



SHOW-ME GOBBLER

A Tri-Annual Publication of the George C. Clark Missouri Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation

Volume 37 Number 2 • Summer 2018

Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter Hosts 3rd Annual JAKES Event and Mentored Youth Turkey Hunt.



The three luck youth attendees filled their 2018 Missouri spring turkey tags.

The Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter held their 2018 JAKES event on March 24 as a youth turkey hunting workshop for 21 participants. The youth learned about turkey biology, general turkey hunting techniques, turkey calling, turkey hunting regulations, hunter safety information, and shotgun patterning. Four girls and three boys of the youths that attended the workshop were selected to participate in a mentored turkey hunt on April 7th & 8th at the farm of Art and Kathy Booth near Richland, Missouri.

The 2018 Missouri youth turkey season presented less than ideal hunting conditions for the entire weekend

throughout most of the state with the overall harvest less than half that of the previous season. We were essentially still in winter conditions with subfreezing temperatures statewide with snow in the southern half of the state the first day. Bird behavior was also impacted by the reluctance of winter to leave with most birds still bunched up and not very receptive to calling.

The hunt started a little later than planned due to the weather with the first trip to the field attempted during the afternoon of the opener. During this first hunt, two of the seven hunters scored

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A Turkey Trip with the MeatEater

By Brandon Butler

There's an old adage about not meeting your heroes because you'll likely be disappointed. My time with Steven Rinella dispels this assertion. The man behind the popular outdoor platform "MeatEater" is every bit the outdoorsman and authentic communicator he comes across as through his writing and on his television show and podcast. At the end of the day, he's just a down to earth dude who loves to hunt and tell stories about his experiences. Only he does both better than most could ever imagine.

I first met Rinella six years ago at the SHOT Show in Las Vegas. He was signing copies of his book, American Buffalo. I ran into him again later in the evening at an awards show and we struck up a conversation about turkey hunting. We tentatively planned a hunt but then jobs and life and a million other things happened and we lost touch. Last summer, I was at a conference with a mutual friend and asked her



Enjoying the remainder of the day, while recording a podcast.

to remind him about our past plans. A couple of emails and a phone call later, the dates were booked and turkey camp was set.

Standing on top of the highest point behind my cabin a half hour before sunrise on opening day, Rinella, his producer, Janis Putelis, and I eagerly waited and waited for an opening morning gobbler. Fear set in as the minutes ticked away. These guys had traveled from Washington and Montana to turkey hunt based on my assurance of an incredible experience - rife with gobblers ringing from every ridge around. Instead, utter silence. At one point I compared the morning to the actualization of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. There wasn't a critter moving. The sky was dark and gray. The woods were extremely bare and the wind was howling. It felt like the worst of winter with no semblance of spring.

After giving up on hearing a bird gobble from the roost, we split up. Rinella and I began working slowly down the ridge, stopping every hundred yards or so to call. Putelis bailed off onto a side ridge heading down into a deep holler. For Rinella and I the silent spring continued throughout the morning, only to be interrupted at 7:15 by the single report of a shotgun from the direction Putelis had gone.

He came across what must have been the loneliest bird on the mountain. While all his comrades were closed mouthed, this gobbler couldn't help himself. Putelis said the hunt was everything he had hoped for. The gobbler was still on the roost when he located him, so he slipped in close enough to know he had to sit down or risk spooking the bird. When the gobbler pitched down, he put on a show. Strutting, gobbling, and spitting and drumming until the old ridge runner came too close and Putelis dropped the curtain.

We rendezvoused at our agreed upon time of 10:00 a.m. Rinella and I were motivated by Putelis's story of success. We set out to check every spot I could think of where a gobbler might have been doing his thing. But we never heard a peep the

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entire opening day. Steve Jones, our wild game camp chef alleviated some of our dismay with an incredible dinner of sous vide venison loin with all the fixings. Parker Hall, a USDA Wildlife Services Director, arrived in camp just in time to eat. He rounded out our camp of four hunters and a chef.

The next morning, as soon as I stepped out of the cabin, the world felt right. The temperature had nearly doubled and the wind had lain down. I stepped out into the driveway and let out a loud owl hoot. To my surprise, a gobbler went off down by the creek. Hall and I went after him while Rinella and Putelis headed back up the ridge.

It didn't take long to figure out the gobbler was across the river up on a bluff. Meaning, the chance of calling him down and across was tough, but as it turned out, not too tough for Hall, who generously deferred the first bird to me. He laid down some sweet, soft yelps. I couldn't believe the gobbler could hear him over the sound of the river. Then he came sailing down from the bluff, gliding through the fog rising off the water and lit on the gravel bar. It was one of the most beautiful



Brandon Butler, Steven Rinella, and Janis Putelis pose with three public land gobblers.

sights I had ever seen in the wild. Every time he gobbled, I could see his breath. I could feel the vibrations as he drummed just out of range. Then he closed the distance, looking for the lone hen begging for his attention. Now two of the four of us were done.

Rinella and Putelis were on birds all day, but never pulled the trigger. Just when they thought it was about to happen, another hunter shot the bird they were working. To which these western public lands advocates both said, "that's how it goes. We were out hunted." The day ended without a bird for Rinella, but Wednesday did not. He came across his gobbler deep in a holler with less

than an hour left to hunt on his last day. Hall had one within 60 yards, but we were picked off by a wily old gobbler in a forest so bare we might as well had been sitting in a pasture.

Going three for four under tough conditions on public land was an incredibly successful camp. I desperately wanted to show these guys a good time while experiencing a classic turkey hunt. I am satisfied with the results. To hear much more about our hunt, and Rinella's take on Missouri turkeys, subscribe to the MeatEater podcast available on iTunes or visit www.themeateater.com.

See you down the trail...



NWTF

Conserve. Hunt. Share.

SHOW-ME GOBBLER

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION NOTE:

The staff of the Show-Me Gobbler thank you for your contributions to the publication. Please feel free to submit future articles with photos to the contact information listed on the back page of this issue. Submission requirements: Digital copy submitted in Microsoft Word. (please contact us if you can only send hard copy) Digital photographs are preferred but will be accepted as snapshots if supplied to the editor. When scanning your own photos, please use at least 225 resolution (dpi) but no more than 400 dpi, saved as a .jpg, .tiff or .eps. Photos submitted outside of these guidelines may not be suitable for printing. Please include photo captions and credits for each photo submitted. Photos will not be returned. Thanks again for your contributions and we look forward to your participation in the future.

HUNTERS AREN'T BORN.



THEY'RE GROWN.

Inspire the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts by joining the Outdoor Mentoring Program we are launching with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Missouri and the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Contact John Burk at (573) 676-5994 or jburk@nwtf.net for more information






North Missouri Update

By Regional Director, Mike Allen

Here in the north part of our state we went from winter to summer in about the span of our turkey season; spring was a darn short season this year. We are suffering the effects of prolonged drought conditions. Some have caught a shower or two, but for the most part, we have had very little rain. About the only good thing that may come of it is that hopefully the dry weather will be good for the turkey nesting. I have seen a couple of broods, so that is promising. Most of the hay has been baled and the poults should be decent sized by now, so hopefully more of them start showing up on Jason's brood survey cards. I have seen a lot of fawns in the past month, and the bucks are growing antlers and tempting me to start hanging cameras.

I would like to welcome our newest regional director, Nate Carl, to the NWTF team. Nate will be taking over Derek Payne's territory in west central and northwest Missouri, and eastern Kansas. Nate's first day on the job was July 9, 2018.

With Jason Brown and Nate Carl joining Larry Neal and myself as Regional Directors in Missouri, there will be some reassignment of chapters. The changes are being made to help control expenses in travel, and make it easier for staff to make it to your various chapter meetings and functions.

Larry's area will be in southeast and east central Missouri, Jason will cover the southwestern and south central areas of the state, Nate will work around the Kansas City metro area and northwest Missouri, and I will cover the northern and central areas of the state. These chapter assignments will take effect on September 1; the start of the 2019 fiscal year. One of the Regional Directors will be contacting your chapter in the near future, if they have not already, to make you aware of any changes that may affect your chapter.

We will once again offer the Missouri calendar raffle in 2019. The calendars should be ready to distribute to the chapters for sale by August 1, 2018. Your Regional Director will be contacting you with more information. If you would like to purchase

a calendar, let someone know! There will be 1,000 calendars available. The sale of the calendars add several dollars to our state super fund, and enable your state board to fund more projects, so thanks in advance for your support.

The Missouri State Chapter once again is setting the tone within the NWTF. We continue to lead the nation in the number of sponsor members and JAKES members. We need to add about 1,500 adult members to our ranks to surpass the 10,000 adult member level. If you know anyone that would be interested in becoming a member, let us know, or better yet, get them to join the flock. Memberships can be purchased through a chapter, or through our website at NWTF.org. Membership numbers for awards at the national convention are compiled during the fiscal year, and that is the end of August, so time is of the essence.

As always, thanks for your continued support in helping us deliver our mission. We cannot do this without you!

Missouri, The Sponsor Monster

By Senior Regional Director, Larry L. Neal

CONGRATULATIONS VOLUNTEERS for a job well done! Missouri has clawed its way to become the Top NWTF State according to L.A. Dixon scoring which, simply put, calculates Memberships and Money (Net Dollars). We have hovered near the top for quite some time and in 2017 we finally took top honors, bumping Pennsylvania. Illinois held the top spot for a number of years also. These are very strong and proud NWTF states with a great volunteer army and staff working hard to regain top position again. Sadly, Missouri's total adult memberships are well under these states and at times a few other states will top us in adult members also, including Tennessee and Wisconsin. These states top us by high regular and WITO members and that is something Missouri chapters and staff need to work harder on. Signing up EVERYONE not only at your banquets but also throughout the year at Gun Shows, Sports Shows and County Fairs will help. Memberships are weighted in the L.A. Dixon scoring and Sponsors are worth the most and that's a big part of why Missouri is at the top. Missouri has over 2,000 Sponsor members statewide and more than half of these reign from I-44 and south. The next closest state to our Sponsor numbers is Illinois and they trail us by over 400 sponsors, coming in close to 1,600 Sponsors. To say that the folks in South Missouri are proud of their Sponsor members is an understatement. I'm not trying to divide our state by any means nor upset any chapter, I'm only wanting to point out that there are plenty of great people that would Sponsor, if asked. People will do this because, "you are their friend and you asked them". The average chapter in south Missouri has about 33 Sponsor Members which is an incredible feat and done only by asking well over that 33 number as you all realize. Every chapter can do this but they just have to ask and sometimes ask some more. An amazing fact is Missouri has only 1 chapter that has signed up over 100 individual people that each write a check to be a Sponsor member for multiple years and that's the David Blanton Memorial Chapter in Mountain Grove. Other chapters have reached the 100+ level or more by calculating UPPER Level members which are tremendously generous people

or businesses that write larger checks to support us and these checks are divided by \$250 and every \$250 equals a Sponsor member according to L.A. Dixon scoring. Some of these chapters include Pike County Twin Rivers, Bootheel Boss Gobblers, St Louis Sponsor Event, Heartland Gobblers and possibly more that I'm not aware of and I apologize if I left them off the list. Upper Level Members are harder to come by, but these folks are out there to, and deliver more than they may realize for NWTF Programs in our state. Most Upper Level Members commit to making payments over 4 years to total \$10,000 or more dollars but there is flexibility within this as well. Talk with your NWTF Regional Director for more information on Upper Level Memberships. We all know someone that could pledge to become an Upper Level Member, we only need to take the step to ask. The NWTF has a Director of Development that works with chapters to help create Upper Level Members, his name is Jeff Pratt and he resides in Arkansas but has Missouri as part of his region and is very knowledgeable about Upper Levels. Jeff would be happy to assist in the approach and asking for Upper Level Memberships. Don't hesitate to utilize Jeff; he has brought a lot to the table for the NWTF and has been wonderful to work with. Two things Missouri needs to continue to make priority are Adult Members and Sponsors including Upper Level Sponsors because each one is very important and delivers huge results for both outreach and conservation programs. This money generates Super Fund Dollars along with banquet net. Another important fact is that Missouri has the largest super fund of any state and that's how we are able to implement our outreach programs including JAKES, Wheelin, and WITO as well as habitat, scholarships, conservation seed, dove fields, mentored hunts and much more. Missouri didn't get to the top without the great tireless volunteers that step up to the plate year after year and deliver unparalleled results. THANK YOU! Sometimes our volunteers have to get outside of their comfort zone to make special asks of their friends or acquaintances but it's all worth it to keep Missouri the Number 1 NWTF State and "The NWTF's SPONSOR MONSTER".



For a complete listing of NWTF events, visit: www.nwtf.org/events

NEMO Chapter Assists with 4th Annual Turkey Hunting Apprentice Program

Mark Twain Lake is an extremely popular 32,000 acre area in northeast Missouri that offers a plethora of outdoor recreational opportunities including hunting. However, there is an additional nearly 4,000 acre portion of the property that is closed to general public access for hunting because of other conflicting uses and safety concerns. In 2015 the NWTF was approached by Allen Mehrer with the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) at Mark Twain Lake to support a new hunter creation effort that was being planned to address this. A small super fund project was proposed to pay for the creation of signs that would be used annually to designate the Indian Creek, Frank Russell, and Robert Allen Recreational Areas (around 3,000 acres) as special use areas. These signs are placed on roads and entry points restricting access to only those individuals selected for participation in controlled mentored hunts.

In addition to the signs, super fund money was also used to convert 21 acres of cool season grasses to native warm season grasses and forbs to improve nesting and brood rearing habitat in these special use areas. Local volunteers with NWTF and Whitetails Unlimited have improved the habitat and hunting by also planting food plots in these areas.

Each year USACE offers several mentored hunts in these special use areas of Mark Twain Lake including handicapped deer and turkey hunts, a youth deer hunt, and an apprentice turkey hunt. The apprentice turkey hunt is offered annually to adults that have an interest in hunting but lack the knowledge, access, and confidence to go it alone.

As we learn more about recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters (R3) we are finding that hunts like the apprentice hunt at Mark Twain Lake are probably more effective at accomplishing R3 goals than providing youth focused opportunities. Although youth focused events are still valuable and easier, because everyone wants to help out the kids, in most cases, participants at youth focused events are being brought to them by friends



Mentored hunting and apprentice programs ensure generations of future participation in the sport.

or family that hunt. Therefore, they were probably already on their way to becoming a hunter and were just taking advantage of a program that provided additional access. What's more, when we provide these opportunities for kids, in most cases, they will not be able to repeat the experience unless someone else takes them again because they do not have the means.

In most cases, adults that may be interested in hunting but have not yet tried it, probably have not because they are not related to a hunter or have any hunters that are close friends. Getting started in anything new can be intimidating and most folks need to be introduced into whatever the activity may be by someone that is experienced and willing to teach them. Therefore, when we provide mentored hunting opportunities to these folks it does function more like an apprenticeship. A good mentor is not just putting game in front of their mentee, they

are explaining how and why they are doing what they are doing. If the adult mentee has a decent experience or two, they are likely to apply what they've learned and venture out on their own. If they have a little luck at that, they are likely to become disciples of the sport to their circle of friends and family.

Each year USACE promotes the availability of this opportunity, selects 10 candidates, provides a pre-hunt orientation, and then works with local NWTF volunteers to serve as guides and mentors during the hunt. The hunt is usually offered during the second weekend of the season to maximize guide availability. Because these areas are relatively large, closed to all other hunting access, and are being managed, the hunting quality is typically very high.

Although the weather during the second weekend of the 2018 spring season was ideal, no birds were harvested this year. Apprentice

hunters experienced what most of the rest of us did this season; a late spring, very open woods, and low numbers of 2-year-old birds effected how birds behaved and the ability to get on them and work them. However, the following testimonial offered by participant John-Mark Zini exemplifies that a successful hunt does not have to result in a notched tag as well as the difference hunts like these are making:

“Hi Allen, I apologize for the delay in my writing to you, but since there weren't turkey photos to send along to the NWTF, I wanted to send along an email that perhaps would help to show the benefit of, and my appreciation for, the Mark Twain Lake Apprentice Hunt.

I grew up in Overland Park, KS and had never spent a day hunting any species until this year. My dad used to bird hunt doves and quail before I was born, but gave it up as life got in the way. He always kept me out in nature with family vacations to Beaver Lake, float trips, and more fishing than most people do in a lifetime, and thanks to him, as I get older I crave more and more time outdoors.

I got interested in turkey hunting in a roundabout way. I was suffering cabin fever during the winter two years ago and read that the MDC stocked trout at my local conservation area. I dragged a buddy out and fell in love with the beauty so close to home. I started subscribing to field and stream and the MDC magazine, and I started to going to more CAs further from Kansas City and with more solitude (I also started catching larger and more fish as a result). Then, I got a hand me down shotgun from my grandfather. My fiancé and I eat ground turkey every week, and turkey seemed like the perfect game for me. I bought the gear, watched YouTube videos, and read all the articles. My first day out, I saw five turkeys, none of which ever made a peep, and I spooked all five. My second time out, I heard turkeys finally, but was unable to persuade them.

What the apprentice hunt offered me was confidence. Confidence in that some of what I was doing was

correct and confidence that with a few changes (getting out a little earlier chief among them) and some more practice calling, I too will be able to bag a turkey. I also enjoyed learning about the breeding cycle and talking with my mentor hunter.

I want to assure you, the Corp of Engineers, MDC, and NWTf that the money and time spent are not in vain. I am a turkey hunter now. I cannot describe how much I enjoy watching the sun rise with the sound of “spring thunder” and the red buds and dog woods in full bloom. It was truly an almost religious experience.

I also would like to express my gratitude for the adult apprentice hunt. So often the hunts are targeted

to youth hunters, youth hunters who I would argue come from a family of hunters and are more excited to access off limits areas than necessarily become hunters (as they are already on that path). With hunting license rolls shrinking, targeting urban individuals seems like a better allocation of resources. I know from my experience and talking to the guys I went to college with and play softball with that there is an interest, but the barrier of entry feels too high to many with their lack of knowledge on how to approach hunting. Mentor hunts like the one you put on are excellent opportunities and I would advocate for expanding the program particularly near Kansas City and St. Louis and to other species. I looked

at the 2017 fall deer and turkey pamphlet, and I didn't see a single apprentice deer hunt for non-youth hunters, which to me (as someone also interested in starting to deer hunt) was a shame.

I truly cannot express my gratitude enough for the tremendous weekend at Mark Twain Lake. I got to hear more gobblers than I dreamed about it before the hunt, saw beautiful woodlands, and even caught a couple nice crappie before heading home. It was an awesome couple of days. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity.”

The R3 effort is front and center with every state agency in the country and the urgency of succeeding in

these efforts intensifies annually. Even here in Missouri where we play a leading roll nationally and have the best numbers, the hunters we gain annually are about equal to the number we lose. As Mr. Zini stated in his testimonial above, we need to be providing more opportunities like the hunts at Mark Twain Lake. As we work our way through the second half of our Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative, we will continue to seek out and develop additional opportunities to get more folks hunting. Whether you have an idea for a similar program in your area or just want to do it on your own, take somebody new with you in the seasons to come and continue to help us Save the Hunt!

Clay Howlett Memorial continued from page 1.

their first turkeys. The weather was a little more favorable the second day and three more lucky youth put an exclamation point on their experience by harvesting long beards. Despite the curveball served up by Missouri weather, Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Conservation Agent, Aaron Pondrom, was amazed at the success experienced by the seven youth that participated. The harvest on this one hunt accounted for 22% of the harvest in Pulaski County.

Special thanks are due Art and Kathy Booth for their idea to sponsor the hunt by offering of their property, their hospitality, and feeding and hosting everyone. It's not a coincidence that seven hunters killed five turkeys through some of the toughest turkey hunting conditions you could experience. The Booth's have done a great job managing their habitat to produce the birds and pre-hunt planning and scouting ensured that mentors and hunters would be able to maximize the effectiveness of their time afield.

Thanks are also due MDC Conservation Agents Jared Milligan, Jarrad Jewell, Justin Emery, Casey Simmons, Aaron Pondrom, and State Board Member and Clay Howlett Memorial Chapter President Dave Howlett. Successful mentored hunts cannot occur without knowledgeable mentors willing to give of their time and talents.



The spring youth hunt of 2018 will be a memory for these two young men that hopefully has left a seed planted for a lifetime of passion.

Events like these are also how we ultimately achieve our Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. goals. Therefore, if you think your chapter might be interested in this worthwhile endeavor, start planning now. Even if you can't put on an event that hosts multiple hunters, invite someone new to share a hunting experience with you in a one on one hunt and then let us know about it by contacting John Burk at 573-676-5994 or jburk@nwtf.net.

Missouri Wheelin' Sportsman Events

Sho-me Gun Bash

08/30/2018 · 6:00 PM

Contact: Kevin Hess (417) 521-7447

hessmnstr@gmail.com

Location: Shrine Mosque

601 East St Louis St.,

Springfield, MO 65802

Bootheel Boss Gobblers Gun Blast

10/04/2018 · 6:00 PM

Contact: Timothy Schwent (573) 225-3740

Location: Jackson K Of C Hall,

Hwy 61 North, Jackson, MO 63755

The George C. Clark Missouri State Chapter Member Harvest Page

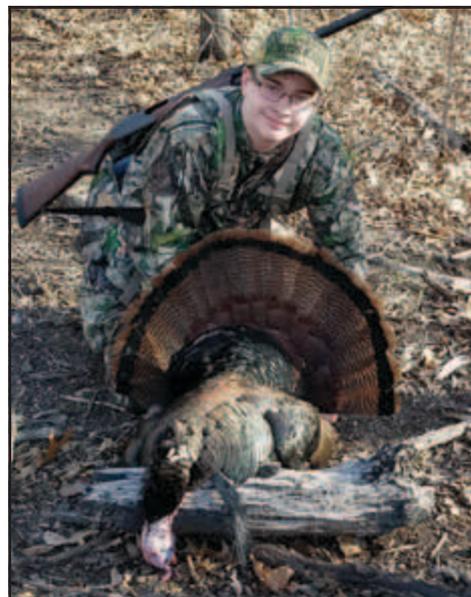
Share your outdoor experiences with your NWTF peers, PLEASE submit them to John Burk at jb Burk@nwtf.net with a brief photo description and they will be considered for the harvest page section of your Show Me Gobbler newsletter.



Chuck Stewart, Heartland Gobblers Chapter President with a 2018 season harvest.



Ed Tostenrud of the Bunt Cumbea Laclede County Chapter with a 25lb. opening day bird taken on Stan O'Daniels Farm.



New hunters created by Kingdom of Callaway Limbhangers member Jerod Huebner on 2 hunts on MPF property this spring. Pictured L-R: Son, Shane, and father, Pat Shauphnessy.



Black Mountain Longbeards Jakes, Kaylee and Kolby Stafford with a dandy pair of gobblers taken on the 2018 youth opener.



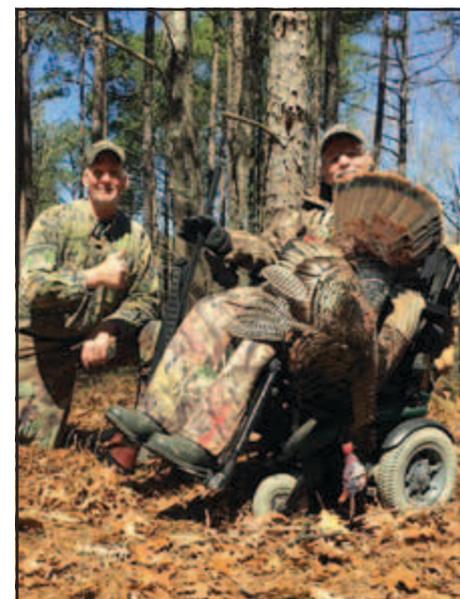
Show Me Gobbler Editor, Joe Pendergrass, and Tim "The Thinking Woodsman" Kjellesvik, doubled up on the last Saturday morning this past spring on a farm in Crawford County, Missouri.



Perry County Beards and Spurs Chapter Member Gary Blocker with his opening day bird.



Hell of a morning in the Ozarks for (left to right) RD Larry Neal with his flint lock bird, NWTF DFO Phil Ferrare, and member Jimmy Dunkerly.



RD Larry Neal assisted Heartland Gobblers member Randy Wallis harvest his first turkey during the 2018 season.

Missouri State Chapter Helps Meet the Challenge

Back in mid-January the NWTF was offered an amazing fundraising opportunity centered around our 2018 National Convention. A foundation in Missouri anonymously challenged us to raise \$100,000 prior to the end of the National Convention and, if we did so, they would match it up to \$100,000. The donation was also to be used to deliver the conservation side of our mission. Our match could count as any type of new funding whether that be from major donors, convention auctions, raffles, corporate partners, or state chapter contributions.

Contributions from the 18 state chapters that responded to the challenge totaled \$110,250 and when added to contributions from all sources exceeded \$500,000. The Missouri State Chapter contributed \$3,000. This money will be matched with \$7,000 from an approved super fund project, \$10,000 from our USFWS Partners Agreement, and this \$20,000 was used to successfully apply for a Habitat Challenge Grant available through the Missouri Department of Conservation's Private Land Services Division; a 13:1 match rate.

NWTF worked with key partners beginning in 2008 to identify the specific area we wished to target conservation efforts in Missouri. Our interest in the MO/IA Oaks Focal Landscape was driven by a significant regional decline in turkey populations that our membership wished to address. Historically, this landscape was dominated by open oak woodlands and savannas. Oak savanna was once prevalent in the Midwest but has been reduced to just 0.02% of its original acreage once estimated to be around 32 million acres prior to European settlement. Savannas and open woodlands provide excellent nesting and brood rearing habitat for wild turkeys as well as being important to a broad range of wildlife important to federal and state agencies, and other conservation organizations. Finding ways to collaborate in a broad sense across political boundaries will help address habitat restoration needs, build upon existing partnerships, and leverage additional funding to assist landowners who voluntarily wish to restore open woodland and savanna habitats.

Although areas of public land do exist within the selected landscape, a significant positive impact will have to involve private landowners. In most cases, unless cost share money is available through state, federal, or private sources to offset implementation costs, significant habitat enhancement on private lands does not occur. The purpose of this project is to sustain a successful private lands cost share program that has been providing funding for habitat enhancement practices that favor the restoration and maintenance of savanna and open woodland habitat types since 2009. Primary conservation goals are to increase the use of prescribed fire, increase forest management activities, and increase the establishment of native warm season grass (NWSG). These practices are all pivotal in providing



Workshop attendees in one of Mark's open woodland restoration areas.

key nesting and brood rearing habitats for ground nesting birds widely accepted as the most significant limiting factor for successful reproduction.

Since 2009, NWTF has been actively working in this landscape through a variety of grant opportunities and partners matching our dollars 4:1 by other partners including: USFWS Partners dollars, Audubon Society of Missouri, Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative, and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Habitat Challenge Grant (HCG) dollars. The cumulative \$220,000 was used to augment the existing MDC cost share program in the participating counties to pay primarily for timber stand improvement (TSI), prescribed burning, and NWSG establishment. One additional practice that has been implemented is woody cover control. Woody cover control is the mechanical removal of smaller diameter woody vegetation to enhance the process of savanna and open woodland restoration in areas where burning alone would take longer and be less effective. The MDC Private Lands Conservationists and Forester work with interested landowners to develop management plans, line up contractors, and approve completed projects.

To date, this initiative has impacted 75 landowners and achieved 842 acres of prescribed burning, 1,293 acres of TSI, 127 acres of woody cover control, and 93 acres of NWSG establishment on private land totaling 2,355 acres conserved. The 48 open woodland units restored by this project through TSI thinning and burning average 29 acres in size and are scattered throughout the focus area. As previously stated, the vegetative structure of these units provides ideal nesting and brood rearing habitat. It is impossible to accurately measure the actual influence of these units in additional birds produced. However, one of the landowners provided a pretty telling testimonial to the difference this program has helped make on his property. Mark Williams has owned an 800 acre tract in northeast Missouri he calls Turkey Hills since the



Pictured L - R: John Murphy, and Mark Williams..

1980's. This property was purchased primarily for recreational purposes with an emphasis on turkey hunting. Mr. Williams had witnessed the turkey population rollercoaster unfold on Turkey Hills firsthand. From explosive growth and population densities as high as could be realized anywhere to the dramatic declines experienced in the mid-2000's. That decline is what motivated Mr. Williams to take action on doing what he could to improve habitat conditions on Turkey Hills. For the last 10 years Mr. Williams has taken advantage of a variety of cost share programs including ours, to implement TSI, burning, and NWSG conversion throughout Turkey Hills. This past season, most would acknowledge, was an extremely tough one; a product of the 2 worst hatches on record in 2016 and 2017 and a late spring that influenced bird behavior. However, Mr. Williams reported that, at Turkey Hills, jake sightings were common and he reported hearing as much gobbling as during "the good ole' days."

We are thrilled to be able to put the generosity of the anonymous donor to good use and we will continue to take advantage of every additional opportunity to conserve this important landscape. Thank you for helping us make a difference as we Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt!

Lucas Oil Partnership

By: Regional Director, Jason Brown

Beginning late in the afternoon and continuing well into the evening on Saturday June 23rd in Wheatland, Missouri, the annual NWTF sponsored RACE to SAVE the HUNT was held. This event marked the fourth year that NWTF has collaborated with Lucas Oil in an effort to recruit new volunteers, raise a little money for the mission, and have a great time in the process. As part of our collaboration, Lucas Oil also assists with the Governors' Youth Turkey Hunt, providing 5,000 acres of access, meals and lodging, and guides for the entire youth turkey season for 2 kids and their guardians.



Jerry Hodges of Louisberg Missouri was the big winner of the evening, walking away with a brand new rifle.

About three weeks prior to arriving at the intersection of racing and conservation, this new RD was handed a stack of tickets to a suite at the Lucas Oil Speedway, guns to raffle, and a phone number for the track manager. On race day as the first hot laps were being completed, not knowing exactly what to expect, the suite opened and began to fill. This fund raising event would be my first time at the track so with help from my wife, we hosted an evening of complimentary food & beverage,



lap rides in the pace car, and great fellowship in the name of conservation all set to the constant backdrop of roaring engines for Suite ticket holders. Each attendee to the suite were automatically entered into multiple gun drawings held between race events. A special Q&A session was also held in our NWTF Suite with the VIP attendance of Missouri Sportsman Caucus Co-Chairman State Senator David Schatz and State Representative Robert Ross. Missouri Chapter President R.L. Bennett also attended the event. All VIPs spent

time visiting and answering questions of concern about hunting and conservation for our state. When the checkered flag fell on the last race of the night, NWTF and conservation were the biggest winners. This annual event will continue to grow because our heritage of hunting wild turkeys has a direct impact on the story of conservation. I want to thank all those who attended and Lucas Oil Speedway for their continued support of the NWTF. I look forward to seeing everyone again next year and I promise to have complimentary ear plugs available.

NWTF State Chapter Supports Fifth Annual Mizzou Trap Academy

On June 21-23, 2018, Midway USA Foundation and the Mizzou College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources offered a 3 day training course focusing on shooting techniques, leadership skill development, team building, and mental preparation. The state chapter also helped support this event by providing product for the 20 students that were selected to attend. The academy targets individuals interested in honing competitive shooting skills and pursuing a degree in higher education.

Attendees of the academy had the opportunity to shoot 300 rounds at Prairie Grove Shotgun Sports, participate in the Mizzou ropes course and strengths assessment, receive focus and concentration training from world renown coach on mental and physical skills development, Mark Brownlee, receive shooting techniques tips from Women's National USA Shooting Trap Champion, Terri DeWitt, and skill development training from Associate Teaching Professor and NRA Level II Shotgun Instructor, Dr. David Vaught.



The academy is available to rising junior and senior shooters interested in perfecting their shooting and life skills and is intended to be made available annually. Look for more information about this and other academies offered through the University of Missouri at the following link: <https://cafnr.missouri.edu/summer-academies/>

The Importance of Early Successional Habitats for Wild Turkeys

By Jason L. Isabelle
Resource Scientist
Missouri Department of Conservation

There are many things a landowner can do to create habitat for wild turkeys; however, establishing and maintaining areas of early successional vegetation is arguably the most beneficial. Turkeys have a diverse diet, so food is rarely a limiting factor. Cover, on the other hand, is often in short supply especially those used for nesting and brood-rearing.

Turkeys nest in knee-to-thigh-high vegetation because it helps protect them from predators. Similarly, an ideal location for a hen turkey to take her brood is an area that has vegetation tall enough to hide her poults, yet short enough for her to spot any potential danger approaching. Ideally, the vegetation would contain a diversity of grasses and forbs and would be sparse enough at ground level to allow her poults to easily move through it while searching for insects. Although forested areas can serve as nesting and brood-rearing habitats, openings tend to be preferred by wild turkeys. However, not all openings are created equal with respect to a wild turkey's needs during the reproductive period.

Crop fields are used relatively little by hen turkeys for nesting and brood-rearing. Turkeys do use pastures and hayfields for these activities, but vegetation composition, density, and often height typically limits their usefulness. This is in addition to the danger to nesting hens that cutting hay poses. And while some food plots are used by turkey broods, nesting rarely occurs there. In contrast to these types of openings, fields that contain a combination of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs (often referred to as old fields) can provide areas for hen turkeys to nest and to rear their broods. Turkeys will also use these areas to feed and to strut. These fields of native early successional vegetation can offer just the right combination of plant species diversity, density, and height if managed properly.

Many old fields were abandoned pastures or hayfields. As such, these areas generally contain a few forbs and shrubs (if left fallow for long enough) and are often blanketed by non-native cool season grasses. When trying to improve their property for wildlife, many landowners look at these areas and are unsure about what course of action to take. The first thought that comes to mind for many is to convert the area to a food plot or to keep it brush-hogged. However, keeping the vegetation in a field short by constant brush-hogging provides no habitat for wild turkeys. And although food plots do have their place in wild turkey management, many landowners fail to recognize that with just a bit of management, old fields can provide outstanding habitat for turkeys and other wildlife species without

having to plant anything. By simply changing the species composition and disturbing the site (using prescribed fire, disking, or herbicides) every few years, these “abandoned” areas can become some of the most valuable portions of your property for wildlife.

In most cases, the first step in establishing a high quality early successional vegetative community is to get rid of the non-native grasses that cover the site. This is accomplished by spraying the area with an herbicide when the grasses are actively growing (preferably in the fall for cool-season grasses). This releases the seedbank and allows native seeds in the soil to germinate. If the area is also covered with small trees, they should be removed as well to allow more sunlight to reach the ground. Although native grasses and forbs can be planted after spraying the non-native vegetation, this usually isn't necessary. If the area had been previously cropped for many years (which can deplete the native seedbank), planting may be warranted, but most folks are amazed with the response they get from simply killing the non-native grasses and allowing the seedbank to respond.



A diversity of annual forbs and grasses should become established shortly after killing the non-native vegetation. This will transition to perennial species through time and eventually woody species if the area is not managed (i.e., if succession is not set back). However, to realize the full benefit of these areas for wildlife, it is best to disturb them periodically. Using prescribed fire every 2-4 years is a great way to manage these areas for wild turkeys. Disking is another good tool to help maintain the desired plant composition

and especially to encourage growth of forbs. Brush-hogging is the least preferred method for managing early successional vegetation, but can be used where prescribed fire or disking are not viable options. Managing these areas in late winter allows retention of cover for wildlife through the colder months of the year. Fall is also a good time to conduct management of early successional plant communities for wild turkeys.

To increase the diversity of species along with their density and height, divide the area in half or into thirds and manage only a portion of the area each year. Doing so will provide turkey nesting cover in portions of the area that are not disturbed in any given year and brood-rearing habitat in areas disturbed earlier that same year. Along with managing each portion of the area every few years to set back succession, undesirable species that germinate can be removed by spot-spraying with herbicide. In addition to providing habitat for wild turkeys, fields of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs offer benefits to many other species. White-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, and northern bobwhite are just a few of the species that will benefit from devoting some of your acreage to early successional vegetation. With their diversity of plants, including a myriad of flower colors, these areas offer aesthetic appeal as well.

For those interested in improving their properties for wild turkeys and other wildlife species, creating and maintaining areas of early successional vegetation is certainly an option worth considering. If you are interested and would like additional information about how to create and maintain early successional plant communities, contact the Conservation Department and request to speak with the Private Land Conservationist in your county. They're a great resource and will be happy to visit with you about your wildlife habitat management goals.

HOPE...What do you hope for?

By: Kimberly Bauman

This question, to be answered honestly, evokes a pause in our hectic lives and inspires self-reflection. Do you hope for more money, for a bigger house, for a fancier car, for a better job, for material possessions you don't have?

For children with severe, heart-breaking challenges in their lives, they hope for a chance to set aside their difficulties and simply enjoy life as kids. And, it is exactly this chance that the faith-based organization Hope Outdoors provides.

This year (2018), the Ste. Genevieve, Missouri chapter of Hope Outdoors celebrated its fifth year as an organization hosting youth spring turkey hunts. This year's event, like past events, brought together the local community as landowners availed their properties and hunting cabins, guides donated their time and turkey calling abilities, businesses donated money and supplies, and citizens donated their talents for whatever needed to be done – cooking, gun/shooting instruction, safety/conservation education, and much more.

Built on Christian values, the annual Hope Outdoors youth turkey hunt is not just an opportunity for kids to hunt the magnificent wild turkey. It is a weekend completely free-of-charge to the young hunters and their families that is kicked-off with an evening of fellowship and prayer culminating with each child receiving a full set of camo clothing, boots, and turkey hunting accessories generously donated by an assortment of sponsors. This year, the Ste. Genevieve chapter of the NWTF – River Hills Thunderin' Longbeards – donated camo drawstring backpacks and turkey calls for each hunter, and pocket knives for the guides.

Turkey hunters know how a turkey hunting weekend goes, and it was no different for this event. The young hunters and guides barely slept the night before opening day, they were up before dawn to eat a quick breakfast, and were headed afield to hear the first gobbles on the roost. And so, the dance between hunters and gobblers began for a group of very special youth hunters.

Youth weekend 2018 in Missouri was ushered in with temperatures well below freezing, but the young hunters braved the icy weather to experience the wonder of God's nature and the thrill of turkey hunting. Two fine Eastern gobblers were harvested during the Hope Outdoors event, but all the young participants had a great weekend dressing up in camo, running around and playing with other kids, experiencing home cooked meals and desserts, camping-out in hunting cabins, and having fun just being kids. But as wonderful as this was for the young hunters, any of the adults involved with the event will tell you they got more out of the weekend than the kids, and that the event enriches their hearts and souls and makes them



look forward to next year's Hope Outdoors youth turkey hunt. Mentored hunts like this one exemplify not only how giving feels good but are also helping us achieve our Save the Hunt goals of 1.5 million hunters recruited, retained, and reactivated.

The River Hills Thunderin' Longbeards helped sponsor this event and would like to thank other sponsors that also helped make it possible: Mossy Oak, LafargeHolcim (US) Inc., American Legion-Ste. Genevieve, Jordan Bader, Bloomsdale Excavating Co., Weingarten Jaycees, Sieveking, Inc., Ste. Genevieve Community Betterment Grant, Houston Meyer, LEE Mechanical Contractors, Premier Farm Realty Group, Klump Custom Woodworking (Tyler Klump), Desired Health Chiropractic, Missouri Alliance Mutual Insurance, First Baptist Church Ste. Genevieve, Vern Bauman Contracting, Ste. Genevieve Jaycees, Wolk's Insurance Agency, Local Union #2030 Carpenters, Chris and Connie Drury, CE Contracting Inc., Piros Signs, Ste. Genevieve County Community Center, Equipment Pro, Inc., Drury Chiropractic & Family Wellness, Zell Area Jaycees, Riverside Landscaping, Lurk Custom Cabinets, Garrett & Angela Drury, Loida AG Service, HSB Advisors, LLC., Mississippi Lime Company, Bader Land Surveying, Ste. Genevieve County Memorial Hospital, Oberle Meats, Sirros, Dairy Queen, South Bound Fuel, Save A Lot, Mary's Market, Stonie's Market, Farmington Country Mart, Kohlfeld Distributing, Subway, Dominos, McDonalds, Kozy Kitchen/Dew Drop, Ste. Genevieve Country Mart, Hoekele Bakery & Deli, Gilster Mary Lee, Shop and Save

Special thanks to the landowners that opened their hearts and properties to make this event possible: Tom & Janet Gray, Rick & Paula Meyer, Donze Farms, John Fallert, Okenfuss Family Farm, Steve Rottler, Kenny & Teresa Goddell, Sanford Roth, Vern Bauman, Bob Geiler, Bahr Farms, Doris Bauman Family, Bob & Tom Schweiss Family, Schweigert Brothers.

Meet New RD — Nate Carl



Nate Carl is joining the NWTF as the Regional Director – Eastern Kansas and Western Missouri, where he will be furthering the NWTF's mission by growing volunteer recruitment, organizing fund raising activities, and expanding new chapters within the region. He reports to Barry Woods, Director of Field Operations.

Nate is a lifelong hunter and outdoorsman who began hunting at the age of 12. He enjoys archery deer hunting, turkey hunting, waterfowl hunting, and fishing. As a third-generation hunter, he is strongly committed to the preservation

of hunting heritage and wildlife conservation.

Nate believes that the lack of access to quality hunting land is the greatest issue plaguing the sport of hunting. It is this lack of access that has led to the sharp decline of hunter numbers. He is excited that the "Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt." initiative is well on its way to directly solving this issue by not only creating 1.5 million new hunters, but also creating quality hunting opportunities for them by opening 500,000 acres of new public hunting and conserving and enhancing an additional 4 million acres, thus building a platform for sustainable growth in hunter numbers. By joining the NWTF team, he is honored to be part of the solution.

Nate's educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing and Business Management and a Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri. His former work experience includes Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Commerce Bank and the Northwest Missouri State University's School of Business. He is a resident of Liberty, Missouri where he was born and raised.

Nate is excited to be part of the NWTF team and looks forward to meeting all of the dedicated volunteers, employees and members. If you have any questions for Nate, please reach out to him at ncarl@nwtf.net or (816) 517-6751

Bear Engbring NWTf Forester – Farmington, MO

The NWTf continues to establish itself as a leader in the conservation of upland wildlife habitat with an emphasis on forest management. As part of this development process, we have grown our project level staff in the field through cooperative agreements with partner state and federal agencies. Missouri has two such positions. Chad Doolen has been working in cooperation with the USFS and NRCS for the last 2 years focusing his efforts primarily in the shortleaf pine region of southcentral Missouri. In early 2018, Bear Enbring was hired to provide additional needed assistance with private land forest management in southeast Missouri.

Bear brings to the table over a decade of experience pertaining to forestland consulting and contracting in southwestern IL and southeastern MO as a consulting forester. Bears' experience includes forest planning, mapping, timber sales, prescribed fire, thinning, and invasive species control in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders. Additionally, Bear conducted wildland firefighting for three fire seasons with the US Forest Service both in the western and northern USA. Prior to this experience, he obtained a Master's Degree in dendrochronology focused on fire and cultural history of the Arkansas Ozarks in north-central Arkansas. He is a graduate of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale Forestry Program and the University of Arkansas School of Forest Resources.

Bears' project area for NWTf Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt. initiative within the Southeastern Missouri Ozarks includes the heavily forested counties of Jefferson, Washington, St. Genevieve, St. Francois, Iron, and Madison. With the exception of some mixed bottomland hardwood forests along the Mississippi River and its riverine tributaries, much of the optimum wild turkey habitat that Bear will be focusing his forestry efforts on are Ozark upland oak-hickory forest types, open oak woodlands, and associated glades.

The land ownership pattern within these counties are largely private although the Mark Twain National Forest, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department



Bear Enbring, NWTf Forester.

of Natural Resources, and other non-private landowners are well represented. Bears' position as an NWTf Forester is a partnership between the NWTf, Missouri Department of Conservation, and the USDA NRCS. This position will primarily be focused on managing privately owned forestlands.

An active management landscape-scale approach is needed to restore and maintain upland oak and glade natural communities that are critical to healthy wild turkey populations and that other native wildlife also depend on. On private lands, some of these natural communities have had a history of poor management, no management, or have been exploited for other land uses leaving them highly degraded. Many upland forests have been repeatedly high-graded by harvesting the best timber and leaving poor quality trees to grow. Other forestlands have not been harvested and are currently overstocked and sometimes stagnated with undesirable tree species for managing wild turkey. Locally, glades are commonly overgrown with Eastern red cedar and winged elm. Furthermore, nonnative invasive plant species are well established on the landscape with moderate to severe infestations occurring along interstates, highways, roads, rights-of-ways, and other areas where the native plant communities are disturbed and/or fragmented.

NWTf and its partners have the opportunity to achieve great success in mitigating these natural resource

challenges. Through outreach and collaboration with private landowners and stakeholders, we are seeing our restoration potential hit the ground and objectives being met in the forest. There are Cost-Share Opportunities through the USDA NRCS Field Offices (EQIP is a great option) and The Missouri Department of Conservation to conduct such practices as Forest Stand Improvement Thinning's (FSI), selective herbicide applications for invasive species control, burn unit preparation, prescribed fire implementation, seeding with native grasses and forbs, erosion control, skid trail stabilization/restoration, and wildlife watering ponds to name a few practices available.

As an NWTf Forester in Southeast Missouri, Bear is available to meet with landowners and listen to their desired objectives and questions they may have regarding their forestlands,

open woodlands, and glades. Bear will assess the resource at present and provide a management plan that best meets the landowner's objectives with resource potential for forest health and wild turkey habitat. Bear will present the best available cost-share opportunities for the landowner to explore and decide upon in order to achieve the desired objectives outlined in the management plan. Lastly, Bear is available to provide technical expertise to the landowner or forest contractor implementing the management practices. Most importantly, Bear will follow-up with the landowner to make sure that the process is successful and that all stakeholders involved are satisfied.

If you have land within the area Bear serves and are interested in receiving professional assistance in managing it, please contact him at 870-723-2743 or e-mail him at bengbring@nwtf.net

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2018 Dove Hunt Opportunities

Hunt locations will include areas near:
Cabool, Chillicothe, Hartsville, Lynchburg, Mokane,
Mountain Grove, Paris, East Prairie, and Washington.

Hunting dates will vary, but most fields will probably be hunted during the first 2 weekends of September, with most fields probably offering a.m. and p.m. options the first day. Since hunt times will vary, and not all of these decisions have been made, I would advise signing up since these opportunities will be first come first served and we only allow 20 hunters per field per hunt. Adjustments can be made as necessary when we get closer to dove season and these dates and times get locked in.

If you think that you might be interested in signing up or know someone that might be, please help us get the word out. Applications can be found on the state chapter website at www.monwtf.org. Just fill out the application and e-mail it to John Burk at jb Burk@nwtf.net, sign up online at <http://tinyurl.com/nuv6gos>, or call John Burk for more information at 563-676-5994.

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Jim Edwards Archery Park is the City of Arnold's newest park!

The Jim Edwards Archery Park Grand Opening was money well spent. The Park is handicap accessible and it is a great range for practicing your archery skills. It was opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony by the grandson of the late Jim Edwards / Cameron Edwards. The Arnold Mayor Ron Counts spoke and said thank you to all that came out to support the event and for everyone's effort to help make this happen.

Jeff Cockerham with the Missouri Department of Conservation said that this was the biggest opening event that he ever seen. The city administrator, Bryan Richison was pleased with the new range, as well as Senator, Paul Wieland, and State Representative, Dan Shaul. We had a great turn out with over 170 people at contest.

The Jim Edwards Archery Park in the City of Arnold is an ADA accessible park located on Telegraph Road just North of Bayshore Subdivision at 1136 Telegraph Road.

This beautiful, state-of-the-art archery park is named for Jim Edwards, a former Ward 2 Arnold City Council Member from 1997-2007 and also from 2010-2011. Jim owned his own business in the City of Arnold for many years, and the city is pleased to honor his memory with the naming of their newest park.

The Archery Park is open to the public during regular park hours – 1/2 hour before Sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset. It is closed every Tuesday from Sunrise to 12:00 noon for maintenance as well as by official posting on the park's Facebook page.

The City of Arnold thanks the Missouri Department of Conservation, The Arnold Jaycees, and the National Wild Turkey Federation for their generous funding and support, which made the Jim Edwards Archery Park possible.

The Archery Park is for enthusiasts of the sport of archery. This park has year-round targets for bow use only and is the only park in Arnold where archery is permissible.

The City will provide assistance to designated Archery Clubs to allow citizens the opportunity to participate in educational, recreational, and competitive archery activities.



Visitors were eager to break out their bows and fling some arrows at the new facility.



Mayor Ron Counts left and Big River Gobblers Committee Member Mitch Norris with the presentation check.