

# OUTDOORS

## Spring turkey season opens Saturday; fishing mixed on area lakes

The 2020 Tennessee statewide spring turkey season opens tomorrow.

Last weekend the youth had their two-day season.

Starting tomorrow, the main season opens for everyone.

I have lots of friends who hunt turkeys. Wild turkey is actually better tasting to me than store-bought turkey.

Turkey hunting is an excellent way to keep social distance, enjoy the outdoors, and take part in a popular activity which has seen tremendous growth in recent years. I personally have never been and they say once you go, you're a turkey hunter for life.

Remember, the season will run through May 17, which is a Sunday.

One thing to note as we remind everyone, turkey check stations at wildlife management areas will not be operational this year.

As far as trying to keep things as normal as possible, a recent press release from Ed Carter, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's executive director, says the TWRA has taken precautions while still providing essential services to the public and resources. He continues to say the TWRA is pleased that the spring turkey season will go on as scheduled as it adheres to guidelines of social distancing and other recommendations.

A reminder that "new" requirement this year is "Tag Before You Drag," where hunters tag their big game animal in the field prior to moving. You will be able to use the TWRA on the Go app to simply E-tag and report their harvest in the field in one easy step, with or without cell phone service, prior to moving. If you do not have a phone, attach one of the temporary transportation tags that printed at the bottom of your license this year and you have until midnight on the same day of the harvest to check in online at GoOutdoorsTennessee.



Outdoor Fishing Report with Brent Callicott

What is needed to hunt turkey in Tennessee? Tennessee Hunting and Fishing combination (Type 001) licenses plus a supplemental big-game license, or a sportsman license is required.

Hunting hours are 30 minutes prior to legal sunrise until legal sunset.

Legal hunting equipment includes shotguns using ammunition loaded with No. 4 shot or smaller, longbows, recurve bows, compound bows, and crossbows.

Firearms and archery equipment may have sighting devices, except those devices utilizing an artificial light capable of locating wildlife.

TWRA is keeping things going the best they can. On their Facebook page earlier this week, TWRA reassured Tennesseans, "The Outdoors Are Open!" The TWRA is reporting at the present time, all TWRA managed boat ramps, fishing lakes, wildlife management areas and waterways remain open. They encouraged people to get out, enjoy the outdoors and socially distance yourself.

They also want to pass along this very important message: Please contact city/county governments and other agencies for closures on properties not managed by the TWRA.

The following TWRA shooting ranges are closed due to COVID-19: Bartlett, John Sevier, Montgomery County, Stones River ranges. All unmanned ranges on WMAs will remain open.

Hatcheries are closed

to the public. Wildlife Management Areas are open. Check stations on these WMA's are closed. Please check in your harvests online using the TWRA mobile app or at gooutdoorstennessee.com

TWRA offices are closed to the public but we are always available by phone, email, tnwildlife.org or our social media channels. <https://www.tn.gov/twra/contact-us.html>.

**Fishing report**  
Reelfoot Lake — Water color remains good lake wide with some slightly stained waters closer to some runoff areas. Water temperatures cooled a little since last weekend but the water should really be warming up now and in the coming days. Reelfoot Lake still remains well above average pool level. Current has been rather slow in the ditches mainly because the Spillway ditch remains high as the Mississippi River is rather high as well. Crappie are decent bite. You need to go multiple days to hit "the day."

Also, some bluegill are being caught as well as bass.

The bass bite comes and goes from day to day. The bass had started moving up on their beds at last report.

Speaking of bass, the Reelfoot Lake Bass Club held a closed club tournament on Reelfoot last Sunday. The bite was tough that day and winds pretty tough as well. The club has a 3-bass tournament limit. No one that day boated and weighed in the limit. First place was claimed by Rick Kelly with two bass weighing 7.11 pounds. Second place was won by Will Simmons with two bass weighing 6.58 pounds. Third place was claimed by John Babb with two bass weighing 6.56 pounds. Big Bass weighed 4.34 pounds and was claimed by Matthew Cummings.

Kentucky Lake — The lake is high, real high. The lake went over the 362 feet



**SUCCESSFUL HUNT** — Bo Bondurant, 7-year-old son of Dylan and Courtney Bondurant of Union City, recently bagged his first Tennessee longbeard while hunting with his father. He harvested the turkey with his .410 shotgun from 35 yards. He is a first-grader at Union City Elementary School.

above sea level mark earlier in the week. That is over eight feet above winter pool and three-plus feet over summer pool. Water color varied around the lake from place to place.

The crappie bite is pretty good. Several in numbers and good sizes are being caught.

The bass fishing is rather slow. This has been a trend really since the explosion of Asian carp in the lake.

Gibson County Lake — The lake is above normal in water levels. Water in decent shape but windy

days keep the water stirred up. Bass and crappie are fair at best.

**Shut down**  
Professional fishing circuits across the country have pretty much postponed and/or rescheduled their tournaments that were upcoming in the next month or even longer. These events have moved to later in the summer or fall. Check your favorite fishing tournament trail website for more updated information.

Submit pictures  
We remind our readers

and those now who have joined us online, that if you have pictures of your recent hunting or fishing outing, especially with a young person, send them out way. We would love to share those with everyone. You can email your pictures and information to me at [brentcallicott@gmail.com](mailto:brentcallicott@gmail.com) and/or drop by The Messenger office on Jackson Street in Union City.

Til next week's column, Catch ya on the water folks.  
— Brent

## Groups sue over continued grazing in Wyoming grizzly bear habitat

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) - Conservation groups sued the U.S. government Tuesday over livestock grazing in a Wyoming forest, saying grizzly bears are too often killed by ranchers and wildlife managers for pursuing cattle in such settings.

Forest officials decided in October to allow livestock grazing to continue across more than 260 square miles in the Green River headwaters of Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Biologists found that as many as 72 grizzly bears could be killed if necessary in the area over a decade without harming the overall grizzly population in the greater Yellowstone region. The bears are classified as a threatened species.

The conservation groups dispute the finding and the decision to allow the graz-

ing, pointing out that 35 bears have been killed on the grazing allotments since 1999 due to run-ins with humans involving livestock. Planned measures to reduce such encounters, such as by moving cattle carcasses away from roads, aren't sufficient or enforceable, the groups allege.

"It's outrageous that the feds are caving to the livestock industry by allowing dozens of grizzly bears to be killed in their crucial habitats on public lands," Center for Biological Diversity attorney Andrea Santarsiere said in a statement.

The lawsuit was filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and Sierra Club against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and Fish and Wildlife Service Director Aurelia

Skipwith in U.S. District Court in Washington.

Bridger-Teton National Forest spokeswoman Mary Cernicek declined to comment on the pending litigation.

Federal officials have concluded that the greater Yellowstone region's population of over 700 grizzlies is large enough to justify lifting the animals' protection under the Endangered Species Act.

A federal judge in Montana in 2018 overturned a decision to declassify Yellowstone's grizzlies as a threatened species. Montana, Idaho and Wyoming officials are appealing the court ruling.



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