



Spring 2017 turkey harvest one of our strongest despite weather

Turkey hunters in Kentucky encountered wind, rain and wild temperature swings this past spring season but did not let factors out of their control keep them from posting impressive results.

The 2017 youth-only and general seasons produced a total harvest of 33,061 turkeys – a 6.5 percent increase over 2016 and the third highest on record for the state.

“We were expecting a pretty good harvest this spring because we had decent hatches in 2014 and in 2015,” said Zak Danks, wild turkey program coordinator with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. “We knew this would provide a bunch of 2- to 3-year-old gobblers for hunters to pursue. But seeing this spring’s big harvest was welcome news, and it’s a testament to the skill and passion of Kentucky hunters.”

Wild turkeys are found across the state thanks to an extensive restoration effort conducted from 1978-1997, and the spring turkey harvest has ballooned since hunters took 13,505 birds in the first modern day, statewide season in 1996.

The spring harvest has held steady since hunters bagged a record 36,097 birds in 2010 with an average of 31,814 birds taken in the seven seasons since 2010. By comparison, the average spring harvest in the seven seasons before 2010 was 26,982.



Leah Godlaski, of Marketing Division, took her first wild turkey this spring.

“Judging by our recent spring harvest totals, turkey populations are strong across the state,” Danks said. “I attribute this to our sound season timing and bag limit.”

Most counties show stable to increasing harvest totals while some have declined over the past five years. Danks believes any declines are due in part to a natural correction after high population years fueled by excellent poult production.

Brood production has leveled off over the past decade, which Danks interprets as a sign the population is stabilizing with

the habitat’s carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is the number of animals the habitat can support and it can vary from year to year based on a variety of factors.

“Some states have seen population and harvest declines, so we want to be cautious and not put extra pressure on the population right now,” Danks said. “We are seeing pockets of counties with declining harvest, and several factors are probably impacting populations. Foremost

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Capt. Charles Phillips



Sgt. Chris Fossitt and Sgt. Scott Horn

Conservation Officers save life

Fast action by conservation officers with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources saved the life of a volunteer who collapsed June 17 at a Northern Kentucky sporting event for children. An ambulance transported the victim to St. Elizabeth Hospital-Edgewood Campus for treatment.

"Everyone is proud of these officers," said Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Gregory Johnson. "Their training and quick response turned a potentially tragic situation into one of hope."

The incident occurred Saturday morning during the annual Youthfest at Lloyd Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Crittenden. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife

Sgt. Scott Horn was assisting with the event when he saw a volunteer with the Boone County Bow Hunters Club collapse to the ground.

Horn summoned fellow department Sgt. Chris Fossitt, who radioed for an ambulance. Horn and Fossitt could detect no pulse on the victim. The two immediately began performing the chest compressions they learned as part of their professional training. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Capt. Charles Phillips placed a CPR mask on the victim to assist with breathing.

The officers continued their CPR efforts 10-15 minutes. Phillips assisted with a defibrillator in an attempt to restart the victim's heart, but it proved unsuccessful.

The officers continued CPR efforts until the arrival of an ambulance. By this time, thanks to the continuous chest compressions applied by Horn and Fossitt, Phillips detected a pulse.

The victim, who is not being named due to federal privacy laws, is currently recovering at St. Elizabeth Hospital.

The Fifth District Federation of the League of Kentucky Sportsmen sponsors Youthfest. Fifth District Director Mike Coyle, who witnessed the events, credited the actions of the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife officers with saving the man's life. "Without their superior training and quick action," Coyle said, "I don't believe the outcome would be the same."



MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Community outreach. Willingness to work anytime, anywhere. Leading the state in boating under the influence arrests. These are among the qualities and achievements that helped Kentucky Conservation Officer Jerrod Alley recently win the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award from the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Alley, a 13-year Kentucky Fish and Wildlife officer based in Monticello, maintains a positive image for the department through his community participation in various events for kids. Known for going above and beyond the standard, Alley is a multiple recipient of the annual Governor's Award for Impaired Boating Enforcement.



Close-up with endangered mussels at Kentucky's Center for Mollusk Conservation

On a recent visit to the Department's Center for Mollusk Conservation, Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Secretary Don Parkinson and Commission

Member Rusty Gailor joined Commissioner Gregory Johnson and others in touring the facility with Dr. Monte McGregor.

They also had the opportunity for

a close-up look at endangered year-old Purple catspaw juvenile mussels displayed in a small dish by Fisheries Biologist Andy McDonald.

Avery, Cravens graduate DOCJT's Academy of Police Supervision

Two Kentucky conservation officers were among 23 law enforcement officers from agencies across the commonwealth recognized last month for completing the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training's Academy of Police Supervision.

Sgt. Joshua Avery of the Fourth Fish and Wildlife District and Sgt. Rufus Cravens of the Sixth completed APS, also called the sergeant's academy. The three-week, 122-hour training program is targeted for newly promoted sergeants, or officers who are on their agency's promotion list to become sergeants.

While in APS, the officers participate

in classes focusing on the role of a supervisor, leadership, resolving conflict, managing diversity, monitoring officer performance, professional image, legal issues for supervisors, ethics, interpersonal communication, effective written communication, making decisions, solving problems, managing critical incidents, public speaking, emotional survival, budgeting, media relations and others.

The graduating class is the 68th to complete APS since the program began in 2003.



Boone County Sheriff's Sgt. Michael A. Rankin served as class speaker.

APS is a stepping stone to DOCJT's Kentucky Leadership Institute, which consists of a series of three progressive leadership courses aimed at developing and shaping future and current leaders in law enforcement agencies across the commonwealth.

DOCJT is a state agency located on Eastern Kentucky University's campus. The agency is the first in the nation to be accredited under the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies' public safety training program designation. DOCJT also earned accreditation through the International Association for Continuing Education and Training in 2013 – making it the nation's only law enforcement training academy to achieve dual accreditation by two independent accrediting organizations.

GOOD BLUEGILL DAY!

Megan Bagby of the Department's Information Center found the hot bluegill spot on Taylorsville Lake last month.





ANNUAL SALATO SAMPLER

The Annual Salato Sampler, conducted this month by the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation, attracted more than 500 to the Salato Wildlife Education Center who sampled Kentucky food and spirits and helped make it one of the Foundation's best fundraisers. Master distiller legend Jimmy Russell joined the Wild Turkey crew, visitors met Salato's animals, current and former directors fried Kentucky Lake catfish and Asian carp, pork BBQ was again a hit, and a bottle of Buffalo Trace bearing its Master Distiller's signature spirited the live auction. Foundation fundraisers have supported KDFWR's conservation camps and the Salato Center for many years.





FISHING DERBY AT MINOR CLARK HATCHERY

Anglers of all ages, 705 youth plus parents and friends, turned out for the annual Department of Fish and Wildlife and Kentucky Houndsmen Fishing Derby earlier this month. Fish and Wildlife Commission Chairman Jimmy Bevens joined Law Enforcement Director Col. Rodney Coffey and Capt. Buddy Grayson for award presentations and helping youth with their catches.



Special investigation into illegal waterfowl hunting guides nets five convictions

Five Kentucky and Tennessee residents paid more than \$10,000 in fines and restitution after pleading guilty in Fulton District Court to charges resulting after joint investigations by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Special Investigations Unit (SIU) officers and conservation officers looking into illegal waterfowl hunting guides. The last two cases were resolved May 30.

SIU and conservation officers from the First Law Enforcement District in western Kentucky say the five also forfeited \$16,400 in firearms and equipment and lost hunting privileges for a total of 16 years.

James "Jimmy" Rowland, 42, of Hickman, Kentucky, pled guilty to one count

of resident commercial license violation and one count of illegally taking migratory birds. He paid \$5,000 in restitution to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and lost his hunting privileges under the Wildlife Violators Compact for four years.

Rhodney Speed, 44, and Jeff Boyd, 49, both of Union City, Tennessee, offered guilty pleas as well. Speed pled guilty to facilitation of non-resident commercial license violations. Through a plea agreement, he paid \$1,153, forfeited a 2011 Polaris Ranger Crew vehicle and lost his hunting privileges for one year. Boyd pled guilty to two counts of non-resident commercial license violations and to illegally taking migratory birds. Boyd paid \$2,500

in restitution, forfeited two shotguns and lost his hunting privileges for five years. He was further ordered not to hunt in Kentucky for eight years.

Bill Jackson, 61, of Woodland Mills, Tennessee, pled guilty to facilitation of resident commercial license violations, non-resident hunting without a Kentucky hunting license and non-resident hunting without a Kentucky Waterfowl Permit. He paid \$1,000 in restitution and lost hunting privileges for three years.

Rob Hitesman, 46, of Hickman, Kentucky, received a \$453 pre-payable summons for three counts of entry on land to hunt/fish without permission.

Investigation into the case began in 2016.



ON THE OHIO RIVER WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission Chairman Jimmy Bevens and member Rich Storm joined Law Enforcement Director Col. Rodney Coffey, Capt. Buddy Grayson, Sgt. Glenn Kitchen and Officer Chris Carson on the Ohio River in the Eighth District this month during a segment of the division's five-day detail to evaluate the division's river enforcement efforts and equipment. At right, Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Secretary Don Parkinson and Rep. David Hale joined Commissioner Greg Johnson, Grayson and Kitchen for another river experience.

Kentucky boys and girls basketball all-stars visit Salato

Kentucky's High School boys and girls basketball All-Stars took a break from the court and their annual rivalry against their Indiana counterparts to visit the Salato Wildlife Education Center.

The players were in Frankfort preparing for their games with Indiana at the Frankfort Convention Center.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife hosted the teams for a Salato visit and BBQ dinner while they were in town.

Thanks to all staff for helping with this event. The coaches thought it was a great experience. Larry Just, the coach from Butler Traditional, remarked about how the trip to Salato was a first timer for many of the players, and that's one of the goals of the All-star experience.

As staff helped set up for Sunday's game, player Tonysha Curry looked over and yelled, "hey that's the guy from the snake place." It appears that we made an impression.



"Turkey," continued

is brood production and recruitment of young birds into the population during summer and fall.

"Weather and predators impact the hatch from year to year, but having enough nesting and brood-rearing habitat provides a strong buffer. We have biologists across the state them for options. But, again, our turkey population appears in good shape and we want to keep it that way."

The top five counties by total spring harvest in 2017 were Muhlenberg (682), Logan (663), Pulaski (610), Hart (606) and Ohio (556). When comparing the number of turkeys harvested per square mile in a county, Pendleton County was first in the state (1.76) followed by Campbell (1.56) and Bracken (1.53).

Kentucky ranks among the top among



surrounding states in birds taken per square mile.

The final tally for the 2017 spring season was impressive considering the uneven weather encountered by hunters.

Average temperatures in April across Kentucky were among the warmest on record while most of the state was wetter than average.

The two-day youth season opened to

below-normal temperatures and ended buffeted by wind. While the youth season harvest finished down 9 percent, it remains within 2 percent of the five-year average of 1,728 turkeys.

The 23-day general season opened on Easter weekend in April and closed May 7. Opening day weather was close to ideal but rain affected parts of the state that Sunday. Nevertheless, hunters posted the third

highest opening weekend harvest behind 2010 and 2012. The 20,975 turkeys taken over the season's final 21 days were a 4.9 percent increase over the previous year.

"This spring was just fantastic," Danks said. "Now let's cross our fingers for good weather over the next few weeks to help those broods survive and thrive. Let's work to provide good habitat, too. Then let's chase them again come fall."