



Blood River Bottoms provides habitat for rare aquatic species

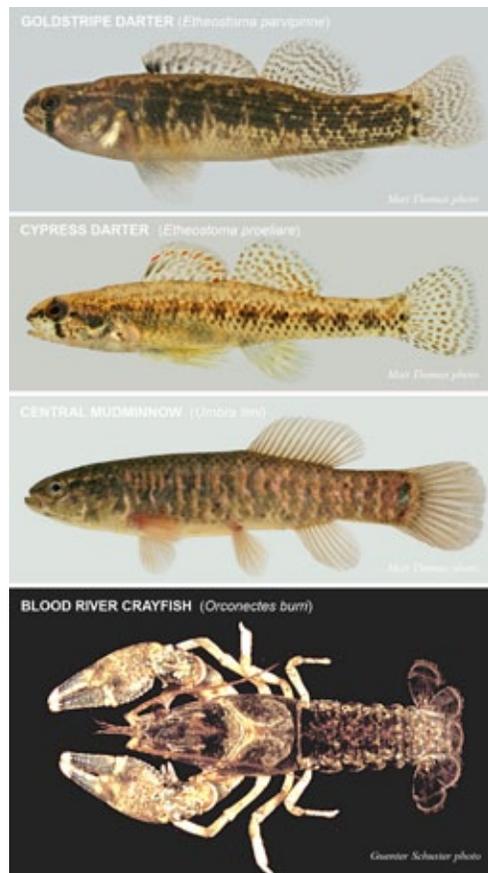
In addition to providing hunting, angling, and other outdoor recreation opportunities, many of Kentucky's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are important refuges to a large array of nongame species.

One of these areas is the Blood River Bottoms WMA, a section within the larger Kentucky Lake WMA in Calloway County. It includes wetlands scattered throughout bottomland hardwood forest with numerous spring-fed streams and seasonal pools that drain into the Blood River.

The Blood River drainage, which is located near the intersection of the Coastal Plain (Jackson Purchase) and the Highland Rim physiographic provinces, has a unique mixture of upland and lowland habitats that support a distinctive assemblage of aquatic organisms.

While conducting fish surveys during early May in the Blood River drainage, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Ichthyologists Matt Thomas and Stephanie Brandt captured numerous individuals of Goldstripe Darter, Cypress Darter and Central Mudminnow.

All three species are listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need under the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program because they are rare and have highly restricted distributions in western Kentucky.



Goose Creek in Blood River Bottoms WMA, Calloway County



The Goldstripe Darter was known to exist in only four streams in Graves and Calloway counties. This year it was observed for the first time in Blood River Bottoms WMA.

The Cypress Darter has a sporadic

existence in small creeks and sloughs of western Kentucky. Prior to this year's survey, it was last reported in the Blood River 30 years ago at only two locations.

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WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner's Office

The following note came to **Clay Smitson**, private lands biologist in the Bluegrass Region. Geof and Janet Scanlon wrote, "Thank you so much for all the help you have given us on our new farm. We are new to all this and you have helped us make our dream of wildlife and native plants come true."

We received the following note from J. Brent Harrel with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "I wanted to brag on **Jacob Stewart** for his excellent work on WRP in Knox County, HFRP work in the Horse Lick watershed, and his presenting it in the NRCS-State and Washington Office easement review last week. He has done some excellent work on all of it and laid down a lot of great conservation in a strategic way. Super work all the way around. I have known Jacob and many more since they were in school and they have all come a long (positive) way. Just wanted you all in the main office to know."

The following letter came from Mr. Stephen L. Bryant of Scottsville, KY. "To Whom It May Concern: Our twelve year old German Shepherd disappeared October 24. We live on Barren Lake and our property consists of four acres of lakefront, all of which sits on a cliff with an eighty foot drop.

After a lengthy search, flyers distributed, and much prayer, we could not find 'Gucci.' But by the grace of God and a warm-hearted fisherman, Gucci was spotted on an out drop of rock at the bottom of the cliff. The fisherman left the lake and came to our private street above the cliffs. A neighbor informed him via the flyer in the mailbox that it was our dog. He went back to the lake to watch over our pet un-



Officer Hurt with Mr. Bryant and Gucci. *Brett Zalla photo*

til rescue could arrive. He came to the luncheon just to meet you and to hear you speak. He began hunting at a early age and it seems that we named him appropriately, because all he is interested in is anything hunting and wildlife. He is only in 6th grade at Northern Middle School here in Pulaski Co. but is already looking to his future and going to college to become a Conservation Officer.

You asked that we send you a copy of the picture taken today for your files.

Thank you from the Somerset Pulaski Co. Chamber of Commerce for speaking today and thank you from a proud mother for taking the time to speak and take a picture with my son.

til rescue could arrive.

In a panic to drive to the State Park dock to seek help, it was closed! I then spotted officers from Fish and Wildlife getting in their boat. Frantically waving my arms like a fool, they picked me up and advised they were already on the move to fetch our dog. It's a miracle, I thought.

The officers in the boat, **Lt. Brett Zalla** and **Officer Lucas Hurt** are my heroes! Both were kind, courteous, and extremely professional. Their calm demeanor and reassurance brought me hope.

As a former member of the United States Marine Corps, professionalism and a straightforward call to duty is something I respect and value. Lt. Zalla and Officer Hurt represent what any law enforcement agent should emulate. I salute their commitment and calmness.

Thank you Fish and Wildlife for being there."

Jessica Carlton, Finance Director/Administrative Assistant for the Somerset Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce writes, "**Mr. Johnson**, thank you for speaking at our Chamber luncheon. It was a pleasure to have you. You were also so gracious to take a picture with my son Hunter



Commissioner Johnson with Hunter Carlton.



The Kentucky Afield Television crew submitted this aerial view of the Headquarters grounds and Sportsman's Lake shortly after Mother Nature dumped three inches of mid-November snow.

New hires / promotions

Welcome **Iga Stasiak** to the agency as the department's veterinarian. Iga is originally from Windsor, Ontario and was most recently working in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories in a contract position with the government of the Northwest Territories.

Iga received her B.S. from the University of Windsor in 2003, completed her Veterinary Degree in 2007, and her doctorate in Zoological Medicine and Pathology in 2012. Iga has experience as a small animal veterinarian, at the Toronto Zoo, and with the governmental position with the Northwest Territories.

Iga has a great understanding of wildlife disease processes and disease surveillance, experience in wildlife management and conservation related projects, and experience in the implementation of the wildlife health programs.

We are very pleased to have Iga on board and are confident she will do an

excellent job.

Effective October 1, 2014, **Josh Lillpop** assumed responsibilities as the Game Management Foreman based out of Taylorsville Lake WMA. Josh is a native of Lawrenceburg, and is currently moving back to the area after serving 5 years as the Manager at Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA and surrounding WMAs in northern Kentucky.

Josh is a graduate of Anderson County High School and majored in Wildlife Management at Eastern Kentucky University. He began his professional career with The Nature Conservancy and then as a member of the KDFWR Habitat Improvement Team.

Josh's previous experience working in wildlife, land management and farming prepares him well to excel as the Manager overseeing daily operations at Taylorsville Lake WMA, John C. Williams WMA, Knobs State Forest and WMA, and Marion County WMA and State Forest. Please join

me in welcoming Josh to his new position.

Please join us in congratulating **Jacob Stewart** in his new role within the agency. Effective last month Jacob is the new public lands biologist at Clay and Fleming WMAs. Jacob is originally from Anderson County but has spent most of the last decade living in Madison County with his wife and two children.

Jacob received his B.S. in wildlife management from Eastern Kentucky University in 2004. He was hired by the department in 2006 as a LIP and mitigation biologist.

Jacob had a daunting task of getting coal companies to comply with mitigation practices in Eastern Kentucky. He was then hired to lead, train and recruit members for the habitat team.

In 2011 Jacob became a farm bill biologist in Eastern Kentucky where he excelled on many projects. We are excited to see what Jacob will accomplish in his new position.

Combs is named SEAFWA Officer of the Year

Seventh District Conservation Officer **Steve Combs** has been named the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Officer of the Year.

SEAFWA made the presentation at its annual meeting last month.

Combs led the Seventh District in cases. They included two for hunting turkeys over bait, numerous illegally taking of deer and elk, including one non-resident who took the elk back to Pennsylvania. They also included using a firearm during bow season, possession of drugs, DUIs, WMA violations, and boating safety and licensing violations.

SEAFWA cited Combs' positive attitude, approach to his work and his



Deputy Commissioner Karen Waldrop with SEAFWA Officer of the Year Steve Combs.

rescue squads has helped him develop a resourceful relationship that helps both the department and the community.

His work with his community has helped educate citizens in dealing with nuisance bears and related issues. He helped to get a new boat ramp installed at Cranks Creek Lake.

He is a member of the Carr Creek Fish and Game club and he helped organize youth fishing and archery events with the Evarts Police Department, Harlan 4-H, Camp O Cumberland, Harlan County Extension Office and local schools.

initiative by becoming certified in swift water level 2 rescue training at no cost to the department. His work with local

Big Rivers Research branch catfish tournament data collection

A discussion between commercial and recreational catfishermen related to concerns of possible declines in Ohio River catfish populations has been occurring over the past few years.

This discussion led the Department to investigate some basic population parameters of blue, channel, and flathead catfish in the Ohio River.

The Big Rivers Research (BRR) branch began trotline, electrofishing, and commercial ride-along surveys in 2004, and in 2013 began attending catfish tournaments all along the Ohio River bordering Kentucky to gather angler catch data.

BRR, along with the help of the Central, Northwestern, and Western districts, attended 11 tournaments in 2014 from Ashland to Paducah, including the likely two biggest catfish tournaments in the nation – the Ohio River Valley Cats Rising Sun Tournament and Monsters on the Ohio.

Lengths and weights of every catfish



Vince Nadosky and Chad Waugh show their trophy blue catfish off to a crowd of onlookers at the 2014 Monsters on the Ohio Catfish Tournament in Owensboro, KY. *Aaron Wheatley photo*

brought to weigh-in were collected to help monitor size structure and condition of catfish. Of particular interest were trophy catfish (blue and flathead catfish greater than 35 inches and channel catfish greater than 28 inches).

Roughly 10 percent of all catfish weighed in during 2014 tournaments were

considered trophy catfish in Kentucky and the Department hopes to see that number rise in coming years.

BRR will continue to attend catfish tournaments on the Ohio River for the foreseeable future to help supplement catfish data collected by traditional sampling methods.



“Good Day Kentucky” opens deer season with live show

WTVQ’s “Good Day Kentucky” host Michael Estime helped open modern gun deer hunting season with a live broadcast from headquarters during opening week.

He and his Channel 36 Lexington

crew spent the morning at Headquarters with Explore Bowhunting Conservation Educator **Katie Haymes** and Hunter Education Conservation Educator **Jamie Cook** talking about tree stand safety, and shooting crossbows and rifles during the show.



Armadillos at Lake Cumberland?

Brian Whitaker of Madison County paused for a photo with his unlikely catch of the day while fishing last weekend at Lake Cumberland.

He found this armadillo floating near the cliffs in the Jamestown Boat Dock area.

Department herpetologist **John MacGregor** says he saw his first Kentucky armadillos in the mid-1980s, but they are not nearly so rare now. This is the third documented in Russell County in the past three years.

He says they’ve reached a point where they are fairly common west of I-65 and he sees them now every time that he visits Land Between The Lakes.

He says he documented occurrences in a number of east Kentucky counties as well.

Beard's 2014 deer hunt scores nice buck, rare find

Although extremely rare, white-tailed deer may have upper canine teeth, and it was this bonus rare find that made Department Wildlife Biologist **Derek Beard's** hunt this season extra special.

Beard took a nice buck this season and discovered the canines while showing his brother-in-law, a first-time hunter, how to age deer and collect other data.

Department Deer and Elk Program Coordinator **Gabe Jenkins** said the trait can be found maybe once in 100,000 deer.

These vestigial teeth in deer are a prehistoric remnant of its ancestors.

Two separate lineages came out of the prehistoric deer family. One group of species, referred to as

"Old World deer," evolved in Asia and the other group, "New World deer," evolved in North America.

Old World deer species have small upper canines although some, such as the Musk deer, have 3-inch tusks.

North American elk are descendents of European red deer and have upper canine teeth, commonly referred to as "ivories."

Due to the evolution of the species, white-tailed deer have lost most of their prehistoric genes. However, the genes for the canine teeth are still present, and when a doe and buck both carrying that gene breed, the offspring may have upper canine teeth.

White-tailed bucks seem to exhibit

Department biologist Derek Beard and his sons, Layton, 5, and Logan, 2.



canine teeth more than does and it is more prevalent as you move southward in North America.

Canine teeth in white-tailed deer resemble incisors more than they do canine teeth in dogs. These teeth serve no purpose as there are no opposing teeth in the bottom jaw. When present, these teeth are easily missed because they rarely erupt through the gums and are usually less than an inch long.

Deer biologist **David Yancy** called Beard's deer "quite a find!"

"In 35 years (i.e., since our 1979 Deer Season) of looking at lower jaws from white-tailed deer, I've only seen this 10 times or less," said Yancy. "I think the pre-



vious ones I saw were all (or mostly) does."

The trait seems to be documented more often in bucks than in does, but Yancy speculated that may be due to the fact that bucks end up with taxidermists far more often than does.

"I'll have to say finding the canine definitely added to the enjoyment of shooting a nice deer," said Beard.

PLANNED OVERTIME

Please keep in mind that planned overtime opportunities for KDFWR employees are those specific overtime requirements, as part of the agency's general presence, to support trade shows and public/partner events such as State Fair, NASP tournaments, Boat and RV shows, and other outdoor-related exhibitor functions.

Employees wanting to work such events must access the sign-up form by visiting Personnel/KHRIS on KDFWR's intranet (fw.ky.gov/fwnet if outside HQ) to read the instructions and complete the form.



LEAGUE OF KENTUCKY SPORTSMEN DONATES FOREST MANAGEMENT EQUIPMENT

The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission took possession of two bobcats with logging attachments, donated by the League of Kentucky Sportsmen on Nov. 7 during committee meetings at Headquarters in Frankfort. The League donated the equipment valued at more than \$160,000 to be used for forest management on wildlife management areas primarily in the Northeast and Southeast Wildlife Regions.

“Blood River,” continued

The Central Mudminnow only occurs in Coastal Plain spring-fed wetlands in the Jackson Purchase, including a few locations in the Blood River floodplain south of the WMA. Individuals captured in the Blood River Bottoms represent a new locality record.

Goldstripe and Cypress darters (maximum size 2 inches) have southern distribu-

tions and are at the northern periphery of their geographic ranges in western Kentucky.

The Central Mudminnow (maximum size 6 inches) is a northern species reaching the southern extent of its range in western Kentucky.

All three species require small, densely vegetated streams and wetlands that are often spring-fed.

These habitats are also utilized by the Blood River Crayfish, which is endemic

(found nowhere else) to the Blood River drainage. This unique crayfish was frequently encountered during fish sampling. Generally, these sensitive aquatic species exist only in the least-disturbed natural areas remaining in the Blood River drainage.

This survey is part of a long-term monitoring effort focused on distributional status and population trend assessments for multiple SWG fish species of greatest conservation need in western Kentucky.

Otter Creek – Big trout and big deer

Charlie Logsdon, at the Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area in Meade County, says that **Fisheries** (both administrative and the fish stocking crew) have gone above and beyond in helping create a quality trout fishing experience for sportspersons.

They conducted both the regular stocking and the stocking of big fish.

“**Mark (Slick) Roberts** and **Jeff Croxton** went out of their way to help us stock not just one site on the creek, but several.”

“The anglers using the area cannot say enough about them (some of it good),”



added Charlie.

“And also here’s a deer that was taken on the area. Five and a half years old, 222 pounds, gross in the mid to high 140’s. First buck with a bow.”



119 youth take 48 deer in BGAD hunt

The November 1 youth muzzleloader hunt for deer on the Blue Grass Army Depot was a great success.

In spite of cold temperatures and high winds, 119 youth hunters harvested 48 deer.

Several youth took their first deer and many killed the largest buck of their young hunting careers during this hunt.

The largest antlered buck had an outside spread exceeding 19 inches.

The largest body weights were a 202 pound buck and two 135 pound does.



ALL SMILES

Twin sister Taylor Abrams was all smiles in helping brother Tyler celebrate taking his first deer during a Mercer County youth hunt. The 6-year-olds from Harrodsburg are the grandchildren of Department Maintenance Manager Pete Elliott.



Boy Scout's Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project removes invasive species from Salato grounds

Nick Sweeney of Boy Scout Troop 37 in Lawrenceburg brought more than two dozen volunteers to remove winter creeper and vine honeysuckle from the Salato Grounds as part of his Service Project enroute to becoming an Eagle Scout earlier this month. Below, Nick gets some guidance about the invasive plants from Salato conservation educator John Baggerman. The scouts pulled the invasives by hand vine by vine.

