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# Black Bear Travels Nearly 400 Miles Across Southern Missouri

JULY 08TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Black Bear Travels Nearly 400 Miles Across Southern Missouri

**Traveling black bear is a reminder to be “Bear Aware.”**

**Whitewater, Missouri** - A three-year-old black bear sighted in Whitewater Friday morning is a reminder to southeast Missourians to be “Bear Aware” according to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Whitewater resident Phillip O’Kelly saw the bear with his daughter on their front porch, but when the bear heard humans, it took off, he said.

“It was probably about 100 feet from the porch,” O’Kelly said. “I came out to look at it and as soon as it heard our commotion it turned around to run off.”

O’Kelly said his property is surrounded by woods and is a place where his family enjoys seeing wildlife of all kinds.

“He wasn’t aggressive, was just looking around and he definitely wasn’t hurting anything,” O’Kelly said. “I hope people just let him be.”

O’Kelly noticed the bear was wearing a collar and ear tag, so the family contacted the MDC’s Southeast Regional Office to report the sighting.

“I’ve been tracking this bear and watched it trek about 400 miles across the southern part

of the state,” said Jeff Beringer, MDC resource scientist who leads the Missouri Black Bear Project.

Beringer’s research confirms multiple bear sighting reports made to Bollinger County Conservation Agent Jeff Scott this week, were all related to the same bear as he traveled through the area.

The Missouri Black Bear Project has entered its second phase. First, biologists trapped and radio-collared bears across southern Missouri. This helped them to estimate how many bears are in the state. Now the biologists are measuring survival and reproductive rates of female bears as well as keeping track of survival of first-year cubs.

“This bear probably left Christian county because his mother ran him off and because young male bears have an instinct to move and find unrelated females,” Beringer explained. “Not all bears move this far, but long dispersals are common for male bears.”

Beringer said the bear sighted in Whitewater was originally captured when it was 18-months-old in Christian county, where it wintered. Sometime the following year, the bear traveled to Warren County where he dened.

“This spring, a landowner took pictures of him and sent them to me and I noted the collar and knew he was a long way from home,” Beringer said, adding that studying the animal’s movements gives MDC an opportunity to see how bears use corridors and other physical barriers like roads and rivers. Beringer said the bear was recaptured and given a new collar in May and has since traveled on its own to southeast Missouri.

“He’s probably looking for a female and I expect he will settle down somewhere this summer, since he’s three-years-old now,” Beringer said.

Beringer said this bear sighting is a good reminder for Missourians to be “Bear Aware” by making efforts to keep bears wild. Residents should ensure bird feeders are put away, trash is kept out of reach and any pet food is stored inside at night.

“A fed bear is a dead bear,” Beringer said. “Bears are creatures of habit, so if they find they can get a free meal somewhere, they’re likely to stick around and that’s when they get into trouble.”

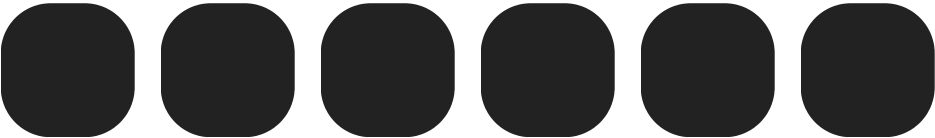
O’Kelly said although he enjoyed seeing the bear, his property doesn’t have things sitting out that might make the bear stay.

“It’s neat to see a bear in real life, instead of on television,” O’Kelly said. “He was a cute bear to look at, but we hope people let him be and he can travel on and stay out of trouble.”

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## MDC Reminds People Outdoors to Celebrate Safely

JUNE 30TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

## MDC Reminds People Outdoors to Celebrate Safely

**The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reminds people in the outdoors to be extremely careful with fireworks, campfires, and other sources of fire that could cause a wildfire.**

### **FIREWORKS**

Don't light fireworks in any areas where the sparks could ignite dry grass, leaves, or other potential fire fuel. Always have an approved fire extinguisher and an available water supply to douse sparks or flames. Wet the area around where fireworks are being discharged. Check with local ordinances and authorities for bans on fireworks and open burning.

### **OUTDOOR BURNING**

Don't burn during wrong conditions. Dry grass, high temperatures, low humidity, and wind make fire nearly impossible to control. Check with local fire departments regarding burn bans that may be in place. A person who starts a fire for any reason is responsible for any damage it may cause.

### **DRIVING OFF ROAD**

Wildfires can start when dry fuel, such as grass, comes in contact with catalytic converters. Think twice before driving into and across a grassy field. Never park over tall, dry grass or piles of leaves that can touch the underside of a vehicle. When driving vehicles off road, regularly inspect the undercarriage to ensure that fuel and brake lines are intact and no oil leaks are apparent. Always carry an approved fire extinguisher on vehicles that are used off road. Check for the presence of spark arresters on ATV exhausts.

### **MAKING A CAMPFIRE**

Clear a generous zone around fire rings. Store unused firewood a good distance from a campfire. Never use gasoline, kerosene, or other flammable liquid to start a fire. Keep campfires small and controllable. Keep fire-extinguishing materials, such as a rake, shovel, and bucket of water, close.

### **NEVER LEAVE A CAMPFIRE UNATTENDED**

Extinguish campfires each night and before leaving camp, even if it's just for a few moments. Extinguish cigarettes completely and safely and dispose of them responsibly by burning them in a controlled campfire or packing them out.

## **CALL FOR HELP**

Call 911 at the first sign of a fire getting out of control.

## **REPORT FOREST ARSON**

Wildfires are sometimes set by vandals. Help stop arson by calling 800-392-1111 and reporting any potential arson activities. Callers will remain anonymous and rewards are possible.

## **MANAGED FIRE**

Fire used in the wrong way can create disasters. Used in the right way, fire can help create habitat for wildlife. For more information on using prescribed fire as a land-management tool, visit [mdc.mo.gov](http://mdc.mo.gov) and search “prescribed fire.”

Photo courtesy of Kay Stevenson.

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# Cicadas Begin Their Summer Sounds in July

JUNE 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Cicadas Begin Their Summer Sounds in July

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages people to discover nature this summer by learning more about cicadas. There are two types of cicadas, annual and periodical. As their names suggest, annual cicadas make an appearance every summer in July, whereas periodical cicadas emerge in 13 and 17-year cycles in late May.

Annual cicadas have dark eyes and greenish bodies, unlike the slightly smaller periodicals which have red eyes and blackish bodies.

After spending two-to-five years underground feeding on root juices, the annual cicada nymphs emerge and begin the search for mates using their raspy hum.

The cicada's endless drone seems to come from everywhere. Cicadas emit a sound that can reach up to 95 decibels, depending on proximity. That is the equivalent noise level of a Boeing 737 before landing.

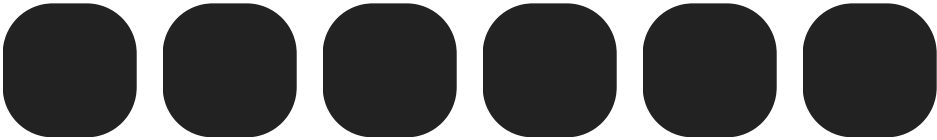
Unlike crickets rubbing together parts of their wings to create a chirp, male cicadas rapidly vibrate a piece of their exoskeleton to produce their loud call.

Despite the mild sound annoyance cicadas induce, the insect is a valuable food source for wildlife such as birds and other insects. In other countries it's common for people to chow down on the meaty bug due to its predictable emergence in the summer. Cicadas pose no threat to people and minimal threats to trees.

While Missouri doesn't have to worry about a large periodical cicada invasion this summer, states toward the east such as Ohio and West Virginia are dealing with a 17-year brood. The next 13-year periodical will not make an appearance in Missouri until 2024.

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Invasive Emerald Ash Borer Continues to Threaten Missouri Ash Trees

JUNE 16TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Invasive Emerald Ash Borer Continues to Threaten Missouri Ash Trees](#)

**Missouri** - Foresters with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) urge people not to move firewood and ash logs to avoid the further spread of invasive Emerald Ash

Borer (EAB) insects. Native to Asia, these bugs are destroying ash trees wherever they are, ruining millions of dollars in forest products and blemishing Missouri's forests as they leave behind skeletons of dead ash trees. An MDC EAB distribution map was updated this week marking all the known Missouri counties with EAB infestations. Examination of ash trees on public land by a U.S. Department of Agriculture officer this spring has revealed additional EAB populations. The updated count of infestations in Missouri is 23 EAB positive counties with 16 of those in the southeast portion of the state.

According to Jennifer Behnken, MDC's urban forester for Missouri's southeast region, EAB is especially threatening to Missouri's ash population because of a simple reason -- it doesn't belong here.

"Our native borer insects kill only the severely weakened trees, the trees that need to be taken out anyway," Behnken explained. "The EAB isn't native to our area and it isn't so picky. It kills healthy ash trees, so it's devastating to our ash tree population."

Behnken said there are few ways to control EAB in forests beyond trying to slow its spread. Many infestations start when people move infested ash wood into new areas. Missourians are encouraged to not move firewood, but rather obtain it near where it will be burned. A statewide EAB quarantine put in place by the U.S. and Missouri Departments of Agriculture in 2013 restricts the movement of ash nursery stock, any part of an ash tree, or firewood cut from any hardwood species into other states not known to have EAB.

"If people will stop moving ash trees, firewood or logs, that will help," she said. "On their own, EAB can only move up to five miles a year, so that's why moving firewood accelerates their movement tremendously."

Also, Behnken said MDC encourages cities, counties and neighborhoods to work with a local forester to help manage ash tree populations.

Ash trees are popular in urban areas, like neighborhoods, because they have a hearty reputation and tolerate a variety of environments. They're easily recognized and typically line urban streets to provide shade and improve the appearance and value of communities. However, they're also a native tree to Missouri forests and the effects of EAB are becoming noticeable on the landscape.

"There are several reasons you might notice a dead tree in the middle of an otherwise healthy forest, but it's becoming more often that you notice it's an ash tree that's fallen



prey to EAB,” Behnken said.

With EAB, it’s the larvae that do the real damage. Adult beetles simply nibble on foliage, but the larvae feed on the inner bark of ash trees, which stops the tree’s ability to move water and nutrients and eventually kills it. All of Missouri’s native ash trees such as green, white, pumpkin and blue ash are vulnerable to EAB. Behnken said cultivars aren’t immune and EAB affects the trees at all stages, from saplings to fully mature.

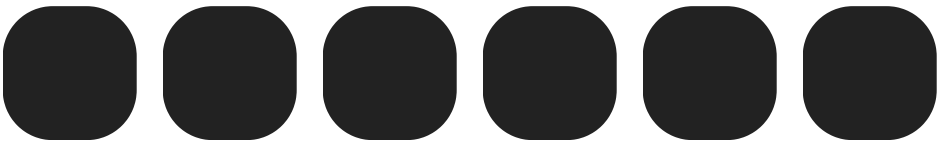
“We ask that people watch for and report suspected EAB infestations in counties that aren’t yet known to have them,” Behnken said. “We’re working to understand how EAB spreads and we certainly appreciate help from people who notice damage to their ash trees.”

Symptoms of an EAB infestation include leaf die-off from the top of the tree, moving downward, excessive new branch growth (epicormic sprouting), bark splitting and woodpecker damage. To check an ash tree for EAB, look for a thin-bodied, emerald colored beetle that is less than a half inch long. Look for the “galleries” or long, squiggly tunnels EAB leave under the bark of ash trees and look for D-shaped exit holes about 1/8 inch in diameter left from adult EAB beetles emerging from an infested tree.

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## Angler Catches State-Record Skipjack Herring

MAY 31ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Angler Catches State-Record Skipjack Herring

**Missouri** - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that Steve Wengler of St. Louis became the most recent record-breaking angler in Missouri when he hooked a skipjack herring on the Mississippi River using a rod and reel.

The new “pole and line” record skipjack herring caught by Wengler on April 17 weighed 2-pounds, 5-ounces. It broke the previous state-record of 1-pound, 14-ounces. Wengler was using two 1/8-ounce white and chartreuse jigs to catch the skipjack herring. MDC staff verified the record-weight fish using a certified scale in Defiance.

“The skipjack put up a pretty good fight, but I got it in as fast as I could because I didn’t want to lose the nice fish,” he said. “Once I got it in, I had an idea that I had caught the state record, but wasn’t sure until I put it on the scale.”

Anglers often catch skipjack herring to use for bait. The fish is boney, lacking in flavor, and is seldom used as food. But it fights spectacularly when hooked and can provide considerable sport on light tackle. The oil present in its flesh is said by fishermen to attract catfish. Skipjacks can usually be found in swift water below dams and around the ends of wing dikes.

“2016 is shaping up to be a big year for state record fish in Missouri,” MDC Fisheries

Programs Specialist Andrew Branson said. “We have already had nine new records so far, which is more than an entire year sometimes. The mild weather we have had so far this year means more anglers are fishing, and catching big fish.”

Wengler added that he intentionally tried catching a state-record skipjack herring.

“I’m really thrilled to have caught a fish like this,” he said. “I’m really glad I was able to get my name in the record books. My plan now is to get back on the water and go after many more records.”

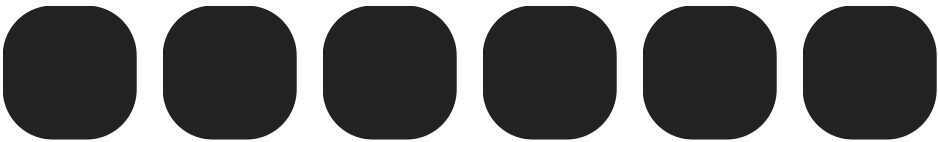
Missouri state-record fish are recognized in two categories: pole-and-line and alternative methods. Alternative methods include: throwlines, trotlines, limb lines, bank lines, jug lines, spearfishing, snagging, snaring, gigging, grabbing, archery, and atlatl.

James Lucas of O’Fallon recently snagged a state-record skipjack herring under the “alternative methods” category on the Mississippi River on April 8 that weighed 1 pound, 10-ounces with a length of 16 1/2 inches.

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