

Trout



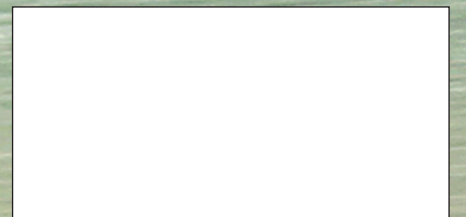
Talk

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JUNE 2020

Heading back to the spring

Page 3



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Bennett gets back to normal

STEVE SMITH • TROUT TALK

After two months spent indoors, people appeared ready to head back outside to Bennett Spring State Park.

The park reports seeing attendance levels getting closer to previous levels with rainy weather the only thing keeping some people away.

Jim Rogers of the Bennett Spring Park store said attendance is about 20 percent less than it was this time last year, but that's not because of COVID-19.

"In the spring, it's been weather driven," he said. "We were flooded last week and so that really cut attendance down, if it's cold and rainy that cuts it down."

He said without the rainy weather he thinks it would be the usual holiday numbers.

"If it is was a nice weekend, I think we'd have a normal crowd," he said. "I don't think the 'rona' as my kids call it would affect the park too much. We had a lot of cancellations earlier, but now people are making new reservations again. I think this summer's going to be alright if the weather cooperates."

See 'NORMAL' / page 11



Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith
A pair of anglers fish near the waterfall at Bennett Spring State Park.

**Reel In
New Customers**
by placing your ad in Trout Talk!

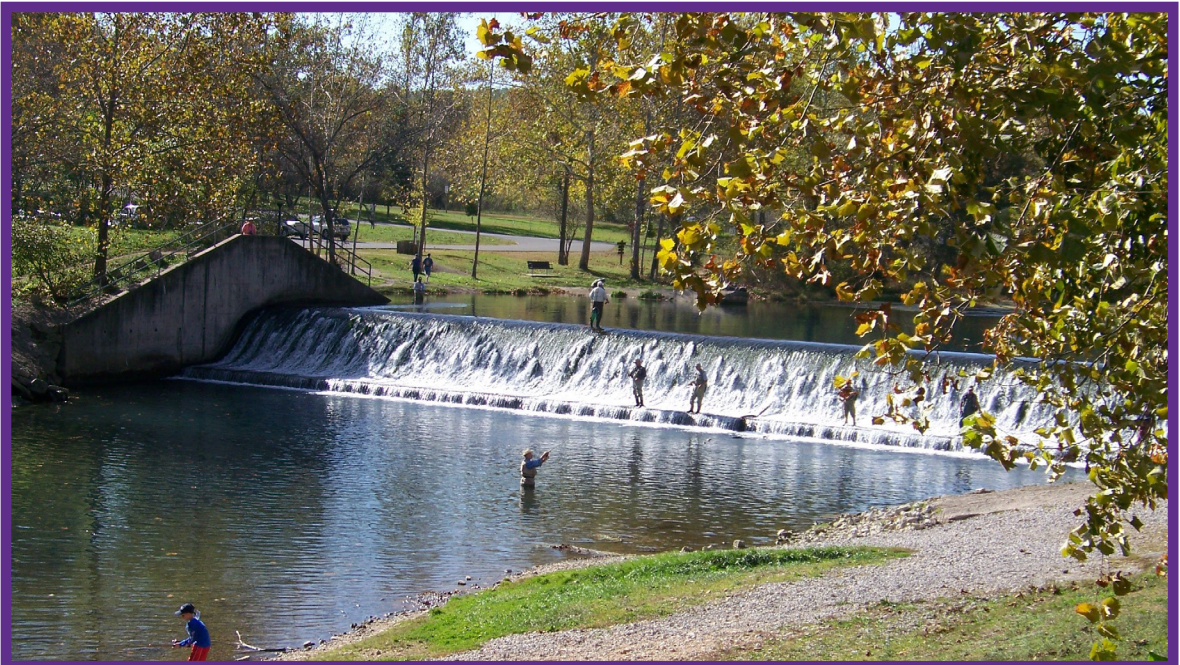
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Get in the zone

Take a look at Bennett Spring State Park's rules and regulations

FISHING REGULATIONS

The spring branch is stocked daily during the regular fishing season, which is March 1 through Oct. 31. Daily permits are required to fish on the spring branch and zones are set aside for different kinds of lures.

For more information, call (417) 532-4307.

ZONE 1: From the hatchery dam upstream to the end of the area. Only flies are permitted.

ZONE 2: From the hatchery dam to the whistle bridge. Only flies and artificial lures are permitted.

ZONE 3: From the whistle bridge to the Niangua River. Only soft plastic bait (unscented), natural and scented bait are permitted. All flies

and artificial lures are prohibited, even if natural bait or scent has been added.

Zone areas are marked in the park and maps are also available in the Park Store.

Trout Fishing Hours

June and July: 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

August: 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

September: 7:30 a.m. to 7:15 p.m.

October: 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

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There is so much to see and do at the park, don't miss out!

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For Information or Reservations: 417-532-4307 • www.BennettSpringStatePark.com





An angler can be seen fishing in Bennett Spring from the vantage point of the Bluff Trail.

Trout Talk photo/Fines Massey

A Trail with a View

The Bluff Trail offers a unique vantage point of the spring

FINES MASSEY • TROUT TALK

A stay-at-home order can be stressful for anyone, but it seems like it's even more fun (sarcasm) when you have a house full of kids. What's a good cure for quarantine cabin fever? A nice walk in the great outdoors at Bennett Spring State Park.

Recently, my wife and I packed up our three boys (ages 10 to 14) and headed to the park in hopes of getting out some of their pent up energy - getting to see some beautiful scenery in the Ozarks was just an added bonus. We've walked several of the trails at the park, but we've yet to hit them all. There seven options at the park ranging

in difficulty from a leisurely stroll in the woods to a strenuous hike up steep terrain. They even vary widely in lengths from a quarter mile to more than seven miles.

Although the allure of seeing Bennett's famous Natural Tunnel was strong, we didn't think our boys (or ourselves, if I'm being honest) would be up for a seven-mile trek.

We ended up settling on the Bluff Trail - a quarter mile trail that is a small section of the Whistle Trail. The trail winds along the side of Bennett Spring, offering you an up close view of the stream.

See 'TRAIL' / page 9

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BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA





Trail

from page 7

At times you feel like you're practically in the stream. After a short jaunt, you head up a steep cliff side for an absolutely unique and beautiful view of the park. While the walk up and back down from the bluffs can be a little tricky with loose gravel in places, the small workout is definitely worth the experience. For those amateur photographers out there (I count myself in that group), this is a great place to

snap some photos of not only nature but some fun family pics.

The short distance and the view make Bluff Trail a perfect little hike along the spring. I would highly recommend checking it out the next time you are at Bennett Spring State Park.

If you're still wondering, while the hike didn't get out all of their energy, it did slow our kids down a little - at least for a day.



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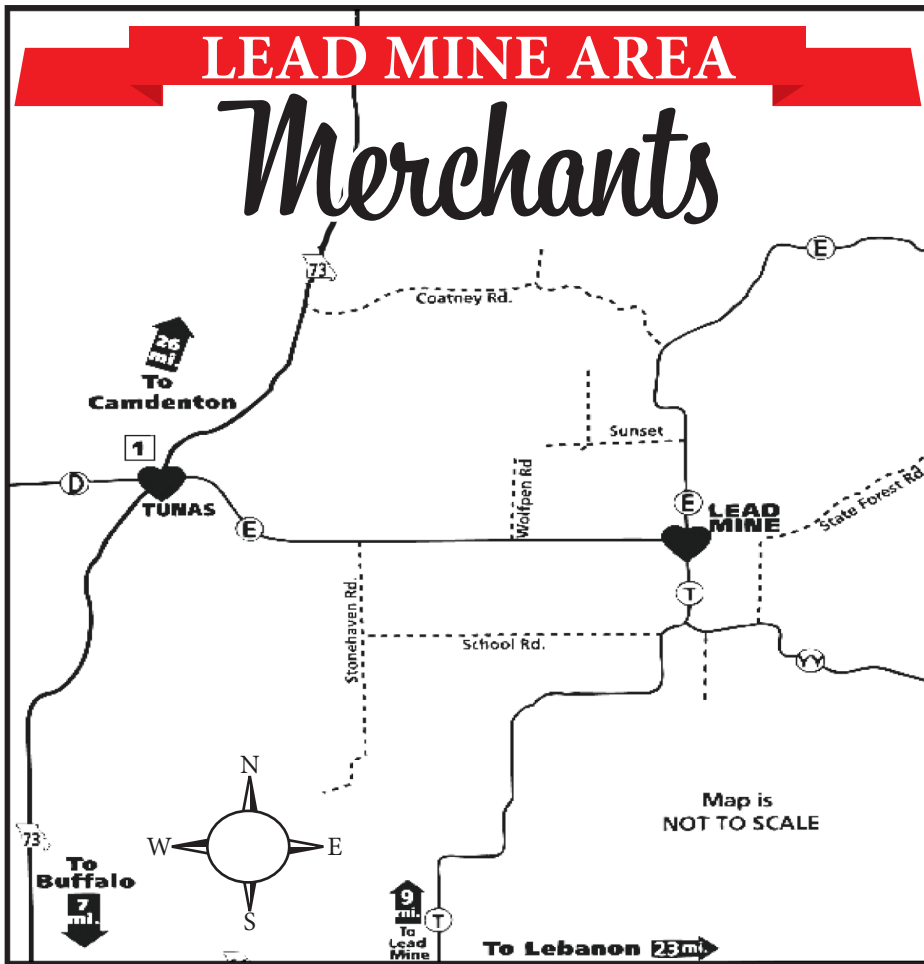
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Normal

from page 3

"The restaurant is now operating table service at 25 percent capacity. It's open from 8 to 8, the store is limited to 20 people in the store at a time. It's open an hour before fishing to an hour after fishing."

Rogers said the park store encourages social distancing.

"That's kind of hard to enforce because our business is so family-related. You'll be standing outside and there'll be four people there by one another but they're all in one family," he said.

Rogers said visitors have done a good job of policing themselves.

He said people seem to be less concerned about COVID-29 than they were initially.

"Two or three weeks ago, everywhere I went, Lebanon, Springfield businesses, 80 percent seemed to be wearing masks," he said. "Now, coming into the store at Bennett, I'd say

it's about 2 percent that are wearing masks, so right or wrong, customers have decided they don't need to wear them."

Ben Havens, hatchery manager at Bennett Spring, said stocking resumed on May 16.

He also sees activity returning to pre-COVID-19 levels.

"Fishing and the hatchery have returned to normal operations. We've gone back to our normal routine if you will," he said. "It's business as usual."

The park pool is also closed due to public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic until further notice.

Lodging, retail and food operations opened May 15 at limited capacity, following all social distancing guidelines. Watercraft rental and pool operations will remain temporarily closed. See <http://www.bennettspringstatepark.com/bennettspring/index.jsp> for more information.





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