

Webster State Park offers plenty of wildlife



The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott

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Charley, my chocolate Lab, and I hit stop No. 4 on "The Jayhawker's Kansas Getaways" last week, traveling to Webster State Park just west of Stockton.

Webster, in the Solomon River Valley, offers a top-notch prairie setting of rolling hills against powder blue skies.

At this time of year, with the drought and all, the South Fork of the Solomon River was pretty low.

Tourists can see a variety of wildlife on and around the lake and in the wildlife areas surrounding it. On this trip, viewing was excellent. Toward evening the wildlife area east of the park came alive with mule deer, white-tailed deer, and a hybrid deer browsing the tree lines. The turkeys were thick. Charley even found a covey of bobwhite quail.

Rabbits, doves and raccoons were numerous. I was surprised to see pheasants running along the shoreline of the reservoir. Pelicans and turkey vultures glided motionless in the wind currents above the lake. This area, with pastures of wildflowers, creates a warm and welcome setting with miles of trail to follow.

The reservoir covers 3,700 acres of open water which produce walleye, wiper, largemouth bass, crappie, and channel and flathead catfish. Don't be surprised when you are fishing for walleye if you come up with a smallmouth bass. Smallmouth have been stocked in the lake for years and usually share the same deepwater structures walleye hang around. White bass and bluegill also provide anglers with opportunities to stretch their line and rip some lips.

Channel catfish was the menu of the evening, though.

I found out early in the morning that the secret to catching those beauties was drifting frozen shrimp along the bottom on a slip-sinker rig.

One six-pound flathead and three two- or three-pound channel cat later, I was finished for the day with plenty of supper for myself and Charley. I figured it took about 45

minutes per fish between 9 a.m. and noon.

One thing I think is a nice feature of this lake is the fish-cleaning station, which is lighted, and if you have an electric fillet knife, just plug it in and start carving.

Webster also has floating fishing docks in the park and an easy-access fishing pier at the nearby stilling basin. It was nice to be able to catch catfish directly off the boat dock area.

The reservoir has five boat lanes and three courtesy docks, but the launch at Rock Point is impossible to use due to the drought and concrete damage by erosion.

Pleasure boaters, jet skiers, tubers, wind surfers and water skiers have plenty of room on this uncluttered lake.

The lake has 66 campsites with water and electric hookups, six with electricity only and lots of primitive sites. Water is available from April 15 to Oct. 15 and reservations are accepted on several sites.

Rock Point Campground lies on the north end of the reservoir. Heading south, the first camping area is Mushroom. Farther down the road heading south is Lake View. Following the road to the far south end, campers run into the Old Marina Campground, Eagle Landing, and Marina Point at the southernmost end of the reservoir.

The North Shore Marina (785-425-7072) is run by Vonda and Dave Pfeifer of Stockton. The on-shore marina provides cold drinks, sandwiches, bait and tackle, and staples if a camper runs short of supplies.

The Pfeifers also run "Bait Betty's Bed and Breakfast," a lodge which is open year-round. Prices run \$50 a night per person including three square meals a day or \$30 with no meals.

Mark Shaw, Kansas aquatic biologist for Webster, indicated the crappie fishing has been fair with fish ranging from nine to 16 inches. White bass fishing has been good during the hot days with fish rang-

ing from 11 to 18 inches. Wipers have been fair from three to six pounds, and walleyes fair from 15 to 27 inches.

Zach Kesler, park ranger and acting manager, invites all to come down and enjoy the summer fun.

Mike Adams, a licensed outfitter, works with the Pfeifers during hunting season. Adams' business, Bucks, Bulls, and Beards Outfitters, may be reached on-line at www.bucksbullsbeards.com, or at (970) 330-8736 or (720) 436-0831.

Every time I have been to Webster the wind has come up, so be prepared. I guess if you are a wind surfer, you would be in paradise.

Over the years, I have had my best luck fishing the rip-rap of the dam at night hunting ol' marble eyes.

Webster has a swimming beach, a sand volleyball pit, horseshoe pits, playgrounds and a great nature hike. The old rest area at the park has been converted into a wildlife-viewing center showcasing the habitat of pheasants.

If you like history like I do, Nicodemus National Historical Site is 10 miles west of the park. The area preserves the only remaining western town established by African-Americans during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War.

The Sternberg Museum of Natural History, a department of Fort Hays State University, is 10 miles east and 40 miles south of the park. Two generations of Sternbergs collected some of the most spectacular fossils in the world from this area. They played a dominant role in initiating the study of North American fossil vertebrates. The museum houses exhibits and also provides educational programs for kids.

The Dane G. Hansen Museum is also in the area, six miles west and 18 miles north of the park. It is known for its collections of American and foreign coins, European and western art and guns. It is one of the only museums in Kansas that has traveling exhibits from the Smithsonian Institute.

Less than two hours away from Oberlin, Webster provides a great place for a quick getaway.

Until next time, this is "The Jayhawker," hoping to see you in the Great Kansas Outdoors.

"The Jayhawker" is a professional outdoor writer with more than 40 years of experience. He is a master hunter education instructor in Colorado and Kansas.



U.S. SENIOR OPEN VOLUNTEER OBERLIN'S JOE STANLEY quiets the crowd on Hutchinson's Prairie Dunes Country Club 17th hole as Dana Quigley drives the fairway. The tournament averaged approximately 25,000 fans per day. — Herald photo by John Wishon

Stanley works Senior Open

By JIM MERRIOTT

For an amateur golfer like Joe Stanley, a trip to the United States Senior Men's Open Golf tournament is a dream come true.

Stanley, an avid Oberlin golfer, says he got started young. He lettered four years in high school playing the game he loves.

Last week, Stanley packed his bags and headed to Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson to join a hand-picked group of volunteers. He was working the 17th fairway landing area and handling crowd control for as many as 25,000 fans.

Stanley said he applied to work the Open last August and did not hear about his selection until October.

"It cost \$110 to be a volunteer," he said, "but it is an experience of a lifetime. A volunteer receives a pass for the week along with two golf shirts, a wind shirt, and a cap, which is worth about \$200, entrance to the hospitality tent, and an opportunity to rub elbows with some of the heroes I grew up watching."

The week-long event gave golfing fans an opportunity to see some

of the legends of golf, including Tom Watson, Gary Player, Jay Haas, Bruce Lietzke, Andy Bean, and this year's winner and defending champion, Allen Doyle.

"There were a lot of experiences that I will never forget," said Stanley. "During a practice round earlier in the week, Dana Quigley lost a ball in the vicinity of my area."

"My job was to mark the ball with a wire with a flag in the high grass, kind of like one of those flags the utility workers put in your yard so you don't dig in that area. When Quigley came to my area, he couldn't see the ball. Quigley said 'What the hell is that,' then he laughed and went on about his business."

"Another experience occurred when one of the pros hit a ball into the gallery on the golf cart path. A little boy about 5 years old broke away from his mother and started chasing the ball as it rolled down the path. His mother started chasing him and, I had to rush to the ball before he got to it. It was kind of funny at the time."

Stanley said his ability to com-

municate well with people helped him in the job. All in all, he said, things went well and the tournament allowed the world to see Kansans at their best.

The event was broadcast worldwide by NBC and ESPN sports on television.

Several other Decatur County residents attended the tournament, but few were able to be part of the experience.

Among others who attended were: Herb and Carol Shirley, Randy and Judy Ostmeyer, Brian Simonsson, Breck and Nathan, Dick and Suzanne Ahlberg and Mason, Jonathon Richards, Dr. Richard May and Nolan, Roland and Pam May, Zach May and Hannah May, Kevin and Carol Brown, Kade and Kelly, Kurt and Becky Vollertsen, Duane Dorshorst and Kelsey, Dr. Don Harrier, John Wright, and Kenny Black and Jobey.

"It was fabulous, the fairway looked fairly tough and they manicured the course quite well. From what I understand there were quite a few Oberlin residents attending," said Kurt Vollertsen.

Adult slow-pitch held last week

With the harvest and the Fourth of July holiday last week, the majority of summer baseball and softball games were postponed until this week.

There were coed adult slow-pitch games Sunday, July 2, and July 9.

The first week, the Fortins continued their winning streak, defeating the Purple Pack 12-5. In game two of the Fortins' doubleheader, the team exploded for 19 runs against

Team Culligan, defeating them 19-1. In Culligan's second game of the evening, they turned the table on Pauls, defeating them 13-3.

In game 3 of the evening, the Purple Pack came back from their earlier defeat, edging Edgerton Auto Repair 9-8.

The final game of the evening saw Pauls defeat Edgerton 14-4.

This week, High Plains Vet defeated Lund Covenant 17-7. In

game 2, Lund Covenant crushed the Rambos 20-8.

Game 3 of the evening matched High Plains Vet against the Freshmen in a thriller as High Plains won 13-12.

LYF pounced on the Rambos in game 4, 20-4.

In the finale of the evening, LYF defeated the Freshman 11-8.

Time for archers to hone skills

If you are an archer, then it's time to sharpen up your skills before deer season begins. A good place to do that would be the 2006 Redhead 3-D Pop-up Tournament on Friday

and Saturday, Aug. 18-20, at the new Bass Pro Shop in Denver.

For information call Jerry Boyles at (501) 337-2424 or Richard Spratley at the Hunting Department

at (720) 385-3600.

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JD 535 Round Baler	\$3,500
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