



TWRA NEWS

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TWRA APPEALS USDA DECISION ON ELK IMPORTATION

In a letter to the USDA, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Executive Director, Gary Myers, respectfully outlined, in detail, the reasons why the United States Department of Agriculture should reconsider their recent denial of Tennessee’s request to import 140 head of elk from Elk Island National Park, Alberta, Canada.

The TWRA was contacted by Elk Island in the fall of last year regarding the possibility of relocating approximately 150 surplus animals from the park to continue Tennessee’s ongoing elk restoration efforts. “Elk Island has been the source for the elk we have restored to our state beginning in 2000,” Greg Wathen, TWRA Wildlife Division Chief stated. “We consider the herd at Elk Island to be one of the healthiest, most stringently tested in North America. Our agency is very comfortable transporting and introducing these animals into our existing herd in Tennessee.”

“Everything is in place to make this happen, except approval by the USDA,” Wathen continued. “Elk Island has captured 131 head of elk, tested, and fitted them with radio collars so they can be monitored after release. Obtaining these animals is crucial to the long-range success of our elk restoration program.”

For more information regarding elk in Tennessee, including a newly released podcast, please visit the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency web site at www.tnwildlife.org.

DEER RALLY SCHEDULED IN SOMERVILLE ON MARCH 8TH

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) will be hosting a deer rally on Thursday, March 8, 2007, in Somerville, TN starting at 6:30p.m. Location for the rally will be Brown's Repair & Sporting Goods, 17605 Hwy. 64 East, approximately one (1) mile east of the courthouse.

Certified TWRA scorers will be on hand to score deer antlers for the Tennessee Deer Registry. To qualify to make the Tennessee Registry, all deer antlers must meet the following criteria:

- All entrees must have been taken in Tennessee by sport hunting.
- All antlers must have dried a minimum of sixty (60) days.

The scoring system used for the Tennessee Deer Registry is based on the Boone and Crockett system of measurement. Minimum scores to make it into the Tennessee Registry are as follows: Archery – 115 (typical), 140 (non-typical); Gun/Muzzleloader – 140 (typical), 165 (non-typical).

BLUEBIRD PLANNING TIME

Are you looking for an indoor project to occupy your time this winter? Something that can help wildlife and add a little color to your property? The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency would like to suggest that you consider building some bluebird nest boxes to erect in February.

Each year in the late winter, one of Tennessee's most attractive songbirds begins to look for suitable nest sites. In February and March, bluebird pairs seek out hollow cavities in decaying trees and wooden fence posts to nest and raise their young.

Eastern bluebirds were one of the first birds to appear around the homesteads of Tennessee settlers. During the 1800s and 1900s, hollow wooden fence posts were plentiful and bluebirds had an abundance of nest sites, but today's metal fence posts have eliminated many potential sites. Luckily, help for the bluebird is as simple as building or buying a bluebird box and placing it 5 to 10 feet off the ground in a fairly open area.

Construction of a bluebird box is easy. Boxes should be made of untreated wood. They should have a cavity 8 inches deep with a floor 5 inches wide and 5 inches long. The entrance should be 6 inches above the floor and the entrance hole should be 1½ inches in diameter.

Other beneficial birds, such as chickadees and wrens, may take up residence in a bluebird box. House sparrows may be a real problem when boxes are located near buildings.

Bluebirds are territorial, so boxes should not be located within 100 yards of each other. Bluebirds prefer open fields like those of farm pastures, parks, cemeteries, or golf courses, but any large grass field or yard will do. Nest boxes in densely wooded areas are rarely used by bluebirds.

If you would like to assist one of Tennessee's most beautiful wild creatures, put up a bluebird box during the month of February.