



Other Viewpoints

State Fair’s history just part of the fun in centennial year

Welcome to the 100th Kansas State Fair. Not the 100th anniversary of the State Fair but rather the 100th fair. Next year, we’ll celebrate the anniversary.

Confused? We’ll explain and that will help you understand why fair officials are rolling out the red carpet for two consecutive years to celebrate one of Hutchinson’s stellar events.

But first, welcome to Hutchinson and the Kansas State Fair. We’re sure you won’t be disappointed by any of the fair offerings. And we’ve ordered up some cooler temperatures, at least for the first few days of the 10-day fair, to tempt you to stroll just a little longer while you’re on the fairgrounds.

We know there are plenty of foods – some healthy and many, like chocolate-covered bacon, that might make your heart stop beating for a second – to woo your taste buds.

And if you’re looking for a particular vendor, or food, or an interactive map to help you navigate the fairgrounds, then *The News* and K-State have the perfect toy – make that, tool. Visit hutchnews.com/fairmap.

Now about that anniversary thing. Think about the day you were born. That began your first year of life. Same with the fair – the 1912 fair began the first of 100 years of fairs.

A year later, 1913, was the first anniversary – or birthday, if you will – of the fair. So 2012 is just a dress rehearsal for the 100th anniversary of the Kansas State Fair in 2013.

Still confused? No worries. No one has needed a reason – or an anniversary – in the past to enjoy the diversity of food and exhibits at the Kansas State Fair.

Just go.

And, again, welcome to Hutchinson and the 100th Kansas State Fair.

– *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

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Blackbirds bring ominous note to feeder

They line up on the roof across the street, a dozen or more at a time, ready for the attack.

Soon, they’ll swoop in for the, er, kill, if you can call it that. They’ll pounce four, five, even six at a time, hanging on every perch, reaching around the tube, even hanging upside down like bats.

They probably spill as much as they eat, but never mind. Their siblings will clean that up, them and the squirrels.

Not a scene out of some obscure Alfred Hitchcock movie. Just our neighborhood blackbirds.

Two or three pairs of redwings nested in our area this summer. At first, it was just the parents at the feeder, trying to balance on perches meant for sparrows.

A full-grown blackbird is at least twice the size of a sparrow, maybe larger. Too big for a one-inch perch, or so you’d think. But they find ways. Blackbirds are very resourceful, we’ve found.

They’ll perch on one side of a feeding tube, reach around and peck food from the other side. Or they’ll perch on one level and peck below. A couple today tried to perch upside down and feed. I’m not saying that worked, but I watched them try.

Early on, nearly all our visitors were males, with their fancy black, gold and red plumage.



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

They must feed mama and the babies, the way they work at it. Seldom if ever did the dun-colored females show up at the feeders.

All that changed in July, though. All of a sudden, perches were full up with brown birds about the size of an adult male redwing. Eventually, I realized these were juvenile blackbirds, fledglings now foraging on their own, competing for perch space with their fathers.

Now, they’re getting their adult plumage, and you can see where their red wing patches will be. These are sort of mottled right now, mixed brown and red, but they are becoming more distinct. Or not, in which case, you’re dealing with a budding girl redwing.

Whole families of them will line up along the peak of the neighbors’ roof, waiting a turn at the feeders. Then they swoop in. Their antics are entertaining, but they’re not the biggest birds we get at the sparrow feeders.

That would be the Steller’s jays, huge blue-

and-black monsters that seem to love milo and millet as much as anyone. Some try to hover, like a humming bird. Others try to grab a perch. The tubes are 18 inches apart, but I’ve seen jays perch on one and try to eat from the other. Hunger seems to be quite a motivator.

Then there are the mourning doves, almost as big as a jay, if a little more sedate. They’ll come in, perch on the top of the mounting pole and survey the feeders, trying to figure out how to tap the goodies.

If all else fails, they can clean up the leftovers on the ground. That’s what the ground squirrel is doing this week.

Cynthia had some tubes out there with little trays attached to catch the spills until he showed up. He could shimmy up the half-inch bar holding the feeders and then jump out to a tray, fill his cheeks, then go home with a load. She fixed that.

Now, he’s cleaning up the ground with the less dexterous redwings and the jays, when they show. The free lunch is over, at least for squirrels.

Gotta go now. Cynthia is going to fill her feeders, and I may have to run interference for her.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor’West Newspapers. When he has the time, he’d rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Working for band trip changes score

Other Opinions

- Daris Howard Life’s Outtakes

about 200 quarts of raspberries and finally started selling some of them.

I love raspberries, especially as jam on hot bread, or just in a bowl with milk and sugar. I would eat enough raspberries while picking that I wouldn’t even want any lunch. As we were getting toward the end of summer the children could hardly wait to go back to school, especially when I reminded them that I had planted nine different varieties to help extend the season well into fall. When school started, I found myself alone, picking berries each evening after work. No matter how I coaxed, I couldn’t get any help.

When it came time for the fees and extras at school that fall, we set up the rules for the use of the money on what we now called the “earn it if you want it” program. If it was required for the class we paid it. If it was extra we paid half and they used their money to pay half.

It was then that we found even more important aspects of this “earn it” program – our children learned the value of money. When the time for the band trip approached, and my daughter had not yet requested we pay our half, I questioned her about it.

“I’m not going,” she replied.

I was shocked. “Why not?”

“Do you know how many berries I had to pick to earn the money that it would take to pay my half? You’re crazy if you think I’m going to pick that much just to go to an amusement park.”

And one last benefit occurred that I hadn’t

considered. With the family gathered around one night, one son told me he planned to get an advanced degree in college so he could earn lots of money without having to pick berries all of his life. “College is expensive,” I told him. “If I were you I would get busy picking berries to earn the money in case you don’t get a scholarship.”

It really amazes me how many of my children now get straight A’s in school – working hard for scholarships. I guess I might be picking berries alone pretty soon.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

