

# Trout

# Talk

JULY/  
AUGUST  
2021

**A Walk in the Park**  
Page 3

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Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

**A pair of hikers takes** a walk down the Oak Hickory Trail at Bennett Spring State Park in July. The trail is located behind the Bennett Spring Nature Center.

# A Walk in the Park

Bennett Spring State Park has more than 12 miles of trails for hikers to enjoy

## LAURA VALENTI • FOR TROUT TALK

After fishing, hiking is no doubt the most popular activity at Bennett Spring State Park.

A number of different hiking trails are free and open to the public, ranging in length from less than half a mile to the 7.5 mile long Natural Tunnel trail that begins south of the spring. With such a variety in length, hiking trails are available to beginners and the very young to more experienced hikers who are ready for more of a challenge. Those trails include:

■ The Old Hickory Trail, a .3 mile loop and the Bride Trail, a .7 mile hike, both of which are located behind the Bennett Spring Nature Center.

■ The Whistle Trail, a mile long trail that runs along the spring and up the bluff and begins at the Wooden Bridge near the Niangua River is also a popular trail.

CONTINUED on next page

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**Left, Sean Willoughby of Kansas City, Mo., prepares** to take a hike to see Bennett Spring State Park's Natural Tunnel, pictured above. The rock formation is located at the end of a 7.5 mile long trail. The picture of the Natural Tunnel is courtesy Bennett Spring State Park.

■ The Trail Head offers two trails, the Savannah Trail is 2.5 miles and runs behind the cabins in the spring area and takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. And finally, the Natural Tunnel Trail is the park's longest and takes an estimated four hours and twenty minutes to complete. This last one features several small caves, bluffs and a water crossing before reaching the Natural Tunnel, the trail's main feature.

According to Bennett Spring State Park's Naturalist Resource Interpreter Patricia Chambers, the park's trails are one of its most popular features. There are more than 12 miles of trails around the park. Chambers said that during the pandemic, people from all over the country have come to the park to hike them.

"...The hiking trails have remained popular this entire season as so many have sought outside activities during this time," Chambers said. "We have even had a number of people stop in from the East and West Coasts, as they have explored the Lebanon area as a possible new home. That's been impressive in that they want to check out Bennett Spring as one of our area's best features as they consider moving to Missouri."

CONCLUDED on next page



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Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

**Old Hickory Trail** features a wooden bridge. The trail is located behind the Bennett Spring Nature Center.

Park visitors of all ages and backgrounds enjoy the trails, like Sean Willoughby of Kansas City, Mo., one of many who come from the state's urban areas and Emily Perry, Grace Baker, Hannah Esther and Maggie Mebruer, who live just up Missouri 64 in nearby Lebanon.

The trails also offer various levels of difficulty, making hiking available to the inexperienced as well as older, more skilled hikers. No matter the age and stage of the hiker, basic safety practices still apply like using sensible shoes, application of insect repellent and sun screen, and staying well hydrated, especially on the warmest days of summer.

In the 2021 season, the Nature Center has offered a series of special Bird Hikes, including one each month this summer on hummingbirds, vultures and bald eagles. On Aug. 21, the last of those Bird Hikes will feature Songbirds and start at the Nature Center at 10 a.m. There is no registration required and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be related activities offered at the Nature Center, including information on the birds' preferred habitat.



Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

**A group of friends on a hike** at Bennett Spring State Park pause for photograph. Pictured are Emily Perry, Grace Baker, Hannah Esther and Maggie Mebruer from Lebanon, Mo.

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Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe's Flapjack Tour made a stop at Bennett Spring State Park on July 13. The lieutenant governor and his staff are providing a complimentary pancake breakfast to visitors at Missouri's state parks.

Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

# Lt. Gov. Kehoe flips pancakes at the park

STEVE SMITH • SSMITH@LACLEDERECORD.COM

Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe served up pancakes to visitors at Bennett Spring State Park on July 13.

Kehoe visited the park's campgrounds as part of his Flapjack Tour of Missouri parks.

"It's just a way to promote not only our state parks, but also conservation here with the beautiful trout facility they have and just tourism overall," Kehoe said.

He said he wants to get out the

message that "Missouri is open for business."

"We are a great tourism location, whether it's a public facility like this one or the numerous private locations across the state," Kehoe said. "We just want people to get out, travel and enjoy the outdoors."

Kehoe said Missourians and others don't realize the assets the state has in the way of recreation facilities.

See 'PANCAKES' / page 11

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businesses or attending one of our many events.

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We hope you will make plans to visit Downtown soon or perhaps return to our area to enjoy one of our upcoming events.



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-Mel & Cynthia Bidwell



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**JULY 31**

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Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

**Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe speaks** to campers at Bennett Spring State Park on July 13. The state official was at the park as part of his Flapjack Tour, where he is visiting state parks and serving pancakes to people.

# Pancakes \_\_\_\_\_ from page 6

"We're one of the few states that has free state parks," he said. "Folks can come and enjoy the park for the day, in other states they charge for that, it's a great asset and we're happy to be in this area."

Kehoe said the people he met in the park seemed to be in a good mood and were catching lots of fish.

"We've had a great turnout this morning, a lot of parks people and helpers are here, we're appreciative they could give us a hand," he said.

Kehoe said he had developed good pancake-making skills while conduct-

ing the events at parks.

"We've done about 125 of these across the state," he said. "It's a great way to meet people in a casual, relaxed atmosphere, folks like to have a conversation over a cup of coffee and pancakes sometimes."

The conversation on Tuesday morning was more about fishing than politics, Kehoe said.

"If people want to talk about that we do, but it's really just meant for people to meet each other and enjoy the morning," he said.

"You can't be unhappy  
in the middle of a  
big *beautiful* river."

- Jim Harrison

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling, sitting in a yellow kayak on a river. She is wearing a blue life vest and holding a black paddle. In the background, another person is visible in a yellow kayak on the water. The river is surrounded by green trees and hills.

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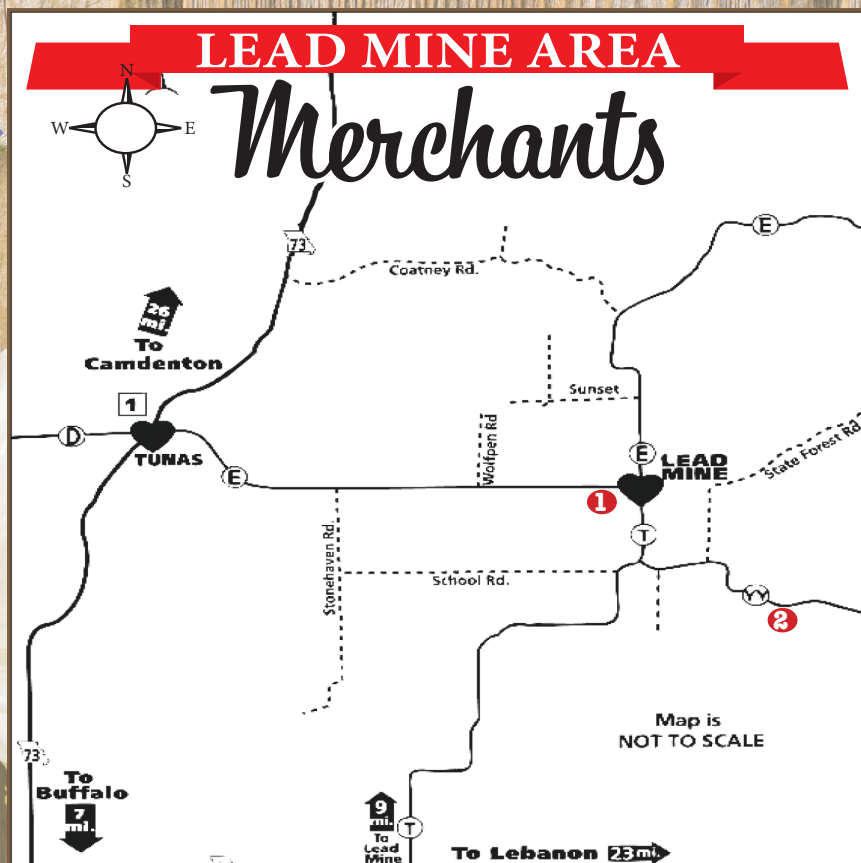


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## Get in the zone

Take a look at the 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. Permits are available at the park store. 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), natu-

ral 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

**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.

### PARK HOURS

Park Grounds: Sunrise to one hour past sunset, daily



# Fish Stories

Proud anglers show off their catch

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENNETT SPRING PARK STORE



**Young fisherman Crews, 4, shows off** his catch of the day. Crews caught these trout on Independence Day.



**Mike Behrman** of Marceline, Mo., caught this 3.8 pound trout in Zone 3 on June 15.



**John Studdard** of Beaufont, Mo., caught this 4.2 pounds trout with a blue fly in Zone 1 on June 15.

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# Trout Talk

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