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## Kentucky Fish and Wildlife partners with Appalachian Wildlife Foundation to bolster Bell County elk herd

### Helicopter crew assists capture and relocation efforts

Visitors to the Cumberland Gap area of the state soon will experience the majesty of elk in much the same fashion as when Daniel Boone blazed the Wilderness Road.

The elk herd in Bell County is regaining a solid foothold through a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation. The effort involves relocating elk from areas of southeast Kentucky with denser populations to the southern extreme of the 16-county elk zone where fewer animals are present.

“We appreciate the opportunity to work with the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation and others to help create a memorable wildlife viewing experience for residents and visitors to southeastern Kentucky,” Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Gregory K. Johnson said. “This project is yet another step in our continuing efforts to broaden the distribution of elk in this part of the state and



Wildlife biologists Joe McDermott, Gabe Jenkins, Dan Crank, David Yancy, Kyle Sams and John Hast were among Department staff helping to capture and move elk into Bell County this month.

promote tourism and economic opportunities in eastern Kentucky.”

The department’s recently approved long-range management plan calls for

making it easier for the public to see elk in the wild, but the benefits of a healthy and

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## WE GET MAIL

### Letters to the Commissioner's Office

**F**rom Joe Purcell (via Facebook) – “I’d like to thank those in charge of the Doug Travis WMA for putting in the new handicap blind spot #19. It has been good hunting and easy to use, and the boat hide is being kept up nicely for us handicap hunters to enjoy. I hope that this spot gets to stay open.

Waterfowl hunter Justin Jerger provided this feedback via Facebook – “I just wanted to drop a quick message and say thanks to Conservation Officers Jennifer Henning and Brant Green for doing a great job here in Henderson this morning and afternoon.

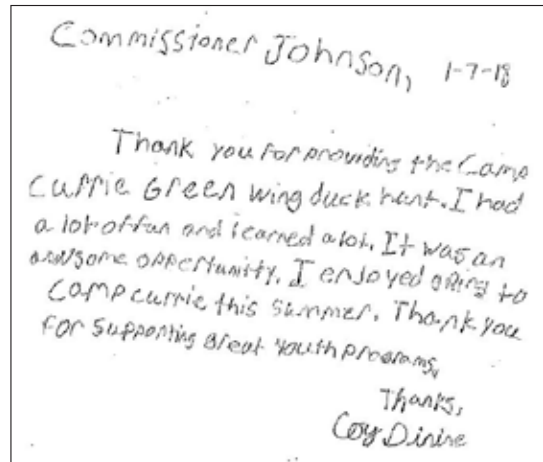
Tell your team to keep up the good work. It means a lot to us hunters that really appreciate all the work the Department of Fish and Wildlife does. Thanks again, and stay safe out there.”

Proud dad and Higginson-Henry WMA Foreman Curt Divine sent this letter:

Commissioner Johnson,

As we all know the future depends on our youth, I wanted to say Thank You to the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources for the opportunities that you provide kids to enjoy the Great Outdoors. From you Staff that travel to schools, Conservation Camps and events that are held for kids the KDFWR does an excellent job of connecting kids to the Outdoors.

In November, my son Coy was notified that he had randomly been drawn to participate in the Green Wing Duck hunt in Ballard County. Coy was eligible for the drawing as a result of receiving all of his outdoor badges while at Camp Currie this summer. Excitement ran high as the event drew near.



The amount of support that this event received from outside the KDFWR was astounding. Kentucky Ducks Unlimited, several privately owned sporting goods stores and numerous commercial and private hunting blind owners graciously and generously donated supplies, door prizes, blinds and guides to this event. The combined efforts of everyone involved proves that the KDFWR, KY Ducks Unlimited, Outdoorsmen and Outdoorswomen are committed to showing the youth of Kentucky what Duck Hunting is all about.

As Bill Fannin said before the hunt, “A limit is not the goal, the goal is to have fun,” were words that I feel were spot on for the kids. Bill emphasized taking in every aspect of the hunt from the scenery and being close to wildlife, to being with friends and family as well as hunting. The goal was to have fun and have fun we did in a big way!

My son Coy truly experienced the hunt of a lifetime. He does not fully understand yet the opportunity he had on that day with the amount of ducks we sw up close and personal over

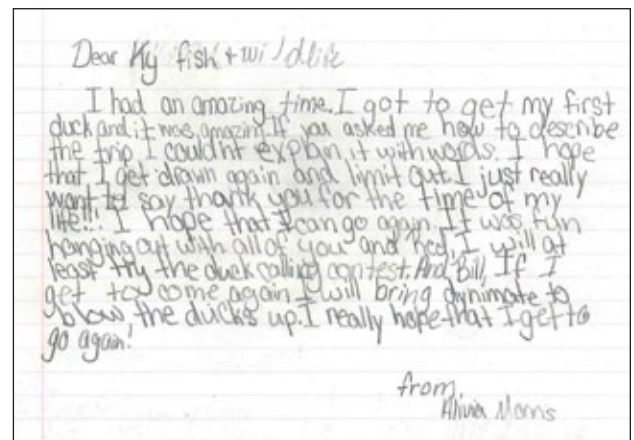
the decoys and in front of the blind. As a result of the Guides effort, Coy saw how ducks should and can be shot over the decoys with feet down intending to land. His most talked about experience was when he killed the drake mallard straight in front of the blind with his wings cupped, feet down and head rocked back (the image is very vivid in his mind). Future hunts will remind him just how special this hunt really was! This day in the blind with my son will be one that both of us never forget. Thank you for making this possible!

Also, I need some medical advice. Since Coy returned home he has blown his duck call continuously. He has it on his nightstand, and blows it before bedtime, and as soon as he gets up in the morning. His mother became very concerned when I told her he had the fever, DUCK FEVER!! /any advice on remedies for this are greatly appreciated. Thanks Again!

Sincerely,  
Curt Divine

From proud and appreciative mom –  
Dear KY Fish and Wildlife,  
I can’t thank you enough for picking my daughter to go on the Greenwing hunt down in Ballard County. I got an experi-

See “Mail,” page 10



## Barrow, Earlywine graduate from DOCJT's APS course

**C**onservation Officer Sergeants William Earlywine and Scott Barrow were recognized last month for completing the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training's Academy of Police Supervision.

Barrow works in the First District's Calloway County, and Earlywine is in the Eighth District assigned to Nicholas County.

APS, also called the sergeant's academy, is a three-week, 122-hour training program targeted for newly promoted sergeants or officers who are on their agency's promotion list to become sergeants.

While in APS, students participate in classes focusing on the role of a supervi-



sor, leadership, resolving conflict, managing diversity, monitoring officer performance,

professional image, legal issues for supervisors, ethics, interpersonal communication, effective written communication, making decisions, solving problems, managing critical incidents, public speaking, emotional survival, media relations and others.

APS is a stepping-stone to DOCJT's Kentucky Leadership Institute, which consists of a series of three progressive leadership courses aimed at developing and shaping future

and current leaders in law enforcement agencies across the commonwealth.

## A different kind of wildlife survey

**B**rian Clark, assistant director of KDFWR Marketing Division and a wildlife biologist, recently joined other state working group members in Washington DC to evaluate progress toward completion of the 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

Clark joined members from Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) staff, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and academic survey consultants at AFWA's offices in Washington, DC for one in a series of ongoing meetings to evaluate progress in completion of the National Survey effort and plan next steps.

The working group is tasked by the directors of state fish and wildlife agencies to complete the survey on its scheduled 5-year interval, and to undertake research that will help shape the future direction of the survey.

Wildlife biologists routinely conduct surveys to better understand wild animal populations in order to conserve them.

These surveys measure such things as animal numbers, age and sex parameters,



and aspects of animal health. Surveys of human populations are also increasingly important for managing wildlife.

Such surveys look at wildlife recreation participation and preferences among different management alternatives.

Clark (far right in photo), serves on a 5-member technical working group that oversees the National Survey for AFWA.

This survey provides important participation and economic estimates at

national and state levels. It has been conducted every 5 years since 1955 and is a unique source of trend data. The survey's results are used extensively by a variety of interests, including state and federal agencies and conservation organizations for

planning, communications, and partnership efforts.

Surveys are increasingly difficult to administer successfully for a variety of reasons. Large-scale, long-term surveys like the National Survey are especially challenging and costly to conduct over time.

The national and state reports from the survey will be published in 2018 and the working group will begin to help plan for the 2021 National Survey.



## Field to Fork events introduce 27 new adults to deer hunting

Members of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, Mossy Oak Pro Staff, the Quality Deer Management Association and Kentucky Sportsman Association hosted two successful *Field to Fork: Deer Hunting* workshops and mentor hunts in October 2017.

The Department and partners also hosted follow-up deer hunts during late crossbow and muzzleloader seasons in December for those who graduated from Field to Fork that afforded some participants additional opportunities to hunt with the very important social and technical support from experienced hunters.

Field to Fork courses help adults with little or no experience at hunting, and are comprised of interactive classroom instruction, hand-on activities, and mentored hunting experiences.

The new deer hunters learned deer biology, hunting regulations, hunting tactics, field dressing, butchering, venison cooking basics, safe use of crossbows, and more.

After the “formal” instruction, the new hunters took to the woods for their first deer hunts, using crossbows provided by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife and mentors from among all the partnering organizations.

The initial mentored hunts took place on Curtis Gates Lloyd Wildlife Management Area and at Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area. Here the hunters applied the practical skills and knowledge that they gained from their courses during time afield with their assigned mentors.

Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area hosted a Field to Fork follow-up crossbow hunt December 1st-3rd. Ten participants who had attended previous Field to Fork workshops were invited to hunt the area.

Participants used a provided crossbow range to hone their equipment skills. KDFWR educator Samantha Seaton and Mossy Oak Pro-staff Kevin Gullett, Jeremy Russelburg, and Jeremy Benham were on standby to assist with mentoring, blood tracking and field dressing.

Participants and volunteers stayed in cabins at the campground for the weekend. They hunted, and spent time in the woods, but took no deer. They networked and exchanged stories and tips with other hunters at various experience levels. The Kentucky Fish and



Wildlife Foundation provided meals.

Feedback from several recent Field to Fork course graduates indicates several already have enjoyed deer hunting success this season and went on to help family or friends with their pursuits in hunting, game processing and/or game cooking.





## 31st Greenwing Adventure is a hit for all

The 31st annual Greenwing Adventure held January 5th and 6th went a bit differently this year due to construction of the new dining hall at Camp John Currie.

Nine hunters who earned their Outdoorsman patch at Conservation Camp during the summer of 2017, along with their parents, traveled to Paducah, Ky to participate.

Despite the location changes and freezing temperatures, the young hunters were very successful.

The Greenwingers and their hunting companions harvested 70 ducks. Hunters

were guests of private land-owners this year and assisted by some of the state's best known waterfowlers -- Lynn and Clint McCutchen, Dr. Charlie Shields, Ricky Waldon, Bob Allen and father and son, Tony Dunker, John Saylor, Ricky Belcher and Engram Shelby Lake Farms.

On Friday night Greenwing hunters toured Millwork Products LLC and saw their impressive animal mounts.

After, hunters and their parents moved to Shooter's Supply, donated by McCutchen, as the location for activities held on Friday and Saturday including dinner, calling lessons, calling contest, shooting practice, and an awards ceremony with lots of great raffle prizes.

Special thanks go out to everyone who helped or donated to this event, including Bruce



Conley and Steve Keister with Ducks Unlimited who gave ammo and prizes. Prizes were also donated by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Cabela's in Louisville and Bowling Green, First Choice Firearms in Murray, Larry Jones with Ken-Tenn Outfitter's in Mayfield, Jim Brummal, and DJ Garland. Dinner one night was also provided by David Curtis and Walker Hall.

Also thanks to the staff of Camp Currie, I&E Division, and the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation who made the event a success!



## KDFWR at the ATA Trade Show in Indianapolis

Nearly 10,000 people from 26 countries attended the 2018 Archery Trade Association (ATA) Trade Show in Indianapolis, and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife was a part of it.

Visitors to the Department's booth expressed strong interest in Kentucky's elk herd and hunting opportunities.

Marketing Division's Brian Blank, Brian Clark and Brian Moore (pictured) discussed Kentucky opportunities with Trade Show attendees as they lined up to get their chance to hunt elk in Kentucky later this year.

Three Kentuckians representing "Wildlife Women" from Whitesburg, Melissa Blair, Erin Stump, and Bridgette Holbrook, were vibrant ambassadors for Kentucky's elk hunt and paused for a photo outside the KDFWR booth.

The 2019 ATA Trade Show will be January 10-12 in Louisville.



## “Salato Day” attracts new and old employees

Salato Wildlife Education Center staff hosted “Salato Day” last month for new employees, commission members, and other staff who may not have visited recently.

The day included a guided tour and lots of demonstrations. From bobcat training at the bobcat enclosure, to kestrel flights in the Schaaf Room, to red-tailed hawk flights at the Raptor Aviary, to groundhog training, to feeding some of the resident animals, onlookers enjoyed a full day.

Despite a sudden cold snap, turnout was great with each demonstration hosting about 20 people.

Salato staff said they wanted to share their daily experiences with new employees and employees who haven't visited in a while, and they planned it for December 7 to allow commission members, who might be on site preparing for their quarterly meeting, to attend.

The Salato Center and its staff tell the story of Kentucky's wildlife resources and those who work to protect and manage them.

The Center hosts thousands of school youth each year, and its staff tries to ensure they leave knowing about the importance of this agency.

Flying kestrels over the heads of a youth group, or training the black bear just a few feet in front of them helps get their attention as they tell the conservation story and leave a lasting impact.

Thanks to all of those who took time out of their busy day to attend, and thanks to each one of you for your work each day.



Above: Conservation Educator Geoff Roberts flew one of the Salato Center's American kestrels for the crowd. Below: Animal Care employee Corrie Joyce feeds the bison and elk up close so employees get a great viewing opportunity.







## Tug Fork water trail organizational meeting

The growth and popularity of paddlecraft throughout the country has led to many areas in Kentucky seeing increased usage and interest in further developments.

Tug Fork, which borders Kentucky and West Virginia is known for its excellent fishing and boating opportunities. In 2015, Kentucky and West Virginia entered into a reciprocal fishing license agreement on Tug Fork.

This common interest between the states recently led to an organizational meeting on December 11 in Matewan, WV to start discussions on a potential water trail on Tug Fork. The meeting held at the Matewan Depot Museum had just over 100 individuals in attendance.

Pete Runyon of Pinsonfork, Kentucky set up the meeting with Christy Bailey, Executive Director of the National Coal Heritage Area Authority, directing the meeting. The meeting agenda included presentations by Seth Burdette, Basin

Coordinator for the West Virginia Department of Environmental Resources and Kevin Frey, KDFWR Eastern Fisheries District Program Coordinator.

Group activities involving all attendees also took place. Notable attendees included Kentucky State Representative Chris Harris, staff from Kentucky US Senator Hal Rogers' office, staff from West Virginia US Representative Evan Jenkins' office, local county officials, and numerous individuals with interests in boating, angling, trails, and tourism. Chris Lawrence of West Virginia MetroNews Radio reported on the event.

The process of a "water trail" designation is already moving forward in Kentucky and the results of this meeting have led to similar efforts in West Virginia.

County officials are planning additional paddlecraft access in the near future. These sites will coincide with already existing sites to provide a more

contiguous "water trail." In addition to the new paddlecraft plans, there are already cooperative fisheries management efforts between KDFWR and WVDNR on Tug Fork.

These efforts have led to recent stockings of muskellunge in 2017. Response to these stockings is positive and the Eastern Fishery District staff have already received several photos of angler catches of muskellunge from Tug Fork.

The great level of interest in the Tug Fork has led to the development of a "Friends of the Tug Fork River" Facebook group. This group has grown to 1,000 plus members over the last year.

The Facebook page will provide easily accessible information on future developments and meetings. The cooperative efforts between Kentucky and West Virginia will provide user groups in both states a premier outdoor recreation destination in the near future.





## MOVING ELK INTO BELL COUNTY

Elk bolted from a trailer into their new Bell County landscape after being moved from capture sites in nine counties. Biologists started with a corral trap, but a helicopter capture crew with nets proved more effective. Wildlife watching is huge in Kentucky, and the new herds near Pineville will mean excellent viewing opportunities by people visiting areas near the future Appalachian Wildlife Center. The Bell County elk also will serve as a research population and a source herd for future trapping and relocation efforts. Some of the crew helping are Homer Pigman, Steve Combs, Dan Crank, Joe McDermott, Kyle Sams, John Mark Curtis, Jason Osborne, John Hast, Toby Howard, Gabe Jenkins, Eric VanBeek, Kate Williams, and Tristan Elmore.



## “Elk,” continued

robust elk herd extend beyond tourism.

The elk released at the proposed site of the Appalachian Wildlife Center near Pineville also will serve as a source herd for future trapping and relocation efforts to increase populations and hunting opportunities in targeted areas of the elk zone and offer excellent research opportunities for the department.

Managing elk in Kentucky sometimes requires moving small numbers from different sites. Traditionally, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife has captured elk with corral traps. In this instance, the Appalachian Wildlife Foundation contracted with a helicopter capture crew that worked with the department using an aerial capture technique familiar in western states but employed for the first time in Kentucky.

The technique is less stressful for the animals. The crew locates a herd of elk, maneuvers to isolate one elk and deploys a net from the helicopter. A crewmember secures and blindfolds the netted animal before placing it in a sling bag. The helicopter then hoists the bag with the elk in it and flies a short distance to a staging area, carefully placing the elk onto a flatbed trailer.

Researchers used the same helicopter technique to capture elk in Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, which were later trucked to eastern Kentucky for the state's restoration effort from 1997-2002.

Over the past few weeks, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife biologists transported elk captured by helicopter from the flatbed trailer to a stock trailer parked nearby. Each animal received a tag and health check. Once a small group was collected, the elk were moved by trailer to the unfenced property and released.

Several of the captured elk have been fitted with either GPS collars that download the location of the animal every few hours or VHF radio collars that allow biologists to track the animals with an antenna. The collars will help Kentucky Fish and Wildlife monitor for mortality

but also provide important movement data over the coming months and years.

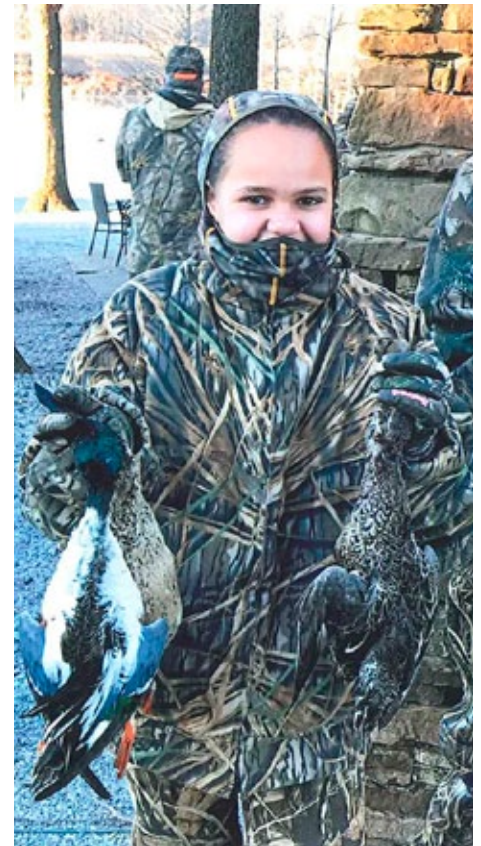
The proposed Appalachian Wildlife Center site spans 19 square miles on a reclaimed strip mine off U.S. 119 that offers stunning views of Cumberland Mountain and surrounding hills. Slated to open in Spring 2020, the center will offer visitors museums, a theater, a hall highlighting the natural history of elk and the species' restoration in Kentucky, bird natural history and watching, and a 15-mile, self-guided scenic loop road for wildlife viewing, hiking trails and picnic areas.

When it captures elk for relocation, the Department is careful to take only a few individuals from any one herd. Department personnel visited sites across nine counties – more than half of the elk zone – and had collected about 130 elk through for this project. Most have been cow elk but both sexes and all age ranges are represented in the capture data.

“It's been 20 years since we started returning elk to Kentucky,” said Gabe Jenkins, deer and elk program coordinator with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. “The number of elk transferred to this location in Bell County is small compared to the total number of elk estimated to be on the ground in the elk zone. It speaks to how far we've come that we're now able to establish a research and source herd while providing the public with a prime location to see these magnificent animals in the wild.”

After receiving public input, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife approved a new elk management plan in 2016. It is designed to serve as a road map for the long-term goals for the management of Kentucky's elk herd through 2030. Doing what is necessary to provide the public with quality viewing opportunities has been one of the goals since restoration efforts started in 1997. It remains so today and into the future.

The 2015-2030 Kentucky Elk Management Plan is available on the department's website at [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov).



## “Mail,” continued

ence of a lifetime along with her. She got her first duck, and I was never so happy to see her get it!

With Camp Currie being under construction, Bill (Fannin) and all the employees did such a wonderful job getting all things organized. I also want to thank Shooters Supply for letting us use their space to practice shooting and allowing us to use a building to meet up and have our meals there.

Huge shout out to Waldon Lodge for allowing us to hunt on their land and allowing me to experience this with my daughters.

I hope she has another experience like this. She enjoyed it so much and can't wait to go again! Thanks again!

P.S. – Her face is priceless in the picture!