KENTUCKY FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSIONER'S NEWSLETTER

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New state record musky crowned
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Alligator gar set to be next species reared at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery

The alligator gar is listed as endangered by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission. *National Geographic photo*

The alligator gar is the largest of the living gar and one of the largest freshwater fishes in North America. These fish are capable of reaching lengths of nearly 10 feet and weights of more than 300 pounds.

Its native range once occurred from the Florida panhandle west into the Gulf Coastal Plain to Veracruz, Mexico and throughout the Mississippi River Basin, including the lowermost Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers.

In Kentucky, the alligator gar is native to the Ohio, Mississippi, and lower Cumberland and Tennessee River systems. Ideal habitat for alligator gar includes large, slow-flowing rivers, oxbow lakes, reservoirs, bayous, and bays with both freshwater and brackish water.

Little is known about the biology of alligator gar. Spawning is believed to occur during late spring and is triggered during seasonal flooding of coastal wetlands and rivers during the spring.

In Oklahoma, this period corresponds with the months of April and May. In Kentucky, the spawning period most likely occurs during the months of May and June. Females tend to grow much larger than males. Females reach sexual maturity at age 11 and live in excess of 50 years, while males reach sexual maturity at age 6 and live in excess of 26 years.

Documented sightings of alligator gar in Kentucky are tied to five areas. These areas include the Cumberland River (3 miles below Dycusburg in 1925), the Ohio River at Shawnee Steam Plant (1975), Mouth of the Ohio River (Ballard/Carlisle County), Mouth of Bayou du Chein (Fulton County), and Kentucky Lake at Cypress Creek embayment (Calloway County, 1977).

Additional historic sightings have also occurred along the Ohio River near Louisville and Northern Kentucky; however, vouchered specimens are unavailable to

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Opening weekend for modern gun deer season

While the second weekend in November always brings excitement to hunters ready to get out in the field and pursue the "big one," our Information Center staff and Dispatchers have a little different take on it. Our dispatchers are used to working every weekend but opening weekend of deer seasons prove to be a little more hectic. On Friday, prior to opening day, they handled approximately 233 calls, on Saturday 406 calls, Sunday 307, and on Monday 259.

Our Information Center Staff work opening weekend each year as well. They handled approximately 755 calls on Friday, 349 calls on Saturday, 180 calls on Sunday and 756 calls on Monday.

One Information Staff member, Phillip "Mississippi" Williams, received a compliment for a call he handled on Saturday. Mr. Bernard Lafavers from Pulaski County called the Commissioner's office and reported he was having some problems with his grandson's hunter education certificate. Mr. Lafavers said Phillip was excellent and found the information he needed and faxed it to his local Sheriff's office. He stated he appreciated Phillip's attitude and help and because of his help he was able to take his grandson hunting and they had a great day.

Tia, Phillip, other Information Center staff members and dispatchers answer hundreds of calls every day. *Mark Marraccini photo*

Phillip quickly included fellow information center employee Tia Edwards with helping him retrieve the information, saying that had she not been able to pull the data up on her computer, he would have been unable to complete the request.

At times our dispatchers and Information Center staff may feel overworked and underappreciated.

So, here's to all of you – **Great Job! Thanks for your continued service to the Department and those sportsmen and women who support us!**

"Gar," continued

verify these sightings. Alligator gar have declined throughout much of their native range as a result of overfishing by sport and commercial anglers, habitat destruction, loss of spawning habitat (i.e. passage between the main river channel and its associated floodplain), and loss of nursery habitat.

Currently, the alligator gar is listed as endangered by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and is listed as a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Wildlife Action Plan.

As part of the Fisheries Division's commitment to help restore this species, alligator gar fry will be obtained from the Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery in Tupelo, Mississippi. These fry should be obtained by May 2009 and will be reared at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery prior to stocking.

Rearing data suggests that alligator gar fry grow rapidly and should reach a stocking size of 8-10 inches by late July. Juvenile alligator gar will ultimately be stocked into the oxbows, sloughs, and rivers of western Kentucky.

For all those interested in seeing alligator gar return to Kentucky, please feel free to stop by the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery next May-July. Partial funding for this restoration project is being provided by the State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG).

For more information on the alligator gar project, please feel free to contact either Steve Marple (502) 564-4957 or Ryan Oster (502) 564-3400 ext. 4461.

Mike Henshaw retires

On October 30 2008, KDFWR said its farewell to Mike Henshaw at a gathering held at the Calhoun regional office.

Through the course of his career, Mike worked in a variety of locations, including the West Kentucky and Yellowbank Wildlife Management Areas, and ended his 32+ year career as the Regional Coordinator for the Green River Region.

The retirement gathering included one of Mike's favorite dinners (a shrimp boil), a slide show highlighting some of Mike's more famous sayings and e-mail spelling prowess, a short parody skit, and the retirement plaque presentation.

We all wish Mike the very best in retirement and his "presents" will be sorely missed in the years to come.

New hires and promotions

The Fisheries Division would like to welcome aboard **Mark Harless** as the new Fish and Wildlife Technician III in the Eastern Fisheries District Office located in Prestonsburg.

Mark comes to the Fisheries Division after having previously been employed as a Fish and Wildlife Technician II with the Wildlife Division under the supervision of Rusty Hamilton.

His primary duties as a Fish and Wildlife Technician II included management and cultivation of WMA lands for wildlife habitat, maintenance of project heavy equipment, assistance with dove banding, conducting woodcock and turkey poult surveys, and many other duties as assigned.

In addition to his duties under the Wildlife Division, Mark offered up his spare time to assist the Eastern Fisheries District with sampling of fish throughout Eastern Kentucky. This existing knowledge will make for an easy transition into the Fisheries Division and his primary job duties.

Mark is a graduate of Johnson Central High School and is certified in First Aid and CPR. Mark's official starting date was October 16th and he will make a great addition to the Fisheries Division.

The Fisheries Division also welcomes **Bailey Smith** as a new interim employee working at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery.

Bailey Smith comes to the Fisheries Division through a co-op/internship from Frankfort High School. Bailey will assist members of Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery spawn and rear white bass, hybrid striped bass, largemouth bass, blue catfish, channel catfish, sauger, and lake sturgeon.

Bailey's official starting date was also October 16th and we wish him good luck and welcome aboard.

The Wildlife Division welcomes **Ryan Taylor** to the fold. Ryan replaced retired employee Steve McMillan as the Game Management Foreman of Yellowbank WMA in Breckinridge County. Ryan was previously a technician with Peabody WMA through the Grasslands Enhancement SWG grant. He's currently going through the process of learning the area and sorting out Steve's paperwork maze. You can reach Ryan at *ryantaylor@bbtel.com* or (270) 547-6856.

David H. Godby Boat Ramp, Prewitt Farm Wildlife Viewing Area dedicated

Pulaski County government officials joined with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Ducks Unlimited, and several others on Oct. 16 for a boat ramp dedication to honor Somerset native David Godby.

Godby retired in 2007 after representing the Ninth District as a member of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Commission for 20 years.

The boat launch ramp on Fishing Creek just south of Somerset at the end of Lake Forrest Drive was dedicated as the "David H. Godby Boat Ramp." The department built the ramp and then later extended it when the Lake Cumberland water level was lowered for repair work on Wolf Creek Dam. The ramp is maintained by Pulaski County Fiscal Court.

Later in the day, an area on Twin Lakes Drive just north of Somerset in Pulaski County was dedicated as the "Prewitt Farm Wildlife Viewing Area." The area is part of property formerly known as the Oak Leaf Farm, owned since the early 1950s by Godby's grandparents, Clellan and Leora Prewitt.

The Prewitts raised cattle and tobacco on the farm, and Godby grew up hunting and fishing there. Later, after Godby acquired the property and Somerset grew northward, operating the farm became more difficult. Part of the property was developed. He resisted development of one piece of the property that was a favorite of waterfowl.

Godby donated that portion of the property for use as a wildlife viewing area, following the legacy of his grandparents, who also donated property to build the Northern Middle School and the YMCA, established scholarships for Somerset Community College and bequeathed gifts from their estate to the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Ducks Unlimited will maintain the new Prewitt Farm Wildlife Viewing Area.

Former Ninth District Commission Member David Godby (3rd from right) was joined at the dedication ceremony of the David H. Godby Boat Ramp on Lake Cumberland by, from left, Pulaski County Road Department personnel Dennis Turner and Terry Phelps, Fish and Wildlife Commission Members Dr. Jim Rich and Doug Hensley, his wife Melody Godby, son Chris, brother Mac and Deputy Commissioner Hank Patton. *Mark Marraccini photo*

The Prewitt Farm Wildlife Viewing Area was dedicated on the same day. There for the dedication were Hank Patton, Dr. Jim Rich, Doug Hensley, Duck Unlimited's Dr. Brian Priddle, David and Melody Godby, Chris Godby, and Jan and Mac Godby. *Mark Marraccini photo*

Sarah Terry, of Mt. Sterling, landed the new state record musky. The giant fish was 54 inches long and weighed 47 pounds.

New state record musky caught from Cave Run Lake

There is a reason why the musky is called "the fish of ten thousand casts." To many people, simply catching a musky in their lifetime is a great accomplishment. If this is the case, then 14-year old Sarah Terry, from Montgomery County, has already accomplished this monumental task early in her career.

On November 2, 2008, Sarah Terry was musky fishing with her stepfather, Scott Salchli, at Cave Run Lake when she boated the new state record, a 54-incher weighing in at 47 pounds.

The fish was caught late in the day and was actually hooked right at the boat. She observed the fish following her in-line spinner as it approached the boat. Quickly, Sarah immediately began making a "figure eight" and the musky bit on her second go-around.

Muskellunge that follow a lure but don't strike often fall for this old trick.

"She did the figure eight perfectly," Salchli said. "She made really good, wide circles. The fish struck just as she was making her second figure eight."

This is the third musky she has caught since beginning to fish for musky in September 2007. Her record musky beat the previous state record by nearly three pounds which was caught by Mr. Scott Flatt of Lexington in 1998.

This new state record musky is a testament to the hard work and effort of Minor Clark Fish Hatchery and the Fisheries Transportation crew who produce and stock musky throughout the state.

Sarah Terry's fish is now Kentucky's state record muskellunge.

"I saw it come to the boat," she said. "It went under the boat and then came back out and hit it. It really chomped that bait. If I had a dollar for every time I said 'Oh, my God,' I would be rich."

Terry and her stepfather, Scott Salchli, were fishing the edge of a weed bed near the Claylick Boat Ramp late in the afternoon when the fish struck. Terry caught the record musky on a Double Cowgirl in-line spinner with two size 10 gold blades and a purple skirt.

"It didn't fight that long, but was still unbelievable," she said. "I was running around the boat ramp. I felt like doing jumping jacks. I could've run laps around the whole lake."

Salchli, who works for a soft drink company, also guides anglers for muskellunge on weekends on Cave Run. He is also a member of the Professional Musky Tournament Trail.

"This is the first Sunday I've had off in a while," he said. "This was the only fish we saw all day."

Terry won the in-line spinner that caught the record at a Muskies Incorporated banquet earlier in the year. The

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"Musky," continued

teenager realizes the significance and rarity of her catch. "I've been to Muskies Inc. banquets and saw older people who fished for 50 years trying to catch this kind of fish," Terry said.

CERTIFYING HER NEW STATE RECORD

Terry and her stepfather went through the proper steps to make sure her catch was certified as the official state record. If you catch what you think is a potential state record fish, you must follow the correct instructions to insure your fish makes the official state record fish list. This list is on page 33 and 34 of the 2008 Kentucky Fishing and Boating Guide.

First, you must catch the fish by pole and line. Fish taken by commercial gear, trotlines, gigging, snagging, limb lines, hand grabbing or bow fishing are not eligible for state records.

Secondly, a fisheries biologist must verify the catch. "We have a fisheries biologist verify the fish to make sure it is identified correctly," said Gerry Buynak, assistant director of fisheries for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "We have 14 fishery biologists and several research biologists."

The phone numbers for the fisheries biologists are listed on page 33 of the current fishing guide.

Next, you must have the fish weighed on scales certified for trade by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and witnessed by three other people. The three witnesses must sign the application for a Kentucky State Record Fish. Official applications should be supplied by the fishery biologist or you may print an application from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's web page at *fw.ky.gov*.

Anglers who catch a state record often want to release the catch. It is not necessary to kill the fish, but it can be difficult to follow all of the steps to certification and keep the fish alive.

"If they can keep it alive while taking photos, having a biologist identify it and weighed on certified scales, then more power to them," Buynak explained. "It is not a short process. The chances of the fish dying are pretty good."

Salchli knows how tough it can be. "It was a three-hour ordeal," he said. They took the record muskellunge to a grocery store, but the scales weren't big enough for such weight. "Then, someone contacted Southern States and the manager drove from the other side of Flemingsburg to Morehead on a Sunday evening," he said.

It is possible, although difficult, to keep your record alive. Bruce Midkiff released his 104-pound Kentucky state record blue catfish after he caught it in 1999.

So, if you catch a potential state record, follow these steps and bask in the glow of catching a rare state record fish.

HALLOWEEN SPECIAL GUESTS

On Friday, October 31st, we had several special costumed characters show up to work. Here, I&E Director Tim Slone, posing as Sen. John McCain, and Program Manager Laura Burford, dressed as Gov. Sarah Palin, pause for the camera. We also had a couple of witches, a rather large elderly lady who somehow misplaced her dog and a cereal killer (note the spelling) to name a few. It was a lot of fun and we enjoyed some delicious chili for lunch. *Hayley Lynch photo*

The Wildlife Division assembled for a photo on the final afternoon of the 2008 meeting.

Wildlife Division Staff Meeting

The Wildlife Division held a staff meeting on September 24-26 at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park and WOW what a great meeting!

120 Wildlife Division staff participated in the meeting. Deputy Commissioner Benjy Kinman, Col. Bob Milligan and Jennifer Morrison from Administrative Services helped us kick off the event with well received addresses on Wednesday afternoon.

However, the highlight of the day came after dinner with the Turkey/Deer Bait Toss Competition (better known as Corn Hole) which was won by the team of Ben Robinson (the Great Cornholeoo) and Brian Dolen. With 58 randomly selected teams competing, it was quite a contest!

Concurrent sessions dealing with Public Land issues and Private Land

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Brian Clark and Keith Wethington gamely participated in the Turkey/Deer Bait Toss Competition. Fifty-eight teams played.

Jim Gibson and Wayne Glover graduate DOCJT sergeant's course

Eighth District Sergeant Jim Gibson and Ninth District Sergeant Wayne Glover joined 18 other law enforcement officers from 16 agencies across the commonwealth last month in completing the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training's Academy of Police Supervision.

APS, also called the sergeant's academy, is a three-week, 120-hour training program targeted for newly promoted sergeants or officers who are on their agency's promotion list to become sergeants.

While in APS, students participate in classes focusing on the role of a supervisor, as well as 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 29th to complete APS since the program began in 2003.

Madisonville Police Department Chief James Pendergraff served as the guest speaker for the graduation. Jim Donaldson from the Covington Police Department was chosen as class speaker.

APS is a stepping stone to the Department of Criminal Justice Training's Criminal Justice Executive Development program, which is a five-week advanced leadership course offered once a year for supervisors at Kentucky's small and medium-size law enforcement agencies. Potential CJED students must rank sergeant or above and be selected by a committee to take part in the course.

The Department of Criminal Justice Training is a state agency located on Eastern Kentucky University's campus. The agency is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and was the first accredited public safety-training program in the nation.

In 2006, the academy also became the first law enforcement-training academy in the nation to be designated as a CALEA flagship agency.

APS 29 GRADUATES AND THEIR AGENCIES

Chief Alan Alsup, Lewisburg Police Department
Sgt. George D. Ballard, Owensboro Police Department
Sgt. Bryan Brashears, Kentucky State University Police Department
Sgt. Tim Burkett, Louisville Metro Police Department
Sgt. Tim Burnett, Russellville Police Department
Sgt. Charles D. Casey, Bowling Green Police Department
Sgt. J. Ryan Conley, Ashland Police Department
Sgt. James T. Donaldson, Covington Police Department
Sgt. Matthew S. Enlow, Madisonville Police Department
Cpl. Michael A. Fleming, Nicholasville Police Department
Sgt. Jim Gibson, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Sgt. Wayne Glover, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Sgt. Will B. Love, Northern Kentucky University Police Department
Cpl. Justin E. Purcell, Fulton Police Department
Sgt. Marc T. Schworer, Fort Wright Police Department
Sgt. Barry G. Smith, Daviess County Sheriff's Office
Sgt. Brian C. Steffen, Covington Police Department
Cpl. Ben Walden, Hopkinsville Police Department
Sgt. Shane West, Bowling Green Police Department
Sgt. Steven Williams, Fulton Police Department

"Meeting," continued

challenges and opportunities opened the meeting Thursday morning. Training opportunities featuring a GPS/Geo-Caching Exercise, a mock Technical Guidance visit on a private farm, a First Aid and CPR certification class, a Pesticide Refresher class, and Department ATV operation happened later. The day ended with a cookout and social in honor of our recent retirees.

Commissioner Gassett addressed the group Friday morning and the University of Kentucky's Dr. Jeff Stringer discussed forest management issues afterward.

The meeting ended with a Field Committee report presented by Director Alexy and the awarding of the coveted Broken Antler Award. Our congratulations go to Mr. Scott Harp who won the award for his prowess in handling poisonous snakes and for always putting safety first.

The meeting was a great opportunity for our new staff to meet and share ideas with their peers across the state, and it gave everyone a chance to say farewell to our recent and soon-to-be retirees. Staff received needed training and they engaged in a variety of informative discussions.

The oldest show makes the hi-def leap

By Charlie Baglan

Digital Santa has come down the "Kentucky Afield" chimney to say high-definition is in the bag. By the airing of this winter's "Kentucky Afield Christmas," the nation's oldest outdoor television show will be in HD.

The whole television world is going hi-def. Production crews, broadcasting stations and viewers at home are all part of the system and it's a slow transition. Similar to Living Color in the late 1950s and 60s, quite a number of stars must align to produce it, broadcast it, receive it and appreciate it in true high-definition form. "Kentucky Afield" will be shooting and editing in HD slightly ahead of Kentucky Educational Television's HD timeline.

"We can probably start broadcasting "Kentucky Afield" in HD in late February," says an optimistic Craig Cornwell, Program Director for KET. He knows it will be a busy winter around their Lexington facilities to bring all the HD toys, tools and transmitters into play. He adds, "Our ultimate goal is to have an all-HD channel by fall 2009."

Meanwhile, by this holiday season, our viewers will already notice HD enhancements such as a sharper, more brilliant picture even if watching in black and white. More readily, you'll notice the widescreen (16:9) picture. If watching on a square'ish (4:3) set, you'll see black bars on the top and bottom of your screen (that's black bars, not black bears). If Santa has already brought an HDTV to your living room, then be prepared to be dazzled, even more so toward spring when KET is fully operational.

"Not only will you see Kentucky's wildlife, hunting and fishing, you will experience it in an uncanny clarity," boasts producer Brian Volland. "In bass fishing, that means detail down to the scales. With a picture this vivid, you can almost see what the fish is thinking."

Graphics editor Nathan Sangster agrees, "The look and feel of the show will be different. We're making the digital/hi-def transitions both at the same time. By doubling the lines resolution from 525 to 1080 and physically changing the shape of the screen, it's a new way of thinking video for the staff and the industry."

For the record, "Kentucky Afield" TV has always kept pace with industry standards. But they have been minor compared to the digital/high-definition revolution. Since moving to KET in the 80s, we've adopted several format changes for gathering footage in the field and then editing it into a final product once back in the studio. What once was a tall rack of tape decks and a tangle of wires has evolved to PC and Mac-based software allowing editing and graphics to be performed on a laptop.

But enough Greek. The new imagery will say it all. For Santa to bring us such a gift, we must have been good. Showcasing Kentucky's wild outdoors is about to look finer than ever. In hi-def, you might say, "as fine as frog hair."

KENTUCKY AFIELD'S FELINE FAN

Shayne and Brenda Wicker of Mousie, KY, say their cat, Ginger Faye, is quite the Kentucky Afield TV fan. Kentuckians can find Ginger Faye on the Kentucky Afield website and with a simple click get a preview of upcoming shows.