

Wildlife Diversity Day at the Capitol March 26, 2009

All West Virginians will have the unique opportunity to learn about the rich diversity of West Virginia's native wildlife and plants in the Lower Rotunda of the state capitol on March 26, 2009 during the annual Wildlife Diversity Day. This free event will feature live animals and interactive educational exhibits from the Wildlife Resources Section's Wildlife Diversity Program and from many groups active in managing and conserving West Virginia's wildlife resources. Exhibits will be on display in the lower Capitol Rotunda from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

Legislators, school children and the public will have the unique opportunity to see live eagles, hawks, owls, snakes, fish, butterflies, insects and mammals up close, as well as exhibits on a variety of natural history themes. Invited organizations include The Raptor Rehabilitation Center, Three Rivers Avian Center, The Mountain Institute, Native Plant Society, Oglebay Good Zoo, DuPont Washington Work's Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Committee, Butterflies from Heather, Marshall University's Herpetology Laboratory and the Schrader Environmental Education Center.

State agencies exhibiting include the Division of Forestry, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Natural Resources Law Enforcement, State Parks and Wildlife Resources sections, West Virginia Wildlife Center, and Department of Agriculture Plant Industries. Federal agencies include National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service

The Wildlife Diversity Program conducts research, management and educational programs in the area of nongame wildlife and botanical resources throughout the state. These animals comprise more than 90 percent of all species statewide.

For more information about Wildlife Diversity Day, please contact: Jim Fregonara at the Wildlife Diversity Program, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Section, P.O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241, (304) 637-0245 or jimfregonara@wvdnr.gov.



Live snakes and salamanders attract a crowd.

Student captures a photo of a live bat.



Acreage Added to Sand Hill WMA

An additional 1,020 acres have been added to the Sand Hill Wildlife Management Area, according to West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Director Frank Jezioro. Heirs of the Dennis O'Brien Estate agreed to lease the acreage to the Wood County Parks and Recreation Commission and in turn, through Mountwood Park, lease the property to the DNR so the public can use the additional acreage for hunting and other recreational activities.

"All of the current parties realized that the public would be better served if the land was incorporated into the adjacent Sand Hill Wildlife Management Area," Jezioro said. The original 967 acres were leased from CNG Transmission Corporation in 1997 and have been managed as a wildlife management area since that time.

The Sand Hill Wildlife Management Area is located on either side of U.S. Route 50 approximately 12 miles east of Parkersburg and lies both in Ritchie and Wood counties. Several portions of the WMA share common boundaries with Wood County's Mountwood Park. This new lease increased the size of the area to 1,987 acres, all of which were available for hunting this past fall. Users are reminded that ATVs and permanent tree stands are not permitted on wildlife management areas.

"This property is an important supplement to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources system of wildlife management areas," Jezioro said.

2008 Spotlight Surveys Show Deer Population Changes in the Eastern Panhandle

The Wildlife Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources conducted annual spotlight-distance surveys during the month of September in several eastern panhandle counties to estimate deer population levels. The surveys this year were expanded to include Hampshire, Berkeley and Pendleton counties. By doing so, wildlife biologists are able to compare results among three different regions of the panhandle. The results show high populations in some areas, and low populations in others.

"These spotlight-distance surveys are conducted to determine relative abundance of deer in these counties," noted District Wildlife Biologist Rich Rogers. "This information, when added to other data sources collected throughout the year, helps to better manage county deer herds."

This year's surveys showed deer densities of 50 deer per square mile in Berkeley County, 80 deer per square mile in eastern Pendleton County, 30 deer per square mile in the Slanesville area of Hampshire County, and 22 deer



Mark Shock

per square mile between Augusta and Kirby in Hampshire County.

It appears that reduced antlerless deer harvests in both Berkeley and Pendleton counties have resulted in higher deer densities over the past couple of years. By contrast, increased antlerless deer harvests in Hampshire County have kept densities lower. "I found it interesting that deer densities actually seem to be higher in the Slanesville area of Hampshire County, where we have been intensively collecting deer in the spring for chronic wasting disease (CWD) monitoring," Rogers said. He also said that the deer

herd displays a younger age structure and is producing more fawns.

"This is good news and is the first evidence that our Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan is, at least in part, achieving its goal of maintaining a younger deer population in the area where the disease is found in Hampshire County," noted Rogers. It is thought that younger deer are less prone to spreading the disease, since it takes over a year for most deer to begin shedding infectious material.

Deer densities in surveyed sections of both Berkeley and Pendleton counties are much higher than desired and above their management objectives. It is hoped that with increased antlerless deer harvests, these deer densities will decrease to more appropriate levels, herds will remain healthy, and crop damage will decrease.

Wildlife managers and biologists distributed flyers describing the survey along the routes and talked to as many landowners as possible in the week prior to conducting the survey. "We really don't want to disturb people while conducting the surveys, and if people ask us to leave, we do," said Rogers. He also noted that it was important for people to realize they were only looking and not shooting any deer for survey collections.

The survey involves driving along predetermined routes and spotlighting deer to count by age and sex when possible. Distances to the deer, as well as compass angle, and distance traveled, are noted and submitted for statistical analysis. A computer program then calculates the total area surveyed and the number of deer per square mile that were present. Al Niederberger, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist, noted that the survey provides a conservative estimate of deer abundance. Wildlife biologists also take into account food availability, time of year, and other factors that may affect their interpretation of the results obtained.

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Beyond the Backyard Program Purchases New Scoring System for the DNR Archery in the Schools Program

Beyond the Backyard, a Bobby Warner Charitable Youth Foundation based in Charleston, recently made a \$1,500 donation to the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) to purchase a state-of-the-art scoring system for the DNR Archery in the Schools (AIS) Program.

"This generous donation will allow our AIS Program to run a highly efficient State Tournament in March 2009," said Curtis Taylor, Chief of the DNR Wildlife Resources Section. "Through this donation, our state will be using the same scoring system the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) uses at the National Tournament in Louisville, Kentucky."

West Virginia's AIS Program (www.wvdnr.gov/archery) teaches Olympic-style target archery in participating grade 4 – 12 public and private school physical education classes. The AIS Program has grown at a phenomenal rate in West Virginia, going from just 19 schools in 2004 to more than 150 participating schools in 2008. In four short years, it is estimated that more than 30,000 West Virginia students have experienced archery through the AIS Program.

The DNR has hosted a state tournament the past three years. This tournament has grown from 280 archers the first year to more than 500 participants this past spring. Due to the phenomenal rate of growth of the state tournaments, it has become logistically impossible to continue the current tournament scoring process.

"The new scoring system will undoubtedly expedite and improve the scoring process – leading to a flawless, thoroughly enjoyable event for hundreds of state youth each year," said Taylor. "We know that with this generous financial assistance, the quality of our state tournament will match both the enthusiasm of our participants and the fantastic growth of the program. We welcome Beyond the Backyard's financial assistance, which will help the DNR touch the lives of many West Virginia school children, and potential future sportsmen and sportswomen for years to come."

Beyond the Backyard is West Virginia's first and only outdoor youth organization dedicated to both children and parents. For more information, visit online www.beyondthebackyard.org or call 1-866-WV-WOODS; e-mail cwalls@beyondthebackyard.org.

Beury Mountain WMA Extended

The **West Virginia State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation** has donated \$20,000 towards the purchase of a 4,586-acre tract of land extending Beury Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Fayette County, according to Curtis I. Taylor, Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Section Chief.

Beury Mountain WMA is now 7,647 acres of prime hunting land for wild turkey, white-tailed deer, squirrel and other small game species. Partial funding for this acquisition came through the West Virginia National Wild Turkey Federation's Hunting Heritage State Super Fund Project.

Projects are now underway by the Wildlife Resources Section to improve hunter success for harvesting deer and developing habitat for upland game birds. "This area has an excellent potential to provide West Virginia and out-of-state hunters tremendous hunting opportunity for wild turkey, deer, bear, squirrel, ruffed grouse, woodcock and other species," Taylor said.

Calendar of Events

MARCH

- 16 Regulation Public Meetings**
Fairmont, Lewisburg, Milton, Martinsburg, North Bend State Park, and Summersville
Talk informally to biologists about proposed hunting and fishing regulations.
- 17 Regulation Public Meetings**
Buckhannon, Glen Dale, Logan, Moorefield, Parkersburg, and Twin Falls State Park
Talk informally to biologists about proposed hunting and fishing regulations.
- 26 Wildlife Diversity Day at the Capitol**
Capitol Building, Charleston
Interactive displays and live animals. From 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Call (304) 637-0245 for more information.

APRIL

- 17-19 BOW Weekend**
Pipestem State Park
Full weekend of Becoming an Outdoors-Woman activities. Thirty different classes to choose from. Contact Billie Shearer, 304-558-2771, billieshearer@wvdnr.gov or visit www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/bow.shtm.

MAY

- 7-10 48th Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage**
Blackwater Falls State Park
Activities include bird walks, wildflower tours, nature programs, bird identification workshops, craft exhibits. Call (304) 558-2754 for more information.