

NEWTON COUNTY SPRING
**VISITOR
GUIDE** 2022



*Pedestals Rock near Pelsor, Arkansas
Jeff Rose, Photographer
See pages 10 & 11*



A quick Google search of “small town Arkansas” yields Jasper as the top result. Established in 1840, Jasper offers a variety of outdoor enthusiast and family friendly places to visit. The city of Jasper, Arkansas is a gateway for tourists looking to hike, camp, and canoe on the Buffalo National River.

Jasper sits in the heart of the Ozark Mountains and along the banks of the Little Buffalo River. The town has a picturesque downtown square filled with classical Americana design. Tourism from the Buffalo National River largely drives the local economy.

Established as the first national river in 1972, the Buffalo National River is famous for its towering rock bluffs and emerald colored water.

In recent years, Jasper has grown as a hub for motorcycle and automotive enthusiasts. Drawn to the beautiful mountain views and the winding roads of Scenic Highway 7, Arkansas’ first state-designated scenic byway. Jasper is always a popular route destination during the yearly Blues, Bikes, and BBQ festival.

source jasperarkansas.com



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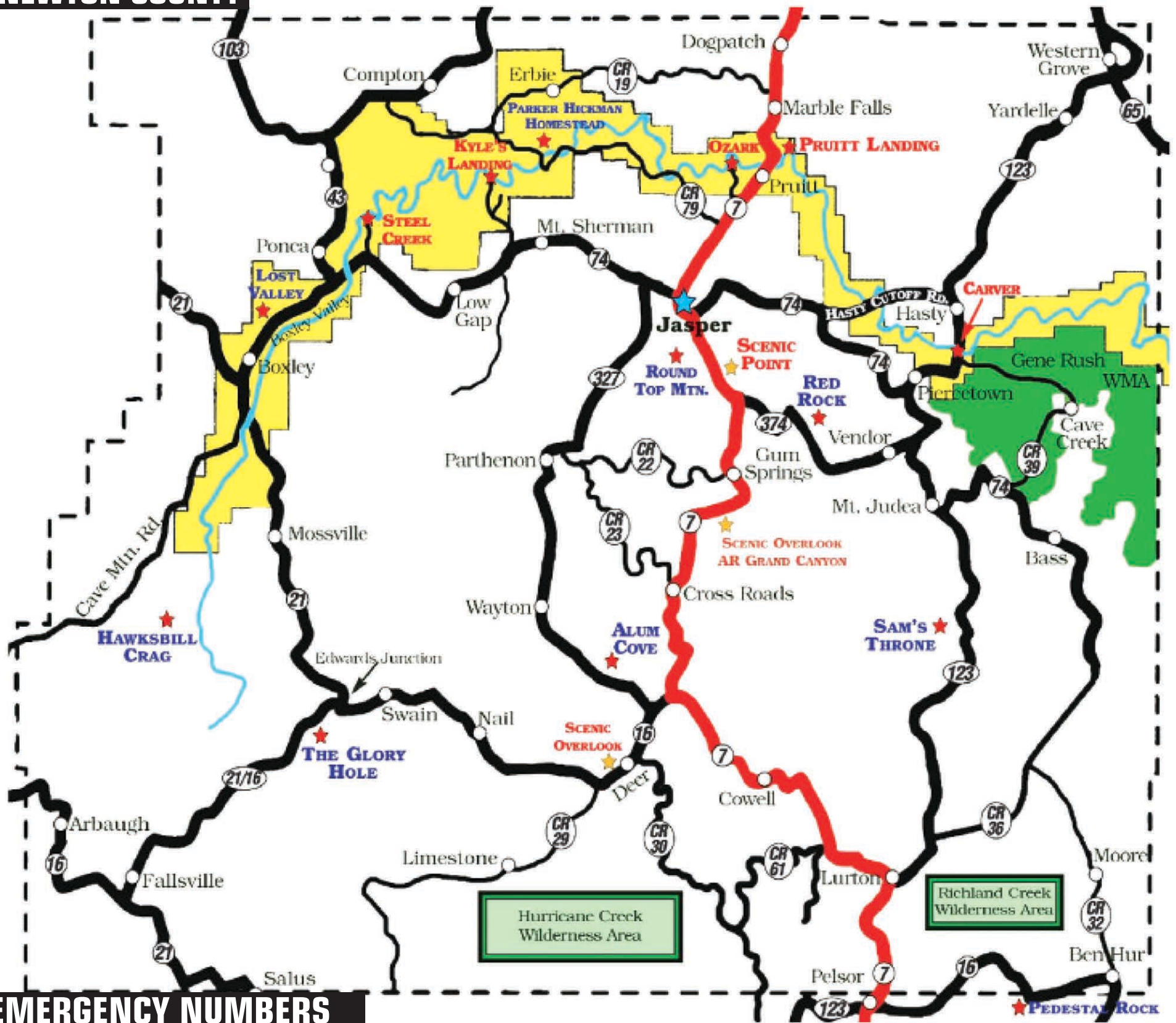
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NEWTON COUNTY



EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Newton County Sheriff — 870-446-5124
- National Park Service — 870-741-5443
- Buffalo National River — 870-446-5373
- U.S. Forest Service — 870-446-5122
- Poison control Center — 1-800-376-4766
- National Weather Service — 1-800-762-4363

FOR ANY EMERGENCY SITUATION, CALL THE NEWTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

ALERTS & CONDITIONS

▶ SOUTH WOOLUM ROAD CLOSED, ALTERNATE ROUTE AVAILABLE



In the interest of safety, the South Woolum Road has been closed. The Woolum launch and campground remain open. The National Park Service, in coordination with Searcy County, will work to reopen the road as soon as possible. more

▶ TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF CECIL COVE TRAIL

The upper/western section of the Cecil Cove Trail from Jones Cemetery to the Compton-Erbie Road is closed until further notice. A large landslide and continued unstable conditions have deemed the area unsafe, with no alternate route possible.

▶ TYLER BEND CAMPGROUND SHOWERS CLOSED

The Tyler Bend Campground showers are currently closed for remodeling. Please call the Tyler Bend Visitor Center at 870-439-2502 for updates. All restroom facilities remain open and accessible.

You can find updates on the park's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/buffnatriver/

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Elk in Arkansas: Roaming Black Mountain Refuge Since 1933

By Jill Rohrbach

As the fog lifts in Boxley Valley and the morning sun warms the dew on the grass, elk move from the mottled shade at the edge of the forest into the open pasture to graze.

Before long, cars stop on the side of the road and their inhabitants stand at the edge of the field, pulling out binoculars, cameras, and tripods to view and photograph the majestic beasts in northern Arkansas.

Elk range through more than 315,000 acres in Arkansas in the northwest part of the state along the Buffalo National River in Newton and Searcy counties and in portions of southern Boone and Carroll counties.

The large beasts prefer open areas for grazing with nearby wooded areas for resting.

One of the most popular places to view elk in their natural habitat is along state highways AR 43 and AR 21 in Boxley Valley. On the weekends, visitors need to get there early to get a spot, particularly in the fall when the elk are bugling.

“Plus that area is absolutely beautiful with the fall color change, so a lot of people show up,” Randy Zellers with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission says. “Around the area by Ponca, there are places you can stay in a cabin or camp out so you can get out early and enjoy that experience.” Dawn and dusk are when the elk are most active at any time of year.

September through October is mating season for elk with 76 percent of calves born in early June. At birth, calves weigh about 35 pounds. By the start of its first winter, the elk may weigh five times as much as when it was born.

By the time they reach adulthood, cows weigh up to 500 pounds, and bulls may reach more than 800 pounds, stand five feet at the shoulder and measure eight feet from nose to rump. Each year, bulls shed their antlers and it takes about 180 days for them to grow a new rack.

“If you want to step out of your car and easily view elk, you can’t beat Boxley Valley. We have turnouts there. You can pull over and park your car safely to view the elk,” explains Zellers.

“While you’re there at Boxley Valley, stop into the nearby Ponca Elk Education Center and talk to those folks. They can give you daily updates on what the elk are doing.”

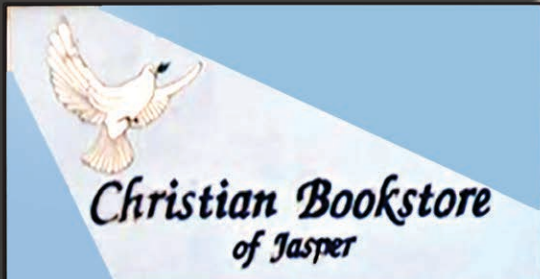
If you’re more adventurous and want to immerse yourself in the elk experience, Zellers suggests primitive camping at Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area.

“You’ll hear them all around you, and in the twilight, it’s a powerful sound,” he says.

Additionally, elk can often be seen near



ELK cont pg 7



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FUN things to do in buffalo river country

▶ GO BIKING:

Mountain biking is growing in popularity and Newton County has become a destination for mountain biking trail seekers. Many mountain biking trails are in the Upper Buffalo Wilderness Area. Here's a listing of several, but not all, local trails open to mountain bikes compiled by Ozark Off-Road Cyclists.

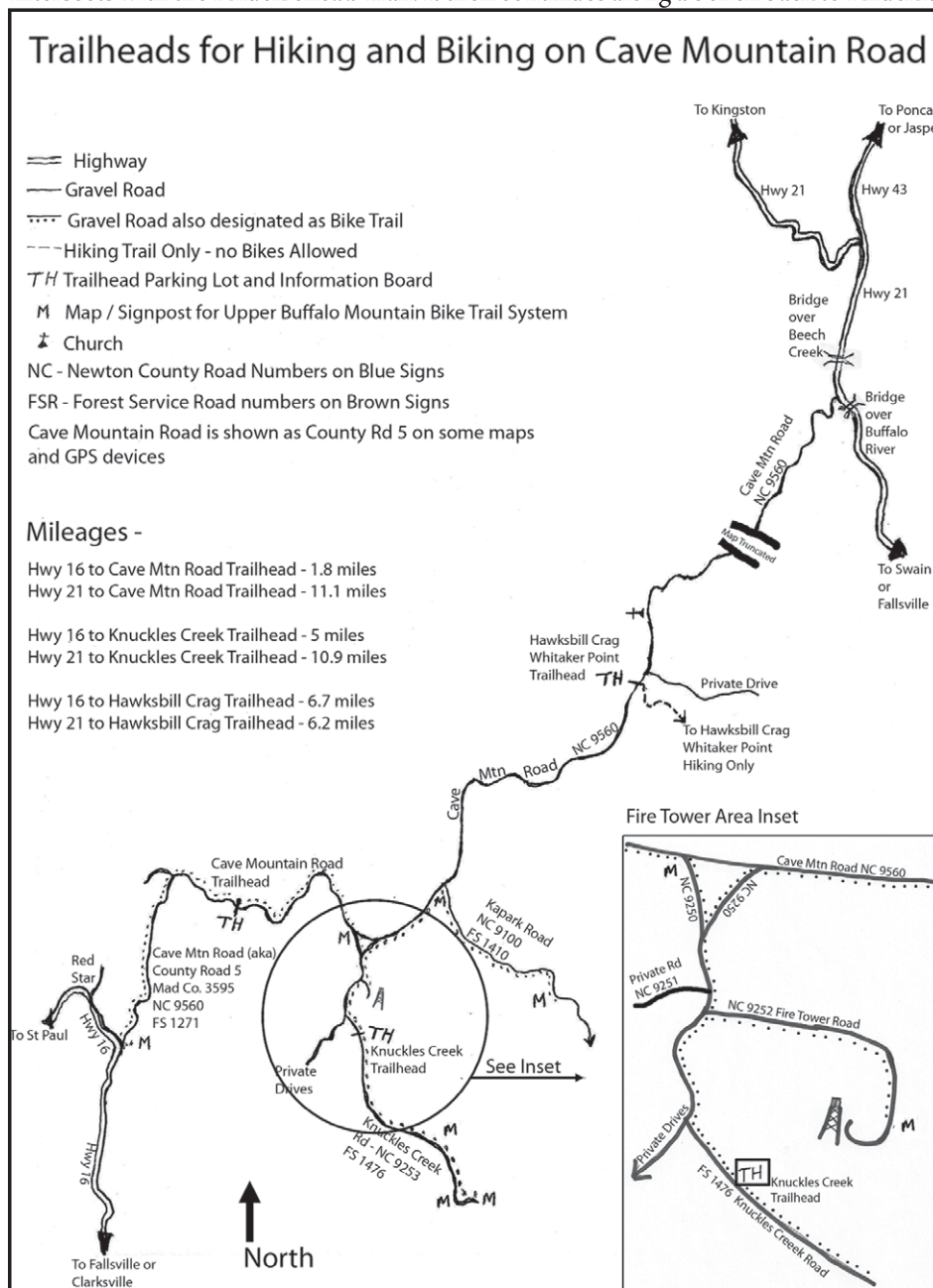
• **Fire Tower Trail:** This machine built flow trail is accessed by beginning at the Fire Tower Loop Trail and descending about half way down to Knuckles Creek where it intersects with the Knucklehead Trail. It then continues along a bench back to Knuckles Creek Road Trail (FR 1476) at Signpost 27. The Fire Tower Loop Trail can be completed by turning up FR 1476 at Signpost 27, climbing up to the Knuckles Creek Trailhead and further to the Fire Tower.

• **Fire Tower Loop Trail:** This machine built flow trail is accessed by beginning at the Fire Tower Loop Trail and descending about half way down to Knuckles Creek where it intersects with the Knucklehead Trail. It then continues along a bench back to Knuckles

Creek Road Trail (FR 1476) at Signpost 27. The Fire Tower Loop Trail can be completed by turning up FR 1476 at Signpost 27, climbing up to the Knuckles Creek Trailhead and further to the Fire Tower. Or, better yet, a larger loop can be ridden by turning down the Knucklehead Trail West at Signpost 28 and descending to Knuckles Creek (a 750 foot vertical drop from the Fire Tower), to Signpost 26, then riding down the creek back to ascend Knuckles Creek Road (FR 1476).

• **Knuckles Creek Road Trail:** A 3.1 mile long dirt road trail along Forest Service Roads FR 1413 and FR 1476. This is a well-maintained US Forest Service dirt road that can be used to connect the Knucklehead Trail West or Knucklehead Trail East with the Knuckles Creek Trailhead, the Fire Tower Loop Trail, the Azalea Falls Trail and the Cave Mountain Road Trail. The trail begins at UMBBTS Signpost 33 and terminates at Signpost 26. For shuttle purposes most cars and trucks can drive to the bottom and back up in dry weather.

• **Buffalo Creek Trail:** A 6-mile long, mostly hand-built, intermediate trail beginning at the Buffalo Creek trailhead on Cave Mountain Road Trail. Start by following a double-track down toward Big Buffalo Creek. The Buffalo Creek Trail continues down Big Buffalo Creek with numerous creek crossings to its current terminus at the bottom of the Southern Slide Trail. The creek crossings can be very technical, and high water could prevent access to parts of this trail. The Buffalo Creek Trail follows an old homestead road down the creek. There are numerous old homesteads along the way. The Buffalo Creek Trail connects to the Red Star, Twisted Hickory, Wildcat Hollow, Zeester, An-



cients and Southern Slide trails.

• **North Bench Trail:** This trail was not included in the UMBBTS because it ends on private property. However, if you wish to hike a bike to the top, or have permission to access from the top, it is an exhilarating experience! This trail features super-steep sections coupled with fast flow terminating into Wildcat Trail.

• **Kapark Road:** This is a Forest Service Road used to access trails on the Upper Buffalo Mountain Bike Trail System. Kapark Road is a 1.56 mile US Forest Service Road trail along FR 1410.

This dirt road is well-maintained and can be used to connect to the Knucklehead Trail East at UMBBTS Signpost 30 and to Cave Mountain Road Trail at Signpost 34. For shuttle purposes cars and trucks can access the road between those signposts and beyond. There are also several primitive roadside campsites in the Ozark National Forest along this road.

HILARY JONES WILDLIFE MUSEUM & ELK INFORMATION CENTER



ELK from pg 5

the Erbie campground on the south side of the river or in fields on the north side.

Another opportunity for elk viewing is along roads leading east and west from Pruitt Bridge in Pruitt.

In Carver, look for elk in the fields near the Carver Bridge and in the Gene Rush Wildlife Management Area just south of the river.

Bearcat Hollow Wildlife Management Area and the Richland Valley addition to Gene Rush WMA are the newer elk viewing areas. They contained elk before, but now have better public access and improved habitat for elk.

No matter where visitors decide to go to see the elk, Zellers reminds people “the elk are wild animals. They are unpredictable and very strong.”

Even the herds in Boxley Valley that are used to people gazing at them from

the fence row are still wild. “That is private property, so you don’t want to go walking into that field,” he adds. People that take advantage of the remote wildlife management areas should also remember to keep their distance from animals and be aware of open hunting seasons.

Although elk are often thought of as a western animal, the eastern elk was a native of Arkansas. However, it disappeared from the state’s forest sometime around 1840 and is now considered extinct.

The U.S. Forest Service introduced 11 Rocky Mountain elk in the Black Mountain Refuge of Franklin County in 1933.

Although the herd did well for a number of years, it eventually disappeared likely due to illegal hunting, natural mortality, and loss of suitable habitat.

Between 1981 and 1985, 112 Rocky Mountain elk were again stocked. This

ELK cont pg 9

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► **GO HIKING:**

• **HEMMED-IN-HOLLOW - THREE DIFFERENT TRAILS**

Center Point Trailhead - 5.4 miles One way to the Falls

This trailhead is located 3.5 miles north of Ponca on state Highway 43 and actually follows an old road all the way to the Buffalo River. The 1300 foot drop to the River begins as a leisurely stroll down hill and gets steeper after the first mile. Along the way, you will pass other trails that lead to great spots like Chimney Rock and Granny Henderson's Cabin. You will also pass the Goat Bluff Trail to Big Bluff but unless you are a very experienced hiker it is not recommended because it is extremely dangerous out on Bluff and warning signs are posted. Even though this is a spectacular sight, the trail is narrow and the edge drops straight down about three hundred feet to the river so folks are not encouraged to take this trail. After passing this intersection, you are approximately 2.5 miles from another intersection which will take you to the mouth of Hemmed-In Hollow and a view of the tallest waterfall between the Rockies and the Appalachians.

• **COMPTON TRAILHEAD - 5.0 MILES ROUND TRIP**

To reach the trail head, take County Road 19 of Highway 43 at Compton, travel .8 miles then turn right at the sign and the trailhead is just up the road. Two trails begin here but the one on the left is the quickest and also the steepest way to get to the falls. It's a quick trip down hill but the hike out will be a real test for the greatest of hikers. The other trail is longer and will take you past several special scenic spots along the way. **From the River:** While floating the Buffalo, you'll want to watch for the traditional spot that canoeists stop at to access the falls. It's just a short hike and to view the tallest waterfall in mid America is truly a memorable experience.

• **HIDEOUT HOLLOW TRAIL - 2.0 MILES ROUND TRIP**

To reach the Schermerhorn Trailhead take County Road 19 off Highway 43 at Compton. Do not turn off the dirt road to the Compton Trailhead but continue straight ahead for about two more miles. At approximately 3.5 miles from the highway at Compton turn left into the primitive parking lot and begin your hike.

This is a great little trail that takes you into a large bluff and waterfall area. Along the trail you will see some fantastic sights, thick stands of trees, and an apartment-sized rock that has broken off from the bluff with giant pines sprouting from it. You will pass through a cedar grove and start hearing water so that's a sign that you are nearing the head of Hideout Hollow. Down below the trail you can work your way around to get a better view of the big falls and the bluffline you've been walking on. There is private property approximately 60 feet upstream so please respect their rights. To get back to the trail head just hike back the same way you came in.

• **MILL CREEK TRAIL - 1.5 MILES**

Take Highway 7 north from Jasper. Then just past the Pruitt bridge, take a right to get to this 1.5 mile historical hike. Follow this trail through the forest land and you'll walk by remains of former homesteads, and a gristmill operated on Mill Creek prior to the Civil War. Follow this trail along the creek until you come to a road, turn right, cross a low water bridge, turn right again. You'll then come to Shaddox Cabin pioneer homesite. The present house was constructed from logs salvaged from a pre-Civil War cabin. Follow the trail on down to Mill Creek and ford the creek on stepping stones unless there's high water. If so, backtrack and cross the creek at the low water bridge.

► **SEE A DRIVE-IN MOVIE:** Searcy County is home to Arkansas' only year-round Drive-in movie theater....the Ken-



da Drive-In, providing family fun since 1966! Nothing ends a perfect day of exploring or relaxing quite like a movie under the beautiful night sky. A full concession stand with very reasonably-priced snacks and food options makes this a must-do in Buffalo River Country. Admission is \$6 for adults, ages 12 and up. Children under 12 are free with parents, unless otherwise specified. If there is an admission for children, ages 6-11 are \$2, under 6 are free. 107 Westwood Dr, Marshall, Arkansas. Call (870) 448-5400.

► **GO CAMPING:** Buffalo National River maintains numerous campgrounds throughout the park. Newton County is in the river's upper district. The upper or western end of the park includes 5 campgrounds. Fees for sites in these developed campgrounds are \$12.00 per site per night with 6 people permitted on each site.

• **STEEL CREEK CAMPGROUND** is about 3 miles east of Ponca Arkansas off of Highway 74. The tent campground has 26 campsites and the horse campground has 14 sites. Campgrounds open year round. The vault toilet in the tent campground will be open but with very limited servicing. No water and no trash pick up provided Nov. 15, 2013 - March 14, 2014. No RVs allowed. GPS Coordinates: 36.0407758, -93.3440483

• **KYLES LANDING CAMPGROUND** is about half way between Ponca and Jasper Arkansas off of Highway 74. The entrance road into Kyles is gravel, very rough and high clearance vehicle is recommended. Campground closed Nov. 15, 2013 - March 14, 2014. No RVs allowed GPS Coordinates: 36.0557563, -93.2812997

• **ERBIE CAMPGROUND** is reached off of Highway 7 north of Jasper Arkansas. The road is 5.5 miles of graded gravel. At this time, the Erbie Campground is closed, but river access is open. Erbie Horse Camp, located 1.5 miles away, remains open to those with horses. GPS Coordinates: 36.0734394, -93.2177326



• **ERBIE HORSE CAMP** is located 7 miles east of Compton and is reached via gravel and dirt roads and is north of the Buffalo River. Open year-round with camping and vault toilet. Use is limited to those with horses only. Campsites allow a maximum of 6 persons and four horses per site. No fees charged. GPS Coordinates: 36.0800929, -93.2342205

• **OZARK CAMPGROUND** is located 3 miles down a graded gravel road off of Highway 7 north of Jasper, Arkansas. Campground closed Nov. 15, 2013 - March 14, 2014. Campground has 30 campsites, each with a picnic table, fire ring and lantern hook. Restrooms have flush toilets. RV's allowed but the campground has no hookups and no dumpstation. GPS Coordinates: 36.0621317, -93.1597244

• **CARVER CAMPGROUND** is located near the bridge crossing the Buffalo River along Hwy 123. The campground has 8 campsites, a vault toilet, water, and access to the river. Open year round. This is a pack in/pack out facility with no trash service provided. GPS Coordinates: 35.98518232 -93.03818673

time they were placed near the Buffalo National River in Newton County.

The 112 elk have grown to about 550 elk in 2020. The animals are referred to as the Hilary Jones Elk Herd, after former Game and Fish Commissioner Hilary Jones. Jones, along with local citizens of Newton County was instrumental in establishing the elk herd.

Two centers interpret the elk and their habitat.

The Ponca Elk Education Center is operated by the education division of the AGFC in Ponca and has about 6,500 to 7,000 visitors annually. This interpretive center, which has free admission, contains an exhibit room with full-body mounts of elk in natural settings as well as an Arkansas black bear.

Hands-on displays include hides, skulls, and other artifacts, a geology display, interactive computer quizzes, and a birding window. Groups are welcome to schedule the use of the facility for customized programs.

Visitors can shop for educational and fun souvenirs, books, videos, shirts, and even buy a hunting and fishing license at the center, which also has rustic log rockers and benches on its wrap-around deck overlooking Pond Creek, picnic tables, and a covered pavilion.

Another source of information is the Hilary Jones Wildlife Museum and Elk Information Center in Jasper. Learn more about elk and other wildlife through exhibits and video presentations.

Exhibits include elk mounts, three freshwater fish aquariums, and a touch table of furs, feathers, and bones.

The gift shop offers hand-painted agar nightlights, carved wooden toys, wildlife prints, note cards, T-shirts, caps, jewelry made from elk antlers, coffee cups, and more.

Admission is free and the center is located on Scenic Byway 7 about a half-mile north of Jasper and the Little Buffalo River.

Find out more about Elk viewing in Arkansas at their tourism website.

Jill Rohrbach is a staff travel writer for Arkansas Tourism.

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**Check out this NPS webpage
Birding For Beginners**

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/birding-for-beginners.htm>

You can also get a list of all the birds known to visit Buffalo National River at

<https://www.nps.gov/buff/learn/nature/animals.htm>

PONCA ELK Education Center



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CLOSED Monday & Tuesday



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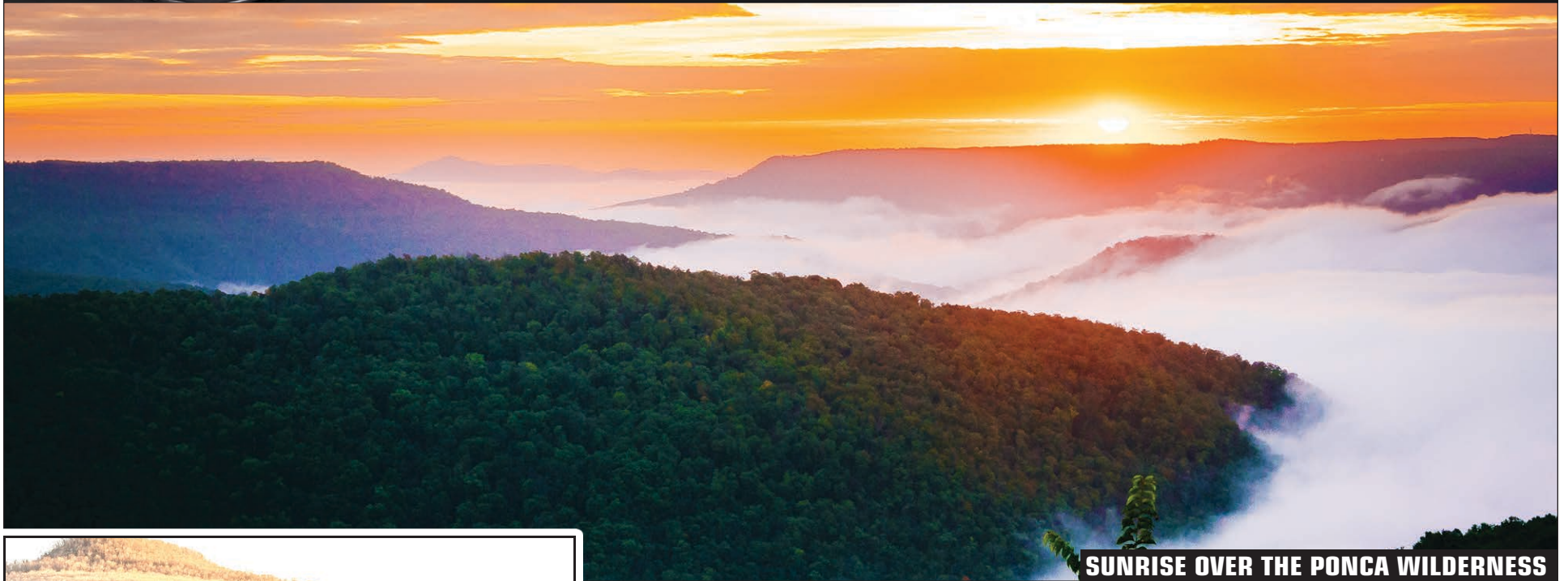
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CLOSED Sunday - Tuesday



Through the lens

with Jeff Rose — Jeff Rose Photography



SUNRISE OVER THE PONCA WILDERNESS



Jeff Rose

Jeff Rose is an outdoor landscape and lifestyle photographer who is based in Ponca, Arkansas.

Jeff is extremely passionate about exploring and documenting the hills and hollows of his home state and spends nearly everyday immersed in them. His portfolio of fine art landscape photography is centered around the stunningly beautiful Buffalo National River and the surrounding Ozark Mountains.

You can follow along with him on his adventures through the Ozarks on instagram at @thejeffrose or visit his website at www.jeffrose.photography for more information and to purchase prints.

BALD EAGLE OVER THE BUFFALO RIVER



CLIMBING THE UPPER BUFFALO



EXPLORING MIDDLE BUFFALO - THE NARS



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► **GO RIDING:** There is a long, rich culture of equestrian use along the Buffalo River. From the time of the early settlers until today, horses and mules have been used to support the commerce of the region. Farming and logging with stock was once a common practice in the rural counties along the river. Mail delivery and traveling "circuit rider" judges and preachers depended daily on their horses and mules. Today, equestrian use is one of the popular recreational activities along the Buffalo River, giving visitors access to many of the areas scenic features and the rich history of the Ozark Mountains.

Whether you are looking for a developed campground or a wilderness adventure, Buffalo National River offers visitors several options for equestrian camping and trail riding. The park encompasses over 95,000 acres that surround the free-flowing Buffalo River with over 75 miles of designated equestrian trails. Many miles of primitive trails and old road traces are also available to equestrian use. The most extensive horse trail network is in the upper section of the river. Due to the extensive network of trails, horseback riders are advised to purchase a Trails Illustrated® map published by National Geographic from any of the park visitor centers, park concessionaires, area Arkansas Game & Fish Commission offices, or local area businesses to properly identify park approved equestrian trails. If you wish to ride your horse in the park, please read the park's rules and regulations concerning equestrian use at Buffalo National River. Visit www.open-trail.us/arkansas-trails/newton-county for a list of trails.



► **FIND WATERFALLS:** It's no secret that Arkansas has a plethora of gorgeous waterfalls. We've mentioned the ones you can enjoy in a drive-by, the more hidden falls, and the most unique. There's one particular area in the state that's an absolute waterfall paradise. Newton County is overflowing with more than 100 falls (which isn't even including all of the unnamed ones) but don't worry, you won't have to scroll through 100 pictures today. We're just focused on our top ten favorites in the county.

• **PARADISE FALLS:** A waterfall paradise wouldn't be complete without an actual Paradise Falls. You'll pass many smaller waterfalls in the area before you reach this lovely 32-ft. falls.

• **EDEN FALLS:** Just as fitting as Paradise Falls, Eden Falls is a perfect representation of the gorgeous waterfalls in the area. You'll come across it during your hike around Lost Valley Recreation Area.

• **GLORY HOLE FALLS:** This iconic waterfall is one of the most unique in the state. Glory Hole is one of the few that flows through the above rock instead of over it. The hike is fairly short but all uphill on the way back.

• **TRIPLE FALLS:** Triple Falls (or Twin depending on recent rains) is an easy waterfall to reach, which makes it perfect for a family day trip. It's part of the popular Boy Scout camp, Camp Orr and is a quick .3-mile jaunt from the parking lot.

• **HEMMED-IN HOLLOW FALLS:** It's only fitting that the county with the most waterfalls is also home to the tallest. The 6-mile trail has a rather steep 2.5-mile climb out but the exertion is absolutely worth it to see the 209-ft. falls, the tallest waterfall between the Rockies and the Appalachians.

• **CHUMFARGER FALLS:** Not too far from Paradise Falls is the Chumfarger Falls.

What's even better is that the neighboring waterfall is Hargfarger Falls. You'll have as much fun saying the names as you will exploring the area.

• **PAIGE FALLS:** Paige Falls is a gorgeous waterfall that's super easy to reach since it's just a .3-mile walk from the road. The falls is a modest 8-ft. but pours into a stunning blue pool.

• **BROADWAY HOLLOW FALLS:** If you made the effortless track to Paige Falls, then you should stop by Broadway Hollow as well. The roaring falls are 21-ft.

• **Middle Cow Falls:** Right on the edge of the county line is Cow Creek. Waterfalls are all along the creek including Middle Cow.

• **THUNDER CANYON FALLS:** Getting to Thunder Canyon isn't the easiest of hikes but the end destination makes the effort well worth it. The secluded 71-ft. waterfall is absolutely breathtaking.

Visit www.onlyinyourstate.com/arkansas/ar-waterfalls-everywhere/ for more information on the above waterfall destinations.

► **GO SHOPPING:** Jasper's variety of shops focus on the eccentric, on hand-made items and groovy antiques. Emma's Museum of Junk is packed with everything from roller skates to ride-on toys, plus every manner of record, doorknob and bicycle part known to man. The Scenic Point Gift Shop just south of town offers magnificent views of the Buffalo River Valley as well as jams, jellies and Arkansas crafts. And pick up great works of art, quilts and more from local artists at the Chamber of Commerce and Information Center.



► **SOUTHERN FOOD ENDS THE DAY:** End the day with southern charm and



comfort food – both are served up in heaping helpings at Big Springs Trading Co. Here you will find a smoked meat deli, a full BBQ menu, provisions, gifts, and Arkansas-style hospitality. This charming, tastefully styled building is home to some of the best food found anywhere on the Buffalo National River, so whether you are packing a picnic basket or meeting up to discuss the day's adventures, be right at home and filled to the brim at Big Springs.



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Take paddling fun seriously

Jeff Williams Editor, Arkansas Wildlife Magazine

LITTLE ROCK — A friend of mine who grew up in Yell County was a regular visitor of the creeks that zig-zag through the Ozark and Ouachita mountains. One of his favorite fishing, swimming and paddling spots was Big Piney Creek in Pope County.

Big Piney's Long Pool Recreation Area is popular among folks who canoe and kayak, and this young man knew well the 5-mile run down to Twin Bridges.

Big Piney can be a beast when its narrow watershed is raging after a downpour, although it wasn't particularly rowdy that spring day. After my friend began his paddle at Long Pool, he dropped through a fast chute, was turned sideways and his canoe wrapped around a rock he had paddled by many times before. His boat — weighted down by the stream — trapped him underwater, within sight of people on the bank. By the time they were able to reach him, he had drowned in less than 4 feet of water before his 30th birthday.

Paddlers with wide ranges of skill levels drown for various reasons every year in Arkansas's lakes, rivers and streams; a few have lost their lives this spring. The rapid rise in sales of recreational paddle boats, especially kayaks, means it's likely more people with little experience are on the water. Experienced paddlers carry no guarantee of safety but their inexperienced colleagues certainly stand less chance of survival when trouble suddenly appears.

With a little forethought, preparation and practice, some of those disasters can be avoided.

Canoeing at the Nature Center on Spring BreakAbove all, wear a well-fitting, U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket with the proper amount of buoyancy. It's no guarantee, but no matter a paddler's skill level, this is the best way to avoid drowning.

Assume you will be immersed at some point during your adventure. Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature, which leads to this advice: In cool weather, always pack dry clothes in a waterproof container to avoid hypothermia. Also pack an extra paddle with someone in your party.

Research the water where you'll be paddling. Many small streams can become raging torrents with only a slight bit of rain in the watershed. Rain miles upstream can cause sudden rises in water level and current. Be prepared to change locations or cancel if the forecast calls for rough conditions.

Paddle water suited to your skill. This goes hand-in-hand with knowing the water you plan to paddle. Do not rely on someone else in your party to know all the details about the water level, where the put-in is and where the take-out is. Who



AGFC photo
Kayaking at dusk on Lake Ouachita

will you call in a dangerous situation? Know this information before you go.

If you're a novice, paddle with someone who's experienced and don't paddle alone. Watch what they do and ask questions.

File a float plan; let someone know where you're going and when you expect

PADDLING FUN cont pg 14

The logo for Shady Oaks Campground & RV Park features the text "SHADY OAKS" in a stylized font above a graphic of an acorn and leaves, with "CAMPGROUND & RV PARK" below it. The background is a close-up of tree bark.

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PADDLING FUN from pg 13

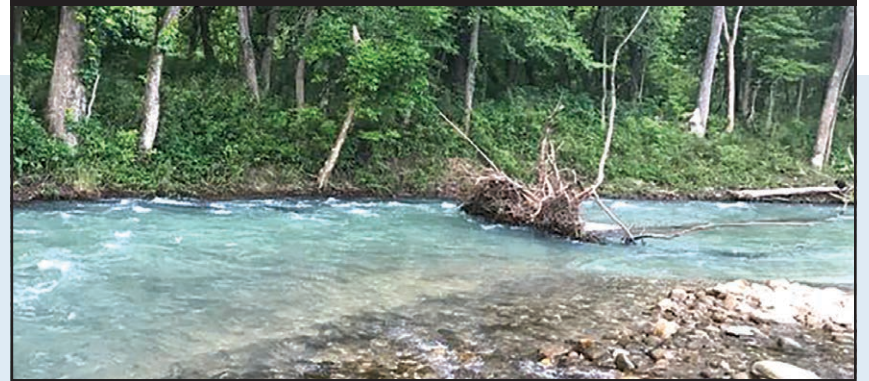
to return.

Don't get a ticket – According to Arkansas law, children 12 and under must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket; everyone else must have one ready to use. Canoes and kayaks 16 feet and longer must have a throwable life preserver aboard. Glass containers are illegal in canoes and kayaks. Cooler lids must be securely fastened, each boat must have an attached, closeable trash container, and beverages must be in floating holders.

Thinking about buying your first new or used kayak? Here are some tips to consider:

- ▶ Buy a boat that fits what you intend to do. If you plan to learn to spend your time on whitewater, buy a whitewater boat. The same goes for recreational boats, made for slower streams and flat water, and longer kayaks built for speed. All these boats have characteristics that suit them to different types of water.
- ▶ Take your boat to a calm, shallow lake or pond and become familiar with it, preferably with an experienced paddler. Fill it with water to see how it changes (notice how heavy it is). Get in it and turn yourself over with someone nearby to help – it's going to happen sooner or later and it's best to learn how to deal with capsizing before you're on moving water.
- ▶ Learn how to get back in, which is called self-rescue. This could save your life. After you've taken these steps on still water, do the same thing in a slow-moving creek. Work your way up to faster currents slowly; there's plenty to enjoy along the way.
- ▶ If paddling is for you and you'd like to learn various strokes and rescue techniques, take a class. Local groups such as the Arkansas Canoe Club welcome new members who are interested in learning. The American Canoe Association and the American Red Cross websites offer training videos, books and information about everything from paddling strokes to essentials for a float trip.

SAFETY ON THE RIVER



Photo/L. Eddings Photo

A down tree with a large root ball lies across the Buffalo River. There is a narrow, clear path to pass the tree on the right. Photo taken between Pruitt and Hasty.

Safe paddlers will scout out obstacles before paddling into them.

On a wild stream like Buffalo National River, natural forces are constantly at work. Large trees can get swept into the river when streambanks erode away during high water events. These trees often get lodged in bends or narrow chutes where the river is fastest. They can cause a canoe or kayak to capsize and require extra care to avoid.

Experience is the best practice; avoidance is the best caution.

National Park rangers remove downed trees when they are judged to be a hazard, but it's crucial to know that not all trees are removed from the Buffalo. Some are considered nuisances, not hazards, and are part of the wild river experience.



Floating the river in innertubes this summer?

There are several important things to #KnowBeforeYouGo

Without a paddle, you are completely at the river's mercy and cannot steer or propel yourself downstream. Shallow, rocky shoals can easily pop innertubes, so a casual float can quickly turn into a long hike or swim to your destination. On the other hand, deep pools may not have enough current to push you along, so you might "get stuck" in one place for awhile.

Tubing on the Buffalo is a slow-going activity, so we recommend trips no longer than 1.5 miles. Try the Steel Creek Campground swimming hole to the boat launch (1.2 miles), Tyler Bend to Grind-

ers Ferry (1.4 miles) or Dillard's Ferry to Buffalo Point (1.5 miles). Be sure not to miss your take-out, or you could be in for a very long day (or night).

You are very limited as to what you can take with you on a tube, and there is often no room for water, snacks, or sunscreen. Please take all of this into consideration when planning a float on inner-tubes. For more information on river safety, please see: <https://www.nps.gov/buff/planyourvisit/floating.htm>



NPS photo

A placid, blue pool in the Buffalo River with a gray bluff on the left and Skull Rock pointing out into the river downstream.

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Thwart a snakebite before it happens

Arkansas Game & Fish Commission

LITTLE ROCK — The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate between 7,000 and 8,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes in the United States each year. Thanks to modern medicine, only about five of those victims die from their snakebite. By comparison, an average of 41 people in the U.S. die annually from lightning strikes.

Odds aside, preventing injury from Arkansas's venomous reptiles is as simple as learning to identify them and avoid them should you come across one in the wild. According to Lori Monday, regional educator for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, only six of Arkansas's native snake species are venomous, and each can be identified with a little practice.

"Many people will point out that a nonvenomous snake will have round pupils where a venomous snake has elliptical pupils like a cat's eyes, but that can be dangerous and misleading," Monday said. "Coral snakes are venomous and have round pupils, and if you're close enough to tell the snake's pupil shape, you're probably not at a safe distance."

Identifying a venomous snake by a triangular head also can be misleading, as the eastern hog-nosed snake and some nonvenomous water snakes can flatten their heads to look triangle-shaped as well.

"It's easier and safer to just learn a few key identifiers that will help you judge if it's a venomous snake or not," Monday said.

The eastern copperhead has one of the best camouflage patterns in the fall woods, with hourglass bars that alternate between dark and light coppery brown. The distinct hourglass may not be easily noticed unless you are looking at them from above. Instead, Monday says look for the "Hershey's kiss" shape on the side of the snake that's formed



AGFC photo

A timber rattlesnake has an orange-brown stripe down its back and chevron-patterned bars.

by half of that hourglass.

"Northern cottonmouths are probably the hardest of Arkansas's venomous snakes to identify because the juveniles are lighter colored and have distinct barring, while the adults will be very dark," Monday said. "But the cottonmouth has a very fat, wide body compared to most snakes, and they have a dark stripe across their eye that I like to refer to as sort of a mask of Zorro. Juvenile cottonmouths and copperheads also have a greenish yellow tip to their tails that they use as a lure to draw curious animals close enough for a bite."

Rattlesnakes have their namesake noisemakers at the end of their tails, and if you need further confirmation of which species you're looking at, timber rattlesnakes have an orange-brown stripe down their back and chevron-patterned bars, while the western diamond-backed rattlesnake has its diamond-patterned skin and a distinct white-and-black zebra stripe pattern at the tail just before the rattles begin.

"Western pygmy rattlesnakes have the red-brown stripe down the back, similar to timber rattlesnakes, but they are much smaller and have small, button rattles at the tips of their tails," Monday said.

The coral snake is the only venomous snake in Arkansas that falls outside of the pit viper family, and its contrasting bands of red, yellow and black are a dead giveaway that

SNAKE BITE cont pg 16

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it may be dangerous. Some nonvenomous Arkansas snakes, such as the milk snake, have alternating red, yellow and black bands as well. Some people have come up with handy rhymes to tell the two apart, as the coral snake's red bands are bordered by yellow bars, opposite the milk snake's red-and-black pattern.

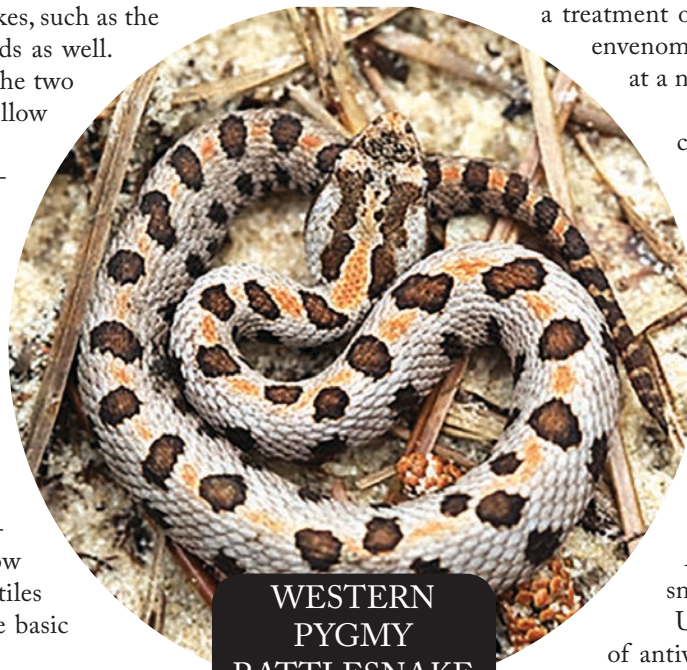
Clarisha Cummins, representative for BTG Industries, the company that produces the antivenom, CroFab, for North American pit viper envenomation, offers her own handy rhyme for people who aren't sure about the species:

"Red-and-yellow, leave the snake alone; red-and-black, leave the snake alone. Follow that and you'll be much safer," Cummins said.

Even with a healthy live-and-let-live attitude, some people may accidentally step on an unseen snake and receive a bite. Wearing boots or shoes that go past the ankles can be some protection, and some manufacturers make special snake boots for hunters who know they'll be venturing in snake country when these reptiles are still active. Even after a bite, a level head and some basic knowledge of how snake venom works can help.

Cummins has heard of many home remedies for snakebites, and none prove successful. "Cold packs, cutting and sucking venom at the bite site, and even electric shock are all talked about, but they don't work," Cummins said. "You're likely to cause yourself more damage than anything else by trying these tactics. In cases where someone says these may have worked, they were likely dealing with a dry bite that the snake didn't inject venom into."

The best remedy, according to Cummins, is to remain calm and go to a hospital for



a treatment of antivenom. Remove any jewelry, watches and rings, as envenomation can lead to swelling and try to keep your heart rate at a normal level.

"Don't use a tourniquet," Cummins said. "Tourniquets can keep the toxin concentrated at the bite site, causing more damage. Also, the buildup of bad blood behind the tourniquet can cause the body to go into shock if it is released too quickly. A hospital will have to relax the tourniquet through a gradual loosening, which can delay the proper treatment of the envenomation."

Cummins says to forgo the first aid for the bite and just go to a hospital and receive treatment there. Don't worry about collecting the culprit of the bite, either.

"You don't have to kill the snake or know exactly what species it was as long as it was a pit viper," Cummins said. "CroFab works against all venoms of North American pit vipers, so please don't bring a dead or live snake into the emergency room with you."

Unfortunately, not every hospital in Arkansas has a supply of antivenom onhand, which can lead a person to being transferred to another hospital, lengthening the time the venom is in the system untreated.

"Antibiotics don't work, nor do antihistamines like Benadryl," Cummins said. "They only help if there's an allergic reaction or infection of the bite. Envenomation works much differently. CroFab has created the Snakebite 911 app to direct you to a hospital with a current supply of the medicine you need. It's available as a free download."

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Life list adds angling excitement

By Chuck Long

AGFC Regional Educator, Northeast Arkansas

Lists are commonplace in our society; shopping lists, to-do lists and wish lists are found in most every household. Most lists are met with anxiety, but there is a list that each Arkansas angler should try to keep: an Arkansas fish list.

A fish list keeps up with species as an angler first catches them. It encourages the angler to broaden horizons and seek fish in a variety of waters, improving their knowledge. Lists also spark the use of different techniques from live bait to artificial lures.

With more than 200 species of fish in Arkansas, so another key ingredient to a fish list is the ability to identify species. Though many can be quickly identified by an internet search, a good book can be invaluable in the identification process. The AGFC offers a the Arkansas Fish Pocket Guide as a download or printed publication for free. For those willing to spend a few dollars, "Fishes of Arkansas" from the University of Arkansas press is the gold standard in fish identification.

Some of the first fish to fill an angler's list often are bream species. Bluegill, redear sunfish and green sunfish can be caught in a variety of waters. Though most sunfish are common, this group of fishes produces some obscure species like the flier, a small sunfish often confused with a bluegill. This group can also produce some fish that are only found in certain types of waters. The shadow bass and Ozark bass, for example, will be found primarily in clear mountain streams.

Largemouth bass are easy to add to the fish list, but smallmouth and spotted bass will need to be sought in certain waters. Some bodies of water, like Greers Ferry in central Arkansas and Beaver Lake Bull Shoals Lake and the Kings River in northwest Arkansas all have the poten-

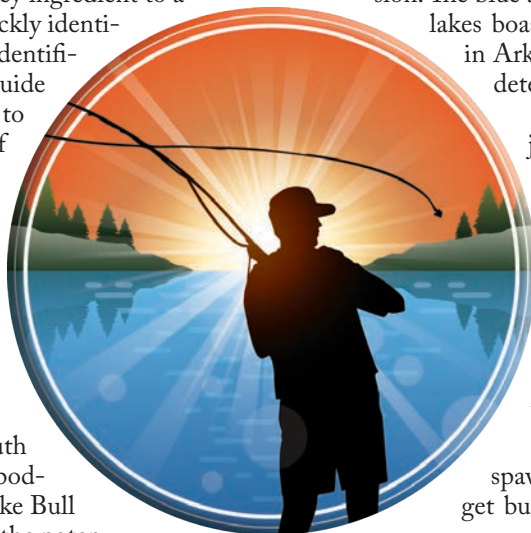
tial to produce all three in single outing.

Both black and white crappie can be found throughout the state. A quick count of the dorsal spines will distinguish the species with the white crappie having six spines while the black crappie will have seven or eight.

Fishing for catfish can add several species to the list for anglers who adventure to various types of waters. The more common catfishes, the channel, flathead, and blue can be caught in most lakes and rivers. The channel will be the most accessible and is the fish most often stocked for fishing derbies by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. The blue and flathead are more often found in flowing waters, though some lakes boast good populations of each. Three species of bullheads also live in Arkansas: the black, brown and yellow. Identification will be a key to determine exactly which species is at the end of the line.

Introduced to Arkansas after the construction of dams on major rivers, trout can be found in several rivers flowing with cold water. The rainbow trout is the most often stocked species, and can even be found in Family and Community Fishing Lakes in winter. Brown, cutthroat and brook trout also can be found in the tailwaters of dams forming some Arkansas lakes, but are not as prevalent as rainbows. Bull Shoals and Norfolk tailwaters offer the opportunity to catch all four species on one fishing trip. Additional stockings of tiger trout (a brown/brook trout hybrid) and golden rainbows (a rare color variation of the common rainbow trout) add even more flavor to Arkansas's trout waters.

White bass can be found in many rivers as they make their spawning run in early spring. Striped bass are a little harder to target but can be found in some of Arkansas's larger lakes, such as Lake



ANGLING cont pg 19

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Ouachita, Beaver Lake and Lake Dardanelle. The hybrid striped bass, a cross between the white and striped bass, have been stocked in a couple of lakes as well.

Walleye and sauger are found in many bodies of water across the state, but often require specific tactics. These fish are often found near the bottom of flowing rivers and can be tempted by a jig tipped with a minnow.

There are a host of other fishes that can be added to the fish list. While not as popular as sport fish, many "rough fish" have much more potential than anglers give them credit. Grinnel (bowfin) are found in backwaters across the state, put up an amazing fight and are eager to take most bass lures, especially spinnerbaits. Freshwater drum are easily caught in most rivers on worms or crawdads as they make their spawning run.

The gars of Arkansas offer an interesting challenge. Spotted gar are the smaller species and are found in more quiet waters. Likely to take a crappie jig or minnow, these fish are easy to find and catch. The same can be said for the longnose gar and it can be found in a wider range of areas than the spotted gar. The shortnose gar is typically found in the larger river systems of the state. Often confused with a spotted gar, the shortnose lacks spots on top of the head. The alligator gar has the title of the largest fish in Arkansas and is found mainly in large rivers. Big baits and big tackle are keys to taking alligator gar.

There are several types of suckers that inhabit the waters of Arkansas. These fish, as well as many other species, are best sought with a worm fished on the bottom. The red-horse species are most often caught, but the buffalo species will also occasionally be taken. Once again, fish identification is critical in adding species to the list.

Chain and grass pickerel can be taken from a few bodies of water in Arkansas and look very similar. The chain pickerel is larger and more abundant. The shovelnose sturgeon and paddlefish are found in many Arkansas rivers and can be incidental catches while targeting other species.

For specific ideas on the wheres and hows of fishing in Arkansas, please check agfc.com. Rules and regulations vary depending on the waterbody, so check those. Also check out the Virtual Nature Center and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission YouTube channel for videos on fishing in Arkansas.

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