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BK LEACH

Widgeon's healing of his lipoma operation went well. Took him a bit for all of the incisions to heal up but that was expected since he had so many of them. Had to be very careful so that the incisions would not get infected, especially his right hip since it was so large.

Duck season was fast approaching and Widgeon was far far from being ready to hunt. Once I got the all clear from the Vet we took to his training every day. We began slowly since he was very much out of shape, taking long walks at first with short retrieves and built up from there. After about a couple of months of this he was getting back into form. Took him out to the lake at Bush for working on his water retrieves where he was doing doubles and blind retrieves with no problems.

Waterfowl season arrived and I deemed Widgeon ready for the first hunt I would have with him in many a year. Back in those days I hunted strictly public. I could not afford a lease or being part of a club, I mainly hunted Dresser Island, where I still have nightmares about building blind 40 or 42 in the inner island. Dragging 4X8 sheets of 3/4" plywood almost killed us! I got a reservation for BK Leach in the early part of the season, I always enjoy hunting BK, a lot of folks hate the area, but for me, I have almost always had a successful hunt there.

On the morning of the hunt to BK, Widgeon and I got up at the obligatory ungodly hour of 2:30 AM to load up in the truck and head up to BK where we arrived in plenty of time to scope out the previous numbers and get our spot picks. The pill I got was not the best, but not the worst either and I picked area 5 by the old/new pole barn which got taken out by the flood years ago, which was also where the draw took place.

We walked out to our spot in the darkness and set up. The weather was not the greatest for hunting, but I was out in the field with my dog. All the hard work leads you to this, being in the field with your best friend. Widgeon was all excited, splashing around and carrying on like a puppy, even though he was about 9 or 10 about this time. The water was full of debris of cattails and other matter, but he did not care, just romping around carrying on as I threw out our meager spread of 18 decoys.

Shooting time was upon us and I got Widgeon up on his platform, he sat and just watched and did not make a sound, he knew it was show time. Soon, I saw he was looking at the skies and tracking something, a single hen Mallard was coming into our little spread. Now, I was not the greatest shot then, nor now, but I did managed to knock her down on the second shot and to my amazement, Widgeon was still sitting on his stand. I gave him the dead bird command and he launched off the stand! Granted, not too graceful mind you since the stand fell over and he swam out to the duck, grabbed her and began to bring her back! When he got close I saw she was very much alive but you could see in his excitement that she was not going anywhere and he retrieved it to hand, just like he was trained! After dispatching the duck he got huge amounts of praise and obligatory treats. I was one proud Dad!! Widgeon had finally arrived!!!!!! Problem was, that was the only duck we saw that day, but what a day!

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MEMBERS MEETING

It was decided on this coming members meeting that we will have a discussion of Turkey hunting since the Spring season is upon us and Dan Zerr will be giving that discussion. Come on out and enjoy the discussion as Dan has always given a GREAT discussion!

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Gary Hirsch has decided to join YOUR MVDHA board to help make a difference in the future of your club. Welcome Gary and thanks for stepping up to help!

MARCH MEETING

If you missed last month's members meeting you missed one for the books. We had over 80 folks show up to listen to Gary and his representative of MDC to discuss the new initiative to no longer have a blind drawing in the Upper Mississippi Conservation area.



The summary of the proposal is:

The proposed amendment removes Upper Mississippi Conservation Area from having an annual drawing to allocate blind locations after the 2024 drawing. This will result in all

sections of Upper Mississippi Conservation Area falling under the statewide regulations (paragraph 1) for decoys and blinds beginning in 2026.



In my mind this is a very dangerous proposition. For one, it takes more opportunities away from duck hunters who do not or cannot afford a boat to get to some of these areas or to build a boat blind. For another, hunting the Mississippi requires special equipment, specifically the size of a boat to handle those unpredictable waters. Duck hunters will chance those waters with less than desirable equipment and safety gear.

The blind draw has been around for years and has many a fond memory of the traditions of waterfowling that many a person looks forward to each and every year. This proposition will be a huge loss in our waterfowl traditions that are dwindling almost daily.

If you would like to make your thoughts known on this issue, out on the MDC site there is a comment area for you to express your opinion to MDC about this, if you support or

MVDHA BOARD

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Nick Witte
Gary Hirsch

oppose this proposal. Comments are opened to the public from 2 April till 1 May. The link to the page is:

<https://mdc.mo.gov/about-regulations/wildlife-code-missouri/proposed-regulation-changes>

Scroll down towards the bottom and look for: 3 CSR 10-11.155: Decoys and Blinds

Select the link of Comment on This Proposed Legislation and let your voice be known.

Below is the proposed amendment copied from the MDC site:

(1) Decoys and blinds are permitted but must be removed from the area daily and may not be left unattended between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., except as otherwise provided in this chapter. Blinds may not be constructed on-site from woody vegetation except for willows (*Salicaceae* spp.).

(A) The current Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Waterfowl Hunting Information booklet is hereby incorporated in this Code by reference. This booklet is published annually in March by, and a printed copy can be obtained from, the Missouri Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180 and is also available online at www.missouriconservation.org. This rule does not incorporate any subsequent amendments or additions.

(B) On those portions of Upper Mississippi Conservation Area designated as restricted waterfowl hunting areas, blind sites shall be designated and allotted through a system of registration and drawing established by the department. No blind drawings will take place after the 2024

drawing. Blinds must be constructed in accordance with specifications, dates, and other requirements as described in the Upper Mississippi Conservation Area Waterfowl Hunting Information booklet. Waterfowl may be taken only from a designated blind except that hunters may retrieve dead birds and pursue and shoot downed cripples. This rule does not apply during the early teal season and the early Canada goose season. On portions of the area designated as open, blinds may be constructed without site restrictions. Blinds or blind sites on both restricted and open portions of the area may not be locked, transferred, rented, or sold. Boats shall not be left overnight at blind sites. Blinds unoccupied at one-half (1/2) hour before legal shooting time may be used by the first hunter to arrive.



Huge thanks goes out to Borgettis Bar & Grill and their staff for allowing us to move out of our normal meeting place and basically take over half of their establishment for this. Much appreciated!!

TROUT TRIP UPDATE

Our annual trip to Taneycomo was another resounding success. It was great to be back at Trout Hollow to enjoy that resort. We had a smaller crowd this year but still had a GREAT time! The weather was perfect for fishing, best time ever up in the trophy area with Tony where we caught and release numerous fish and one that was about a three pounder that went over 18 inches.

We had our annual Trout Tournament and the results are:

Jerry Sr won heaviest stringer of 2 lbs 1 oz

Duane Stinchcomb and Scott Combs tied for second largest stringer at 1 lb 12 oz

Rob Nowak won largest fish at 2 lb 3 oz.

Funny thing happened to Rob's fish, at the weigh in, where his fish was laid out to be measured, everybody thought it was dead, but it was very much alive and flopped back into the water! That fish is out there for the next angular! One lucky fish!



Jerry Sr



Jerry, Tony, his lovely wife and Bill



Sampling the fried food before it was eating time. We had fried everything. Duck (complete with copper plate bismuth courtesy of Jerry), crappie, frog legs, chukar and of course trout. The food was excellent!!

We all had a great time enjoying each others fellowship and company. Hopefully you can make plans for next year to join this event, one I am sure you will enjoy!



Ken and Erik

2024 FUND RAISER

Our coffers are running low and we need to raise money. For a fund raiser this year, Kenny Liebel has offered to design and create a custom made hunting knife.

Until recently, I did not know much about Kenny and his extraordinary talents. I knew he created duck calls and carved decoys, and is a tool and die technician, but until recently, I found out he is an re-enactor and has also been making custom knives for years!

Kenny has graciously volunteered to design and create a custom hunting knife complete with a custom leather sheath!

The design is in it's infancy but here are the preliminary details:

- Made out of 496 Staret Tool Steel
- 5 to 7 inch blade length
- The blade will be buffed out to mirror finish
- It will have a Brass Hilt

- Laminated handle made out of wood that is similar to golf driver handles
- Leather Sheath that will be hand stitched
- The value of the knife is about \$600.00

Once the knife is completed I will be posting pictures of it here. This planning is still in it's infancy and we have not determined what the cost of the raffle tickets will be at this time, so stay tuned!!

MDC QUESTIONS

In our January Board meeting where we read the answers that we sent to MDC it was apparent we did not agree with the answers to those questions or we had follow-up questions to MDC about their answers. It was decided at the board meeting to hold off this discussion to an undetermined date where you will be given the opportunity to voice your concerns about those answers and we will formulate a rebuttal or follow-up questions to MDC about those answers.

MDC QUESTIONS UDPT

We received an update and answers from MDC of the questions we sent them. Since the answers are long I will be parsing them out over the next couple of months so you will see them in their entirety. Here is the last set of questions with their answers:

18. How is the Missouri Department of Conservation actively promoting minorities and urban recruitment of new hunters? Additionally, what efforts are being made to educate suburban and urban schools and communities about the significance of conservation, the North Ameri-

can model of conservation, and the funding from the Pittman Robertson and Dingle Johnson acts? **Answer:** The Conservation Department created a new Relevancy Branch in 2020 to engage a broader constituency in conservation throughout all parts of the state, including Missourians who may not have had access to conservation and recreation opportunities in the past. The Branch has made efforts to expand public engagement and recreational use opportunities to a diverse group of constituents; foster relationships with a broad array of partners; and implement new initiatives to grow awareness and citizen engagement with the outdoors. As a component of this work, the Relevancy Branch carries out strategic R3 programming for the Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation of hunters, anglers, trappers, and shooting sports participants in Missouri. Missouri Conservationist and Xplor magazines reach over 500,000 and 225,000 in-state subscribers, respectively. Missouri Conservationist is targeted to adult readers; Xplor is targeted to readers 7 to 12 years old. The goal of both magazines is to inform readers about the importance of conservation and describe how Missourians can get involved in conservation efforts and outdoor recreation. Missouri Conservationist and Xplor reach 91,574 and 46,973 subscribers, respectively, in the St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, Columbia, Cape Girardeau, and Kirksville areas. The Department's Community and Private Lands

Conservation Branch developed conservation equity models that are utilized by staff to prioritize communities to engage. The models are based on demographic data, population density, poverty levels, access to public land, land cover types, and tree canopy cover to identify appropriate community targets. Regional Community Conservation teams have increased conservation education and conservation efforts (tree plantings, pollinator plantings, invasive species management, storm water management, green school yards, etc.), within the targeted communities. Protection Branch have increased community policing initiatives within the targeted communities as well.

19. What is the allocated budget for the annual sunflower show, including the expenditure on sunflower seeds, fuel, and labor costs? **Answer:** Sunflower planting in 2023, at Columbia Bottom CA, cost \$2,706.60 for seed and herbicide. Our part-time labor expense was \$325.28. We do not track fuel expense on individual projects such as sunflower planting. This is due to the same equipment being used on other habitat projects and mowing while the sunflowers are being planted.

DIVE BOMB

Dive Bomb Squad Fest 2024
4TH Annual Squadfest is coming this summer.

JULY 19TH - 20TH 2024
370 Lakeside Park in St. Peters, MO

CALLING CONTESTS • RETRIEVER COMBINE • SHOW SPECIALS • VENDOR FAIR • RE-

TRIEVER TRAINING DEMONSTRATIONS • FOOD & DRINK • AND MORE!

Dive Bomb Industries' Squad-Fest is an exciting free-admission, waterfowling event for the entire family. Come on out for exclusive in-person show specials, check out the latest and greatest products at our massive vendor fair, hear the world's best duck and goose callers go toe-to-toe, watch hard-charging gun dogs compete in the retriever combine, and much more, all while spending time with outdoor enthusiasts from across the country!

EVENT HOURS

Friday, July 19th — 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 20th — 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For more information go to:

<https://www.divebombindustries.com/pages/squadfest-2024>

2023-2024 SEASON

Light Goose Conserv Order

Feb. 7–April 30, 2024

Up Coming Events

April 10: Talking Turkey with Dan Zerr

May 8: TBD

June 11: Trap Shoot

July 10: TBD

Aug 14: NO MEETING

Sept 11: TBD

Oct 9: TBD

Nov 13: NO MEETING

Dec 11: Annual Holiday Party

General Information

This newsletter is distributed to our active members. For non-active members check the website for the current newsletter. We have our general meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM and our Board of Directors' Meeting every fourth Monday at 7 PM. Members meetings are held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. Board Meetings are held at various locations, contact Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548 for this month's location. In case of bad weather call Ken Liebel at 314-822-8030 or Jerry Mercurio at 314-603-6548.

Visit YOUR web site at <https://mvdha.com> to get the most recent news, events and updates. There you will find this newsletter and other helpful information concerning conservation and the great outdoors that we love. If you would like to be added to the email listing of important news and updates you can do that through the web site through the contact us link, fill out the form and make sure you add your email address.

Any comments or suggestions concerning the newsletter or the website can be sent to mvdha@mvdha.com. I am always looking forwards to suggestions concerning content and what you would like to see or be presented in these publications.

Next members meeting: APRIL 10, 2024

Next Board Meeting: APRIL 22, 2024

Members are invited to the Board Meeting

Member's meeting start at 7:30, Board meeting starts at 7:00

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DUCK HUNTERS ASSN. INC.

"A Nonprofit Association of, by, and for the Duck Hunters"

"ST. LOUIS' NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION"

P.O. BOX 6, VALLEY PARK, MO 63088

