

**Wanderings
from the
Woods
& Water**

**by Jay
Bicknell**
WetStoneKennels@yahoo.com



Snow Covered

The cold and snow is not relenting! It seems like last winter I hunted in short sleeves. This year you need to wear every single piece of warm clothing you own.

I went duck hunting in the blizzard we had last week (dedicated or stupid, you be the judge)! When we started the hunt it wasn't too cold and with very little snow, but by the time we ended the hunt, the ground was covered and the hood on my jacket was frozen solid.

It was about a mile walk to the truck after the hunt. The ground was white and the snow just kept coming down. You couldn't see the tractor tire tracks in the road because the snow had smoothed them over. It was a continuous white blanket that hid all the imperfections of the ground.

Once I finally made it home from the duck hunt, it was time to run my trap line. I had made all new bucket sets the day before. It was hard to find where I had set the traps because the snow had covered them up. As I was checking all my traps I noticed again how beautiful the snow covered the ground. The ugly mud holes on the old road were hidden by the snow.

So, you're probably wondering where I am going with this column with

all the snow talk.

As I looked at the snow I saw how it covered all the imperfections. How the snow covered up all the mud holes. How it even covered up some garbage in the field. The snow got me to thinking what Jesus has done for my life!

Jesus works the same way as the snow. Once you accept Him in to your heart He will cover all your imperfections. He will cover all the mud holes in your life. He will cover all the trash. All it takes is to accept Him.

I am not ashamed of Jesus. I will never compromise what Jesus says in His word. I Love Jesus and want everyone to come to know Him. I am so thankful that He talks to me and gives me insight while out in the woods. I love writing about the insight He gives me while hunting.

The extreme cold temps have me dreaming about warm spring days chasing turkeys! Turkey season will be here before you know it. Now is the time to get your turkey hunting gear ready for the upcoming season. The NWTf convention is coming to Nashville in February. It's a great place to pick up some cool turkey gear.

Until next week, get out and enjoy God's creation!

Hunters Post Another Record Ky. Deer Harvest

A year after establishing an overall deer harvest record, Kentucky hunters did it again.

The 2013-14 deer season in Kentucky ended Jan. 20 with a total harvest of 144,404 animals. That represents a gain of more than 9 percent over the previous record set during the 2012-13 season.

"This year we were ahead of the curve," said David Yancy, deer biologist with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "Hunters harvested more deer in September than they ever had, the October youth weekend was the best it had been since 2008, there was a slightly better than average muzzleloader season and then modern gun season was way better than it normally is. It sort of held throughout."

A spotty crop of acorns and other hard mast across Kentucky had deer on the move, and made them more vulnerable to hunters.

An increase of about 9,000 deer permits sold – about one third of those coming through youth sportsman's licenses – also meant there were more

hunters in the field.

"The poor acorn crop was a major factor in getting those deer out into the open and into the harvested corn fields and the food plots," said Tina Brunjes, deer program coordinator with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. "The weather during the modern gun season and during the muzzleloader season was not as wonderful as it was last season, but we didn't have any epic ice storms or some sort of huge flood. Hunters were able to get out."

Harvest totals for firearms, archery, muzzleloading and crossbow were up across the board. A record 104,619 deer were taken by firearms hunters. Archery hunters harvested 20,833 whitetails while muzzleloader hunters bagged 15,641 deer and crossbow hunters reported taking 3,311 deer.

Male deer accounted for nearly 54 percent of the deer harvested. Out of the 77,719 male deer taken, 9,962 were antlerless, according to telecheck data.

Three of the top five counties in terms of estimated deer densities produced the top harvest totals. Hunters

in Owen County took 4,069 whitetails to lead the state followed by Pendleton County with 3,464 and Crittenden County with 3,033.

Kentucky's deer herd was estimated at approximately 900,000 prior to the season. Herd estimates are derived through computer modeling that takes into account harvest and age structure data.

Brunjes tempered her expectations for this past season, thinking it might be average compared to the record harvest of 131,395 deer posted in 2012-13. "We ended up with a huge, record-breaking year," she said.

After a second record harvest in as many seasons, deer are looking at a landscape that has more to offer, Brunjes said.

"The potential is there for the does that make it through this cold winter to have really high fawning success, and those bucks that make it through this cold winter, they're going to be the best of the best," she said. "If we can get a good spring, we might not see the numbers next year, but we'll see a lot of quality deer out there."

Kentucky Afield Outdoors: Collecting broodstock key to excellent muskellunge, walleye and other fisheries

by **LEE McCLELLAN**
Ky. Dept. Fish & Wildlife

Crews from the fisheries division of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources will be spreading out across the state in a few weeks to collect broodstock for the Minor Clark Hatchery in Morehead and the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery near Frankfort.

"We hoped to get out there by the first of February, but we are held up by the current cold temperatures and the hatchery ponds being frozen over," said David Baker, stream biologist for Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

"It will be a little later than we would like to do it."

Breeding a proven stallion with a regally bred broodmare is often the recipe for making Kentucky Derby winners. The mating of female and male fish collected from the wild and breeding them at the hatchery is what makes state record muskellunge in Cave Run Lake, 10-pound walleye from Laurel River Lake and rod bending hybrid striped bass in Barren River Lake.

Some citizens get upset or worry when they see fisheries personnel collecting broodfish from their favorite fishing waters.

"Without collecting broodstock from the wild, we wouldn't have these great walleye, muskellunge or hybrid striped bass fisheries," said Gerry Buynak, assistant director of fisheries for Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

Buynak explained there is little natural reproduction of walleye or muskellunge in Kentucky. The productive fishing found in our state for these species is almost completely supported by stocking.

"Without collecting broodstock below Cave Run Lake Dam, we wouldn't have the world class muskellunge fisheries in Cave Run, Green River and Buckhorn lakes or many muskie in our native muskellunge streams and rivers," he said. "We breed the native strain Kentucky muskellunge."

Fisheries biologists must routinely change the broodfish at the hatchery to sustain the genetic diversity of the resulting fry. "Hatcheries try to mimic what happens in the wild," Buynak said. "The quality of eggs from wild stocks is much better than reusing hatchery broodstock over several years."

Workers will collect 70 female and 75 male Erie strain walleye from the Green River Lake tailwater, Lake Cumberland, Carr Creek Lake and Laurel River Lake to make 1.6 million fingerlings. The fisheries division will stock these fingerlings into Green River Lake, Laurel River Lake, Lake Cumberland, Carr Creek, Nolin River Lake, Paintsville Lake and the Russell Fork of Big Sandy River.

Fisheries biologists and technicians will also collect broodstock of the river strain walleye native to Kentucky before the construction of the large reservoirs in the decades following World



Photo courtesy of Ky. Dept. Fish & Wildlife Resources
These sauger eggs spawned at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery near Frankfort eventually grew into fingerlings that workers with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources stocked into the Kentucky, Barren, Green and Salt rivers. Biologists and technicians with the fisheries division of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife will begin collecting hatchery broodfish from waters across the state in a few weeks.

War II. The native strain walleye mainly inhabited the Green River and Cumberland River systems.

These native fish grew to monstrous size in the early years of Lake Cumberland, culminating in the 21-pound, 8-ounce state record walleye, caught in 1958. Then, the bottom fell out of the fishery as the native river fish didn't reproduce well in the new lake environment. The fisheries division began in the early 1970s to stock the Lake Erie strain, which better survived in reservoirs.

Biologists thought the native strain of walleye was likely gone from Kentucky until a discovery of an isolated population in the upper Rockcastle River in the 1990s.

"We want to continue restoring the population of native walleye into areas where they once were and expand fishing opportunity as well," Buynak said.

Fisheries research biologist Dave Drees and crew will collect 10 to 15 female and 16 male native walleye from the Big South Fork of Cumberland River and from the Barren River system.

These fish will produce 150,000 fingerlings to stock in the Levisa Fork of Big Sandy River, Martins Fork Reservoir, the upper Barren River and in the Cumberland River above the Falls.

"Some of the Erie strain walleye females will also be used to breed with male sauger for the new saugeye stockings," Buynak said. Guist Creek Lake in Shelby County, Bullock Pen Lake in Grant County and A.J. Jolly Lake in Campbell County all received saugeye stockings last year and will again this year. Boltz Lake in Grant County will get saugeye this year. These stock-

ings provide a new fishery for Kentucky anglers to enjoy in the next year or so.

The fisheries division also plans to collect sauger broodstock from the Ohio River and lower Kentucky River to continue the stocking program in the Kentucky River, Salt River, Green River and upper Barren River.

"We are going to get five to eight female striped bass from Lake Cumberland to produce the original cross for making hybrid striped bass," Buynak said.

The original hybrid striped bass cross used male white bass and female striped bass to make hybrid striped bass. Female striped bass proved difficult to use and didn't respond well to human handling, so the fisheries division switched to the reciprocal cross, using female white bass and male striped bass, in the mid 1990s.

"The reciprocal cross is easier to produce at the hatchery, but it seems they run smaller," Buynak said. "We are trying to produce a bigger hybrid striped bass."

If anglers see fisheries technicians and biologists collecting broodstock over the next two months, they shouldn't grow alarmed. "Anglers must know we are removing these fish to improve these fisheries," Baker explained. "We plan to put them right back from where they came after we spawn them at our hatcheries."

Author Lee McClellan is an award-winning associate editor for Kentucky Afield magazine, the official publication of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. He is a life-long hunter and angler, with a passion for small-mouth bass fishing.

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