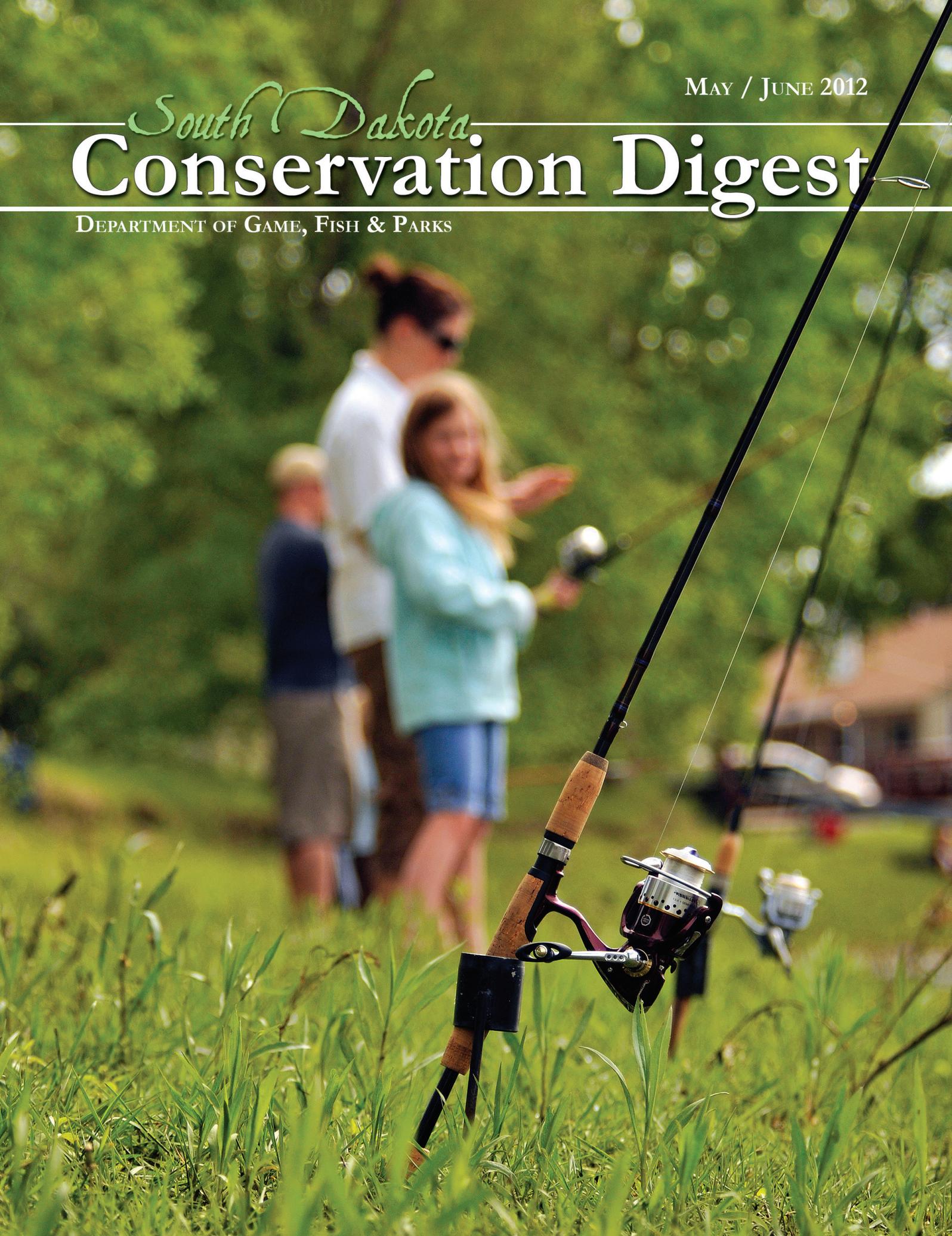


MAY / JUNE 2012

South Dakota
Conservation Digest

DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS





South Dakota Conservation Digest

DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS

Volume 79, Number 3

Dennis Daugaard
Governor of South Dakota



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If you think about it (and you might have to REALLY think about it), a GFP fisheries biologist and a dentist are a lot alike.

Wait, don't turn the page! Hear me out on this one.

A dentist wants to provide you with a healthy mouth, gums and teeth. He does a bunch of prep work, digs, pokes, prods...and for what? So you can have a bright, white...SMILE!

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks does a bunch of prep work too. We do prep work on lakes, dams and streams. We poke around in the water, dig and move dirt (or snow), to provide access to these waters...for what? Access to these waters so you can fish! And why do we want you to fish?

So you can show off that bright, white...SMILE!

OK. OK. Maybe that was a stretch, but in all honesty, smiles are the goal of fisheries access projects and they

define success. Every year the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks invests a lot of time and millions of dollars to provide anglers with access to waters that provide the opportunity to the public to catch fish. These projects range in size from large to small and could be as simple as a gravel surfaced path along a stream or pond, to as complex as constructing a new water.

Every year, the SDGFP gets a myriad of requests, suggestions, ideas and plans from the public, cities, counties, landowner and our own staff on how and where to provide new access. It is a difficult process to decide where to invest our efforts.

In any given year, the Department spends nearly 3 million dollars on creating and improving access for anglers across the state. So sit back, open wide, and let's take a look at those pearly whites and see exactly what we have going on in there...



Access *for* Anglers



New Waters

Creating new fisheries from scratch is an expensive endeavor, but every so often, GFP can partner with an individual and create access to a previously private fishery. A shining example of this would be Family Park in Sioux Falls. The Soukup Family donated this flooded gravel pit to the city of Sioux Falls. GFP has worked to create access trails, fishing pods and a small boat ramp to provide access all the way around this fishery.

GFP also manages and stocks this popular pond, and the public has responded. Since its opening to the public, anglers have spent approximately 59,000 hours fishing at Family Park. That equates to about 27,000 fishing trips with anglers on average spending just over 2 hours at the lake.

Anglers have caught an estimated 42,380 fish at Family Park and harvested 12,664 of those fish, respectively in the two years since the lake opened to fishing. About 12,500 trout have been caught and 8,000 harvested from the stocking of about 34,500 fish.

By Will Sayler, Fisheries Program Administrator
& Chris Hull, SD GFP Information Specialist

Fishing Piers

Probably the most common and popular access projects the Department undertakes each year is the addition of fishing piers. These structures provide safe and easy access to lakes and ponds across the state. A majority of these piers offer handicapped access as well. These fishing piers are often built in partnership with a community or civic organization. The Chamberlain fishing pier is a very popular fishing spot in that community and was built in partnership with the Chamberlain Walleyes Unlimited Chapter.

Fishing piers not only offer easy access to popular waters, often they offer the ONLY access on certain ponds. The pier at the Family Park in Sioux Falls is a great example.

Fishing Trails

While these might not be the best known access points to many anglers, they are extremely popular in the Black Hills. The Grace Coolidge fishing Trail in Custer State Park provides trail access to 7 ponds and 3.5 miles of stream running down from Center Lake. This trail offers beautiful canyon scenery, cool temperatures on



Many boat ramps along the Missouri River have high-water and low-water boat ramps for increased access no matter the water levels.

even the hottest day, and good trout fishing. I caught my first trout on a fly rod on this trail, so obviously the fish cooperate for even the most novice of anglers!

Chasing Water

One thing the past 10 years had taught South Dakota anglers is that water levels are anything but constant. From 1996, SDGFP has built

high water and low water boat ramps on the SAME LAKES. Not only do we have wildly fluctuating levels on the Missouri River system, but lakes like Pointsett, Belle Fourche Reservoir, Waubay and Thompson have had multiple ramp projects tackled in the recent past.

In the case of Lake Oahe, areas like Busch's Landing had a high water ramp built. Two years later, we were



Family Park in Sioux Falls has had steady usage by local anglers since it opened in 2011.

back, creating a low water ramp. Five years after that, we were FISHING on top of the low water ramp. Chasing water on South Dakota's lakes is an expensive endeavor, but anglers want access to the fish and we want to provide it to them.

Many lakes don't need extreme ramp rebuilding projects, but may need ramps extended to provide safe boat launching. GFP does several of these projects over the course of a year. Many times, anglers may not even realize GFP crews completed these projects, but their boat trailers do!

This year, GFP crews were busy removing sand and debris from many Missouri River boat ramps. High, fast waters move a great amount of sediment and our boat ramps seem to enjoy catching it.

Plowing the Trail

Access doesn't stop when old man winter comes around either. GFP staff and contract crews are out as soon as the lakes have thick ice. Throughout the winter 56 lakes get weekly snow removal. When snow conditions persist, GFP will attempt to clear snow prior to noon each Friday. Because South Dakota's weather and winds are unpredictable, access cannot be guaranteed throughout the week. Vehicle travel on the lake will be dictated by snow and ice conditions. To find the list of waters GFP provides access to in the winter, visit: <http://gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/tacklebox/ice-fishing-access.aspx>

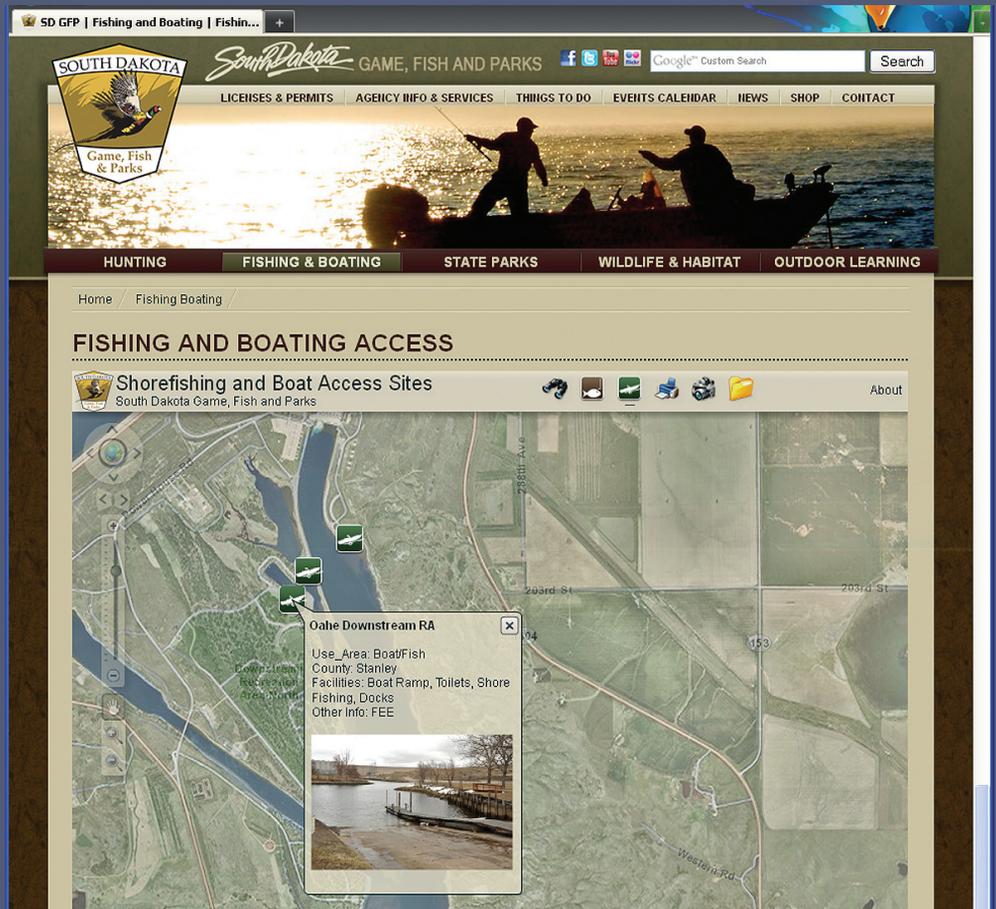
All these efforts by GFP employees are designed to provide as much access as possible. From the novice angler tempting panfish with a plain hook and worm underneath a red and white bobber, to the walleye fanatic with GPS enabled lake maps inside a brand new Ranger boat, this work is done to put a smile on a face and to make them say "Ahhhhhhhhhh" as they enjoy another awesome South Dakota day out on the water.

INTERACTIVE FISHING MAPS

The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks works hard to stay ahead of the technological curve and provide hunters and anglers tools to make their time in our fields and waters more enjoyable. Along that line is the Interactive Fishing and Boating Access site. This map allows users to find fishing access, boat ramps and area amenities across the state. Each access area listed tells users what you can find in a particular area, including fish species, ramps, restroom availability, camping, and a ton of other info.

Pictures and videos are available for some sites, and more will be added in the near future.

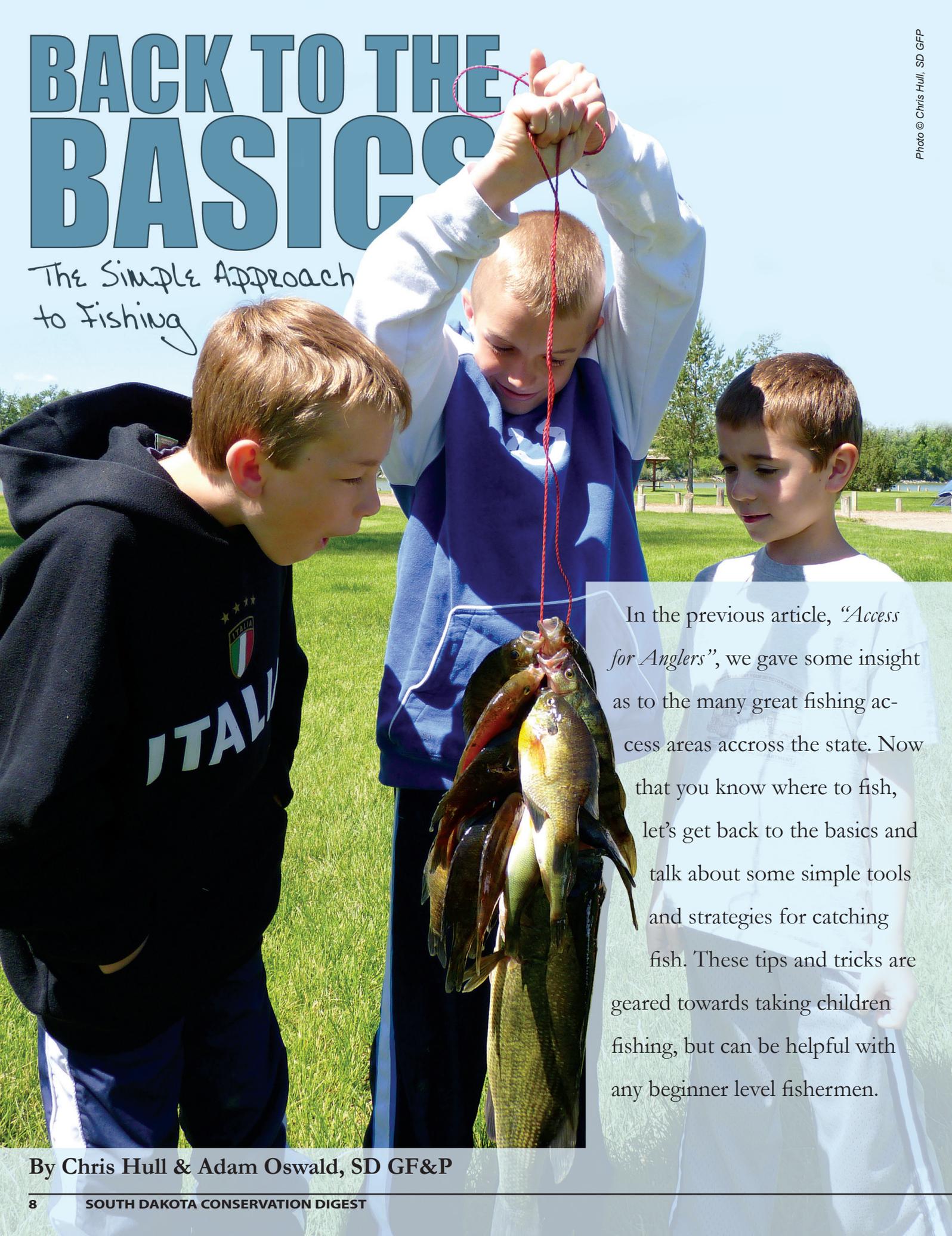
So, basically what we are telling you is that you cant use the "I don't know where to fish," excuse anymore! Fire up your computer and visit: <http://gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/fishing-access.aspx> , then get out and wet a line! You wont regret it!



BACK TO THE BASICS

The Simple Approach
to Fishing

Photo © Chris Hull, SD GFP



In the previous article, “*Access for Anglers*”, we gave some insight as to the many great fishing access areas across the state. Now that you know where to fish, let’s get back to the basics and talk about some simple tools and strategies for catching fish. These tips and tricks are geared towards taking children fishing, but can be helpful with any beginner level fishermen.

By Chris Hull & Adam Oswald, SD GF&P

KIDS FISHING TIP...

Have fun.

Children tend to have a short attention span, somedays it's REALLY short. If they don't want to sit and watch a bobber, have them reel in the line very slowly - they will have to cast more which is good practice and keeps them busy.



HOOKS, WEIGHTS & BOBBERS

You don't need a HUGE tackle box full of lures, start with the basics... a few hooks of varying size, some split shot weights to attach to your line, some small jigheads and maybe some artificial "twister tails". Start small, you can add to your fishing arsenal over time.

RODS & REELS

The red reel is a spincast reel - great for beginners, but they have some limitations. Snagging and tangling can be a problem over time. The other reel is a spinning reel. Spinning reels take a little more practice, but can offer further casting ability and greater control.



KNOT TYING

One of the biggest hurdles for anglers is knot tying. There are as many knots for fisherman as there are fishing lures. This knot is really all you need to know, until you get REALLY good!

1. Run the end of your line through the hook eye. Wrap the "tag end" (essentially the loose end of your line) back around the line 3-6 times.



2. Run the tag end through the loop that was created near the eye, and then back through the new loop you created.



3. Pull the knot tight by holding on to the tag end and pulling the other end.

Here is a simple way to rig your line.

12"-48"
of space
between
bobber and
split shot.

Split Shot >

6"
of space
between split
shot and
hook.

Hook >

LIVE BAIT

A majority of fish are caught on live bait. The minnow on the left is hooked through the bottom jaw, but minnows can also be hooked through the tail. Nightcrawlers can be hooked in a variety of ways. When fishing for smaller fish, cut worms in multiple pieces and string a small piece on a small hook... almost

like stringing popcorn for Christmas! Only better!!! Keep your bait lively and fresh by keeping fresh water on your minnows, and keep worms in a cooler or at the very least, out of the sun! Fish love lively, squiggly bait!



ARTIFICIAL LURES

A few basic artificial lures to start with: a spinner, like the one on the left, will catch everything from pike to crappies. The beetle spin on the right is designed for panfish. Vary your casting speed, and add pauses or twitches to entice fish to bite.



Photos © SD GFP



FISHING TIP...

Ask questions of other fisherman.

While fishermen have a reputation for being secretive, when it comes to helping new anglers, most are quite willing to help. Whether it be with knots, bait, what kind of gear to buy, etc.

We are a helpful bunch!

PREPARE A CHECK LIST

Taking kids doesn't have to be a ton of work. Create a checklist and tape it onto your tacklebox. Games, toys, snacks, juice, water, chairs, sunscreen, bug spray and a hat are all must haves for kids. An otherwise fun fishing trip can be (and probably will be) cut short if you forget even ONE of these items.

TAKE A CHILD FISHING

The smiles will last a lifetime

Talk about having fun with water... these kids are smiling ear-to-ear! These photos were submitted to our Facebook page as part of a "Kids Fishing" contest. Become a friend of SD GF&P on Facebook to win prizes like these youngsters!



Photo © Adam Oswald, SD GFP



Brax - 9
Anika - 8 Aiden - 7
Alex - 6

Courtney - 8
Rachel - 8
Jayden - 6

Reed - 5

Nicholas - 2

Dalton - 13

Jaetin - 12

Justin - 5

Jacob - 7

Katlin - 12

Chase - 9

Gage - 8
Cooper - 6

Ryder - 2



Taking a Closer Look at South Dakota's **FLYING FISH**

From the cool waters of the Prairie Coteau and Black Hills National Forest to the warm waters of the wide open prairie, I have had the opportunity to wade and float in South Dakota streams studying fishes over the past seven years. I've studied fishes with crazy names such as hornyhead chub, trout-perch (it's not a trout or a perch!), northern redbelly dace, flathead catfish, and goldeye. There are also several fish species that are threatened or endangered in the state, so care must be taken to preserve these species by preventing further destruction of their habitat. South Dakota has unique and beautiful areas with diverse fish communities, and my opportunities to research South Dakota fishes have inspired me to preserve the integrity of these aquatic resources.

Recently, a gloomy threat has invaded South Dakota's eastern rivers. Some refer to them as "flying fish", as they are often seen leaping many feet out of the water like Shamu at Sea World. Why are these fish associated with such gloom and doom? They can produce up to 4 million eggs per female (walleye have only 100,000 eggs), and within a year, young can grow too big for other fish to eat. They can live up to 10 years, grow to be 4 feet long and weigh as much as 100 pounds. In addition to all this, they are voracious eaters. They eat the food of other native fishes, such as the paddlefish and bigmouth buffalo, which can cause these natives to starve. Their eating habits can also affect gizzard shad and emerald

shiner, which are important food for sportfish such as walleye and sauger. In rivers where their numbers are soaring (e.g. Illinois River), the river is congested with carp, similar to salmon migrating upstream to spawn in the western states. What are these mysterious "prairie salmon", you ask?... Asian carps.

Bighead and silver carp, collectively referred to as "Asian carps", escaped aquaculture facilities in the 1970s in Arkansas and have since invaded the Mississippi River and connected rivers and, more recently, the Missouri River up to Gavins Point Dam in South Dakota. Asian carps have altered river ecosystems in the Mississippi River Basin, by crashing the sauger fishery in the Illinois River, reducing the health (e.g.

weight) and numbers of other native fishes, and harming recreational boaters by leaping out of the water. In this way, high numbers of Asian carps could disrupt the natural balance of the rivers and ultimately change these unparalleled and diverse waters.

To understand the potential impacts of Asian carps, my PhD research, funded by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and conducted at South Dakota State University, will document the spread of Asian carps in South Dakota, provide information on what they eat in South Dakota streams, and look at harmful effects they may have on other native fishes (e.g. competition for food). My research, which began in 2009, will continue through 2013 and will provide insight into the disturbance that Asian carp may create in our unique river systems. I am sampling three South Dakota prairie rivers: the Big Sioux, James and Vermillion, each of which are tributaries to the Missouri River. Prairie rivers are one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America, so any additional threats such as Asian carps could further endanger the system.

Since 2009, Asian carps, more specifically silver carp, have invaded farther north in the three tributaries each year and their numbers also have increased. The past two years (2010 and 2011) saw never-before-seen precipitation which resulted in high and sometimes dangerous flowing waters. As a result, most of the 200 lowhead dams in the James River were underwater which allowed for Asian carps to swim upstream farther than they have in previous years. In fact, silver carps were found in the James River in North Dakota for the first time in the fall of 2011. There are however two barriers that are likely impassable for the Asian carp: the Sioux Falls on the Big Sioux River, and the Vermillion Lake Dam on the Vermillion River. In addition, small silver carp were collected in the James River for the first



time in 2011, indicating that they may be reproducing in South Dakota waters. This could lead to an even larger spike in Asian carp numbers and an increased chance to see negative impacts of Asian carp on sportfish and other native fishes in South Dakota.

In addition to documenting their distribution and abundance, I am also examining the food webs of the three rivers Asian carp have invaded. Essentially, I am putting together a food web where piscivores (e.g. walleye) are at the top, plants and algae are at the bottom, and Asian carp are somewhere in the middle. I want to see where Asian carp fit in this web, by determining what they are eating, and if there is a diet overlap with native fishes. To do this, I am using stable isotopes, which is a fancy technique that tells us the history of a fish's feeding habits based on their body tissues. Basically, "you are what you eat!"

My research will not only provide managers with information on general biology and distribution of Asian carp in South Dakota, but will also help identify priority areas for Asian carp control. In addition, the information from this project

will help to maintain the unique and diverse prairie streams in South Dakota that I have grown to cherish so much.

Author: Cari-Ann Hayer is currently researching the Asian Carp at South Dakota State University.

Anglers who observe Asian carp jumping or capture an Asian carp in waters OUTSIDE the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux Rivers and below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River are encouraged to report these encounters to GF&P. Reports can be made at the following website: gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/nuisance/aquatic/report-ANS.aspx or by calling your local GFP office.





Sun and the Great Cover Up



by Chuck Schlueter, SD GF&P

The Sun is life.

It blazes in the heavens as our source for light, warmth, and energy. A key element to life is plant photosynthesis, triggered by the Sun. Climate is affected by the Sun. The Sun's rays have a myriad of physical and mental benefits for us.

However, there is a catch.

I hear you...WHY does there ALWAYS have to be a catch!

The Sun is one huge, spectacular nuclear reactor. Most of the harmful radiation created in nuclear fusion reactions never makes it off the surface, and most of what does is filtered out by the Earth's atmosphere.

Most.

Some ultraviolet light does make it to the Earth's surface and to our bodies. With any prolonged exposure to sunlight, our skin is damaged by that UV radiation.

This makes for fascinating facts of science, but I want to skip to the heart of the matter.

TANNED SKIN IS DAMAGED SKIN

Beach goers, anglers, outdoor workers, gardeners, I repeat...tanned skin is damaged skin.

That "healthy glow" we have aspired to over the years is in reality a warning sign that we have exposed our skin to too much of the Sun's ultraviolet rays. Too much exposure readily leads to blistering sunburn, pre-mature aging of skin with fine and course wrinkles, discolored areas of the skin (mottled pigmentation), dilation of small blood vessels under the skin, cataracts, weakened immune systems, benign tumors, and cancerous tumors.

All of these take away from that "healthy glow" of a sun tan. I would be remiss if I did not point out that skin cancer, certainly an extreme result of exposure to ultraviolet rays, is the most prevalent form of cancers in the United States. There are one million new cases each year. In 2012, the U.S. will likely see more new cases of skin cancer than prostate and breast and colon and lung cancers combined.

THE COVER UP

Prevention from the harmful affects of the Sun's rays – and in turn optimization of the benefits of being outside and in the sun – is a case in moderation.

Chocolate can be beneficial, but if you eat 8 pounds of it in a day those benefits are lost in the harm of over-indulgence. The same can be said for the Sun. Prolonged exposure, especially during the middle of the day when UV radiation is most intense, is always harmful and may be deadly.

When appropriate, seek shade. Remember the sun's rays are strongest midday.

For workers and people at leisure who have to (or at least feel the need to) be out in the Sun during midday hours, cover up.

I don't mean a little bit here and a little bit there. I mean COVER UP:

> **Shade is good.** Especially the complete shade of a solid building. Tree shade can be sporadic.

> **Clothing is important.** You may want to skimp to take full advantage of that sun-damaging tan you seek, but I implore you to cover up. When I first saw clothing advertised as SPF-rated protection from harmful sun, I laughed. Now the laugh is on me. There truly is a difference in the protective quality of clothing. Light-colored, thin material is not a good way to protect your skin. Darker clothing may protect better than light. Best of all is high-rated SPF clothing (15 or higher). Keep your arms, your legs and your head covered. Wear a hat of tightly woven material and completely brimmed to cover your face, ears and neck. Straw hats are limited in their ability to block the Sun's rays. A good option for a lighter hat is one with a high SPF protection rating.

> **Good sunglasses rated with UV protection.** Especially those rated to block both UVA and UVB rays, are vital. Larger wrap-around sunglasses that keep light sneaking in from the side. Sunglasses will protect your eyes and reduce the risk of cataracts from exposure to the sun, as well as protect tender skin around your eyes.

> **Always use sunscreen.** Most sun protection products work by absorbing, reflecting or scattering sunlight and go a long way towards saving your skin. Sunscreen comes in a variety of formulas, styles and applications, so if you dislike one type then try another. Do not settle for an SPF rating of less than 30. Apply thick and apply often, especially if you are in the water or sweating a lot. Some make-up and lip balm are SPF rated higher than 15 and these can be helpful.

Each of these separately provides valuable protection. Combine them and you will be giving yourself maximum protection.

PROTECTING YOUR KIDS

Some experts on sun and skin cancer estimate that by the time you are age 18 you have had 80 percent of your lifetime exposure to the Sun's rays.

Rather than argue that number, let's just concentrate on the importance of making sure our children are protected from UV rays and at the same time learning lifetime habits for protecting

themselves and their skin.

The same cover up precautions apply to children. Keep them slathered in a high-rated SPF suntan lotion, covered with a shirt and hat even while swimming, out of the midday sun and in the shade as much as possible, and looking cool in the UV protecting sunglasses.

The skin that looks "a little pink" today may turn out to be badly burned. Unprotected skin can be damaged in as little as 15 minutes of exposure to the sun, and can take up to 12 hours for the full effect of the damage to show.

Plan ahead. Always have sun protection handy wherever you are and wherever you go – in your car, bag, or child's backpack.

It is, after all, the Great Outdoors. Embrace every opportunity you have to be outside; just do so equipped with the knowledge that too much of the Sun's UV rays can be harmful, and a few easy steps to cover up will protect you.

As Grandma would say, all good things in moderation.

Basic Steps to a Healthy Day Outdoors Should Include:



FORT SISSETON

A Family Destination Nestled in the Coteau Hills

By Katie Ceroll, Park Manager
Photography by South Dakota Tourism



During the winter of 2007, I was attending college in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, enjoying life and looking forward to graduating college and putting some roots down in the city. Then, after one phone call, one application, and one earnest mother's plea to come back to South Dakota, my life took an adventurous turn. For the past five years, I have been a park manager stationed in a very unruly but beautiful place: Fort Sisseton Historic State Park. I've loved every minute of it.

For nearly 150 years, the fort has remained a landmark of the Coteau Hills. Fort Sisseton, originally named Fort Wadsworth, was built in 1864 in response to the Minnesota Uprising and assisted in westward expansion until 1889. Originally comprised of 44 buildings, 14 original buildings remain intact. It is listed on the National Register of Historical Places, and attracts visitors year-round. However, beyond its historical significance you may be surprised at what this state park has to offer today's visitors.



Summer Jr. Naturalist Programs

Across the state, parks and recreational areas are providing Junior Naturalist Programs where kids and parents get out into nature to discover new skills, learn about conservation, and enjoy a little blue-sky time. All participants need is a park entrance license and a curiosity to explore. After attending a program, I truly believe participants will make Jr. Naturalist Programs a permanent part of their summer routine. How can you go wrong? You feel good, your kid feels good, and your wallet feels good! The program is broken down into three levels to give parents and kids the flexibility to take in the programs at their pace. Plus, when they complete each level, kids are rewarded with a Jr. Naturalist badge and outdoor gear!

For those of you close to or traveling through northeastern South Dakota, we hope to see you at one of Fort Sisseton’s Junior Naturalist Programs this summer. Each program takes place from 3-4 p.m. at the Visitor Center.

- **Become a Buffalo Buff**
June 23, Aug. 4, and Sept. 8
- **Campfires and Food – Healthy Bits**
July 21, Aug. 25
- **Dig In! Archeology and Fort Sisseton**
June 9, Aug. 11, and Sept. 24

These programs are hands-on, fast paced and intriguing to all ages. While you’re here, arrive early and tour the buildings, hike the trails, check out bocce ball, ladder ball or even a fishing pole (a variety of outdoor games are available for checkout at the Visitor Center – FREE!), or rent a canoe and paddle Cattail Lake.

Lantern Tours

Listed as one South Dakota’s top ten most haunted locations, Fort Sisseton often creates its own living history. Three times throughout the summer, the old buildings get their time in the “lantern light” to tell their tales. At dusk, guests gather at the North Barracks to watch a brief video depicting apparitions of the past. Next, the kerosene lanterns are lit and visitors are led outdoors, with their lantern light in tow, to tour through the 14 buildings. Park staff tell stories of times past as the cool night air and park guests move through the stone and brick doorways.

Guided Tours & Large Group Tours

Driving past the fort is not enough. The buildings may seem stark and lonesome, but they are filled with life and history. Through generous donations and years of effort, the North Barracks, Library Schoolhouse, Hospital, Blacksmith Shop, Carpenter Shop, Doctor’s Residence, Commanding Officers’ Quarters, Officers’ Quarters, and Guardhouse contain displays and antiques designed to depict the way these buildings were used and furnished nearly 150 years ago. Tours through the buildings are offered at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 4 p.m. daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on weekends in September. The museum, gift shop, and Visitor Center are open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day and weekends in September. Large group tours or other tour times can be arranged by appointment.

Northern Fort Playhouse

This will be the seventh year that Northern State University and Fort Sisseton team up to provide summer theater at the historic site. Each July, NSU students, Northern Fort Playhouse board members and Fort Sisseton staff transform the South Barracks into a classic dinner theater. Guests can enjoy a three-course dinner and play on Saturday evenings, take in the show and hors d'oeuvres on Friday evenings, or spend a leisurely Sunday afternoon attending the 2 p.m. matinee. Cole Porter's *You Never Know* and Ken Ludwig's *A Fox on the Fairway* will fill the stage in 2012.

NORTHERN FORT PLAYHOUSE

Ticket info: 605.924.0173

July 6, 7:30 p.m.	<i>You Never Know</i>
July 7, 7:30 p.m.	<i>A Fox on the Fairway</i>
July 8, 2 p.m.	<i>You Never Know</i>
July 13, 7:30 p.m.	<i>A Fox on the Fairway</i>
July 14, 7:30 p.m.	<i>You Never Know</i>
July 15, 2 p.m.	<i>A Fox on the Fairway</i>
July 20, 7:30 p.m.	<i>A Fox on the Fairway</i>
July 21, 7:30 p.m.	<i>You Never Know</i>

You Never Know

One summer evening in 1929 in an elegant penthouse suite at the Paris Hotel Ritz, a baron and his butler switch identities so that the butler can pursue a woman he believes is a lady of a much higher class. Actually, she is a maid in the service of Mme. Baltin, who has captured the baron's heart. Her jealous husband and an actress from the Follies Bergere round out the cast of this enchanting musical.

A Fox on the Fairway

A tribute to the great English farces of the 1930s and 1940s, Ken Ludwig's *The Fox On the Fairway* takes audiences on a hilarious romp which pulls the rug out from underneath the stuffy denizens of a private country club. Filled with mistaken identities, slamming doors, and over-the-top romantic shenanigans, it's a furiously paced comedy that recalls the Marx Brothers' classics. Northern Fort Playhouse audiences who enjoyed Ludwig's *Leading Ladies* are sure to want to see his latest comedy!



Weddings, Reunions, Retreats & Meetings

Facilities at the fort can accommodate everything from small meetings to elegant weddings. The fort is also a popular spot for reunions, birthday parties, anniversaries, and business retreats. Guests can reserve the large event tent, picnic shelter with kitchenette or the South Barracks. The South Barracks is the most popular rental facility. Built in 1864 by civilian artisans and soldiers, this beautiful fieldstone and mortar building contains a kitchen, handicap accessible restrooms, and seating room for 400 guests.

Fort Sisseton Historical Festival

The Fort Sisseton Historical Festival is the highlight of our summer events. The festival takes place annually during the first full weekend of June. The festival captures both historians and western romantics and transports them to the peak of the fort's existence. Find yourself in a sea of military personnel, tents and horses as cavalry troops and infantry units converge on the fort's grounds. Root for your favorite marksman as muzzleloaders, riflemen and crack shots test their skills or cheer for your top cowboy or cowgirl in the ranch rodeo. Tap your toes to fiddle music, and treat yourself with period sweets and trinkets, including rock candy, kettle corn, period clothing and frontier toys.



Chuck Wagon Cook-off – The newest addition to the Fort Sisseton Historic Festival

The fort is familiar with the necessities of the chuck wagon, a rolling vestige of the American West. More than one cattle drive rambled through this area delivering “dinner on the hoof” and those cattle drives often came with their own “diner” or chuck wagon. In 1866, Charles Goodnight created a way to keep his drovers fed while on the cattle trail. Colonel Goodnight purchased the sturdiest wagon he could find: a war-surplus munitions wagon capable to make long journeys over difficult terrain. He fastened a wooden box to the back of the army wagon and added food and storage compartments. The design was adopted by drovers across the west, and the “chuck” wagon, named in his honor, was born.

This year’s Fort Sisseton Historical Festival will feature five wagons and all their cook-off fixings: good cooking, historical ambience, authentic wagons and gear. The wagons will compete in five food categories: meat, beans, biscuits, potatoes, and dessert. The wagons will also be judged on camp set-up and authenticity. The cooking competition will begin at 2 p.m. on Saturday. At 6 p.m. the wagons

will serve up their meals. These “diners” will have the coffee on all day long Saturday and Sunday, so stop by and check them out during the festival.

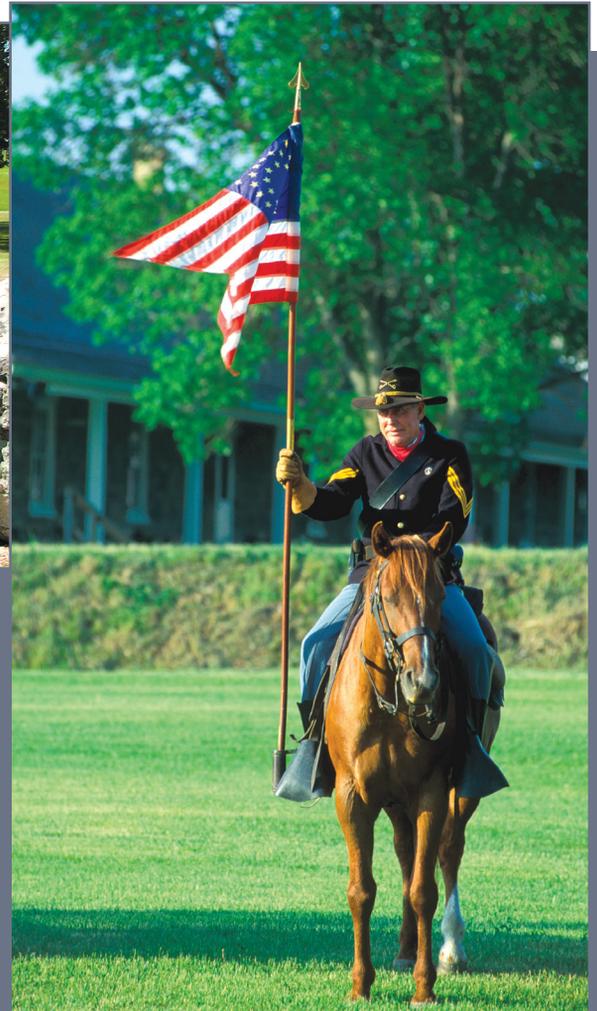
Frontier Christmas

On the second Saturday of every December, the annual Frontier Christmas event celebrates an authentic 1860s Christmas with bread baking, make-and-take craft stations, popcorn stringing, historical demonstrations, music, butter churning, sleigh rides, Father Christmas, and much more. This event is a Christmas tradition for the whole family.

Make it your own

I encourage you to grab the crew and head to Fort Sisseton this year. What you do once you get there is up to you—sit by the campfire, fish Cattail Lake, explore nature at a Jr. Naturalist Program, take in a little theater, or tour the buildings by lantern light. Visit www.gfp.sd.gov for more information on upcoming events.

Whatever your fancy, you will be glad you stopped at historic Fort Sisseton. I know I am.



LEAD A KID TO NATURE

It's not so much the destination, but the journey.

Several new programs from the Game, Fish and Parks are designed to help kids and families connect with the outdoors, but encourage them to take their own path to do so.

"There are so many different ways to enjoy the outdoors," said Lynn Spomer, visitor services coordinator. "We want folks to find the right activities for them. The activity that keeps you outside for hours may not excite me enough to get me out the front door. We could host nature hikes every day, but unless that's your passion, you're not going to get much out of it."

The department is taking a more customizable approach in their new nature programs.

Conservation, volunteering, recreation, wellness, and education are all core elements, but how you go about reaching each goal depends a great deal on your interests.

The re-vamped Junior Naturalist program, for example, requires kids 7-18 to attend several nature programs and do several healthy recreational activities. Programs could focus on anything from nocturnal animals to native trees to area legends. Activity options are nearly endless, from biking to bird watching to archery. The next two levels of the program incorporate volunteer service, and likewise encourage kids to come up with their own ideas of what they could do.

The programs also offer incentives so people can show off their passions.

The Fitness Passport Challenge encourages families to keep track of which Game, Fish and Parks ar-

reas they've visited and the activities they've done at each. Prizes will be given for visiting 10, 25, 45 and 65+ areas.

Online interaction also plays a role in keeping the outdoors in the forefront of visitors' minds, even after they've reached the trail's end.

TRACK Trails, part of a national program, lets kids earn Trail Tracker Gear for their adventures when they register them online.

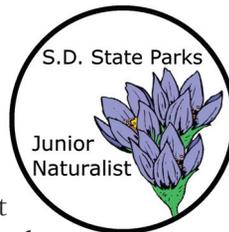
The paths people take in each program may be different, but they all lead to a common goal: sparking a love for the outdoors in the next generation.

"We're kind of testing out a new theory," said Spomer. "You can lead a kid to nature - by letting them blaze their own trail."

Junior Naturalist Program

For youths aged 7-18 who want to learn more about the outdoors and healthy activities. Participants must keep a journal with programs attended and items completed to be signed by the area in which it was done. Journal pages can be printed online at www.gfp.sd.gov or picked up at state park areas.

The program features a three-tiered accumulative process.



Level 1

Attend five Game, Fish and Park programs and do three healthy recreational activities on their own. Earn a Junior Naturalist Badge.

Level 2

Attend five additional Game, Fish and Parks programs and visit five different Game, Fish and Parks areas – or – do three healthy recreational activities and complete five hours of volunteer service at any Game, Fish and Parks location where opportunities exist. Volunteer hours can be such things as helping a naturalist put on a program, picking up litter, watering plants, planting flowers, painting, or helping in the office. Earn a Game, Fish and Parks sleeping bag.

Level 3

Create a nature program and present it to the public – or – create and/or help to complete a project in a Game, Fish and Park area with the help of a Game Fish and Parks employee, where opportunities exist. Minimum of 15 hours. Examples include creating flower boxes, creating a new walking/hunting trail or path, or making new nature signs. Earn choice of: a pair of snowshoes, a fishing pole with tacklebox, a disc golf set, or binoculars.

Fitness Passport Challenge

Visit state parks, recreation areas, fish hatcheries and The Outdoor Campuses and have your passport stamped to receive fun incentives.

Families can travel the state and visit Game, Fish and Park areas while participating in healthy activities such as hiking, rock climbing, snowshoeing, birding, swimming, cross-country skiing, hunting or fishing.

Each area has its own stamp to mark in your passport book that you've been there. Prizes will be given for visiting 10, 25, 45 and 65 + areas.

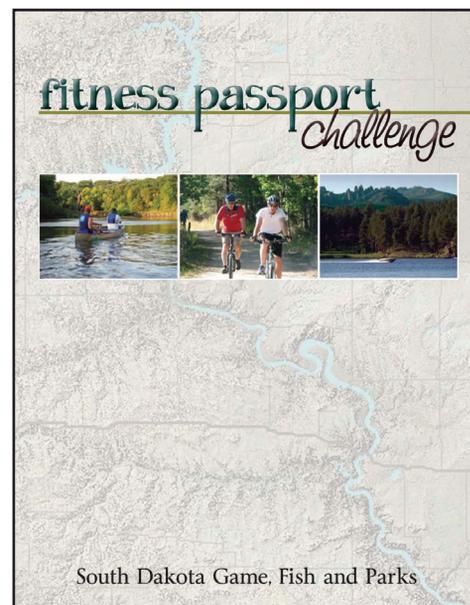
The Fitness Passport Challenge book also features healthy tips, provided by Sanford Health as part of their fit™ program.

The fit™ program is a national initiative aimed at promoting health and wellness and preventing childhood obesity among kids ages 2-18. The project was created by WebMD, the leader in online health content, and Sanford Health, the nation's largest rural, not-for-profit, health system (www.fit.webmd.com).

fit™ uses a combination of the latest scientific and behavioral research to educate, motivate, and inspire children of all ages to live a balanced, healthy lifestyle. It is the only national initiative focusing equally on the four key contributing factors to childhood obesity: Food (nutritional fitness); Move (physical fitness); Mood (emotional fitness); and Recharge (restorative fitness).

In addition to addressing the standards of a healthy lifestyle through nutrition (Food) and physical activity (Move), the fit™ approach is more comprehensive, expanding the total view of health to include both emotional fitness (Mood) and restorative fitness (Recharge). Through interactive online sites, fit™ not only demonstrates how to make simple changes but explains why it matters.

Visit fit™ online. Children's site: www.fit.webmd.com, Parents' site: www.webmd.com/parenting/raising-fit-kids.



Track Trails Program

The Kids in Parks TRACK Trails program provides a network of trails nation-wide designated for kids and families. Each TRACK Trail has a series of self-guided adventures. A different story unfolds within the pages of each brochure. They're fun, easy and free. Best of all, the fun doesn't stop at the trail's end because kids can earn Trail Tracker Gear for each Track Trail adventure when they register at kidsinparks.com.

The Kids in Parks program has two types of TRACK Trails designed to get kids of all ages outdoors, active and healthy – the standard hiking TRACK Trails and the Nature Trail Disc Golf Course TRACK Trails.

In South Dakota, you can find a hiking TRACK Trail in Custer State Park. Nature trail disc golf course TRACK Trails can be found at Angostura, Big Sioux, Hartford Beach, Lewis and Clark, Oahe Downstream, Oakwood Lakes, and Randall Creek. More to come!



Photo © SD GFP

Life Jacket Loaner Program





In 2000, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GF&P) started the first Life Jacket Loaner Program in the state of South Dakota. The program was developed as a means to not only educate the public about life jacket wear and safety, but also as a means of getting life jackets into the hands of those that needed them.

Overstating the value of life jackets is nearly impossible. Life jackets are to boats as seat belts are to motor vehicles. Life jackets are the single most important piece of equipment that any boat owner not only needs, but is required by law to have aboard his or her boat. However, like seat belts, life jackets are of little use if they are not worn.

In 2010 there were a reported 4604 boating accidents nationwide. A total of 672 deaths resulted from those boating accidents. Of those deaths, 504 were due to drowning. An overwhelming 88% of those that drowned were not wearing a life jacket. The numbers do not lie, life jackets are a critical piece of boating safety equipment and need to worn in ordered to work.

So how does the Life Jacket Loaner Program work? The answer is simple. If you or someone you know is planning an outing on a lake or river and find yourselves needing an extra life jacket or two, look to the loaner program. As part of the program, GF&P offers life jackets available in sizes ranging from infant all the way up to adult. All of the available life jackets are in good, clean working order and all are US Coast Guard approved. All life jackets are offered at no cost and can be loaned out for up to two weeks at a time.

WHERE CAN YOU GET A LOANER LIFE JACKET?

Find them at a Game, Fish & Parks Office near you!

Aberdeen: 605-626-2391, 5850 E. Highway 12

Chamberlain: 605-734-4530, 1550 E King Ave.

Ft. Pierre: 605-223-7700, 20641 SD Hwy 1806

Huron: 650-353-7145, 895 3rd Street SW

Mobridge: 605-845-7814, 909 Lake Front Drive

Rapid City (Outdoor Campus West), 4130 Adventure Trail

Sioux Falls: (Outdoor Campus East), 4500 Oxbow Ave.

Watertown: 605-882-5200, 400 West Kemp

Webster: 605-345-3381, 603 E. 8th Ave.

In addition, the following GFP Park offices offer life jackets as part of the loaner program:

Adams Homestead: 605-232-0873

272 Westshore Dr., McCook Lake

Lake Vermillion: 605-296-3643

26140 451st Ave, Canistota

Lewis and Clark: 605-688-2985

43349 SD Hwy 52, Yankton

North Point: 605-487-7016

38180 297th, Lake Andes

Snake Creek: 605-337-2587

35316 SD Hwy 44, Platte

To participate in the loaner program, simply visit any of the listed offices during normal business hours, fill out the required loaner/waiver form, and pick up the desired life jacket for loan.

Then, go out and enjoy what South Dakota has to offer and most importantly, be safe while doing so.



Dakota Flora

Harebells

by Dave Ode, GFP Botanist



Photo © Dave Ode | SD GF&P

Harebell is one of the most common and distinctive wildflowers of the Black Hills.

In Scotland they are called “bluebells,” or perhaps more widely, “Scottish bluebells.” In their native Sweden where Carl Linnaeus first scientifically described them, they are called “liten blåklocka” or little bluebells. In Germany they are called “Rundblättrige Glockenblume” meaning (as near as I can interpret) “the bellflower with the round basal leaves.” In England and in much of North America most people call them the “common harebell,” while all across their range, they are known by the scientific name *Campanula rotundifolia*.

The written history of harebells in South Dakota begins with the famous Custer Expedition to the Black Hills in 1874. For those unfamiliar with this expedition by General George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, it began in Fort Lincoln near, today's

Mandan, North Dakota, where they departed on July 2nd, 1874. They traveled southwest to the North Cave Hills stopping off at Ludlow Cave, traveled south along the eastern edge of Montana and Wyoming entering the Black Hills near Inyan Kara and proceeded up Cold Springs Creek (which they called Floral Valley) over the divide into the Castle Creek drainage, south to upper French Creek, then back north and out past Bear Butte and across the plains back to Fort Lincoln by August 31st, all told spending about one month within the Black Hills.

Accompanying this expedition of about 1,000 men (and one woman), were several newspaper reporters, two miners, a photographer, and a couple scientists including George Bird Grinnell (a prominent zoologist from Yale

University), Newton H. Winchell (the state geologist of Minnesota), and Aris B. Donaldson (an English professor from the University of Minnesota), who doubled as a correspondent for the St. Paul Daily Pioneer and as the expedition botanist. After traveling about 300 miles across the dry, dusty plains, virtually every member of the expedition was enthralled by their entry into the relatively cool, lush canyon of Cold Springs Creek. Perhaps Samuel J. Barrows writing for the “New York Tribune,” captures it best when he writes, “We were almost startled by the unlooked-for array which met us as we descended into the valley. Such brilliancy, such beauty, such variety, such profusion! All the glories of color, form and fragrance which Flora could command had been woven into a carpet for our feet.”

Among the 74 plant specimens collected by Professor Donaldson and later identified by Dr. John Coulter, was one of *Campanula rotundifolia*. Since Donaldson's 1874 collection, harebell has been documented in forests and meadows throughout the Black Hills as well as elsewhere in western South Dakota. In North America it ranges all across Canada southward to West Virginia, Missouri, Nebraska, and in the mountains throughout the western United States extending south into northern Mexico. While North American harebells exhibit a great deal of minor variation in size, hairiness, and flower color, they are treated as the same species as the harebell of Europe and Asia, which ranges from the British Isles all across Scandinavia and Siberia southward to the Alps and Caucasus Mountains of central Europe.

A slender, rhizomatous perennial, harebells typically grow one to two feet tall and produce pendulous blue flowers that develop into oblong fruiting capsules containing several dozen small round seeds. The flowers begin blooming in June and may be found well into September. Bumblebees commonly visit harebell flowers for pollen and nectar, and while harebell are self-fertile, cross-pollination increases seed production. Harebells also form mycorrhizal connections with soil fungi, gaining them improved access to soil nutrients like phosphorus.

Given the broad distribution of harebells in the Old World and their delicate bell-like flowers, it's not surprising that they have found their way into folklore and fairy tales. The harebell flower would make a good goblet or headpiece for a fluttering fairy or wee leprechaun. Even the name

"harebell" implies an animate connection. Some would say that the harebells chime whenever a fox approaches so that the hares might safely escape. Others claim that witches used the plant to transform themselves into hares. This plant once went by the name "Dead Man's Bells" suggesting to the superstitious that you don't want to hear them ringing.

Nowhere are harebells more celebrated than in Scotland. Along with the thistle and rose, Scottish bluebells appear in many poems and songs. They are the floral emblem of the McDonald Clan, and there are a variety of "Bluebell Festivals" held each spring. Historically the flowers were used as a source of blue dye in some Scottish tartans. In 1901, a children's Christmas musical debuted in England called "Bluebell in Fairyland" written by the actor and playwright Seymour Hicks, about a young flower girl named Bluebell and her adventuresome dreams in Fairyland. Enormously popular with children of the day, this play provided inspiration to Scottish author James M. Barrie who shortly thereafter created his famous "Peter Pan."

Flowers have always inspired us humans. Even the crusty, hard-bitten soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry were not unmoved by the splendor of Floral Valley and I can just see them reaching down from their saddles, plucking a bouquet of wildflowers including harebells, and tucking them into the bridles of their horses.

For more information on the Custer Expedition see Ernest Grafe and Paul Horsted's 2002 book *Exploring with Custer – The 1874 Black Hills Expedition*, and Custer's *Prelude to Glory* by Herbert Krause and Gary D. Olson, published in 1974. 🌸

Professor Donaldson's dispatch to the St. Paul Daily Pioneer contained the following description of the delightful Floral Valley,

"The floral decoration is the very richest. Every order and species seem to vie with every other in giving brilliancy to the display. The gaudy sun-flower and the delicate harebell, the fair lily and the bright blue daisy, the coarse elecampane, and the modest violet, the gay lark-spur and the fragrant peppermint, roses and pinks, asters and phlox, bell-flower and coreopsis, geraniums, goldenrod, purple coneflower, are part of Flora's contributions to these lovely dells."



Dakota Naturalist

Fort Pierre National Grasslands

By Chris Hull, SD GFP Information Specialist



Photo © Keith Anderson

Photo © Chad Tussing, SD GFP

“Flyover country”... for many South Dakotans, that term is insulting. Insinuating that for people on either coast, there is nothing here of circumstance or substance. When other Rushmore State residents hear it, they say “Good, we don’t want them here.” As with most things, the correct answer is in the middle.

I was excited to move to Pierre 15 years ago. The Missouri River was my big draw. I felt it was an oasis among a sea of open grasslands

with nothing much else to offer. Boy was I wrong. And it took a 115,890 acre piece of public wonder to show me how wrong I was.

My introduction to the Fort Pierre National Grasslands was a dusty map found in my desk at the Dept. of Tourism. I was looking for a place to hunt pheasants, and a chunk of ground THAT big had to hold birds somewhere. Fifteen years later, I easily spend as much time on that piece of earth as I do floating on the Missouri River.

In their journals during “the greatest camping trip ever taken”, Lewis and Clark documented the wonder of the prairie ecosystem. The Merriweather Lewis quote was submitted on a day when they were very close to the modern Ft. Pierre National Grasslands

“I am determined to devote this day to amuse myself on shore with my gun and view the interior of the country lying between the river and the Corvus Creek. ... the shortness and virtu[te] of grass gave the plain the appearance throughout its whole extent of beautiful bowling-green in fine order. ... this scenery already rich pleasing and beautiful was still farther heightened by immense herds of Buffalo, deer Elk and Antelopes which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains.”

Today’s explorers won’t find elk, but deer, antelope, grouse and endless discoveries are still available.

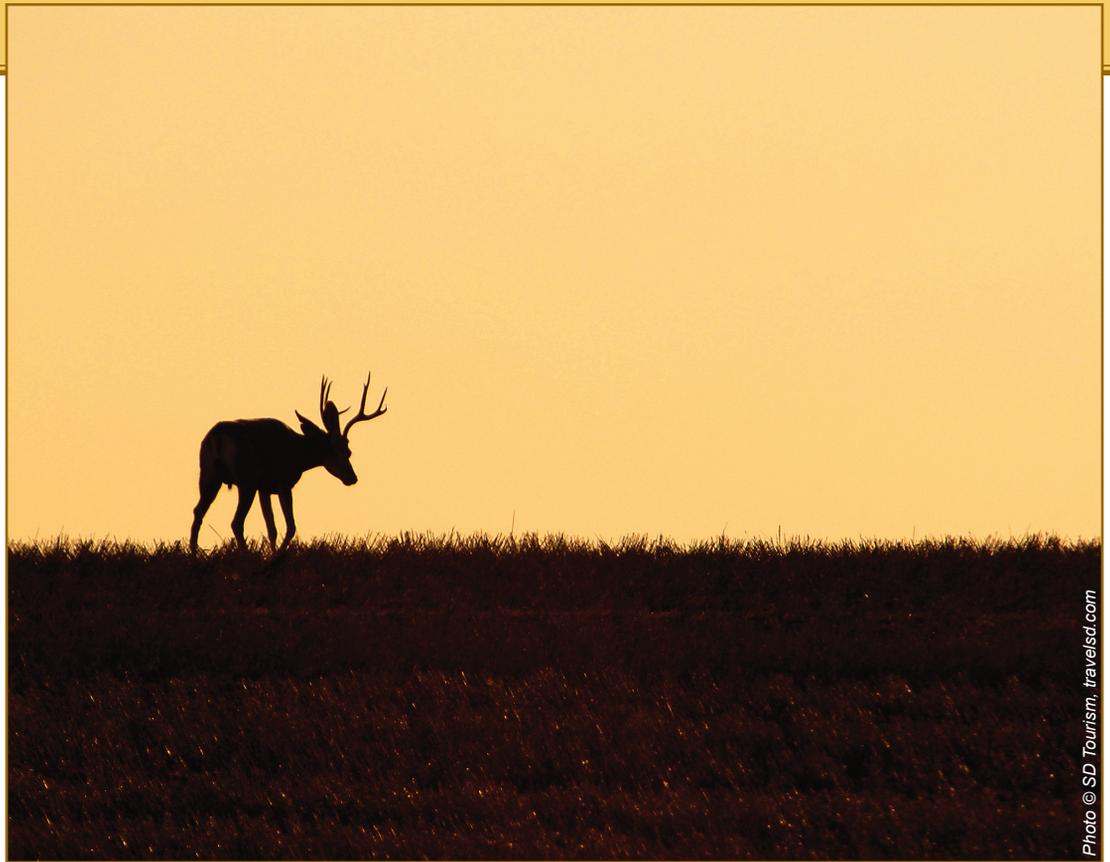


Photo © SD Tourism, travelsd.com

The Fort Pierre National Grasslands lists camping, hunting, fishing, bird watching, hiking, and horseback riding as “activities” on its website, and I guess that is sufficient, but the beauty of this place is it has to be experienced

with your feet on the ground to be appreciated.

The Grasslands is a place where I saw my first grouse dance (Which, by the way, if you are a TRUE South Dakotan, you have to experience). It is a place where I have watched my dog watch coyote pups play around a den as the sky was seemingly on fire on its way out of sight. It is a place where my daughter caught her first fish. It is a place where I have sat and heard... literally nothing. And it is a place where I have shared countless memories with friends in the field.

It is also a place, from 30,000 feet, that probably doesn’t look like much. It’s hard to believe the short, native prairie grasses could hide such splendor...even from 5 miles away.

For more information on the Fort Pierre National Grasslands, visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov>. The Grasslands have several blinds set up on historic Grouse leks for the public to use. They are on a signup basis. Grouse typically dance late March – early May. Maps are also available for purchase on the Forest Service website. 🐾



Photo © Adam Oswald, SD GFP



Natural Heritage

SNOWY OWL Invasion

by Silka L. F. Kempema, SD GFP Wildlife Biologist

Many residents and visitors to South Dakota have had their heads turned this past winter by a conspicuously large, white owl. The snowy owl (*Bubo scandiacus*) is typically a diurnal owl of flat, open areas such as prairies, fields, beaches, and frozen lakes. It is one of North America's largest owls.

This owl is heavily feathered as an adaptation to cold environments. Feathers almost completely cover the entire bill and the legs and feet are feathered down to the tips of the sharp claws. The snowy owl lives a nomadic lifestyle; this is the result of a continuous search for food. It breeds in the arctic from about the tree line north to the shores of the polar seas in rolling tundra habitat. Similar to their breeding habitat, snowy owls can be found during migration and the winter months in areas simply described as open.

The snowy owl is a widespread and regular winter resident of the Great

Plains of southern Canada and the northern United States, including South Dakota. From 1952 to 1981, snowy owls have been reported from this region every year during the annual Christmas Bird Count organized by the National Audubon Society. From 1961 through 1984, three Christmas Bird Count locations in South Dakota reported more than one snowy owl per year during this time period. In South Dakota, observations of this species can begin as early as mid-October and peak in December and January. The last few reported birds of the winter season in South Dakota are typically observed in April. They will return to their arctic breeding grounds in the spring, moving north beginning in late March and continuing through April. Although the presence of at least a few snowy



owls in the Great Plains each winter is normal, the number of individuals and the location of concentrations in any given winter may change. During these periodic irruptions many more snowy owls can be seen in South Dakota and elsewhere. This is the reason why a drive down one of South Dakota's back roads or highways during the winter of 2011-2012 could very well have produced a casual snowy owl observation or two, while in other years incidental observations would be much more difficult to come by.

According to eBird.org, the northern Great Plains region did indeed have a high concentration of reported snowy owl observations in the winter of 2011-2012. This past winter is being considered one of the larger irruptions in the Great Plains but the excitement was not limited to the northern prairies. Observations came from as far south as Texas, east to the

Photo © Adam Oswald, SD GFP

Atlantic Ocean and west to the Pacific coast. Both the east and west coast have had “larger” irruptions in terms of bird numbers and geographic extent. Reports from the South Dakota Ornithologists’ Union listserv indicate that during the winter of 2011-2012, snowy owls were observed in at least 26 counties across South Dakota. At least half of the snowy owl reports (which may have been the same individual bird or birds) were made in December. What makes this winter especially noteworthy is the ease and frequency of reporting and sharing snowy owl observations via websites, email, and listservs, etc. The magnitude of increase in the number of reported snowy owl observations is more than what is thought to be realistically accounted for by the electronic ease of reporting, however.

Snowy owl irruptions have been documented in the winter range of this species for over a century. Major irruptions occur approximately every four years; however, this so-called “cycle” can vary from 2 to 11 years. I found evidence of at least four other snowy owl irruptions in South Dakota. During the winter of 1949-1950, 643 snowy owls were reported from 28 counties in South Dakota. About five years later, during the winter of 1954-1955, 65 snowy owl observations were reported from 21 counties. The next large influx of owls came during the winter of 1966-1967 (101 owls reported from 22 counties). A more recent irruption in South Dakota and the northern plains was documented in the winter of 2001-2002.

The unpredictable migration of this species is thought to be related to prey abundance in ways not completely understood. Existing data, although limited, on the relative number of young birds suggests that a lot of snowy owls were produced in the Arctic this past breeding season and the resulting

competition for food may have pushed individuals of this species farther south. Large, geographically synchronous snowy owl irruptions can not be fully explained by lemming prey-cycles which are more geographically localized. Factors operating at larger scales (such as snowfall and temperature) may more appropriately explain snowy owl invasions.

Snowy owls are opportunistic foragers selecting areas where prey is most available. Lemmings (small arctic rodents) are the principle prey species on the arctic breeding grounds. Although their prey base is typically mammals (rodents to hares), snowy owls will also take birds ranging in size from small songbirds to medium-sized geese. Diet during the winter may be more variable especially for females. Males more consistently take mammals as prey.

In central South Dakota deer mice, meadow vole, harvest mice (species unknown), Northern pocket gopher, thirteen-lined ground squirrel, and an unidentified species of songbird have been documented as snowy owl prey. Reported snowy owl observations in the state commonly come from areas on and around National Wildlife Refuges where the species can be observed feeding on injured waterfowl. There

have also been reports of snowy owls chasing a greater prairie-chicken and a ring-necked pheasant, making these birds likely snowy owl prey species, too.

Can you age and sex a snowy owl just by looking at it? Maybe. As with many other raptor species, females are larger. This is often hard to tell from a distance. You may be able to tell age and sex by the amount of white on the bird in question. Older owls and male owls are whiter. Younger owls and female owls are more heavily marked with dark barring. There is enough variation in these characteristics that you should use a bit of caution before making a definitive conclusion about the sex and age of a snowy owl.

A snowy owl’s primary predator is man. This species has been killed by humans for food, trophies and to protect game species. Some have been killed simply out of curiosity. The major cause of death for wintering birds is collision with structures, not necessarily starvation. Cause of death for necropsied birds found in Kansas and Missouri during the winter of 2011-2012 has been primarily collisions (cars, power lines, trains, etc.). These individuals have been mostly young, males in poor conditions. Wild predators include foxes, wolves, skuas, and jaegers. 🦋



Photo © Doug Backlund



ParkNotes

STATE RECREATION AREAS OFFER SUMMER NATURE CAMPS FOR KIDS

Several state parks and recreation areas will be offering several free nature day camps throughout the summer for kids ages 7-12 to explore the area and focus on the outdoors.

Angostura Recreation Area near Hot Springs. Info: 605.745.6996

- Kids' Fishing Day, June 13, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.
- Follow that Footprint, Paw Print, Hoof Print, July 11, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.
- Nature Explorers, August 8, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.

Big Sioux Recreation Area near Brandon. Info: 605-582-7243

- Frogs, June 21, 9-11 a.m.
- Water, July 19, 9–11 a.m.
- Pioneers, August 9, 9–11 a.m.

Custer State Park near Custer. Info: 605.255-4515

- Kids' Fishing Day, June 27, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.
- Follow that Footprint, Paw Print, Hoof Print, July 25, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.

Lake Poinsett Recreation Area near Arlington. Info: 605-627-5441

- Fishing, June 12, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Nature Day Camp, July 17, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Oakwood Lakes State Park near Bruce. Info: 605-627-5441

- Fishing, June 5, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Nature Day Camp, July 10, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Nature Day Camp, August 7, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Palisades State Park near Garretson. Info: 605-594-3824

- Frogs, June 14, 9–11 a.m.
- Water, July 12, 9–11 a.m.
- Pioneers, August 2, 9–11 a.m.

Rocky Point Recreation Area near Belle Fourche. Info: 605.641.0023

- Kids' Fishing Day, June 20, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT
- Follow that Footprint, Paw Print, Hoof Print, July 18, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.
- Nature Explorers, August 4, 9:30 a.m.–Noon MT.

Reservations are required and can be made by calling the park office. The camps are geared for kids ages 7-12, but younger children may attend if accompanied by an adult. Kids are reminded to wear clothing appropriate for the weather and shoes comfortable for walking. No snacks or refreshments will be provided, but kids are welcome to bring their own. The camp is fee; however a park entrance license is required.

GFP, DOH WORK TO GET KIDS OUTSIDE WITH GRANT PROGRAM

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department and the state Department of Health recently teamed up in an effort to increase the amount of time children in after-school programs spend outdoors.

The two departments recently awarded nature activity totes, filled with items to encourage outdoor activities, to 114 after-school and out-of-school programs across the state. Based on class sizes provided by applicants, the backpacks will reach nearly 7,000 children.

“The nature backpack program is a perfect opportunity for GFP and the Department of Health to partner with caregivers in getting kids outside,” said GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk. “Keeping kids physically active and connecting them with nature is very important, both for the children as individuals and

for society as a whole.”

Studies show children who play outside are healthier, have higher self-esteem, are good problem-solvers, have good self-discipline and do better in school.

This is the third installment of the grant program. In the first two years, the Game, Fish and Parks Department reached over 12,500 pre-school age children by awarding backpacks to 424 childcare providers across the state. Follow-up surveys showed that childcare providers were going outside more often and spending longer periods of time outside each time.

More information on other opportunities provided by GFP can be found at GFP's Children in Nature webpage.

STATE PARK VISITORS SHOULD LEAVE FIREWORKS AT HOME

PIERRE, S.D. – The upcoming Fourth of July holiday is always a busy time in South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas. As you celebrate, Game, Fish and Parks officials ask you to please leave your fireworks at home.

Discharging fireworks is prohibited on all lands owned or leased by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The ban includes state parks, recreation areas, lakeside use areas, game production areas and nature areas. Discharging fireworks is also illegal within the exterior boundaries of the Black Hills forest fire protection district, national forests and national parks within South Dakota.

For more information on the South Dakota State Parks, visit gfp.sd.gov or call 605-773-3391.



WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK TO SHARE ELK WITH CUSTER STATE PARK

WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, S.D. - The superintendents of Wind Cave National Park and Custer State Park announced today that the two parks will cooperate in management of elk that use the parks.

The parks share a common fence that restricts movement of elk between the two areas. Under a recently developed Memorandum of Understanding, the parks will install drop-down gates along the fence to allow elk to travel between the two parks. The agreement will benefit both parks by allowing managers the tools needed to adaptively manage elk populations.

"It's much more economical to reduce our elk herd by allowing them to move into Custer State Park, where they are legally hunted," said Wind Cave Superintendent Vidal Davila. "This plan protects natural and cultural resources in the national park from over-grazing while improving wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities in Custer State Park."

"This plan is a win-win for both parks. It allows Custer State Park to bolster its population, and it allows Wind Cave to meet its management objectives," said Custer State Park Superintendent Matt Snyder. "The ability to move elk into Custer State Park is timely because population levels in the park are currently low. This plan will help grow the park's elk population, which will improve viewing opportunities and provide future hunting opportunities."

Wind Cave's Elk Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, completed in 2009, calls for an elk population of 232 to 475. This last winter, there were an estimated 850 to 900 elk in Wind Cave National Park.

Davila continued, "Using the adaptive management techniques, we not only reduce the over-abundant elk in the park, but provide a recreation opportunity for the state park."

The collaborative project will start sometime this summer or late fall when conditions are right for the movement of elk from the national park to the state park.

ASIAN CARP RANGE INCREASING IN EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA RIVERS

PIERRE, S.D. - Anglers who see or capture silver or bighead carp outside of the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers or below Gavin's Point Dam are asked to report their findings to the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Anglers may do so online or by calling a local GFP office.

In an effort to slow the spread of silver and bighead carp, anglers are reminded that catching bait below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River and in the James, Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers is now prohibited. While some anglers will be impacted by the prohibition, it is a necessary step to keep those undesirable fish species from continuing to expand their range.

In addition, the Game, Fish and Parks Department reminds anglers coming to South Dakota that they may not bring bait fish into the state, which will help reduce unwanted introductions of aquatic nuisance species and fish diseases.

"Anglers are one of the first lines of defense against the spread of unwanted species," said Geno Adams, GFP fisheries program administrator. "Being aware of what's in your bait bucket and making sure there are no unwanted hitchhikers on your boat are two ways

to help fight the spread of these harmful species."

High water levels in eastern South Dakota rivers in recent years have allowed for the expansion of silver and bighead carp in those rivers. Anglers should be aware of the increased possibility of encountering silver and bighead carp, often referred to as Asian carp.

An ongoing research project by South Dakota State University has confirmed that, in addition to the Missouri River below Gavin's Point Dam, those unwanted species have spread along the entire length of the James River and portions of the Vermillion and Big Sioux rivers.

Asian carp were first found in South Dakota just below Gavin's Point Dam on the Missouri River in the late 1990s and began spreading about a decade ago into tributaries of the Missouri River - such as the James River. Both silver and bighead carp are filter feeders and compete for food with young game fish, bait fish and native fish species.

Asian carp can grow to more than 50 pounds and 40 inches in length, and females of the species are capable of producing more than one million eggs per year. Silver carp are known for leaping out of the water when startled by boat motors - sometimes injuring boaters.

Along with range expansion, ongoing research at SDSU is trying to determine the effects of those undesirable species on aquatic food sources in eastern South Dakota's rivers and also document the extent of natural reproduction in South Dakota.

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