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## Race to Save the Golden Riffleshell

### McGregor, KDFWR's Center for Mollusk Conservation in key roles

*"This is a great article the Service wrote in regards to the work done at the CMC this year on an EXTREMELY rare animal. It was featured in the USFWS Endangered Species Bulletin. Our Agency is truly seen as a world leader in this field."* – Sunni Carr, KDFWR Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator

By Roberta Hylton, Jess Jones and Leroy Koch

The quiet, pastoral landscape of remote southwestern Virginia was filled with sudden loud cheers when biologists managed to collect three golden riffleshell mussels (*Epioblasma florentina aureola*) from a stream near Cedar Bluff, Virginia. This endangered species – which is listed as the tan riffleshell (*E. f. walkeri*), despite a recent change in its scientific name – is now likely one of the rarest freshwater mussels on Earth. It survives only in a single, small and isolated population in Indian Creek, a tributary to the Clinch River, and biologists racing to save it from extinction were thrilled to discover that not only were the golden riffleshell they had found all female, they were also carrying glochidia, which is what immature, young mussels are called.

The golden riffleshell is just one of the many freshwater mussels species that call the Clinch River watershed home. In fact,



In late April 2016 a male golden riffleshell sits anchored in the sunlit stream bottom of Indian Creek near Cedar Bluff, VA. Tim Lane, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

the region boasts one of the most diverse assemblages of these freshwater animals in the U.S. With fanciful names such as birdwing pearl mussel (*Lemiox rimosus*), Appalachian monkeyface (*Quadrula sparsa*), and rough rabbitsfoot (*Q. cylindrica strigillata*), these animals provide a critical role, filtering and cleaning river water.

They serve as “bio-indicators,” letting us know when something is not quite right in our waterways.

“We are lucky to have such incredible diversity right in our backyard and it is our responsibility to ensure its future,” says

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## WE GET MAIL

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

**M**r. Edgar Adams wrote through an email, "Just completed the KF-101 course (Kayak/Fishing 101) you offered. Wanted to tell you that the two FW young men did a great job (**Easton Copley** and **Andrew Wooldridge**, Aquatic Education). I really enjoyed myself, all three weeks. I am a seventy-two year old male, and I learned so much. Thank you for this opportunity.

On this evening event, the FW young men were very helpful and even took pictures if we were lucky enough to catch a fish. They even got lines out of trees. Great job by them and a fun time I think was had by all."

The following note came through the Salato email system. Mr. P.J. Moore from Georgetown Twp, Indiana wrote, "I wanted to express my appreciation for the courtesy and politeness shown me by your staffer, **James Brown**, when I visited your facility late on August 31. Despite my arriving within an hour of closing, and with a bad leg that slowed my walking tour, James was patient, respectful, and pleasant towards me. He is a very personable young man, and you are fortunate to have him on your staff."

Mr. Harry Pelle sent this email through our Info Center email, "I hope you can get this to the right folks at KDFWR. My name is Harry Pelle. We have a local group of about 25 Deer hunters and we get together one Saturday a year before Deer season and go over Deer and other wildlife related issues. (Our group covers about 8,000 acres in Taylor and Marion counties.)

We always invite KDFWR and they always oblige. We started a few years back and several Department personnel always try to make the event. Their participation is

very informative and greatly appreciated by our group. We started with **Steve Beam, Jason Nally** and our Biologist **Chris Mason** (Chris is our contact). Steve moved on to a new job with the Dept. this year. Several other people from the department have participated over the years also but Chris and Jason have made every meeting.

I just wanted to take a minute and recognize these guys for the extra effort they give every year in giving up a Saturday of their time to help our group be better wildlife stewards. I think it is definitely "service above and beyond the call of Duty." Thanks again for all you do at KDFWR and I know you guys are and should be very proud of the dedicated

folks like these at KDFWR. A great group of folks. Thank You."

This handwritten note came from Jimna D. "When I went to Camp Webb it was amazing! I learned so much! I learned about nature, outdoor survival, swimming, archery, gun safety, boating, canoe, casting and fishing. This was the best camping experience ever! The best part was I earned all my patches. It was hard but I did it.

My parents were proud of me for going. I was afraid about not knowing what to expect and making friends, but I became friends with everyone especially my cabin mates. We exchanged contact info to be friends for life. Thank you!"



## NEW COMMISSION MEMBERS

Five new members of the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission took their oath of office earlier this month at their first commission meeting. Franklin Circuit Judge Thomas Wingate administered the oath to (from left) Jimmy B. Bevins of Frankfort representing the Sixth District, Paul B. Horn of Prestonsburg representing the Seventh District, Richard M. Storm of Carlisle representing the Eighth District, Dr. Karl D. Clinard of Somerset representing the Ninth District, and Dr. Harry W. Carlross of Paducah representing the First District. New Fifth District Commission member Kevin Bond was unable to attend the first meeting.

## Bobby McKee retires

**B**obby McKee, the Hunter Training Officer for western Kentucky, retired on July 31 after 30 years with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. Bobby worked as a counselor at Camp Currie for a few summers before he was hired full time in 1986. Bobby spent his entire career as a Hunter Training Officer and enjoyed his job immensely.

Bobby was part of the transition of hunter education into a mandatory requirement and worked tirelessly to handle the massive increase in students brought on by this change. He increased the number of hunter education instructors in west Kentucky by constantly recruiting and training new volunteers. He also developed new ways to improve his course delivery and incorporate new technology throughout his

career. Bobby also coordinated and improved Kentucky's Bowhunter Education Program.

Bobby was a consummate professional and outstanding employee for the agency. His positive attitude and outgoing personality will be greatly missed.



## Patrick O'Connell retires

**P**atrick O'Connell, our Archery in the Schools Coordinator, retired August 31. Patrick started working in state government in 1996 in the Finance Cabinet. He also worked in the Office of the Controller and while there helped design parts of the EMARS accounting system for state government.

Patrick moved to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife in 2002 to work in and supervise the IT section for 10 years. In 2012 Patrick began working as the Archery in the Schools Coordinator and filled that position for almost four years. During that

time he conducted and coordinated the state and regional archery tournaments with decreased Department staff members without affecting the high quality of the events. He also developed a reporting and accounting system to verify the number of schools and students in the statewide archery program.

Throughout his time with the Department, Patrick was a dedicated and professional employee who used his resourcefulness and intelligence to improve each program he worked in. We wish him well in his future endeavors and a happy retirement.



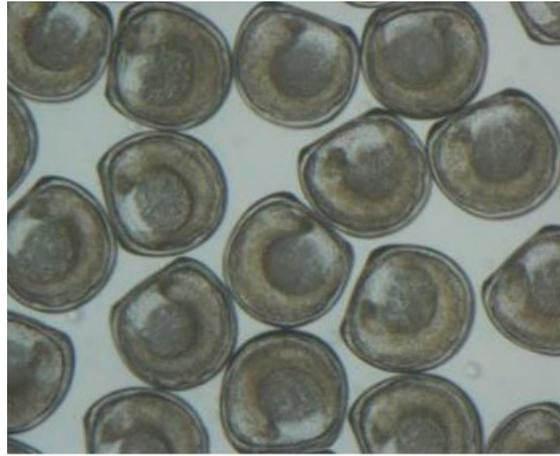
A biologist uses a view bucket to peer beneath the water as he wades the shallow riffles of Indian Creek on a sunny spring day in search of female golden riffleshells. *Roberta Hylton, US Fish and Wildlife Service*

### “Riffleshell,” continued

Sarah Colletti of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. “If we can maintain healthy diverse freshwater mussel communities in our rivers, then we know we are doing a good job of protecting water quality too, and clean water is important to us all.”

Over the years, the golden riffleshell and a number of other freshwater mussel species found in the Clinch River watershed have dwindled to precariously low numbers, and locating individuals has become highly problematic. Today, biologists believe there are less than a few hundred golden riffleshell left in a single stretch of stream.

Biologists with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Virginia Department of



Golden riffleshell “glochidia,” or tiny immature young, reveal themselves with the aid of a microscope. *Monte McGregor, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources*

Game and Inland Fisheries have recognized for years now that the golden riffleshell and other freshwater mussels throughout the Upper Tennessee River Basin face incredible challenges to their survival. Though government regulations have brought about water quality improvements, freshwater mussels and fish are harmed wherever streams are affected by poor land use practices, mining, industrial spills, climate change, invasive species and other factors.

Biologists with the Service’s Southwestern Virginia Field Office, Virginia Field Office, Kentucky Field Office, Vir-



Biologist uses a syringe to extract the tiny immature young from an adult golden riffleshell female so they can be transported to Kentucky’s Center for Mollusk Conservation, cultured with a technique using rabbit serum, and reared to a larger size for reintroduction back into the wild. *Tim Lane, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries*

ginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Tech, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and The Nature Conservancy worked cooperatively and quickly this past March to extract the glochidia and return the females unharmed back to Indian Creek. The glochidia were transported to Kentucky’s Center for Mollusk Conservation where scientists are using new techniques in an attempt to grow the species in captivity and help increase its population.

The golden riffleshell is on the brink of extinction. Still, conservationists hope that if we work hard and fast, we just may have a chance to save it.

While habitat conservation, restoration of water quality, and educating the public about the values of aquatic ecosystems are important components of recovery efforts, for the golden riffleshell, culturing (i.e., growing) this species in the laboratory is likely this species’ last best hope. Culturing mussels isn’t easy because the life cycle of a freshwater mussel is one of the most complex in the animal world.

In the past, biologists have used a variety of conventional techniques to propagate golden riffleshell, but success has been limited as numbers in the wild have continued to decline. However, efforts led by **Monte McGregor** of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources **Center for Mollusk Conservation** to refine lab techniques for culturing mussels in serum extracted from the blood of rabbits offered new hope for saving the golden riffleshell. McGregor and his staff have been successful in propagating and culturing the tan riffleshell, which is closely related to the

See “Riffleshell,” page 5

## AFWA honors Roy Grimes with Special Recognition Award

**R**oy Grimes, President of the National Archery in the Schools Program and a former Deputy Commissioner and Director of Wildlife Division for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, was one of four individuals, three state agencies and one private landowner recognized by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) for their dedication to advancing fish and wildlife conservation at the Association's Annual Awards Ceremony held on September 13 in Philadelphia.

The Association presented a special recognition award for outstanding commitment to the work of AFWA to Roy Grimes. Over the last 15 years, Grimes has led the efforts of the National Archery in the School Program (NASP).

Grimes worked for fish and wildlife agencies in Indiana, Kansas and Missouri before coming to Kentucky in 1999 as the Department's Wildlife Division Director. He became Deputy Commissioner in 2001. He retired in 2007.

While Deputy Commissioner, he was charged with developing an international-style target archery program that could be integrated into Kentucky's schools that

would achieve specific and targeted educational and conservation related goals. The program initially was called the Kentucky Archery in the Schools Program. But its popularity quickly extended beyond Kentucky's borders, and it became NASP.

"Having spent 30 years as a state wildlife agency biologist, I consider members of AFWA my peers," said Grimes. "It is a terrific honor to have the National Archery in the Schools Program recognized by AFWA professionals for its efforts to establish millions of student archers every year."

"Over the course of its 15-year existence, the National Archery in the Schools Program has now involved over 16 million student archers in 47 states, and 11 other countries," said NASP Vice President and General Manager Tommy Floyd. "We believe NASP represents one of the most positive forces in archery today. We also believe that it is highly beneficial to the students, educators and coaches that participate.

"Roy would be the first person to say that it is never about any one person and that NASP is a team effort involving the



vision and hard work of many extremely dedicated people over time," said Floyd. "However, through Roy's consistent and focused leadership, NASP continues to grow and expand at a rate of about 1,000 schools per year... another example of how exciting it is to be a part of the National Archery in the Schools Program."

### "Riffleshell," continued

golden riffleshell, from the Cumberland River system in Kentucky. If the success using rabbit serum can be repeated for the golden riffleshell, biologists just might be able to accomplish their mission to save this small aquatic animal.

The determination of biologists who are partnering across state lines in Virginia and Kentucky is paying off. From the three gravid (with young mussels) female golden riffleshell collected in Virginia in March, the Kentucky Center for Mollusk Conservation has successfully used rabbit serum to rear about 12,000 glochidia to the juvenile stage. While there may be some

mortality, this first batch of mussels appear to be among the healthiest ever cultured by McGregor and we expect a few thousand will make it to larger sizes suitable for reintroduction into the wild.

Although some of the young mussels will remain at the Kentucky facility, by mid to late summer of this year, many will be transported to Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center in Marion, Virginia, and Virginia Tech's Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Center in Blacksburg, Virginia, to allow for continuous monitoring and growth. Eventually, if all goes well, the young golden riffleshells will be released back into the wild.

The road ahead may be a long one, but the success of propagating golden riffleshell to date has provided new hope in the race to save this species.

Roberta Hylton, Supervisor of the Service's Southwestern Virginia Field Office, can be reached at [roberta\\_hylton@fws.gov](mailto:roberta_hylton@fws.gov) or (276) 623-1233, ext. 22.

Leroy Koch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist in the Service's Kentucky Field Office, can be reached at [leroy\\_koch@fws.gov](mailto:leroy_koch@fws.gov) or (502) 695-0468, ext. 106.

Jess Jones, Fish and Wildlife Biologist in the Service's Virginia Field Office, can be reached at [jess\\_jones@fws.gov](mailto:jess_jones@fws.gov) or (540) 231-2266.

## Robinson named 2016 Kentucky Firebird Award winner

In early August, **Ben Robinson**, Assistant Director of Wildlife, was recognized for superior achievement in national bobwhite conservation.

Robinson was acknowledged as a Firebird Award recipient in front of his colleagues when the National Bobwhite Technical Committee (NBTC) held its annual meeting in Lincoln, NE. The banquet group included representatives from 25 states.

Few individuals ever in the Commonwealth have made a bigger impact on northern bobwhite conservation.

From putting habitat on-the-ground, planning, monitoring and research, and motivating the troops, Robinson has done it all.

In 2008, he co-authored the Road to Recovery: The Blueprint for Restoring Northern Bobwhite and the subsequent benchmark report in 2015. He spearheaded training and monitoring efforts and supported research projects for habitat management (native grass management and mineland enhancement). He was part of the Peabody WMA research team that orchestrated the state's largest bobwhite research ever.

Perhaps most notably, Ben was the technical expertise behind one of our state's and nation's most prominent restoration success stories at Shaker Village. He's done countless presentations and penned innumerable articles promoting bobwhite in Kentucky and beyond. Few have beat the drum and told the story any better.

Finally, he's become a nationally recognized figure in the bobwhite conservation community. Robinson is an active member of the NBTC and chaired the Outreach Committee. He was a key factor in completing the group's first communications plan and was an integral part of the upcoming bobwhite documentary that will air on PBS this fall on the nationally



Wildlife Program Coordinator John Morgan and NBTC Communications Committee Chair Tim Kavan recognized Ben Robinson for super achievement in bobwhite quail conservation.

syndicated "This American Land Series." He now serves as the Southeast Regional Representative on the NBTC Steering

Committee.

Please give Ben a hearty pat on the back for a job well done.

## Shelby County Cooperative Extension Office new course

Private Lands Biologist **Chris Grasc** presented during a new course series at the Farming 101 course offered by the Shelby County Cooperative Extension Office. The course covers basic information for new farmers (or experienced farmers wanting a refresher).

We are appreciative for the invitation to speak to new landowners and managers about what they can do to improve wildlife habitat on their properties while maintaining a productive farm.



## Butterfly tagging at Sloughs WMA

**I**t was an eclectic group who assembled at the Sloughs WMA on a Saturday earlier this month to assist Audubon State Park naturalists in the capture, tagging and the release of migrating Monarch butterflies.

Twenty-nine folks showed up to assist with the project. Some were young, and some weren't. Some were veterans of the tagging process, others were novices. All participants were given huge butterfly nets and told to have fun.

"It's an experience like no other," said Jackie Crowley, an assistant naturalist with the park. "Sometimes you just see hoops and heads going through" the tall grasses and flowers of the sloughs.

The goal of the annual event, Crowley said, "is to tag Monarchs on their journey to Mexico and hopefully be able to document where and how they migrate. We won't know that until their bodies are found in Mexico."

Crowley has participated in the Monarch tagging event "for many years." She said her enjoyment comes from watching families participating.

The group tagged 55 butterflies on Saturday and another tagging event was scheduled for Sept 17.



*Mike Lawrence photos, The Henderson Gleaner*



## FILO staff attend Biennial 2016 EcoStream Stream Ecology and Restoration Conference

**K**DFWR staff **Kevin Rexroat** and **Tom Van Arsdall** each gave presentations on two FILO projects at "EcoStream," the biennial southeastern stream conference for approximately 400 stream and watershed restoration professionals and hosted by North Carolina State University.

Rexroat presented on the initial findings of the biological sampling currently being conducted on the Hatchery Creek Project in Russell County. He showcased the initial positive response of rainbow, brown and brook trout in the newly constructed channel.

Van Arsdall presented on the com-

pleted Elm Fork Stream Restoration Project, located on the Kleber WMA in Owen County. He discussed the modeling methodology and results that estimated a dramatic decrease in sedimentation pollution as a result of the project. His presentation also gave an overview of the Kentucky FILO program.



## Kentucky hosts 40th Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group Meeting

**D**eer and Wild Turkey managers from across the Midwest met at the annual Midwest Deer & Wild Turkey Study Group on August 22–25, 2016. The managers representing Kentucky, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota gathered at General Butler State Park.

The Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (MDWTSG) meeting is an annual gathering of wildlife managers sanctioned by and affiliated with the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The primary objectives of the meeting include dissemination of deer and wild turkey management strategies, discussion of emerging or existing issues associated with deer and wild turkey management, and coordination of regional deer and wild turkey management or research efforts. The meeting location rotates among the Midwestern states that are active within the group.

General Butler State Resort Park offered an excellent venue to discuss research and management strategies. **Brian Clark** discussed Field to Fork during the general session, and **Jamie Cook** presented the Hunter Legacy Program for discussion.

During the breakout sessions many topics were covered and discussed including Midwest Deer Metrics, Urban Deer Management, Population Ecology of Wild Turkey, and Turkey Management Zones just to name a few.

This gathering of professional deer and turkey managers provides us with a key opportunity to gather information that will ultimately allow us as managers to better understand the deer and wild turkey populations here in Kentucky.

There was also an opportunity for the group to relax and socialize with a round of mini golf. A good time was had by all!

## New hires

**W**e are happy to announce the addition of **Justin Heflin** to the staff at the Northeastern Fishery District in Morehead.

Justin comes to us from Virginia where he worked as a Technician for their Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for the last 4 years. Justin graduated from Frostburg State University in Maryland with a degree in Wildlife and Fish Biology. Justin will assume the responsibilities of Assistant District Fisheries Biologist and we are confident his skills and experiences will serve this district well.

Justin is an outdoorsman and enjoys fishing, deer, waterfowl and turkey hunting. He and his wife, Hannah, are settling into the hills of Eastern Kentucky in Morehead just in time for a busy fall field season.

**Tony Smith** was appointed as Maintenance Superintendent I within Maintenance Branch effective August 16, 2016. Tony was previously a Wildlife Technician and has served the Department with roles in Animal Care and the Maintenance Branch for the past 11 years. Tony is looking forward to the duties and responsibilities of his new position as Maintenance

Superintendent.

**Justin Tucker** recently joined the Wildlife Division as Fish and Wildlife Technician I at Green River Lake WMA. Justin is from Knifley, Kentucky which is next to the WMA, so he comes to us already knowing a good deal about the WMA as he has hunted and fished on the area for years. He has several years' experience with farming 14,000 acres as a grain producer, has valuable experience as a mechanic, and has a Class A CDL which is a plus. In his free time he is an avid bass angler and tournament fisherman.

## O'Bryan's Kentucky Lake trophy largemouth is just one piece of the story

By Paul Rister

**Fisheries Division's Program Coordinator for the Western Fisheries Branch**

Recently I had the chance to talk with Kaoru O'Bryan a few days after he landed a 9-pound, 8-ounce largemouth bass while fishing at Kentucky Lake. Truth be known, this beauty of a bass was caught just across the state line near the Highway 79 Bridge in the Tennessee portion of Kentucky Lake. O'Bryan said this was his personal best, with the fish having a length close to 26 inches long.

Kentucky Lake has proven that it supports a very healthy largemouth bass population, and this particular bass would be a trophy to any bass angler.

O'Bryan indicated that since it was summer time and the water temperature was warm, most might suspect this large bass came from a deep main lake channel ledge. Instead, he caught this fish while fishing along the rip-rap of the bridge in about 12 feet of water.

The bass was enticed to bite by the action of a Strike King KVD Finesse Worm on 10-pound test line tied to a Lew's MB Tournament Reel on a Denali N2 Rod.

If the trophy bass catch is not enough story in itself, I also learned that O'Bryan runs a program called Kentucky Pro Bass Warriors. "Kentucky Pro Bass Warrior

(KPBW) is a 501c3 non-profit organization that helps wounded soldiers and veterans by taking them on a free fishing event once a month from March to November."

"These events are staged like tournaments for fun, and trophies are awarded," he said.

Their schedule for this year has included events at Rough River Lake, Lake Cumberland, Taylorsville Lake, and Nolin Lake. They are hoping to have an event at Kentucky Lake in 2017. For each event location, they always are seeking new boat volunteers.

They also annually conduct open fishing tournaments. These tournaments are open to all anglers to help raise funds that allow other volunteers at the KPBW events to help injured or ill soldiers, veterans and their families get out on the water for a day of stress free fishing and relaxation.

The program and volunteers provide all that is needed for a fun day of fishing. In addition, the program will provide education on how to fish, relaxation, and simplicity in a stress free environment at one of Kentucky's lakes.

The motto for KPBW is "Relax and Recover, One Fish at a Time," and that is just what they hope the soldiers and veterans can do while on the water. O'Bryan



said he is grateful for the Department's support in this endeavor.

O'Bryan suggested that others can get involved, provide support, or become volunteer anglers. The best way to learn more about the KPBW program is through their website <http://kentuckyprobasswarrior.com/>.

This program "is a great way to show your support and appreciation to those brave individuals that gave so much of themselves in defending our country."

## Kentucky hosts first Bobwhite Leadership Workshop

State fish and wildlife agency leaders from nine states convened at Shaker Village to strategize the future of range-wide bobwhite conservation last month.

For two decades, states have been working collaboratively to tackle the bobwhite decline. In just the last two years, state fish and wildlife agencies have substantively funded the National Bobwhite

Conservation Initiative (NBCI) through Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds taking bobwhite restoration to new heights.

The group of conservation executives assessed if progress was on par with the annual investment of over \$800,000 and strategized for the future of bobwhite restoration.

This was for wildlife management.

It was the first time that a group of state agency executives spent nearly two full days discussing bobwhite conservation.

Participants were exposed to the Shaker Village success story, and they engaged in critical review, strategy, and planning for the future of the national ef-

See "Bobwhite," page 10

### “Bobwhite,” continued

fort. Beyond work hours, the group toured Woodford Reserve Distillery to gain a taste of some true Kentucky flavor.

The workshop was an overwhelming success. Participants found the atmosphere and products outstanding. Efforts are underway to prepare for the upcoming meeting at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Meeting in Philadelphia to help solidify funding for the next 5 years of the NBCI.

Attendees were supportive of progress and the deliverables being generated by the collaborative efforts. The Department was well represented with **Commissioner Johnson** being a leading voice among the group.

Other supporting staff included **Steve**



**Beam, John Morgan, Ben Robinson and Naomi Wilson.** The future looks bright

for bobwhite conservation in Kentucky and beyond!

## 2016 Ronnie Rich Memorial Wounded Warrior Dove Hunt

**F**ive soldiers from the Fort Campbell Military base in various stages of rehabilitation from injuries participated in the Fourth Annual Ronnie Rich Memorial Wounded Warrior Dove Hunt August 31 through September 2.

Events like this one are critically important because it helps to take the soldiers minds off of their treatments and lets them focus on having fun and enjoying time away from the base.

The Soldiers arrived for dinner on the 31st. Later they glassed for velvet bucks from the new Riverbend Whitetails Lodge. They received gifts from sponsors including hunting licenses and federal duck stamps, a full set of camouflage, dove decoys, a hunting stool and a grab bag.



The next morning began with breakfast and then the trap range. Gun safety in hunting situations was stressed along with the types of shooting scenarios that would

be encountered. Dove shooting started at 11 and slowly increased as the day went on. The first day of hunting resulted in 50 doves (one dove was banded) and many happy hunters.

Bud's Country Corner hosted a breakfast for the soldiers on the next morning before the hunting began. The group took 61 doves (including one banded), and one of the hunters killed her first dove ever.

After lunch at the Lodge, the hunters were loaded and ready to depart. However, before they left, they wanted everybody to know what a great time they had, and wished that they could personally thank everybody that had helped

with or sponsored the event!

They said events like this make life changing differences in the recovery process and the lives of soldiers.



## DOVE SEASON 2016

Conservation Officer Jason Wells and Wildlife Biologist Joe Lacefield were on hand for the 2016 opening day of mourning dove season at a public dove field in Mercer County. Birds were plentiful and many shooters took limits. Wells visited and chatted with dozens of hunters while checking licenses, HIP survey numbers and shotgun chambers. —*John Brunjes photos*

