

Spring

FEVER

Hunting, Fishing & Outdoors Guide



April 12, 2023 | Pages 1B-12B
A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE

OSAGE COUNTY
Unterrified Democrat

OUTDOORS IN THE OZARKS

An owl before dawn

There is no more efficient predator than a great horned owl. Silent and deadly, he can eat whatever he wants, up to and including a roosting wild turkey. Their flight is completely silent, and they occasionally break the neck of roosting turkeys in the darkness before the dawn. But that does not happen often if there are plenty of rabbits and small ground mammals to feed upon.

Did you know that one of a great horned owl's regular prey is skunks? For some reason, the scent of a skunk is something that doesn't bother an owl. When the moon was bright, I watched rabbits playing around my place, in the pre-mating season antics which include games like jumping over each other and kicking their heels up as if they had never heard of a great horned owl.

Certainly the semi-civilized atmosphere around my home, and the presence of my Labradors, eliminated the threat of foxes and coyotes, which stay down in the woods behind the pond. So this became a sort of haven for cottontails, especially with all the brush piles I have here on Lightnin' Ridge.

Of course, I would probably opt for not having one house mouse or Norway rat in the whole Ozarks, but I like the idea of some ground mammals like the woodrat and harvest mice and white-foot mice. And I'd lot rather have cottontails and quail than hardly anything I can think of. My one covey seems to

not expand much. If I could do it, if God gave me the power of eliminating some of his creation, I would get rid of only a few things beside the house mouse, and that would be ticks, brown-recluse spiders, starlings, copperheads and rattlesnakes, carp, gar, armadillos and maybe cormorants.

But even though I would do it, I would feel guilty about it. It seems selfish to try to create a perfect world up here on my ridge-top when so many people have to live in suburbs and can't do a thing about it. I sincerely suspect that the thing that would make this old world work better is the elimination of about half the people who are overcrowding it, and what worries me about that is, what if I am one of the half which should be eliminated?

My grandfather, who always lived out in the woods or on the river somewhere, sawed the top out of medium sized trees up about twenty feet from the ground,

to create a flat landing place for the great horned owl, and then would set a steel trap there, and bait it with a wood rat or small squirrel. He was paid a small bounty at the county courthouse for the feet of owls, but he also saw no good in them, and believed in maintaining them only in strong enough numbers so that they survived along the river miles from where he kept a

See **OUTDOOR IN THE OZARKS** on Page 4B



THE KENTUCKY warbler is one of the warbler species people can learn about at a Missouri Department of Conservation virtual program on April 15.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MDC

Learn about warblers at MDC virtual program April 15

BY FRANCIS SKALICKY
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

SPRINGFIELD – Warblers are brightly marked birds that are heard much more often than they are seen. Because of their striking coloration and secluded habits, sightings of these birds are always notable events – even among experienced birders.

People can learn more about these interesting birds at the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) online program "Naturalist Notes: Wild Warblers Virtual Program." This virtual program will be from 3:30-4:30 p.m. April 15 and is being put on by the staff of MDC's Springfield Conservation Nature Center. This program will not be recorded. People can register at:

<https://mdc-event-web.s3licensing.com/Event/EventDetails/191235>

At this program, MDC Naturalist Jordanya Raos will discuss the species of warblers that can be seen in Missouri, where they can be seen, and what part of the year they are here in Missouri. "Naturalist Notes" is a series of Springfield Nature Center programs in which MDC naturalists showcase some of their favorite topics. This program is for all ages.

MDC's Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield at 4601 S. Nature Center Way. People can stay informed about upcoming programs at the nature center and other nearby MDC facilities by signing up for text alerts and e-mail bulletins. People who have questions about how to sign up for text alerts from the Springfield Nature Center can call 417-888-4237

Staff at MDC facilities across the state are holding virtual and online programs. A listing of these programs can be found at mdc.mo.gov/events.



by **LARRY DABLEMONT**

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MDC reports 117 new cases of CWD for 2022 surveillance year

BY JILL PRITCHARD
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that it sampled and tested more than 33,000 deer for chronic wasting disease (CWD) during the 2022 CWD surveillance year between July 2022 and April 2023. Of the more than 33,000 deer sampled, 117 tested positive for CWD.

CWD is a 100% fatal disease in white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family. The disease has been attributed to significant deer population declines in other states. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/cwd.

Those 117 deer bring the total number of CWD cases found in the state to 409 since the first case in wild deer was confirmed by MDC in early 2012. Including recent sampling efforts, more than 243,000 tissue samples from wild deer have been collected for CWD testing in Missouri since MDC began CWD surveillance in 2002.

Nearly 19,400 of the 33,000-plus deer tested this past CWD surveillance year were sampled as part of MDC mandatory CWD sampling efforts in select counties during the opening weekend of the November portion of firearms deer season, Nov. 12 and 13. Most of the remaining samples resulted from MDC's voluntary sampling efforts conducted throughout the deer season in partnership with taxidermists and meat processors throughout the state.

Of the more than 33,000 samples, about 3,500 were collected during MDC's targeted culling efforts conducted in cooperation with landowners on a voluntary basis after the close of regular deer season in localized

areas near where CWD has been found. Through targeted culling, 41 CWD-positive deer were removed to help slow the spread of CWD.

"The goal of targeted culling is to remove CWD-positive deer from the landscape and reduce deer density in these localized areas to slow the spread of the disease and protect Missouri's deer herd," explained MDC Wildlife Health Program Supervisor Deb Hudman. "Targeted culling is a proven method to slow the spread of CWD and Missouri is one of several states that uses it to manage the disease."

Of the deer tested, MDC found CWD-positive deer in 23 counties: Adair (3), Barry (1), Barton (9), Carroll (1), Cedar (1), Crawford (2), Dallas (1), Franklin (22), Gasconade (1), Hickory (1), Jefferson (7), Linn (15), Livingston (1), Macon (13), Perry (4), Putnam (3), Ray (1), St. Clair (1), St. Francois (1), Ste. Genevieve (20), Stone (4), Sullivan (3), and Taney (2).

"During this past year, we found CWD in a number of new counties," Hudman said. "Cases were detected for the first time in Barton, Carroll, Dallas, Gasconade, Hickory, Livingston, Ray, St. Francois, and Sullivan counties."

She added that MDC expects CWD to spread but the goal is to slow the spread while researchers work to develop a cure and additional management tools, and to keep the percentage of infected deer low.

In Missouri this past year, less than one percent of tissue samples from hunter-harvested deer tested positive for CWD.

See **CWD** on Page 4B



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

MDC STAFF collect tissue samples from the neck of a hunter-harvested deer to have them tested for chronic wasting disease (CWD).

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CWD • from page 3B

“That is good news,” she said. “It is a testament to our ability to find the disease early in new areas and apply management actions to slow its spread.”

She added that if MDC does not continue to act aggressively to slow the spread of the disease, CWD could have significant effects on the deer population, hunting culture, and economy.

“There are areas of the country where over half of hunter-harvested adult bucks test positive for CWD,” Hudman explained. “We must do everything we can to not let this happen in Missouri and we need the help of hunters and landowners in this fight.”

Hunters and landowners are critical partners in the fight against CWD and can assist MDC by continuing to deer hunt, by participating in CWD sampling, by following regulations designed to slow CWD spread, and by cooperating with targeted culling efforts. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/cwd.

Outdoors in the Ozarks • from page 2B

few chickens.

Grandpa liked to eat eggs and the owls liked to eat chickens, and he was much more inclined to believe in the survival of things he liked to eat, like rabbits, quail and ducks, than things he didn't eat. There were so fewer men back then than there are today. Grandpa wasn't so far removed from a time when a man's greatest concern wasn't so much economics and gas prices, but what he was going to eat and perhaps what might be about to eat him. Who could believe we would ever make a great and drastic impact on the land, and perhaps endanger our own existence in time?

When I was 15 years old, Grandpa and I floated a particular Ozark river in a wooden johnboat he built, and caught some nice fish from it. Today that stream is completely and totally dry. If I mention it on occasion when I speak to a live audience somewhere it quickly comes to me they would rather I didn't. So more often, I talk about the funny stories that came from the old men in the pool hall back in that time.

I figured out long ago that even if you know something, it isn't always wise to try to explain it to anyone. That's true of things like the spreading of billions of gallons of chemicals, all over the Ozarks. Nothing will stop it, and what is going to come from it is going to come from it, and

that's that.

Maybe God himself knows this, and is just watching and waiting, ready to reclaim, rebirth and regrow the perfect earth he created, sometime in the future. I guess it follows then, that the best thing to do is the best we can, to try to get our grandkids someplace where there are songbirds still singing and the water still has some crawdads and kingfishers and there are more trees than there are stumps. But, not many of the grandkids in the world today care about those things. They are more interested I new boxes! The latest computers and smart phones. To each his own I guess. More kids today will choose drugs than old fashioned things like clean water and forests.

If you wonder how any of this has anything to do with that owl, I can't explain it. I just thought about some of those things while I was listening to him one night, mice and rabbits and water. It was awfully quiet and peaceful up here on Lightnin' Ridge, with the moon so bright it was casting shadows on my lawn as it sunk toward the west well before dawn. And it was so still. That old owl is likely sitting in a hollow tree somewhere right now, getting some sleep, and maybe a little bit hungry because there aren't enough mice and rabbits around my place. Some of that may be his own darn fault. But at least he has no steel traps to contend with now.

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MDC expert shares advice for dealing with black vultures

BY COLIN WILLARD
ADVOCATE STAFF WRITER
cwillard@wardpub.com

VIENNA — Local farm families gathered at The Market in Vienna on April 3 for the 2023 Beef Meeting presented by the University of Missouri Extension. The evening included a roast beef meal and presentations by guest speakers, including Alan Leary, who oversees the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Wildlife Damage Management Program. The program helps landowners who have issues with wildlife interfering with their property.

Black vultures are the most numerous vultures in the Western Hemisphere. Leary compared their migration to that of armadillos. He said the black vultures' range has expanded over the last decade as they have continued to move further north because of warmer temperatures and food availability.

Black vultures are scavengers first, but they sometimes become predatory. When they become predatory, they usually target newborn livestock such as calves or lambs. They sometimes target adult cows if after-birth covers them or they are weak from giving birth. Black vultures account for about 5.2 percent of nationwide cattle deaths caused by other wildlife. Leary said that number is "definitely higher" than Missouri's totals, but other states such as Texas increase the average because they have much larger black vulture populations.

Black vultures damage more than just livestock. They sometimes perch on vehicles. When they do, Leary said they may tear off wiper blades, rip out the rubber from around the windows or scratch the paint.

Leary shared a story that took place near Bagnell Dam, which forms the Lake of the Ozarks. During paddlefish season, fishers leave paddlefish guts around the lake, and black vultures scavenge the fish remains. He said that he has seen a photo of about 25 black vultures perched on a truck and its trailer.

"It had suffered quite a bit of damage by the time he (the owner) came back from fishing," he said.

Black vultures also damage buildings by tearing off roof shingles, pulling off window caulking and ripping off chimney lining. Perching on houses

can also lead to black vultures leaving behind odors and waste.

Although the black vultures cause destruction that can be troubling to humans, they serve a purpose in the ecosystem. The stomach skin of the black vultures breaks down diseases such as rabies and botulism. If a black vulture scavenges a rabies-infected carcass, rabies does not appear in the vulture's waste, which helps prevent the spread of disease.

Leary said that beginning in the 1990s, the vulture population in India increased by about 95 percent. The main cause of the decline was poisoning from an anti-inflammatory livestock drug. Declining vulture populations led to feral dogs becoming India's main scavengers, which increased the spread of rabies. The spread of rabies by feral dogs has made India the country with the highest rate of human rabies cases worldwide.

Black vultures have a disadvantage while scavenging when compared to turkey vultures, which have a much better sense of smell that allows them to more easily locate carcasses. Black vultures rely on their eyesight to watch turkey vultures locate food and follow the turkey vultures' lead. Sometimes the species share meals, and sometimes one group chases the other away from a carcass. They are also known to roost together.

Permits for removal only affect black vultures. Federal law still protects turkey vultures, and they never become predatory. The easiest way to tell the difference between black vultures and turkey vultures is by looking at their heads. Black vultures have dark heads. Adult turkey vultures have red heads, but juvenile turkey vultures have dark heads.

Another way to tell the difference is by looking at their wings while they fly. Black vulture wings are only white on the ends. Leary said the pattern looks like a hand. Turkey vultures have white primary feathers. The birds also position their wings differently when they fly. Black vultures hold their wings flat, but turkey vultures raise their wings into a "V" shape.

"If you look out the window there, within the next

five minutes you'd probably see a turkey vulture fly by, and it's going to look like they're in a "V" shape," Leary said. "It's quite distinctively different."

Leary shared steps that those bothered by black vultures can take to reduce the problem.

"There's no silver bullet for

this issue," Leary said. "You're going to have to implement a wildlife management program where you start doing several things all at the same time, and they work together to solve the problem. You're not going to be able to go and put a scarecrow out there and it's problem

solved. It's not going to be that simple."

Options Leary listed included harassing the birds, changing farm operations and applying for federal permits that allow

See **BLACK VULTURES**
on Page 7B

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MDC reports young hunters took 2,550 turkeys over youth weekend

BY JOE JEREK
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY — Preliminary data from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) shows that young turkey hunters in Missouri harvested 2,550 birds over the past youth weekend, April 1 and 2. Top harvest counties were Osage with 71 birds harvested, Miller with 65, and Texas with 64.

Young hunters checked 2,881 birds during the 2022 spring youth weekend. “The cool, windy weather on Satur-

day made for challenging turkey hunting conditions,” said MDC Turkey Biologist Nicholas Oakley. “Fortunately, hunters stuck with it and Sunday’s weather was more conducive to harvesting a turkey.”

Get more harvest information by county at extra.mdc.mo.gov/widgets/harvest_table/.

The regular spring turkey season runs April 17 through May 7. For more information on turkey hunting in Missouri, visit mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/turkey.



MDC CONGRATULATES Jim Dain of Pittsfield, Ill. on becoming the second state record holder of 2022 after snagging this 140-ound, 10-ounce paddlefish at the Lake of the Ozarks March 18.

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Black Vultures • from page 5B

the permit holder to legally kill a limited number of black vultures.

One method that homeowners can use to deter black vultures from perching on a house is bird spikes. Another option is hanging fishing line about three inches above the railing where the birds perch because they will not perch on the fishing line.

If the black vultures roost somewhere around a house at night, lasers are an option to chase them away.

“You’re going to have to do it more than once more than likely,” Leary said. “If there’s a reason they want to be up there, they’re going to come back. You have to be persistent, and you have to go out five, six, 10, 15 nights and scare them off that roof. Eventually, they’ll get tired of coming back.”

Noise can also scare away roosting black vultures. Someone trying to chase off birds could use a noisemaker such as a clapper or household objects such as two-by-fours.

As a quieter option, Leary recommended using effigies to repel black vultures. Although it’s difficult to get a real dead vulture without a permit, a homemade effigy could also be effective.

“They’re pretty easy to make,” Leary said. “You could get a bowling pin or something and put a black garbage bag on it and hang it upside down.”

Another way to discourage black vultures from visiting an area is to remove attractants such as dead trees or dead animals.

“As long as you have an attractant there for them, they’re going to come back,” Leary said. “That would be like someone coming and putting a nice warm pizza on my desk every day and expecting that I’m not going to eat it. They’re going to lose a lot of pizzas because I like pizza.”

Sometimes leaving a vehicle in an area that might attract black vultures is enough to deter them because they think humans are there. That method is not always guaranteed to work because the vultures sometimes learn that abandoned vehicles are empty.

If crows do not bother someone experiencing issues with black vultures, leav-

ing out cracked corn to attract crows can cause vultures to avoid an area. Leary said the two types of birds do not get along.

Problems with black vultures could persist even after taking measures to discourage vultures away from an area. If vulture issues continue, there are other options.

The United States Department of Agriculture will have two wildlife services technicians assigned to help people around the state who experience issues with black vultures. They will assist with developing a wildlife management plan and making changes to a property to deter black vultures.

The Missouri Farm Bureau offers applications for permits that allow the use of lethal force to eliminate vultures. The permits only allow the holder to remove up to five black vultures.

“With that, you get the potential for five effigies,” Leary said. “You’re never going to get a permit for this to be an eradication program. This is a wildlife damage management program. It’s not a problem that we’re ever going to shoot our way out of.”

Leary said the intent of the program is not prevention. Applicants are unlikely to receive permits until they have suffered a loss of cattle because of black vulture predation. Property owners also have the option to apply on their own for a federal permit through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. There is a \$100 application fee.

“They could give you a permit to shoot 1,000 of them, but as long as you don’t remove the attractant, you’re not going to win this,” Leary said. “I can promise you that. Shooting your way out of it is not the solution.”

Leary ended his presentation by reminding the attendees that though black vultures are troublesome to some farmers, they are not guaranteed nuisances.

“They won’t impact everyone,” he said. “If they do impact you, hopefully, if you can implement some of these things that we’ve just talked about, it’ll be a short-term thing, and you can get them to move on and go somewhere else rather than be a perennial issue for you.”

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Missouri fisherman catches two state record-worthy fliers

BY JILL PRITCHARD
Mo. Dept. of Conservation

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) congratulates Tyler Goodale of Doniphan for swiping the second state record fish of 2023 – an 11-ounce flier he caught March 26 from Duck Creek Conservation Area using the pole-and-line method. Goodale actually caught two record-worthy fliers that day, both identical in weight and length.

The previous Missouri record flier was a 10-ounce fish caught from a private pond back in 1991.

Fliers are a species of conservation concern in Missouri. Largest populations are found at Duck Creek Conservation Area and nearby Mingo National Wildlife Refuge, where extensive areas of standing-water habitat remain. Fliers prefer quiet, clear bodies of water with little current and considerable

aquatic vegetation and mud bottom.

MDC staff verified the fishes' weight using a certified scale in Wappapello.

This is the second state record Goodale has reeled in from Duck Creek Conservation Area. He caught a 5-pound, 4-ounce spotted sucker at Duck Creek in 2020 that also happens to be the current world record.

Learn more about fliers from MDC's online Field Guide at <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/flier>.

MDC also congratulates Mitchell Dering of Fairdealing on shooting the third state record fish recorded in 2023 — a 4-pound brown bullhead. Dering shot the fish while bowfishing at Duck Creek Ditch #105 March 14. The previous state record brown bullhead was a 2-pound, 7-ounce fish caught in 1994 from Wappapello Lake.

"I got off work that day and went out to one of the ditch-

es in Duck Creek and just got lucky honestly," Dering said. "We shoot a lot of smaller fish. I knew it was a bullhead, but didn't know if was a brown bullhead. But I knew it was large for its size."

Dering contacted the MDC Southeast Regional Office the next day to get his fish weighed. MDC staff verified the fish's weight on a certified scale in Wappapello.

Derin's brown bullhead beats the current 3-pound, 4-ounce bowfishing world record.

Missouri state record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Alternative methods include: trotline, throwline, limb line, bank line, jug line, gig, bow, crossbow, underwater spearfishing, snagging, snaring, grabbing, or atlatl. For more information on state record fish, visit <http://bit.ly/2efq1vl>.



MDC CONFIRMS Tyler Goodale of Doniphan is the new state record holder for flier after catching two 11-ounce fish from Duck Creek Conservation Area March 26.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TYLER GOODALE

"A duck call in the hands of the unskilled is one of the conservation's greatest assets."
– Nash Buckingham



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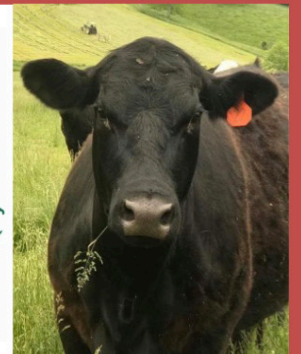
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It's time for morels

JEFFERSON CITY – To the uninitiated, a morel does not have the most appetizing appearance. Its brain-like form looks like something out of a campy horror movie, and a morel's neutral, earthy color doesn't command much attention. From about late March to early May, however, foraging for these small mushrooms is serious business — a business so serious that many folks refuse to reveal their morel spots even to their closest friends and family!

The question many people ask this time of year is, "How can I find morels?" Well, morels are finicky fungal organisms. The underground portion of the fungus only produces mushrooms in some years — mostly based on soil temperature and moisture availability (but other factors play a role, too). Ultimately, most of what we know about finding morels is anecdotal and widely variable, but here are a few tips to help you narrow down good places to look for morels:

- Morels commonly appear after warm, moist spring weather with daytime temperatures in the low 70s and nighttime temperatures in the 50s.
- South and west facing slopes are good sites to look for morels early

in the season, with north and east slopes being better for later-season morel hunting.

- Morels tend to favor tree species such as elms, ashes, cottonwoods, and even domesticated apples. Look around recently dead trees but beware of falling branches!
- Areas disturbed by flooding, fire, or logging often produce loads of morels.
- Morels peak when lilacs bloom!
- Most public lands in Missouri allow the collecting of mushrooms for personal use, but always check the regulations before you collect to be sure.

Remember, these are just general guidelines — morels have been found growing in all sorts of locations and conditions!

Before setting off into the forest, make sure you know how to correctly identify morels. Misidentifying and consuming toxic mushrooms can cause anything from mild stomach issues to organ failure or even death! There are several mushroom species in Missouri, including the big red false morel, which are considered toxic and not recommended for consumption. Consult with field



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

LATE APRIL is a good time to find morel mushrooms. They often grow in bunches, but in varied places and not everywhere. Sometimes a morel seeker feels lucky to find just one, or if none, wild places are still fun to visit in the spring season.

guides or a professional mycologist to be completely confident in species identification before consuming any mushrooms.

Browse MDC's mushroom field guide for photos of the more common and

noticeable fungal species in Missouri. Click here to find tasty recipes using Missouri's wild mushrooms!

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DRIFTWOOD OUTDOORS

Recovering America's Wildlife Act returns for another round

Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is bipartisan legislation that if passed, will dedicate \$1.3 billion annually to state fish and wildlife agencies and an additional \$97.5 million for tribal fish and wildlife management. The funds will be used to conserve fish and wildlife through science-based wildlife action plans.

During the last session of Congress,

RAWA passed the House of Representatives, but failed to make it across the finish line in the Senate. Reports from polling and public opinion research indicate broad bipartisan political support for passage of this bill remains. U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., carried the legislation in the past with now retired Missouri Senator Roy Blunt. On this go around, Senator Thom Til-

lis, R-N.C., is sponsoring the legislation with Heinrich.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) serves as the collective voice of state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies. The organization issued a press release acknowledging the advancement of the act and their support for final passage.

"The Recovering America's Wildlife Act is a transformational bill that will give state fish and wildlife agencies the sustainable resources needed and will empower local stakeholders to work together with states to implement the wildlife action plans they've had in place for years," said Ron Regan, Executive Director of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. "We know what needs to be done on the ground for wild-

life — and it takes time and dedicated funding to achieve it, that is why this bill is so critically needed."

Funding for fish and wildlife conservation is truly a matter of life and death.

Not necessarily so for us, at least not in the short term, but thousands of species, some you've likely never heard of, face dire circumstances. The prairie chickens and monarch butterflies are just two examples.

"The need for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act is indis-

putable and the urgency never greater," said Curt Melcher, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and President of the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. "This is common sense, collaborative conservation and it

See **DRIFTWOOD** on Page 11B



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is widely supported by a growing and diverse national coalition. We applaud Senators Heinrich and Tillis for their leadership and perseverance and stand ready to assist them in passing this bill for our fish and wildlife and for future generations.”

Senator Martin Heinrich is an undisputed champion of wildlife conservation. I have actually eaten dinner at his home in Albuquerque where he made myself and Jesse Duebel, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, a stew made with caribou meat from a hunt in Alaska. In Heinrich we have a true conservationist leading the way in Washington DC. He walks the walk.

“Over the past few years, the outdoors have proven to be a real uniting force in Congress. I’m proud of the momentum and widespread bipartisan support we built with Senator Blunt last Congress, and I look forward to doing the same with Senator Tillis as we work to move this bill across the finish line,” said Heinrich. “Without enough resources, state and Tribal wildlife agencies have been forced to pick and choose which species are worth saving. Instead of doing the proactive work that is necessary to maintain healthy wildlife populations on the front end, they have been forced into using reactive measures to rescue species after they are listed as threat-

ened or endangered. We urgently need to change this paradigm and save thousands of species with a solution that matches the magnitude of the challenge. The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act offers us a constructive path forward. Passing RAWA into law will mean our grandchildren will be able to experience the same rich and abundant American wildlife — from bumblebees to bison — that we have been so lucky to grow up with.”

With Senator Blunt’s retirement, we lost a strong advocate for wildlife. His friendship with Bass Pro Shops founder, Johnny Morris, helped drive legislative action. But thankfully, we have the next man up in Senator Tillis who represents North Carolina, another state rich in outdoor heritage.

“Congress has a long history of being champions of conservation efforts in the U.S. to protect our unmatched landscape and wildlife population. Today, we are facing another crisis with too many fish and wildlife being placed on the endangered species list, negatively impacting businesses, farmers and landowners,” Senator Tillis said. “This situation must be avoided at all costs, and RAWA gives state and tribal wildlife commissions the tools needed to perform proactive, on-the-ground conservation to prevent threatened species from becoming en-

dangered. This is the first step in a long road to build consensus, and I look forward to partnering with Senator Heinrich and my colleagues in Congress to work on this legislation so we can avoid those situations and keep more fish and wildlife off the endangered species list, saving tens of millions of dollars in compliance costs for Americans, and protect our country’s rich natural resources.”

The significance of RAWA is monumental. Without a serious influx of funding for critical fish and wildlife work, we

will continue to lose species to extinction. If you care about fish and wildlife, and the overall health of our natural environment, take a moment to contact the offices of your congressmen and senators and ask them to support RAWA.

See you down the trail...

For more Driftwood Outdoors, check out the podcast on www.driftwoodoutdoors.com or anywhere podcasts are streamed.

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