

SOUTH DAKOTA CONSERVATION  
Digest

# Kids edition





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# South Dakota. Conservation Digest

DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS



Nancy Tesdall



- 4 When I Grow Up  
I Want To Be a  
Conservation Officer
- 5 Only In South Dakota  
*By MaKayla Heckler*
- 6 Nature Poems
- 7 When I Grow Up  
I Want To Be a  
Naturalist
- 8 Wilderness Survival  
Checklist
- 10 When I Grow Up  
I Want To Be a  
Wildlife Photographer
- 11 My Outdoor Adventure  
*By Alexander Gustad*
- 12 Ask Jersey
- 13 When I Grow Up  
I Want To Be a  
Biologist
- 14 Profile: Reagan Spomer  
Fitness Is A Way of Life
- 15 Match-Game

Front Cover: Photo by Chad Coppess

Opposite Page: Photo by Joe Riis

Back Cover: Photo by Cathy Buchheim

# When I Grow Up... I want to be a Conservation Officer

- *Why did you want to be a Conservation Officer?*

Some of my fondest memories growing up in South Dakota were tagging along with my hero and grandfather, Herb Keeton. When he was not working, we were going to be outside, fishing and hunting. Even when I was too young to legally carry a firearm, I walked behind him carrying my toy gun, observing his every move.

The friendship we developed over those years was priceless to me, and it has forever bonded me to the outdoors. My grandfather told me that if I found a job that I loved, I would never work a day in my life, and that's

when I knew that I wanted a job in the outdoors, and a job that I could be proud of.

- *What do you love most about your job?*

I truly adore being outdoors. But I've realized that if our outdoors weren't regulated there would be no wildlife to enjoy. I like the fact that I am a protector of wildlife.

I also have made my family my first priority, and this job definitely has its challenges but it also gives me a lot of flexibility, despite some of those busy times of year where I work long irregular hours.

- *What's your favorite thing to do outside?*

I have always loved to hunt, fish and trap, but now I have found a new passion in the outdoors: teaching my four year old son how to do these things. I have now realized why my grandfather spent so much time with me when I was a child: because it's fun!

It's interesting how you go through phases as an outdoorsman. When I started, I just wanted to shoot the gun and hear it go bang. Then I wanted to harvest something. Then I wanted to harvest a limit, or harvest something big. I am now to the point where I just want to share this with someone I care about, and teach him (my son) the values and morals that I hold dear.



Joe Keeton



We held a contest to find some of the best outdoor writers in the state. We received around 600 entries and the following pages have some of our favorites- Enjoy!

# “Only in South Dakota”

By MaKayla Heckler, 13  
Simmons Middle School

Aiyana walked out of her home into the brightly lit forest her family was visiting. The light shone through the bright fall leaves, leaving yellow and gold speckles on the ground. As she stepped into that familiar scenery, she heard a family of orioles, singing her a song.

Aiyana closed her eyes and stood there, taking in all the beauty of the morning forest. She could smell wood, damp from the morning’s dew. She could hear the soft sound, almost a whisper, of a squirrel family nibbling its breakfast. She could feel the soft, cool breeze, as it seemed to caress her skin. Her heritage had taught her to become one with nature.

“Yep. Only in South Dakota,” she whispered to herself.

As she opened her eyes, Aiyana heard Chaska, her father, stirring, so she left to begin her morning walk. She dove through the trees, and climbed over rocks and hills. As she climbed, she became overwhelmed with thoughts of nature and beauty, which she found more common in South Dakota. Her family had traveled to many places, but she found South Dakota had the best wildlife. Everything was so beautiful and breathtaking. She felt comfortable here, like she’d known this place her whole life.

Aiyana walked back and her mother, Aponi, was packing the tent while her father prepared the morning meal.

“We’re leaving?” Aiyana asked, disappointedly.

“We have to young one. We cannot stay here forever,” her father answered.

“I guess. I was just hoping-”

“Well, you hoped wrong!” her mother fiercely interrupted. “This is not the place for a girl your age. You are going to school.”

Aiyana knew that this would be the final word. Days had passed, then weeks. Aiyana was now enrolled at the nearest middle school, Hill City, where she met new friends, though none like her.

One day, after school, Aiyana was day dreaming about the beautiful nature that had once been her home, when her mother called her from inside their new home.

“Aiyana, we need to talk.”

“I’m coming, mom!”

“I know that you’ve had questions lately, and I want you to understand that we moved for you, even though it doesn’t seem like it,” her mother began, once Aiyana was inside. “Do you have any questions about our moving?” she asked.

“I do have a question,” Aiyana said hesitantly. “When we were in the Black Hills, I noticed that we kept coming back here. Why has everything has been so familiar

every time we come?” As she asked, she felt relieved. She saw the smile on her mother’s face.

“That is understandable, little one. Is everything familiar?”

“Yes,” Aiyana answered. “There’s a comfortable feel, within the nature.”

“Of course there is.” Her mother was slow with her words. “In this beautiful state full of the most breathtaking nature, is your home.”

What was her mother saying? She knew that they lived in South Dakota. She knew every morning that she woke, and heard the birds’ songs, saw the morning sunrise.

“What?” she asked her mother.

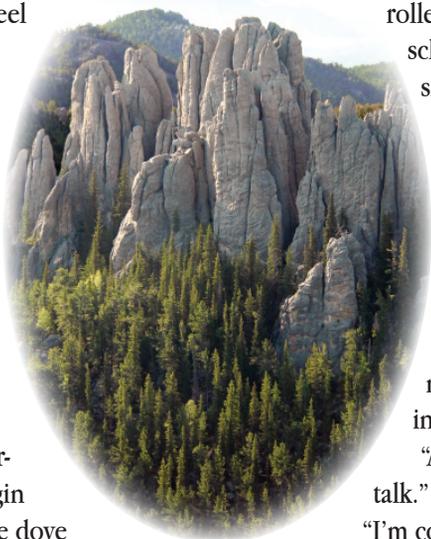
“You were born here.”

Aiyana gasped, but then understood.

One Year Later

Another camping trip. Aiyana felt the wind blow through her hair, and the sun warmed her skin.

“Ah,” she sighed, “*Only in South Dakota.*”



Ciara Duffy, 16, St. Thomas More High School

*The river flows, an endless stream  
The sun is shining, an endless gleam  
It shines on the water, a deepening blue  
Grass sways in the wind as it shakes the dew  
A splash in the water, the whisper of trees  
Mother Nature wakes with the steady breeze  
To try to express what is seen and felt here  
Is like trying to count the breaths in a year  
Wherever you look there is life to be seen  
From the ripple of fish to leaves that are green  
Seeming larger than life, a towering tree  
Began as a seed almost too small to see  
Some life is so big, it brushes the sky  
Still some is too small to be seen with the eye  
The river gives life to every part  
Pumping water throughout, it works like a heart  
It all seems so different, but all nature reveals  
The complexity and beauty that all of us feel  
Seeming hard to unite, yet all one in the same  
An unvanquished beauty that cannot be tamed*



Addison Warriner, 6,  
Jefferson Elementary

### SQUIRRELS

Squirrels eat nuts and apples!  
They have fuzzy tails and  
2 puffy cheeks.  
They climb trees and  
Bury nuts in winter time.

### SQUIRRELS

Parker Oleson,  
15, St. Thomas More High School

*Bubble, bubble, deep in trouble  
Flowing free but on the double  
Over rock and over stick  
Afraid to disappear too quick  
Water rushing, water flowing  
Quickly down its course but knowing  
Of mountains made of concrete high,  
Freedom's end is all too nigh  
Of poisons in and poisons out  
Of sickened kids and sickened trout  
Of sanctuaries 'neath the soil  
Of helping mother's meals to boil  
Yes, flowing free, even through rubble  
Bubble, bubble, on the double*

Shayla White,  
14, Canton Middle School

*Lying on the ground  
Everywhere they fall  
Amazing hues of yellow,  
orange and red  
Very beautiful colors  
Every leaf is different  
Summer is over; fall is here*

# When I Grow Up... I want to be a Naturalist

Photos by Nancy Tesdall

## *Why did you want to be a naturalist?*

As a child, I was always curious about the outdoors and loved to be outside. I enjoyed catching lightning bugs, fishing with my grandpa, climbing trees and riding my bike. As I got older, I was thinking about being a teacher. I realized that being a naturalist is a great combination of the love of the outdoors and teaching.

## *What do you love most about your job?*

I enjoy seeing the excitement of kids discovering something in nature that they have never seen before. I also love seeing kids bring their parents back to the park and sharing their knowledge that they learned when they were here for a field trip. Knowing that you may have sparked the curiosity of a child to explore more in the outdoors is what I really love about the job.

## *What's your favorite thing to do outside?*

At this moment, one of my favorite things to do outside is run. Sometimes I have my music going, but other times I turn it off so I can pace myself to the sounds of the park. I enjoy hearing the songbirds in the spring and the smell of different shrubs or wildflowers as I pass by. Just being able to have that time alone in the outdoors is great way to relieve stress and be ready for what life throws you next.



Naturalist: Jody Moats of Adams Homestead



# Wilderness Survival Checklist

Here's a list of things to consider bringing for outdoor survival when camping, hiking, or otherwise exposed to the elements. Remember, it's always better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it. With this list, you can start building your own survival kit!

## • First Aid Kit

Tweezers, bandages, needle, moleskin, sterilized gauze, safety pins, soap, bee paste (baking soda and water), aspirin, adhesive tape, elastic

wrap, topical antibiotic, utility knife, scissors, emergency blanket, snake bite kit, tick release, emergency phone numbers, water purifier, poison ivy/oak cream, sunscreen, sunglasses – Also, it can't hurt to be trained in first aid. The American Red Cross uses 13 as an age guideline for first aid training, but there is no set minimum. It all comes down to whether you can read the information, understand it and get certified.

## • Canteen or Water Bottle

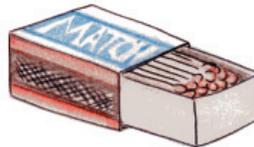
One with its own water purification or filtration system is ideal.



## • Insect Repellent

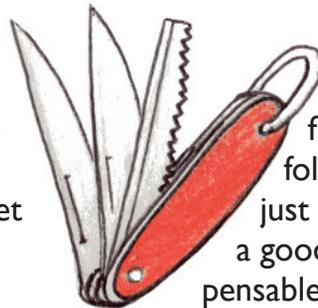


• **Kindling** In addition to the twigs, leaves and logs you can find in the wild, some fire starters such as newspaper or old toilet paper rolls stuffed with dryer lint can be helpful.



## • Waterproof Matches or Propane Lighters

In the wild, fire can mean life, especially at night. Being able to start a fire is vital to survival, so bring the right tools to do it.



## • Knife

Whether fixed blade, folding blade or just a pocket knife, a good knife is indispensable in the wild.

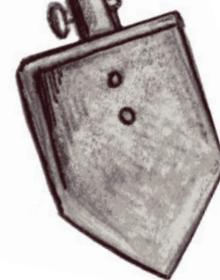
You may even want a file or stone so you can sharpen your blade.

## • Hatchet



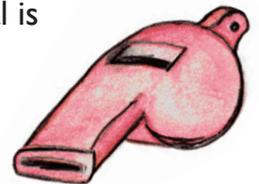
## • Camp Shovel

For an ideal campsite, some digging may be necessary, but make sure you know the rules and regulations of the area.



## • Whistle or Noise-Making Device

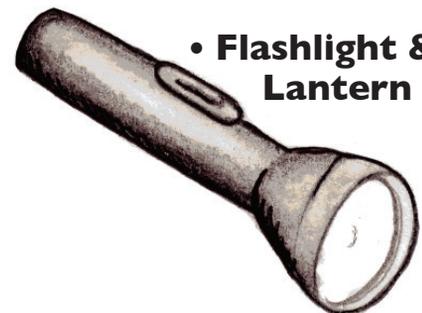
The standard signal for S.O.S. signal is three blasts.



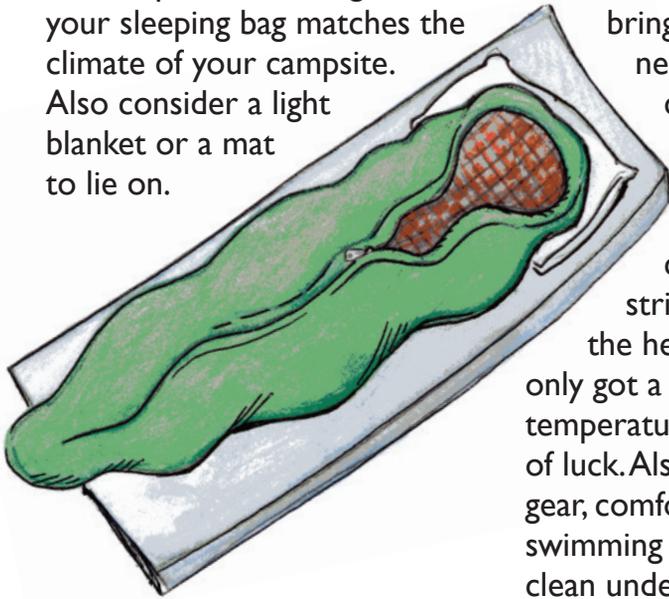
## • Tent



## • Flashlight & Lantern



- **Sleeping bag** Make sure the temperature rating on your sleeping bag matches the climate of your campsite. Also consider a light blanket or a mat to lie on.

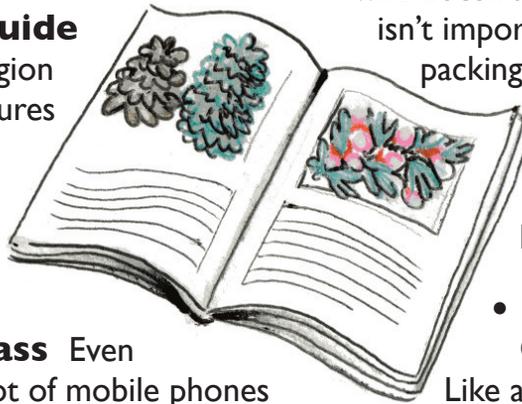


- **Clothing** The clothes you wear and bring along for survival need to be comfortable, breathable and warm. Remember, layered clothing can be stripped down to fit the heat, but if you've only got a t-shirt and the temperature drops, you're out of luck. Also consider rain gear, comfortable shoes, a swimming suit and, of course, clean underwear.

- **Food** Survival food needs to be portable, nutritious and easily preserved when you're out in the wild. Things like canned food, food ready just by adding water, rice and things easily cooked over fire are ideal. Don't forget seasonings; just a pinch of salt, pepper or whatever spice you like can take campfire food from bland to delicious.

- **Vitamin C and Multi Vitamins**

- **Field guide** of the region with pictures of edible plants, nuts and berries



- **Compass** Even though a lot of mobile phones have GPS, a compass doesn't need batteries and isn't as susceptible to damage as some phones.



- **Cooking Gear –**

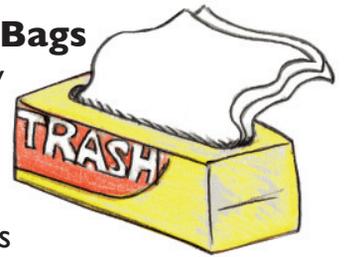
Two aluminum pots work well for cooking over an open fire. A grill may also be an asset, and a green stick or branch should work well as a skewer. A large metal cup or thermos is great for broths, and don't forget your mess kit (fork, spoon, knife, cup, and plate). Tin foil is also great for wrapping items.

- **Paracord**

- **Book** Take advantage of the tranquility. Read a good book.

- **Trash Bags**

Take only pictures, leave only footprints



- **Gun or Bow or Traps**

- **Fishing Gear –** To pack lightly for fishing, try going without a pole. Just hooks, line, sinkers and whatever bait you can find in the wild.

- **Money, Permits, Licenses, I.D.**

- **Personal Hygiene Kit**

Just because you're out in the wild doesn't mean hygiene isn't important. Consider packing a toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and especially toilet paper.

- **Magnifying Glass**

Like a camera, this can be nice to have just to appreciate everything, but it can also be an aid for fire if you run out of or lose your other fire starters.



- **Towels**

- **Hiking Backpacks**



# When I Grow Up... I want to be a Wildlife Photographer



## *Why did you want to be a wildlife photographer?*

I enjoy spending my time outdoors and daydreaming about wild animals and places. So it was fitting for me to become a wildlife photographer. We are very lucky to still have wildlife here in South Dakota; many places around the world do not have wildlife anymore, as humans poached them or developed their habitat. Through photography, I think the general public can be connected and inspired by wildlife.



## *What do you love most about your job?*

I enjoy being alone in the wilderness. I also love when young people are inspired by my photographs to protect and conserve the wildlife on their

home land. For example, right now in South Dakota we are increasingly losing a lot of our native prairie to large scale corn and soybean production. We need young South Dakotans to stand up for the prairie wildlife that also call this land home.

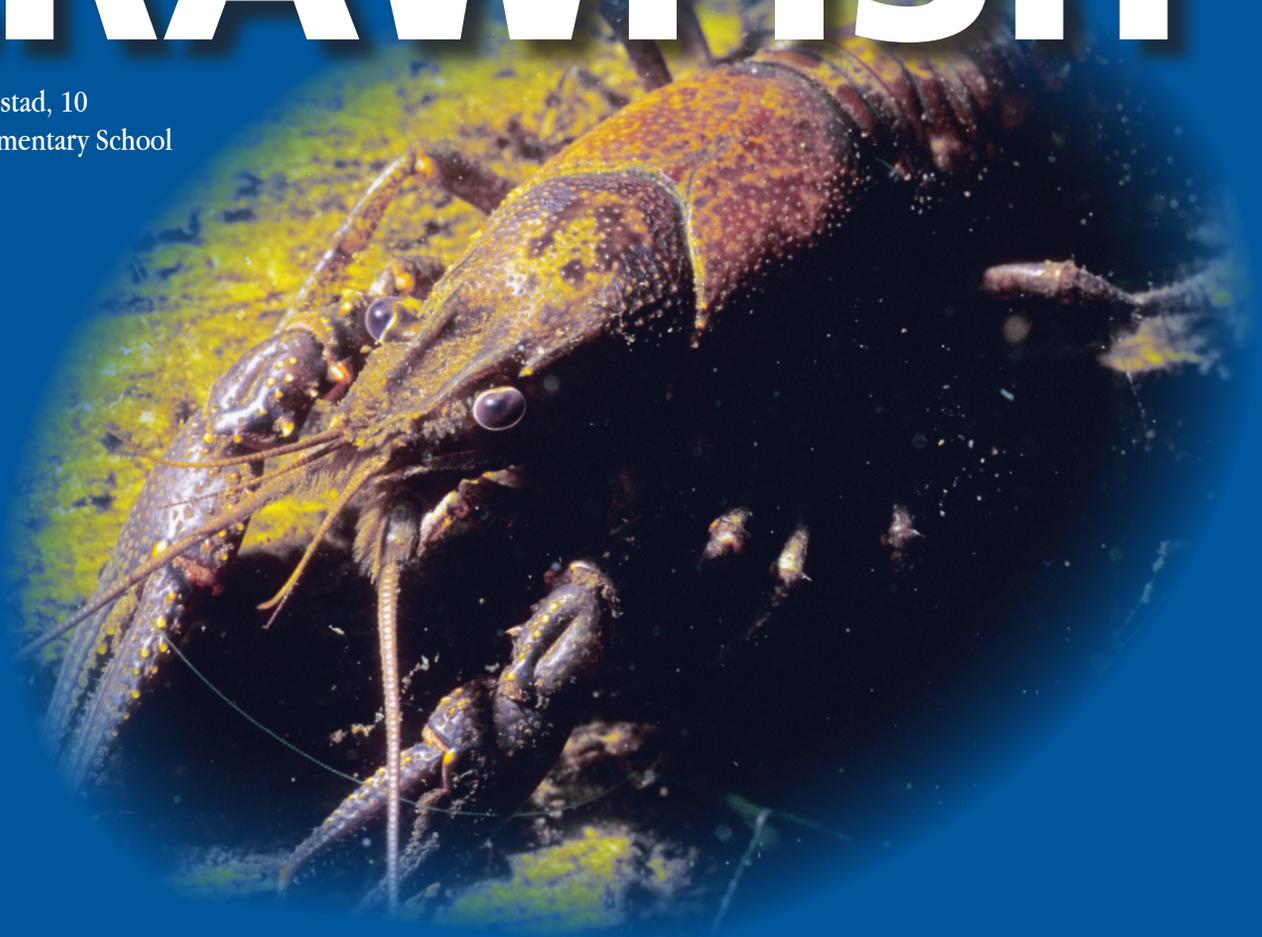
## *What's your favorite thing to do outside?*

Bird watching, pheasant and deer hunting, and river rafting.

# My Outdoor Adventure

# CRAWFISH

Alexander Gustad, 10  
Lawrence Elementary School



**O**ne weekend I was camping with some friends. We decided to go down to the creek and go crawdad fishing. The water was as cold as ice. We saw some large crawdads, also known as crayfish. My friend had a net so we could catch them. We tried different methods. Most didn't work, but one did: Lift a rock up and if the crawdad was under it, put the net behind it and, since they swim backwards, make movement in front of it so they shoot right into the net.

After an hour or so things started to kick into full gear; my friend was out on some rocks and a few crayfish showed up. Nothing out of the ordinary. But then, more and more appeared. She was shivering and terrified on the rocks. The crawdads acted as if she was a magnet to them. We caught about 15 nice sized crayfish. The crawdad has a shell that is hard yet fragile. Sometimes I would get pinched, which was kind of painful.

Then we saw the big one. It was definitely the alpha

male, in charge of the area. He was under the rock my friend was standing on. I scared him out from there, but then couldn't find him. After catching about 6 more crayfish, I saw him again. This time he was right behind the rock she was standing on.

I put the net behind him and he moved a little bit. He stayed in an area where I couldn't catch him though. I tried to scare him, and he chased my finger. I was going to have to try a different way. I kicked the water in front of him, and he swam right into the net!

I asked my friend if she wanted to trade spots, and she accepted. But when I got on the rocks, they were all gone! So we headed back to camp. The final count was about 30 live crawdads in the bucket. We decided to eat them. We put them in a crock-pot, and cooked them with some Cajun seasoning. Then we ate them all up. They tasted like shrimp and lobster in one. They were really good. While we ate them we talked about our very fun, amazing day.

# Ask Jersey



Jersey, resident *Bark Ranger* at The Outdoor Campus in Sertoma Park, Sioux Falls, sat down to answer some questions.

Dear Jersey: I'm 13 years old. My family just moved to South Dakota from a big city in another state. I'm making new friends, and a lot of them talk about hunting. At my old school, nobody hunted and I didn't think much about it. Now, one of my new friends has invited me to go hunting and I don't know what to do. I'm concerned, because I don't want to make animals go extinct. Won't hunting endanger wild animals?  
— Nervous New Kid



*Dear Nervous: Whether or not you hunt is your choice, so if you don't personally want to be a hunter, it's best to leave it to those who do. However, thanks to GFP biologists watching the population, or number of a certain type of animal living in one area, state regulations can prevent hunting pushing any animal group towards extinction. If any type of animal has a low population, there will not be any hunting tags for that group until the population returns to healthy numbers. Hunting also helps make sure one type of animal population doesn't become too high and endanger another type.*

Dear Jersey: I'm nine years old and have never gone fishing. My mom and dad don't fish but I think fishing could be fun. I asked them to take me but they don't want to. How do I get someone to take me fishing?  
— Eager to Cast

*Dear Eager: Fishing is a great outdoor activity, and many people enjoy it. While you shouldn't disobey your parents, you might ask them if they know of anyone else willing to take you. Consider asking grandparents, aunts, uncles or a*

*responsible older sibling. There may also be a nature center near you offering classes on fishing, like The Outdoor Campus in Sioux Falls or The Outdoor Campus-West in Rapid City. To learn about nature centers in your area, visit website*

Dear Jersey: I'm 16 and love hunting and fishing. However, during the school year I have class all day, plus homework and sports at night. I have everything I need to get out there: equipment, licenses, landowner approval – but I just can't find time to hunt or fish. I feel like I never get to be outside. How can I find time to do what I love when I'm busy with school and extracurricular activities? – Trapped Indoors

*Dear Trapped: Being involved in many things can make it hard to get outside, so you need to choose what activities are most important to you. As a student, one big focus should be getting good grades, but if there is a sport you play or a club you're in that isn't as important to you as hunting or fishing, you'll have to choose getting outside over that activity. You can also plan ahead and be smart with your free time. Finish Wednesday's homework on Monday night so you can fish Tuesday night, or plan on doing all your homework Saturday so that Sunday is open to hunt. If you're really serious about changing your schedule, you could even hunt or fish before school and sleep earlier in the evening. Just remember to plan ahead and be smart with your time to do both what you need and most want to do.*

A woman wearing a tan cap with the Wildlife Division logo and a light-colored short-sleeved shirt is crouching in a forest. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the foreground, two spotted deer are lying on the ground. The background is filled with green grass and trees.

# When I Grow Up...

I want to be a  
**Biologist**

**Julie DeJong**

*Why did you want to be a wildlife biologist?*

I have always loved animals and spending time outside. I still remember playing in streams and hiding out in tree forts when I was a little girl. That love of nature led me to wildlife biology.

*What do you love most about your job?*

My favorite part is getting to work with animals and knowing that the work that I do is helping wildlife. I have worked with many animals: tiger beetles, songbirds, turtles, amphibians, bald eagles, gray wolves, black bears, white-tailed deer, turkey, pheasants, red-shouldered hawks and waterfowl (to name a few).

I mostly do surveys, finding and counting animals to see if there are more or less of them than there used to be, and determining what may be influencing population changes. I've done quite a bit of telemetry – where we put a radio-transmitter on an animal and track it to see where it is living and what may be affecting its survival.

*What is your most exciting memory as a wildlife biologist?*

Boy, that's a hard one.

There are a lot of exciting things about my job. I used to ride in helicopters with the doors off while I searched for wolves. An otter once tried to chew through my waders while I released it from a trap.

*What's your favorite thing to do outside?*

My favorite outside activity is hiking and exploring with my kids. Through them I am able to experience the wonders of nature as if for the first time. I enjoy learning with them when they ask questions that I don't have the answer to.

It was very exciting to have live black bears or gray wolves in traps, and to be able to observe them in the wild. I once released a momma bear from a barrel trap while her cub was crying in the tree above me. That was nerve wracking, waiting to see if the mom would turn right around after she emerged from the trap and come after me (she didn't - whew!).

# Reagan Spomer

*Fitness Is a Way of Life*



**M**y name is Reagan Spomer and I am ten years old. I live in Pierre, South Dakota and am a fourth grader. Recently I was appointed to sit on the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Youth Advisory Board. This board was created by the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation. There are 21 board members from all across the United States and two of us in South Dakota.

This board is designed to help kids across the nation get healthy in fun ways. There are many parts of getting healthy such as eating healthy, exercise and mental health. It is important to learn these items when you are young because it is harder to change them when you get older. One of the reasons that I wanted to get on the board is that I wanted to show kids in my community a healthy way to live that still is fun and also show them that they can still eat unhealthy food in moderation as long as you stay active.



There are a lot of ways to get healthy, but some of the ways that I enjoy staying fit is by learning new things.

This summer I tried kayaking for the first time at The Outdoor Campus during Outdoor University. It was a great way to exercise, and it was fun to be out on the water. Kayaking can be enjoyed by the whole family.

I also enjoy going camping with my family at state parks across South Dakota.

One of my favorite places to go is Farm Island. I love to swim, bike, hike, play on the playground and use paddle boats. Usually by the end of the day I am very tired, but I know that I have stayed busy and active the entire time.



Nearly one in three children and teens in the United States are overweight. If current trends continue today's kids could be the first in America that could live shorter lives than their parents. This time of year kids spend a lot of time in school, so it is important to eat healthy and spend as much time being active as possible. Take the time to try new activities such as

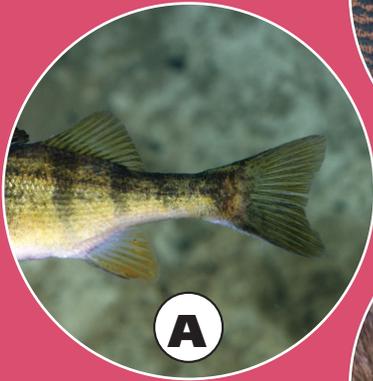
snowshoeing, sledding, walking, running, fishing or even try a new sport like I am doing with swim team here in Pierre.

Staying fit can be a lot of fun so get outside and be creative. Go to [healthiergeneration.org](http://healthiergeneration.org) or follow me on Facebook for more great ideas, healthy recipes and fun ways to stay fit.

# Match-Game

See if you can correctly match the animal tail with their name below!

Photos by Nancy Tesdall & SD Tourism



BUFFALO

BLUEGILL

DUCK

EAGLE

BIG HORN SHEEP

TURKEY

MOUNTAIN LION

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

PERCH

PRAIRIE DOG

A - PERCH  
B - TURKEY  
C - BLUEGILL  
D - EAGLE  
E - BIG HORN SHEEP  
F - MOUNTAIN LION  
G - PRAIRIE CHICKEN  
H - BUFFALO  
I - PRAIRIE DOG  
J - DUCK

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Photo: Cathy Buchheim