First Year Fur Trapper

Lessons learned and earned in the field.

by JEFF KITCHEN, photos by DAVID STONNER
I'm not sure what causes a grown man to try something completely new. Perhaps it's a chance to feel young again, optimistic and green. Maybe it's the joy of discovery, or the excitement of exploring a new world. I did just that when I became a first-year fur trapper at the age of 34.

The idea of fur trapping always appealed to me when I was a kid. I would read stories in Fur-Fish-Game of Alaskan trappers and dream of wild, lonely places, adventure and riches. However, growing up on the outskirts of St. Louis didn't provide an environment conducive to those dreams. I thought that learning to trap would be expensive and complicated, and I had questions about the humaneness of the sport.

I began my voyage into the world of fur trapping in 2003 when I signed up for a class called Trapping in Today's World sponsored by the Conservation Department. As an agriculture teacher, I attend in-service activities to learn new material for the conservation class I teach in Camdenton. The trapping class was held during the National Trappers Convention in Columbia. I watched demonstrations, visited with vendors, took notes and asked a lot of questions. I left the convention with three traps, a second-hand fleshing beam, some castor lure and high hopes.

During my first trapping season, there was a lot to learn. Whether you're a would-be trapper, or merely curious, I hope my experiences help you to better understand the world of fur trapping.

**LESSON 1**

**BIG WORK, LITTLE PAY**

My dream of easy riches quickly faded in my first season of trapping. Dragging a sled with 30 pounds of equipment and a 45-pound beaver reminded me more of football practice than a leisure activity.

Everything about trapping seemed like work at first, walking a creek in waders, climbing up and down river banks, making sets. It was a great way to stay in shape and shed a few of those holiday pounds.

The first time I sold my furs I was paid $9 for each beaver pelt. It was more than a little discouraging after spending so many hours trapping, hauling, skinning, scraping and stretching them. I had to remind myself that I was not only richer, but also happier and healthier for the experience. Later, I was able to sell beaver pelts for substantially more money as I gained experience and skill.

**LESSON 2**

**A GLOBAL ENTERPRISE**

I was fascinated by how much of the fur market had nothing to do with Missouri or even the United States. I never thought about how the Russian winter or the economy in Greece would affect prices for Missouri furs.

Fur was one of the main reasons for the exploration of our continent, if not the globe. Prior to synthetic materials, fur was the best way for people to keep warm. In some parts of the world, it still is. I liked the idea that my furs could end up anywhere—Chinese soldiers might be wearing the otter fur that I caught in Missouri.

There is also a downside to a global fur market. Just as in the early 1800s when silk displaced fur in the hat trade, causing the fur market to crash, today's fashions are just as fickle. One season furs will be valuable, the next season they won't. There aren't any uncharted fur fields anymore but the fur trade is as global in scope as it ever was.

**LESSON 3**

**PROCESSING FURS**

I found this to be one of the most difficult but rewarding aspects of trapping. Most trappers today sell their fur "green" or still frozen to buyers. Furs are sold this way because fleshing and drying hides can be time consuming and labor intensive. Also, if done improperly it can devalue your furs.

Fur handling is fast becoming a lost art, and I take a lot of pride in having learned to do it well. The first beaver pelts I processed took me four hours and rubbed blisters on my hands. For all that, I still managed to cut several holes in them. After several hides, I got the hang of it and it
helped me sell my pelts for higher prices. As I gained skill, I actually became more interested in how my furs graded than the price I received for them.

There is something primitive and appealing in stretching and preserving hides for the fur trade. It allowed me to develop an ancient skill and connect with the past in a way that a trip to a museum never could.

Although I have hunted and fished for years, I have never connected with nature as I have with fur trapping. To be successful, you must study the animals’ habits and habitats closely.

Trapping forced me to get down in the water and examine every square foot of riverbank for tracks, scat or other sign. Sometimes a small stick or a clump of grass would determine where an animal was going to place its foot or stick its head.

I was amazed at how many furbearers roamed the woods at night. These animals are rarely seen by people, except perhaps a fleeting glimpse in passing headlights. Missouri furbearers are much more abundant than most people realize.

LESSON 4
UNDERSTANDING ANIMAL BEHAVIOR
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caused to the animal will lower the quality of
the pelt and affect the price the trapper receives
for the fur.

Trappers strive to dispatch animals as quickly
and painlessly as possible. I have learned first-
hand that trapping can be done humanely.

LESSON 6
BEAVERS ARE BRUTES
I guess it makes sense that a critter that eats
trees for breakfast, lunch and dinner would be
one of the toughest animals the woods. Beavers
have no natural predators, and it is easy to see
why. They are equipped with 3-inch-long chisel-
sharp teeth on the business end of a stump-like
body of solid muscle.

Making a beaver set often involves chopping
wood, scooping mud and hammering stakes—all
in ice-cold water. Furthermore, the traps
used for beavers are big, heavy and powerful.
Even carrying a beaver out of the woods is
tough. The biggest beaver I caught my first year
was 53 pounds. I suggest that a beginner start
with muskrat or raccoon trapping and graduate
to beavers if you want more of a challenge.

LESSON 7
FEW YOUNG TRAPPERS
Through the Missouri Trappers Association, I
met men with names like “Griz” and “Bug.”
They seemed every bit as tough and colorful as
the mountain men who settled the West must
have been. Apparently, it takes something seri-
sous to keep these guys from trapping. They are
also serious about helping kids.

A fur buyer in Lebanon offered to buy my
students’ furs at a premium, in spite of mar-
ket conditions, just to encourage them to trap.
At an MTA auction an auctioneer appealed to
the buyers to raise their bids when he real-
ized my kids were involved in the project.
Afterward, I joked with my children that we
were starting the Kitchen Fur Company. They
took me literally and believed we had begun a
real business with real profits. From that day
on we checked traps together and split the
“profits” three ways.

It has been six years since my first trapping
season. Each year I have learned more about
trapping and more about Missouri furbearers.
I now tan hides, and I have added to my trap line.
I teach an extensive trapping unit as part of my
conservation class each year.

One might wonder after reading this why
anyone would choose to trap. Fur trapping is a
unique sport that results in harvesting a com-
mercially valuable renewable resource from
nature. Though it’s not likely you’ll be able to
make a living off the land in this way, it can add
a little income and a lot of enjoyment to your
outdoor adventures.

If you do decide to try fur trapping, learn as
much as possible before you ever set your first
trap. Use modern equipment, ethical practices
and humane techniques. Add a different dimen-
sion to your outdoor experience, and don’t for-
get to bring a kid along! ▲

Learn more about trapping through the Department’s Web site at
www.MissouriConservation.org/7616 or the Missouri Trappers Association
This summary of the Annual Report highlights the Missouri Department of Conservation’s accomplishments and expenditures from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009. These accomplishments are based on the nine goals established in *The Next Generation of Conservation.*

**PLANTS & ANIMALS**

**Quail and grassland bird habitat**
In FY09 we completed about 103,000 acres of quail and grassland bird habitat work on conservation areas throughout the state. On conservation areas designated as Quail Emphasis Areas, more than 19,000 acres of quail and grassland bird habitat was completed. In addition, we have established 34 private-land quail focus areas throughout the state in places where landowners are managing their property for quail.

**Natural communities**
At the end of FY09 there were 181 natural areas totaling 70,677 acres. These areas represent the best examples of healthy natural communities within the state.

**Endangered species**
Three species were removed from the state endangered-species list because they were no longer threatened with extinction: bald eagle, barn owl and Western fox snake.

**CLEAN WATER**

**Taum Sauk Dam research and monitoring**
MDC evaluated aquatic habitat availability and monitored water quality in the East Fork Black River. This work was
conducted in preparation for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s relicensing of the Taum Sauk Pumped Storage Project. The information will be used to understand and minimize the potential effects of Taum Sauk Project operation on the aquatic life of the East Fork Black River.

**Stream Team celebrates 20 years**
The Missouri Stream Team Program celebrated a 20th birthday and signed on its 4,000th team. Last year volunteers spent 137,488 hours working on their adopted streams.

**Stream Stewardship Trust Fund**
The Stream Stewardship Trust Fund is available to restore, enhance and/or protect stream systems and associated riparian habitats. The Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation administers the program and funds, and MDC applies for grants. In FY09, 15 projects costing $1.1 million were approved to protect 83.2 acres of stream channel and 615.8 acres of riparian corridor.

**COMMUNITY CONSERVATION**

**Volunteer fire departments**
MDC, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, provided $381,886 in grants to 178 volunteer fire departments. These grants help fund protective clothing, equipment and training. We also provided equipment to fire departments through two federal programs. With the Federal Excess Property Program, we obtained equipment valued at $316,695. The new Fire Fighter Program obtained equipment valued at $11,591,225.

**Community Assistance**
Through the Community Assistance Program and the closely related Corporate and Agency Partnership Program, MDC enters into agreements (usually 25-year) with cities, counties, state and federal agencies, businesses, foundations, schools and colleges. Under these agreements, MDC provides fisheries management at existing lakes and ponds, and cooperatively develops and maintains facilities for anglers and boaters at lake and stream areas. MDC has agreements with 116 partners for the cooperative management of 166 public lakes, 42 stream access areas, four lake access areas and six aquatic resource education ponds.

**Venison donation**
MDC coordinates the Share the Harvest program with the Conservation Federation of Missouri, local charitable organizations and local meat processors. During FY09, 4,465 hunters donated 249,156 pounds of venison.

**HEALTHY FORESTS**

**Wildfire prevention**
By way of endorsing a third-party U.S. Forest Service Hazard Mitigation grant to the Southwest Resource Conservation and Development Program, MDC supported a two-year effort beginning in FY08 to promote wildfire prevention in southwestern Missouri. This area was hit severely by the January 2007 ice storm, and the resulting heavy, woody debris in the forests makes wildfire suppression more difficult and hazardous to firefighters.

**Forest health**
The Forest Health Program is a cooperative effort among MDC and other state and federal agencies to conserve Missouri’s forest resources by monitoring and evaluating forest health and providing forest-health management information to Missouri residents. Monitoring activities document and evaluate ongoing threats to forest health.

**Timber harvesters**
The Missouri Forest Products Association and MDC jointly sponsor logger training courses aimed at educating loggers about forest-management principles, introducing new techniques and concepts, and enhancing the safety of timber-harvesting operations. Thus far, 308 loggers have been through the program in Missouri.

**OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**New hunters and anglers**
We provided more than 2,400 programs with instruction in hunting, fishing, trapping and shooting sports. More than 126,000 people took part in these programs. We offered about 900 Hunter Education classes, certified 24,733 students and began an online Hunter Education training module. More than 130,000 visitors attended programs or practiced firearms and archery shooting at our five staffed ranges.

**Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program**
MDC—in collaboration with the Conservation Federation of Missouri—is the Missouri coordinating agency for the NASP. In FY09, 13,776 students from 82 schools experienced this international-style target-archery program taught in fourth- to 12th-grade physical education classes.

**Urban fishing**
In FY09, more than 60 urban lakes were managed for fishing. More than 158,000 keeper-sized fish were stocked in these
lakes; this included almost 97,000 channel catfish, more than 46,000 rainbow trout and 15,000 brown trout.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Discover Nature—Schools
More than 30,600 Missouri children were connected with nature through Discover Nature—Schools instructional units and grants. The middle school aquatic unit was adopted by 72 schools. The elementary unit, Nature Unleashed, was piloted by 21 schools. Grants supporting the two school units totaled $114,000. Conservation field trip grants helped 20,273 students get outdoors. Outdoor classroom grants were awarded to 34 schools. Conservation grants to schools exceeded $238,500.

Citizens enjoying nature
About 900,000 visitors explored the trails, programs and exhibits at our conservation nature centers and education centers throughout the state.

Grow Native!
Grow Native! is a program of the Missouri departments of Conservation and Agriculture, with help from the Missouri Botanical Garden’s Shaw Nature Reserve. A focus in FY09 has been the education of civil engineers and contractors in St. Louis, where an emphasis is being placed on the ability of native plants to slow stormwater runoff and improve water quality. Also, a survey shows sales of native plants in Missouri increased 70 percent between 2003 and 2008.

LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance
Nearly $1 million in cost-share funds went to 523 private landowners to implement beneficial habitat management practices for fish, forest and wildlife resources. The funds helped install 921 individual conservation practices, impacting nearly 12,000 acres.

Technical assistance
MDC provided timely and responsive service through 63,986 rural and urban landowner contacts, including more than 16,171 on-site visits. We also answered 4,488 requests for wildlife nuisance assistance, including 1,038 on-site visits.

Partnerships
We developed about 35 partnerships with federal, state and non-governmental organizations. These relationships helped MDC enhance technical, financial and equipment support to landowners interested in improving fish, forest and wildlife. For example, MDC assisted Missouri USDA with developing and applying $150 million in Farm Bill conservation programs, including more than $2 million in staff time.

PLACES TO GO

Forest and woodland improvements
We conducted forest and woodland habitat improvement on 21,078 acres of state land. This included thinning young trees on 3,052 acres, post-sale work on 1,048 acres, prescribed fires on 10,922 acres and harvest of 6,056 acres.

Land management
MDC conducted habitat management on approximately 187,000 acres of public land, with an additional 120 miles of edge habitat. We spent nearly 460,000 hours on area and equipment maintenance.

Adopt-A-Trail
Volunteers monitored, maintained and helped to enhance trails. In FY09, 44 volunteers or groups of volunteers reported spending 1,130 hours on conservation area trails.

ACCOUNTING FOR DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

Listened to Missourians
We conduct a variety of scientifically sound, unbiased and representative efforts each year to understand public opinions, expectations and recreation participation. This information guides decisions about regulations and fish, forest and wildlife management. In FY09 there were 62 activities that involved 87,226 people. These included public surveys, focus groups, public meetings and ombudsman contacts.

Internal audit reports
Internal auditors issued six internal audits to ensure that public funds were expended in a responsible manner. There were no major findings.

Strategic plan accomplishments
FY09 was the third year of tracking accomplishments of The Next Generation of Conservation, MDC’s strategic plan. The plan identifies nine goals, 28 results we want to achieve and 61 specific actions. For each of the action items, performance measures and staff responsible for reporting are identified.
What the Money Bought—Fiscal Year 2009

**County Assistance Payments**—$1,453,573 Included payments to Missouri’s counties for levee and drainage district taxes, forest cropland payments, payments in lieu of real estate taxes and county aid road trust payments. Since 1980, more than $13.79 million has been paid to Missouri counties in lieu of real estate taxes.

**Capital Improvements**—$21,777,980 Work included fish hatchery improvements, river access development, wetland renovations, shooting range construction, nature center improvements, land acquisition transactions and renovation and repair of facilities statewide.

**Fisheries**—$12,563,006 Maintained and improved sport fish populations, aquatic biodiversity and aquatic habitats. Managed 902 impoundments and stream areas for public fishing, and provided stream and lake management assistance to almost 8,600 private landowners. Stocked approximately 5 million fish in public lakes and streams.

**Forestry**—$16,051,758 Fostered a healthy and growing forest resource. Examples include distributing about 4.5 million seedlings for planting to nearly 12,000 landowners, provided forestry assistance on more than 100,000 acres and facilitated EQP projects totaling more than $725,000 on private land, managing 438,700 acres of public forest land, monitoring insect and disease threats and facilitating development of the state’s forest industry.

**Wildlife**—$16,338,979 Worked toward ensuring wildlife populations are in harmony with habitat and human enjoyment. Managed more than $25,000 acres of public land and implemented programs to maintain and restore natural communities and wildlife diversity across Missouri’s landscape.

**Outreach and Education**—$15,186,325 Sustained Missourians’ connection to the outdoors through more than 1 million visitors to conservation nature centers and shooting-range/outdoor-education centers, nearly 500,000 subscribers to the Missouri Conservationist magazine, Web-based information, grants to schools exceeding $238,500, conservation curriculums for schools, outdoor skills programs and hunter education.

**Private Land Services**—$7,630,877 Helped private landowners to achieve long-term natural resource conservation objectives. Provided service through 63,986 rural and urban landowner contacts; affected 327,181 acres through technical assistance to landowners; provided habitat management workshops to 34,959 attendees; assisted USDA with enrolling 14,000 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program SAFE practice; and assisted 4,488 private landowners in controlling nuisance wildlife.

**Protection**—$13,505,810 Paid for law enforcement in every county as well as resource management, information, education and public service contact activities conducted by conservation agents who directly contacted more than 675,000 people. Coordinated the Share the Harvest Program where close to 5,000 deer hunters donated 249,156 pounds of venison to less fortunate Missourians. Conservation agents, along with 1,788 volunteer instructors, conducted 937 hunter education classes, certifying nearly 25,000 students.

**Resource Science**—$11,392,711 Provided the science-based information needed to effectively manage Missouri’s natural resources. Resource Science monitors the status of Missouri’s fish, forests, plants and wildlife, recommends conservation actions, evaluates these actions and reports the results. In addition to surveys of fish and wildlife, tens of thousands of Missourians were contacted to determine their outdoor activities and opinions about conservation programs.

**Regional Public Contact Offices**—$3,583,989 Provided regional public contact offices.

**Administrative Services and Human Resources**—$30,661,827 Paid for human resources, federal reimbursement administration, hunting and fishing permit point-of-sale system, fiscal services, distribution center, print shop, fleet management, vehicle and equipment maintenance centers and information management and technology. Also includes other agency appropriations, Department-wide equipment and other essential services.

**Design and Development**—$12,134,219 Provided engineering, architectural, surveying and construction services for conservation programs and maintenance of conservation areas and facilities.

**Administration**—$3,349,974 Paid for audits, legal counsel and the coordination of strategic planning, environmental policy development, cultural resource reviews, public involvement and river basin management.
Bunny on the Run

Winter is no time to stay inside when great fun is to be had rabbit hunting on conservation areas.

A SCATTER OF fur at the Scrivner Road Conservation Area was mute evidence that a predator had passed that way, maybe a fox or coyote or possibly someone armed with a beagle and a shooting iron. My bird dogs showed great interest in the rabbit aroma, but we had a discussion about it. It recalled a quail hunt on the Robert White CA north of Mexico. My Brittany locked up. I stepped in front of him and a rabbit bolted, and I turned to explain the difference between winged creatures and furred ones … and a huge covey of quail erupted behind me. I wished for a beagle at that moment. …

Rabbit season and Missourians go together like sorghum 'lasses and cornbread (and actually 'lasses & cornbread goes very well with rabbit stew, too). Most Department conservation areas sport rabbits as fair game. North Missouri’s many areas (see the Department’s Conservation Atlas www.Missouri Conservation.org/2930) probably hold more cottontails than the more heavily forested Ozark areas, but it’ll be a rare public area that does not have them. The west and southwest prairie region also is cottontail country.

The season is long, from Oct. 1 through Feb. 15, and the bag limit is liberal at six daily, 12 in possession for cottontails; two and four for swamp rabbits. Cottontail rabbits once were so numerous they were commercially trapped; now they are strictly a game animal. Some opt to still hunt, hoping to start a rabbit. The best idea is to walk, stop, walk, stop. The hesitations often spook a jittery bunny into flight. Others wait for a snow and track rabbits to their hides. But of all the methods, running rabbits with a beagle is not only the easiest, but the most productive (and, dedicated hound hunters will tell you, the most fun).

While a coyote may run a straight line to the next state, and raccoons and foxes cover huge chunks of real estate, a rabbit usually runs a circular route. Meaning that if you jump it at point A, it will take the baying beagle on a leisurely stroll, ultimately returning to point A, where you wait with a loaded gun and a smile. The gun can be either a shotgun or a bullet gun (rifle or pistol). Obviously a shotgun is more certain on a running bunny, but deposits several to many pellets. The single projectile is deadly but harder to place in a fleeing rabbit. Beagles are plodders. They scent-hunt and usually are far behind the rabbit, unlike a greyhound, which sight hunts and runs the prey down. Some Missourians opt for a bow or crossbow, and a few hunt with falcons—usually a dog to start the bunny and a raptor to finish it. Regardless of the method, rabbits remain a staple of the Missouri hunter’s season. When deer and turkeys were virtually extirpated from the Show-Me State, rabbits thrived and every rural kid learned to hunt them for the family pot. Then it was necessity; now it’s just pure fun.

—Joel M. Vance, photo by David Stonner

For More Information
To learn more about hunting in Missouri, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/7604.
Ozark Zigzag Salamander

These cool, mysterious amphibians come in a variety of colors, but they can be hard to spot.

No one knew where Ozark zigzag salamanders (*Plethodon angusticlavius* Grobman) went in the summer, or where they laid their eggs. There were theories, of course, but all based on the behavior of other salamanders. Then, on July 7, 1999, Department Herpetologist Jeff Briggler and Biologist William L. Puckette stumbled onto a group of brooding females and other adult salamanders in a small cave in the Arkansas Ozarks. They continued their study of the site for the next two years in order to learn more about the reproductive biology and natural history of the species.

Zigzag salamanders are known to thrive in cooler and wetter areas than other salamanders, and they remain on the ground nearly until winter. They are found only in the Ozarks, where they inhabit the caves of the Central Highlands or nearby areas, under rocks and leaf litter, near small streams and on steep hillsides. They are found in the south and southwestern portion of the Missouri Ozarks. Until Briggler and Puckette’s discovery, it had only been theorized that these cold-adapted salamanders retreated deeper into the earth during warmer months, to both escape the heat and produce their young.

The brooding females were discovered in tiny crevices in the cave’s walls, where they were laying tiny clusters of two to eight eggs. The eggs were attached to a central stalk that hung, grape-like, from the roof of each hole in the rock. The females then curled themselves around these stalks in order to defend them from predators—including the other salamanders. When disturbed by the scientists, the females reacted aggressively, with lunges and bites. All of the eggs were deposited by late June to early July and hatching concluded by the beginning of September. Unlike some salamanders, the zigzag does not lay eggs in water, so the young complete their larval phase within the egg, hatching as fully-formed, miniature adults after an incubation period of 65 to 70 days.

Adult zigzags are among the smallest of the salamanders, reaching a length of only 2½ to 3½ inches. Males and females are difficult to tell apart, but males are usually smaller and more slender. Individuals may be red-striped, yellow-striped, or unstriped, also known as “leadback.” Interestingly, hatchling colors typically do not match those of their mothers. The zigzag, along with other members of the Plethodontid group, do not have lungs; oxygen is absorbed through their skin and mucous membrane of the mouth. Both genders have 17 to 19 “costal grooves,” vertical indentations along the sides of their bodies. These grooves help distribute moisture across the salamander’s skin, which improves their ability to take in oxygen and regulate their temperature.

The zigzag’s prey consists of tiny arthropods. Mammals, birds, reptiles and even other amphibians may feed on the zigzag, given the chance.

—Nichole LeClair Terrill, photo by Jeff Briggler

For More Information

To learn more about salamanders, watch this video at [www.MissouriConservation.org/21330](http://www.MissouriConservation.org/21330).
Mussel Fork CA
Outdoor recreation options abound all year-round at this north central conservation area.

TEN MILES EAST of Brookfield on the south side of Highway 36, Mussel Fork Conservation Area fronts about two miles of Mussel Fork Creek. With a wide range of habitat types covering more than 2,000 acres, the area serves as habitat for hundreds of native Missouri plants and wildlife species, and offers plenty of outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the year.

Visitors will appreciate the area’s landscape for its diversity and beauty. Southward-draining, closely spaced streams create a pattern of long, narrow ridges and wooded stream valleys. Before settlement, this rolling landscape included oak savannas on the ridges and more densely forested areas along the steeper slopes. Lowlands next to Mussel Fork Creek were prone to flooding and included a complex pattern of wet prairie, marshes, small lakes and ponds and riverbank timber. These natural communities were home to a wide diversity of plants and animals.

Today the area’s managers are restoring ecosystem processes, such as prescribed fire, that create a diverse prairie-savanna-woodland mosaic, much like that of the historic landscape. Prescribed fire cleans out encroaching saplings, removes leaf and woody litter and stimulates plant growth, resulting in a rich ground flora of wildflowers, grasses and sedges. The area’s well-managed woodlands provide excellent habitat for wildlife, including white-tailed deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, red-headed woodpecker, Coopers’ hawk, Indiana bat, three-toed box turtle and eastern grey treefrog.

In January, several hunting seasons are open, including furbearer, rabbit, squirrel and crow. Trapping is allowed by special permit only. Visitors to the area may also pursue deer with bow and arrow, or hunt quail through January 15. Antlered or antlerless deer may be taken on an Archer’s Hunting Permit; however, no archery antlerless permits may be used.

Area ponds offer winter fishing opportunities for bass, catfish and bluegill. Hiking and birdwatching are also great winter activities, particularly after a snow event, when tracks and other wildlife signs can be seen and identified. On a sunny day after a fresh snowfall, quail, turkey, sparrows, chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers will flock to foodplots and other open fields to forage and sun themselves.

—Bonnie Chasteen, photo by Noppadol Paothong

Photo right: Red-headed woodpecker
Recreation opportunities: Birdwatching and wildlife viewing, primitive camping, fishing, hiking on mowed service roads and hunting for deer, quail, rabbit, squirrel and turkey
Unique features: Two miles of Mussel Fork Creek and four fishable ponds

For More Information
Call 660-646-6122 or visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a8422.
### Hunting and Fishing Calendar

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<td>Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the Wildlife Code)</td>
<td>5/23/09</td>
<td>2/28/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giggling Nongame Fish</td>
<td>9/15/09</td>
<td>1/31/10</td>
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<td>Trout Parks Catch and Release</td>
<td>11/13/09</td>
<td>2/8/10</td>
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<td>Friday–Monday at Bennett Spring, Montauk and Roaring River and daily at Maramec Springs</td>
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<td>HUNTING</td>
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<td>Youth Archery</td>
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<td>Furbearers</td>
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#### TRAPPING

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<td>Beaver &amp; Nutria</td>
<td>11/15/09</td>
<td>3/31/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furbearers</td>
<td>11/15/09</td>
<td>3/31/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otter &amp; Muskrats</td>
<td>11/15/09</td>
<td>see Wildlife Code</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the Wildlife Code and the current summaries of Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations and Missouri Fishing Regulations, the Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information, the Waterfowl Hunting Digest and the Migratory Bird Hunting Digest. For more information visit www.MissouriConservation.org/8707 or permit vendors.

The Department of Conservation’s computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800-392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/.

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“**What I really have an appetite for is pie and ice cream.**”

### OPERATION FOREST ARSON

If you see or learn of someone deliberately setting a fire, please dial toll-free: 1-800-392-1111

### Contributors

JEFF KITCHEN is an agricultural education instructor at the Lake Career and Technical Center in Camdenton. He, his wife, Jennifer, and their three children live on beautiful Lake of the Ozarks. Jeff has taught school for 17 years. He is also an FFA advisor, certified arborist, horticulturist and amateur botanist.

Nature photographer DAVID STONNER lives in Jefferson City with his wife, Angela, daughter, Maggie, and son, Sam. Since joining the Department of Conservation in 2007, he has made his favorite photographs while on the beautiful trails of southern Missouri, where he backpacks every chance he can get.
I didn’t know the first thing about trapping before becoming a conservation agent. What I knew about trapping came from watching movies or walking through a theme park’s leather shop.

From day one as a conservation agent, I began recognizing the great number of animals that live around us (especially in metro areas), and the tremendous skills trappers need to catch the animals. Almost immediately, I began receiving calls from homeowners, farmers, groundkeepers and gardeners who felt frustrated, even helpless, in controlling the damage some of these animals caused. As time has gone by, I have learned a few tricks about dealing with raccoons in chimneys, skunks under porches, squirrels in attics, groundhogs under sidewalks and beavers damming up drainage ditches. I took the opportunity to educate myself on some basic trapping techniques. In fact, I have even begun trapping beavers and muskrats as a hobby on some lakes and subdivision ponds near my home. These homeowners get so frustrated when they lose a 50-year-old ornamental tree from their backyard overnight that they beg me to come back each year.

The more I trap, the more I understand the value of these historic and nearly forgotten skills. Modern trapping is a reputable and valuable wildlife management tool that deserves great respect.

Scott Rice is the Protection district supervisor for the Central Region. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, phone your regional Conservation office listed on Page 3.
What is it?

Our photographers have been busy exploring the intricacies of the Missouri outdoors. See if you can guess this month’s natural wonder. The answer is revealed on the inside of this back cover.