



# NEWSLETTER

## Smithville Lake Kids Fishing Day



[Gerry Crawford volunteering at Kids Fishing Day](#)

### Kids Fishing Day at Smithville Lake

by Gerry Crawford, photos: Bruce Windsor, Madi DeShazo

“Rain, rain go away come again some other day.” was the rhyme of the day for the Kids Fishing Day event at Smithville Lake Saturday May 18th, 2019. The rain gods must have heard since the rain held off until the event concluded. Only minutes after everyone was gone the sky opened up with a strong thunderstorm but the day had been a great success.

Jaime Picken with the USACE organized the event, partnering with Clay Co. Parks staff and interns and volunteers Bruce Windsor, Gary House and Gerry Crawford from Loess Hills MMN chapter assisting.

Despite the threat of rain the event went on without a hitch with thirty-two families attending. Parents, grand parents and kids enjoyed a nice day. Jaime provided items of interest from USACE, CCP provided the fishing poles and gear and worms and minnows



[Kids and Bruce Windsor with the biggest catch of the day](#)

were donated by Gary Burton, owner of Burton's Bait and Tackle on Hwy 169 in Smithville.

For many of the kids and some of the adults, this was their first experience with the sport of fishing. It was obvious everyone enjoyed the amenities provided and the opportunity to wet a line along with receiving some how-to instruction and a fair chance to catch a fish. Indeed some fish were caught, the species being Channel catfish and all were released back into the lake. The kids and adults all enjoyed the fishing experience but also

had fun just being outdoors. The adults sincerely appreciated the event as many thanks were spoken with gratitude for enjoying the day. It seemed the volunteers also enjoyed the opportunity to the mentor the adults and kids and watch them exploring fishing, one of nature's great outdoor activities.

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR AT WINGS OVER WESTON

by Suzanne Rush, photos by Brent Galliard

IN 2000 WINGS OVER WESTON was held for the first time at Weston Bend State Park. Because of its popularity, it has been held every year since, with this being the second highest attendance since its conception. On Friday, May 4, 2019, the day for school children to attend, a record was set with over 300 attending. On Saturday, May 5, 2019, the event was open to the public, with an attendance of 781.

The event is focused on providing opportunities for parents and children to interact with birds in a number of ways. Several organizations bring rescued birds, particularly owls and other raptors to see and learn about. A bird banding station allows them to hold a bird for banding. They learn about the importance of conservation and the flyways for migrating birds. The children have the opportunity to make birdhouses and feeders, participate in bird related crafts, and navigate a maze by identifying bird characteristics. For both parents and children, instructions and practice on the correct way to use binoculars for bird viewing is provided. After this they are led on a bird hike with one of the Audubon volunteers, using binoculars.

This event is a partnership between Burroughs Audubon Society and Missouri State Parks. It has the support of many groups including Operation Wildlife, Missouri Western University, Bird Banding groups, and of course Missouri Master Naturalists. This year Loess Hills MMN gave a total of 100+ volunteer hours.

Included in MMN volunteers for the event were Jessica Erdrich, Gerry Crawford, Gary House and Sue Knight who helped kids build bird houses and feeders. The most popular part of this event for the kids was pounding nails. Lynn Tushaus, Debbie Butterfield, Ginger Turner, Janet Mason and Charles Bramlage helped with the construction and use of hummingbird feeders from recycled plastic water bottles. Rick and Chris Fulker were on hand to direct the creative juices of these budding ornithologist in creating a bird mural and other related bird crafts. Dennis and Suzanne Rush taught Binoculars 101 to both parents and children. There were lots of successes in their class. These "graduates" went on to take an actual bird hike, complete with binoculars, led by Cliff Amos and Brent Galliard. And let's not forget Bonnie who once again came as a garden fairy all the way from South Carolina to show the kids how to smear peanut butter between the bracts of a pinecone for another kind of bird feeder. (Bonnie gets the prize for the longest commute to participate in a MMN service opportunity. It was great to see you again.) Wings Over Weston would not

be the success that it is without the support of volunteers. Together, it is the largest one-day public birding festival in the Midwest.



Dennis teaches binoculars 101 (upper left) Ginger Charles and Lynn help with humming bird feeders (upper right) and many new birders explore the woods at Wings Over Weston 2019

## On the Scene with Stream Team 5527

by Hayley Howard



Debbie, Kim, Sue and Hayley (at the other end of the string) measure stream flow

With the fresh spring air in our lungs and the warm, morning sunlight at our backs, we set off on foot to our destination: a small stream accessible from McGee Conservation Area in Clinton County.

Once we found a clearing on the stream bank, we set down our gear and got our bearings. Common violets dotted the ground around us as sunlight funneled through the young sycamores that lined the stream bank, helping channel the gentle flow of the Little Platte tributary where our citizen science work would commence. Under the guidance of veteran Master Naturalists Sue Knight, Kim Lafolette, and Debbie Butterfield, I was ready to get my boots wet in my first ever water quality survey



Kim tests dissolved oxygen

since becoming certified.

First up on our citizen science checklist was gauging the water and air temperature, 15 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively. Not bad for a mid-April morning. Next on the list was testing the nitrate levels of the water, which were well within acceptable limits, meaning possible pollutants from inorganic fertilizers had not compromised the water quality. Thankfully, too, we managed to keep the potentially dangerous chemical mixture for this test off our skin and in the proper container, not a problem for trained citizen scientists like us, of course.

As Sue made her way through the checklist, she delineated the various tasks as we all eagerly morphed from curious volunteers into serious, test-tube wielding chemists. Oxygen and turbidity level tests followed, both showing normal readings and further satisfying our suspicion that our pretty little stream surely wasn't polluted. The pH test showed a level of

8.2, on the higher end of the normal range, with 7 being the standard neutral reading for pure water. Still, things were looking very good.

These readings really came as no surprise, considering the visual quality of our little, clear stream, which gently trickled over algae-covered rocks as it meandered down to meet the Little Platte. So picturesquely serene that it was easy to get lost in admiration.

But, we had work to do and water to slosh through. Our dipstick and string measurements indicated that our creek's average water depth in our testing location was around four and a half feet and the total width was 11.5 feet. Kim accepted the task of both dropping a ping-pong ball into the water and timing its movement past two points in the water, while Debbie and I held a string that served as starting and stopping points along its path, and Sue recorded the data. These figures helped in calculating the stream discharge (flow) and velocity, both of which required some equations that we needn't be bothered with in the field.

With the bulk of our testing behind us, we moved onto the biological monitoring that would conclude our work and unequivocally prove the health of our stream. Was our stream full of pollution-sensitive organisms? Fingers crossed, we assembled our kick net and chose a nice riffle in the stream. We held the net in the water, turning over rocks to hopefully trap a slew of aquatic invertebrates in a stranglehold for the good of science. Over the course of three nettings, our work revealed a bevy of organisms, from aquatic worms to mayfly nymphs, riffle beetles and crane fly, black fly and midge larvae.

Our little stream was teeming with life, and we were teeming with pride in the knowledge that all is well for now and we did our part in providing valuable data about water quality in our region. Until we meet again in the fall, we will continue to do our parts to be responsible stewards of the Earth and hope that others do the same.



Jessica Erdrich in an "awesome learning experience" caught a 34" Spoonbill in April while fishing with Dennis Rush and his son at Warsaw