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The Tennessee Out-of-Doors Magazine is the official publication of the Tennessee Wildlife Federation. Printed materials include natural resource and conservation notes, outdoor recreation news and articles on pertinent legislation. All information is subject to editing or cutting. All editorial, advertising and subscription correspondence should be directed to:

Tennessee Out-of-Doors
300 Orlando Avenue, Suite 200
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TENNESSEE OUT-OF-DOORS
WINTER 2010
Early last year, in January of 2009, the Tennessee Wildlife Federation (TWF) worked with the Tenn. General Assembly to establish one of the largest organized youth waterfowl hunts ever. Over 175 kids hunted on 12 different farms in 19 hunting blinds, all of whom were participants of the SCTGP program.

The event was a huge undertaking—but a rewarding one, as we introduced dozens to hunting. Thanks to event sponsors, we were fortunate enough to give a lifetime hunting license and two scholarships at the dinner the night before the hunt to deserving winners.

The Davis P. Rice Memorial Waterfowl Hunt was named in honor of my late son, Davis. Like his brother and me, Davis was an avid hunter and began his passion as soon as his mother would let him. He would have been so proud to see how we accomplished at the hunt, and the knowledge that we are introducing others to his lifelong passion of a love for the outdoors.

TWF is working hard to get our today’s youngsters into the outdoors. Through the SCTGP and GOU programs, we understand our next generation of leaders needs to experience and appreciate the out of doors in order to conserve it. Without this, the work we accomplish today is for naught.

As we begin preparations for our 2010 hunt in February, I encourage you to follow our lead and honor Davis’ memory, by taking a young person with you as you head into the woods or onto the water. It doesn’t have to be your children; nieces, nephews, grandchildren, your neighbor’s kids even. Whether it be fishing, hunting, hiking or biking—we owe it to our planet to get our next generation of kids into the outdoors.

Tom Rice
President

“Right” to Hunt and Fish
Why this effort is one of the most important wildlife and conservation issues of our time.

Hunting, fishing and trapping have long been a part of Tennessee’s history, lore and culture. Who hasn’t heard stories of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett and their exploits across our state? The images are so strong that even to this day they persist with a public and visible force.

Take for example the pioneer dressed college student complete with muzzleloader and coon skin cap roaming the sidelines of Tennessee football games. Or consider the many a political gatherings throughout the spring named “coon upper” or “bird upper” referencing the traditions of hunting raccoons and quail respectively. There are even two hunts given in the name of the highest elected official in the state—the Governors Dove Hunt and Governor’s One-Shot Turkey Hunt. And how many small towns still hold “turkey shoots” as local fundraisers.

Thus, for many, the thought of Tennessee without the pursuits of chasing game or catching fish is foreign, even if they themselves are not active participants in the pursuits.

However, many are concerned about a future which may someday not allow for hunting, fishing or trapping. They point to successful efforts in Europe and Great Britain which have curtailed hunting traditions in the past 10 to 20 years. They despair over the limiting of hunting seasons in California for certain game species.

The message they bring to the table is this, “Do not wait until you need a right to hunt and fish in your state. If you wait until you need it, you will already be too late.”

In many of these examples, the debates over hunting or fishing have been as much about the differences between rural and urban culture and values as they have been about hunting and fishing. Simply put, to people close to the land, hunting and fishing are largely an accepted part of life. However, to those with little to no connection to the land, or nature and its realities, these activities are not well understood. It is largely a lack of understanding that creates the fertile ground for efforts to stop hunting and fishing.

What is the Why?
For many, the most visible threat to hunting, fishing and trapping are the images of radical members of PETA, the Humane Association of the United States, the Fund for Animals, or the Coalition to Abolish Sport Hunting campaigning to stop hunting and fishing. Creating a right to hunt and fish is an obvious solution to address these challenges.

For others (from both people whom do and do not hunt, fish or trap) the question of “why does Tennessee need a constitutional amendment which provides for a right to hunt and fish?” is often the first words they have spoken on this topic.

This question is asked from two distinct perspectives; with the first being “Don’t we already have a right to hunt and fish?” (hunter perspective). The second being “Is it really necessary?” (typically a non-hunter/fishер perspective).

Why Does Tennessee Need a Right to Hunt and Fish in its Constitution?
Currently, Tennesseans do not hold a right to hunt and fish, although the average hunter or fishermen flock they do. In Tennessee, hunting, fishing and trapping are a privilege, not a right. This privilege is granted by the state through its hunting laws. If laws can be created for Article 11, Section 15 of the Tennessee Constitution.

Given this reality, the most obvious need for such an amendment is quite simple, it helps Tennesseans preserve an important part of our history and a current set of recreation and wildlife management tools, and places the interests of citizens equal with that of the state. If laws can be created for Article 11, Section 15, then logic would dictate that laws can be changed to prohibit hunting and fishing, leading to the conclusion that having a right to hunt and fish in the state constitution provides a stronger protection as compared to a simple law.

For example, if ever there was a successful challenge to a hunting or fishing season, manner or means, then the affected constituency (name sportsmen and women of Tennessee) currently do not have the right to appeal such a case to the Tennessee State Supreme Court. Passage of this “right” will at the very least allow for such an appeal.

However, the importance of preserving the traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping go far beyond the effort to simply protect a recreational pursuit.

In Tennessee and across the United States of America, sportmen and women are still the largest financial contributors to the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Through license sales, federal excise taxes, sales taxes and other payments, sportmen and women are the financial fuel that feeds “on the ground” fish and wildlife work.

The system of fish and wildlife management developed in North America is considered to be the single most effective model in the world. This “North American Model” has produced with millions of hectares and non-game species of wildlife. However, one of the most significant aspects of this model has been that efforts to manage fish and wildlife, while being paid for by sportmen and women, have dramatically and positively impacted those fish and wildlife which are not hunted or fished.

Thus, to weaken, challenge or attempt to halt hunting, fishing or trapping is to weaken, challenge or attempt to halt fishing, hunting or trapping to promote a fundamental attack on the North American Model of wildlife management. For many, the most visible threat to hunting, fishing and trapping is the radical language that has and continues to provide to both game and non-game species of fish and wildlife. Stated in the affirmative, to support the protection of hunting and fishing through a right to hunt and fish is also supporting the system that helps all fish and wildlife.

What is the task that lies before us?
Amending the constitution of Tennessee is not a simple task. First a joint resolution containing the amendment language must pass both chambers of the general assembly during one session (a two-year period) by a simple majority. Following this passage and during the next immediate session, the resolution must pass the general assembly by 2/3ds majority vote. Then the language is advertised and subsequently placed on the November ballot as a referendum vote in the year in which a gubernatorial election is taking place. If the general election, the amendment referendum must then receive at least 50% plus one vote of the total number of votes voting in the gubernatorial election to become ratified.

In Tennessee, we are preparing for the 2/3ds majority vote which will quickly be followed by the amendment language referendum vote in November of 2010. We expect final passage of the general assembly in January with no difficulty. But then the real work begins.

In 2010 we will need your help in preparing the public to understand the importance of this amendment and the upcoming November vote.

If you are interested in helping in the campaign or can support financially, please do not hesitate to contact us at 615-353-1133, ext 1 or e-mail me directly at mbutler@tnwf.org. Together we will be able to pass this very important referendum and ensure that the foundation of fish and wildlife management and conservation in Tennessee are protected long into the future.

Michael Butler
Chief Executive Officer
MANAGING your lands for DUCKS in Tennessee

Mathew J. Gray, Ph.D., University of Tennessee Wetlands Program, Institute of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries

Thousands of waterfowl migrate through and winter in Tennessee each year. Most of these birds are produced in Saskatchewan (27%), Manitoba (19%), and Ontario (15%). During their long flight south, waterfowl burn lots of energy, often arriving to Tennessee nutritionally depleted and hungry.

Additional energetically demanding events occur while waterfowl are in Tennessee during winter, including accelerated heat loss on cold days and courtship activities. Waterfowl also need foods that are high in protein, because they replace some of their feathers in winter. Therefore, the best way to provide agricultural food for ducks and geese is to nutritionally superior to soybeans.

Yields in unharvested fields and waste grain that is left behind by combines in harvested fields also differ among crop types. Research performed by the UT Wetlands Program indicates that average yields in unharvested corn and grain sorghum fields are 7500 and 2000 lbs per acre, respectively. These yields equate to having the ability to energetically sustain about 460 and 120 ducks per acre for 90 days during winter. Grain on the ground following harvest in corn, grain sorghum, and soybean fields was 270, 500, and 100 lbs per acre, which equates to the potential of sustaining 3, 6, and 2 ducks per harvested acre per day for 90 days. Grain in harvested fields disappears rapidly due to germination, decomposition, and consumption by wildlife other than waterfowl. Research at UT revealed that most waste grain is gone within 2 months post-harvest.

First, waterfowl biologists call it “dirty corn.”

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Ducks rarely land in unharvested fields that are not flooded; therefore, the capability to flood is necessary. Programs, such as the Tennessee Partners Project (contact: Tim Willis, 731-668-0700, twillis@ducks.org), will provide landowners financial and technical assistance to build levees and install water control structures on your land. Most often, strips of unharvested crops are left for waterfowl at the lower contours of a production agriculture field, where flooding is most feasible. It is recommended that fields are flooded from mid-November through February, during the period when waterfowl numbers are greatest in Tennessee. Ducks cannot survive on agricultural grains alone; therefore, the proactive landowner also manages for native wetland plants (often called moose-soil plants).

Seed from moose-soil plants contains essential minerals and nutrients that are absent in agricultural grains. Also, when moose-soil plants are flooded, aquatic insects that are high in protein flourish, which ducks readily consume. Most often, a strip of moose-soil plants is managed at the lower end of a field directly below a strip of unharvested crops that are left for waterfowl. At a minimum, a 30-ft wide strip of moose-soil plants is recommended, with 50-60 ft of unharvested crops located directly above it. Additionally, landowners may promote growth of moose-soil plants within unharvested crops by increasing width between planted rows to 3 ft and limiting use of herbicide after crops are 12 inches in height.

Management of moose-soil plants is simple given that seeds typically are naturally found in the soil. Management includes a combination of flooding, drawing down water, and periodicdisking. When imposed water is lowered in late winter for preparation of annual field planting, it is recommended that at least 1 ft of water is left over the designated moose-soil zone. If water has not evaporated by the end of June, the remaining water should be drawn off. Moose-soil plants (e.g., barnyard grass, flat sedge and smartweed) will naturally germinate and establish during the remainder of the growing season.

Natural germination can be supplemented by broadcasting seed from agricultural varieties of wetland plants (e.g., Japanese or pearl millet) following drawdown. Three years after the moose-soil zone should be disked (2-3 passes) following drawdown to prevent trees, such as willows, from establishing. By providing a combination of agricultural grains and native moose-soil plants, landowners will provide a well-balanced diet for ducks, and be guaranteed to attract the greatest number of birds!

If hunting occurs on your land, it is recommended that at least 3 days per week are designated as no-hunting. This will ensure that ducks have periods that are free of disturbance, and continue to use your land. Another strategy is not allowing hunting on parts of your land. It is recommended that one-quarter to one-third of your property is designated as a refuge if waterfowl hunting occurs greater than 4 days per week. According to federal law, hunting is allowed over standing crops or fields that are harvested with a combine. Hunting cannot occur over agricultural crops that are bush-hogged or knocked down, which constitutes hunting. Hunting over naturally germinated moose-soil plants that are subsequently mowed to create openings for ducks to land following flooding is permitted.

For more information or management guidance on your land, contact:

Dr. Matthew J. Gray
University of Tennessee – Wetlands Program
865-974-2740 • mgray11@utk.edu
http://fwf.ag.utk.edu/personnel/mgray.htm

2009 Waterfowl Survey Indicates Increase in Duck Population

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the preliminary estimate of total ducks from the 2009 Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey was 42 million, which is 13 percent greater than last year’s estimate and 25 percent greater than the 1955-2008 average.

The Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey samples more than two million square miles of waterfowl habitat across the north-central and northeastern United States, south-central, eastern, and northern Canada, and Alaska. The survey estimates the number of ducks on the continent’s primary nesting grounds.

Overall, habitat conditions for breeding waterfowl in 2009 were better than conditions in 2008. The total pond estimate (Prairie Canada and United States combined) was 6.4 million. This was 45 percent above last year’s estimate of 4.4 million ponds and 31 percent above the long-term average of 4.9 million ponds.

The annual survey guides the Service’s waterfowl conservation programs under authority of the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Service works in partnership with state biologists from the four flyways – the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central and Pacific – to establish regulatory frameworks for waterfowl hunting season lengths, dates, and bag limits.

A Crowning Achievement

Tennessee Wildlifers Stand Proud by Richard Simms

I have ridden across the waters of the Chesapeake Bay photographing the capture of young osprey to restore the magnificent “fish eagle” to the waterways of Tennessee.

I have sat high atop cypress trees to photograph the very first wing beats of young bald eagles that helped return that incredible symbol of our nation from the brink of extinction.

I have watched the first tenuous steps of river otters, brought from Louisiana to Tennessee waters.

I have seen beavers go from a rare and almost unheard of wildlife oddity, to a nuisance.

As a youngster the sight of a great blue heron was the Holy Grail of birding. Now fishermen must take care to avoid them with their fishing lines.

We are likely on track for a record bear harvest in Tennessee this year.

The list of Tennessee wildlife success stories goes on and on. Not to belittle the momentous events that occurred before my time, but I am old enough to have been around for many of our greatest wildlife accomplishments. I am fortunate enough to have actually witnessed many of them first-hand with pen or camera in-hand, including the heart-racing, hoof-pounding and tumultuous release of elk into the mountains of the North Cumberland Plateau.

But in my humble opinion, Monday’s final culmination of that effort... when Tennessee hunters legally harvested the first elk in a fair-chase scenario... was the crowning achievement of wildlife success stories in the State of Tennessee. I spent the day in the North Cumberland WMA on an adrenaline-filled day that still hasn’t worn off two days later. It was clear that I was not alone. The list of onlookers to the first elk killed in Tennessee read like a laundry list of Who’s Who among wildlife and conservation professionals. There were only five hunters... but hundreds of people drove hundreds of miles just so they could be a small part of the remarkable event.

Millions of people who don’t have “wildlife” coursing through their veins wonder, “What’s the big deal?” Perhaps they are interested, or amused, to read the press about Tennessee’s first elk kills in modern-day history. Perhaps they might even be one of the folks who visit Hartfield Knob... the elk sanctuary, dedicated and set aside specifically for wildlife watchers... to view elk in their natural Tennessee habitat. But still, their interest is often fleeting and wax or wane based upon the temperature or wind chill factor.

But there are some... sportsmen, biologists, wildlife officers, private conservationists and others who care most deeply. These are the ones who well understand what a giant leap we have made. They will step out on Hartfield Knob, or anywhere else in the 145,000 acre North Cumberland WMA on a frosty October day and listen. If they listen long enough it is likely they will hear the quaking, but rising roar of a bull elk bugle. A massive 800-pound brute announcing to all the world that on this mountaintop, HE is the King of the Tennessee Beasts.

Those who listen and really know how to “hear” will smile. And perhaps like me, they will tremble a bit as a chill runs up their spine. Not because of the cold but because they understand, and have witnessed, the call of the wild. They will stand and remain stock still, no matter what the temperature or wind chill, and listen more.

These are the people who understand that this day, this week, will be one of the greatest chapters ever written in a very special book of Tennessee’s rich wildlife legacy.

And they will stand proud, as do these magnificent animals.

This article originally appeared in the October 21, 2009 edition of the Chattanooga.com. Richard Simms is freelance outdoor journalist providing material for Chattanooga newspapers and a wide variety of other outdoor publications. He also operates Scenic City Fishing Charters, Inc. in Chattanooga.
Though feeding wild birds is one of the nation’s most popular hobbies, few studies have been conducted on avian nutritional needs; here are some of the most recent findings.

As the weather turns cooler, it’s time for backyard birders to start cleaning out feeders and stocking up on supplies for winter feeding. Trying to decide which bird seed to buy? Surprisingly, the answer is not clear-cut. Despite our enthusiasm for backyard feeding—more than 50 million people feed wild birds in the United States alone—very little science has gone into understanding the nutritional needs of wild birds or even which seeds they like to eat.

According to David Horn, professor of ecology at Middlesex University and a leading expert on the subject, “wild bird feeding is one of our most understudied wildlife management issues.” To promote smarter decisions about bird seeds and how to feed wild birds, Horn recently established the National Bird-Feeding Society (www.birdfeeding.org). Many of the group’s recommendations will be based on Project Wildbird, a 2005–2008 study led by Horn in which several thousand volunteers contributed observations from their backyard feeders. Among the study’s results are that black oil sunflower, white proso millet, nyjer (thistle) seed and sunflower chips are the most highly sought after seeds for reasons that are only now being researched (see www.projectwildbird.org).

To stay healthy, birds must consume a mix of fats, proteins, carbohydrates and various vitamins and minerals to fuel a metabolism that can require up to a whopping 10,000 calories a day (equivalent to a human consuming 155,000 calories). A bird’s inner furnace burns especially hot during flight and the breeding season and on the coldest days, which means the animals must make highly efficient choices about what they eat.

A backyard feeder is an especially efficient place to forage because it mimics what scientists call a “resource patch,” a cluster of food much like a fruit-laden apple tree. But although a feeder offers food much like a fruit-laden apple tree. But although a feeder offers....
The practice of applying agricultural limestone to neutralize acidity and raise pH in soils is widely accepted as an effective means to enhance productivity in crop fields and wildlife food plots throughout the southeastern United States. Similarly, many fish ponds in this region require regular applications of agricultural limestone in order to increase total alkalinity and create conditions favorable for fertilization and maximum fish growth. Properly limed and fertilized ponds produce more, healthier and better conditioned fish than ponds which are not.

Total alkalinity is a measure of carbonate and bicarbonate ions in the water. The higher the alkalinity, the greater the buffering capacity of the water; or stated another way, the greater the ability of the water to neutralize acid and resist changes in pH. The pH is a measure of the acidity of the water and is measured on an inverse logarithmic scale, meaning that a change in pH from 7 to 6 indicates a ten-fold increase in acidity. A pH of 7 is considered neutral. Values lower than 7 are acidic, while values higher than 7 are considered basic or alkaline. Fish grow best in water ranging between 6.5 and 9 pH. Anything outside this range will negatively impact fish growth.

The affects alkalinity has on fish production and growth can be classified into two general categories: nutritive and physiological. Nutritive affects are those that impact fish production via the food chain; from the productivity of the water itself on up through to the phytoplankton, zooplankton, insects and ultimately the fish. Physiological affects are those that impact fish growth not by what or how much they eat, but rather by how fish utilize what they eat and how well they can maximize their growth potential.

The acidity or alkalinity of a pond’s water is largely determined by the soils; those upon which the pond is constructed or the soils that comprise the majority of a pond’s watershed. Most ponds in middle Tennessee typically have naturally high alkalinity levels due to the abundance of limestone. Conversely, most ponds in east and west Tennessee are on the acidic range of the pH scale, and therefore, require the addition of agricultural limestone. However, there are many exceptions to this general trend. The best way to determine whether or not a pond needs lime is to test the water.
The need for lime may be determined by water analyses of total alkalinity and/or total hardness. These tests are quick and easy, producing results within a minute or two. Total alkalinity is perhaps the most reliable indicator of the need to add lime. Research has shown that a total alkalinity concentration of at least 20ppm is necessary for effective fertilization. However, research also suggests that even higher alkalinites in the range of 50 to 100ppm are correlated to increased water production and growth due to the reason stated above.

There are a number of suitable liming materials which may be more or less available depending on your geographic region. The most common materials which are suitable for liming fish ponds are calcium carbonate (agricultural lime) and calcium magnesium carbonate (dolomitic lime). Ground sea shells, flue dust, and wood ashes can be used in areas where more traditional materials are not available. Materials which should be avoided unless specifically required, include calcium oxide, sometimes called quick lime and calcium hydroxide, also referred to as slaked lime or hydrated lime. These materials raise pH quickly to levels that are highly toxic to fish. Generally speaking, regular agricultural or dolomitic lime provides the best option in terms of cost, effectiveness, and longevity.

As traditional liming season approaches, consider that one of the important keys to a healthy and productive sport fish pond is liming. Given the wide range of benefits attributable to sufficient alkalinity, a lime application may be one of the best investments you can make in your pond. Southeastern Pond Management offers a complete and comprehensive liming service. Additionally, we will be glad to perform a simple water test to determine the alkalinity of your pond on site or from a water sample sent to our office.

Lime should be applied to achieve a uniform and complete distribution over the entire pond. Lime should be applied to existing ponds in the late fall or winter, to filling with water. The required amount of lime should be evenly spread over the entire pond bottom; a disc harrow may be utilized to incorporate the liming material into the soil.

The method of lime application is critically important to the effectiveness and longevity of the liming effort. Recommended liming materials such as agricultural and dolomitic lime do not readily dissolve in water; rather they sink to the bottom where they react with the pond’s bottom mud. This reaction at the bottom of the pond is a slow one, in fact, it may take several years, depending on application rate, for all of the material to react. Coupled with the fact that the majority of the liming material sinks to the bottom immediately after it is applied, these factors suggest that proper application of lime involves uniform distribution of the material over the entire surface of a pond. This is best accomplished using a specialized boat called a liming barge. Bulk lime is loaded directly onto the front platform of the barge; it is then washed from the platform with water from a trash pump as the boat is slowly driven across the pond. In this way, uniform distribution of lime may be accomplished.

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Lime should be applied to existing ponds in the late fall or winter, after fertilization has ceased. The year of the application. Lime during the growing and fertilizing season (March - October) may interfere with fertilizing efforts. However, in cases where lime is badly needed, fertilizer may be largely ineffective. In such cases, lime may be applied at any time of the year. New ponds may be limed prior to filling with water. The required amount of lime should be evenly spread over the entire pond bottom; a disc harrow may be utilized to incorporate the liming material into the soil.

After the application of lime, it takes several years for all of the material to react. Coupled with the fact that the majority of the liming material sinks to the bottom immediately after it is applied, these factors suggest that proper application of lime involves uniform distribution of the material over the entire surface of a pond. This is best accomplished using a specialized boat called a liming barge. Bulk lime is loaded directly onto the front platform of the barge; it is then washed from the platform with water from a trash pump as the boat is slowly driven across the pond. In this way, uniform distribution of lime may be accomplished.

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Lime should be applied to achieve a uniform and complete distribution over the entire pond.
Tennessee Scholastic Clay Target Program Has Stellar Year

Tennessee’s Scholastic Clay Target Program continues to grow exponentially while leading by skill and example, evidenced by a stellar year of national and state competition.

Breaking through over 1500 national competitors, 352 Tennessee athletes competed at the July Nationals in Sparta, Illinois. Tennessee teams brought home their sixth win in five years, with the Hoodlum Alley Clay Busters of Bedford County shooting an impressive two day total of 863/1000, winning the Rookie Division for their first National Championship.

In trap, Blake Triplett of Puryear and Linly McClain of McKenzie each recorded a second and two third place finishes, as well as a second place overall in 2009 TN Junior High School-High Overall division.

Earlier in the summer, 1,106 athletes competed in the 2009 TNSCTP National Shooting Clay Target Program. The event registration & squad building experience for coaches and athletes (www.tnsctp.org). Event registration & squad building is limited to TNSCTP teams and is available only to registered athletes.

In the skeet competition at Nationals, TNSCTP teams also earned 10 additional scholarships were awarded for $500 each.

Orders will be accepted periodically throughout 2010 through scheduled order dates. For more information, subscribe to TNSCTP’s online newsletter to stay up to date.

Check out TNSCTP’s new online registration software for coaches and athletes (www.tnsctp.org). Event registration & squad building are both component in the new system.

The Tennessee Wildlife Federation, in partnership with RIO Ammunition, is now a distributor for shotgun ammunition, offering quality shotgun shells at affordable prices. This exclusive pricing is limited to TNSCTP teams and is available only to registered athletes.

TWF’s Tennessee Scholastic Clay Target Program Has Stellar Year

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TWF Programs

Hunters for the Hungry Has Successful 2009/2010 Season

The Hunters for the Hungry program is full swing for the 2009/2010 hunting season, with 69 processors in 54 counties now participating in the program. That is six more processors over last year.

Twenty of those counties have funding to accept deer for free processing. TWF keeps a list of funds available for processing on our website at www.twf.org. The list is updated weekly. Processors who have not been adopted typically offer discounts on donated deer to the hunter. Check with your local processor for details.

New this year, Former UT coach and football legend, Philip Fulmer, has lent his voice in support of the program; filming several PSAs to encourage hunters to donate to the program. Airing on radio and television spots around the state, Fulmer’s support will help us reach our goal to receive 75,000 pounds of venison this season, resulting in 300,000 meals.

We encourage you to donate a deer, a pound or two of your own harvest, or funds to the Hunters for the Hungry program. With the state of our economy, and one in six people in Tennessee going to bed hungry each day, our work has never been more important. For some soup kitchens, venison donated through this program is the only meat source for the year – meaning every pound received makes a difference.

The Madison County chapter of the Tennessee Wildlife Federation (TWF) hosted the first annual Madison County Sporting Clays Challenge over the summer in an effort to raise funds for the Hunters for the Hungry Program. The event sold-out quickly and raised over $12,000 to provide venison to hungry families in Madison County.

“We are very excited about the response to this event, as it should go a long way towards fighting hunger in Madison County,” said Trey Teague, chapter president and former NFL star. Sponsors for the event included Promatic Trap Machines, Gamaliel Shooting Supply, the Great Outdoor Store, Southern Concrete Products, Central Distributors/Budweiser, Tripp Tucker/Edward Jones, Signs First and Mossey Oak.

Money raised at the sporting clays challenge is providing funds to participating meat processors in Madison County to process deer into venison. “Having quality deer processors like Latham’s Meats and Three Way Deer Processing makes the program even stronger”, added Teague. “We couldn’t do it without them. The venison is distributed to hungry individuals, families, and other non-profit agencies in the local community. 75,000 pounds of venison this season, which is more important. For some soup kitchens, venison donated through this program is the only meat source for the year – meaning every pound received makes a difference. We encourage you to donate a deer, a pound or two of your own harvest, or funds to the Hunters for the Hungry program. With the state of our economy, and one in six people in Tennessee going to bed hungry each day, our work has never been more important. For some soup kitchens, venison donated through this program is the only meat source for the year – meaning every pound received makes a difference.
Great Outdoors University Expands

The past year has seen growth barely imaginable for TWF’s Great Outdoors University (GOU) program. With programming now up and running in Nashville, and the addition of two new full time staffers, what was once a dream on paper is now a full agenda.

Expanding from Memphis, GOU Nashville has been up and running since April and has already provided 15 days in the field. Trips have included 10 day trips, one weekend trip and one canoe training day. That means 250 outdoor experiences for children and adults of our partner organizations.

GOU Nashville has partnered with five youth organizations so far: BSA Scoutreach of Middle Tennessee, Oasis Center, PEN Pals, Youth Encouragement Services and Youth Villages. For 2010, the program is planning on adding several more partners, including Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee.

In addition to program partners, GOU Nashville has contracted with 12 instructors to provide services on trips. Training for them was provided at a staff meeting and training session at Warner Parks Recreational Area in September. GOU Nashville has also met with university societies, including Vanderbilt’s Wilderness Skills society and Tennessee Tech University in September. TWF has also met with university societies, including a gathering at Winchester Farms in October for a day of sharing ideas and peer mentoring.

“We are thrilled by the growth this program has experienced over the past three years but we are not content to see it end here,” said Martha Lyle Ford, TWF’s Educational Programs Director. “Taking the Memphis model and successfully expanding it to Nashville sets the groundwork for growing the program to Chattanooga, Knoxville and beyond.”

As an addition of two new full time staffers, what was once a dream on paper is now a full agenda.

In Memphis, where the program began in 2006, TWF has brought on Kate Friedman to serve as the GOU Memphis program coordinator. An environmental educator for more than 18 years, Kate’s experience and enthusiasm for getting kids outdoors has helped the program achieve record capacity for 2009.

GOU Memphis had 54 days in the field in 2009 and has provided partner organizations with outdoor experiences that included 107 bus loads of attendees for Saturday day trips, week-long day camp trips, weekend overnight camping trips and family experience days. A whopping 2,406 experiences for children and adults in the great outdoors was provided in Memphis last year.

The Memphis program also received a prestigious Plough Foundation grant. The Plough Foundation was established in 1960 by Memphisian Abe Plough and funds only Memphis and Shelby County programs. The grant will provide $50,000 over two years to help sustain GOU-Memphis, as well as to expand trips and activities with one of GOU’s main partner organizations, the Boy Scouts of America’s ScoutReach program.

Contract staff in Memphis now includes 15 naturalists, as well as student volunteers from the Wildlife Society of the University of Tennessee at Martin. Additionally, there are six volunteers from the Brownsville area who assist with fishing trips. In 2009 the program provided four opportunities for staff training including a gathering at Winton Farms in October for a day of sharing ideas and peer mentoring.

“When we started, the idea was to provide outdoor experiences for children and adults in the great outdoors,” said Kate. “But now we have grown to provide services for three years but we are not content to see it end here,” said Martha Lyle Ford, TWF’s Educational Programs Director. “Taking the Memphis model and successfully expanding it to Nashville sets the groundwork for growing the program to Chattanooga, Knoxville and beyond.”

When Words Become Endangered

The removal of numerous nature terms from a revised edition of a prominent children’s dictionary spurs a debate about language and learning in a high-tech age.

NOTED WASHINGTON NATURALIST Robert Pyle once asked, “What is the extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a bird?” In other words, if children can’t recognize the common wildlife in their neighborhoods, why would they care about endangered animals that live miles away?

Ironically, the word “wren” was removed not long ago from the Oxford Junior Dictionary. In fact, the newest edition of this prominent children’s learning tool no longer defines more than 30 nature words, including “dandelion,” “toadstool,” “sacred” and “beaver.” In their place, a child will now find definitions for such terms as “MP3 player,” “blog” and “cut and paste.”

Though the latest edition was published in 2007, no one seemed to notice the changes until late last year when an outraged woman told a reporter about the additions and omissions. According to the British newspaper The Daily Telegraph, Lisa Saunders, a mother of four in Northern Ireland, was helping her son with his homework when she realized that words such as “moss” and “fern” were not in his dictionary. Certain Christian terms, including “chapel” and “saint,” also were gone.

When it was published online last December, the Telegraph article drew hundreds of vitriolic comments from readers. Bloggers took it from there, and outrage spread across the Atlantic. Which leads us to another irony: The Internet had become a tool for protesting the saturation of digital technology into all aspects of modern life—especially children’s education.

In response to the criticism, Oxford University Press released an official statement: The dictionary “is not designed for children to use as they progress higher up the school years, and should be regarded as an introduction to language and the practice of using dictionaries.” The words included in it, the statement continues, are selected based on the “language children will commonly come across at home and at school.” The books also must include words “covering the main religious faiths” and must now pay special attention to computer-related words.

These concerns, says the company, must be balanced with keeping the book small enough to be accessible for children between the ages of 8 and 11.

For many naturalists and educators, however, the omissions raise a different set of concerns. “Making room in the junior dictionary for a new lexicon of technology and communications may be a good thing for children, provided they are not also denied definitions as basic as that of the flower growing on their own lawn,” says Kevin Coyle, NWF vice president for education and training. “Several of the words removed to facilitate participation in the virtual world were cut at the expense of some creatures such as the toad that have been struggling for survival in the real world.”

The revised book could be viewed as another example of adults contributing to the growing disconnection between children and the natural world—a trend that was identified by a study conducted a few years ago by two zoologists at Cambridge University. Reporting in the journal Science, the researchers revealed that a typical 8-year-old could name 78 percent of the 150 characters in the popular video game Pokémon, but could identify less than half of the common British plants and animals in pictures.

Which brings us to one final irony: The concept of the Pokémon universe stems from the hobby of insect collecting, a popular pastime of the game’s inventor when he was a child in Japan. Anne Keisman is an NWF education media coordinator.

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