

Briefs: Lake Vermillion Rec Area Adds New Campground

CANISTOTA — More campers will be able to enjoy Lake Vermillion Recreation Area near Canistota this summer, thanks to the addition of a new 28-site campground.

"Lake Vermillion is a popular, well established park and the new campground will help meet the demand for more campsites in the Sioux Falls area," said Park Manager Derek Dorr. "Because of its location, this campground is going to have a slightly different feel from the rest of Lake Vermillion's campgrounds. It will provide a wooded camping experience within seconds of the water recreation the lake is known for."

The new campground, situated north of the existing West Campground, provides a much more private and wooded setting, said Dorr. Trees and bushes between sites will provide shelter during windy days. Campsites are larger and more secluded and shaded than the park's waterfront campgrounds.

The campground also includes two camping cabins, offering visitors views of the prairie landscape and rolling hills. A new comfort station will offer two family rooms and two common areas.

Other areas of the park have also been improved. A new sanitary dump station has been installed, allowing four campers to use the facility at one time, and the west boat ramp features expanded parking and a boat wash station.

A campground map showing the layout of the new campground and location of the facilities is available on Lake Vermillion's webpage, found at www.gfp.sd.gov.

The new campground will be ready for campers Memorial Day weekend. Campers can begin making reservations at the new campground on Feb. 25 for a May 25 arrival. Reservations can be made online at www.campsd.com or by calling 1-800-710-2267.

Memorial Day Weekend Camping Reservations Open Feb. 25

PIERRE — South Dakota state park campers can make reservations for Memorial Day weekend beginning Feb. 25, for Friday, May 25 arrivals.

"Memorial Day weekend is very busy in all the parks," said state Division of Parks and Recreation Director Doug Hofer.

A three-night stay is required during holiday weekends at all parks except Custer State Park. Reservations are currently being accepted for the entire camping season for campsites in 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 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central 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 openings for holiday weekends. Text "SDGFP ROD" to 368638. Message and data rates may apply.

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

Late Season Walleyes Plentiful

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

When people ask me when's the best time to catch good fish, I have to say that some of the finest fishing I've ever had came during this time of the year, the late winter and early spring.

It's this time of year when fish are located in close proximity to areas they'll spawn during the spring, which means huge concentrations of fish.

On the river, walleye and sauger will have made their annual migration, heading up stream in order to be at their traditional spawning grounds to be ready when temperatures are right for spawning.

On the Missouri River system, their upstream journeys are cut short by dams forcing fish to stack up below them.

In early winter, below the dams, you'll find them in the deeper holes, below sandbars and rocky points.

As winter makes the turn towards the spring they'll move up shallower, looking for those gravel areas exposed to the wind, which oxygenates the water, which is needed in order for the eggs to hatch.

The smaller males are going to be the first to arrive during the late fall and these large schools of aggressive fish will generally make up the majority of your catch during the cold weather months. All of the fish won't move up at the same time with the majority of the fish arriving by the first of the year.

The males will be located in the deeper water adjacent to the shallows, traveling from spot to spot looking for receptive females.

Since the females aren't as aggressive as the males, they'll be using less energy and feeding less, which is the reason you'll catch more of the smaller more aggressive males.

The females will move up into the shallows from time to time to feed and then moving back into the deeper holes and slack water areas to rest. They'll be found in the deeper water, resting behind the sandbars, islands or other current breaks in the river.

As the water temperatures begins to warm, the females will move shallower and start to feed heavily.

The females will now begin to cruise the shallows during low light periods, with the males in hot pursuit and moving back into deeper water as the sun begins to rise.

Spawning will occur when water temperatures reach 50 to 55 degrees. Once these temps are reached, the race is on with the females up into one to six-foot of water to begin spawning.

The preferred spawning grounds for walleye and sauger are shorelines with a



PHOTO: TEAM OUTDOORSMEN ADVENTURES
Joel Vasek, of the Missouri River Guide Service in Geddes, is pictured with two walleyes taken during the late winter, using the methods mentioned in this column.

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New Rig Technique Has Become Bass Fishing Craze

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A new bass fishing craze has hit the waterways.

Fishermen are snapping up the Alabama Rig and similar devices, apparently catching fish aplenty. Tackle companies are raking in enough sales that at least one was able to add to its workforce in Arkansas.

The Alabama Rig, invented by Muscle Shoals fisherman Andy Poss, has a harness with five wires leading to baits, mimicking a small school of baitfish that bass evidently see as tempting prey. A few dozen companies have created their own version.

One fish at a time is so 2011. "It's the biggest thing to come along in fishing since probably the rod and reel," said Jack Tibbs, owner of Strikezone Lure based out of Eufaula, Ala. "Every magazine you pick up, every Internet site, they're talking about it or writing about it or demonstrating it."

Poss, a union Pipefitter, came up with the idea while watching "Blue Planet" on the Discovery Channel in his hotel room on a business trip.

He essentially created a smaller version of the umbrella rigs used in saltwater after seeing tuna gobbling up small schools of sardines on the episode, calling to mind similar observations on his home lakes.

"If I'd have known it would be as good as it was," Poss said, "I would have hired me

about 20 people and made about a million of these things."

It's still much closer to the big one than the one that got away.

The new umbrella rigs are effective enough that the world's top pros have banned them from the Elite Series tournaments.

That's why they aren't allowed at this weekend's Bassmaster Classic in Shreveport, La., bass fishing's equivalent of the Super Bowl. Some states also don't allow lines with more than two or three lures on their waterways.

"The Elites are kind of a different animal," said Trip Weldon, Bassmaster's tournament director. "You don't see Major League Baseball players using aluminum bats."

In states like Alabama and Arkansas, though, fishermen have taken the bait — and so have the fish.

Tibbs and Dave Precht, senior director of B.A.S.S. publications and communications, both said there are 30-plus companies making versions of the Alabama Rig, which is produced by Mann's Bait Company in Eufaula.

Poss spent some 18 months tinkering with the device. He used it himself for a year and won "about every tournament we fished with it." Then he and his father started making them by hand at home last July before the enterprise fizzled out a couple of months

later.

Then, Poss showed the rig to angler Paul Elias, who used it in an FLW tournament on Lake Guntersville in northeast Alabama in October, and won by 17 pounds with a four-day haul totaling more than 102 pounds.

The devices simulate a school of shad, which bass feed on in the fall.

"It's very effective on a fall pattern," Elias said. "Nobody really knows how effective it's going to be on everything else. We haven't had much of a winter, so it's really been exceptional while the fish have stayed on fall pattern."

"It's an amazing bait, and it's amazing how the fish react to it."

Doug Richardson of Guntersville watched Elias' tournament run, and was hooked. He and friends build their own makeshift versions of the \$25 Alabama Rig, and he said he caught three two-pounders at one time using one of them.

"It'll catch fish," Richardson said. "Guaranteed, it'll catch fish."

In Fort Smith, Ark., Yum Bait Company was able to rehire nine workers laid off for the winter season in September and has hired 57 people since Christmas, general manager Bruce Stanton said. They've got two shifts running 20 hours a day, six days a week, he said.

It's a boon in a town where some 1,000

Whirlpool employees are losing their jobs when the refrigerator plant is expected to shut down by late June, hitting local suppliers hard, too.

"It's good to see the parking lot filling up, parking being a problem again," Stanton said. "It's making a sale, but it's fun going out seeing people working and looking them in the eye and they're happy they've got a job."

Weldon said the devices capitalize on the predatory instincts of bass, who hone in on smaller groups of shad.

"If a pack of wolves came up on a herd of sheep and a straggler got separated, or two or three, they're gonna concentrate on those two or three," the Bassmaster tournament director said.

Elias said he doesn't understand some of the negative sentiment toward the new presentations among pro anglers. The anglers' rules committee asked Bassmaster to ban the umbrella rigs.

"I think it's a new technique that's allowed people to catch a lot of fish and have a lot of fun and it's pumped a lot of money in the fishing industry, millions and millions at a time," Elias said. "It's really been a plus to the fishing industry. I really think the pros far outweigh the negatives that I think there's been an overreaction."

For the amateurs it has been no contest — the new technique is a hit.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the president of Outdoorsmen Productions, the host of the Outdoorsmen Adventures television series and the co-host of Outdoor Adventures radio. More information videos are available at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

Boys: Wagner Routs Gregory 67-51; Ponca, Wynot, B-R Get District Wins

GREGORY — Jack Robinson scored just under half of Wagner's 67 points in the Red Raiders' 67-51 boys' basketball win over Gregory on Friday night.

Robinson finished with 32 points. Gregory's Nolan Mikkelsen posted 18 points while Gavin Thomas netted 10 points.

Wagner hosts Parkston Tuesday in districts. Gregory's next game is to be determined.

WAGNER (10-10).....13 30 44 67
GREGORY (3-16).....11 20 40 51

McCook Cent.-Montrose 69, Baltic 54

MONTROSE — Shayne Gottlob recorded 24 points and 15 rebounds as McCook Central-Montrose beat Baltic 69-54 to win the Big East Conference title on Friday night.

Gavin Gassman added 19 points for the Fighting Cougars (17-3), while Jordan Wolf had 15 points and six rebounds.

In the loss for Baltic (7-13), Chris Mesa scored 20 points and Josiah Abersson added 16 points and eight rebounds.

BALTIC (7-13, 1-6).....14 31 41 54
MCCOOK CENTRAL-MONTROSE (17-3, 7-0).....12 26 46 69

Sub-District C2-8 Ponca 55, Winnebago 41

WAYNE, Neb. — Thanks to a strong first half, Ponca held the lead throughout the game to win 55-41 at the Sub-District C2-8 boys' Final.

Trenton Peterson led Ponca to a victory with 18 points. Seth O'Neill added nine points on the night. Winnebago's Trey Blackhawk

Late Thursday Sub-District D2-5 Wynot 50, Wausa 40

HARTINGTON, Neb. — It took an extra overtime period to decide the champion of the Sub-District D2-5 boys' final, but Wynot prevailed over Wausa, 45-40.

The victorious Blue Devils were led by Austin Wieseler with 13 points, and Nathan Wieseler with 11 points.

The Vikings end their season with an 18-7 record. Leading the way for the Vikings was Marcus Claussen with 13 points, and Austin Conn added nine more for Wausa.

The Blue Devils improved to 21-2.

WUSA (18-7).....12 16 23 40
WYNOT (21-2).....8 17 33 40 45

Sub-District D1-4 Bancroft-Rosalie 57, Omaha Nation 55

WISNER, Neb. — Bancroft-Rosalie escaped Thursday night with a two-point win, 57-55, over Omaha Nation to claim the Sub-District D1-4 boys' crown.

Bancroft-Rosalie held a four-point lead heading into the final quarter, and was able to hold on for the win.

Leading Bancroft-Rosalie was Nick Sjuts with 13 points, Preston Peters had 11 points, and Matt Wegner also scored 11 points.

OMAHA NATION (15-10).....6 25 38 55
BANCROFT-ROSALIE (18-6).....12 24 42 57

Morneau Returns To Twins After Concussion Issues

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP) — The optimism that permeates most big league players when they start spring training wasn't quite there for Justin Morneau on Friday. There certainly wasn't pessimism, either, for the former AL MVP who is coming off another injury-plagued season.

At this point in the Minnesota Twins first baseman's career, there is only realism.

He feels good, but knows he can't guarantee that his concussion problems are behind him. He is confident that he can get back to his All-Star form, but nervous as well because he's not sure how many more rehabilitation programs he has left in him.

"I don't think there will be a career if it's something I'm dealing with (for the long term)," Morneau said before the Twins held their first full-squad workout of spring training. "That's the reality of the whole thing. I'm obviously not going to continue to mess around with this if it continues to be a problem."

"There comes a point where you can only torture yourself for so long. It's something I love to do but you keep preparing and you keep

being left out," he added. "That's something that nobody wants to go through."

He participated fully in the workout Friday, taking grounders at first base, popping a couple of home runs during batting practice and standing in against a pitcher to work on his timing.

"If people are getting excited and worried about him being honest then that's too bad," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "He should have concerns. Everybody should when you're talking about things like that because it's the unknown. But I think he's fine, from everything we've seen he's doing good. He had a good day today, and we just go from there."

Morneau also missed games over the last two years with neck, back, left knee, right foot and left wrist injuries, but said he wasn't worried about those holding him back. He's still gaining some strength in his wrist after surgery and has some numbness in the index finger on his left hand from a neck procedure. But he expects both conditions to improve this spring.

He's dropped some weight with a change in his diet, reducing the

stress on his ankles and knees. Morneau said he feels strong enough to go through all the workouts without limitations.

It's the concussions that concern him.

He was hit in the head while sliding into second base at Toronto on July 7, 2010, and missed almost all of the rest of that season while recovering. Then the symptoms resurfaced last year. He hit .227 with four homers and 30 RBIs in 69 games, and needed four operations — on his neck, wrist, foot and knee.

"The only thing right now that I'm worrying about coming back or bothering me as we go along is the concussion stuff," he said. "That's something that's just so unknown. There's people that have the post-concussion and deal with it the rest of their lives. It's one of those things that I don't know. I can't predict the future."

Coming off a 99-loss season, the Twins missed their franchise cornerstone, clubhouse leader and feared cleanup hitter. He was hitting .345 with 18 homers and 56 RBIs when he went down in Toronto, and he hasn't been the same since.

"It is definitely good to see him here walking around," center fielder Denard Span said. "He's definitely a big key to our success and we're definitely going to need him. If we get him back to the old Morneau, I think we'll be able to surprise some teams."

The Twins medical staff will be monitoring Morneau closely throughout the spring to see how he responds to the workload and he has yet to be cleared to play in a game. But that is considered only a formality.

"There are no restrictions," general manager Terry Ryan said. "I'm sure there's doubt. Everybody that comes in here the first couple days is going to have doubt on where they're at. But that's about the extent of it."

Morneau did say that he feels much better entering spring this season than he did last year after being able to work out for most of the winter. He's received support from his wife and advice from athletes who've had concussions, including former Twins third baseman Corey Koskie and pro hockey player Willie Mitchell.

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