

Trout



Talk

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**Time to catch a lunker:
Trout season is finally here!**

Page 3

APRIL 2022

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Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

Anglers line the top of the dam at Bennett Spring State Park near the old hatchery on Opening Day, March 1. Hundreds of anglers visited the state park on Opening Day for a chance to catch a lunker trout.

Trout season is finally here!

Anglers line the banks and fill the stream for Opening Day on March 1

STEVE SMITH TROUT TALK

Hundreds of anglers visited Bennett Spring State Park on March 1 in search of the elusive lunker for Opening Day of trout season.

Many anglers were out early that morning despite some remaining patches of ice and temperatures in the

upper 30s. As the day went on and heated up, more and more anglers came out to enjoy the early spring-like weather.

"Tradition" is what brought two fishermen from Columbia, Missouri to Bennett Spring for Opening Day.

"I like the fishing. We've been here several years in a row," Shelby

Nichols said. "We've always liked coming here. Every year you see the same people here," the weather's nice, should be a good day."

Alan Nichols, who was fishing with Shelby, said that the pari have been coming to Bennett Spring every year since 1982.

The opening ceremony for Ben-

nett's big day included Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe, Missouri Department of Conservation Director Sara Parker Pauley and local state legislators. The Opening Day siren ringer was Charlie Reading, who owns Reading's Fly Shop on Missouri 64 near the park.

CONTINUED on PAGE 4

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Submitted photo
Charlie Reading, owner of Reading's Fly Shop, shows off his number 1 trout tag for the Opening Day of trout season. Reading was chosen as the official whistle-blower for the day.



Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

Anglers fish at Bennett Spring State Park on Opening Day, March 1.

"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 his life is tied up in his business.

"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 freshwater 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."

CONTINUED on PAGE 5

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Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

Bennett Spring State Park Hatchery staff stock trout into the raceways that connect to the spring the day before Opening Day.

Havens and his team stocks the stream with fish every day through Oct. 31, which is the end of trout season. He said that on Opening Day, the hatchery staff puts out an extra large batch of trout.

“We stock somewhere around 6,000 to 7,000 fish for Opening Day,” he said.

Numbers for some of the past Tuesday openers, which Havens said were highly variable depending on weather conditions, were 2016 – 1,328 tags, 2011 – 1,717 tags and 2005 – 1,964 tags

“On a normal March Tuesday, we’ll probably stock 700 fish, but we’ll also only have maybe 280, 300 anglers, and (on Opening Day) we expect 1,500 or better anglers,” he said.

For Opening Day, there were 1,571 total trout tags sold. Of those, 1,467 were adults and 104 were kids. Havens said the number was pretty average for a Tuesday opener. He added that it is hard to compare a weekday opener to a weekend Opening Day.

CONCLUDED on PAGE 6

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Trout Talk photo/Steve Smith

Bennett Spring State Park Hatchery Manager Ben Havens stands in front of the raceways at the state park that house growing trout until they get big enough to move onto the stream

“We haven’t been below 1,571 for an opener in the last five years. If it had been this good of weather and a Saturday or Sunday, I think we would’ve had 2,500 or more,” Havens said.

According to Havens, the park has done well with attendance during the pandemic, seeing trout tag sales in numbers that the park hasn’t reached in years.

“There was a push while we were all hunkered down to get out and explore locally, I think that was definitely a boon for the local state parks,” he said. “We had great attendance last year for the season, we sold more tags last year than we have since 2010.”

He is expecting the high turnout to continue and believes 2022 will be a good year for the park.

“Weather has a lot to do with it, flooding has a lot to do with it, people make plans and want to come down and fish when the spring branch is crystal clear,” Havens said.

A major construction project for the park started last fall, according to Havens. The first phase is about to wrap up for design and exploration to look at the hatchery system, the raceways, the infrastructure and how fish are raised.

A consulting firm has done an analysis of the hatchery and the grounds and will make recommendations for improvements.

“It’s time for us to do a major overhaul and bring it update with new technology,” he said.

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Discarded fishing line can be a deadly hazard for wildlife

FRANCIS SKALICKY
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Unfortunately for wildlife in Missouri and elsewhere, fishing line is involved with catching more than fish.

While you're enjoying the great fishing opportunities this state has to offer, one thing that's important to remember: If you have to cut your fishing line because it's knotted or snagged, take those pieces of line with you when you leave. Leaving the line behind could create a deadly hazard for the wildlife and aquatic creatures that needs your fishing area more than you do.

Humans who discard fishing line provide the landscape with a lethal

device that keeps on killing – studies have shown monofilament line can take up to 600 years to break down in the environment.

Discarded fishing line can pose problems for many types of wildlife. Because a variety of bird species frequent stream banks and shorelines, they are frequent victims and, thus, provide many examples of the problems caused by discarded fishing line. Birds that get tangled in fishing line will struggle and this frequently tightens the line to the extent that it cuts into legs, feet, necks, wings and other body parts. This can lead to serious injury or death.

Even if the line does not tighten

enough to cause serious injury, it can restrict movement by decreasing the range of motion of legs or wings. This can make it harder for the bird to forage and harder to escape predators.

When fishing line becomes tangled around a bird's beak or bill, it can lead to starvation. Birds that ingest fishing line may eventually starve, too, because the plastic in their stomach restricts how much food they can digest. Sometimes birds use fishing line to build nests and this can also have fatal results when the young hatchlings become entangled in the line as they grow and get more active.

See LINE on PAGE 10



Trout Talk photo/Fines Massey
A fishing line recycling container is posted at Bennett Spring State Park near the stream. The container was built by the Missouri Stream Team.

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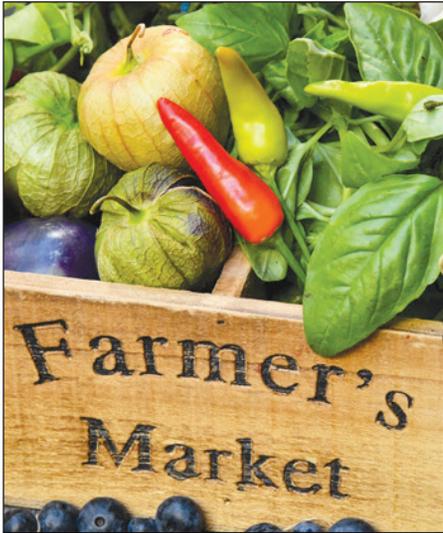
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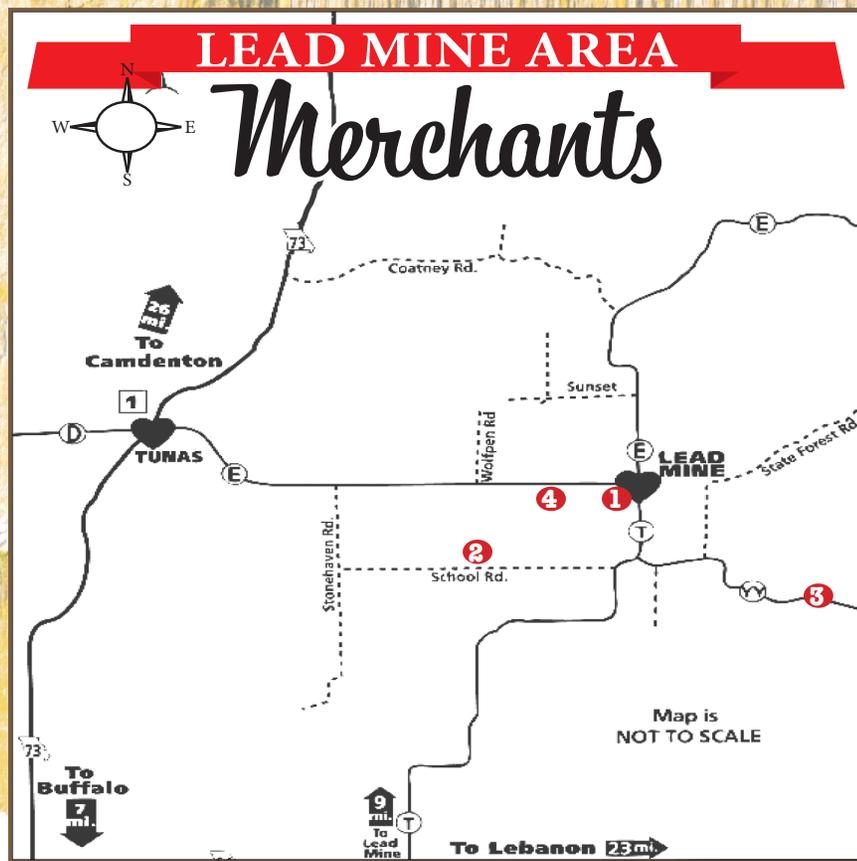
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Line _____ from page 7

Remember, birds, turtles and other animals that live in and around the water don't have hands and fingers and can't use tools to free themselves from fishing line. When they get tangled, they usually stay tangled. If you keep the remnant bits of snipped line that are the refuse of getting hung up, getting tangles on your reel or tying on different lures; it guarantees that those pieces of fishing line will not pose problems for animals in the future.



fishing line can also be found online or at a number of stores that sell hunting and fishing equipment. If you choose to throw your fishing line in the trash at home, make sure you cut it into small pieces first. Incineration of old fishing line at home is another option, just be mindful of the fumes.

Missouri's Stream Team program encourages monofilament recycling and has information about how stream teams can get fishing line recycling bins for their areas. This information can be found at <http://www.mostreamteam.org/mrrp.asp>.

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Bennett Spring State Park Rules and Hours

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.



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.

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

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.

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Fish Stories

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF BENNETT SPRING PARK STORE



Brian Lindsey of Mascoutah, Ill., caught this 7.5 pound trout on Opening Day.



Wayne Bennett of Buffalo, Mo., caught this 3-pound trout on March 7 in Zone 1 with an orange fly.



Logan French of Lebanon, Mo., caught this 3-pound trout on Opening Day in Zone 1 with a black and yellow fly.



Michael Gould of Lebanon, Mo., caught this 5.5-pound trout on March 1 in Zone 1 with a tan fly.



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Trout Talk

BENNETT SPRING STATE PARK AND SURROUNDING AREA



A walk in the park

There's a lot more to do at Bennett Spring State Park than fish for trout

While Bennett Spring State Park is known around the world for its trout fishing, there is also a lot for hiking enthusiasts to do at the state park.

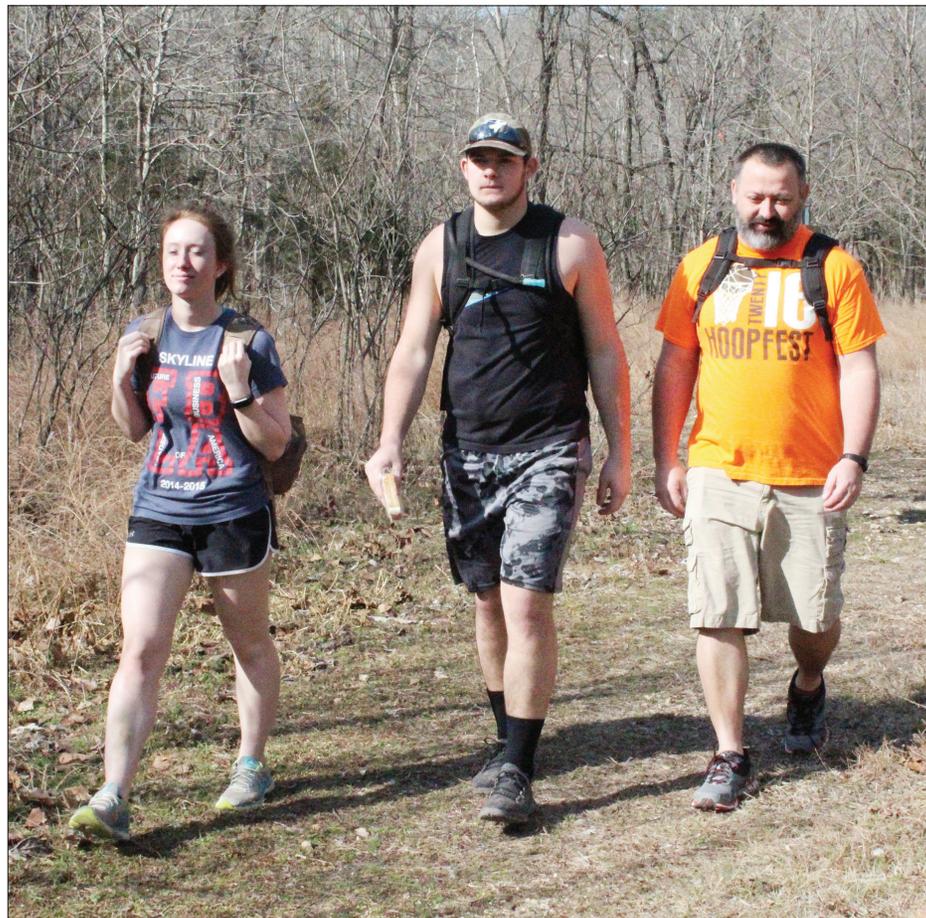
Each month Trout Talk puts the spotlight on a different trail at Bennett Spring State Park.

This month Trout Talk takes a look at one of the park's most unique and popular walking trails: the Natural Tunnel Trail.

The trail's signature feature is the Bennett Spring Natural Tunnel, which is 296 feet long and forms an S curve through the hill.

Formed from Gasconade dolomite, the tunnel contains a large gravel creek bed. On its way to the tunnel, the trail crosses Spring Hollow and passes through many different habitats. The trail is a combination of roads used by people living in the area from the 1840s to present and rugged wooded areas crossed by small streams. The wooded areas support abundant wildlife including deer, squirrels, chipmunks, many woodland birds and insects, including ticks. Several bluffs have interesting geologic features, tiny caves, sheer rock faces and deep overhangs with vines and other foliage.

The trail passes near a small cemetery that dates from the late 1880s and holds the graves of two families who lived in the area. The length of the trail is 7.5 miles with an estimated hiking time of 5 hours and 45 minutes.



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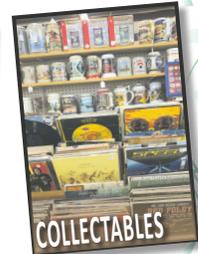
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