

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Kids & Fishing: A Perfect Combo

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

When you spend as much time in the outdoors as I do, you realize there are many things that just naturally go together.

For instance, spring - mushroom hunting, summer - walleyes, fall - pheasant hunting - the fall colors and winter - ice fishing and of course - kids and the outdoors.

When I think about kids, I think fishing. Because kids and fishing just naturally go together.

Kids have a lot of energy and are always looking for their next great adventure. Of course, one thing they are short of is a whole lot of patience, but that can be something fishing can teach them.



Gary HOWEY

To a kid, fishing can be an adventure into the unknown. All you'll need to do is to make it interesting and keep the action going.

You don't want to make it too complicated, as you want them to catch a bunch of fish.

Bluegills and sunfish are a great place to start, as they are eager biters. The fish don't have to be big; they just need to bite.

Once you've figured what you're going to be fishing for and where you're going, you can have the child help you get bait. When my daughter Cassie was younger and we started fishing together, she'd help dig the worms, pick up night crawlers and catch grasshoppers using a small net.

Then we would set down and figure out our game plan, you know, map out our strategy just like the explorers Lewis & Clark did a cou-



Columnist Gary Howey is pictured with two of his grand children, Braedon (left) and Ashlynn Howey, on one of the fishing trips he takes with his grandkids. On these trips, it's not just a learning experience for the kids, as these trips teach grandfathers a lot about kids.

ple of hundred years ago.

We would talk about the fish we are going after, where we would be fishing and any other little details that will make the trip interesting to a youngster.

When the day finally arrives, we'd put together a lunch, usually from our local Stop-N-Go as I'm not much of a cook!

Then we'd head for the "hot spot", which is generally a small pond not far from town.

Once we arrived, we would have a little safety talk and then see who could catch the most fish. Gener-

ally, it was my daughter, honestly, if you're going to get a child interested in fishing, that's the way it should be.

She'd pick out her bait and then slowly attempt to bait her own hook, with me helping her. At first, I would help her cast out and to take the fish off for her. At that time, she was young and I did not want to spoil a perfect trip by getting a hook stuck in her finger.

After I'd unhook the fish, she'd hold the fish and release it back into the pond. She had already learned in or-

der to have fish for the future that we have to let some fish go.

We'd talk about the fish. How it finds its food and what it eats. Since she was at that inquisitive age, we would talk about nature, the birds, grass and all of that stuff that a Dad and Daughters might do.

We both enjoyed the time we spent together because she's asked to go out many times since.

It's too bad that there are so many young kids out there with no one to take them fishing. These kids could really learn a lot from a trip into the outdoors.

Of course, everyone is busy, but if we took part of a day and took a niece, nephew or neighbor kid fishing to the park, lake or river, it would mean a great deal to them.

Many kids out there do not have the opportunity to see all the great things the outdoors has to offer. You do not have to be an expert to do it; you just need to take the time to introduce a kid to a sport we all love.

There are several groups or organizations that have mentor programs for both the fishermen and the hunters. Your state Game & Parks or D.N.R has the aquatic education programs as well as hunter education programs. Your local Most Pheasants Forever groups have their mentor hunts that also help to introduce kids to the outdoors.

These groups can't reach all of the children that would love to get outdoors.

Why not take a little time and take a kid fishing, hunting or camping.

Let them see what the outdoors is all about, it would mean a lot to them and a great experience for you!

Gary Howey, Hartington, Nebraska, is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He is the Producer/Host of the award winning *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series, seen locally in Channels 2 and 98 at Saturday at 6:30 pm and Sunday at 7:00 am, On KTTW-TV Fox, Sioux Falls at 6:30 am and on the MIDCO Sports Network Thursday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 10:00 am. He and Simon Fuller Co-Host the *Outdoor Adventures* radio program on *Classic Hits 106.3*, *ESPN Sports Radio 1570* in Southeastern South Dakota and Northeast Nebraska. In Northwest Iowa, it airs on *KCHE 92.1 FM*. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS DIGEST

South Dakota Salmon Record Broken

PIERRE -- A Highmore angler had barely started his day on Lake Oahe when a fish hit his lure and created a memory to last a lifetime.

Gordon Sampson boated the 24 lb., 8 oz. Chinook salmon after only five minutes of fishing on Aug. 14. The massive fish broke the previous state record of 23 lbs., 14 oz. The record salmon was verified by Hilary Meyer, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) fisheries biologist.

"We have had reports of several large salmon being caught, and two fish that were close to the state record," Meyer said. "The salmon on Lake Oahe are in great condition because of large numbers of bait fish, such as lake herring."

Sampson told Meyer his hands were shaking due to the excitement of his record breaking catch, and she is pretty sure there is more excitement to be had yet this season on Lake Oahe.

Neb. G&P Receives Grant For Open Fields, Waters

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Public access to hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities in Nebraska received a boost on Aug. 17 with the announcement that the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Funding from this three-year, \$1.35 million Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) grant will be used to improve and expand the Open Fields and Waters (OFW) Program.

OFW provides public walk-in hunting, fishing and trapping access on private land. Through OFW, Game and Parks offers incentives to landowners who allow access to quality habitats for hunting, fishing, trapping, and other forms of compatible outdoor recreation. In addition, Game and Parks offers incentives through OFW for habitat upgrades on these private lands when necessary to provide a quality experience to hunters, anglers and trappers. OFW is a joint project of Game and Parks, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Nebraska Environmental Trust.

Minn. Outdoors Camp A Training Ground And More

BY DOUG SMITH
(c) 2015 Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

FERGUS FALLS, Minn. -- Megan Weidenfeller shouldered her shotgun, tracked the flying clay target and squeezed the trigger.

Boom! The clay pigeon exploded in a cloud of dust. Then the 15-year-old did it again ... and again, breaking an impressive 10 out of 10 targets.

"Nice shooting," said instructor Jenny Johnson.

Shotgunning was just one of the activities Weidenfeller and 47 other youths, ages 13 to 15, were immersed in last week at the Minnesota Waterfowl Association's seven-day Woodie Camp -- a unique, hands-on camp that aims to hook kids on the joy of waterfowl hunting and also educate them about wildlife habitat and conservation.

"The purpose is to get kids involved in the outdoors," said Brad Nylin, MWA executive director. "We introduce them to all aspects of waterfowling, including decoy painting, photography, shooting, calling, dog training, decoys, water safety and habitat and wetland issues."

"It's really a waterfowl immersion camp. There's nothing else like it in the state."

Also unique: The camp is free. The Waterfowl Association's 2,700 members and sportsmen's clubs donate money to cover the costs of housing, food and a few staff, and volunteers provide the instruction. Now in its 27th year, about 1,000 youths have experienced Woodie Camp.

"It's been successful beyond our wildest dreams,"

said Tony Rondeau, a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife waterfowl biologist, one of the founders of Woodie Camp and a volunteer instructor.

Rondeau and other MWA leaders came up with the idea when the average age of waterfowl hunters was getting older, and too few youngsters were replacing them. That concern remains today; the average age of Minnesota's small-game hunters is around 41. The number of Minnesota duck hunters has fallen from a peak of around 140,000 in the 1960s, to around 90,000 last year.

"We're hoping to expose them to waterfowling and ignite a passion," said Rondeau, 62. Hunters, through their license fees and excise taxes on hunting equipment and ammunition and membership in conservation organizations like the Waterfowl Association, have been key supporters of wildlife habitat and conservation, he noted.

"These young people are the future," Rondeau said last week while a group of boys and girls practiced goose calling. "Exposing them to the outdoor world is critical; they will influence what happens in the future. They will be leaders in outdoor conservation."

A Hands-On Approach

For the past 15 years, the camp has been held at the scenic Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, nestled on 325 acres of rolling grasslands dotted with 28 wetlands -- a waterfowl paradise. It's the first environmental center operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"We couldn't have designed a better place for a waterfowl camp," Nylin said. "It's remarkable."

Much of the camp's focus is on hunting -- kids even learn how to clean ducks and cook them. But they are also taught about wetland invertebrates, aquatic plants and prairie ecology.

Most of class time is outdoors. Campers use dip nets to find invertebrates in a pond. They helped put bands on ducks. They swamped canoes on a lake to learn water safety. They learned to use a compass.

"We call it waterfowling 365 -- we want to instill a passion for waterfowl for 365 days, so it's a lifestyle, not something that happens 60 days a year [during hunting season]," Rondeau said.

Tom Tubbs -- 77, of Rosemount, one of MWA's founders -- said, "We're teaching them to have respect for the environment, the birds and themselves -- and maybe help them make lasting friendships, too."

Said Rondeau, "They come in as strangers and leave as friends."

This year, there were 35 boys and 13 girls, the most ever. "I'd love to see it half and half," Rondeau said.

When it comes to hunting and the outdoors, the students have a wide range of experience.

"Some have a lot, some have none," said Teresa Schlieman, 36, a science teacher and camp director. She's also Rondeau's daughter. "I grew up hunting and fishing," she said.

One thing the kids won't find at camp: their smartphones.

"They're not allowed to have them here," Schlieman said. "We're trying to get them outside and away from all the technology."

Thumbs Up From Kids

Amy Worum, 13, who comes from a hunting family, had just finished a session on goose calling on the first full day of camp and was heading to the dining hall for lunch.

"It's really fun," she said of Woodie Camp. "I wanted to learn to call [ducks and geese] and to shoot better and to meet people."

"Hunting gives you time to appreciate being outdoors, watching wildlife and spending time with my mom and dad."

Chance Pratt, a 14-year-old from Lakeville, also was all smiles.

"I love to hunt," he said. "No one in my family hunts; my grandpa taught me." He came to Woodie Camp to broaden his knowledge. "It's a lot of fun and I've met a lot of nice people."

Megan Weidenfeller, who later blasted the first 10 clay targets she saw, also was excited about camp.

"I didn't know what to expect, but it's really fun so far," she said.

Nylin said his nonprofit Waterfowl Association has to decide how to respond to the popularity of Woodie Camp. The group routinely turns kids away because of lack of space.

This year, there were 80 applications for 48 spots.

"We'd really like to do a second camp," Nylin said. But the camps cost around \$45,000, and securing funding and getting volunteers to donate another week of their time is problematic.

Meanwhile, Tubbs, the co-founder of the Waterfowl Association, watched students shoot clay targets, saw the smiles on their faces and said Woodie Camp is a chance for an older generation to share their knowledge and passion for waterfowling with a younger one.

"It's a joy to give back," he said.

Yankton School District Hosts...
Annual Middle School
Open House
6th, 7th and 8th Grade
Monday, August 24th
6:00-7:00 p.m.
See where the action is!!

Better Hearing Made Easy at Avera

SEE OUR AUDIOLOGISTS TO TEST DRIVE A HEARING AID FOR TWO WEEKS AT NO COST OR OBLIGATION

Matthew D. Rumsey
AuD, CCC-A

Kendra Neugebauer
AuD, CCC-A, FAAA

Avera

Call 605-655-1220 to schedule your appointment.
409 Summit St., Suite 3200 • Yankton, SD 57078

15-AMGR-3759