



Commissioner's wish

Yes, the Holiday season is here, and it is always my favorite time of year. Of course the obvious is relishing time spent with family enjoying the Holiday season, but as you might suspect, for me, it also means hunting and fishing. So let's check off my Holiday list, where do we start; waterfowl season, small game season, the walleye and smallmouth bite on Lake

Cumberland. Somehow I have to set priorities.

What makes it so great is the long history our Department has for making Kentucky the greatest State in the nation for hunting and fishing. And yes, a great spouse and family that allows me time to spend on my outdoor passions as long as I keep my obligations as a husband

and father in perspective. As might be suspected they are very forgiving.

We are truly living in the "good ole days." I think the greatest challenge to me as Commissioner,

and to all of you as part of the Department team, is to not let those who came before us be disappointed in our effort and results. Our past employees, historical partners, previous Commission Members, and previous Commissioners, have all left a legacy of leadership and commitment that has resulted in these "good ole days." I know our team, we will succeed, and no doubt those who come after us will also feel like they are in the "good ole days."

Most importantly, let's make sure we all take time to enjoy family and friends during this Holiday season. Take that time to become reenergized and refocused on the year to come. Thanks for all you do, and Happy Holidays.



— Gregory K. Johnson, Commissioner



SALATO BIRDS OF PREY

Salato staff had their birds of prey out to greet guests who were attending the Commission Awards Dinner last week. The hawk was flashing his red tail feathers and Geoff was giving him the "eagle eye." From left are Geoff Roberts with our red-tailed hawk, Brent McCarty with the great horned owl and Tiffany Ogunsanya with the screech owl.

INSIDE:



4 Wildlife Awards



7 Field to Fork



9 Elk honors

WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner's Office

Ron Schneider of Henry County hosted a Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt during the November firearms season. He sent the following email: "Our Veteran hunt was a tremendous success. Each veteran harvested a doe and one was very excited to harvest the great buck seen in the attached photo.

The veterans were thrilled with the license exemption from the Commissioner and the greeting from **Officer Jenkins** and **Officer Hudson**. The officers should be commended for their professionalism and the warm welcome and friendship.

All involved were impressed with Kentucky and KDFWR. Please thank Commissioner Johnson, and forward this e-mail to Officer Jenkins and Hudson and anyone else you feel are appropriate.

This experience will never be forgotten by the veterans and me and the others who assisted me."

The following came from Gallatin County Sheriff Josh Neale. He wrote, "I am writing this letter to express our gratitude to **Officer Michael Hudson**. Officer Hudson was instrumental in helping us solve the vandalism of several churches in Warsaw.

With Officer Hudson's help we were quickly able to solve this case and this case and incarcerate the juveniles responsible for these crimes. Again, we want to thank Officer Hudson for his assistance in this case."

This email came through our website Info Center email. We don't have any idea who this helpful person was or even for sure that they were a department employee but, we assume since the note was sent to the department that it was one of you folks.

"I'm sorry this is so late coming but



I just wanted to thank **the gentleman** who helped my daughter with her flat tire on Tuesday, November 18, 2014. She was coming home from Western Kentucky University. I'm not exactly sure where, but north of Louisville exit she got a flat.

Since she has only watched someone change a tire, she was struggling a bit – mostly with the lug nuts. Anyway, she didn't get a name and the only description she gave me is "he had very pretty eyes." So, to the pretty-eyed stranger – thank you very much!"



PRITCHERT RETIRING

Kentucky State Migratory Bird Biologist and Coordinator Rocky Pritchert was joined by his family, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Karen Waldrop and Acting Wildlife Division Director Chris Garland last week at his retirement gathering at Headquarters. Pritchert is wrapping up a 24-year career with KDFWR and will be taking a position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service based in Bismarck, North Dakota. From left are son Garrett, wife Beth, Rocky, Waldrop, daughter Hannah and Garland.

Brannen steps down from Honor Guard after 16 years

The Department of Fish and Wildlife Honor Guard recognizes **Sgt. Pat Brannen** for his 16 years of dedicated service to the Honor Guard.

Brannen stepped down from the Honor Guard recently to spend more time with his family. Brannen (right) was recognized for his service with a plaque presented by **Sgt. Damon Foster**.

The Department thanks Sgt. Brannen for his dedication and countless hours of service to the Honor Guard.

Brannen served as the Honor Guard commander for the last eight years. During his time as commander he oversaw and led the way for much of the new equipment the Honor Guard now enjoys. He led monthly trainings, standardized protocols, and was the lead contact on every detail the Honor Guard completed.

The Honor Guard represents the Department at countless functions throughout the year including funerals of retired law enforcement officers, the Northern Kentucky Fallen Officer Memorial, and special details honoring fallen conservation officers from other states.



The Honor Guard also participates in school functions, hunter education banquets and other special occasions requiring a formal presence from the Department.

The Honor Guard thanks Sgt. Bran-

nen for all his hard work, leadership and professionalism and wishes him the best as he continues to serve the sportsmen and women of the Commonwealth in the Fifth Law Enforcement District.

2014 Wildlife Division Employee Recognition

Wildlife Division recognized 11 employees with annual awards during the annual Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission awards dinner earlier this month.

The Division selected **Eric Williams** as Wildlife Biologist of the Year, **Carrie Blake** as Fish and Wildlife Technician of the Year, **George Corder** as Fish and Wildlife Management Foreman of the Year, **Randall Alcorn** as Wildlife Rookie of the Year, named **Sunni Carr** to receive the Wildlife Director's Leadership Award and picked **Nathan Gregory, Brian Wagoner, Scott Freidhof, Harley Weaver, Wes Mattox** and **Dave Ross** to receive the Wildlife Group Achievement Award.

Eric Williams – Wildlife Biologist of the Year

Williams, who manages Peabody WMA, has been at the forefront of the department's quail restoration plan since its 2008 inception. The effort brought on a whole new set of opportunities and challenges for the Peabody area and his selection recognizes his excellence in meeting those challenges. Peabody is now home to some of the finest public lands for hunting wild quail in the southeast.

The area also provides excellent deer, turkey, rabbit, and dove hunting opportunities. Williams is an excellent role model and team leader for a large workforce that includes a game management foreman, full time technical staff, several seasonal staff, a Quail Unlimited biologist, University of Tennessee technicians, Masters Degree students and small game program staff.

George Corder – Fish & Wildlife Management Foreman of the Year

Corder is a 26-year employee who began his tenure as a part-time technician



Eric Williams with Chris Garland

before climbing to the WMA Management Foreman at Beaver Creek WMA. He supervises and conducts all WMA habitat management work, operations and maintenance on the nearly 18,000-acre WMA. He also assists with work on Cane Creek and Lake Cumberland WMAs and has taken the lead on management activities on Buck Creek and the new Ping-Sinking Valley WMAs.

Carrie Blake – Fish & Wildlife Technician of the Year

Carrie has consistently and successfully helped manage Higginson-Henry WMA. This year, she completed the labor intensive management work of controlling autumn olive and TSI work on 120 acres in addition to the regular management on the area.

Also, she has administered a Mentor/Youth dove hunt insuring that every hunter had a memorable day afield. She supervises nine month and three month seasonal staff and leads by example. She had the additional task of visiting a 2nd and 3rd grade class and taught them about

wildlife and their management needs.

Randall Alcorn – Wildlife Rookie of the Year

Randall has been described as self-motivated, hard-working, a good listener, dedicated to customer service, one who strives for continual personal improvement, and is always trying to conserve habitat.

Since joining the Farm Bill section in 2011, he has quietly but effectively performed his job surpassing both KDFWR and NRCS expectations. Stationed in the London USDA Service Center, Randall services a forested area of the state with less potential for traditional open-land habitat improvement practices.

Most of the Farm Bill contracts Randall works on involve Forest Stand Improvement – a practice not typically serviced by PLBs or Farm Bill Biologists.

See “Wildlife,” page 5



Randall Alcorn

“Wildlife,” continued

However, Randall has combined his educational background, strong personal interest and willingness to delve deeply into tasks to continue getting forest habitat improvement on the ground.

His skill and knowledge have developed to a point where he is now taking on the added responsibility of field forestry planning in addition to contracting duties of a Farm Bill Biologist. Randall is quickly developing into one of the Wildlife Division’s strongest forestry oriented wildlife biologists in the state.

Nathan Gregory, Brian Wagoner, Scott Freidhof, Harley Weaver, Wes Mattox, Dave Ross – Wildlife Group Achievement Award

Forest management efforts have been and continue to be a major goal for KDFWR. This group of individuals deserve a ton of credit for spearheading those efforts in the Northeast region of the state.

Despite the many obstacles of a new or ever-changing process, training and equipment needs, limited staff and questionable public perception at times, this group has utilized every tool available to them to accomplish thousands of acres of improved forest habitat over a relatively short time period.

They recorded these successes with the support and hard work and dedication of the entire region. This group utilized division staff to complete forest habitat improvements on multiple WMAs across the region, set up demonstration areas to demonstrate good forest management practices to the public and developed step by step methods



Left to right: Nathan Gregory, Wes Mattox, Brian Wagoner, Commissioner Johnson and Scott Freidhof.

for private landowners to complete forest management on their own properties.

This group continues to ramp up their forest management efforts through every obstacle despite the fact that they may not see the fruits of their labor in their career. Forest management is a long term effort, and these employees have the drive, forethought and vision to see the benefits for generations to come.

Sunni Carr – Wildlife Director’s Leadership Award

Sunni has been with the agency since the early 90’s and has served at a high capacity in everything she has done. Sunni started out like a lot of us did as a seasonal employee – in her case, on the grouse trapping crew.

Since that time Sunni has served in multiple roles within the agency. They include: our Partners in Flight biologist, one of the three original NRCS liaisons, and LIP coordinator and currently Non-Game program coordinator position.

Sunni has had a hand in everything from making our non-game program one of the best in the country, to agency policy decisions, providing support and resources to the regional and program staff, and national participation in all things nongame,

including but not limited to the nationally recognized mussel facility, bat issues including White Nose Syndrome evaluation and response, birding joint ventures, Teaming with Wildlife/SWG participation, as well as being the self appointed agency visionary!



Sunni Carr

New Hires

Jarrold Arnold, wildlife technician at Peabody WMA, has been promoted to the Foreman position, replacing Freddie Adkins who retired in July of this year. Jarrod is a 7-year veteran of the Department and has demonstrated exemplary work ethic while supporting the efforts at Peabody WMA. We are very pleased to have him and look forward to many more years of excellent work.

The Salato Center welcomes **Dane Cassady** to the Animal Care section. Dane grew up in Edmonton, in Metcalf County and holds a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Biology from Murray State University.

Dane's background is both varied and interesting. As a college student, during the summers of 2008 and 2009, he served as a counselor at Camp John Currie. Following his graduation in 2010, he joined the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries as a Biologist, performing field work necessary following the MC252 BP Oil Spill. This included damage assessment, cleanup, and oiled wildlife rescue.

In addition, he conducted studies of secretive marsh birds, Diamondback terrapins, Brown pelicans and whitetail deer, and assisted in the eradication of wild hogs.

In 2013 he returned to Kentucky as an Animal Educator and Caretaker at Kentucky Down Under, where he worked with a variety of captive wildlife ranging from bison to kangaroos and pythons. Last, he has served as a volunteer at Salato for two months, where we came to know him as friendly, hard-working, and dependable.

He has experience with a wide array of wild, domestic, and exotic species, and is familiar with heavy equipment regularly used by Animal Care. Dane currently lives in Louisville, Ky and we're happy to have him.

Greg Logan accepted a new position as Maintenance Branch Manager with the Engineering Division. Greg previously was a Technician Supervisor over the Dam Maintenance section in the Engineering

Division.

He began his career with the department in 2002 then decided to start his own construction company in 2004. In 2008 he rejoined the department and has continued to prosper in his career. Greg has a lot of experience in equipment operating, surveying, construction, land development, and farming.

The Fisheries Division would like to congratulate **Neal Jackson** on his promotion to the Critical Species Investigation Program Coordinator. Neal has been the assistant fisheries biologist in the Western Fishery District for the last 9 years.

During this time, Neal has gained ex-

perience in all aspects of fisheries management. Since much of the current aquatic nuisance species and paddlefish (critical species) issues are occurring in this district, Neal has not only acquired valuable experience concerning these species, but has also gained an understanding of the commercial industries associated with them.

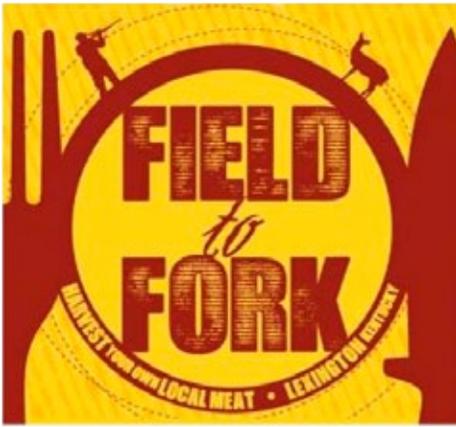
Neal has a Master's Degree in Zoology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and has taken extensive classes in fisheries management and aquatic resources. Neal's educational background and fisheries management experience make him an excellent choice for this position.



ODIN STILL PERFORMING AT SALATO

The Salato Wildlife Education Center may be closed for the winter season, but training with Odin, the red-tailed hawk that flies through the facility to the delight of visitors, must continue. Odin flew through a room full of hunter education instructor students last week to his perch on the gloved hand of Salato's Brent McCarty.

Field to Fork, a new way to recruit hunters



By Michael Pendley
Reprinted from "Timber 2 Table"
November 24, 2014

Pose the question, "Why do you hunt?" to just about any group of hunters and you are likely to get the same answers. Some will say they do it for the challenge of matching wits with a mature trophy buck. Some might answer that they enjoy the beauty and solitude they find afield. But the vast majority will answer that they do it for the meat.

It was this desire to procure organic, hormone- and additive-free red meat that struck **Jamie Cook** and **Brian Clark** of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife (KDFWR) as they sat around one day brainstorming ways to recruit new hunters. Why not capitalize on the natural foods movement that is gaining strength among urban and suburban residents? What could be more organic than wild game?

With this question in mind, they set out to put together a program that emphasized wild game as a way to entice non hunters into the sport. Since deer season



Field to Fork classroom

was in, the first class centered around deer hunting. The response was immediate and all available spots for the inaugural class filled quickly with an eclectic mix of men and women from all over the central Kentucky area.

In order to cover everything, the Department put together an extensive weekend program that basically amounted to Deer Hunting 101: What you need to know from field to table. By teaming up

with a local culinary instructor, restaurant owner and avid wild game chef Mac McBride, University of Kentucky Extension Meat Specialist Dr. Gregg Rentfrow, and volunteers from the KDFWR, the class covered all aspects of deer hunting.

Stretching over three days, the Friday evening class was a thorough one, covering topics ranging from weapon choice, to whitetail biology and behavior, stand placement, hunting methods, public vs. private land, hunting laws, Telecheck (KY has a phone or on line system for checking in large game) and numerous other deer-hunting-related topics.

At the mid class break, Chef McBride and crew supplied several venison dishes as an introduction to wild game. For many of the participants, this was their first opportunity to taste any type of game meat. The response was overwhelm-



Field to Fork blood trail demo

See "Field," page 8

“Field,” continued

ingly positive.

Day two began bright and early on Saturday morning. The class met at a local Wildlife Management Area where they were introduced to blood trailing. The trails were set up to lead to donated, freshly killed deer. Once all of the class participants had worked out the trail and located the deer, a demonstration was given covering both traditional and gutless methods of field dressing.

The field dressed deer were then taken to a station set up for butchering and processing. As Dr. Rentfrow butchered, participants were able to get hands on with the deer, see how the muscle

groups fit together, and learn how to break down the deer into meal-sized portions. As the cuts came off the carcass, Chef McBride went over cooking techniques that best suited each muscle group.

To make the recipes hit home, a massive spread of venison dishes and local produce, sponsored by the Kentucky Dept. of Ag’s Kentucky Proud program, was served up for lunch. As the class members sampled the food, they were able to question Chef McBride on preparation techniques for their favorites.

The afternoon portion of the class covered the Hunter Safety program and range time with various weapons. At a cost of \$55 per person, class participants ended the day with a Hunter’s Safety Education orange card, a Kentucky hunting license and a deer tag, enabling them to legally take two deer in the state.

Realizing that many of these new hunters would not have access to private land to hunt on, volunteers from



Field to Fork butchering demo



Field to Fork wild game lunch

the KDFWR spent Sunday taking those that wanted to go on mentored hunts to a nearby state-owned Wildlife Management Area using Department-supplied crossbows. Clark reports that, “six of the eight mentor-mentee pairs saw deer, and most of the six had deer within range but weren’t able to pull the crossbow trigger due to brush, getting busted, etc. All great experiences for first-time hunters!”

After the weekend was complete, I asked one of the participants, Paul McCurdy, what his overall impression was. “I feel like I am capable of hunting deer on my own now. The hunt Sunday sort of explained some of the stuff we had gone over in Friday night’s class. I am still a little unsure about exactly where to hunt, but time and experience should help with that,” said McCurdy.

I broke the news to Paul that many of us long time hunters still struggle with the same issues. Then I asked what he felt was

the best part of the class, “There was this awesome, I mean awesome lunch!” came the reply.

Even though the class portion is complete, the folks at KDFWR plan to keep up with the participants to help with any questions they might have as the season progresses. According to Clark, additional mentored hunts will be offered and an end-of-season social, complete with food and culinary tips from McBride, will be held. Chef McBride is also working on a cook book of venison recipes for each participant.

Initiatives like the Field to Fork program are just part of an overall push to recruit as many new hunters into the sport as possible. Other programs offered by the KDFWR include college hunting clubs that match new hunters with more experienced classmates in a mentor program, more traditional hunting presentations in urban and suburban settings and printed training material for new hunters.

RMEF honors Kentucky for its elk restoration efforts

Plain and simple, it was a big award presented on the biggest of stages. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation honored the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) and the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission as co-recipients of the 2014 RMEF Conservationist of the Year Award. The presentation took place before more than 1,000 RMEF members at RMEF's recent Elk Camp national convention in Las Vegas.

"Kentucky has been and remains a prominent example of a state dedicated to ensuring the future of elk and elk country," said Blake Henning, RMEF vice-president of Lands and Conservation. "Not only did KDFWR and the Commission show great passion and dedication in restoring elk to the native Kentucky landscape, but they successfully worked to implement recent restoration efforts in other states as well."

KDFWR, the Commission and RMEF worked cooperatively to help release 1,547 elk into Kentucky from 1997-2002. Now with more than 10,000 elk within its borders, Kentucky boasts the largest herd in the East. It also established an annual elk hunt beginning in 2001.

As impressive and successful as that was and is, the award is actually focused more on Kentucky's recent commitment to eastern elk restoration. The Department and Commission pledged their support to successful elk restoration efforts in Missouri (2011) and Virginia (2012), plus they just signed an agreement to assist with elk restoration efforts in Wisconsin. In addition, Kentucky's wild elk also crossed the state border into West Virginia – a state that is in the midst of determining whether it will launch its own elk restoration efforts.

Our thanks go out to the KDFWR and the Commission for leading the way by example!



Left to right: RMEF Team Elk Host Brandon Bates, RMEF Vice President of Lands & Conservation Blake Henning, KDFWR Commissioner Greg Johnson, Commission Chairman Frank Williams, RMEF Chief Operating Officer Rod Triepeke.

Third District gets kayak donations for creek patrols

Austin Mussellman and Quality Deer Management Association partnered to donate two kayaks to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Third Law Enforcement District to help with patrols on small waters in the District, primarily Otter Creek, Harrods Creek and Floyds Fork Creek.

The creeks, stocked with trout, can be easily over-fished, and the kayaks will

allow conservation officers better access to remote areas. League of Kentucky Sportsmen Third District president Ed Morris approached Mussellman for the donation, who agreed and did so through QDMA, who then approached Cabelas to complete the transaction.

Pictured from left are Ed Morris, Chad Miles of the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Toni French

of Cabelas, Sergeants Scott Herndon and Ed Mahurin, donor Austin Mussellman, Pete Blandford, president of QDMA Derby City Branch, and Steve Daniels, Derby City Branch Treasurer.





When staff assembled this week for the annual Christmas holiday luncheon, Commission Gregory Johnson took the opportunity to present Fisheries Director Ron Brooks with his Five-Year Certificate. Johnson then conveyed his sincere thanks and appreciation for everyone's dedication and professionalism to their work and the agency throughout the year and his good tidings to all during the holiday season and coming year. Then the food lines became serious and the generously-laden tables became the center of everyone's attention.



SEASONS GREETINGS!



HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION

Hunter Education Conservation Educator Jamie Cook braved the cold and the classroom last week in conducting a Hunter Education Instructor class at Headquarters for about 18 staff and volunteers who work boat shows, state fair and other major events.