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Dennis Daugaard
Governor of South Dakota



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ARCHERY IN OUR SCHOOLS

Danielle Arpan, 8th grade, readies for her shot in practice with the archery club at St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain. The club developed through training and equipment provided through the National Archery in Schools Program and the SD Game, Fish and Parks.

The N.A.S.P. program provides great opportunities and experience, but for the students at St. Joseph's Indian School, it means much more.



Story and Photos By Jessica Giard

Three years ago, sixth grader Irene Grassrope stepped up to the line for the first time. Beside her were the older kids, the 7th and 8th graders, each with a bow in hand, a quiver full of arrows and a target 10 yards ahead.

“On the first day of class, I was self-conscious. I didn’t think I’d be as good as the others in the group,” said Grassrope. She is now a 9th grader in St. Joseph’s Indian School high school program at Chamberlain and a veteran member of the school’s archery club. She was one of the first students to learn archery at St. Joseph’s thanks to the National Archery in Schools Program. Today, her instructor considers

her one of the better shooters in the group and one of the few he trusts to handle trick shots such as shooting while lying down.

Her status as a third-year archer doesn’t go to her head, even though she realizes she’s now a role model for the younger members in the club. “They kind of look up to me, I guess, but I’m still a rookie,” Grassrope said. “I can still be not very serious with it. I still mess up and start laughing.” After that first day of class, she stuck with the archery program, attending all the practices and, in her words, “I ended up ... getting good,” which came from lots of practice.

Grassrope is one of the nearly two dozen students at St. Joseph’s Indian School who practices with the archery club led by instructor Aaron Wisenbaugh, a five-year houseparent at the residential school which teaches nearly 200 Native American students on its campus in Chamberlain.

“I want the kids, especially the non-sports kids, to have an opportunity to do something. Not everybody likes basketball,” he said. “This is an opportunity for kids who aren’t team players, maybe, or aren’t physically motivated to go play these sports to have something else.”

SETTING UP WITH NASP

Wisnbaugh took up archery about 15 years ago while living in Michigan. He learned the sport from his brother-in-law, then turned around and taught others, including his wife, son and father-in-law. Through the National Archery in Schools Program, he formalized his training and helped bring a program to St. Joseph's. The school has an archery club on campus and incorporates the NASP curriculum into the on-campus physical education classes.

"This came up, so we went and it was the best choice we made. I love what I do," he said. "The coaching is great."

Through his own interest and experience, he wanted to teach archery to the high school students he works with, but all St. Joseph's had on hand were, as Wisnbaugh said, "some really old bows." He then learned of NASP through Jona Ohm, who works in the development offices at St. Joseph's, and her husband Mark Ohm, a conservation officer serving Lyman and Buffalo counties west of Chamberlain.

Wisnbaugh, another houseparent and the school's P.E. teacher took the NASP training in Oct. 2010 in Chamberlain. With their certifications, the school was given a full archery set-up – 12 Genesis compound bows without sights, 100 arrows, five targets, a shooting screen and a bow rack. Wisnbaugh appreciates the Genesis bow's versatility and ability to fit from kids to adults.

"It's a nice way to get more people in to shooting," he said. "If you can get kids shooting, you can get them into bow hunting, if you get them into bow hunting you've got them for life."

Since NASP was his first run in formal archery training, he picked up a few new lessons, namely minor bow repair, eye dominance and shooting without sights – something he had never done before. Plus, he was able to meet other instructors from around South Dakota.



Coach Aaron Wisnbaugh likes to compete one-on-one with the students to keep practice interesting. He learned archery 15 years ago and sees NASP as a good way to share a sport he loves with the St. Joseph's students.

"I wouldn't mind doing the training again," he said. "There's a lot of information I learned."

SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

As an instructor, Wisnbaugh says the key to success on the range is the 11 steps: stance, nock, draw hand set, bow hand set, pre-draw, draw, anchor, aim, shot set-up, release, then follow-through and reflect.

"If you go through the 11 steps, you can put the arrow where you want it. We can get you shooting and hitting the target every time," Wisnbaugh said. "If the kids do (the 11 steps), you have good form. I don't want to call it pretty, but it's very nice when they have a nice release."

With the combination of proper form and technique plus good hand-eye coordination and, above all, patience and practice, he says any student can hit the targets. The students agree, especially when it comes to the patience part.

Grassrope said, "It's good to have good hand-eye coordination and just be patient with yourself. Even if you get a low score, you can still get better."

Her teammate Danielle Arpan, an 8th grader in her first year in the club, said that archery is easy and fun, but reminds

her fellow archers the importance of patience, of being able to calm yourself while setting up a shot. "Breathing in through your nose and breathing out through your mouth. That's what I do," she told James Lapointe, a 7th grader in his second year of archery. He said his challenge was aiming straight.

"I'm too shaky," he said. However, LaPointe says archery is relaxing. "Takes out the stress of the day. It's a lot of fun."

St. Joseph's archery club is a volunteer extra-curricular for 6th through 8th grade students. In three years, the number participating tripled with about a 60/40 mix of boys and girls. Wisnbaugh now coaches up to 24 students, many who find archery a good personal fit and a motivator.

"I have a couple kids who are naturally good at archery. I have a couple girls who are phenomenal," he said. "If you're patient and you know where you want to put your arrow, it's just there. You can teach it, but some people just have that."

For the girls, archery can be an equalizer in competition between the boys and the girls. And, the girls know this.

"At basketball, some think boys excel more. But, in archery, it can be 50/50," said Grassrope.

Wisnbaugh explains. "I think, especially, the girls like archery because it's just another avenue they can beat the boys," he said. "I can't play football with you, but I can put this arrow where I want it."

DRAWING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Wisnbaugh understands archery's draw for the students: experience for bow hunting, a fun challenge with a new sport and the chance to compete as an individual. Or, for some, it's cultural or maybe even spiritual.

"We have some who like the competition of it," he said. "The kids at this age group, any 6th-8th grade kids, are very competitive."

To test the student's competitive drive, St. Joseph's sent a middle school team of four students – two boys and two girls – to compete for the first time in archery at the Lakota National Invitational in Rapid City on Friday, Dec. 21. Wisnbaugh says they also plan to enter a team of high school students in NASP state tournament in April. The group also would like to organize local shooting events with Chamberlain's 4-H Shooting Sports.

For 8th grader Deavontay Smallbear, learning archery might be considered cultural or maybe just a family tradition. At 6 years old, he picked up his first bow and arrow to shoot targets on hay bales at his grandparents' home near Wood, S.D. His grandpa carefully taught him stance and safety, especially with younger brothers and sisters around, said Smallbear.

"My grandparents just wanted to pass on what they know," he said. The NASP curriculum at St. Joseph's is his first formal training.

Wisnbaugh, of course, would like to see his students stick with archery. He reminds his students, especially the high schoolers, the opportunities beyond graduation in the form of college athletics and scholarships.

But, archery is more than opportunity and experience. As a houseparent, Wisnbaugh enjoys the time to build



Sixth grader Jacquelynne Rank retrieves her arrows from the targets after a round of shots. The St. Joseph's club teaches a fairly even split between boys and girls. Students see the target range as an even playing field.

relationships with the kids outside of the homes and the school. The joy also comes in sharing with students a love for the sport and the quiet and patience that comes with developing the skills.

"For me it's the joy of being out.

When I'm shooting I'm relaxed. I'm in a different place. I'm happy. It's just peace. Relax, let it flow," he said.

"Some get it. Some are like, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

They'll eventually get it."

"Changing Lives One Arrow at a Time"

For more information on N.A.S.P. in SD, visit:
gfp.sd.gov/outdoor-learning/archery-in-schools



**4th Annual SD N.A.S.P. Tournament
will be held April 6, 2013
in Rapid City.**

Responsibilities... and Rewards of a Mentor



By Chris Hull, SD GF&P Communications Specialist





Photos © Adam Oswald | SD GF&P

It's been a while, but I can still remember what it is like to be 10 years old. You are still amazed at worms on a sidewalk after a rain. Transformers, GI Joe and Legos are still cool. A BB gun is a life transforming gift. You have yet to acquire the jadedness of a 15 year old, where showing emotion will get you nothing but jeers.

Being a 10 year old boy, for me, meant FINALLY getting to go with my dad on hunting adventures. The memory of sitting on a green pickle pail by a spring in our pasture waiting for doves will forever bring a big smile to my face. Introducing kids to the outdoors, and the ethics that go with outdoor activities is a big responsibility. My daughter is soon to be 5, and we talk about being safe and having fun outside all the time. In fact, this year she went on her first big group pheasant outing and she was reminding hunters, "watch the dog!" and "keep those shots high". A pretty proud papa left the field that day.

That is all fine and dandy if you grew up in a hunting family. Safety, ethics, and even the practice of being a hunter or angler get instilled at an early age, but what about kids who WANT to do these things, but don't have hunting parents, grandparents or friends?

Slater is a 10 year old from Fort Pierre, SD. He is a good kid. He wants to learn. He is respectful. He is inquisitive. He wants to hunt. His parents want him to enjoy the out-

doors, but they aren't hunters. I had taken Slater and his sister Shaylee out on fishing trips a few times, so after much thought, I volunteered to take Slater on his first mentored deer hunt.

Mentoring is a big step. It is laying the groundwork for kids to be ethical, responsible stewards of our sport...GULP! Slater had experience with a BB gun, but that is about it. We made a trip out to the Varmint Hunters of America office outside of Ft. Pierre, and VHA's Jeff Rheborg and Adam Oswald helped Slater get familiar with a rifle.

Jeff had Slater find the 100 yd. target and dry fire the gun 4 or 5 times. We had an extensive talk about squeezing the trigger, breathing etc. Jeff then made it look like he put a round in the youth model .243. Slater went through his pre-shot checklist, found the target, took the gun off safe and "CLICK". The champ didn't flinch, jerk, or wince...rock steady.

Slater hit the gong at 100 yards 3 times and even poked the 200 yard gone with one try. We were ready.

Before we get into the hunt itself, it is important to focus some on the idea of "mentoring", because after all, this is a mentored hunt situation. Most of these are common sense, but in the heat of a hunting situation, they can be easily forgotten. I put this list on my dash of my pickup when I had Slater along with me.

10 COMMANDMENTS OF MENTORED HUNTING

- 1. Safety First** – Safety first, everything from open actions to shooting at targets on the horizon. This cannot be overstated.
- 2. Have Fun** – Stay positive. Talk to your mentee about the act of hunting being fun. Sure harvesting an animal is important, but don't miss the other aspects of your trip.
- 3. Give all your attention to the youth** – this experience is about them...not you.
- 4. Remember, they are young!** – Consider shorter hunts, keep in mind their physical stamina and mental maturity. Be sure to discuss field dressing etc. before the hunt.
- 5. Patience** – They won't get it right the first time... Neither did you. Practice.
- 6. Listen and Talk** – Listen and address any concerns and questions your mentee has. Talk to them about their connection to nature and respect for habitat and wildlife.
- 7. Use appropriate equipment** – youth model guns, or shortened stalked guns, with reduced recoil shells make youth hunting much easier.
- 8. No Pressure** – Sometimes the best shot is no shot. Make sure they are comfortable. Stay calm. Believe me, you will be nervous...and it will show.
- 9. Practice** – This reduces wounding loss and builds confidence in the beginning hunter.
- 10. Use Good Judgment** – If the youth is not ready for hunting, having the youth come along to observe your hunt is a great option.

Being a true mentor is a lot more than a one-time trip to the range or field. To be an effective mentor, your youth must have on-going access to you (as they do a family setting) and feel a close, trusted connection.

In other words, if you truly want these kids to continue with outdoor activities, a "one and done" situation isn't going to work. Beginning hunters and anglers need continued interaction with people who hunt and fish.

At first blush, shooting a doe doesn't seem to be too big of a challenge. I have some awesome private land access and miles of Lake Oahe shoreline at my disposal. Getting a doe within 100 yards, and preferably closer, while having Slater still, with a good rest...well that is fairly daunting.

Adam Oswald and I took Slater out on a Saturday afternoon. The wind was blowing and the West River Deer Season was in full swing. These weren't exactly ideal deer hunting conditions, but we were out on our adventure.

We stopped on several high hills and glassed for deer. Slater loved this part. I had brought binoculars for him. About two minutes in to our first spot, he brought his binoculars down and said, "No deer. Let's move". I had seen several deer and showed him where to look and what to look for. I had overlooked telling him even the basics of glassing. A learning experience for both of us I guess.

We drove into another pasture, got out of the pickup and went for a slow walk. Immediately we saw deer. Unfortunately, they were running past us at breakneck speed. We followed the deer to a deep, Lake Oahe draw, but they were gone.

A little while later, we got to crawl up on a bedded deer. After showing Slater the basics of crawling, I handed him



the unloaded gun and we successfully got to within 70 yards of a mule deer...buck. "Can I take him", he excitedly asked. "Do you have a buck tag", was my reply. (All mentored deer tags are antlerless only.)

The buck finally saw us and bounced over the hill, picking up four does with him. We watched them follow a draw and begin to double back to us. We quickly picked a path to cut them off, and sat down on a side hill.

"Now we wait," I told him as we glassed the deer.

"Chris, don't move, there are deer right below us," Slater whispered.

I looked down the hill, and sure enough, two does were in a buck brush patch 75 yards away. My heart was pounding as I tried to calmly get him into position. The deer was looking straight at us, but didn't seem spooked.

"I can't get steady," Slater strained.

For 10 minutes that doe never turned broadside. Slater's back was killing him as I had him lying on the ground, downhill. Eventually he sat up, got a good rest and kept that deer right in the scope. Never once did he ask if he could shoot. We had gone over where he needed to aim, and he was waiting.

The doe turned. "Take your gun off safe..." I whispered.

"I can't FIND her," he was shaken. "Oh there she is!" He slowly took the gun off safe.

"When you are ready, squeeze it slo..." CRACK!

"Did I get her?"

My smile and high five answered his question.

Slater helped dress and butcher the deer. I don't know how many times he asked, "When does next year's deer season start?"

I told him we have a lot of fish to catch between then and now, but I couldn't wait either.



MENTORED HUNTING IN SD

The mentored hunting program is designed so parents can make the decision on when their child is ready to go hunting for the first time. By emphasizing one-on-one interaction between the beginning hunter and the experienced hunter, safety, respect for wildlife and solid conservation ethics are passed to the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

For more information, visit:

<http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/youth-hunt>



It's a big, beautiful world, and the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department wants to make sure every boy and girl has an opportunity to get outside and enjoy it.

To help with this outreach, GFP hired me as their new Outreach Coordinator working out of their Sioux Falls office.

The focus of my position is to assist conservation officers with GFP Step Outside programs, take education programs into schools where I can teach students about wildlife in South Dakota, and setting up other community events centered on outdoor activities.

At the time they were hiring for the new position, I was a naturalist intern at The Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls. I applied, was offered the job and started full time in April knowing that the Step Outside program would be my main focus right away.

Step Outside brings programs to communities in southeastern South Dakota that provide the opportunity to shoot shotguns, .22's, BB guns and archery, and learn about trapping, fishing, cleaning wild game, cooking outdoors, and hunting many different types of wildlife in South Dakota; all in one day.

Participants were able to try these events free of charge.

Every Saturday morning, I pulled a trailer with all of the equipment and set up at the hosting town. With a total of 23 Step Outside programs over three months and more than 600 participants, it was a very successful summer.

Without the community volunteers, the local organizations and clubs, and donations from Pheasants Forever, Bon Homme Bass, East River Strutters, and the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Step Outside program would not have been as successful and fun.

Over the summer kids of all ages, skill levels and experience attended the Step Outside events with their parents. Whether it was practicing or trying an activity for the first time, the kids learned more about South Dakota, firearm safety and all of the opportunities GFP has to offer.

I look forward to another great summer and growing the program. If you are interested in hearing more about Step Outside, please feel free to contact me anytime at The Outdoor Campus, 605-362-2777.



GF&P Offers a Step Outside

By Patrick Klotzbach
GF&P Outreach Coordinator

Photo © Michael G. Brown

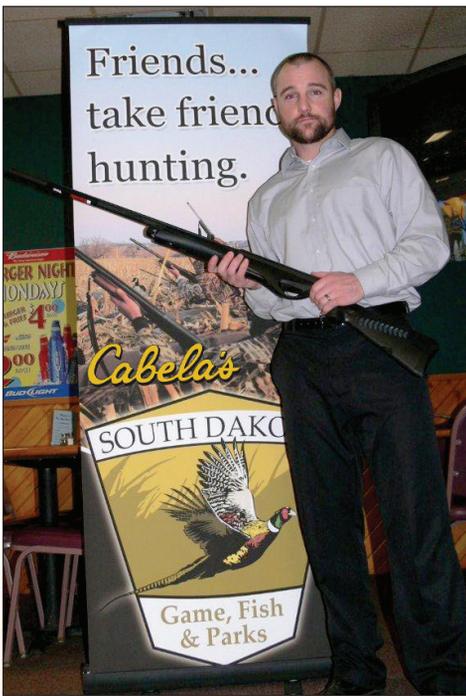


For a list of Step Outside Programs, visit this webpage in early summer. The programs will be listed as they are scheduled.
gfp.sd.gov/outdoor-learning/step-outside.aspx

Contact Patrick Klotzbach at
The Outdoor Campus - East in Sioux Falls
for more information: 605-362-2777.

Silly Mentor, New Hunters Aren't Just Kids

By Chris Hull, SD GF&P Communications Specialist



Eric Haniel hooked his friend on the sport of goose hunting, then entered GF&P's "(re)Introduce the Sport" giveaway. He won the top prize, a Benelli Vinci.

It started with a simple statement from Scott Simpson, GFP's Information and Education Chief.

"We've got record numbers of geese, how do we get more people hunting them in the early season"? A simple statement turned into a long discussion on the difficulties, both perceived and real, of introducing new waterfowlers. SDGFP staff decided to offer something to prod experienced waterfowlers into taking someone new. And the (Re)Introduce Someone to Waterfowling promotion was born.

The idea was to reward experienced waterfowlers for taking a new hunter to the blinds and sloughs of South Dakota for an early season goose hunt. GFP, in partnership with Cabelas, offered a Benelli Vinci shotgun, two decoy packages and two layout blinds to hunters to took a hunter who had never had a migratory stamp, or who hadn't purchased one in 2011. Hunters then had to submit a picture of themselves in the field.



Photo © Dean Pearson | deanpearson.net

The winners, like an early season duck hunt, had a mixed bag of backgrounds and reasons for mentoring.

Eric Hamiel, a school guidance counselor from Groton, was the lucky winner of the Benelli Vinci. "I have a college buddy who left the state, but recently moved back," Hamiel said. "He never hunted geese, but wanted to try. I thought this would be a perfect match. We had a great hunt and now he is calling all the time."

Cameron Lehner, a Northern State student took a baseball teammate from California out on his first goose hunt. "He had hunted ducks at home before, but I told him geese were a different deal. It was an awesome team building experience."

Steve Reppe lives near Crocker and has a wildlife mecca around him. He took his girlfriend out on her first goose hunt, literally steps from his back door. "Right on the other side of the slough right there," the veteran goose hunter pointed out the window. "She wasn't a hunter, but after this experience, and cooking them, she is hooked. It gives us a special way to spend time together."

Gregory's Ben Stukel reintroduced a

landowner to the sport. "He has some great waterfowling opportunities all around him, but hadn't done it for years," Stukel said. "I saw the contest idea and asked him if he wanted to go with us. He jumped at the chance. We are going again and he can use this new layout blind!"

Waino Dahlman, of Watertown, definitely has a new waterfowler on his hands with his son Sam. Waino took Sam out on a mentored hunt, and they have been going full bore all fall. "He has shot ducks, geese and a deer already," said Waino. Sam is involved in lots of extra-curricular activities, "as long as they don't get in the way of hunting," Sam said.

The GFP promoted this opportunity through social media and by providing tear sheets to local sporting good and game processing facilities across the state.

"We had no idea how popular this would be," said Simpson. "It is a good fit for our social media and to try and get an increased harvest for resident Canada geese. Cabelas stepping up and donating prizes, without being asked, is also a great fit and helped make this promotion a success."



Top: Cameron Lehner qualified for the giveaway by taking his college baseball teammate on his first goose hunt.

Bottom (l - r): Steve Reppe introduced his girlfriend to goose hunting; Waino Dahlman has a new waterfowling partner in his son Sam; and, Ben Stukel reintroduced a landowner to the sport of waterfowl hunting.

Whether you introduced waterfowling to someone new, or reintroduced the sport to someone that hasn't done it in awhile - all participants should be commended!





Growth

Means More Recreational Opportunities for Big Sioux

Land purchases over the last couple years have increased the size of Big Sioux Recreation Area by 120 acres, but its true growth is just now beginning.

The expansion of Big Sioux Recreation Area, located on the west side of Brandon, included two different land purchases since 2010 and a land gift from area residents. Big Sioux Recreation Area is now comprised of 530 acres and runs along 1.6 miles of the Big Sioux River.

The expansion was a great opportunity to help increase recreational opportunities in the already very popular park, including fishing and hunting, as well as to improve the quality of life for local residents.

The land that was purchased along the river is in a flood plain, so the challenge was to create recreational areas that would also support wildlife. The land is located on both sides of the river, which allowed us to treat each side individually to create special areas.

One of these areas is truly unique, as it is the only one in the state parks. Big

Sioux's new dog training area allows visitors to have dogs off of a leash year-round for open running and training. Dog training rarely occurs in the state parks due to leash requirements. However, the Game, Fish and Parks Commission approved an exemption for Big Sioux's area. The 12-acre dog training area simulates a hunting environment with short native grasses that allow the dogs to work, while at the same time its location minimizes the chance of them getting loose and on any roads. The training area opened late last year, and has already seen quite a bit of use. Other facilities planned for the area include a shelter, water hydrant and vault toilet.

The dog training area is just the first of several new recreational opportunities that will now be available at Big Sioux because of the land expansion.

Some of the other developments in

the new area include:

- Extension of the park's paved bike trail to Holly Boulevard, which could eventually meet up with the Sioux Falls bike trail. The extension, planned over the next few years, will increase park's portion of the bike trail to 3 miles long. Once the trail out of Sioux Falls heads east toward Brandon, the park will provide the main link between Brandon and Sioux Falls.
- A second canoe launch. One launch is already located off of Park Street on the south end of the park, but we wanted to provide additional river access for canoeing and fishing. A second launch recently constructed off of Holly Boulevard will provide a shorter and very scenic trip option.

By Jason Baumann, Big Sioux Recreation Area Park Manager

- Expansion of the Valley of the Giants Trail. This very popular trail in the park will be expanded from its now 1.5 miles north into the new area, offering more opportunities to see wildlife and scenic river views.
- Re-establishment of natural wildlife habitat from present agricultural fields. The park currently rents out 30 acres of land for agriculture crops. This will continue until 2014 when native grasses will be re-established, creating some great wildlife habitat and wonderful wildlife viewing. The Division of Wildlife plans to plant five acres to a non-row crop food plot to help attract wildlife in the area.
- Increased shore fishing. Since Big Sioux Recreation Area now spans 1.6 miles of river, we were able to expand on the shore fishing opportunities in the park. The new land will fit right in with the many popular fishing spots already in the park. There are a number of large sand bars that provide great access and fishing. The north canoe launch is already a local favorite and plans are to provide a trail on the west side of the river to create even more access to the river.
- Archery hunting opportunities. Big Sioux was already a very popular archery hunting site for deer and turkeys but with the expansion of the park, the native grass plantings and food plots the opportunities will only get better.

These new opportunities will certainly enhance all the park already has to offer. As the closest state park to Sioux Falls, Big Sioux has become a very popular destination for people wishing to leave the city and take part in outdoor recreation.



Park staff have been working on several other projects, including the 18-hole disc golf course. This fall, the last of the tee pads were cemented. The course has hosted two state championship tournaments. The outlay of the course lies along the river and is a beautiful course for anyone playing.

Another ongoing project has been the archery range and course. The range has 6 targets from 10-60 yards so you can get some practice and sight in your bow before you head out on the course. The course has 14 different targets that present different shots. It is very popular in the spring and fall around hunting seasons.

Along with these popular facilities, the park is home to a 49-site campground, 3 camping cabins, 2 shelters, 2 playgrounds, 2 miles of paved biking trail, nearly 4 miles of mowed trails and 2 canoe launches.

The park is also known for its nature programs and events. In addition to

weekend and holiday programs, the park hosts several larger events throughout the year. In July the park hosts a Dutch Oven Gathering where Dutch oven cooks demonstrate their skills, culminating with potluck supper. October brings the park's biggest event, Spooktacular Trails. Kids can trick-or-treat local business booths along the trail and take part in a fun scavenger hunt along the way. Many other events and programs are planned at Big Sioux next year so check the online 2013 calendar of events for the latest information.

While the area will be a work in progress for the next couple years as we continue to fine-tune and improve the new areas, we hope that you will come out and experience all Big Sioux has to offer.

We can mark the growth of a park in acres or visitors, but it's more than a mere number. It's the memories made by visitors that mark the biggest growth, and that's something you can't measure.



Hiking Harney



**By Julie Brazell, Park Naturalist and
Amanda Katzenberger, Seasonal Park Naturalist,
Custer State Park.**

Julie Brazell (author) shows visitors a map of the area.



Photo courtesy, McNight

For two former governors, reaching the peak was not the pinnacle of their journey.

There was a chill in the air that cool September morning at Custer State Park's Sylvan Lake. We both zipped up our jackets and looked at each other, knowing that where we were headed, we wouldn't need them very long.

It was a Saturday and the water was calm on the lake. We were in the shade of tall pines and mountainous terrain, but the sun shone on the granite outcroppings that made this area one of the most picturesque places in the Black Hills.

Amanda and I rearranged our backpacks. Water...check. Lunch...check. Radio...check. Map...check. Dead mountain pine beetles (a popular topic nowadays)...check. I could hardly contain myself. Hiking in the hills and sharing nature with others. It doesn't get any better than this!

We were here to hike with a group of people we had never met, to a place they had never been: Harney Peak. Three and a half miles up; three and a half miles back down. Over 1,000-foot rise in elevation to 7,242 feet. Highest peak in North America east of the Rockies. Seven miles of absolute Black Hills. Not necessarily a hard hike, but it does take time and effort.

The reward is the vista, the historic lookout tower, and also what happens along the way - the journey to the summit

and back. A favorite song of mine has the lyrics "...the journey is half the joy, you might reach the peak, but that's not the point..." That was certainly the case on this fall September day.

It was the weekend of the Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival and our hiking group was made up of travel writers, businessmen and native South Dakotans taking in the three-day event. The group gathered their items for the hike and headed our way.

"Welcome to Custer State Park," I began. "My name is Julie Brazell and this is Amanda Katzenberger. We are both park naturalists here at Custer State Park..." I shared some basic history of the area and handed out trail maps, when I heard someone nonchalantly say to another, "There are two former governors on this trip."

I soon learned that Frank Farrar and Harvey Wollman, the 24th and 26th governors of the State of South Dakota, were among the eager to hike to Harney Peak that day. Frank, 83, and Harvey, 77, were both ambitious politicians in the late 1960s and 1970s - but of different parties. Could be interesting.

We headed toward the Trail #9 trailhead and the chatter of excitement and the sound of boots on the mica-glittered trail resounded. We passed the trailhead

sign and ventured north through tall pines toward Little Devil's Tower and the Cathedral Spires. Teasing views of Harney Peak could be seen through treetops and masses of granite.

We passed other hikers and greetings were exchanged. "You're almost there!" "We saw a mountain goat near Little Devil's Tower - keep your eyes open!" And sometimes it was just a simple nod between hikers.

It was the peace that the quietness of nature brought to a person; to be in an area without the distractions of everyday city life. There were also conversations going on all the way to the peak and all the way back down.

We registered at the border as we left Custer State Park and entered the Black Elk Wilderness, part of the Black Hills National Forest. We talked of the mountain pine beetle management in the area and passed around that vial of dead beetles for all to see. "They are that small?" someone asked in amazement.

"Yep, the size of a grain of rice and native to the area," Amanda replied.

Harvey Wollman mentioned he remembered hearing about the beetles when he was in the South Dakota Sen-

ate but never knew what they looked like. We continued to converse about the beetle as we began our journey again. Before we knew it, we were at the base of Harney Peak with less than a quarter of a mile left.

We continued to the lookout tower and watched one by one as everyone reached the peak. High fives, photographs, and amazement. The view was breathtaking.

Several people pointed out the backside of Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Bear Butte State Park far off on the horizon, Badlands National Park, the cities of Custer, Hill City and Rapid City, the states of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana, the Cathedral Spires and many other landmarks.

Others stood in awe at the construction of the lookout tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1938 to 1940, imagining the horse drawn wagonloads of rock meandering its way through switchbacks and boulders that we had all just traversed on foot. We talked of the Forest Service rangers living in the tower for weeks at a time.

Many showed signs of respect for the area as the sacred place for the La-

"We continued to the lookout tower and watched one by one as everyone reached the peak. High fives, photographs, and amazement. The view was breathtaking."

kota people, discussing Black Elk, his vision and the book *Black Elk Speaks*.

"What a place to be!" someone said. Amanda and I turned around to see Frank Farrar and Harvey Wollman side by side, shaking hands and having their picture taken together. They began conversing about their different experiences and connections to Harney Peak, about each other's families, and used their cell phones to call their family to let them know they had reached the top. They began recalling memories from their time serving together and different political issues.



Photo © SD Tourism | travelsd.com

For the rest of the hike, Harvey and Frank were inseparable.

Everyone slowly made their way off the majestic mound of granite for the trip down. Ahead of Amanda were Harvey and Frank, walking side by side, still talking of the old days. It seemed that a new bond was created. As Frank stumbled over the rough terrain of the trail, Harvey was there to lend a hand, and vice versa.

As Amanda walked slowly behind, she watched what looked like two friends from way back. They continued to talk about politics, and realized that even though they were from different political parties, they've changed over the years and actually agreed on more things than they thought they would.

It started at the top of the peak with a picture and continued the rest of the 3.5 miles – reconnecting with memories; memories others wouldn't understand the same way. It was a wonderful experience for all to see, how one mountain can bring people together and spend a wonderful day talking about all the different experiences in their lives. As we finally reached the trailhead again, we had made the whole trip and had made new friendships, too.

As the group started to depart, we thanked Frank for taking the hike with us. "Oh" he said, "I loved it! I knew I would make it, I am just usually slower," he laughed. "Have you ever hiked Harney Peak before?" I asked. "Oh yes, this area is so beautiful," he said. "Exercising is good for you, you know. I have done triathlons almost my whole life. I have bad knees from an injury in high school, but I will keep doing triathlons until I can't anymore. Thank you for leading the hike. This was great!" With that, he headed off "before my ride leaves me."

I wasn't able to catch up with Harvey Wollman until several days later, when he was back home. Harvey had never hiked to Harney Peak, but has seen it many times from the air.

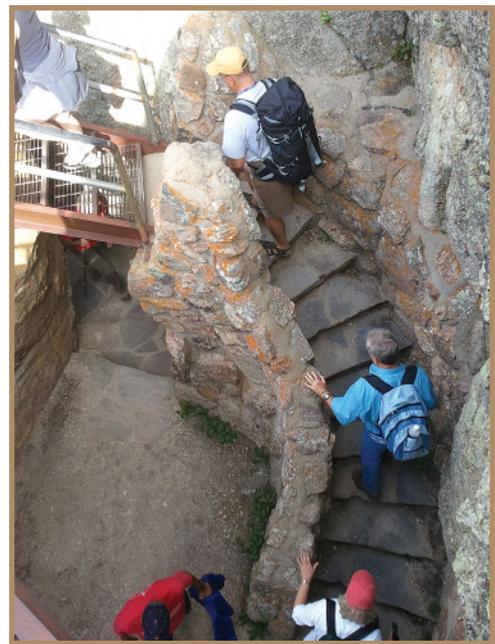
"I have flown planes for years and I

would take people out to the Black Hills for whatever reason and would fly around Harney Peak," he said. "You had to check in with the Ellsworth Controller at Ellsworth Air Force Base. I had done that and when I flew up around Harney Peak, I must have gotten down behind some of the outcroppings. The controller called and said he lost me on the radar and wanted to know if I was okay." He chuckled.

"I had seen the (lookout) tower many times in the airplane, but you have to have your feet on the ground to really experience it. My daughter had hiked it in the past and told me I should hike it. I thought this was the perfect opportunity.

"The highlight for me," said Harvey, "was hiking with Frank back down. For three hours we never stopped talking - from the tower to the (trailhead).

"I think he was the youngest governor when I was the youngest in the senate. We were opposite politically, but we still talked. Through this hike, I gained a new appreciation for Frank. I always knew him and we always did talk, but we were able to talk about those days more than we ever did



when we both served. We just never had that long of time to chat before. Why did it have to take so long to have a conversation like this?

"It was more than a casual hike for me. I have thought a lot about it since then. It was the highlight of the year for me. It was more than educational; it was a spiritual thing for me due to my time spent with Frank. If Harney Peak offered an experience like this for me—" He paused. "I will remember it with fondness."



Former SD Governor's Frank Farrar (left) and Harvey Wollman (right). Photo © Angela Hofmeister | SD Tourism

GREAT PLACES

Game, Fish & Parks Outdoor Heritage Projects Part of Governor's Budget

South Dakotans have a rich outdoor heritage. Outdoor education and enjoyment are a valued part of the lives of most of us. Our great outdoors also attracts millions of people across the nation and world to our state and is one of the most vital engines for South Dakota's economy.

To enhance and create new great outdoor places, Governor Dennis Daugaard included three "Outdoor Heritage" projects in his December budget address. The funds would be a one-time expenditure from the General Fund. He is requesting approval of \$4 million in spending authority for these projects during Fiscal Year 2014, which begins in July. The 88th Legislature will consider the request during the session now progressing in Pierre.

These General Funds would be used to supplement private contributions to three of South Dakota's greatest outdoor attractions: Custer State Park, the George S. Mickelson Trail, and the new Blood Run nature and cultural heritage area near Sioux Falls. Many of the private contributions will flow to these projects through the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation), a charitable support organization for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP).

By Dick and Sue Brown

Blood Run State Park Phase I Development Including Visitors Center

The Parks and Wildlife Foundation has been raising money for the last year to purchase additional land and initial development for a new, premier state park in the Blood Run National Historic Landmark along the Big Sioux River southeast of Sioux Falls. The Governor's plan would permit a significant acceleration in development of the park by adding a visitor and interpretive center to the initial phase of development.

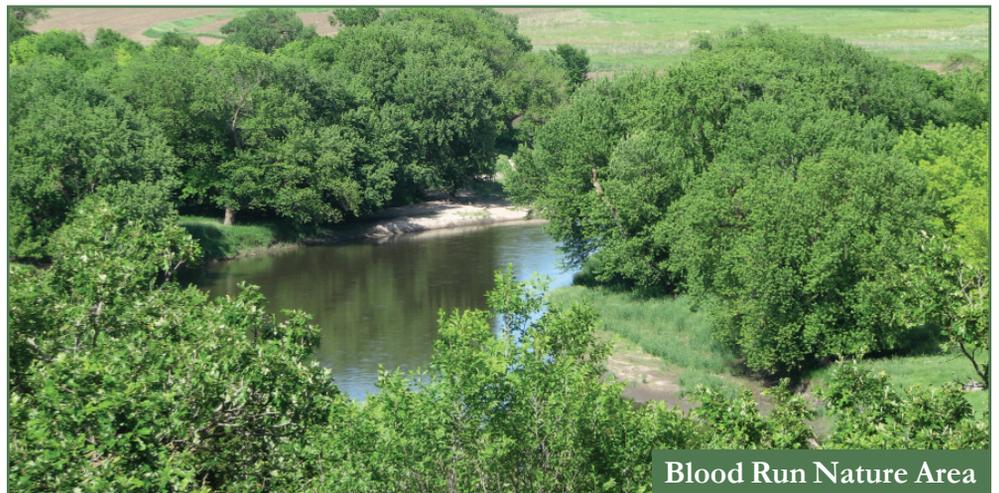
The cost of Phase I development at Blood Run will total \$5 million. The Foundation is charged with raising \$2 million by the end of 2013, with GFP and General Fund dollars mak-

ing up the rest of the cost. Half of the Foundation's goal has already been achieved. Parking, trail development, maintenance facilities, day use facilities, an entrance road and interpretive sites will also be developed on property in state ownership or to be acquired.

The Governor announced that the state of Iowa may also be interested in making the part of the Landmark on its side of the Big Sioux River open to the public. If the plan comes together, Blood Run would be the site of a unique two-state park joint effort.

Custer State Park Theater and Visitors Center

It has long been the dream to improve visitors' experience at Custer



Blood Run Nature Area

State Park by developing a state of the art visitor center and theater where visitor orientation can take full advantage of today's technology. The impact on the economy of the Black Hills could be significant: the new visitor experience would draw attention to more areas of interest in the park and surrounding area and encourage extended stays or return visits. Nearly 2 million visitors now enjoy the park each year.

Again, a public/private partnership would fund these improvements. State General and GFP funds would provide \$2 million, and funds raised through the Foundation will require \$1 million in private contributions.

Mickelson Trail to Mt. Rushmore Connector Trail

A feasibility study for a non-motorized recreational trail from the Mickelson Trail near Hill City to Mount

Rushmore was sponsored by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks, the US Forest Service, the National Park Service and the Mount Rushmore Society and completed in September, 2012. The proposed trail will be 18 miles long and traverse some of the most scenic landscapes in the Black Hills. This trail will accommodate hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders, and appeal to residents and non-residents.

Those who travel the proposed connector trail to Mount Rushmore will be rewarded with unmatched scenic vistas. \$1.1 million in charitable contributions will be required to match South Dakota General and GFP funds of \$900,000. The private funds raised for this project will be used to leverage grants and federal funds to fully fund the development of this world class trail opportunity.

The Foundation will also continue to raise funds for bridge repair on the existing 114 miles of the Mickelson Trail and other projects that will enrich our outdoor lives. We continue to respond to the charitable intentions of others who want to add to the state's hunting op-



Proposed Mickelson Trail to Mt. Rushmore Trail

portunities, fishing and boating access, and outdoor education. The Governor's agenda highlights the highest priority goals for the Foundation.

For more information about how you or your organization or business can contribute to South Dakota's Outdoor Heritage through any of the Governor's priorities, please contact Dick and Sue Brown, Development Directors for the South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation, 605-673-4017 or brownassociates@goldenwest.net.

Proposed Custer State Park Visitor Center



portunities, fishing and boating access, and outdoor education. The Governor's agenda highlights the highest priority goals for the Foundation.

Yes, I would like to help the Parks and Wildlife Foundation with one of these projects!

- Blood Run National Historic Landmark
- CSP Theater & Visitors Center
- Mickelson Trail Bridge Builder II
- Foundation Support

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail this card to: **South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation - 523 East Capitol - Pierre, SD 57501-3182**
 Or contact Dick and Sue Brown, Development Directors - SD Parks and Wildlife Foundation at
 605-673-4017, brownassociates@goldenwest.net.

Donations in any amount can be mailed to the address above or can be made online.

www.parkswildlifefoundation.org

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Dakota Flora

Boxelder

by Dave Ode, GFP Botanist

Boxelders are great for climbing because of their low, spreading branches.

Photo © D.J. Ode

Boxelder trees were made for children. Their multiple trunks and horizontal branches make it easy for even the most klutzy kid to climb. Boxelders provide perfect places for lookouts, tree houses, and easy attachments for swings and hammocks. Boxelder trees just seem to invite adventure. Oh, they have their detractors. To many people the boxelder is just a “trash tree,” refusing to grow straight, dropping branches with every wind-storm, sending up suckers from its base, and attracting those smelly boxelder bugs. But, here on the Great Plains boxelders grow and survive in places where other, more genteel trees cannot.

Also called the ash-leaved maple, the boxelder (*Acer negundo*) is our only maple with compound leaves, typically bearing 3 to 5 leaflets. In the wild it commonly grows as scattered trees or as swarms of saplings on floodplains, streambanks and shorelines of lakes and marshes. When grown in a fertile, Midwestern, floodplain forest, boxelders may grow straight and tall and reach 75 feet. However, most of our Great Plains boxelders grow in less productive, more exposed locations and have a rounded shape, with gnarled branches and rarely exceed 30 feet tall. The boxelder ranges all across eastern North America from the Appalachians to the Rockies, north to prairie Canada and south well into Mexico, with isolated populations scattered west of the Rocky Mountains. Boxelders have been widely planted in rural shelterbelts and as lawn trees on farmsteads, parks, and small towns all across the Midwest and Great Plains.

While boxelder trees are the namesake of boxelder bugs (*Boisea trivittata*), they are not the only host plant. Boxelder bugs have piercing mouth parts and feed by piercing and sucking plant sap from leaves, stems and developing seeds. Female boxelders and other maples appear to be the preferred food source, but boxelder bugs have been documented feeding on green ash, bur oak, apple, cherry, plum, grape and herbaceous plants like strawberries. Some people suggest that getting rid of a female boxelder tree will get rid of boxelder bugs. I'm skeptical of this advice since I only have a male boxelder tree in my yard and, in good years, thousands of boxelder bugs seem perfectly happy to dine on it or on my Amur maple.

The other night I awoke to a boxelder bug crawling across my face. Living in an old farm house with too many cracks and crevices to seal up, boxelder bugs have become a regular,

if infrequent winter guest in our home. Fortunately, I have become desensitized to the feeling of their dainty feet ascending my cheek-bone or eyebrow. I no longer yelp and thrash about, stunning my wife and awakening the entire household. Instead I semi-consciously pluck them off my face, crush them between my fingers, and fling them across the room to be gathered up by the vacuum cleaner later in the week. Boxelder bugs overwinter as adults and have the annoying habit of seeking out warm winter quarters by sneaking into houses and other natural or man-made shelters. They don't bite, they just wander around getting in the way. In the spring they come out of hiding, mate, and lay their eggs on the bark of boxelders, or on other nearby substrates. The tiny red and black larvae suck plant sap and molt about five times before becoming an adult.

I can't think about boxelders without thinking about hammocks and mushrooms. My wife's grandmother in North Dakota had a hammock in her yard suspended between a boxelder and a green ash tree. My own hammock (held up by a steel frame) sets in the shade of a boxelder tree. There's something about the light that filters through boxelder leaves, a kind of soft yellow-green light that's relaxing and homey. But lying in my hammock is rarely restful for long, because of the western kingbirds that often nest in my boxelder. Invariably I'm joined in the hammock by a cat or a dog, and if the kingbirds haven't already started their tirade, the presence of a cat always prompts their wing-snapping dives and their sharp and incessant shrieking. Fortunately, when the young kingbirds leave the nest, the parents give up their vigil and I can catch a decent rest in the shade of my boxelder tree.

RIGHT: Like other maples, female boxelders produce winged seeds called samaras that may persist on the tree well into winter.

BELOW: Male boxelder trees flower in early spring at about the same time as their leaves first emerge.

Photos © Shutterstock



Boxelders are leaky trees, which make them a good host for oyster mushrooms. Boxelder trees have rather weak wood and their branches tend to grow at odd angles making them vulnerable to breakage from high winds and ice storms. Each wound become the site of leaking sap. Mushroom spores floating through the air stick to the sap, germinate and grow into thread-like mycelia. In the autumn it is not uncommon to find oyster mushrooms growing from old wounds on boxelder trees. The mushroom that I've found most is the elm oyster (*Hypsizygus ulmarius*) or occasionally the common oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*). I find both are delicious, and fun to hunt, because you often have to climb a little to collect them. The sugary sap of box-

elders can also be tapped and boiled down into syrup, which I'm told resembles maple syrup but with a more fruity or butterscotch flavor.

I don't know what the future holds for boxelders. In the wild, boxelders are doing fine. Thus far they have not been attacked by foreign diseases like Dutch elm disease, or by exotic insect pests like the emerald ash borer. Whenever a stream floods or a lake recedes, boxelder seedlings seem spring up, and despite the fact that beaver commonly topple boxelder trees, the stumps resprout with vigor. What I do not see is much urban or suburban planting of boxelders. I can understand not wanting a boxelder tree as the center piece of your front yard, but every child's home should have a big, old, gnarled boxelder in the back yard. 🌿



All About Owls

by Jody Moats, GF&P Naturalist - Adams Homestead & Nature Preserve

Photo © USFWS

I have discussed many topics in schools throughout the winter season, but the favorite for kids seems to be when we focus on animal adaptations. The animal at the top of the list with the coolest adaptations is the owl. I would have to agree with the kids on this one too. Owls are one cool bird. From their excellent eyesight to their incredible hearing, owls hunt by stealth, taking their prey by surprise.

So what is in an owl's diet? Depending on the owl, their diet can include insects, spiders, earthworms, snails, crabs, reptiles, amphibians, birds and small mammals. Now catching these critters is the key to keeping themselves well-fed. This is where their cool adaptations come to play. Let's focus first on their eyesight.

Of all the owl's features, perhaps the most striking is its eyes. Large and forward facing, they may account for one to five percent of the owl's body weight. The forward facing position of the eyes gives them a wide range of "binocular" vision (seeing an object with both eyes at the same time). Owls can see objects in 3 dimensions (height, width, and depth), and can judge distances in a similar way to humans. An owl's eyes are quite large in order to improve their efficiency, especially under low light conditions. They are held in place by bony structures called sclerotic rings. For this reason, owls can not roll their eyes around like we can. So they make up for that, by being

able to turn their heads up to 270 degrees left or right. This allows them to look around without having to move their bodies.

Next up...Hearing. Some species of owls can even hunt in complete darkness using sound alone to help them to a successful kill. Sensitive, directional hearing helps locate the concealed prey. The ears of an owl are located at the sides of the head, behind the eyes, and are covered by the feathers of the facial disc. The "ear tufts" visible on some species are not ears at all, but simply display feathers. Some owl species have asymmetrical ear openings (one ear is higher than the other). These species also have a very pronounced facial disc, which acts like a guide to direct the sound to the ear openings. An owl will use these unique, sensitive ears to locate prey by listening for movement through the ground cover. When a noise is heard, the owl can tell its direction because of the minute time difference in which the sound is perceived in the left and right



ear. For example, if the sound was to the left of the owl, the left ear would hear it before the right ear. The owl then turns its head so the sound arrived at both ears simultaneously. Then it knows the prey is right in front of it. Owls can detect a left/right time difference of about 0.00003 seconds. Incredible! Once the owl has determined the direction of its victim, it will fly forward, keeping in the direction of the last sound the prey made. If the prey moves, the owl can make corrections in direction mid-flight.

What other cool adaptation does an owl need to have a good meal for the night? Talons and silent feathers. The quiet comb-like or fringe-like leading edge of the primary wing feathers allow them to sneak up on their prey. These “flutings” muffle the sound of air rushing over the wing surface and allows the owl to fly in silence. This is a cool adaptation for most owls, but some do not have it, especially some species that hunt in the daytime.

If you work hard to find your prey, hopefully you do not let it go, so that is where talons come in. An owl's foot has 4 toes. When in flight, 3 of these toes face forward and one backwards. When perched or clutching prey, the outer toe on each foot swivels to face the rear. Pretty cool flexible joint allows them to do this. The powerful talons will lock onto their prey once they catch it for a

successful meal later on.

The ability to eat your prey once you catch it is quite important. Hence, the curved sharp beak of the owl. It is designed for gripping and tearing food. The crushing power of the beak is usually used to kill the prey once it is captured. In times of plenty, Owls may surplus their food in a cache. May be in the nest, tree hole or a fork in a branch. In extremely cold conditions, that food may become frozen, so some owl may sit on them until they thaw. A natural defroster.

We can come up with many more cool things an owl does or has on its body to survive the outdoors. This is a great time of the year to bundle up and head outside to do some owling or to listen for the deep hoots of a Great Horned Owl and the soft trill of an Eastern Screech owl. Enjoy the outdoors any time of the day! 🐾

Owl Fun For Kids

Owl Creations:

Set out pine cones or 2-inch pompoms and let your children choose the ones they want to use for owl bodies. Cut feet and triangular beaks out of yellow felt. Invite the children to glue the shapes onto their owl bodies. Then help them self-stick reinforcement labels for eyes, using glue, if necessary.

In the Kitchen:

On a paper plate, give the children a circle of meat (the owl's head), can be bologna or others like turkey. Next, a triangle of American cheese. Place the cheese, triangle pointing down on the top half of the circle head (this forms the beak). Next place two Ritz circle crackers for the eyes on each side of the beak. Last, place olive circles on top of crackers for pupils. The children can add other bits of veggies too.

Let's Be Owls:

Invite your children to try these activities:

- Owls have excellent vision. Name some things owls might be able to see in the dark that we can't
- Owls are silent flyers. Pretend to be owls and fly quietly around the room
- Owls make hooting sounds. Practice perching on a pretend branch and calling out. “Who, Who.”



Natural Heritage

Cats and Wild Birds - *A Bad Combination*

By Eileen Dowd Stukel, GF&P Senior Wildlife Biologist

There's an expression that "Dogs have owners, cats have staff."

Considering that there are an estimated 90 million owned cats in the U.S., you may be a staff member. In addition to the millions of owned cats, an estimated 60 million additional cats are considered feral or wild. And two more estimates to consider: Only about 35% of cat owners in the U.S. keep their cats indoors all the time, and roughly ¼ of respondents to a survey by the American Bird Conservancy had not spayed or neutered their pet cats.

Cats are the most popular pet in the U.S., and they bring comfort and companionship to many people. But hunters, wildlife biologists and wildlife enthusiasts have become increasingly concerned about the impact of free-roaming cats to wildlife, particularly species and populations already stressed by other factors, such as decreasing habitat quality and quantity. Besides cats that are exclusively indoor cats, other categories include cats with limited access to the outside, cats that are owned but roam freely, such as barn cats, and feral cats.

Free-roaming cats, whether owned or not, are highly effective predators on small mammals and wild birds, especially birds that nest or forage on the ground. Many people believe that a well-fed cat is not a threat to wild animals – not so. Many research stud-

ies have confirmed that prey drive is not related to hunger in free-roaming cats. Estimates of the number of wild birds killed by cats are conservative and range in the hundreds of millions of birds each year. Studies of bird colonies have also shown severe indirect impacts to nesting birds, which may abandon traditional areas because of the presence and stress related to free-roaming cats.

A responsible cat owner provides appropriate veterinary care, such as vaccinations and spaying or neutering. But millions of feral cats without this care are exposed to and transmit a variety of diseases that harm wild animals and humans. According to the Centers for Disease Control, cats are the domestic animals most frequently reported rabid. Most feral cats that have been tested were positive

for toxoplasmosis, which can cause severe illness in children and people with weakened immune systems. Cats can also become infected with plague through flea bites from infected rodents. Plague-carrying cats can then transmit the disease to humans either through the bite of an infected flea or by fluid transmission from the cat to the human through coughing or sneezing.

Some cat owners believe their gentle, affectionate animal can be safely allowed outside for a little fresh air because they've thoughtfully attached a bell to the cat's collar to warn of its approach. Wild animals, particularly young ones, do not necessarily associate a tinkling bell with a stalking cat. Another fallacy is that because cat owners may not observe their animals bringing home prey, they are not

causing an impact. Cat owners often do not see their cat preying on wild birds, and cats do not always present their kills to their owner. Many small mammals and birds that are not immediately killed by cats may die later from their injuries or due to infection. After habitat loss and degradation, free-roaming cats are believed to be the second greatest cause of wild bird extinctions in the world. Cats can easily outcompete other predators that rely on small mammals as prey. Because many free-roaming cats are fed and vaccinated, their numbers can grow much greater than those of a typical wild predator, which is limited by prey availability.

Even considering the conservative losses of wild birds to free-roaming cats, their economic impact is estimated at \$17 billion per year in the U.S. This estimate is based on the amount that bird watchers spend per bird observed, the average amount spent by a hunter to harvest a bird and the

amount spent by people who captive rear and release birds. This estimate pertains only to wild birds and does not include economic impacts to other animal groups.

So what can be done? Some well-meaning cat advocates practice Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Release (TNVR). The idea is to care for feral cat colonies by trapping the animals and releasing them at the same site after the cats are neutered and vaccinated. Volunteers feed and periodically attempt to recapture colony cats for follow-up vaccinations. The original hope was that the colony size would remain stable or decrease over the years as cats died and colony members chased off interlopers. What has happened in many cases is that the cat colonies became convenient dumping sites for irresponsible pet owners who no longer wanted their animals. Colony cats proved tolerant of new members, which may not have been neutered. Many cat colonies are in public parks, exposing human

visitors to disease risks.

Some municipalities have legalized the TNVR practice, despite conflicts with existing laws that prohibit free-roaming domestic animals. Many colonies depend on volunteers to continue the TNVR process, which requires substantial time and funding. The colony may become a site where diseases spread as other wild animals, such as skunks, raccoons, and rodents, are attracted to the chow line. Even under the ideal scenario where all colony cats are neutered and vaccinated, the animals continue to prey on wild mammals and birds. They also remain vulnerable to the many perils of living in the wild, including automobile collisions, attacks from other cats, poisons, traps, and predators such as dogs and coyotes.

This situation didn't happen overnight, and it will take time, dedication and cooperation to even begin to address the impact that free-roaming cats are having to wildlife. 

What can you do?

- Spay or neuter your pets and keep their vaccinations current.
- Instead of letting your cats roam outside, play with them each day and provide them with toys and other stimulation.
- If you live in a rural area and need cats for rodent control, keep only as many vaccinated and neutered cats as you need for that job.
- Don't feed stray cats or dump unwanted cats in rural areas.
- Continue to become informed on this issue by visiting the American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors website:
<http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html>



ParkNotes

Register for 16th Annual Mickelson Trail Trek

PIERRE, S.D. – Online registration for the 16th Annual Mickelson Trail Trek are now open. Bicyclists can sign up at www.MickelsonTrail.com. Game, Fish and Parks officials encourage riders to sign up early to ensure a spot in the Trek, which will be held Sept. 20-22, 2013.

The annual supported ride highlights the George S. Mickelson Trail as it winds through the heart of the Black Hills from Edgemont to Lead/Deadwood. The ride began in 1998 as a celebration of the completion of the rails-to-trails project. The Trek continues today to introduce new bicyclists to the trail and to thank supporters for their long-standing enthusiasm for the trail. Riders on the Trail Trek will cover the entire 109 miles of the trail over three days, from Friday, Sept. 20 through Sunday, Sept. 22.

Registration before July 1 with merchandise is \$180, without merchandise is \$150. Registration after July 1 is \$180, and merchandise is not available. The registration fee for the 3-day ride includes the trail pass, shuttle service, refreshments and some meals during each day's ride. Riders are responsible for accommodations and mechanical support. The ride is open to all bicyclists 14 years of age or older.

Pre-registration is required and may be completed online by visiting www.MickelsonTrail.com and following the "Trail Trek" link. Registration cutoff is September 1, 2013. For more information on the Mickelson Trail or the 3-day Mickelson Trail Trek, visit www.MickelsonTrail.com or contact the Black Hills Trails office at (605) 584-3896.

Make Camping Reservations for the Upcoming Season

Even if there is still snow on the ground, it's not too early to be planning your summer camping trip.

Jan. 31 is the first day to make reservations for May 1. Reservations for Friday, May 17, Open House Weekend at South Dakota state parks and recreation areas, open February 16. Reservations for arrivals on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend open February 23.

When making reservations, keep the following in mind:

- Reserve online at www.campsd.com or call 1-800-710-CAMP (2267). Campsite reservations open at 7 a.m. CST 90 days prior to arrival and can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Campsite and cabin reservations can be made up to 90 days before arrival (starting at 7 a.m. the first day) at most state park areas. The 90-day calendar is available online at www.gfps.sd.gov. At Custer State Park, reservations can be made up to one year in advance.
- Several sites may be reserved with one phone call, but payment of all fees for all sites is required before a confirmation is granted.
- A three-night stay is required on holiday weekends at all parks except Custer State Park.
- There is a \$7.70 non-refundable reservation fee (not applicable to South Dakota residents).
- A cancellation fee equal to one night's camping fee will be charged if you cancel your reservation, either through the reservation center or after arriving at the park.

For more information on reservations, including the full 90-day window calendar, visit the state parks website at www.gfps.sd.gov.

Free Entrance, Free Fishing Mark S.D. State Parks' Open House Weekend

PIERRE, S.D. – To kick off summer, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks is encouraging families to spend the weekend outside during the Parks' Open House Weekend and Free Fishing Weekend May 17-19.

During the annual three-day event, anglers can fish without a license anywhere in the state, and entrance fees are waived for all visitors to South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas. Camping fees still apply. Fishing regulations and limits apply.

Parks will be hosting a variety of Open House Weekend special events across the state. Check parks for details.

Custer State Park will host a number of family activities both Saturday and Sunday, including cookouts, nature hikes, free hayrack rides, a fishing derby, nature programs and demonstrations. A full schedule of events can be found on the state park's website.

South Dakota state parks offer a wide variety of outdoor fun, including camping, picnicking and boating. Many parks also offer trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

For information on fishing, fishing license and fishing regulations visit the GFP website at www.gfps.sd.gov. Find more information on the South Dakota state park system online or call 605-773-3391.

-GFP-



FISHERIES RULE CHANGES ADD OPPORTUNITY

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission finalized changes to fisheries regulations at its November commission meeting, and the rule changes went into effect Dec. 3, 2012.

Anglers are now allowed to spear northern pike on all inland waters in South Dakota, except those managed as muskie waters.

Additionally, the daily limit for walleye on Lake Oahe has increased to eight fish per day. Of the walleye taken daily, no more than four may be 15 inches in length or longer, and only one of those four may be 20 inches or longer. The possession limit has been increased to 24 walleye.

More information on fisheries rule changes can be found in the 2013 fishing handbook available online at <http://gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/rules-reg.aspx>. Printed versions available through license agents. Anglers with questions concerning rule changes are encouraged to contact their local Game, Fish and Parks office.

GFP CONSERVATION OFFICER HONORED

PIERRE, S.D. - South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks conservation officer Brian Humphrey has been honored by Shikar-Safari Club International as the South Dakota Wildlife Officer of the Year.

Humphrey, the conservation officer for Hutchinson and Turner counties, has been with GFP since 1997.

“Brian is very deserving of this award,” said Marty Pennock, who is Humphrey’s supervisor. “He has always shown extraordinary dedication to both the wildlife resources and the people he serves. He holds himself to the highest

standards in all aspects of his work.”

In receiving the honor, Humphrey was not only praised for his law enforcement work but also helping private landowners and sportsmen implement conservation programs. He is part of a team that enrolled more than 8,000 acres of land into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in his area.

Humphrey works on area lakes to oversee safety and law enforcement and is a past Boating Officer of the Year award winner. He logged more than 300 hours assisting in the Missouri River flood relief efforts last year.

One of his duties with GFP is serving as a training officer for other conservation officers. He also works as a mentor for newly assigned officers in his area and to officers who transfer into the region.

“Brian is an experienced and respected officer who truly cares about making the department the best it can possibly be,” Pennock said. “His strength is his value of duty and his ability to serve people, while promoting an excellent image for our agency.”

The Shikar-Safari Award is awarded annually in all 50 states and in 10 Canadian provinces by the worldwide conservation organization. It has been presented to a South Dakota officer each year since 1968. The award honors wildlife officers for their performances in wildlife protection, wildlife law enforcement, and in the implementation of wildlife conservation programs.

The award was presented to Humphrey at a recent regional meeting in Sioux Falls that included many of his fellow conservation officers and other Wildlife Division staff. He was also honored at the November GFP Commission meeting in Madison.

GOVERNOR UNVEILS SD TIPS TRAILER

PIERRE, S.D. - A mobile fixture at South Dakota outdoor events, sports shows and festivals has received a face-lift.

The educational trailer used for the Turn In Poachers (TIPS) program has several new photo “skins” on its exterior, making the traveling trailer more visible and inviting.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard unveiled the updated trailer on the grounds of the state Capitol on Nov. 15.

“The outdoor scenes depicted on the sides of the trailer, along with TIPS educational displays, serve as important tools that will draw attention to the problem of poaching in South Dakota,” the Governor said.

“It’s important for citizens to be aware that wildlife belong to all of us,” Gov. Daugaard said.

TIPS information is used at educational and outdoor festivals; in Step Outside programs of the state Game, Fish and Parks Department; in hunter and angler education programs; and at many outdoor venues.

The TIPS program was started in South Dakota in 1984 in response to the illegal killing of two elk in the Black Hills. Within a year, the program was so successful that it was implemented statewide.

Since the program began, there have been more than 10,000 investigations, resulting in about 3,400 arrests. Poachers have paid more than \$658,000 in fines, and an additional \$509,000 in liquidated civil damages has been assessed.

TIPS has paid out more than \$135,000 in cash rewards since 1984 to people who have supplied information leading to arrests in South Dakota.

(photo of trailer on back cover)

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Use QR Code to visit SD TIPs webpage, or visit:
<http://gfp.sd.gov/agency/law-enforcement/turn-in-poachers.aspx>