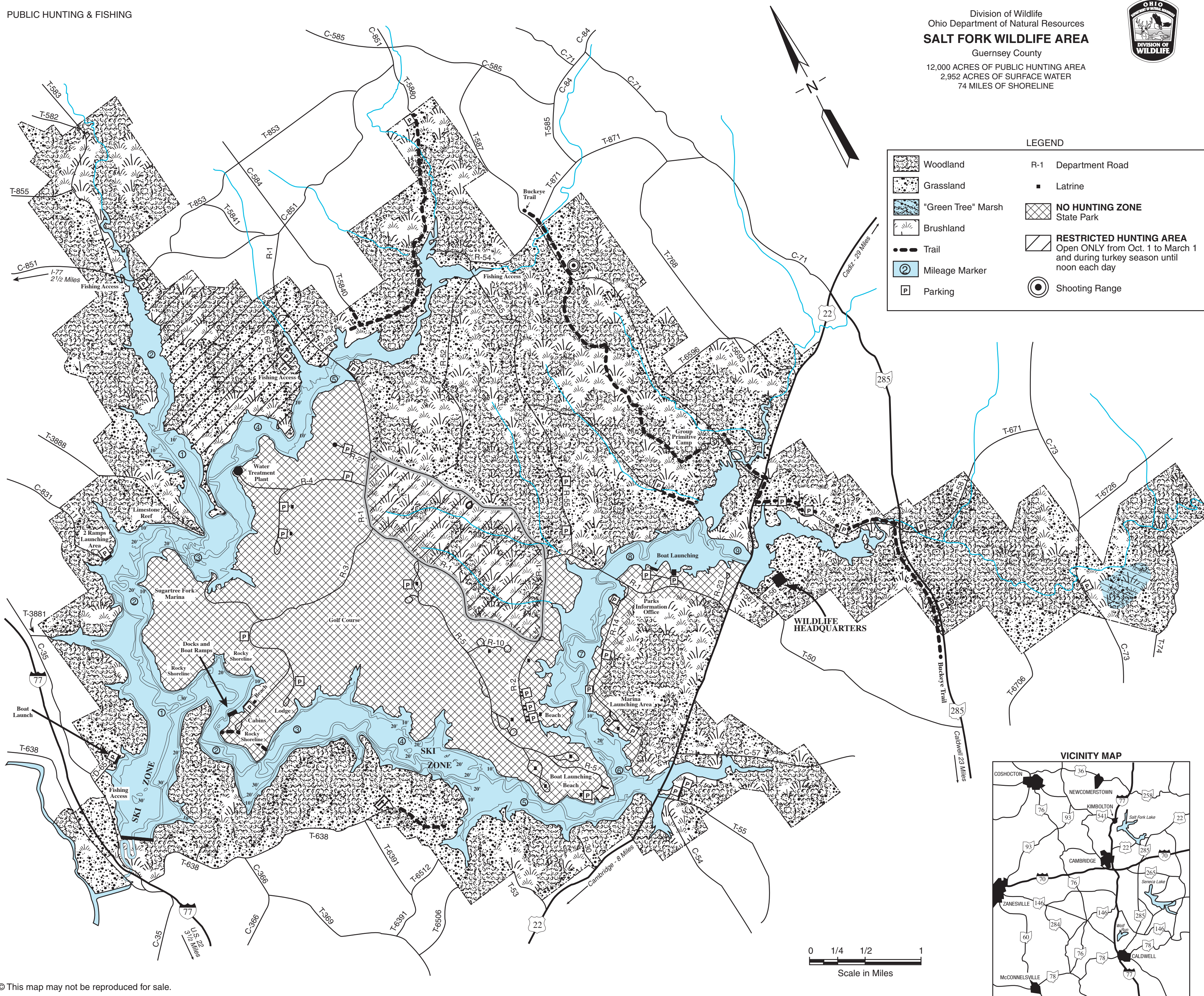
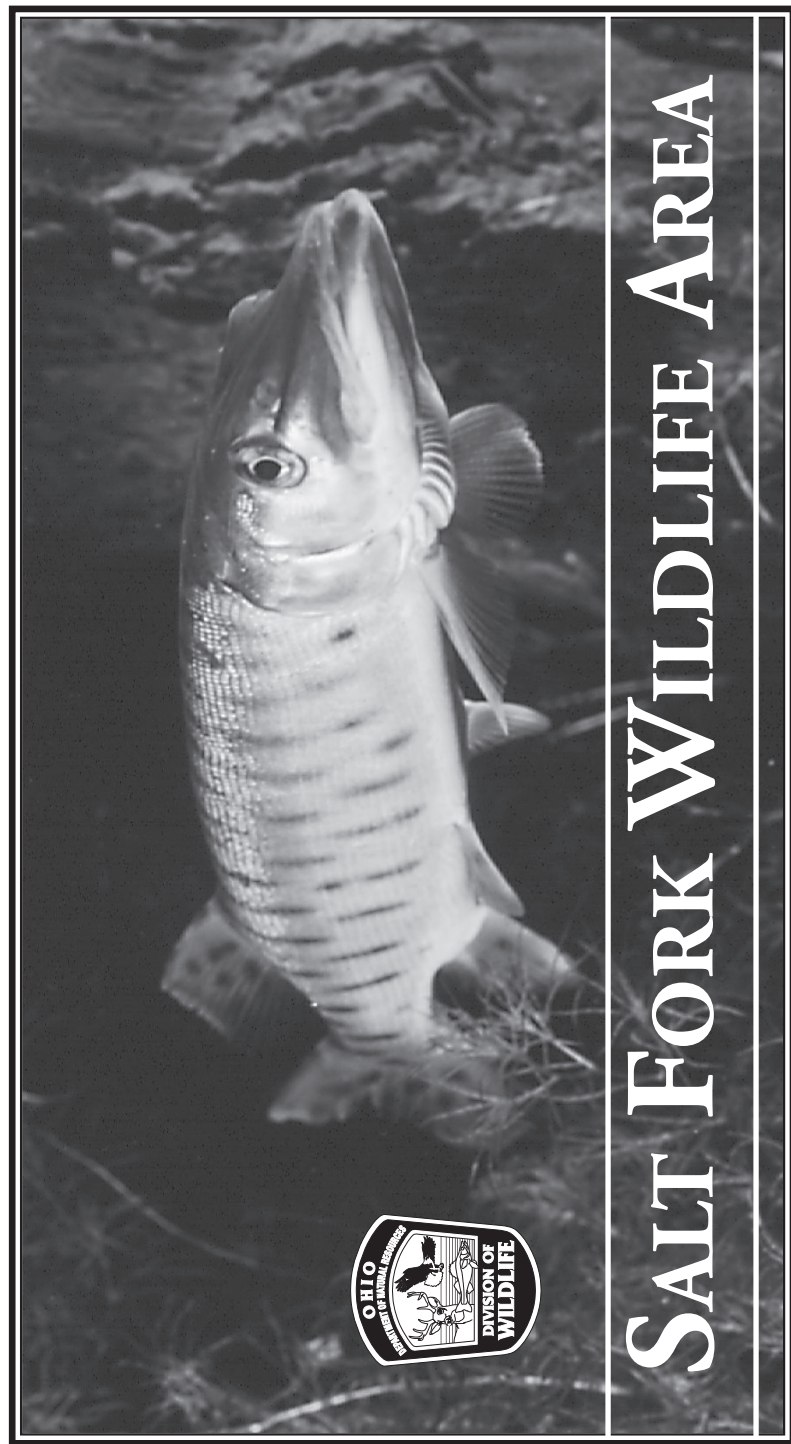






LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Situated in the hills of southeastern Ohio, the Salt Fork Wildlife Area and the Salt Fork State Park have a steep to rolling terrain that is dissected by numerous small streams. The largest of these, Salt Fork Creek, has been impounded to create the 2,952-acre Salt Fork Lake. The area is administered by the Division of Wildlife and the Division of Parks and Recreation, respectively, of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The Division of Wildlife is responsible for fish and wildlife management and public hunting and fishing activities on the area. The Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for development and maintenance of the general recreational facilities of the park area. The main entrance to this 20,542-acre recreation area is seven miles east of Cambridge on U.S. Route 22.

Lying to the east of Salt Fork Lake, the wildlife area is deeply dissected by the stream and tributaries which flow into the lake. Elevations vary from 1,065 to 790 feet above mean sea level. Thirty-five percent of the wildlife area is woods, mostly on the steeper slopes and along the streams. Oak and hickory dominate the drier slopes; maple, beech, elm, ash, willow, and sycamore are more common on the lower slopes and bottom lands. Cropfields, former cropfields, and old pasture dominated by grasses and other herbaceous plants occupy one-third of the wildlife area. A variety of shrubs and small trees, such as dogwood and sassafras, intermixed with grasses and other perennials, are dominant on the remaining 28 percent of the wildlife area.



HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Salt Fork Lake occupies the fertile bottom land soils of Salt Fork Creek Valley. During lake construction in 1967, trees and shrubs were left standing in many of the embayments, and an artificial reef was constructed on the north branch to provide fish cover. Portions of the shoreline are covered with large boulders which serve as desirable fishing areas. Salt Fork Lake provides fishing for a variety of game and panfish. The Division of Wildlife conducts annual test netting, seining, and physical and chemical surveys on the lake to determine the status of fish populations. This information is used to plan fish management programs.

Hunting for small game, waterfowl, and white-tailed deer is available on approximately 12,000 acres, of which 8,279 acres are managed primarily for wildlife. Wildlife management work has included the protection and improvement of existing woodland, selective maintenance of shrubby coverts, maintenance of permanent grassland, and maintenance of open land.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Gray and fox squirrels, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbit, wild turkey, and white-tailed deer are the principal game species, with lesser numbers of woodchuck and woodcock. Beaver can be found on Salt Fork Creek and several of the smaller streams. All furbearers common to the region occur on the area. Wood ducks are common along the many small streams. Mallards, teal, black ducks, wigeons, goldeneyes, buffleheads, Canada geese, and other waterfowl can be found on the 80-acre seasonally flooded marsh and Salt Fork Lake proper; these occur primarily as migrant visitors. A rich variety of songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects also occur on the area in association with the diverse mixture of habitat types.

In June and July, wildlife enthusiasts can watch from State Route 22 as young ospreys feed and exercise in “hacking” (or rearing) towers on the Salt Fork Wildlife Area. This area is one of five in the state selected for an osprey reintroduction project which began in 1996. Fledged ospreys are released in mid-July to the wild.



Three to four years after their release, these birds should return to the area to mate and build permanent nests. The “fish hawk” once common in Ohio fell victim to deforestation, persecution, and pesticides in the early 1900s. This project to restore Ohio’s native wildlife is made possible through donations to the Do Something Wild! income tax checkoff.

Salt Fork Lake provides angling opportunities for those who seek largemouth bass, walleye, channel catfish, muskellunge, crappie, and various species of sunfish. Flathead catfish, smallmouth bass, and white bass are also present, but provide a more limited sport fishing option.

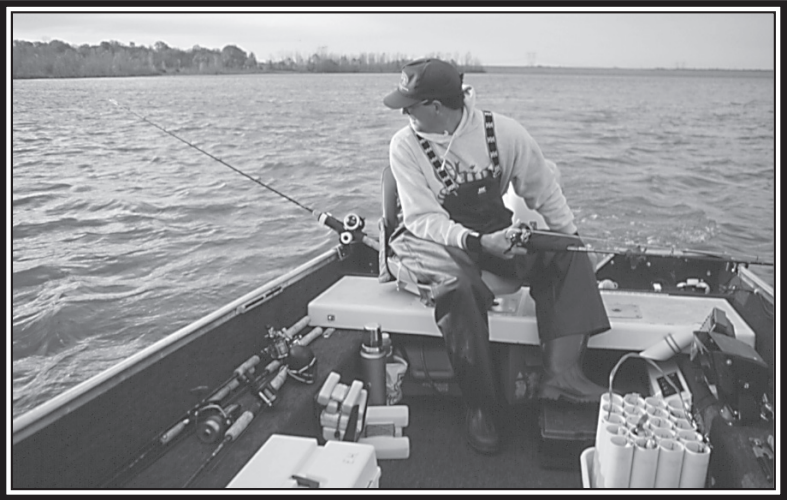


HUNTING, TRAPPING, & FISHING

The area is popular for hunting of gray and fox squirrels, grouse, rabbit, deer, and wild turkey. Oak-hickory stands and beech groves scattered throughout the area provide good squirrel hunting. The reverting old fields, with wild crabapple, hawthorn, and pine plantings in combination with second-growth hardwoods, provide excellent grouse and deer habitats. Waterfowl hunting is good during the fall migration. Woodcock hunting is increasing in popularity. Trapping of muskrat and mink is productive along the small streams and raccoon hunting is good throughout the area.

Bass fishing is at its peak in late April, May, and June, when the fish move to shallower waters. In summer, bass are more likely to be found in deeper waters near drop-offs and deep weed beds, or in the old stream channel, old road beds, or other natural irregularities in the bottom. June, July, and August are the peak months for taking muskies, especially along the south shore near the dam and the north shore between the lodge and beach.

The best fishing for walleye is along the rocky shore area, north of the cabin area, to the southeastern shore toward the dam. Crappie and sunfish are more readily caught during the months of April, May, and June. Catfishing continues to provide quality catches from May through October. Lake maps listing the fish concentration devices and preferred angling areas for various sport fish species may be requested from the Division of Wildlife office in Athens (see Additional Information section).



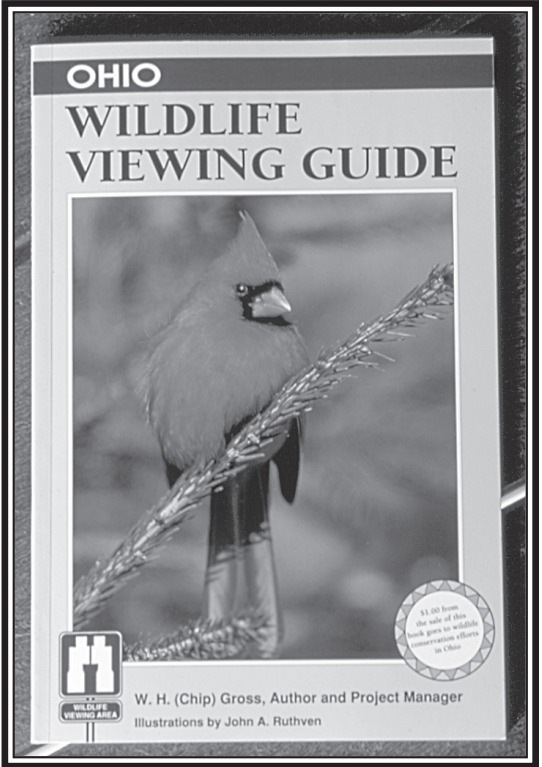
The Salt Fork Lake fisheries are managed by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Data are collected through the use of electrofishing surveys, stationary nets, and angler surveys and provide valued information for the management of largemouth bass, walleye, sunfish, muskellunge, and channel catfish. Enforcement of and angler compliance with the black bass minimum length limit imposed in 1985 have aided development of an excellent fishery for this sport fish. An annual stocking of fingerling muskellunge and walleye, raised at Division of Wildlife fish hatcheries, maintains these non-reproducing fish populations. Discarded Christmas trees are submerged to attract various sport fish at numerous sites around the lake. Angling success for sunfish, crappie, and largemouth bass has increased at these locations.

PUBLIC USE FACILITIES

A lodge, cabins, and camping areas are provided in the state park for overnight accommodations. Picnic facilities are also available. On the lake, there are marinas and boat ramps. (Horsepower is unlimited in designated speed zones.) A large beach and bathhouse are open to the public for swimming during the summer. Several miles of well-marked nature trails, including a portion of the Buckeye Trail, are available to the hiker and nature lover. Vehicles are not permitted on these trails.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

The Salt Fork Wildlife Area is one of 80 areas throughout the state designated as an official Ohio Watchable Wildlife site. The wildlife watching year begins in late February and early March when the woodcock begins its mating rituals. Spring treks along wooded trails and roadways provide encounters with wild turkey, white-tailed deer, foxes, skunks, and groundhogs, as well as glimpses of songbirds, woodpeckers, hawks, and an occasional bald eagle. Summer evenings around the lake reveal pairs of Canada geese, beavers, mink, weasels, and owls. Fall migration brings an abundance of waterfowl, flushes of ruffed grouse, squirrels, and cottontail rabbits. Winter snows provide excellent opportunities to track wily wildlife.



The Ohio Wildlife Viewing Guide highlights 80 of the best wildlife watching sites in the state and can be ordered from the Ohio Division of Wildlife by sending a check or money order for \$10 (includes tax and mailing) to: Ohio Division of Wildlife, Ohio Wildlife Viewing Guide, 2045 Morse Road, Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The nearest wildlife district office is located at 360 East State Street, Athens, Ohio 45701; telephone (740)589-9930. For current fishing conditions, contact the Salt Fork Fish Management Work Unit at (740)489-5240. For current hunting conditions, contact the Salt Fork Wildlife Management Work Unit at (740)489-5021. Information on the state park may be obtained from the Park Manager, Salt Fork State Park, Box 672, Cambridge, Ohio 43725; telephone (740)439-3521.

TURN IN A POACHER

Ohio’s TIP, “Turn In a Poacher,” program is helping to curtail poaching throughout the state. TIP is designed to involve the public in reporting wildlife violations. Citizens who observe wildlife violations should call the TIP toll-free hotline, 1-800-POACHER.

