

Trout



Talk

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**Bennett Spring
had a busy winter
season**

Page 3

“The Last Days of Trout Season” by Chris Roden

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Bennett stays busy in winter

The state park is prepared for trout season to kick off on March 1

**LAURA VALENTI
FOR TROUT TALK**

A great many anglers might assume that the four months Bennett Spring State Park is closed to the regular fishing season is a slow time of winter hibernation, but nothing could be further from the truth. As has taken place for the past 40 years, from the second weekend in November through the second weekend of February, Bennett Spring entertains catch-and-release fishermen.

"We had lots of folks fishing the winter program this year, more than usual, I think," Jim Rogers, Bennett Spring Park concessionaire, shared recently as he and other park store and dining lodge employees began to prepare for the March 1, 2022 opening. "I think people are still anxious to get out and about as the pandemic has been so hard on everyone."

This year, Bennett Spring State Park also saw some significant refurbishing of the multi-plex cabins that serve those who come during the regular season.

"It's hard to believe the store building and those cabins are 40 years old already," Rogers said with a laugh. "They were all opened up in 1982, two years after I got here. As everyone says, time passes quickly and of course, with the wear and tear those cabins endure, it was time for some renovations."

The multi-plex cabins were built to replace the tiny tourist cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1937. After 45 years, those original cabins were worn out and needed to be replaced. The

new multi-plex cabins have now served nearly as long. In addition to the renovation of the cabins, this refurbishing project also included landscaping, sidewalk, and concrete work.

Meanwhile, the Missouri Department of Conservation is in the process of a multi-year major upgrade and renovation of the Bennett Spring Trout Hatchery. In conjunction with HDR Engineering, MDC is engaged in a \$20 million project to replace and repair parts of the hatchery.

Originally built in 1923, the Bennett Spring Trout Hatchery has been in constant production since. The first year or so it was in private production and since then as a part of the state-operated park and hatchery system, catering to visiting fishermen and tourists.

The current project will replace portions of the hatchery that are outdated as well as bring new technologies to the nearly 100-year-old hatchery, improving fish production.

Phase I of the project is already underway, according to a press release from the Missouri Department of Conservation. During this past winter, the engineering firm sunk a groundwater test well at the head of the hatchery pools.

Other portions of Phase I include surveying, flow monitoring, geotechnical investigations, and locating utilities.

For their part, visitors to the park will notice the presence of machinery and its accompanying noise and some road and parking lots restrictions in the hatchery area.

See 'WINTER' / page 4



Anglers wade into the stream on an unseasonably warm day at Bennett Spring State Park.

Photo by Chris Roden



Photo by Chris Roden

A man fishes near the dam at Bennett Spring State Park.



Trout Talk photo/Laura Valenti

Workers drill for a groundwater test well near the Bennett Spring State Park Trout Hatchery. The construction is part of Phase I of improvements to the hatchery.

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Winter _____ from page 3

Phase II and III, the construction portion of the project, will take place in 2023 and will see the Bennett Spring Trout Hatchery closed down for the first time in a century. Trout will be brought in from other state-owned hatcheries also operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation. The construction will include a new intake structure, the reconstruction of some raceways, piping improvements, and numerous upgrades to protect the hatchery from future floods. It is estimated to take two years to complete this part of the project.

“These renovations will breathe

new life into our aging hatchery, improving safety for hatchery staff and utilizing new technologies which will enable us to raise quality fish for the public to enjoy for many years to come,” said Bennett Spring Hatchery Manager Ben Havens.

Havens added that he wanted to “give a huge shout out” to his staff for getting the stream ready for the upcoming season. He also thanked the park staff and Rogers and his staff “for getting the park grounds, campgrounds and cabins ready for all the park visitors that Bennett Spring will see this coming trout season.”

Bennett businessman, angler chosen to kick off trout season

Charlie Reading is the 2022 bell ringer

**STEVE SMITH
TROUT TALK**

When the 2022 trout season at Bennett Spring opens March 1, the man ringing the siren will be a veteran fisherman and fly shop operator known for sharing his knowledge and experience.

Charlie Reading, owner of Reading's Fly Shop, has been selected to begin this year's season by sounding the official starting whistle on March 1.

Reading said he was happy to be recognized for his many years of operating a fly shop and offering instruction to anglers.

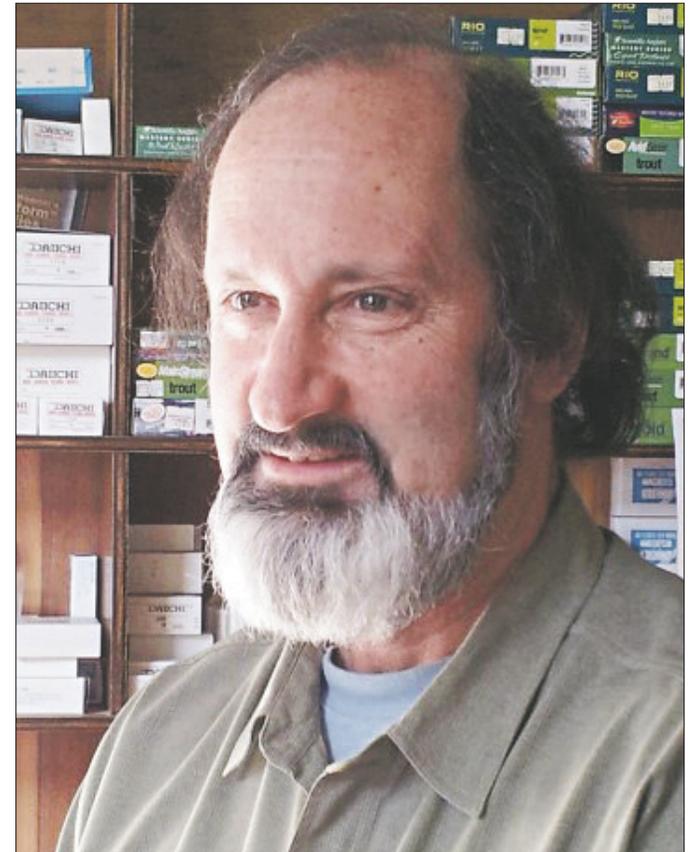
"It is an honor and it's very nice," he said. "I've been helping people and doing things here for a long time, It's nice to have people

acknowledge what you've done over the years, it's a humbling thing to see that people appreciate that I've been there for them and helped them with a lot of stuff."

Reading said he spend a lot of time giving away fishing education.

"I had a rep say you are the guy if you spend a \$100, you get \$200 of advice," he said. "It's a nice compliment, but I do feel if I'm going to spend that quality time with you, I'm hoping that when you do get read to make a commitment, you realize this guy has given me so much information, why would I want to go somewhere else."

Reading said his life is tied up in his business.



Reading

See 'READING'/ page 6

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Reading

from page 5

“A lot of people, they put their 40, 50 hours a week in, they have a family, they have other things they do,” he said. “What make me different is that this is a big part of my life, my business, it just happens to be here.”

Reading spent his childhood fishing for cool and warm water fish in the ponds, creeks and river of his grandfather’s farm just outside of Lebanon.

He began fly fishing when he was 15.

In 1978 he was hired to run Tony Pack’s fly shop. He worked there until he opened Reading’s Fly Shop in 1985.

From 1978 on, Reading has fished both fresh-water and saltwater around the globe. He’s made many trips to New Zealand, Christmas Island, Brazil and Argentina, Russia, New Guinea, Europe, Central America, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic.

Bennett Spring State Park Hatchery Manager Ben Haven said Reading “is a knowledgeable fly fisherman, great mentor to new fishermen, a strong park supporter and a huge ambassador to fly fishing in Missouri.”



Trout Talk file photo

Charlie Reading demonstrates different fly fishing casting techniques in a pool in front of his store.

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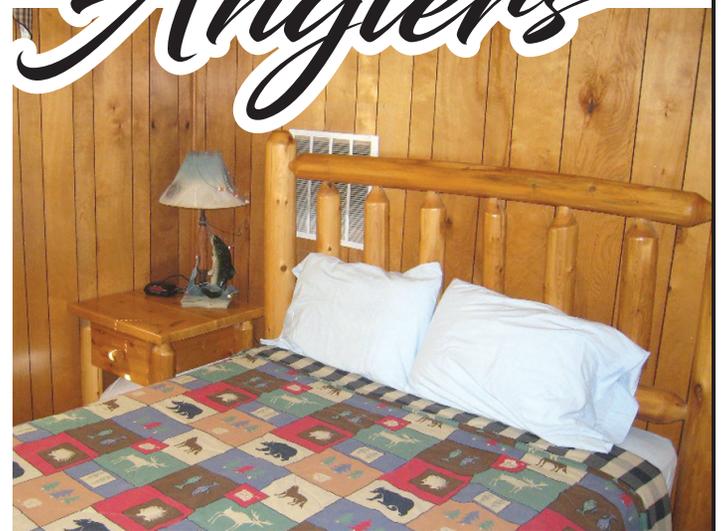
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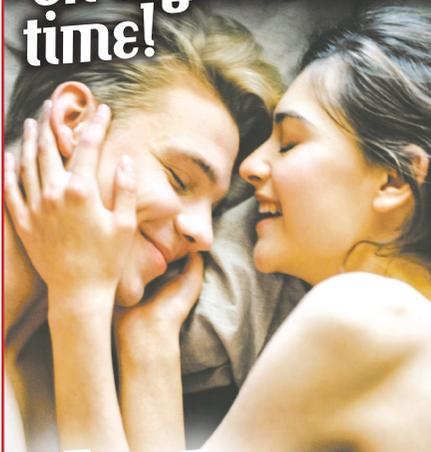
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Bennett Spring State Park Rules and Hours



Photo by Chris Roden

Anglers fish at one of the most popular fishing spots at Bennett Spring State Park.

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), natural and scented bait are permitted. All flies and artificial lures are prohibited, even if natural bait or scent has been added.

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

Trout Fishing Hours

- March:** 6:30 a.m./7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m./7 p.m.
- April:** 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- May:** 6:30 a.m. to 8:15 p.m.
- 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.

PARK HOURS

Park Grounds: Sunrise to one hour past sunset, daily

DINING LODGE HOURS

7 a.m. to one hour after the whistle during trout season

NATURE CENTER HOURS

Feb. 25 through Oct. 31
10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday
Nov. 1 through Feb. 24 - Closed

PARK OFFICE HOURS

SUMMER HOURS (On-Season)

Feb. 25 through Oct. 31
8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday
Closed on state holidays

STORE HOURS

One hour before fishing officially starts through one hour after the regular fishing day ends according to the regular schedule daily during trout fishing season at the park



Photo by Chris Roden

Anglers try their luck at catching the next big lunger at Bennett Spring State Park.

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*"And he saith unto them,
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Matthew 4:19*



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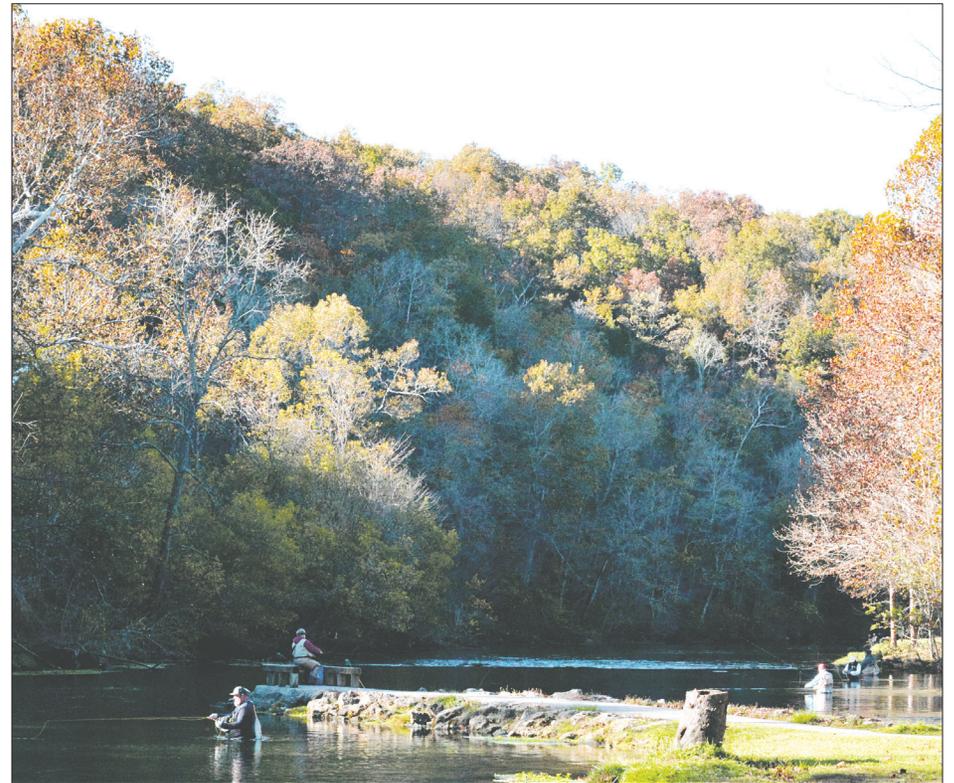
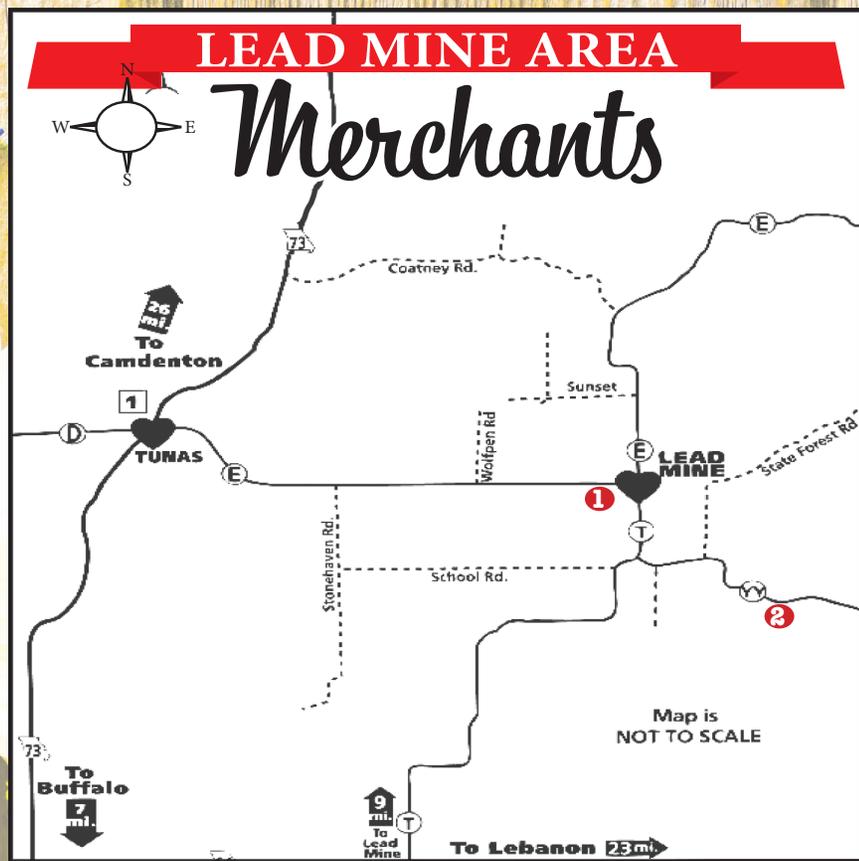


Photo by Chris Roden

Fall is a beautiful time to visit Bennett Spring State Park to see the leaves change color.

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Species: Rainbow trout

Scientific name: *Oncorhynchus mykiss*

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Virtually all of these areas and opportunities are sustained by stockings from Missouri Department of Conservation hatcheries.

See 'TROUT' / page 15

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Trout Talk

BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



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Trout

from page 13

The Department stocks more than 1.5 million trout annually in the state.

Species status: Rainbow trout are not native to Missouri, but were first imported here in the 1800s.

The rainbow trout's native range stretches along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to northern Mexico.

First discovered: The first scientific description of the fish was written by Russian naturalist Johann Julius Walbaum in the 18th century.

Family matters: Rainbow trout belong to the salmonidae family of fish. This family includes several species high in angling popularity such as brown trout, salmon, char and whitefish.

Length: The average length is 10 to 15 inches, but longer lengths have been reported.

Diet: Aquatic insects, terrestrial insects, snails and small fish make up the bulk of a rainbow trout's diet. There is some variance based upon local availability of food.

Weight: Most adult rainbows caught in Missouri range in weight from under one pound to one-and-one-half pounds, but they can grow larger.

Distinguishing characteristics: The upper parts of a rainbow's body are dark olive and thickly speckled with black spots. Of course, the tell-tale sign of a rainbow is the pinkish to pinkish-red stripe that runs the length of the body on both sides.

Life span: Rainbow trout have been reported to live up to 11 years in some parts of the country.

Habitat: Within their natural range, rainbow trout inhabit streams, naturally occurring lakes and reservoirs.

Trout do best in waters that gen-



Trout Talk file photo

Hatchery Manager Ben Havens points to some trout eggs in his hand. As they begin developing, the eggs are placed in upwelling jars that stir the eggs much as the current would in a stream. Some of them have

erally remain below 70 degrees F. In Missouri, suitable trout habitat is limited to approximately 170 miles of Ozarks spring branches and spring-fed streams and the 2,080-acre cold-water reservoir of Lake Taneycomo.

Life cycle: Most of the trout in Missouri waters come from hatchery-raised brood-stock, with the few exceptions of some areas where conditions are suitable for some trout spawning to occur. In parts of the continent where trout reproduce in the wild, spawning occurs from early winter to late spring, depending on local conditions.

Eggs are laid by the female in a shallow pit dug by the female on clean, gravelly riffles. The female resumes digging upstream and the eggs are covered by gravel carried down by the current.

No parental care is provided to the eggs, which are dependent on oxygen present in the water percolating through the gravel.

Eggs hatch in about 21 days and the fry remain in the gravel until the yolk sac is absorbed.

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