

January 2010

—VOL. 5 NO. 1—



From the Commissioner's Desk

I don't often tell you enough how excited and honored I am to work with such a talented staff. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to work in a field that we all love, and though we frequently face challenges, our passion, persistence, honesty, and integrity allow us to hold our heads high and take comfort knowing that we have the best interest of the fish and wildlife resources and our customers at heart.

Early this month you pulled together in extreme weather conditions and helped kick off the 2010 session of the Kentucky General Assembly with another outstanding wild game dinner, just as you have done so many times before. The talents and skills of our people extend well beyond their professional abilities, and hundreds from our three branches of government benefited. Gov. Steve Beshear, First Lady Jane Beshear, Lt. Gov. Daniel Mongiardo and dozens of House and Senate members braved the cold and a winter snow storm to enjoy courses of buffalo, elk, deer and fish in a non-partisan atmosphere. They especially look forward to our event at the beginning of each session, as do I.

As many of you know, the 2010 General Assembly is now underway. We con-



tinually work with legislators on all bills that impact the fish and wildlife resources as well as the sportsmen and women of the Commonwealth. Agency legislation (bills that we specifically request) is light this year, but still there are bills that may impact the Department and our mission. We are frequently asked about our position on such legislation, so I have asked staff to update our website regularly (Legislative Update on fw.ky.gov) to keep you

informed on our position regarding any bills that have been formally filed.

The focus of the General Assembly this year will likely be the biennial budget. Times are tight in the Commonwealth, and hopefully we can maintain our status quo. We have always been fiscally responsible as an agency, but I will ask you to redouble your efforts to identify cost-savings measures and efficiencies to further stretch the license dollars which we are entrusted to manage. Please continue to look for opportunities for improvement and identify those to your supervisors so that we can do the best job possible for those that pay our bills.

Once again, thank you for the great work you do for Kentucky sportsmen and women and for our fish and wildlife resources. My passion remains with this Department and working with the dedicated staff throughout the Commonwealth. Please remain mission-focused, and continue your professionalism. Remember that 92 percent of Kentuckians approve of the exemplary work that we all do.

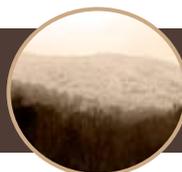
Sincerely,

Jon Gasset

INSIDE:



2 Calendars for soldiers



5 Bear hunt



7 Waterfowl report

Kentucky Afield to the Troops program enters fifth year

Five years ago, Dave Baker (I&E) began sending *Kentucky Afield* magazines and calendars to Kentucky National Guard soldiers serving in combat zones overseas – and the Kentucky Afield to the Troops program was born.

Recently, Information Center Supervisor Seth Stewart – an ex-Marine whose previous posts included the American embassies in Moscow and Helsinki – took charge of this program, which now includes mail-outs of magazines, calendars and “Kentucky Afield” television DVDs to our troops.

Stewart provides a soldier’s perspective on what it means to receive packages from home, and the response he has received so far from our troops:

“Being in the military, stationed stateside, is the same as being away from home,” writes Stewart. “Being overseas and in the military often is like being on a different planet completely. “Spaghettios! All I want are some Spaghettios!” Sgt. Hellwig, a friend of mine, once pronounced to me while we were standing post at the American Embassy in Moscow, Russia.

“The comforts of walking to buy a burger or enjoy your favorite TV show are often fantasies at best, unless care packages come regularly through the mail.

“A taste of home is all that many of our men and women overseas hunger for while they do their duty for their country.”

Since 2005, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has been satiating that hunger by sending troops stationed overseas DVD copies of the “Kentucky Afield” television show, *Kentucky Afield* magazine and the yearly *Kentucky Afield* calendar.

See “Troops,” page 5

WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner’s Office

Dear KDFWR,

Thank you so much for sending the *Kentucky Afield* calendars and DVDs. We are staying busy with our mission here but there is always opportunity to watch videos. It’s very nice to be able to “escape” back to the woods and waters of our great state of Kentucky that we all miss dearly. The weather and terrain in Kosovo is almost identical to Kentucky with a few larger mountains. Aside from some giant rabbits we have not seen much wildlife. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful resources in Kentucky and we all look forward to the next time we can be back there soaking it all in. But until then we have some very nice calendars to enjoy. We have also been shar-



ing these calendars with soldiers from Croatia, Portugal, Ireland, Sweden and Germany just to name a few.

Thank you so much for your support.

*The Men and Women of:
B Co. 2-147th Aviation “Renegades”
C Co. 1-169th Aviation “Wildcats”
Kentucky National Guard*



Lt. Col. William T. Ewing, U.S. Agricultural Development Team Leader Kapisa/Panjshir, Afghanistan (left), proudly displays his 2010 Kentucky Afield Calendar along with Maj. Jim Rush (right) and members of the Office of the Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) in Kapisa, Afghanistan. The Kapisa DAAIL (roughly the equivalent to Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture) is Abdul Samad (second from right). Fareed (next to Ewing) is Economic Advisor to the DAAIL, and “EZ” (center) serves as interpreter. Ewing sends a big “Thank you for all the calendars.” He said DAAIL Samad was quite interested in the photos and that they were taken in Kentucky. Ewing also says every Kentucky soldier that received one has been very appreciative and that “the calendars have been extremely helpful in giving us all a ‘taste’ of home.

2010 LEGISLATIVE WILD GAME DINNER

Governor Steve Beshear (at right greeting conservation officers Michael Caudill and Barry McCoy) defied the cold and snow and addressed hundreds from all three branches of government at the 2010 Annual Legislative Wild Game Dinner in the Frankfort Convention Center. The menu included venison, elk, buffalo and Kentucky Lake catfish. Shane Carrier, Ed Mahurin and Scott Herndon grilled elk burgers, and Captain Larry Ashford fried fish. Rose Mack and Melissa Trent and others helped register guests. Salato volunteer Lindsey Thompson displayed a barred owl. Johnny and Bobby Widener helped provide music.



New hires and promotions

The I & E Division is pleased to welcome a new employee who needs no introduction for the majority of us. **Art Lander, Jr.**, long time award-winning outdoor columnist of the *Lexington Herald-Leader* has joined the Information Center Staff.

Art was a voice of support for many years in the print media, and has an excellent understanding of our mission. Now, we are going to put him to work directly for us.

We are fortunate to have his extensive knowledge of the hunting, fishing and boating sports, and wildlife conservation programs our agency employs available to help and guide the sportsmen and women of the Commonwealth to more enjoyment in the outdoors.

Art will be housed in the "hub," or "hood," as deemed by co-worker Jeff Spalding. Please make him feel welcome with a visit or e-mail as you have time. Good to have you, Art.

The Wildlife Division announces the promotion of **Scott Buser** to the Public Lands Biologist position for the southern counties of the division's Bluegrass Region.

Scott transitioned from his post as Wildlife Management Foreman at Higginson-Henry WMA to this position with oversight of the southern cluster of Bluegrass Region WMAs – including Taylorsville Lake WMA, Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMA, John C. Williams WMA and Knobs State Forest and WMA.

Scott initiated numerous significant habitat projects and other managerial improvements during his 10 years at Higginson-Henry WMA, and has been involved in an array of wildlife surveys and research projects.

Prior to working with KDFWR, Scott served as a forester for the state of Indiana, and will help provide expertise in the Bluegrass Region in the arena of forest

habitat improvements.

Before getting his bachelor's degree in wildlife management with a minor in forestry from the University of Tennessee, Scott served for four years in the Air Force as an information system specialist. Congratulations, Scott!

The Wildlife Division announced that **Jason Nally** is the new Private Lands Biologist serving the southwestern counties of the division's Bluegrass Region. Jason will share an office with Kevin Raymond in the Division of Forestry building in Elizabethtown. He will be providing private lands assistance and other wildlife services in Bullitt, Jefferson, Marion, Nelson and Spencer counties.

Jason has recently been working as a Farm Bill Biologist for nearly two years with focus on providing wildlife assistance

on implementation of the CREP Program. Prior to his current position, Jason worked in a variety of wildlife and related conservation positions with organizations including Kentucky PRIDE, NRCS, The Nature Conservancy and KDFWR's Landowner Incentive Program. Jason has a farming background and earned his bachelor's degree in Wildlife from ECU. Congratulations, Jason!

Tim Layson will be serving as our new Fish and Wildlife Program Manager (aka Assistant Director) in the Engineering Division. Tim attended the University of Kentucky and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and is a licensed Professional Engineer.

Tim brings with him over 20 years

[See "Hires," page 6](#)

NEW CONSERVATION OFFICERS



Nine new conservation officers took their official oath of office last month. From left, they and their county of assignment are Jason Ping (Breckinridge), Brandon Boone (LaRue), Brandon Bennett (Todd), Barrett Brewer (Oldham), Franklin District Judge Chris Olds, Bradley McCoy (Ohio), Carlas Tufono (Elliott), Steve Nelson (Grayson), Eric Chambers (Davies) and Bill Speer (Casey). The new officers are working in the field with field training officers.

Winter storm seriously impacts Kentucky's first bear hunt

By Steven Dobey

Kentucky's first bear hunt in modern history proved that even with all the planning and preparation in the world, sometimes you simply can't compete with Mother Nature.

That proved to be utterly true last month when an unseasonably early snowstorm hit eastern Kentucky the afternoon before our inaugural hunt. The only thing higher than hunter expectations ended up being the amount of snow that was dumped in the three-county bear zone. It began the afternoon before opening day.

Ultimately, 372 bear permits were sold and hunters had every intent of being the first to legally harvest a black bear in Kentucky. But the storm paralyzed the area, burying most roadways in the bear zone on opening day, and left most without electricity for the remainder of the week.

While snowfall amounts reached seven inches in downtown Harlan, amounts totaled as much as two feet on Pine Mountain and more



Snow covered Pine Mountain.

than three feet on parts of Black Mountain. Those were the areas in which the great majority of hunters had planned to hunt.

By Saturday evening, Gov. Steve Beshear had classified much of the three-county bear zone a state of emergency due to road conditions, widespread electrical

outages and disruption of residential water services.

Despite the conditions, all KDFWR check stations were in operation and bear hunters did filter through over the course of the weekend. Although no bears were harvested during the 2009 season, the perseverance of Kentucky's "new" bear hunters proved to be quite impressive.

Not only did they weather all that Mother Nature could throw at them, but many cut their hunts short to assist relief efforts by clearing fallen trees and obstructed roadways.

"I can't remember the last time we had a snow like this in December," said one bear hunter, "but I'm just glad to have the opportunity to try and get a bear, and I'll sure be back next year."

Only next year without the snow.



"Troops," continued

The department sends these several times a year to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. "It's tough being thousands of miles away from home in a combat zone," Baker said. "This is our way of bringing a bit of Kentucky to our soldiers, to let them know that we appreciate their efforts and

pray for their safe return."

One of these many soldiers is Jeremy Ringo, the brother of Kristy Stroud, a CEPL at the Salato Wildlife Center. "I know those help a lot," Stroud explained. "Not all of those guys get things. So when someone does get something in the mail they all get to share. The DVDs and magazines are really appreciated."

The Kentucky Afield to the Troops program is a small token of the gratitude that the department shows our men and women overseas.

"Many of us at the department know first hand that when you are in a far-off land, waiting for the next patrol or operation to begin, a little taste of home can go a long way," writes Stewart.

“Hires,” continued

of experience in state government at the Dept. of Transportation and has experience with project development, planning, design and construction just to name a few. Tim will focus on bringing agency projects from the feasibility stage to final construction along with administrative duties in the division. Welcome, Tim!

The Administrative Services division would like to welcome **Kellie Hale**, who was recently hired as an Internal Policy Analyst I in the Grants Branch. Kellie will be responsible for the SWG, Hunter Education and Archery in the Schools grant programs.

Kellie has an extensive background in financial accounting and legislation and is accustomed to handling multiple projects in her daily duties. She came to us from

the Office of Occupations and Professions, where she was the Administrator for a number of Boards. She was responsible for the preparation of financial statements, changes to statutes or regulation, and the planning and execution of all board meetings.

Kellie is currently going to school to finish her accounting degree. She states that in her free time, “I pretty much go to school and hang out with my dogs.” She is also a NASCAR fan. Please join us in welcoming Kellie to the department in her new position.

The Fisheries Division would like to welcome **Dan Stoelb** to the Department as the new Wildlife Biologist II in the Environmental Section. Dan previously worked for Kate Heyden in the Department’s Wildlife Diversity Program as a Fish and Wildlife Technician II where his duties included monitoring, resight and banding

of peregrine falcons. He also assisted in the banding of songbirds, as well as construction of falcon and owl nest boxes.

Dan is originally from Wisconsin where he obtained a B. S. degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in the field of Wildlife Ecology and Management. Dan went on to earn a M. S. Degree in Zoology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. His thesis work focused on the impacts of urbanization on mourning dove relative abundance and nesting ecology. Dan’s experience and educational background will be a valuable asset to the Department.

Dan currently resides in Lexington and is an avid hunter, outdoor enthusiast and a lifelong Green Bay Packer fan that is hoping for a Super Bowl win. His first day on the job was December 16. Please welcome Dan to his new role with KDFWR.

Information Center quite busy in 2009

Last year was a busy one for the employees of the Information Center. In 2009, the staff answered more than 106,000 telephone calls and mailed more than 47,000 letters and packages.

Not only that, but the Information Center responded to nearly 6,500 e-mails and entered 9,500 subscriptions to *Kentucky Afield*. For many hunters, anglers, boaters and nature lovers, the Information Center is the primary point of contact with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

Perhaps that’s one of the reasons that the department maintains its excellent reputation in the public’s eyes. Thanks Information Center staff for all the good work that you do.

A SUCCESSFUL HUNT



Casey Begley was joined by Conservation Officer Eric Thomas and Thurman Begley in celebrating a successful mobility-impaired deer hunt, January 2-3 at Jenny Wiley State Park. There were five participants and all harvested a deer. The hunt included good food and good friendship, and everyone enjoyed themselves despite the cold weather.

2009-10 Waterfowl Report

By the time you read this, Kentucky's 2009-10 waterfowl seasons will be winding down and most of it will be history.

It was a year of great expectations. Breeding duck numbers were up 13

percent from 2008 and Kentucky's local Canada geese had a relatively good hatch compared to past years. Wetland habitat across the state was in good shape.

By the time duck season opened in November, nearly all basins were flooded

to capacity by abundant fall rains. Mother Nature even cooperated by providing an extended cold snap that should have concentrated birds and produced a prolonged period of good hunting.

However, reports from hunters around the state indicate the birds failed to get the message and hunting in most areas was considered only fair at best.

Results from aerial surveys conducted through early January revealed duck and goose numbers ranged 25-50 percent below the numbers reported for the same period during 2008-09 surveys. Mallards were the primary dabbling duck species encountered, followed by gadwall. Scaup and ring-necked

ducks were the most common diving duck observed. Canada geese were scattered across the state with largest numbers reported in the Green River Region, followed by the Bluegrass, Northeast, Western and Southeast regions, respectively.

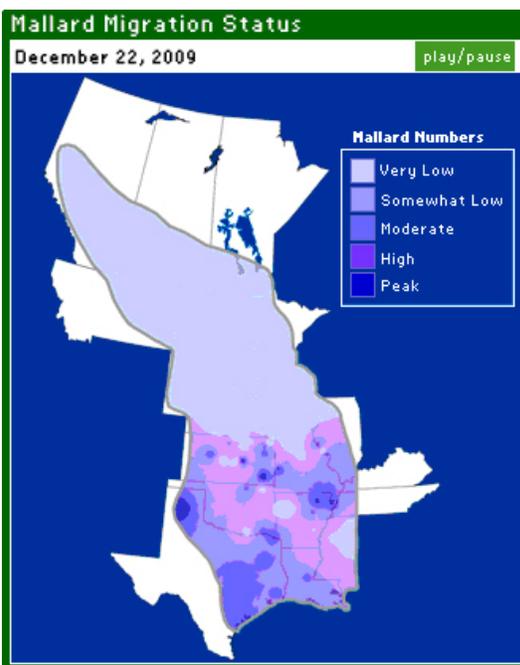
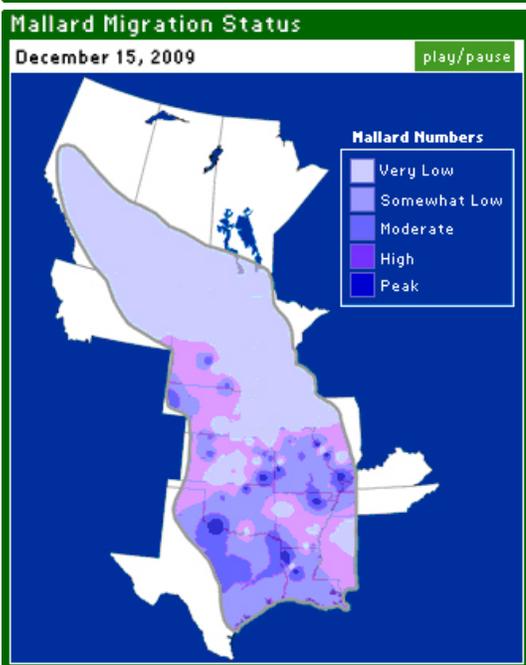
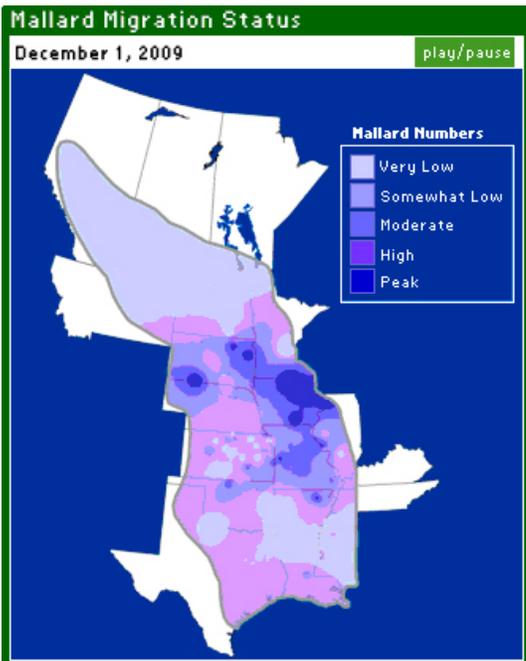
A review of telemetry data obtained from mallards carrying satellite transmitters show birds generally stayed west of the Mississippi River through the fall migration. The period of peak movement through western Kentucky occurred in mid-December, with most birds moving into southern wintering areas by the end of December.

While the chronology of migration is similar to band recovery patterns observed from past work, the birds appeared to migrate on a more direct north/south pattern than in other years. We have noted this happening in the past and there is suspicion it is tied to year to year variability in weather. At left are maps showing 2009 mallard migration patterns.

On a positive note, due to calendar shift the last Sunday of January is on the 31st. This is the latest the duck season can go under the current federal frameworks.

There is still plenty of time for weather conditions here to moderate and Kentucky hunters to see an influx of birds from the south as birds begin to stage for spring migration. If this happens, hunting should improve and the season could end on a high note for the state's waterfowl hunters.

Duck hunters are an optimistic bunch. If they do not fly today, maybe they will tomorrow? Here is to better hunting tomorrow!



Where's a good elf when you need'em?

By Charlie Baglan

The "5% other duties" clause means many things including the busy work normally done by elves. Look at your job description – it should be there. The Kentucky Afield TV crew certainly saw it in theirs when they filled and carried a sleigh full of orders to the mail room for Christmas delivery.

The Christmas combo offer for the deer processing DVD, 2010 calendar and one-year magazine subscription for a measly \$15 filled many a stocking and editor Dave Baker's heart with joy. I'd like to say "love," but I'll hedge my bet and stop at "joy." Joy's good.

Santa knows that Baker and his staff were very good this past year. Joining three popular products together at a time when consumers are hungry for value was a perfect example of how two programs can work together for the greater good of the department and our constituents.

Since the online store's grand opening in September of 2006, the department has realized gross sales approaching \$146,000.



TV crew members Nathan Sangster and Scott Moore with stacks of fulfilled orders.

With online Christmas shopping as common as candy canes, the Kentucky Afield store offered the right gift idea at the right time. The goal was 1,000 subscriptions.

At last count, 1,071 with orders still

trickling in. Many subscriptions are new, while others are renewals. But either way, interest and participation in the outdoors is what we aim to renew more and that's what *Kentucky Afield* magazine does best.

Commercial fisherman net large fines

Three commercial fisherman pled guilty to one count each of fishing commercial nets in closed waters in Union County Circuit Court October 12, 2009.

The guilty plea stemmed from charges brought forth by Union County officer Lt. Greg Noel (now Captain) and Conservation Officers Josh Gunn and Marcus Bowling after observing them fishing commercial nets below J.T. Meyers Dam in Union County on February 24.

Owen E. Trainer, 65, of Sturgis, Randy Lee Weishaar, 61, and Homer R. Weishaar, 35, both of Browning, Illinois, were stripped

of their Kentucky fishing privileges for a period of two years, \$100 fine suspended on condition of no other offenses for a period of two years, and ordered to each pay restitution of \$2,500 (total \$7,500) to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. Confiscated fish were ordered forfeited and disposed of by the Department.

On December 24, Vincent C Halligan, 28, of Smithland, pled guilty in Union County Circuit Court to four counts of fishing commercial nets in closed waters.

Halligan was arrested after he was observed fishing nets in closed water on

February 22, 2009 below J.T. Meyers Dam. Other officers participating with Noel, Bowling and Gunn in the case were Randy Conway, Daniel Richardson and Deputy Greg Rushing of Crittenden County Sheriff's Department.

Halligan was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$25,000 to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, and his boat, motor, and boat trailer valued at \$30,000 were forfeited, as well as all equipment and other items confiscated during the investigation. His fishing license was suspended for a period of two years.

Taylorsville WMA songbirds reap benefits of Eagle Scout project

Carolina chickadees, wrens and eastern bluebirds seeking nest sites in Taylorsville Lake Wildlife Management Area this spring should quickly find that the department has rolled out the welcome mat.

Two dozen newly constructed and installed nest boxes await the birds' selection thanks to Steven Marraccini, 16, of Lawrenceburg, who designed and implemented the nest box project in completing his Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project.

Steven, a member of Boy Scout Troop 37 in Lawrenceburg, a Bluegrass Council troop, pulled together nearly two dozen other scouts, troop leaders, and their family members and friends to construct and install the nest boxes. He completed the project, titled "Songbird Nest Box Habitat Conservation Project," in October.

Steven worked closely with Taylorsville Lake WMA Manager Bill Mitchell last year in designing the nesting habitat project. He called it in his written plan, "a two-part conservation project that will benefit non-game wildlife species, people who enjoy watching and hearing songbirds, and area managers and wildlife biologists who are seeking nesting habitat selection data for three targeted species of songbirds: wrens, chickadees and eastern bluebirds. Tufted titmice, nuthatches and brown creepers may also use the nest boxes in the river bottom terrain."

His plan also said: "In addition to providing these songbirds excellent nesting habitat, this project offers him (Mitchell), other public lands wildlife biologists, and geographic information system (GIS) specialists at the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife an opportunity to collect data for an area study about the

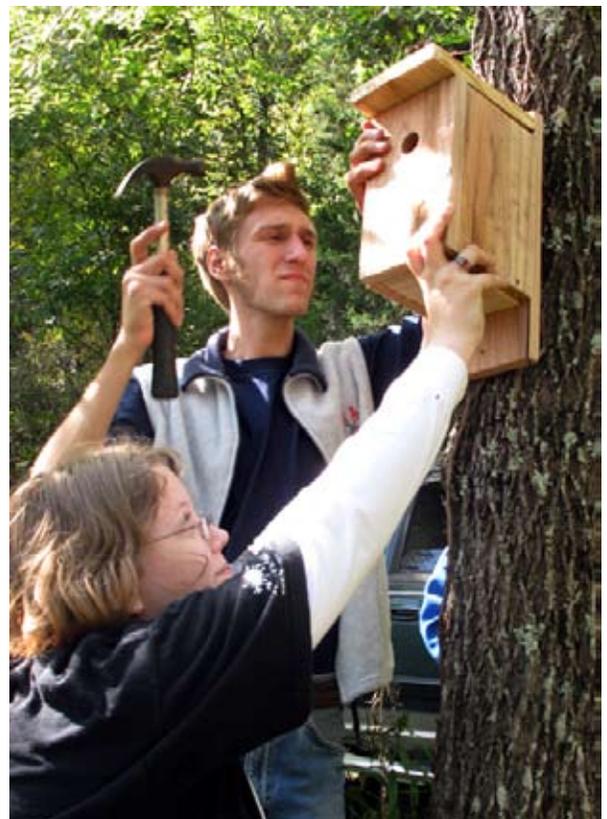


Steven Marraccini (center) showed a completed chickadee nest box to Dalton Cook and Denver Ewing and others during project assembly.

landscape selection and nesting habitat preference of the songbirds listed above."

Steven's team built the nest boxes in the WMA's workshop. They installed 12 chickadee/wren nest boxes along Old River Road, which is closed to traffic and adjacent to the Salt River. Mitchell worked with him to select the exact location for each nest box. These nest boxes were identical to 12 Mitchell had previously installed on another section of the road, creating a continuous line of nest boxes for about four-miles upstream from the lake's headwaters.

The group installed the eastern bluebird nest boxes around the edges of open ridge tops at the opposite end of the WMA overlooking the tail-



Tim White and Ginny Sweeney hang a chickadee nest box along the Old River Road.

See "Scout," page 10

BIG TURNOUT FOR YOUTH RABBIT HUNT



The Department and the Little Shepherd Chapter of the NWTF sponsored a youth rabbit hunt Saturday, December 26 during the free weekend. We had 55 youngsters and 75 adults participate. After the hunt we fed them lunch and also fired shotguns on the range. No rabbits were harvested, but two kids took pheasants that were released for the hunt. Divisions represented were Law Enforcement, Wildlife and Information & Education.

“Scout,” continued

waters. They identified each nest box with a numbered metal tag. Upon installation, they recorded the GPS coordinates of each nest box and then presented them to Mitchell.

Bluegrass Region Wildlife Coordinator and Wildlife Biologist Brian Clark, himself an Eagle Scout, welcomed the project and said many of our WMAs could benefit from similar conservation

projects. “We definitely like to see projects like this completed on our WMAs where individuals or groups are seeking to make a positive impact for wildlife and recreation in a way that is compatible with our plans for the WMAs,” Clark said. “We welcome Scouts and others to bring to us service project proposals for consideration, or to inquire with us about what projects are most needed,” he added.

The nest box project helped Steven

reach his goal and he became an Eagle Scout on December 7. He expressed his gratitude to all those at the department who helped him with this project.

He included special thanks to Mitchell and Elijah Thompson, seasonal wildlife technician at the WMA, for their close guidance, and to Geoprocessing Specialist Gary Sprandel, of Wildlife Division's Information Systems Branch and also an Eagle Scout, for assistance with his maps.



Left: Boy Scouts Tim White, James Burns and Sam White hang an eastern bluebird nest box and record GPS data along the edges of meadows overlooking the tailwaters. **Right:** Scouts, leaders and friends are all smiles after building 24 nest boxes.

Salt River boat ramps nearer to completion

The Engineering Division continues to make headway with the construction of new boating access facilities throughout Kentucky.

The newest project nearing completion is a single-lane boat ramp along the Salt River behind the Shepherdsville Tourism Office just west of I-65. This new boat ramp will provide ample parking for up to 10 vehicles and small boat trailers launching into the lower sections of the Salt River.

This ramp is also anticipated to provide access for canoes and kayaks into this portion of the Salt River.

This project was the result of a joint effort between the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the City of Shepherdsville Tourism Office. Paving of this project will occur in the spring of 2010 once the weather warms up.

Two additional boat ramps are slated for construction along the Salt River. One boat ramp will be located in the tailwater area below Taylorsville Lake. Initial construction at this site has already begun with the clearing of trees within the footprint of the project area. Actual construction is scheduled to begin any day barring setbacks due to weather or high water levels.

The second boat ramp will be located near the City of Taylorsville. The initial clearing of trees at this site may occur any day during potential down times that may occur with the construction crew. Both projects are anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2010 (weather pending).

Also recently completed is the new



Pictures of the boat ramp and parking area of the recently completed Shepherdsville boat ramp along the Salt River.

Ryan Oster photos



partnership with the City of Hazard who cut the grade previously to the water. Staff from the Engineering Division helped develop the plans, obtain permits and constructed the ramp. In addition to this ramp, the Engineering Division is also planning to construct a bank fishing access area at this location.

While not yet completed, this bank fishing access is sure to be well received in the area. The bank fishing access is scheduled to be completed by summer 2010.

For more information about any of these projects, please feel free to contact Keith Parker, Eric Brooker or Walt Redmon in the Engineering Division.

small boat/canoe/kayak ramp at the City of Hazard. This ramp provides access into the North Fork of the Kentucky River.

This project was the result of a



The recently completed small boat ramp at the City of Hazard along the North Fork of the Kentucky River. *Kevin Frey photo*

Youth scores big in double hitter

By Brian Clark

Fall 2009 was quite a season for a Bullitt County girl. Although she scored big in her extracurricular pursuits, two of her most memorable successes weren't in volleyball or cheerleading like some of her peers. Casey Porter joined a growing number of young females who are reaching milestones in the field – hunting and fishing Kentucky's wild outdoors.

Eleven-year-old Casey Porter capitalized on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by harvesting her first white-tailed deer and her first elk in Kentucky this past autumn. Either would be a major accomplishment in itself for a young person, especially in our era when most kids grow up in urban and suburban settings, besieged with a dizzying array of pastimes and captivating technology set before them.

Casey bagged a prized button buck on her family's farm near Taylorsville during the modern firearm season for deer. She was fortunate enough to also be drawn in 2009 for a cow tag in the eastern Kentucky elk hunt. With the help of family members and a local guide, she was able to take a mature cow elk in Perry County. The two harvests – which helped to fill her family's freezer – occurred within a month of one another, making her experience all the more remarkable.

Casey beams when recounting her hunts last fall. "It was awesome. When I was successful in taking my cow [elk] I was very happy... my daddy hugged me really hard. My first deer hunt was a big deal, too. I thought I could do it but I was nervous. I was afraid I would miss, but I didn't."

Casey's father, Jack, is passionate about youth involvement in the outdoors, as a father, sportsman and conservationist. As a father and sportsman, he has regularly exposed his two children to fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing from their

earliest days, which has culminated in their active involvement in the outdoors as adolescents. As a conservationist, Jack has worked locally for well over a decade with KDFWR on habitat projects and outreach efforts through his leadership of the Salt River Chapter of Quail Unlimited.

Jack currently serves as State Chairman for Quail Unlimited and is an avid supporter of several other wildlife organizations. He knows the future of our wildlife heritage depends on mentors being involved with helping those who are new to hunting and fishing. He supports the efforts of KDFWR and its partners to step up recruitment and retention of wildlife recreationists.

KDFWR congratulates Casey on her unforgettable fall 2009 hunting season,

and we salute all the mentors – like Jack Porter – who made a difference for youth and the future of wildlife conservation by taking the time to take kids afield in 2009.



Casey Porter took her first deer on the family farm in Bullitt County.



Casey proudly poses with her Perry County cow elk. She was accompanied on her hunt by brother Jack and her father. *Photos courtesy Jack Porter*