

Briefs: Camping Reservations Open Feb. 18 For SD Parks

PIERRE — Visitors planning camping trips to South Dakota state parks and recreation areas will soon be able to make reservations for the summer camping season.

“Camper numbers at state parks have increased in the past several years,” said Doug Hofer, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation. “The growing number of people camping in South Dakota state parks makes reservations even more important.”

Reservations for camping in most state parks can be made within 90 days of arrival. The first day to make reservations is Feb. 18 for a May 18 arrival. May 18-20 is Open House Weekend in South Dakota state parks. During Open House Weekend, no entrance fees are charged, but camping fees still apply.

Camping reservations are available for dates between May 18 and Sept. 3 in most parks. A limited number of parks also accept autumn reservations through Oct. 8.

Reservations for Memorial Day weekend can be made beginning Feb. 25 for a May 25 arrival. Reservations are currently being accepted for the entire camping season for campsites at Custer State Park and for lodges in all state parks and recreation areas.

Reservations can be made online at www.campsd.com or by calling 1-800-710-2267. The telephone reservation center is open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Standard Time daily. Online reservations may be made 24 hours a day, though campsites do not become available until 7 a.m. on the first day of the 90-day window, both online and at the call center. There is a \$7.70 per site non-refundable reservation fee, which does not apply to South Dakota residents.

People may sign up to receive text message reminders about reservation opening dates for holiday weekends. Text “SDGFP ROD” to 368638. Message and data rates may apply.

The full 90-day window calendar can be found online at www.gfp.sd.gov.

Unintentionally Trapped Mountain Lion Released By Neb. Game & Parks

LINCOLN, Neb. — A mountain lion unintentionally caught in a foothold trap in Dawes County was tranquilized and released by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on Feb. 9.

The mountain lion was a young female weighing approximately 85 pounds that appeared to be in good health.

The trapper called Game and Parks immediately upon discovering the mountain lion, as required by Game and Parks policy. High pelt prices for bobcats and an increased effort to trap them may have contributed to the recent incidental captures of mountain lions in Dawes County, according to Sam Wilson, Game and Parks’ carnivore program manager. It was the third unintentional trapping of a mountain lion in the Pine Ridge this winter.

Game and Parks requests fur harvesters immediately contact the agency if a mountain lion is incidentally trapped. Anyone with trail camera photographs or other evidence of mountain lions should contact the agency.

Neb. Game Officials Offer Tips To Goose Hunters

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is offering safety tips for goose hunters this winter and spring.

Among the agency’s tips are:

- Dress in layers to stay warm;
- Be aware of the symptoms of hypothermia, which can affect your judgment and ability to control a shotgun.

- Before hunting, practice mounting and maintaining control of the shotgun while wearing cold-weather clothing.
- Never jump or climb over or into a blind or boat with a loaded shotgun.
- Wear a personal flotation device if venturing onto ice.

- Avoid alcohol, medication and other mind-altering drugs before and during the hunt.
- Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

Hunting for certain types of geese runs as late as April 15 this year.

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Structure = Better Fishing

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

Some of the finest fishing I’ve ever had, no matter what the season has come on those farm ponds and smaller lakes with excellent structure, structure that’s available year round.

What exactly is structure? It’s nothing more than a change in the bottom configuration, something different, something aquatic critters can relate to and seek shelter in. It can be weeds, rocks, sunken trees and even changes in the bottom contour.

On some ponds, you may find excellent fishing in the summer when the main structure on a pond being the vegetation. Vegetation produces oxygen, which lowers water temps and is the beginning of the food change. Tiny microscopic organisms, such as zooplankton thrives in these oxygen rich waters, which in turn attracts baitfish and

the young of the year that feed on it, which attracts the game fish who feed on the smaller fish. Making the weed lines the beginning and the end for some critters, an area where most of the fish will be attracted.

The weeds also act as a rearing area for the young of the year, the fry, as the weeds are a place they can duck into and hide in in order to keep from being gobbled down



Gary HOWEY

by game fish, some of which will be their own parents.

If vegetation is the main or only structure on a pond, your fishery could be in big trouble as there are times of the year when this structure, the weeds aren’t available for the smaller fish to take refuge in and for the other fish to relate to which means that they will be harder to locate and more than likely always moving around in search of food.

These include early spring, late fall and in the winter months, when vegetation is just beginning to grow, dying or gone, which means the young of the year are now left out in the cold, running for their lives, trying to keep from becoming the main dish on a larger predator’s menu.

In these ponds that have little or no structure, spawns may be pulled off, but once the male abandons the nest, no longer protecting the young of the year, the area these fry are occupying becomes an area for a feeding frenzy as the young of the year are now on their own and without structure, a place for the young of the year to hide, they are chewed up very quickly.

This is why, on some ponds and small lakes, there are very few if any small fish as each spring they become the main course for the predator fish.

It doesn’t take a lot of structure to keep a pond healthy, it just needs to be something that fish, especially the newly hatched fry, and smaller fish can seek refuge in to escape the predator fish, which would like nothing better than to take them to lunch, making them the main course.

Years ago, there were several newly-stocked ponds built in northeast Nebraska



PHOTO: GARY HOWEY

Small ponds with year around structure can provide excellent fishing opportunities no matter what the season. Larry Myhre is pictured with a Bluegill taken from a small pond in northeast Nebraska.

and after a few years opened to fishing. We knew that there were a lot of fish stocked in the lake, but the fishing wasn’t what it should be, as a matter of fact it sucked.

We’d catch a fish here and there, but never any numbers. After a couple of years, it became apparent that the lake needed something as it lacked structure; there was nothing to give young of the year a place to hide or to attract and hold the fish.

That winter a group of us got together gathered discarded Christmas trees after the holidays, concrete blocks and nylon rope which would be bound together, forming brush piles that would be put into the ponds. Once the ice formed on the lake, with the help of a local scouting group they would be strategically laid out on the ice.

In the spring as the ice melted, these piles sank to the bottom, creating excellent structure or aquatic habitat, which allowed the young of the year a place to hide, to grow to a size where they were too large to be eaten or perhaps just fast enough where they could outrun danger and dart back into the brush piles for protection.

Because of these, this new structure, the fishing improved on the ponds and became productive throughout the year.

If your pond is in an area with an over abundance of Cedar trees, which would be a lot of the areas along the Missouri River, you have a never ending supply of trees for brush piles and most land owners would be more than happy to let you cut Cedars in their pasture.

As I mentioned, structure should be strategically placed, not just thrown out on

the ice. This is where a good depth finder comes in handy as it will let you know depth changes. A good place to install a brush pile would be in an area where the shallow water drops off into deeper water or along a creek channel, areas where fish will be moving.

These locations work particularly well adjacent to spawning areas, giving fry a place to dash off to seek refuge once they are on their own.

Brush piles are just one example as to how structure could be added to a body of water to improve the structure and the fishing.

Rock piles are another type of structure, which can be added to ponds to help improve the fishing. They can be piled on the ice or be placed in the water from a boat.

Once this structure is placed in the water, it will take some time before these areas really start to produce, as the microscopic organisms that are the beginning of the food chain will need to develop. Once this happens, the fry, small baitfish and other aquatic creatures will move in, which will then attract the predator fish.

With decent year around structure, fishing in even the smallest of ponds can provide excellent fishing opportunities throughout the year.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the president of Outdoorsmen Productions, the producer/host of Outdoorsmen Adventures television and the co-host of Outdoor Adventures radio. If you're looking for more information on the outdoors, go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Gazelles

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like to clean up how we finish the game,” coach Doug Pesicka said.

Aberdeen Central, which scored 60 points in the first meeting in early January, had just 10 points at halftime and 18 through three quarters.

“We got off to such a poor start and they brought a ton of energy,” Golden Eagles coach Dawn Seiler said. “On both ends, we looked flat and weren’t very active at all.”

In what was a defensive first quarter, Yankton held the Golden Eagles to one field goal and got seven points from Fedders to lead 7-4.

Aberdeen Central battled back to tie the game at 9-9, but from there, the Gazelles got out from outside — keying a 13-0 run.

“We came out strong right away, and honestly, we needed to do that,” Fedders said. “Every-

thing was working for us.”

Consecutive 3’s from Chloe Cornemann and Fedders made it 15-9, five straight points from Tory Gross pushed it to 20-9, and a jumper from Cornemann gave Yankton a 22-9 cushion.

The Golden Eagles were a chilly 2-of-19 shooting in the first half, setting the tone for the final two quarters.

“You have to find a way to win games when you’re not shooting well, and we just didn’t do that,” Seiler said. “We let that bad shooting affect every other part of our game.”

Yankton built its lead out to 18, at 31-13, midway through the third quarter. The Golden Eagles closed with five points to get within 31-18.

With 2:08 left in the game, Cornemann scored on a coast-to-coast layup and hit the ensuing free throw, giving Yankton a 42-30 lead.

The Golden Eagles responded with five straight points to get within 42-35, but the Gazelles hit six free throws in the final 33 seconds.

Gross finished with 12 points

for the Gazelles, while Cornemann added 11 points. Yankton won the rebounding battle 28-27 behind 10 from Mikala Hora.

The Golden Eagles got 10 points from Megan Jordre, while Sam Knecht added five points and 10 rebounds, and Leah Beringer had five points.

“We had some kids make some shots in the final minutes, but we should’ve been getting that from the first play,” Seiler said.

Yankton begins a stretch of three road games to close the regular season next Tuesday at Watertown — a team the Gazelles beat by five last December.

“We’ll have to be physical, obviously, because they’re a good rebounding team,” Pesicka said. “They try to take things away from you offensively.”

A 5-game homestand that resulted in four wins certainly sets the Gazelles up nicely for the district tournament, but that’s not the team’s ultimate goal, Fedders said.

“It was definitely neat thing to have all these games at home in

a row, but we need to finish strong on the road,” she said. “We want to get back to state; that’s our main goal.”

In sub-varsity action, the Golden Eagles held off Yankton 36-33 in the JV contest. Whitlee Larson led the Gazelles with 13 points and Morgan Tessier added 11 points.

Aberdeen Central won the sophomore game 42-35. Brooke Loecker and Allie Murphy had six points apiece for Yankton.

ABERDEEN CENTRAL (12-4, 8-4 ESD)
Chloe Cornemann 4-12 2-3 11; Mikala Hora 0-4 3-4 3; Audrey Fuks 0-2 0-0 0; Tory Gross 5-9 1-2 12; Kelsey Fitzgerald 0-2 2-6 2; Jenn Granfilaten 0-2 0-0 0; Emily Fedders 5-8 3-6 16; Sarah Ekren 0-2 0-1 0; Courtney True 0-0 2-2 2; Vanessa Rockne 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS 14-41 13-24 46.

YANKTON (11-5, 8-3 ESD)
Chloe Cornemann 4-12 2-3 11; Mikala Hora 0-4 3-4 3; Audrey Fuks 0-2 0-0 0; Tory Gross 5-9 1-2 12; Kelsey Fitzgerald 0-2 2-6 2; Jenn Granfilaten 0-2 0-0 0; Emily Fedders 5-8 3-6 16; Sarah Ekren 0-2 0-1 0; Courtney True 0-0 2-2 2; Vanessa Rockne 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS 14-41 13-24 46.

ABERDEEN CENTRAL 4 10 37
YANKTON 7 22 31 46
Three-Pointers: YHS 5-7 (Fedders 3-3, Cornemann 1-1, Gross 1-1, Granfilaten 0-2), AC 5-10 (Jordre 3-5, Beringer 1-1, Lundberg 1-2, Fuks 0-1, Ka. Schaanman 0-1). Total Rebounds: YHS 28 (Hora 10), AC 27 (Knecht 10). Assists: YHS 10 (Hora 4), AC 4 (Jordre 2). Turnovers: AC 19, YHS 16. Personal Fouls: AC 20, YHS 15. Fouled out: None.

Ice Fishing On Lake Mille Lacs: The Fire Still Burns

BY DOUG SMITH

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WAHKON, Minn. — Eddy Lyback has been catering to winter anglers on Lake Mille Lacs since he was 8, when he drove his dad’s 1946 Willys Jeep around the lake supplying firewood to the family’s rental ice fishing shacks.

“My job after school was to split the wood and stack it under the bunks,” he said. “We used wood stoves in the ice houses until LP gas came on the scene.”

Lyback was on the lake last week — as he is virtually every day during the winter — driving his 1966 blue Ford pickup with the big red V-shaped plow that he uses to clear roads on the lake for his customers. The 45-year-old truck has 100,000 miles on the odometer — all tallied plowing roads and pulling shacks on a frozen Mille Lacs.

The Lyback name is a familiar one here.

“I grew up on the lake, my father was born on the property and my grandfather homesteaded it,” Lyback said Monday while jiggling a minnow through a hole in the ice inside one of his heated rental houses, complete with bunks, biffy and a stove.

He and I drove out to fish for a few hours.

For Lyback, 56, it was a rare break from 12- to 14-hour workdays running his business, Lyback’s Ice Fishing, with his wife, Cindy, on the south shore of the lake. Besides his 25 rental houses, he also hauls about 150 private houses onto and off the lake.

Those 25 rental houses don’t just stay in one place. “We move half every week to keep them on the fish,” he said.

His parents started the business in 1954, charging a 25-cent access fee and \$2 per fishing hole for 12 hours in a wooden fishing shack. Now ice house rental ranges from \$70 for 12 hours to \$450 for a weekend.

WEATHER WILTS SEASON

But the unseasonably warm winter has shortened the winter angling season. There was open water on the lake earlier in January, and ice conditions were poor. More than 30 anglers were rescued Dec. 21 after a huge sheet of ice broke free from shore. Conditions have improved greatly since then.

“We’ve got 21 or 22 inches of ice here,” Lyback said. “Normally we’d have 30 inches now.”

Still, some business owners were only able to put their heavy rental houses on the lake just last week — a month behind schedule. Ice formed in the south shore sooner, and Lyback got his houses out earlier, but the poor ice kept traffic down.

“I’d say our rental income is down 30 to 35 percent,” he said.

More houses are sprouting up on the lake now, but it’s already February, and permanent unoccupied houses have to be off Mille Lacs by March 5 — meaning an awfully short season on Minnesota’s most popular walleye lake.

“The number of ice fishing houses at the first of the year was substantially lower than we’ve ever seen,” said Rick Bruesewitz, Department of Natural Resources area fisheries supervisor. “Normally we might have 3,000 to 4,000 by then, and we only had a few hundred.”

Because of the reduced fishing pressure, winter walleye harvest likely will be lower than expected “Typically most of the harvest occurs in December and early January,” Bruesewitz said.

Lyback is hoping for continued cold weather. His rental houses are booked solid for upcoming weekends.

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