



New program  
Page 5

## First brood fish for Trophy Bass Propagation Program

**B**obby Webb caught the 8-pound 2-ounce largemouth bass on April 4 at Fish Pond near Jenkins that became the first brood fish in the Department's new Trophy Bass Propagation Program.

Webb brought the trophy-sized fish to the ANA Variety Bait Shop in Jenkins where the Fisheries Transportation crew picked it up. They took the trophy bass to the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery where it became the first brood fish in the Division's program.

The Department launched the program last month, and it is seeking big bass for brood stock.

Not just any largemouth bass, however. The hunt is on for the wall-hanging, line-busting fish that anglers in the local tackle shop will talk about for years.

Big bass produce big bass. And we want anglers to donate their live trophy bass so the department's hatcheries can use them to produce new generations of oversized fish. In return, anglers will receive a replica mount of their bass.

"I wanted to figure out how we could do a better job of propagating larger bass in Kentucky," said department Fisheries Director Ron Brooks. "So this kind of program just makes sense. People have been breeding animals forever to optimize the size of the animal, so why not do this with largemouth bass?"

Anglers for years have lobbied for



Kentucky to stock the jumbo-sized Florida strain largemouth bass in the state's waters. However, Kentucky doesn't have the same kind of climate as Florida, so that variety of bass would not do as well here.

The best alternative is spawning native fish with proven genetics to grow big. Kentucky's program will only accept female bass weighing more than eight pounds, and male bass weighing more than six pounds. Fish this size generally exceed 22 inches in length.

Anglers wishing to participate should take their trophy bass to a participating bait shop, where employees will hold fish in aerated bait tanks until a Kentucky Fish and Wildlife employee can pick up the bass and take it to a hatchery.

"We don't want anglers to leave their trophy bass in a livewell or keep it a fish basket on the bank for an extended period of time, because we don't want the fish to succumb to stress," Brooks said. "We're asking people to handle these fish with kid gloves and bring them to a participating bait shop as soon as possible."

After the bass spawn, hatcheries will raise young fish until they reach five inches long. Then employees will stock the bass in lakes around the state, including the lakes where the parent fish were originally caught.

"This won't mean that every largemouth bass spawning in Kentucky will have trophy bass genes," Brooks said. "That would be a long way off. But in the immediate future, it will mean the fish we're stocking to augment the natural spawning will be a higher quality of fish as far as growth potential."

A list of the participating bait shops and more information about the trophy fish program can be found on the department's website, [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov). Search under the keywords, "Trophy Bass Propagation Program."

INSIDE:



4B 4 Funds awarded



6 Report barn owls



8 Conclave at EKU

## WE GET MAIL

### *Letters to the Commissioner's Office*

The following letter came to Commissioner Johnson from Michael Brewer of Lancaster, Kentucky. He wrote, "While long overdue, I wanted to get a letter of thanks to KDFWR. I was drawn for the cow rifle season #1 last fall. My dad (76), son (29) and I had a wonderful time.

We've been waiting since the first draw for the chance to go. We spent the summer of 2015 walking and scouting. We elected to hunt, as we always do, we find, we camp and hunt together. My son and I made a couple of trips even to Frankfort just to confirm we were within our hunting zone. Everyone there was very friendly and helpful.

Once the season came in, we camped and at dark on the third day, the cows came back where we thought they'd be returning. We took a cow and sent in 2 teeth and a patch of hair (just so you all would know the color at that location).

Once my dad got to see the cow where I shot, I field dressed and my son and I drug the cow out and up to the truck. (6 hours, Ha!) We wanted to bring the complete animal to show the rest of the family. My mother (72) was up waiting at 3:00am to see it. This trip here in Kentucky where we always lived will never be forgotten. This hunt made our family's memory forever.

This should've been said months ago, but we've been busy looking for ducks, rabbits and grouse.

Again, thank you for all the KDFWR does for the Kentucky sportsmen and sportsladies."

The following note came from the Nicholas County Family Resource/Youth Center to Officer **Loren Clark**. Ms. Paula

See "Mail," page 3



## Sportsmen Awards Banquet 8th District

Commissioner **Greg Johnson** attended the 8th District Sportsmen Awards Banquet in Frenchburg last month. What a great group of "expert" youth marksmen seen pictured and recognized!

Several State winners in this bunch as well. It was great having Representative

David Hale also in attendance to recognize the youth and their accomplishments. Many thanks to their coaches for being there for the kids.

And yes, as can be seen sitting on the table in the foreground, there were some hotdogs left over.



## AT SLOUGHS WMA

Commissioner Greg Johnson recently visited Sloughs WMA with Commission Chairman Frank Williams. They looked over the work being done with Ducks Unlimited and also some other management objectives with Sloughs staff. It was a great trip, great work going on! From left are Michael "Catfish" Hutchieson, Commissioner Johnson, Charlie Plush, Greg Buckert, Chairman Williams, and Region Coordinator Scott Harp.

## Charlie Plush named Kentucky Ducks Unlimited Jim Moynahan Award recipient

Kentucky Ducks Unlimited has named Sloughs Wildlife Management Area Wildlife Biologist **Charlie Plush** as its Jim Moynahan Award winner.

Plush has been very active hosting and assisting with numerous educational activities in Kentucky for the last several years.

At Sloughs WMA, during wood duck rocket netting and migrant waterfowl trapping, he annually hosts two or three Ducks Unlimited Greenwing events, school groups, community groups, and various visitors who wish to participate in and learn about waterfowl and wetland management.

He also personally participates in and encourages his staff to participate in Greenwing youth waterfowl hunting events hosted at Camp Currie and Ballard WMA.

In 2014 he took over as the public lands biologist overseeing the management and operation of Sloughs, Big Rivers, and Higginson-Henry wildlife management areas. In just two years in this position, Charlie has already implemented an impressive body of work.

At Big Rivers WMA, which was basically void of manageable moist soil units and offered very little waterfowl habitat or hunting opportunity, he worked with The Nature Conservancy and implemented a successful NAWCA grant that included creating three new shallow water areas, accounting for 34 acres of new moist soil habitat on the area.

He also renovated a drained fishing lake and was able to flood an additional eight acres of cropland for waterfowl winter use.

These 42 acres of newly created moist soil habitat have already been heavily utilized by waterfowl in the area, as well as hunters. In addition, he erected 15 wood duck nesting boxes along the Tradewater



From left are Barry Welty, Conservation Chair, Charlie Plush, Public Lands Biologist, Wes Little, Migratory Bird Biologist, Kenny Vaughn, State Chairman

River corridor, an important breeding area for wood ducks utilizing the WMA.

At Sloughs WMA, Charlie hit the ground running and was instrumental in assisting DU with acquiring an additional \$75,000 NAWCA grant that is in the process of being implemented.

This grant project will allow for the drilling of a new well and levee work on the Crenshaw Tract of the area, creating an additional 90 acres of moist soil habitat and increasing hunting opportunity with up to three new blind sites being established. He has also replaced five permanent hunting blinds on the area and rehabbed several more, providing a better quality hunting experience for the public.

In addition to the educational and habitat activities, Charlie is heavily involved in waterfowl research and evaluating the current wetland and hunting structure at Sloughs WMA. He is instrumental at collecting data for several waterfowl surveys that assist with our hunt structure approvals, such as the annual blue-winged

teal survey, wood duck rocket netting and banding (~ 500/year), and migrant waterfowl trapping and banding (~ 2000/year).

He has begun the process, with DU assistance, of evaluating the overall wetland system and hunt structure at Sloughs WMA, and hosted a wetland review last October that was attended by a consortium of DU and KDFWR biologists, engineers, and policy makers to assist with this evaluation of how to better the wetland complex for waterfowl and hunters alike for years to come.

---

### “Mail,” continued

Hunter wrote, “Thank you so much for your support of the FRYSC Progressive Agriculture Safety Day. You have made a difference in the lives of our children in ways that you may never know. Our children are our tomorrow and I appreciate you taking time out of your day to support our Safety Day.”

## Bobwhite specialty license plate funds over \$30,000 in conservation projects

The Bobwhite Specialty License Plate Committee met at KDFWR Headquarters on March 30 and awarded over \$33,000 in conservation projects. KDFWR employee-submitted projects represented 88 percent of the allotted funds.

Funded projects included the following:

- 1. Pollinator Partnership** – supports 1 to 10 acre wildflower enhancement plantings in the Kentucky Green River CREP Project Area. \$5,000 to Chris Mason
- 2. Clay WMA Demonstration Day** – supports lunch cost for a field day at Clay WMA highlighting open and forest land management. \$500 to Jacob Stewart
- 3. Prescribed Fire Notification System** – contributes up to \$5,000 towards the creation of the on-line notification system for Kentucky's new Prescribed Fire Program. \$5,000 to John Morgan
- 4. Livingston County National Focal Area** – supports seed and herbicide expenditures within the focal area. \$5,000 to Phillip Sharp
- 5. Clay WMA ATV Wick** – purchase of an ATV wick to target invasive plants through herbicide applications. \$1,000 to Jacob Stewart
- 6. Peabody WMA Plow Perch Project** – fund establishment of single-strand songbird perches via wire and t-post construction over disked ground to foster natural shrub development. \$1,800 to Eric Williams
- 7. Perryville Battlefield Project** – fund land clearing of colonizing trees and pay for signage on the new Perryville Battlefield Bobwhite Focal Area. \$5,000 to John Morgan
- 8. Legume Seed for Bobwhite Food and Brood Habitat** – support legume seed purchase for private and public lands use. \$5,000 to Dave Howell
- 9. Tablet Data Collection** – purchase of tablets and protective covers to pilot the collection of bobwhite focal area monitoring data for the Livingston Co. National Focal Area. \$2,500 to John Morgan



Plate artwork provided by Rick Hill and graphic design by Obie Williams.

Over the last six years, the committee has taken great pride towards funding projects that are visible to the community and carry out the vision established in the Department's bobwhite restoration plan. In 2015 alone, the plate generated over \$29,000 in conservation funding. To keep up with the bobwhite license plate projects visit: <http://www.kentuckyquailplate.com/>.

## Law Enforcement Division names 2015 award winners

Law Enforcement Division Director **Col. Joe West** announced three Department recipients last week of 2015 statewide law enforcement recognitions.

The Division of Law Enforcement Awards Board and Command Staff selected Fourth District Conservation Officer **Jared Ervin** as National Association of State Boating Law Administrators 2015 Boating Officer of the Year.

Conservation Officer **Jason Ice** was named Southeastern Association of Fish



Jared Ervin



Jason Ice



Greg Youree

and Wildlife Association Officer of the Year.

Conservation Officer **Greg Youree** was selected as Shikar Safari Kentucky Wildlife Officer of the Year.

"We had several deserving candidates for these awards," said West. "I want to extend my congratulations to all of the district award winners."

## Prescribed Burn Program becomes law

In 2008, the Department hosted a roundtable meeting of conservation partners committed to the expansion of prescribed fire in the Commonwealth. That event spawned the creation of the Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council.

Earlier this month, the General Assembly passed the Council's top priority into law – a Prescribed Burn Program.

Prescribed fire is widely considered our most powerful and cost effective land management tool. A lack of trained and experienced practitioners in Kentucky has greatly limited

its use. HB 208 created a pathway for farmers, small business, and motivated land-owners to conduct prescribed burns during the states fire hazard season.

Kentucky's fire hazard season runs from February 15 – April 30 and October 1 – December 15. During this

timeframe, prescribed burning within 150 feet of woodlands or shrub lands is largely limited to fires conducted from 6 PM to 6 AM.

Over 80% of KY's prescribed burning occurs during this window. Burns during the evening and night present smoke management problems and puts practitioners at risk by operating in the dark. Also, fire effects can be marginalized and efficiency greatly reduced by higher atmospheric moisture.

HB 208 created a Prescribed Burn Program that empowers the Kentucky



Prescribed Fire Council to certify individuals to conduct prescribed burning during the fire hazard season.

The Council will establish training, experience, and insurance requirements that must be approved by the Kentucky Division of Forestry. Upon approval, the Council and its partners will begin to certify individuals through this program.

The Department (from the Commissioner's office to field staff) was actively engaged with the Council partnership to formulate and pass this legislative initiative.

The bill was carried by two fantastic

sponsors in Rep. Tom McKee and Rep. Mike Denham. Strong bi-partisan support and robust collaboration by the conservation community resulted in what many deemed unlikely – passage in the first attempt.

Congratulations to all that were actively engaged in making this bill a reality! The Department will continue to be a critical partner towards the implementation of this landmark conservation program.

## Wanted: Information on Kentucky barn owls

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) is conducting a statewide inventory of barn owl nests this spring to expand research on



KDFWR photo



Kate Slankard photo

this rare species.

Barn owls remain quite uncommon in Kentucky despite a large amount of suitable habitat. Currently, there are only about 50 documented nesting locations statewide.

Department bird biologists want to expand Kentucky's nest inventory in hopes to better understand the reasons for decline in this species.

Barn owls have a whitish face and breast with no ear tufts. They do not "hoot" like some owls species. Instead they "screech" and "hiss."

They prefer open habitat such as hayfields and pasture and are usually not found in the woods. Barn owls can nest year-round in Kentucky, though most of the nesting activity occurs from March-August.

Although they often nest in hollow trees, barn owls also regularly nest in some very strange places including silos, grain bins, chimneys, hay lofts, attics, and elevated hunting blinds.

If you think you've seen a barn owl on your property, please see [KDFWR's owl identification webpage](#) to confirm the species of owl you have observed.

If you know of a barn owl nest, please contact Kate Slankard, KDFWR at 1-800-858-1549 x 4474 or [kate.slankard@ky.gov](mailto:kate.slankard@ky.gov).

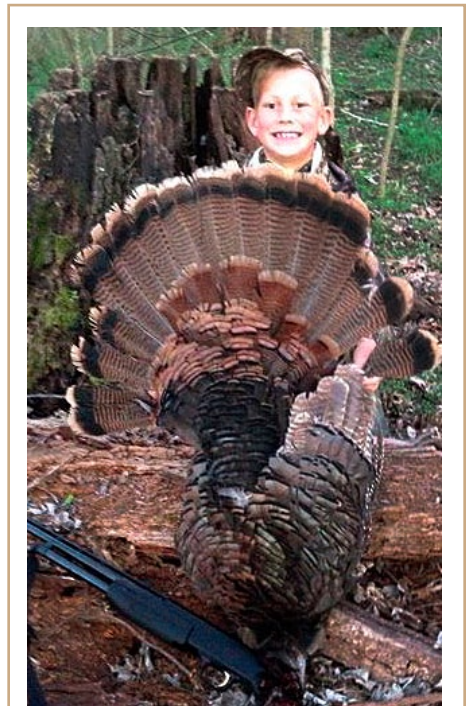
KDFWR tracks barn owl nest locations to learn more about this rare species. For the protection of owls and landowners, exact nesting locations and landowner information for barn owl nests reported to KDFWR is strictly confidential and will not be

released to the public.

KDFWR is also collecting dead barn owl specimens to test for possible causes of decline. Fresh specimens are preferred, but slightly decomposed specimens are still useful. Even if the cause of death is obvious (e.g. collision with vehicle) the specimen is still useful.

Please notify KDFWR at the contact above if you find a dead barn owl so that it may be used for research.

More info on Kentucky barn owls can be found at <http://fw.ky.gov/Wildlife/Pages/Barn-Owls-in-Kentucky.aspx>



### BEARD GETS FIRST TURKEY

Layton Beard, 7, took his first turkey on Youth Turkey Weekend while hunting with his father, Wildlife Biologist and Program Coordinator Derek Beard, in Franklin County. Layton scored his trophy at 30 yards with No. 6 shot from a Mossberg Super Bantam .410 shotgun.

## Kentucky Afield goes live on KET

**K**entucky Afield's Spring Turkey live call-in show on KET is one of the station's most popular telecasts.

Wildlife Division Director **Steve Beam** and Conservation Officer **Bill Spears** joined new host **Chad Miles** in answering questions from viewers in real time.

Information & Education division Director **Tim Slone**, Kentucky Afield editor **Nathan Sangster** and Leslie Witt-Moore were among those helping answer the hundreds of calls that came into Kentucky Educational Television studios during the half-hour show. KET staff worked behind the scenes at the controls.

It was the first of five annual live call-in Kentucky Afield shows for 2016. A Spring fishing show, Wildlife Diversity show, Fall Hunting show and Fall Fishing show are also scheduled. The Spring Fishing show will be May 14.



## KDFWR sponsors Southeastern Wildlife Conclave at EKU



Eastern Kentucky University hosted this year's *Southeastern Wildlife Conclave*, an annual competitive and educational event that rotates among colleges with fish and wildlife programs in the region. Nearly 400 students participated.

Twenty-three university student chapters of The Wildlife Society, the premier professional organization of wildlife biologists and managers, sent delegations this year.

Congratulations to Murray State University for its first place win in the Quiz Bowl and for placing second in the Team and Overall competitions.

As host, EKU was ineligible to compete, but its students and faculty advisors were very busy with planning and hosting the three-day event based at the Richmond campus March 17-19.

KDFWR was lead sponsor of the event and provided substantial staff support as well, including facilitating field trips, providing workshops, and judging competitions.

Commissioner  
**Gregory K. Johnson**

welcomed participants and shared about his own experiences as an EKU wildlife program alumnus.

Department wildlife biologist and Research Program Coordinator **Danna Baxley** provided the keynote address, encouraging students to think outside the box, pursue leadership development, and work hard to achieve success in their careers.

**Scott Barrett** (Fisheries) provided a hands-on tour of the Minor Clark Fish Hatchery. **Loren Taylor** (Wildlife) partnered with falconer Mitchum Whitaker to offer a falconry and raptors field trip.



KDFWR veterinarian **Iga Stasiak** (Wildlife) provided a wildlife necropsy workshop.

**Jamie Cook** and **Olivia Harmsen** (Information & Education) presented a Hunter's Legacy Program award to the Murray State student chapter for its college hunter recruitment efforts, and challenged all of the region's programs to compete for the annual

title of "most college hunter-recruits made."

Cook and Harmsen joined Wildlife staff members **Brandon Jacobs**, **Joe Lacey**, **Wes Little**, **Jason Nally**, and I&E's **Madeline Ruhl** in serving as judges for various competitions.

Wildlife biologists **Will Bowling**, **Tom Edwards**, **Charlie Logsdon**, **Jayson Plaxico** and **Kyle Sams** led a trapping techniques workshop at the Miller Welch Central Kentucky WMA.

**Zach Beyer**, **Scott Ferrell**, **Chris Grash**, **John Morgan**, **Ben Robinson**, **Jimmy Woods** and **Jacob Stewart** (all from Wildlife) facilitated a field trip on prescribed fire and grassland habitat management.

**Jamie Cook** and **Brent McCarty** guided participants on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Salato Center and provided an overview of I&E Division operations.

**Brian Clark** (Public Affairs) manned KDFWR's sponsor table to sell licenses and permits, provide information on opportunities for outdoor recreation, and discuss career opportunities with Conclave participants.





John Hast, KDFWR Bear, Wild Pig and Furbearer Coordinator helps move elk into the working facility. *Dave Baker photos*

## Wisconsin receives second round of Kentucky elk for ongoing restoration effort

**W**isconsin's Department of Natural Resources has received its second round of Kentucky elk.

Thirty-nine Kentucky elk trapped this winter were released into a Jackson County, Wisconsin holding pen late last month.

This restoration effort is part of an ongoing partnership between Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Wisconsin received its first shipment

of 23 elk about a year ago. It was the first of an agreement to provide Wisconsin with up to 150 elk over a three- to five-year trapping period for an elk restoration program led by the Wisconsin DNR.

In return, Wisconsin agreed to pay the cost of the translocation program and also provide financial assistance for the development of forest habitat projects in eastern Kentucky benefitting grouse and other woodland species.

Wisconsin DNR staff assisted Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Elk Program staff this winter with trapping, disease testing and elk caretaking while the animals were quarantined in Kentucky.

The elk will be quarantined in Wisconsin within a 7-acre holding pen in the Black River State Forest near Black River Falls until their release this summer. The elk received last year were released in the same area.



Will Bowling, KDFWR elk biologist and Karen Sexton, Ho-Chunk Nation Wildlife Biologist, sort elk in the working facility.



## Wildlife Division teams up to get prescribed burning done

**M**anpower remains one of the most significant bottlenecks towards getting the hard work of habitat management done. To get the most bang for the buck, few management practices are more efficient and effective than prescribed burning.

Two of Kentucky's northern bobwhite focal areas this year tried a new approach to maximize efficiency when deploying fire. The small game program coordinated internal and external volunteers to help project leaders **Philip Sharp** (Livingston County) and **Jacob Stewart** (Clay WMA) meet their annual burn management goals. In its pilot year, the effort proved to get more work done, provide cross training opportunities, and build invaluable relationships among professionals that rarely, if ever, get to work together.

Each project area had three days of volunteer support. In Livingston County, the team completed a total of 378.7 acres of burns. Most of the prescribed burns were comprised of native grasses, but one unit was a pine savanna trial area. These were all conducted on private lands. Clay WMA incorporated a combination of forest and grassland burns that were all within the public lands focal area boundary. They were able to complete an impressive 600 acres of burning.

Beyond the habitat, a sense of team and camaraderie made the work fun. Volunteers ranged from the Bluegrass Region, big game and research program, State Parks, Farm Bill, and USFWS staff. Staff experienced burning in different environments and diverse ways of getting the task of prescribed burning done. All involved spoke highly of the experience, and I think



it's fair to say – the pilot will transform into an annual effort. If you have an interest in getting involved in the program next

year, then gain approval through your supervisor and reach out to the Wildlife Division.

## 1-day BOW event draws 95 to Salato Center

**K**DFWR staff and volunteers for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program educated 95 women about wildlife-related topics Saturday, April 2 at the Salato Wildlife Center.

"Nearly half of those who attended this special one-day event had never attended a BOW workshop, or been introduced to the agency and the work it does, and we were very pleased with that," said Beth Spivey-Minch, BOW Coordinator.

During the event 17 different classes were offered, including basic and advanced archery, crossbows, firearms use and selection, fishing, turkey hunting basics, wildlife and edible plant identification and many others.



"The BOW Program is fortunate to have the KDFWR and Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation as the primary sponsors of these events," said Spivey-Minch.

"This partnership gives women an opportunity to learn outdoor skills and engage in various types of wildlife-related activities that they have extremely limited

chances to do anywhere else," she added.

"One participant noted that she has two boys who want to go fishing, and that she really knew nothing about it. She came to the event to learn the basics, so she could take her sons and help them get started this summer. Reaching one mother can translate into three new anglers. That's what this program is really about," says Spivey-Minch.

The next scheduled BOW event is slated for September 16-18 in Jabez, Kentucky on Lake Cumberland.

"I appreciate the support from the KDFWR and Foundation staff to help instruct, provide equipment and in hosting this event at the Salato Center," Spivey-Minch said.

## BGAD, KDFWR & NWTF host Wounded Warriors

**A**dozen Wounded Warriors spent the weekend at Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond highlighted by a day of hunting turkeys.

Among the group were experienced as well as first time turkey hunters. These soldiers from the Warrior Transition Units at Fort Knox and Fort Campbell spent day 1 at the Miller Welch Central Kentucky Wildlife Management Area enjoying a morning of trap shooting.

This was followed by two meals sponsored by National Wild Turkey Federation and then an early evening of turkey scouting with their NWTF guides/callers.

On Saturday the hunters woke to



high winds and a near freezing temperature. In spite of the less than ideal conditions, most of the hunters were successful in taking a turkey.

The soldiers appeared to have an enjoyable and relaxing weekend. Those hosting and assisting them were honored to spend this brief time with these fine men.



Above: Bobby Widener displays a trophy muskellunge sampled during a night sample on Pool 4 of the Kentucky River. Right: Ryan Kausing holds a trophy muskellunge captured just below Buffalo Trace Distillery on Pool 3 of the Kentucky River.

## River monsters lurking in water near Frankfort

**B**ig Rivers Research Branch staff have been rounding up some whoppers.

Staff have been conducting annual spring and fall muskellunge surveys on the Kentucky River since 2014 as part of an ongoing stocking assessment project.

They completed Spring 2016 sampling in March and collected several

trophy muskies in pools 2, 3, and 4.

They found them most commonly in the tailwater areas or lock and dams, and the lock chambers themselves proved to consistently hold large muskies. Average length of muskellunge sampled was over 40 inches and the largest fish sampled was 48.5 inches and weighed nearly 35

pounds.

No stocked fish (marked with fin clips and microwire tags) have been collected to date, but catch rates of muskie have remained steady since the study began.

Stocking and sampling efforts will continue through fall of 2019 to determine if stockings have been successful.



## First turkeys lead to big smiles at BGAD youth turkey hunt

**A**windy and cool day didn't dampen the spirits or the success of 40 youth turkey hunters on Blue Grass Army Depot during the youth turkey hunt.

Twenty of the 40 hunters, ages 11 to 15 years, killed gobblers.

It was the first turkey ever taken for six of those successful hunters. Most of the hunters heard turkeys gobbling from the roost at daylight. But, after the birds hit the ground they generally went silent.

In spite of the lack of gobbling response to the hunter's hen calls, several youth said they had to choose from multiple bearded birds that came to their decoys when it came time to take the shot.

The result was a very memorable day for young and veteran hunters alike.

