spring turkey hunting season is April 7-8 and regular spring turkey hunting season begins April 16 and runs through May 6. Shooting hours for regular turkey season are from a half hour before sunrise to 1 p.m.

MDC Protection Field Chief Randy Doman stresses that the most common cause of a turkey hunting incident is a hunter being mistaken for game.

“Each year, most turkey hunting incidents involve hunters who shoot at sound, color, or movement,” Doman said. “It’s very important to always identify your target and know what’s beyond it before aiming the gun at it and squeezing the trigger.”

The popular fad of fanning turkeys is catching on and could be dangerous. The fanning technique involves someone hiding behind a turkey fan of tail feathers and moving it around to attract other turkeys.

“The fanning technique is not recommended because you could potentially be mistaken for a gobbler and become a victim of a hunting incident,” MDC Hunter Education and Shooting Coordinator Kyle Lairmore said.

Lairmore encourages turkey hunters to wear hunter orange while moving throughout the woods.

“Wearing hunter orange lets other hunters know that you’re in the area,” he said. “It’s also important to remember to never carry a harvested turkey in the open. Be sure to cover them with a hunter orange vest or put them in a game bag.”

Lairmore added anyone in the woods during turkey hunting season should also wear hunter orange.

“This time of year we also have mushroom hunters, hikers, birders, and others sharing the woods with turkey hunters,” he said. “It is a good safety measure for these other outdoor enthusiasts to make themselves clearly visible to hunters.”

MDC also offers the following safety tips for spring turkey hunting:

Identify a turkey’s head and beard before aiming.

Never shoot at sound or movement. Assume it is another hunter until you can clearly see a turkey’s head or beard.

Wear hunter orange when walking through the woods.

Use hunter orange to identify your hunting location.

Wrap a bagged turkey or decoy in hunter orange when transporting it.

Dress defensively. Never wear red, white, blue, or black clothing because it resembles a turkey.

Be sure of your target and what lies beyond.

Never follow the sound of a gobbling turkey or attempt to sneak up on turkeys. Always call turkeys to you.

Sit against a large tree or other natural barrier to shield yourself from hunters approaching from the rear.

Shout “STOP” when another hunter approaches. Don’t move, wave, whistle, or make turkey calls to get their attention.

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MDC Encourages People to be BEAR AWARE in Missouri

MARCH 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

MDC Encourages People to be BEAR AWARE in Missouri

MDC encourages people to Be Bear Aware!

Don't feed bears. Avoid encounters. React right. Report sightings.

[Jefferson City, Missouri](#) - As blossoms and buds emerge each spring, so do Missouri's estimated 350 native black bears. As they leave their winter dens this time of year, finding food is their main focus. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reminds people to "Be Bear Aware" by not feeding bears and not providing potential sources of food.

"As black bears become active in the spring, they are on a mission to find food," said Laura Conlee, a resource scientist and black-bear researcher with MDC. "It is very important for Missourians to recognize potential food attractants in their area. Things such as bird feeders, trash, barbecue grills, and food waste left out at camp sites can all serve as huge attractions for bears. Keeping our areas free of attractants, and letting bears find natural foods is in everyone's best interest. If you see a bear, enjoy the sighting, let the bear be, and be sure you don't offer it any food. Most importantly, never intentionally feed them."

Conlee added feeding bears makes them comfortable around people, which can also make them dangerous.

A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR

"When bears lose their fear of people, they may approach people in search of food or may defend the food sources or territory they associate with people, which can make them dangerous," Conlee said. "When this happens, the bear has to be destroyed. A fed bear is a dead bear."

She added a fed bear that becomes a problem in one place cannot be relocated to another.

“Once a bear learns that people can provide food, they will seek out other places such as camp sites, residential areas, and farms in search of food,” she explained. “Bears also have an excellent memory and will often return year after year to places where they were provided food.”

AVOID ATTRACTING BLACK BEARS

MDC offers these tips for avoiding attracting black bears to possible food sources:

Don't leave pet food sitting outside. Feed pets a portion they'll eat at each meal and remove the empty containers.

Store garbage, recyclables, and compost inside a secure building or in a bear-proof container until the day of trash pick-up.

Keep grills and smokers clean and store them inside.

Don't use birdfeeders from April through November in bear country, or hang them at least 10 feet high and 4 feet away from any structure.

Use electric fencing to keep bears away from beehives, chicken coops, vegetable gardens, orchards, and other potential food sources.

Keep campsites clean and store all food, toiletries and trash in a secure vehicle or strung high between two trees. Do not burn or bury garbage or food waste.

AVOID ENCOUNTERS AND REACT RIGHT

While close encounters are uncommon, MDC offers this advice when outdoors in black-bear country:

Make noise while walking or hiking to prevent surprising a bear. Clap, sing, or talk loudly.

Travel in a group if possible.

Pay attention to the surroundings and watch for bear sign, such as tracks or claw or bite marks on trees.

Keep dogs leashed.

Leave a bear alone! Do not approach it. Make sure it has an escape route.

If encountering a bear up close, back away slowly with arms raised to look larger. Speak in a calm, loud voice. Do not turn away from the bear. Back away slowly. Do not run.

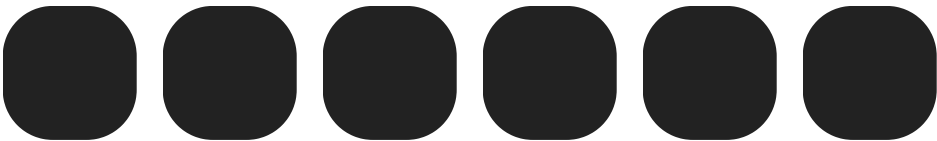
A native to Missouri, black bears were abundant until the late 1800s when they were nearly wiped out from unregulated killing and from habitat loss when Ozark forests were logged. MDC research shows that a small number of native black bears survived. Over time, their numbers increased and continue to do so. Results of ongoing black-bear research by MDC staff and others show that the animals have been sighted in about half the counties in Missouri, primarily south of the Missouri River, with most bears located in the southern third of the state in the Missouri Ozarks.

Black bears are a protected species in Missouri. MDC anticipates a limited hunting season as a population-management method once black bear numbers reach a population estimate of about 500 animals. The current estimate is about 350. No details regarding the anticipated future hunting season have been developed.

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Punxsutawney Phil Predicts 6 More Weeks of Winter

FEBRUARY 02ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Punxsutawney Phil Predicts 6 More Weeks of Winter

The Groundhog has spoken! 6 more weeks of winter weather! Every February 2, all eyes turn to Gobbler's knob, a small Pennsylvania town as winter-weary Northeasterners await weather guidance from the predictive rodent.

It's a 132-year-old tradition that is held every year and conducted by top hat-donning members of the Inner Circle of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, according to the official Pennsylvania tourism website. The idea is, the groundhog wakes up from hibernation on the 2nd, and if it sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't, warmer weather is just around the corner.

This tradition started in Europe as Candlemas Day, an early Christian holiday involving candles. Germans who settled in Pennsylvania in the 1700s brought the custom to America.

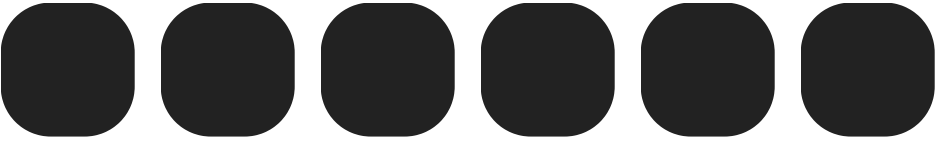
Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil is the most well known, but more than a dozen states celebrate with their own groundhogs, such as Georgia's General Beauregard Lee and Buckeye Chuck in Ohio.

Our own 69 year old box turtle, Murtle the Turtle, said it was still too cold to come out, but predicted that winter has not left Stoddard County just yet.

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