

Salato  
reopens  
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## Watts, Combs, Smith rescue 7 from flood waters

**C**onservation officers Steve Combs and Brian Smith rescued two Breathitt County people who were swept away by flood waters earlier this month.

Lt. Greg Watts said the man and woman were attempting to walk around the flooded waters of the Kentucky River that covered Highway 1098 when they slipped in and were unable to climb out. They were clinging to a tree limb until rescued.

Earlier, Watts had provided the boat and assisted Hazard Fire Department in rescuing three adults from a flooded house in Hazard, and later two other persons from a vehicle after they had attempted to drive through flooded waters.



INSIDE:



**5** Peabody booklet



**6** Cypress plantings



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## WE GET MAIL

### Letters to the Commissioner's Office

#### To our conservation officers

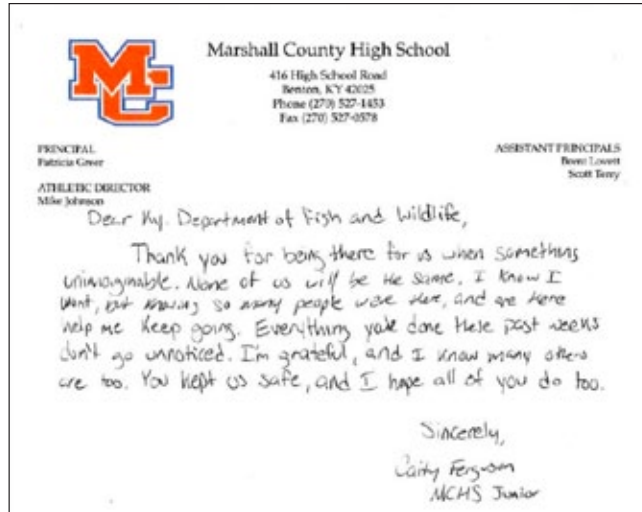
*KDFWR Conservation Educator IV Nancy Kiernan penned this profound and heartfelt thank you to our conservation officers, and specifically Lt. Chad Parker, Sgt. Scott Barrow, Daniel Richardson, Greg Youree and Benjamin Morris, who responded and assisted students and other agencies during the shooting at Marshall County High School last month that claimed two lives and injured 19.*

"I have lived in Western Kentucky for many years and have called Marshall County home for several of those years. On January 23, the unspeakable happened in our community with the shooting at Marshall County High School.

As I started answering phone calls from family and friends that morning, checking to make sure I wasn't in that school on that day, I pulled over along the parkway to get out of the way of law enforcement and first responders racing toward the school...and to text close friends who are teachers there, and to check on two of our F&W Camp Currie summer cooks who work at MCHS as well.

I have had most of those students in class. Many have gone to Camp Currie with us. Several are children of friends, and I have watched them grow up. Many of the teachers and staff are friends, some are very close friends, and for those of us on the outside, to say our hearts were breaking would not even come close.

As the day went on and as I was able to talk or text with many, several mentioned "there are F&W officers here". KDFWR Conservation Officers Lt. Chad Parker and Sgt. Scott Barrow were in the school helping secure the "commons" area, the center of the school and site of this tragedy. Officer Daniel Richardson worked



with other LE officers to secure the area outside the school. Officer Greg Youree provided support and security for our community as he patrolled needed areas as others worked to secure the scene and to ensure the safety of the students and staff.

As students and teachers were escorted to another school so the students could be reunited with their parents, officers from many different agencies worked together to watch over them. I was told by several different friends, both parents & teachers, that as the afternoon went on and several of the officers had to leave, a "F&W guy" stayed with them...until they were all able to leave. Officer BJ Morris stayed, watching over them and helping them feel safe at a time they so desperately needed to feel safe from any more harm. These are kids I know and teachers who are friends. I wanted to personally and publically thank these officers. I am forever grateful for what they do on a daily basis, but especially on this day when "this" happened - because I can find no words that adequately describe "this".

Please continue to pray for our kids, our teachers & school staff, our community, and for these officers - and, for all of the officers and first responders who faced

This note from Caity Ferguson, a junior at Marshall County High School

a part of the world we wish didn't exist and that we can be hopeful will cease to exist with each act of personal kindness. Few of us probably say thank you enough in our personal lives, much less our professional lives, so I wanted to share this here. I want these officers to know that you were and are noticed. On behalf of the people of Marshall County and so many throughout western Kentucky, we appreciate your dedication, your kindness, and your service. Thank you."

*KDFWR Commissioner Gregory K. Johnson added his admiration and appreciation along with Ms. Kiernan -*

"In reading Nancy's email I am really at a loss for words. I can't imagine the tragic situation you all put yourselves into, providing a calming presence by being "that" someone they knew to be well trained, caring, but with the authority and leadership they could count on. I am sure many of these children and adults, active in hunting and fishing, or active at Camp Currie, already knew many of you, and you them. How reassured they must have been, and their loved ones must have been, to see you all on scene to help!

You exhibited the kind of professionalism and servant leadership that exemplifies your Law Enforcement Division and our whole Department. Thank you so much, keep up the great work, we are all very proud of you!!!!"

Kentucky Afield writer Lee McClellan received this response to an email he sent to Louisville Zoo biologist Will Bird:

**See "Mail," page 3**



## Jasmine Johnson is new conservation educator

**O**n February 20th, the Information and Education Division welcomed Jasmine Johnson as a new Conservation Educator in the 3rd district.

Jasmine will present in-school conservation programs to students in Meade, Bullitt and Jefferson Counties and will recruit campers to attend Camp Earl Wallace.

Jasmine is a graduate of Midway

University with a degree in Sports Management. Before accepting this position, she worked as a counselor supervisor at Camp Earl Wallace teaching archery, boating, casting/fishing, gun safety, nature, outdoor survival, and swimming. In addition to her seasonal work experience, Jasmine is a volunteer hunter education instructor.

Her current certifications include:

Hunter Education instructor, Basic Archery Instructor, American Red Cross lifeguard, and American Red Cross First Aid/CPR.

In her spare time, Jasmine enjoys fishing with her family.

Also, in the Information and Education Division, CE Lori Shoup will be transferring to the Salato Center when it reopens March 1.

### “Mail,” continued

Lee,

Thank you so much for taking time to provide me with such a thorough and accurate answer. Your dedication to the subject matter really comes through in your response and the efforts you have taken to uncover the truth and facts about this subject. The depths of the bench at KDFWR never ceases to amaze me. We are truly fortunate to have such dedicated and knowledgeable people serving our outdoors sportsmen/women. Just in case you have not heard this in a while, you are doing great work and there are people around Kentucky that notice and are thankful for your efforts. – Will Bird

This to Commissioner Gregory Johnson from Tamara Sandberg, Executive Director of Kentucky Association of Food Banks:

“Thank you so very much for participating in Serving Up Solutions! What an honor for guest to be served – a truly wonderful example of servant leadership.

The proceeds of the event will make an impact on the fight against hunger, as we are grateful.”

This from Kevin McCormick in Grant County:

“Thank you to all involved in the hatcheries and release of trout. I had such



a blast ice fishing at Leary Lake and Pollywog in Grant County, as well as Camp Ernst in Boone. My father, grandfather, and Uncle even joined in on the fun!”

Aviva Yasgur, Recreation Supervisor/Park Naturalist at Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park forwarded a message that Hap Chambers, a volunteer field leader, sent to the Kentucky Ornithological Society’s birding listserve:

From Hap Chambers in Murray, KY:  
“I would like to take a minute to say how impressed I was with the weekend Eagle tours from KY Dam Village. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, KY Dam and Ballard WMA employees do an amazing job at sharing the wonders of Western KY

with the participants. Volunteering for this event was a pleasure even in inclement weather. Thank you to the folks who did all the work.”

*KDFWR Wildlife Biologist and Regional Coordinator Tony Black adds that, “The Ballard staff assist with the eagle tour every year but this year the group wanted to reach out and express their gratitude. It is difficult to coordinate with multiple parties, end of waterfowl season, prep for youth hunt, squeeze in time to prep school bus and they are still able to pull off this event every year.”*

And this note from Dan Jones, founder, Chairman, and CEO of the Parklands in Louisville. The Parklands had a fair amount of staff turnover this year, and Dane Balsman (FINs Coordinator) recently went over and met with some of their new staff members. The Parklands has been an outstanding partner to Fish and Wildlife through maintaining multiple FINs lakes on the property and also working with us to help provide access to Floyd’s Fork.

Dear Dane,

Thank you again for taking time to meet this morning, for the update, and most importantly, for all the great things you and your colleagues at Ky Fish & Wildlife have done for The Parklands

Sincerely,

Dan

## Salato Wildlife Education Center reopens March 1

The Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort reopens for the season beginning March 1. The Center will welcome a new addition later in the season – a striped skunk. It joins the center's collection of animals that cannot be released back into the wild, but are trained at the center for educational programs.

"We hope that our skunk will help visitors become excited about Kentucky's native wildlife," said Tiffany Laracuenta, a conservation educator at the center. "We are also looking forward to educating the public on skunks, and clearing up the myths about them that seem to persist in people's minds."

While skunks are an important part of the ecosystem, they are largely unappreciated for their role in keeping rodent and insect populations in check.

The Salato Center's skunk is now training for its public appearances and will not be on permanent exhibit until later in the year. Visitors hoping to catch a glimpse of the skunk prior to that time should contact the center at (502) 564-7863 to see when it will be available for viewing. Fans can also check the center's [Facebook](#) site for updates or email the center at [Salato@ky.gov](mailto:Salato@ky.gov).

*TripAdvisor* rates the Salato Wildlife Education Center as one of the top five things to do in Frankfort.

The Salato Center as part of the Department's effort to educate people about Kentucky's native wildlife. The facility offers viewing opportunities for bear, eagle, bobcats, deer, bison, birds of prey and more.

Hours are 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday. Salato is closed on Sunday, Monday and state holidays.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for youth 5 to 18. Children who are 4 years and younger are admitted free. The center also offers annual memberships for indi-

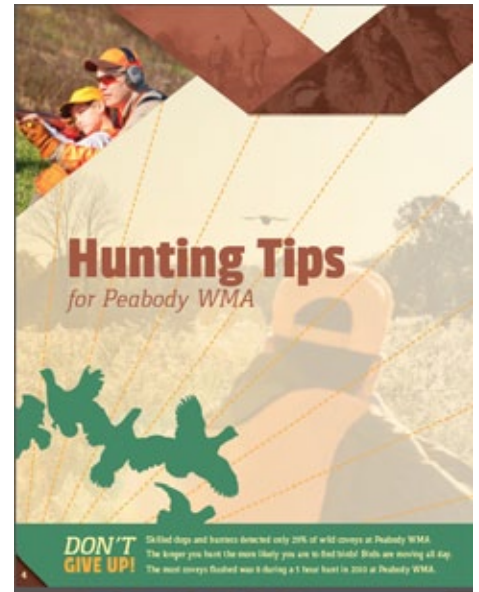
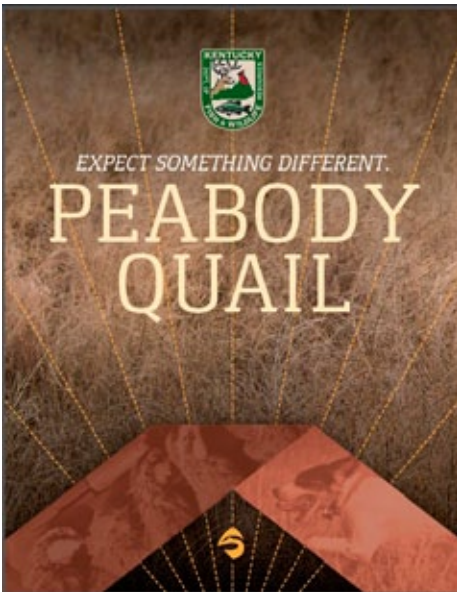


viduals and families.

Find more information about the

Salato Wildlife Center online at [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov), searching under the keyword [Salato](#).





# Peabody quail booklet first of its kind

Millions of dollars spent, a 56 percent increase in the quail population, and a proof of concept shown to be 99 percent effective, but the question remained: Where are all the quail?

That was the question biologist Eric Williams and foreman Jarrod Arnold, along with the staff at Peabody Wildlife Management Area (WMA), received from unsuccessful quail hunters on the Ken, Sinclair, and Homestead tracts of the WMA.

This prompted biologists from the KDFWR and researchers from the University of Tennessee to take a close look at what makes a successful quail hunter on this reclaimed coalmine WMA in western Kentucky.

What the researchers found was surprising in many ways. Quail at Peabody WMA behaved differently when pursued by hunters than other wild birds observed both within the state and abroad.

Many aspects of Peabody WMA contributed to these behaviors, namely the dense, non-native plant sericea lespedeza, which was planted during the

reclamation process. The impenetrable nature of this plant allowed quail to run and break up under its thick herbaceous canopy. Quail held tight and allowed hunters to walk by. These behaviors led many quail hunters to become frustrated at the few birds they saw while afield at

Peabody.

KDFWR biologists were excited to learn why hunters were not seeing more birds while hunting, however they were in need of a way to share this information with the public in a way that would be attractive and informative.

Enter graphic design coordinator Obie Williams. Obie worked closely with individuals who had knowledge about the research and successful hunting skills at Peabody WMA.

This collaboration resulted in a first of its kind publication, blending almost a decade of intensive technical research, habitat management, and hunting trials into an easy-to-read booklet. This booklet also contains a plant guide for interested hunters seeking to hone in on beneficial quail plants.

After over a year of preparation, graphic design, and review from stakeholders, the rollout for this booklet is planned for later this month. If you are planning to hunt Peabody WMA in the future, make sure to have one in your possession!





## Western Fisheries District expanding cypress tree plantings in Kentucky Lake

The Western Fisheries District is expanding a program that for the past few years has resulted in the planting of up to 200 cypress trees annually on Kentucky Lake. A \$5,000 grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority is making the expansion possible.

Cypress trees were first planted on the shores of Kentucky Lake in the 1940's. Those first plantings were designed to make the land more economically productive by allowing timber production in areas of the new flood easement zone.

As time passed, more cypress tree planting efforts began with the goal of decreasing erosion and replacing the degrading fish habitat in the reservoir. Over the last few years, the western fisheries district (WFD) staff has been planting around 100-200

cypress trees a year. The grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority means the program will be expanding.

Historically, survival rates of newly planted cypress trees at Kentucky Lake were very low. Planting trees along the shore of this reservoir is difficult because the water level is designed to fluctuate five feet for the winter drawdown.

Although cypress trees are incredibly tolerant of flooding, they will die quickly if they

are completely submerged. To combat this, WFD staff experimented with growing larger trees in temporary planters before transplanting them to the lake. By planting taller trees that are 2 or 3 years old instead of shorter one-year olds, survival rates climbed to better than 90 percent.

The grant money has provided tree planting materials like beaver and deer protection sleeves, fertilizer, and a gas powered auger to dig the holes for the trees. Staff installed a state of the art irrigation system for a tree growing system they hope will greatly improve growth rates. Crop Production Services in Hardin KY, and Ahart's Gravel and Sand in Almo, KY provided planting containers and sand.

Replenishing natural habitat

in this system should have a positive effect on the fish communities of the lake. Unlike fish habitat styles such as sunken brush piles, each year that a cypress tree survives, the quality of the habitat improves because the tree and the roots get larger.

Another great thing about cypress trees is that they provide habitat for fish and for birds.

Staff have plans to plant about 1,000 trees per year in the reservoir, but that number could easily go up with strong support from volunteers.





## Field to Fork hunters get full experience



**B**est Case Farm in Pendleton County hosted a weekend deer hunt during the recent season for five lucky participants of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife’s “Field to Fork” program. The muzzleloader hunt proved a success as three of the hunters harvested a deer. For two of those hunters, it was their first deer ever.

Best Case Farm Manager Steve Braun and farm hand Lee Emehiser generously invited the new hunters for the full deer

camp experience, from telling stories late at night, to the hunt, and to processing the deer. As part of this weekend hunters learned the proper way to cape a deer for taxidermy and how to tan the hide.

Braun and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife staff provided cooking tips for the venison and helped the new hunters sharpen their overall skills, a primary goal



of the Field to Fork program.

By the end of the weekend, participants gained a greater understanding of deer hunting, made some new friends, created multiple memories – and came home with venison for the table.

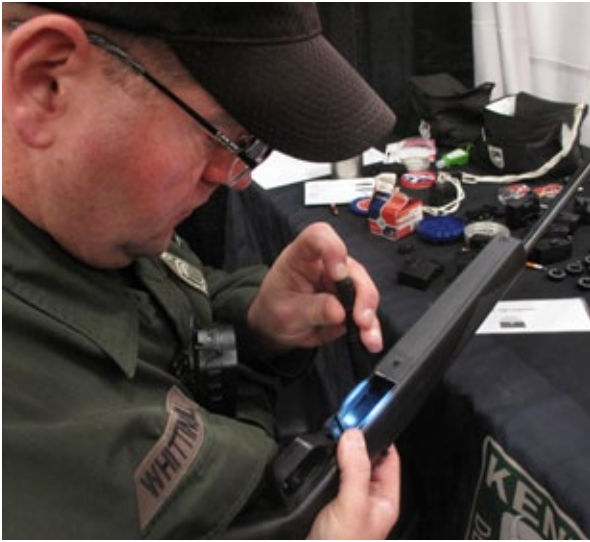
## Discussing wildlife with preschoolers

**E**ighth District Conservation Officers Lt. Andrew Suit and Jeremy Meade spent a morning with Mrs. Amada Bricker’s preschool class at Flemingsburg Elementary School talking about the challenges for wildlife living in the winter climate.

The officers took several animal pelts to share with the children and said they really enjoyed being able to handle the thick fur.







It is show season in Louisville, Lexington, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and more. Patrons visiting Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at the Owensboro Sportsman's Show this month purchased 2018 licenses, completed Hunter Education certification, met with fish and wildlife professionals, took a few recreational shots with air guns, and posed for selfies with Kentucky Afield Television Host Chad Miles. Conservation officer Jeff Whittinghill helped with some needed air gun maintenance.

## IT'S SHOW SEASON





# Landowners, business partners and NRCS recognized for wildlife-friendly practices

## Annual awards highlight wildlife habitat improvements on the landscape

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources recently recognized several landowners, businesses and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for wildlife habitat restoration efforts.

“Each year, we honor landowners who implement wildlife-friendly practices on their lands in each of the five wildlife districts across Kentucky,” said Dan Figert, assistant director of the Wildlife Division of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. “We also honor business partners who work with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife on habitat improvements or public access to their lands. We also select a NRCS Conservationist of the Year.”

### Landowner of the Year: Mike Zimmer

Mike Zimmer is head coach of the NFL Minnesota Vikings football team and former defensive coordinator for the Cincinnati Bengals. His wildlife-friendly land management is a good example for other Kentuckians.

Zimmer converted a 160-acre cattle farm in Kenton County into a showpiece property managed for deer, rabbits and quail. Zimmer and land manager Jeff Bunch converted 130 acres of fescue into more wildlife friendly vegetation, planted 60 acres of native warm season grasses, installed 5 acres of perennial and 5 acres of rotational food plots.

Zimmer also eradicated invasive honeysuckle and works to ensure it does not return. He also works with neighboring landowners by providing guidance and assistance with implementing these practices on their farms.

### Purchase Region Landowner of the Year: Charlie Wilkins



Landowner of the Year



Purchase Region Landowner of the Year



Northeast Region Landowner of the Year

Wilkins installed 150 acres of native warm season grasses as part of the Conservation Reserve Program on 200 acres in Graves County.

He also integrated 3,000 feet of streamside borders on both sides of Morris Creek, which runs through is property.

Wilkins selectively harvested 20 acres of timber to improve wildlife habitat and plants three to five wildlife food plots per year.

He also maintains three ponds for fishing.

### Northeast Region Landowner of the Year: Dr. Herb Loyd

Loyd owns a 1,136-acre Christmas tree farm in Fleming County. He recently completed 160 acres of forest stand improvement, established native warm season grasses around crop fields and cut 74 acres of patch clear cuts to create early successional habitat for birds such as ruffed grouse.

Loyd’s plans call for forest improvements on an additional 112 acres as well as another 45 acres of patch clear cuts.

### Green River Region Landowner of the Year: Gary Boswell

Boswell owns an active 640-acre row crop farm in Hancock County managed for ducks, quail and other wildlife. He is among the first in his county to implement no-till planting to save

See “Awards,” page 10



Southeast Region Landowner of the Year



Ky Business Conservation Partner of the Year

## “Awards,” continued

precious topsoil.

Boswell installed 201 acres of pollinator habitat as well as filter strips, field borders for quail and six acres of shallow water for the benefit of waterfowl and other wildlife.

### Southeast Region Landowners of the Year: Jim and Sara Sproles

The couple own 163 acres in three tracts in Adair County. They established 66 acres of native warm season grasses and forbs, eight acres of pollinator habitat, 11 acres of forest stand improvement and 111 acres of prescribed burning to improve vegetation stands for wildlife.

### Kentucky Business Conservation Partner of the Year: Kentucky River Properties

Since 2015, Kentucky River Properties enrolled 86,124 acres for elk hunting access through Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's Voucher Cooperator Program.

Their properties lie in nine tracts ranging from 1,234 acres to 51,173 acres in Harlan, Leslie, Knott and Perry counties.

Through this program, Kentucky

River Properties provided opportunity for 400 elk hunters; 63 hunters harvested elk in 2015 and 2016.

The company is a vital partner in elk trapping efforts to meet demands of elk restoration efforts.

### Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservationist of the Year: Tony Burnett

Since 2015, Burnett's work unit



NRCS Conservationist of the Year

funded 31 contracts under the Southeast Kentucky Early Successional Habitat Initiative.

His work included plans for 595 acres of forest stand improvements, more than 225 acres of invasive species eradication, 22 acres of patch clear cuts to create early successional habitat, 19 ephemeral pools and a 2.6-acre shallow water area for use by waterfowl and other wildlife.

Burnett's work through the NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program brought an additional 111 acres of patch clear cuts, 33 acres of invasive species eradication, 20 acres of native tree and shrub establishment as well as the installation of 57 acres of native warm season grasses and pollinators.

The Conservation Stewardship Program for forestlands enrolled 1,465 acres into wildlife enhancement practices such as establishing pollinators and shrubs and manipulation of the forest to provide cover for wildlife. He also oversaw improvements to water quality and wildlife health in his role in the Triplett Creek Restoration Project.