WILDLIFE INSIDER ONLINE

Annual Shikar-Safari Award Goes to McNairy County Officer Sam Bedwell

Sam Bedwell has been honored by the Shikar–Safari Club International as its 2015 Tennessee Wildlife Officer of the Year. Bedwell serves the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency as a wildlife officer in McNairy County. He received his award at a recent meeting of the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission (TFWC).

The annual award from the conservation-based organization honors the officer who displayed outstanding performance and achievement among law enforcement personnel. Bedwell is among a distinguished group of officers nationwide to receive the honor.

Along with his daily duties as a wildlife officer, Bedwell is heavily involved in public outreach in his county and district. More than 1,300 people attended or participated in his various outreach programs in 2015. One program provided the opportunity for elementary students to learn about aquatic life. He also presented an archery program at a summer event where children were exposed to the sport for the first time.

He wrote various newspaper articles for the county paper that covered boating safety, current hunting and fishing topics, and changes in regulations. He hosted a booth for the McNairy High School sports show and also held a deer day at an archery store to answer questions and score deer. He taught and organized five hunter education courses resulting in the certification of 214 students.

Sam Bedwell, receiving the Shikar-Safari Club International's 2015 Tennessee Wildlife Officer of the Year award. Pictured (from left) are TFWC Chairman Jim Bledsoe, Boating and Law Enforcement Chief Darren Rider, Jim Maddux of the Shikar-Safari International, Sam's wife, Robin, Sam, and TWRA Executive Director Ed Carter.

One of the highlights of the year came when he organized and participated in a free fishing event at a local senior center. Several World War II veterans were among the participants, including one who said, "I just wanted to go fishing one more time."

Bedwell was involved in several case investigations during the course of the year. He assisted other law enforcement officers in and out of his district. He partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture on planning and coordinating the trapping of several groups of wild hogs in McNairy County.

Shikar-Safari Club International was founded in 1952 for the purpose of advancing knowledge concerning wildlife of the world, independently and in cooperation with zoological societies, universities and museums. Each year, the club sponsors an award for the Wildlife Officer of the Year in all 50 states and 10 Canadian provinces.

Hunting & Trapping Guide for 2016-17 Covers State Regulations

The *2016-17 Tennessee Hunting & Trapping Guide* is available and may be obtained at any TWRA regional office and anywhere state hunting and fishing licenses are sold. Also, the guide is available on TWRA's website, www.tnwildlife.org.

The *What's New* section lists the various changes for the upcoming year.

In addition to hunting regulations and seasons for this year, information is also provided on TWRA firing ranges, public hunting areas, and Wildlife Management Areas.

The 2016-17 Tennessee hunting and fishing licenses are valid through February 2017. Licenses are available at any TWRA regional office, licensing agents, and on the TWRA website (www.tnwildlife.org).

This year's cover photograph is by Brian Shults, of Greenback, Tenn.

Leith Konyndyk Adds National Award, Recognized by State Legislature

Leith Konyndyk, a wildlife officer for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency received another prestigious honor with a national award from the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF). He was named NWTF Law Enforcement Officer of the Year during the 40th annual NWTF Convention.

Additionally, he was honored later in the spring with a resolution by the Tennessee General Assembly for his accomplishments and accolades which included being named the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Officer of the Year last fall. Konyndyk serves as a wildlife officer in TWRA Region II's Lincoln County.

The NWTF honor comes for his dedication in fostering the next generation of hunters and sportsmen, as well as his accomplishments in upholding the state's game laws.

"Officer Konyndyk is an outstanding example of someone who recognizes the importance of conserving wildlife and habitat, and preserving our hunting heritage," said George Thornton, NWTF CEO. "His dedication to upholding game laws and reaching potential hunters is impressive. We commend his service and are proud to honor him with this award."

At the Tennessee General Assembly ceremony, Konyndyk and his wife, Erika, along their sons, Lake and Roark, were joined by State Sen. Jim Tracy and State Rep. Pat Marsh on the floor as the resolution honoring him was adopted for the special April presentation.

"Leith Konyndyk epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean, and the members of this General Assembly find it appropriate to recognize him on this special occasion," part of the resolution said.

During the year, Konyndyk conducted educational and outreach events for more than 3,300 participants. He also coordinated a Kid's Hunting For A Cure deer hunt that raised more than $50,000 for St. Jude Hospital. He taught and certified 109 students in hunter education.

He has been trained in Individual and Group Crisis Prevention Management, Concerns of Police Survivors and Traumas for Law Enforcement and has become a Chaplain for the Agency.

Konyndyk is very active as an instructor for the TWRA. He teaches ATV safety not only for TWRA personnel but for the National Guard, Drug Task Force, ABC, THP and the U.S Forest Service.

Back row, from left– Sen. Jim Tracy, Erika Konyndyk, Leith, TWRA Cpt. Jeff Skelton, TWRA Assistant Director Bobby Wilson. Front row– Leith's sons, Lake and Roark.

New Coordinators Join Wildlife and Forestry Division

Jamie Feddersen

James Kelly

The TWRA Wildlife and Forestry Division has added two new members to its staff in Jamie Feddersen, who will serve as waterfowl coordinator and James Kelly, the deer and wild hog coordinator.

Feddersen comes to the TWRA after having worked in Florida on waterfowl and wetland habitat projects for more than 15 years. He most recently was serving as the waterfowl, small game and furbearer program leader.

A service veteran and certified biologist, he earned a M.S. degree in zoology at the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale. He earned a B.S. degree in wildlife management/wetland ecology from the University of New Hampshire.

Kelly is a subject matter expert in white-tailed deer management and ecology. James has been serving as a big-game biometrician in New York and previously was the assistant deer project leader in Florida. He earned a M.S. degree focused on deer management from the University of Georgia and his B.S. in biology from Mansfield University.

Chris Richardson, Retired Officer Chuck Borum Among Honored at State Conservation Ceremony

Chris Richardson, Special Assistant to the TWRA Director in Policy and retired TWRA Wildlife Officer Chuck Borum, were among those honored at the Tennessee Wildlife Federation's 51st Annual Conservation Achievement Awards ceremony. Since 1965, the Tennessee Wildlife Federation has honored a select group of leaders to celebrate the protection of wildlife and habitat.

Chris received the Chairman's Award. As the director of policy and legislative affairs, he has worked on key legislative initiatives and challenges. This has included issues ranging from the eradication of invasive wild hogs to the Wildlife Restitution Act and the establishment of license fees that largely fund the state's wildlife conservation efforts have made a dramatic impact on Tennessee' natural resources.

Richardson was a practicing attorney before joining TWRA in 2013, and has since demonstrated a unique ability to interpret difficult subjects, solve problems and build relationships.

The Gedeon D. Petit Memorial Award is presented to a TWRA officer in the areas of citizen education, public outreach, and community services. The honored recipient is recognized for those traits which exemplify the dedication, energy, enthusiasm, skills, and dedication of the late TWRA officer.

(clockwise) Tennessee Wildlife Federation President Terry Lewis presented awards to Chris Richardson, retiree Chuck Borum, and former commissioner Tom Hensley at this year's ceremony.

Upon his retirement in 2014, Wildlife Officer Chuck Borum had logged more than 40 years with the TWRA. Chuck is credited with directing the restoration of the wild turkey in Tennessee, personally trapping and moving more than 2,500 birds. As populations began to rebound in the 1980s, he organized seminars and taught hundreds of sportsmen and women about the new sport of turkey hunting. Borum also contributed greatly to ethical trapping practices for nuisance wildlife, taught Hunter Education classes to thousands of students.

In addition to Chris and Chuck receiving their awards, former Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission member Tom Hensley received the Z. Cartter Patton Award. The award is given for many years of valuable service to the cause of conservation in Tennessee, including natural resources management, environmental protection and enhancement, public education, public service or political support.

New TFWC Officers Elected; Commissioner Bledsoe Honored For Tenure As Chairman

The Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission has elected its new officers for 2016-17 and Jim Bledsoe (Jamestown) was honored for his tenure as the commission's chairman for the past year.

Harold Cannon was named the TFWC's new chairman. A resident of Lenoir City, he served as the group's vice-chairman for the past year and as secretary the previous year.

Jamie Woodson, of Lebanon, is the new vice-chairman after serving the past year as the TFWC secretary. David Watson, of Lookout Mountain, is a new officer and will serve as the TFWC secretary.

Commissioner Bledsoe was recognized for his leadership the past year and presented a plaque of appreciation. He will continue to serve as a TFWC commissioner.

The TFWC is the governing body of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

Jim Bledsoe holds a plaque of appreciation he received for his service as chairman. To Mr. Bledsoe's left is Vice Chairman Jamie Woodson (Lebanon), and to his right are Chairman Harold Cannon (Lenoir City), and Secretary David Watson (Lookout Mountain).

Wes Winton Recognized During May TFWC Meeting For Receiving National Award

The TWRA's Wes Winton, who serves as wildlife manager at Arnold Engineering Development Center (AEDC), has been honored with a prestigious national award.

Wes Winton, holding his award, is pictured with (from left) Harold Cannon, TFWC Chairman from Lenoir City, Jim Krajewski, AEDC Officer in Charge over Natural Resources, and Ed Carter, TWRA Executive Director.

He has been selected as the recipient of the 2016 National Military Fish and Wildlife Association (NMFWA) Award for Law Enforcement in support of Natural Resource Conservation Management on U.S. Department of Defense lands.

The award was announced at the NMFWA workshop in Pittsburgh. At a recent meeting of the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission, Winton was presented the award by AEDC Officer in Charge over Natural Resources, Col. Jim Krajewski.

Among his accomplishments, Wes has been practicing some aggressive quail habitat management on the Region II quail focus area, Bark Camp Barrens. Those efforts were noted by the Music City Quail Forever chapter. In addition to his duties at AEDC, he serves as wildlife manager at five other wildlife management areas.

The NMFWA, a non-profit organization, was officially chartered in 1983 by a small group of Department of Defense resource management professionals. These individuals recognized the critical need for enhanced awareness of natural resource conservation requirements in order to provide for both long term sustainability of resource diversity and the successful accomplishment of the military training mission on public lands administered by the Department of Defense.

Federal Legislation Introduced For Funding To Conserve Species In Greatest Need

The TWRA received notification that a bill introduced in the United States Congress could annually dedicate funds from the development of energy and mineral resources on federal lands and waters to state fish and wildlife agencies.

The introduction of the bill has been an effort in progress that the TWRA and other state wildlife agencies have been working toward for several years. The legislation calls for dedicating $1.3 billion annually to conserve species of greatest conservation need. The benefit would come to about $22 million for Tennessee to implement the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and to provide funding for non-game animals.

"This legislation does not create a new tax, but rather reallocates existing revenue generated from energy production on federal lands and waters," said Ed Carter, TWRA Executive Director. "With support from energy companies and a broad coalition of industry and non-governmental partners, we're hopeful this legislation will be well-received by members of Congress.

"Through hunting and fishing license fees, hunters and fishermen have long been the mainstay of funding for non-game animals. I have no doubt the anglers and hunters across the state will welcome this additional help in securing needed financial assistance."

Prothonotary Warbler - by Scott Somershoe

Carter went on to say "the primary intent of this legislation" is to keep animals off the endangered species list and to provide for sound management. For an animal to become listed as endangered it is obviously in peril, but that action can also inadvertently alter management for other non-listed species as well as overall management for any land or water-related uses.

Congressman Don Young (R-AK) and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (D-MI) introduced the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act (HR5650). The bill reflects the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources which released its final report in March 2016. The funding would be deposited in the existing but unfunded Wildlife Conservation Restoration subaccount under Pittman-Robertson.

In addition to providing much needed funding to effectively implement State Wildlife Action Plans, the Wildlife Conservation Restoration program can also be used for conservation education and wildlife-dependent recreation. If passed into law, this would be the largest infusion of funding for state-based fish and wildlife conservation in a generation.

The next step in the process is to secure bipartisan co-sponsors of the bill. A legislative team that includes staff from Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the National Wildlife Federation and Congressional Sportsman's Foundation has developed a list of members to target for co-sponsorship.

Those two organizations have asked for the public's help to reach out and encourage members of Congress to co-sponsor the bill. The legislation will provide an opportunity to obtain sustained funding for fish and wildlife diversity.

New Book To Highlight Tennessee's Natural Wonders

"Wilderness does not exist today in the context of three hundred years ago. But there is wildness. A wildness endures in Tennessee from the Mississippi River valley to the Appalachian Mountains. To many, this wildness is modern-day wilderness. Today's Tennessee wilderness endures in special places where a hunter, fisher, hiker or boater explores without the sight or sound of another human… only the wind in the trees and the eagle overhead. The Volunteer State's wildlife management areas, lakes and rivers are these places." – Larry R. Richardson

Tennessee Wilderness–A Legacy Endures is a pictorial essay of woods and waters. It is a time capsule of natural beauty, a display of those who are charged with its perpetuation and a legacy of forever-wild things and places in Tennessee.

Tennessee Wilderness contains more than 150 vibrant photographs of state, national and public lands and waters in Tennessee accented by quotes from noted outdoorsmen like these...

"Tennessee's wildlife management areas are magical places" –Wade Bourne, Outdoor Writer, Host Ducks Unlimited TV

"Our wildlife management areas are memory makers" –Larry Rea, Outdoor Writer

"Tennessee's wildlife management areas have provided backdrops for many of my eagle and duck paintings" –Ralph J. McDonald, Wildlife Artist.

Tennessee Wilderness–A Legacy Endures

- Published by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation
- Written by Larry R. Richardson with photography by Thomas Wood
- Publication Date: November 2016
- Retail: $39.95 plus tax and shipping/handling
- Order at www.TWRF.net or telephone (615) 831-9311

New State Record Confirmed For Rainbow Trout

The TWRA has confirmed a new state record rainbow trout, caught by 15-year-old Benton resident John Morgan in Polk County in mid-June.

The fish weighed 18 pounds, 8 ounces. The fish measured 32 inches long and 22¼ inches in girth. The catch surpasses the previous record for a rainbow trout of 16 pounds, 15 ounces set in 2002 by Ronnie Rowland at Ft. Patrick Henry Reservoir.

Morgan caught the record fish in a farm pond owned by a friend of his grandfather. He had agreed to help remove a snapping turtle from the pond and was invited to bring a fishing pole along. Morgan didn't know that this favor would lead to a new state record. After 45 minutes, Morgan had fished a little, caught the turtle and decided to fish for another 10 minutes before leaving. He cast again and after a 20 minute struggle, he had the fish on shore.

A sophomore at Polk County High School, Morgan fishes several days a week, mostly in the Hiwassee River. "I just love being outside, hunting and fishing," said Morgan.

"We're very excited for this young man to find himself in the record book," said TWRA Region III fisheries program manager Mark Thurman. "With so many records being broken these days, we look forward to seeing what the next state record fish is."

John Morgan, with his record catch.

Changes Made for 2016-17 Hunting and Trapping Regulations

Several important changes were made to the 2016-17 hunting and trapping regulations.

The state's hunting seasons are annually established during the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission's May meeting.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency made its recommendations during the April meeting. Additional recommendations were made by commission members.

For big game hunting seasons, the TFWC changed the definitions of antlered and antlerless deer. Previously, a deer with antlers less than three inches in length were considered antlerless. With the commission's change, an antlered deer are any male or female deer with antlers protruding above the hairline while antlerless deer are male or female deer with no antler protruding above the hairline. Velvet antlered deer are also considered antlered.

From now on, a deer harvested with any antler protruding above the hairline will count toward the statewide antlered deer limit of two.

The commission approved two additional deer hunting units, C and D. The antlerless bag limit for archery is four and one during the muzzleloader season in these units. For gun season, the bag limit is one in Unit C for the first 16 days and one in Unit D for the first seven days. Some previous Unit A and B counties are now in other units. (An updated deer unit map is available on the TWRA website).

The Unit D counties are Polk, Monroe, Blount, and Sevier. The Unit C counties are Cocke, Jefferson, Union, Grainger, Hamblen, Greene, Washington, and Unicoi.

Four counties were added to Unit L which border the Mississippi River. Lake, Dyer, Lauderdale and Tipton counties are the new additions, making all West Tennessee counties now classified in Unit L.

Changes were made to the elk permits. The previous six permits continue but will now also be valid on private lands within the following five counties. The counties are Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Morgan, and Scott. Additionally, five new archery only permits were added, also valid on North Cumberland WMA and private lands within the five counties. Archery hunt dates are Oct. 3-7, 2016.

A significant change came to fall turkey hunting. The TFWC voted to reduce the fall bag limit to one for all counties currently open for fall turkey hunting. A hunter may harvest a turkey in each open county. Also changed was the bag limit for the Young Sportsman from one bird for the two-day hunt to one bird per day.

For TWRA Wildlife Management Areas, the most notable recommendations were establishing seasons for newly proclaimed areas.

Federal Regulations Process Changes in Regard to Setting Waterfowl Hunting Season

Due to a change in the federal regulation process, waterfowl hunting seasons are now set earlier in the year. The 2016-17 waterfowl and migratory bird seasons were set at the April meeting of the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission (TFWC).

All duck, goose, dove, and other migratory game bird seasons will be similar to last year after calendar date changes, with the following changes approved by the TFWC. The common moorhen, purple gallinule, Virginia and sora rail seasons move earlier (Sept. 1-Nov. 9), to better align with bird occurrence in Tennessee and a change in the Brant season to align with the duck season (Nov. 26-27 and Dec. 3- Jan. 29, 2017).

In addition, a shift was approved for the third segment of the dove season based on public input. This segment will occur 13 days later than previously, from Dec. 8-Jan. 15.

The sandhill crane hunting season will enter its fourth year in 2016-17. Due to the new timing of the federal process used for season setting, an operational crane season cannot be implemented until next year.

The commission considered the agency recommendation of no change to the crane season, but voted to extend the season to 55 days and move it later in the season. The season will be Dec. 3. -Jan. 12 and Jan. 16-29, 2017 and includes a three day closure (Fri.-Sun., Jan. 13-15) for the Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival. The 400, 3-permit packets were issued at an August drawing.

It was announced during the presentation that for the 2017-18 duck, goose, crane and all other migratory game bird seasons, public comments will be invited from Oct. 15-Nov. 15, 2016. Proposed seasons will be presented at the January 2017 TFWC meeting, with final approval the following month at the February meeting.

Central Magnet High and Central Magnet Middle School captured the state championships in their respective divisions while Christiana Elementary won its division at the 10th anniversary edition of the Tennessee National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) State Championships.

More than 1,900 students were registered at the event held at the Tennessee Miller Coliseum in Murfreesboro.

Central Magnet High shot a score of 3,345 on its way to ending White County's two-year reign as champions in the high school division. White County was runner-up with a 3,310. CHET, which participates with home school students in the Nashville area, and Oakland High, each shot 3,273, but CHET had 150 10s to Oakland's 147 to take third place. Warren County was fifth with a 3,240.

Central Magnet repeated as champions of the middle school division with a 3,232. Whitworth Buchanan was second behind their Rutherford County rival with a 3,164 followed by Powell Valley (3,142), Christiana (3,112), and Rockvale (3,092) to comprise the top five.

Christiana Elementary won its third championship in the past four years to slip past 2015 champion Buchanan, 3,057-3,047. Tullahoma's East Lincoln was third with a 3,038. East Montgomery (3,013), and Smyrna's John Colemon (2,933) rounded out the top five.

CHET's Laurel Thompson was the event's top female shooter for the third consecutive year. Laurel had a 286, the same score as Eagleville's Graci Oakley, but had 20 shots of 10 to Graci's 19, to receive the medalist honor.

The overall male champion was decided by a tie-breaker at the conclusion of the competition.

Central Magnet's Craig Bowen and Oakland's Mac Carmichael shot a 291 and had 21 10s to force a five arrow shootoff from 15 meters. After the playoff, they were still deadlocked to move to a one arrow shoot. Craig was closest to the center on the one shot and was the champion for the second straight year.

Team awards were presented following the competition to the top three teams in each division. Medals were presented to the top five female and male finishers in the high school, middle school and elementary school divisions. Each student shot 30 arrows, 15 from 10 meters and 15 from 15 meters with a maximum score of 300.

Sponsored by the TWRA, Tennessee began NASP in late 2004 with 12 pilot schools participating in the program. More than 350 schools now participate in the program. NASP is a 2-8 week curriculum taught during school that teach International style target archery.

The 2016 state champions in their respective divisions (from top) were Central Magnet High School, Central Magnet Middle School, and Christiana Elementary School.

TWRA Executive Director Ed Carter poses with the two individual champions of the 2016 NASP state championships. CHET's Laurel Thompson was the top female shooter for the third straight year, while Oakland's Mac Carmichael won in a shootoff to claim his second straight male title.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 15

Fall turkey shotgun hunting season opens. The fall turkey bag limit is now one for all counties that were open last year for fall turkey hunting. A hunter may harvest one turkey, either sex, in each open county.

October 17-21

Elk quota hunting gun/muzzleloader/archery season will run for five days.

October 22-23

Young sportsman elk quota hunt will be held over the weekend.

October 27-28

The Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission will hold its October meeting in Knoxville at the Holiday Inn World's Fair in the LeConte/Summit Room. Committee meetings will begin at 1 p.m. (EDT), Oct. 27 and the formal session starts at 9 a.m., Oct. 28. The 2017-18 sport fish regulations will be established at this meeting.

October 28

The fall turkey archery/shotgun season comes to a close.

October 29-30

The first of two Young Sportsman Deer hunts is held over a two-day period.

October 31

Fall turkey archery season resumes.
Deer archery season resumes.

November 4

Fall turkey archery season closes.
Deer archery season closes.

November 5

Quail and rabbit seasons open.
Deer muzzleloader season opens.

November 12-13

Duck hunting season first segment in Reelfoot Zone.

November 18

Trapping season opens.
Deer Muzzleloader hunting season closes.

November 19

The deer gun hunting season opens statewide. The traditional opening for the gun season is the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving.

November 26-27

The first segment of the statewide duck season (excluding the Reelfoot Zone) is held.

White-tailed Deer
by Bob Howdeshell