



APRIL 2026

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**BUSCH CONSERVATION AREA**

A lot of people, me included, give the Missouri Department of Conservation a hard time, how they manage waterfowl areas, waterfowl hunting in particular, some of their fishing programs, deer hunting programs etc. There are few times when I can expound on the accomplishments of the MDC, but here is one of them.

I like to fish the lakes out at Busch, my favorite lake is lake 16 which is a catch and release lake so you do not get much pressure of people going there. During the winter urban trout fishing I like to fish lake 21, another catch and release lake. Both of these lakes are fun for me when I go out fly fishing. When I went out to lake 21 during one of the warmer days, I saw MDC was clearing out the lake at the entrance of the conservation area. Over time, they completely scraped it clean of all vegetation, wondering what in the world is MDC doing now. I did not return for about two months.

Last month I went back out to try catching the last trout still in the lakes and when I entered into the area, that same lake had water in it again and it was full of ducks. There were Ring Necks, Blue Wing Teal, Mallards, Wood Ducks, Gadwall and even a Hooded Merganser. It was a sight to see. I saw an MDC employee and pulled her over and complemented her on the work. She stated the beavers were tearing up the area and MDC decided to clear them out. Below are some pics I took of the place, if you have a chance, while the birds are migrating north, head on out to Busch and bring your binoculars and camera.



These are mostly Ring Necks. There were probably over 100 Ring Necks in this pool.

Blue Wing Teal. We don't get to see fully plumed out Blue Wings here locally, unless they are migrating back, so here is your chance!



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### MEMBERS MEETING

With the advent of Turkey season coming upon us will be having Dan Zerr talking Turkey at this month's members meeting. Here is your chance to talk to one of the experts in Turkey hunting. He has presented us with this subject matter a few years back and it was always an enjoyable discussion. So come on out and enjoy the time!

### TROUT TRIP UPDATE

We had our annual fishing trip this past month to Lake Taneycomo where we stayed at Trout Hollow and we all had a fantastic time!

For me, the fishing was great, caught the biggest fish and smallest fish up in the trophy area since I have been going, 20" and 4". Fishing this year was a challenge though, glad Duane brought some extra fish, we might not had enough for the fish fry! Thanks as usual to Duane and your family for everything! Here are some pictures of the event.

As per the norm, we had our trout tournament and here are the results:



Largest Fish of 14" Scott Combs

We had a tie for largest stringer of 3.96 lbs between Lucas Mercurio and Ken Harsin



Lucas Mercurio tied largest stringer



Ken Harsin tied largest stringer

### MVDHA BOARD

- President:** Ken Liebel
- First V. Pres.:** Scott Thoele
- Fin. Secretary:** Rob Mueller
- Rec. Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Correspondence Secretary:** Bill Hilgeman
- Membership Chairman:** Duane Stinchcomb
- Board of Directors:**
  - Chairman of the Board** Jerry Mercurio
  - Asst Chairman of the Board** Art Wende
  - Directors:** Brad Douglass, Jerry Mercurio Jr., James Edwards, Gary Hirsch



View from the water



Could not do it without these two and their spouses, thanks!



Kicking back and relaxing.



Good food and good company



It was a great time had by all. Plan now on attending next years event, the dates have been set for 19 thru 21 March 2027.

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

The board is pleased to announce that Duane Stinchcomb has stepped up and stated that he will become our Membership Chairman. He told Jerry this at our annual fishing trip this past month. Thanks Duane, much appreciated and welcome!

### DELTA BANQUET

**Delta Waterfowl Confluence Chapter**

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Doors Open: 6:00 PM | Dinner: 7:00 PM

The Christy | 9000 Veterans Memorial Pkwy | O'Fallon, MO 63366

### Ticket Options:

Youth Ticket - \$35

Single Ticket - \$80

Couples Ticket - \$150

Silver Table - \$600

Includes: 8 Event Tickets, 8 Delta hats, 8 Friends of Delta Memberships, 4 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, and Advertising at Event and on Social Media.

Gold Table - \$1,000

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 8 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Swamp Gear pack 20 Mag Bag Cooler

Platinum Table - \$2,500

8 Event Tickets, Preferred Seating, 8 Delta hats, 1 \$100 Delta Waterfowl Membership Sponsor, 7 Friends of Delta Memberships, 16 Sponsor Only Gun Raffle Tickets, Advertising at Event and on Social Media, and Ability to Display Banner or Table Cloth.

Sponsor Gift - Savage Axis 30-06

For more information, please contact: Jameson Perkins at (314) 707-9543 | perkinsjameson27@gmail.com

### The Science of Disturbance (part 2)

Excerpts from DU, the full article can be found at: Ducks.org

### Understanding Waterfowl: The Science of Disturbance

### Hunting Is Better Near Sanctuaries

Over three seasons, we indexed hunting opportunity by using autonomous recording units to detect more than 339,000 distinct shotgun volleys in our study area. Two striking patterns emerged. First, hunting opportunities were greater (more shotgun volleys were detected) in areas that were close to sanctuaries compared to areas farther from sanctuaries, suggesting that undisturbed sanctuary areas benefited hunters. Second, when sanctuaries were intentionally disturbed as part of our study, daily shotgun volleys across the landscape dropped by roughly one-third. Thus, disturbing sanctuaries didn't result in a wider distribution of birds. Instead, ducks hunkered down and actually moved less in response to disturbance on sanctuary areas.

**Connectivity Among Sanctuaries Matters**

Our research suggests that several small sanctuaries located in close proximity to each other will generate more "duck traffic" than a single large sanctuary will. Think of sanctuaries as a network of stepping-stones where ducks can hop from one safe area to the next. Our analysis showed that shorter distances between sanctuaries led to more duck movement.

When planning acquisitions or setting aside rest areas, managers should consider prioritizing proximity to other sanctuaries. Strategically placing rest areas across the landscape could help distribute ducks over a wider area and improve hunting opportunities. For agencies with finite budgets, acquisition of smaller rest areas surrounding large well-established sanctuaries (e.g., national wildlife refug-

es) might be a wise investment. Likewise, private land managers could partner with neighbors to create sanctuary networks between state and federal lands.

(To be continued)

**MDC SETS SEASONS**

MDC sets upcoming migratory game bird and waterfowl seasons

For more information on hunting in Missouri, visit MDC online at [mdc.mo.gov](http://mdc.mo.gov).

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri Conservation Commission approved recommendations from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) at its March 27 open meeting in Jefferson City for upcoming 2026 migratory-game-bird-hunting seasons and 2026-2027 waterfowl-hunting seasons, pending final federal approval.

**Mourning Doves, Eurasian Colared Doves, and White-Winged Doves**

Season: Sept. 1 through Nov. 29

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession combined total for all three species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

**2026-2027 WATERFOWL HUNTING**

**Teal**

Season: Sept. 12 - 20

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in possession

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in possession

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

**Ducks**

Season:

**North Zone:** Oct. 31 through Dec. 29

**Middle Zone:** Nov. 7 - Dec. 13 and Dec. 19 through Jan. 10, 2027

**South Zone:** Nov. 26 – 29 and Dec. 7 through Jan. 31, 2027

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

4 mallards (no more than 2 females)

3 wood ducks

2 redheads

2 canvasbacks

2 black ducks

**3 pintail**

2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days

1 mottled duck

Possession Limit: Three times the daily bag or 18 total, varies by species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

**Snow Geese (White and Blue Phases) and Ross's Geese**

Season: Nov. 11 through Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 20 blue, snow, or Ross's geese daily with no possession limit

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

**White-Fronted Geese**

Season: Nov. 11 through Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 2 daily and 6 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

**Canada Geese and Brant**

Season: Oct. 3 - 10 and Nov. 11 – Feb. 6, 2027

Limits: 3 Canada geese and Brant in aggregate daily, 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

**Light Goose Conservation Order**

Season: Feb. 7 through April 30, 2027

Limits: No daily or possession limits

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

Methods: For the taking of blue, snow and Ross's geese, hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shells and recorded or electronically amplified bird calls or sounds or imitations of bird calls or sounds.

**YOUTH HUNTING DAYS**

North Zone: Oct. 24 and 25

Middle Zone: Oct. 31 and Nov. 1

South Zone: Nov. 21 and 22

Limits: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Hours: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Requirements: Any person 15 years of age or younger may participate in youth waterfowl hunting days without permit provided they are in the immediate presence of an adult 18 years of age or older. If the youth hunter is not certified in hunter education, the adult must have the required permits and have in his or her possession proof of hunter education unless exempt. The adult may not hunt ducks but may participate in other seasons

that are open on youth hunting days.

**CHANGE TO FEDERAL DUCK STAMP**

Per the Federal Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, the Federal Duck Stamp has been converted to a digital version and hunters are no longer required to carry a paper copy. Hunters must have a digital version in their possession.

**SEASONS**

**Light Goose Conservation**

Season: Feb. 7 — April 30, 2026

**ILLINOIS TAX**

New Hunting tax: Illinois Democrats are **proposing** a new tax on hunters and firearm enthusiasts in Illinois.

Starting Jan 1, 2027 Illinois firearms owners, hunters, and marksmen will pay a five cent tax per round of ammunition tax under HB4414. Plus, there will be a new requirement that each round of ammunition be registered with a serial number.

That trip to the shooting range or hunting trip will soon get very expensive and very complicated.

Illinois House Bill 4414 mandates that starting January 1, 2027, all handgun ammunition sold or possessed in Illinois must be serialized and traceable by the Illinois State Police (ISP).

The bill was just introduced by Chicago area State Representative Anne Stava-Murray (D - Downers Grove). Democrats support the bill.

The bill will create a centralized registry for transactions, imposes a fee of up to 5 cents per round, and makes possession of non-serialized ammunition a misdemeanor.

HB4414 includes:

Serialization Requirement: All handgun ammunition manufactured, imported, or sold in Illinois must have unique identifiers on the packaging and the ammunition itself starting Jan. 1, 2027.

Registry and Tracking: The ISP will manage a database of handgun ammunition transactions, recording the buyer's identification and the unique identifier of the ammunition.

Fees: A fee of up to 5 cents per round will be charged to the end-user the money will go to the state of Illinois.

Huge Penalties: the law would make Possessing non-serialized handgun ammunition in a public place a Class C misdemeanor.

Exceptions: Exemptions apply to law enforcement, military, and specific authorized individuals

The bill is designed for the ISP to track ammunition transactions.

Revenue from the five cent per round tax would go to the state of Illinois.

**Up Coming Events**

**? Means tentative or have plans for**

**Apr 8 : Talking Turkey**

**13 May : The art of making decoy weights**

**10 June : Jay Henges Shoot ?**

**8 July : Swap Meet**

**12 Aug: No Meeting**

**9 Sept : Ducks at a distance ?**

**14 Oct : MDC Forecast ?**

**11 Nov: No Meeting**

**9 Dec: Holliday 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 also held at Borgettis Bar & Grill 1667 South Old Hwy 141 Fenton MO. 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](mailto: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 8, 2026**

**Next Board Meeting: April 27, 2026**

**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

