



Don't trash the bears

Learn how to coexist with black bears at home and in camp.

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A trophy facelift



Photos: Karl Moffatt

Marc Wethington, fisheries biologist with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, took time off recently to enjoy the fruits of his labors: improved trout habitat in the trophy trout waters of the San Juan River.

San Juan River habitat project brings new life

By Karl Moffatt

Recent fish habitat improvement projects on the San Juan River have surpassed expectations at the state's top trout fishery.

And most anglers are thrilled with the results.

"It's like a whole new river," exclaimed Andy Avery, 41, of Placitas after spending a mild, mid-winter's day fishing the world-renowned river below Navajo Dam in northwestern New Mexico.

Avery had been fishing the Braids area just above Texas Hole, where trout were seldom found in the shallow maze before the \$350,000 habitat project was completed. Today, thanks to the efforts of Department of Game and Fish biologist Marc Wethington and several agency partners, thousands of trout thrive in the Braids' new deep runs and holes.



New Mexico's famed trout fishery on the San Juan River below Navajo Dam attracts about 140 anglers a day and brings \$30 to \$40 million a year to New Mexico's economy.

"The results have been beyond our wildest expectations," said Larry Johnson of the San Juan River Guides Association. "Everyone's just been raving about it." He said since the Braids reopened to anglers in December, the area has become so popular that it has eased pressure on some of the river's other popular holes and runs.

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National Archery in the Schools tourney draws 150 competitors

Young archers from Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science, Garfield Middle School and Maggie Cordova Elementary School won their respective divisions May 12, capturing team titles in New Mexico's first live National Archery in the Schools state tournament.

Ten 15-member teams participated in the event at the New Mexico National Guard Armory in Albuquerque. Competitors in the high school, middle school and elementary school divisions shot 30 arrows, 15 each at 80-centimeter targets 10 meters and 15 meters away.

The top teams in each divisions received trophies. The top two archers – one boy and one girl -- in each division received brand new compound bows and a set of arrows.

This is the fourth year the Department of Game and Fish has coordinated the National Archery in the Schools Program in New Mexico. Previous tournaments were "virtual tournaments" in which teams shot at their respective schools, and then submitted scores online to be compared with others.

The date for the 2013 tournament has not been announced, but it will be earlier – in time to send the winner to Kentucky for the National NASP Tournament in May.

Individual archers were shooting for a perfect score of 300.

In the high school division, Joaquin Romero was the top male archer with a score of 269. Lily Perez took the top female prize with a 265. Both archers represented the Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science.

In middle-school competition, Angelica Avila scored 271 for top honors. Her teammate from Garfield Middle School, Andrew Leon, won the boys prize with a 252.

Elementary school competition saw Desmond Williams of Maggie Cordova Elementary take the top male prize with a score of 241. Erin Mantch of Cottonwood Elementary won the girls prize with a 173.

Here are the scores in the team competition, which included male and female shooters on each team. Fifteen



Participants in the National Archery in the Schools State Tournament shot arrows at 80-centimeter targets from distances of 10 and 15 meters. Angelica Avila of Garfield Middle School had the best score -- 271 out of a possible 300.

Photos: Dan Williams

archers competed for each team and the top 10 scores were tallied for the final total. Teams were shooting for a perfect score of 3,000.

- **High schools:** 1st, Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science, 2,384. 2nd, Albuquerque Early College Academy, 2,172.
- **Middle schools:** 1st, Garfield Middle School, 2,300. 2nd, Carlos Vigil Middle School, 2,199. 3rd, Truman Middle School, 1,834. 4th, Van Buren Middle School, 1,754. 5, Washington Middle School, 1,224.
- **Elementary schools:** 1st, Maggie Cordova Elementary, 1,766. 2nd, Seven Bar Elementary, 1,722. 3rd, Cottonwood Elementary, 1,537.

The National Archery in the Schools program has grown to 55 participating schools since the Department of

Game and Fish began sponsoring it in New Mexico four years ago. It costs about \$3,000 to outfit a school or organization with bows, targets, backstops and other equipment to get a program started. The Department splits the initial cost with schools and provides training for archery instructors.

Many schools incorporate the program into existing physical education classes. The program currently is in 55 schools across New Mexico. Another 45 schools are scheduled to start the program as soon as they receive equipment and training.

Schools or organizations interested in participating in the National Archery in the Schools program can find more information by contacting Brian Guzman, (505) 231-4375 or brian.guzman@state.nm.us.

Paperless draw results available in record time

Hunters who applied for New Mexico big-game licenses got their draw results earlier than ever this spring, thanks to a paperless system that helped the department process license applications in record time.

The Department of Game and Fish sent e-mails to successful applicants and posted all draw results to the department website May 4. That's five days earlier than expected this year

and a more than a month earlier than last year.

"The paperless, online system was so efficient that we were able to process and audit all our applications earlier than anticipated," said Alexa Sandoval, the department's Administrative Services chief. "For a lot of hunters, it was like Christmas in May."

Earlier draw results also allowed the

department to issue refunds to unsuccessful applicants much sooner.

The department received 139,811 applications and issued 59,690 licenses for deer, elk, antelope, bighorn sheep, oryx, ibex, javelina and Barbary sheep for the 2012-2013 seasons.

For more information about the big-game draw, please visit the website or call toll-free, (888) 248-6866.



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Smiles for the gobbler



Photo courtesy Karl Malcolm

Karl Malcolm, Shoshana Malcolm and their dog Luna celebrated a successful turkey hunt this spring in the Sacramento Mountains. Hunters will have another chance to pursue New Mexico’s wild turkeys during the fall season, Sept. 1-30 for bows and arrows, Nov. 1-30 for any legal sporting arm.

Hunter education gets easier with online options

Young hunters and others who need to complete a hunter education course to be eligible to hunt in New Mexico and many other states now have another free option to help them.

The Department of Game and Fish and Huntercourse.com are offering a free online manual and interactive hunter education course that qualifies as the homework requirement for the New Mexico course. The department spent \$20,000 to provide the online course and manual to students at no charge through April 30, 2013. It is one of two online courses offered on the Department website, www.wildlife.state.nm.us. The second course, through Hunter-Ed.com, costs \$24.50.

New Mexico law requires anyone younger than age 18 to have successfully completed an approved hunter education course before hunting with a firearm or bow or applying for a firearm or bow hunting license.

The department offers two types of hunter education courses: an accelerated eight-hour course for students ages 11 or older, and a standard course that includes 16 hours

of class time. Both courses require students to have read the manual and have completed the online or paper homework assignment before the class begins.

Registration for all classes is online through the department website by clicking on the “Hunter Education” button on the home page. Students will be assigned a free customer identification number, which is required to register for all classes. The same number is required to buy hunting, fishing or trapping licenses online or to apply for any of the Department’s special drawing hunts.

Students can acquire free hard copies of the manual at department offices or other specified locations following registration.

Students without Internet access can get customer identification numbers and register for hunter education classes at Department offices in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Raton, Roswell and Las Cruces during regular business hours.

For information about the Hunter Education Program please call (505) 222-4731.

Expect roadblocks statewide

The Department of Game and Fish will conduct roadblocks throughout the state during summer and fall fishing and hunting seasons to collect harvest data and to apprehend wildlife law violators.

At roadblocks, conservation officers also will check for compliance with provisions of the Off Highway Motor Vehicle Act and the Aquatic Invasive Species Control Act. Drivers of vehicles hauling wood products will be asked to produce documentation as required by the Forestry Conservation Act.

Department officers may be assisted by other law enforcement agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Police or county sheriff’s departments. As a result, the public may encounter minor delays.

To report a wildlife-law violation, please contact your local Department of Game and Fish conservation officer or call the toll-free Operation Game Thief hotline at 1-800-432-GAME (4263). Callers can remain anonymous and earn rewards for information leading to charges being filed.

Get involved

Many organizations in New Mexico are dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat improvement and wildlife-related recreation. Whether you are interested in birding, wildlife watching, hunting, fishing or trapping, chances are there is an outfit you’ll deem worth supporting. Here are some of them:

Ducks Unlimited, New Mexico: More than 1,500 members support the organization’s mission to restore and manage wetlands and habitats for North American waterfowl. Cindy Wolfe, cjwolfe@gilanet.com, (575) 854-3365.

New Mexico Chapter, Wild Sheep Foundation: Formerly the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, the organization’s goal is “putting more sheep on the mountain.” Members work with the Department of Game and Fish to increase populations of desert and Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in New Mexico. Lanny Rominger, (505) 821-5064.

New Mexico Trout: Dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of trout fishing in New Mexico’s waters through protection and restoration of riparian habitats and through educating the public about trout fishing and the ecological and social value of trout habitats. newmexicotrout@gmail.com, www.newmexicotrout.org.

The Nature Conservancy: A national organization dedicated to the preservation of plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. In New Mexico, it has worked to preserve 1.4 million acres of landscapes and waterways. www.nature.org/newmexico.

New Mexico Wildlife Federation: Founded by Aldo Leopold in 1914, the organization is a strong lobbyist in the New Mexico Legislature, “dedicated to protecting New Mexico’s wildlife, habitat and outdoor way of life.” (505) 299-5404, www.nmwildlife.org.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: A large national organization dedicated to ensuring the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat. The organization actively supports efforts to protect and enhance elk country, conservation education and to restore elk herds. New Mexico information: (505) 892-1250, www.rmef.org.

Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife: A conservation organization organized to promote the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat, the quality of wildlife management programs and America’s family heritage of hunting and fishing. (505) 486-4921.

Trout Unlimited, New Mexico: Dedicated to the restoration, protection and conservation of all coldwater fisheries, their tributaries and watersheds, and the fish that inhabit them. (505) 470-4878, www.newmexicotu.org.

Audubon New Mexico: Devoted to the protection, preservation and enjoyment of the environment, with a particular emphasis on birds. The organization has chapters statewide, with headquarters at the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe. (505) 983-4609, <http://nm.audubon.org>.

New Mexico Muskies, Inc.: A group of anglers interested in fishing for tiger muskies in Bluewater and Quemado lakes formed this organization in 2008 as a chapter of Muskies, Inc. Information: Matt Pelletier, (505) 264-2999, www.newmexicomuskiesinc.org.

Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge: An organization of about 1,000 members supporting the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and promoting appreciation and conservation of wildlife and habitat through environmental education. (575) 878-2320, www.friendsofthebosque.org.

Albuquerque Wildlife Federation: A volunteer organization focused on New Mexico’s wildlife and habitat resources. It offers monthly meetings with guest speakers, in-the-field habitat restoration projects and a monthly newsletter. (505) 281-4609, <http://abq.nmwildlife.org>.

Southwest Environmental Center: Works to reverse the accelerating loss of species worldwide by protecting and restoring native wildlife and their habitats in the Southwestern borderlands, through grassroots advocacy, public education and on-the-ground restoration projects. (575) 522-5552, www.wildmesquite.org.

Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen: An organization representing at least 15 sporting and conservation groups of diverse interests. The group’s three primary objectives are to “disseminate wildlife and habitat information, participate in habitat maintenance projects, and review and comment on proposals involving wildlife habitat.” (575) 526-5056.

New Mexico Wild Turkey Federation: Supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport. (505) 869-3837, www.nwtf.org.

Safari Club International: Promotes wildlife conservation worldwide while protecting the hunting heritage and supporting many education and humanitarian projects. Southern New Mexico Chapter: LTC R.A. “Pancho” Maples, pancho1@plateautel.net. Northern New Mexico Chapter: Brian Payne, b_payne10@msn.com.

Southeast New Mexico Wildlife, Inc.: A conservation organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat, especially quail habitat, in southeastern New Mexico. (575) 393-2895.

Friends of Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area: A volunteer organization dedicated to supporting the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area in the conservation of wildlife and habitats through environmental education, research, and restoration. Located north of Belen on Highway 47. Molly Madden, whitfieldeducation@gmail.com.



Northwest



Ross Morgan

Santa Cruz Lake a northern favorite

By Ross Morgan

Nestled at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Chimayo at 6,300 feet, Santa Cruz Lake is an ideal spot for anglers, whether they're looking for an easy day trip or a camping destination.

Built in 1929 by the Santa Cruz Irrigation District, the 121 surface-acre lake is 90 feet deep and full of trout and bluegills. The release of water is regulated by the Santa Cruz Irrigation District for agriculture use in the Santa Cruz Valley.

The great location within easy driving distance of Santa Fe, Española and Los Alamos makes Santa Cruz Lake one of the most popular fishing spots in northern New Mexico. It's fed by the clear waters of the Rio del Medio and Rio Frijoles, which also hold good populations of brown, rainbow and cutthroat trout.

The lake has two campgrounds, the north lake and the overlook. Both have picnic shelters, grills and overnight camping facilities that include bathrooms. The lake hours are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and stays are limited to 14 days.



The state's record rainbow trout, a 31-pound, 12.5 ounce, 33 1/2-inch lunker, was caught at Santa Cruz Lake in 1999 by Peter Romero. A replica of the record fish is shown above.

The Department of Game and Fish frequently stocks the lake with rainbow trout. The lake also holds brown trout, Rio Grande cutthroat trout and bluegill. Last year, the Department stocked more than 16,000 rainbow trout and 20,000 cutthroat trout.

Anglers who frequently fish the lake recommend a variety of bait, including Power Bait, salmon eggs, homemade baits and an assortment of lures. Fish seem to change what they prefer from day to day, so it's a good idea to pay close attention to the weekly fishing report from the Department of Game and Fish. Santa Cruz Lake can be fished year-

round or until it becomes unsafe due to thin ice, at which time it will be closed. The lake is a "no wake lake," meaning boaters must keep speeds below 5 mph. Because the lake is on Bureau of Land Management property, anyone wishing to fish there is required to purchase a Habitat Improvement Stamp. The stamp is required for all anglers who hunt or fish on U.S. Forest Service or BLM property.

Ross Morgan is the Department of Game and Fish public relations officer for the Northwest Area. He can be reached in Albuquerque at (505) 222-4707 or ross.morgan@state.nm.us.



Anglers find boatloads of fish, fun at the Butte

By Richard McDonald

Whether the water levels are high or low, anglers continue to flock to Elephant Butte Lake to camp, play and try their hand at catching one of the many species of fish that thrive there.

White bass and crappie are perhaps the most sought-after species because of their fighting ability, especially during the spawning season. Live bait such as minnows or worms tend to be the best baits. Some artificial lures such as grubs or white spinner baits also can work.

Largemouth bass fishing is a big lure for anglers, some of whom participate in several professional bass fishing tournaments every year. The lake's largemouth and smallmouth bass can be challenging. Good baits include artificial worms, tubes, Rattletraps and white or chartreuse colored spinners.

Some anglers set trotlines baited with

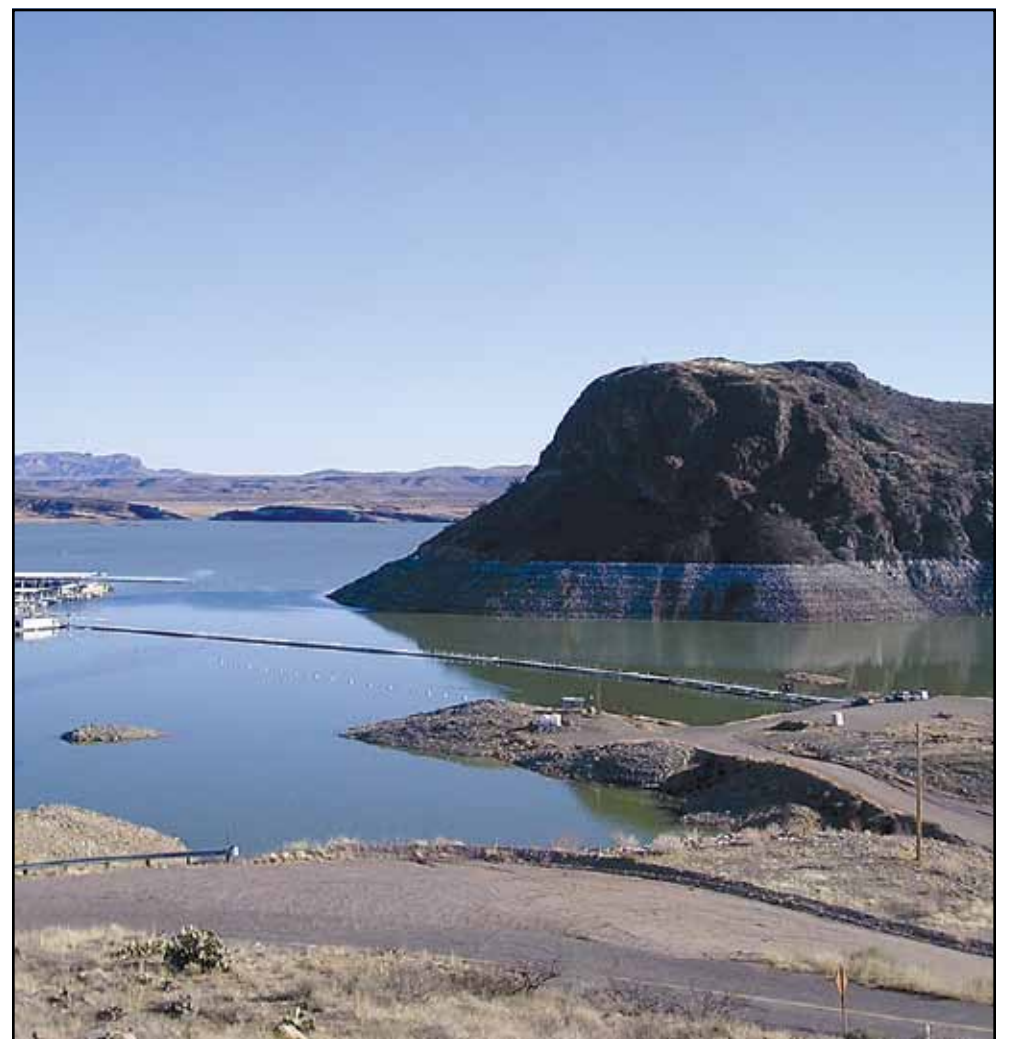
cut shad, carp, shrimp or chicken liver to try and catch one of the Butte's elusive monster catfish. Others pursue large striped bass or walleye.

Sitting along the Rio Grande on the northern-most end of the Chihuahuan desert, Elephant Butte Lake is visited by more than 250,000 people a year. New Mexico State Parks manages camping and boating along 200 miles of shoreline and 36,000 surface acres when the lake is full. The dam, built in 1916 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, is 306 feet tall and 1,648 feet long. At the time it was built, it was the largest irrigation dam in the world except for the Aswan Dam in Egypt.

Elephant Butte Lake also is widely known for its history. The dam project gave rise to a large construction community that included worker camps, railways, water tanks, cableway systems and the former administration building of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Approximately 100 million years ago, the area was part of a vast shallow ocean that stretched for many miles. The ocean ultimately receded, leaving a wide-open expanse that became one of the favorite hunting grounds for the Tyrannosaurus Rex. Remnants of the large predator have been discovered in area rock formations surrounding the lake. The name Elephant Butte came from an eroded volcano, now an island on the lake's southern side. The island actually resembles an elephant when viewed from some angles.

When full, the lake can hold up to 2,065,010 acre feet of water, but it is expected to hold only a fraction



Department of Game and Fish file photo

Elephant Butte Lake, shown in this 2007 photo, is expected to have low water levels again this summer. At the end of April, the lake held 17 percent of its capacity and was only 29 percent of its average level. It's not all bad news for anglers and recreationists, however. The fishing's good, there's still plenty of water for boating, and sandy beaches are plentiful.

of that this year. However, that won't stop hundreds of thousands of visitors from enjoying the park's sandy beaches and plenty of water for boating, swimming, skiing, sailing, windsurfing, and of course fishing.

Richard McDonald is a Department of Game and Fish conservation officer based in Las Cruces. He can be reached at (575) 532-2100 or richard.mcdonald@state.nm.us.

Southwest



Richard McDonald

Birds, fish thrive at Clayton Lake

By Clint Henson

Twelve miles northwest of Clayton, on Highway 370, is Clayton Lake, a jewel of the New Mexico northeastern high plains.

The Clayton Lake dam, built on Seneca Creek in 1954 by the New Mexico Game Commission, was to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl. The lake became a State Park in 1965 and has been a destination for anglers, birders and dinosaur enthusiasts for decades.

More about Clayton Lake fishing, camping and star gazing -- Page 6.

The lake, at capacity is approximately 90 surface acres, but recent droughts have reduced that to about 60 surface acres. The lake sits at 5,000 feet above sea level and generally has good weather conditions except for the early spring, which can be a bit windy.

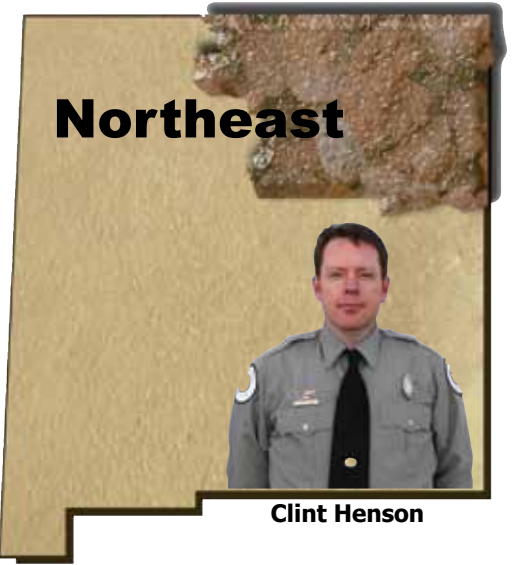
Clayton Lake is closed each year to fishing from Oct. 31 to March 1 for resting waterfowl, including

thousands of geese, a variety of ducks and great blue herons. The 402-acre park also is home to roadrunners, eagles, deer, raccoons, turkeys and the occasional bear. While no fishing is allowed during the winter, the park is open for wildlife watching. The large number and variety of birds prompted the Audubon Society to proclaim Clayton Lake State Park a “Very Important Birding Area” in 2001, a distinction that draws many bird watchers and photographers.

A few years after the dam spillway was built, erosion from the overflowing lake revealed more than 500 dinosaur tracks preserved in stone. The series of tracks is considered one of the most significant discoveries in the world. A catwalk allows visitors to walk right over the area without disturbing it. Visitors can see where 30-foot long herbivores walked through an ancient mud field 100 million years ago, dragging their tails behind.

Sport fish in the lake include walleye, rainbow trout, largemouth bass, bluegill, green sunfish, yellow bullheads and channel catfish. The abundance and variety of fish attracts anglers from the surrounding five states. The Department of Game and Fish regularly stocks the lake with catchable trout and walleye fry, while the other species of warmwater fish reproduce naturally.

Four state-record walleyes have been caught at Clayton Lake since 1981.



The current record of 16 pounds, 9 ounces was caught in 1989, and fisheries biologists who survey the lake say they have caught and released what would be a new state-record largemouth bass.

You might ask, “So how do I catch the big one?” When fishing for trophy walleye or bass it is best to use the prey base that they are accustomed to feeding on. It is legal to use bluegill or green sunfish as bait in Clayton Lake, so the best advice is to first catch a few of them and then put them on a larger hook and then go after the big fish. Plastic jigs and crank baits are also popular for those seeking record fish.

Bank fishing and no-wake boating are allowed during the fishing season when water levels permit launching.

Clint Henson is the Department of Game and Fish public information officer for the Northeast Area. He can be reached in Raton at (575) 445-2311 or clint.henson@state.nm.us.



Photo: Clint Henson

Clayton Lake, reserved for resting waterfowl in the winter, holds some of New Mexico’s largest walleye, and perhaps a new state-record largemouth bass.

Enjoy fishing, acknowledge history at Bosque Redondo

By Mark Madsen

One of New Mexico’s most memorable historical sites is also one of the state’s most overlooked fishing holes.

The fishing area at Bosque Redondo,

6.5 miles southeast of Fort Sumner, is a slough or oxbow off the Pecos River north of Fort Sumner State Monument. Today, anglers fish for trout in the winter and catfish in the summer in the same location where about 9,000 Navajos and Mescalero Apaches were forced to move from

their homelands to a reservation in what is known as “The Long Walk.”

By 1868, the tribes had returned to their historic homelands and the 40-square-mile reservation was closed. Today, the reservation area is site of Fort Sumner State Monument, created in 1968, and the Bosque Redondo Memorial that was built in 2005.

Fishing at Bosque Redondo takes place in a couple of large ponds that once were part of the reservation. From November through March the Department of Game and Fish stocks rainbow trout in the ponds, where anglers find success using traditional baits such as Power Bait, worms, salmon eggs, spinners and flies.

In the summer, the Department stocks the ponds with channel catfish. Bank fishing can be good using chicken liver, prepared dough, stink baits or worms, especially in the late evenings or at night. Trotlines are not allowed.

Bosque Redondo also provides anglers with the opportunity to catch a largemouth bass or two. Preferred methods include using spinner baits or other topwater lures. The ponds also have a healthy population of panfish, which can provide hours of enjoyable fishing for kids and even adults. Small lures, curly-tailed grubs, worms and grasshoppers (when

available) work really well using ultralight spinning gear or any fishing pole using a bobber rig. Anglers might also try their luck with a fly rod or a fly using spinning gear and a casting bubble.

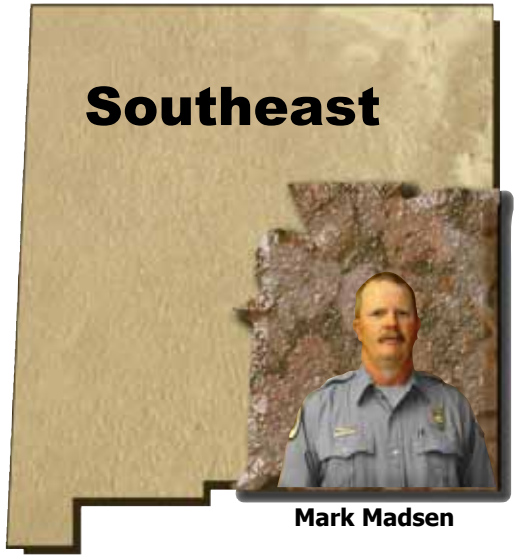
When the fishing slows down, step back in time and experience a little New Mexico history by visiting the Fort Sumner State Monument and Bosque Redondo Memorial. For more information about the Fort Sumner State Monument and Bosque Redondo Memorial, please call (575) 355-2573 or www.bosqueredondomemorial.com.

Mark Madsen is the Department of Game and Fish public information officer for the Southeast Area. He can be reached at (575) 624-6135 or mark.madsen@state.nm.us.



Photo: Karl Moffatt

Bosque Redondo ponds near Fort Sumner are stocked with rainbow trout in the winter and large catfish in the summer.



All eyes on Clayton walleyes

New state record lurks in depths of northeast lake

By Karl Moffatt

It's another beautiful morning at Clayton Lake State Park as Mikie Montoya of Clayton arrives to continue his quest to catch a record-breaking walleye from this plains oasis.

"And at the rate he's been working on, it he'll probably succeed," says Eric Frey, Northeast Area fisheries biologist for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. "This lake produces record-breaking walleye all the time."

The lake has produced numerous record catches over the years, including the latest, which stands at 16 pounds, 9 ounces, and 32 inches in length, caught by G.L. Peppers in 1989.

But just this spring, while trapping walleye during spawning season to collect eggs for fry, department biologists discovered a 17-pound, 34-inch specimen among the lot, Frey says.

And they caught a 21-pound, 36-incher last year and numerous other record breakers in years past, Frey says.

All of those big fish were returned to the water after being milked and presumably are still lurking in its depths, he says.

So Montoya's efforts to capture the state record stand a really good chance, Frey figures.

Montoya, 24, says he wants to bag that title for himself and has been at it for a full year now, making the 12-mile drive from his home in Clayton out to the lake nearly every day. So far, his biggest catch has been a 12-pound, 32-inch walleye that he caught last September.

"I know I've hooked into some even bigger



Photo: Karl Moffatt

Sitting pretty in northeastern New Mexico's high plains, Clayton Lake offers some of the state's best walleye and trout fishing.

ones because they broke me off," he says.

In April, Montoya gained additional motivation as he watched Game and Fish Department employees pull one big walleye after another from their floating traps.

Montoya, a store clerk who insists his real job is to catch that fish, says the key to success when angling for walleye is to concentrate on the take.

"Their bite can be very subtle, very light, so you have to be ready to set the hook at anything," he says.

Montoya likes to use a live minnow attached to a ¼- or ½-ounce jig-head hook and then bounce it off the bottom with a slow retrieve. Plastic lures like a paddle tail shad attached to

a jig-head hook will work, too, as will a diving lure, the kind with a lip that causes it to swim downward as it is being retrieved.

Walleye are predators that like to lurk in the depths, which is why Montoya spends most of his time fishing the deepest water by the lake's dam. Frey notes that the food supply at Clayton is what produces such big walleye. Golden shiners, crayfish, sunfish and even stocked rainbows provide them with plenty to eat.

Frey says anglers also can catch bluegills and sunfish from the lake and use them as live bait, hooking them behind the dorsal fin and letting them swim free to attract walleye.

But as Montoya is quick to note, an angler has to wade through a lot of stocked trout to get to those trophy walleye.

During a recent spring outing, he and a fishing buddy spent much of the morning reeling in one good-sized trout after another, all being caught on spinners, imitation shad and other lures.

"It's a blast when they'll chase lures like that," Montoya says of the stocked trout. They gave up chasing walleye because the trout fishing was so good.

The lake also holds plenty of largemouth bass and catfish, too, many of substantial size and worth pursuing.

Montoya says he learned to fish as a kid from his dad, who died last year.

"It's been a great way to stay busy and out of trouble," Montoya says. "And you know I always feel closer to my dad when I'm out here."

Around the small town of Clayton, just about everyone knows of Montoya's quest to capture the state record.

"He's gonna get that fish," says the town barber, Art Grine. "We're always talking around here



Photo courtesy of Mikie Montoya

Mikie Montoya shows off the 12-pound, 32-inch walleye he caught last September at Clayton Lake.



about his latest catch.”

While Clayton Lake State Park may be a great place to fish, it’s also one of the state’s best places to camp out under the stars. Boasting some of the best star-gazing conditions in the country, the park is only one of four worldwide that is officially recognized for its incredibly dark skies, says Charles Jordan, 51, manager of the park for the last 19 years.

The International Dark Sky Association bestowed its top honor upon the park in June 2010 for its efforts to preserve the dark skies, reduce surrounding light pollution and provide educational programs. The park features a 12-by-16-foot observatory building with a retractable roof that houses a solar-powered, 12-inch, computer-operated telescope and a remote television monitor that allows for group viewing.

The local astronomy club hosts regularly scheduled star parties each month on the first Friday of the new moon cycle, while also providing impromptu parties for visitors when the park has plenty of overnight guests.

The park also enjoys a good reputation among bird and wildlife watchers and those interested in paleontology as a large set of dinosaur tracks are preserved in the earth that forms the dam’s spillway.

The park features a new visitors center constructed of straw-bale and recycled materials that utilize the latest in green energy techniques. An interpretive display inside highlights the park and surrounding area’s history and other interesting information.

The park has more than 30 well-placed

Annual derby ‘a real old-fashioned good time’

Thousands of visitors converge on Clayton Lake State Park every year for one of northeastern New Mexico’s most popular events, the annual fishing derby. The event offers loads of family fun, and the prizes are nothing to sneeze at.

This year’s derby over the weekend of June 9-10 featured a top prize of a 14-foot, fully equipped, aluminum fishing boat, while someone else walked away with \$1,000 cash.

The two-day event featured hot dog eating and horseshoe pitching contests and a sand dig for kids.

“That’s a blast to watch,” Charles Jordan, park manager, says of the sand dig.

With the blow of a whistle, dozens of kids dive into a huge pile of sand and dig around for up to \$500 worth of various coins buried inside.

“You should see the rooster tails coming out of that pile,” Jordan says.

The annual event fills the park with as many as 5,000 visitors, with campers setting up anywhere a tent can be pitched.

“It’s a real old-fashioned good time,” Jordan says. “We have folks and families who have been coming from all over for years now.”

The entire town of 3,000 people seems to get involved, with many local businesses donating door prizes, including fishing and camping gear and other good stuff, Jordan says.

Entrants can sign up online or by mail with

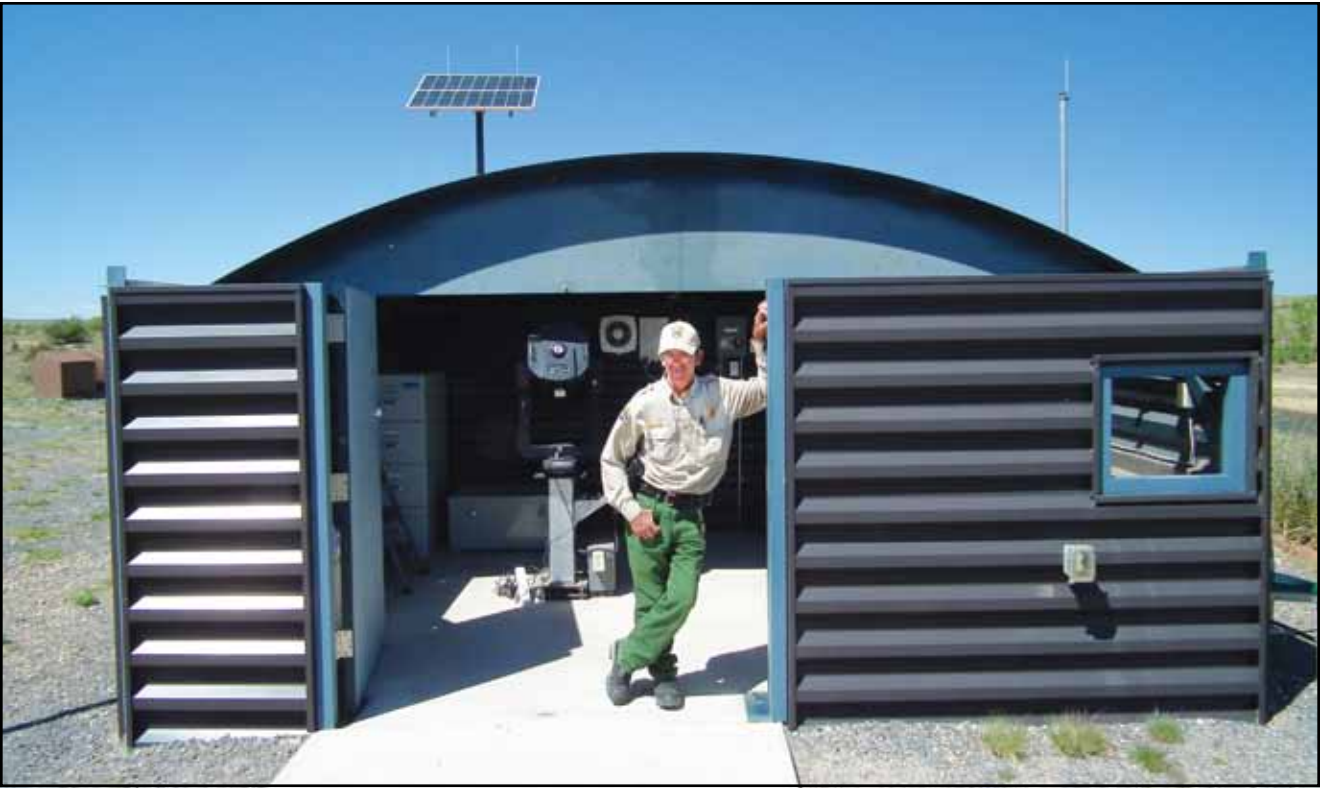


Photo: Karl Moffatt

Charles Jordan, manager of Clayton Lake State Park for the past 19 years, shows off the park’s observatory and 12-inch computer-operated telescope.

campsites equipped with covered shelters, picnic tables and fire rings. Seven sites have electric and water hookups and there are two large group shelters. Showers are available inside the main restroom while numerous vault toilets are located throughout the park. A ranger lives on site to help maintain the park’s family friendly atmosphere.

The park’s boat ramp is sometimes closed due to low water levels, but when it is open, boats are allowed at trolling speeds.

Clayton Lake sits on State Game Commission-owned property on spring-fed Seneca Creek. State Parks has managed the property since

1965. The lake derives nearly all of its water supply from storm runoff on the surrounding plains. The past couple of summer monsoon seasons haven’t been generous to the lake as it has dropped considerably, says Jordan.

This year, weather forecasters are saying the stingy weather pattern La Niña is in retreat and the summer rains could return to normal.

“All it’ll take to bring it back up to normal is a couple of good gully washers,” Jordan says.

Nonetheless, fishing has been great and everyone is looking forward to the annual fishing derby in June.

the Clayton Chamber of Commerce. See the website, <http://www.claytonnewmexico.org> for more information.

Entrants also can sign up opening day at the park, where they’ll find free coffee and donuts awaiting them and free hot dogs at noon.

Most campsites at the state park are reserved for the event, but overnight accommodations can be found in town at several hotels, including the historic Hotel Eklund, and at a nearby KOA campground. Visit the chamber’s website for more information.



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They’re dying for your trash

Managing garbage is key to keeping N.M. bears alive

Bear season begins soon at a trash can or dumpster near you.

To make this a safe spring and summer for bears and humans, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish is encouraging the public to manage their trash properly.

“Everyone needs to keep their trash in an enclosed container stored in a secure building,” said Rick Winslow, large carnivore biologist for the department. “Only put your trash out on the morning it will be collected and hauled away.”

Every year, bears that come into towns searching for food are caught and relocated or killed by department employees. Bears are killed when conservation officers determine the bears are a threat to public safety. Bears that regularly feed on garbage can lose their fear of humans and consider humans as a source of food. This year, the department will increase its efforts to eliminate trash-habituated bears.



“This is potentially a very dangerous situation,” Winslow said. “If people care about bears and their own safety, they won’t let this happen.”

Populations of bears and humans have grown significantly in New Mexico. In 1925, just prior to bears being protected as game animals, a conservative estimate of the bears on

U.S. Forest Service land was 660 animals. Today, the statewide estimate exceeds 6,000 bears.

Last summer was particularly difficult for New Mexico’s bears. The problems began with the previous winter of little snowfall and cold that lingered late into a dry spring that was topped off with a late killing frost. Buds, leaves and flowers were victims of the frost, yielding less of the important acorns and berry crops later in the year. The drought continued through the summer and fall in many areas, leaving less for bears to stock up on before denning and less residual forage in the spring after emerging from their dens.

With more snow this winter, this spring started a bit better than last. It’s still too early to predict how this fall’s important food crops for bears will fare. The Department anticipates bear problems in some areas, particularly where humans leave food available to them.

Intentionally or unintentionally, feeding bears is illegal. Anyone found guilty of creating a nuisance bear by feeding it can be fined up to \$500. Worse, feeding a bear usually results in the bear’s death. When a bear becomes conditioned to humans and their food, the bear almost always ends up dead, killed by the Department or a citizen defending their property.

To illustrate the problem trash creates for bears and bear managers, the Department produced a short documentary about bears and trash in the City of Raton. Screenings of “The Modern Black Bear: Born Wild, Raised on Trash” will be shown around the state at times and sites to be announced soon on the Department’s website, www.wildlife.state.nm.us.



Department of Game and Fish file photo

Coexisting with black bears

If you enjoy New Mexico’s state animal, the black bear, here are some ways to keep them alive and you safe:

Bears at home

• **Garbage:** Store your garbage in airtight containers inside a garage or a sturdy shed, or in an approved bear-resistant receptacle. Clean trash cans with ammonia to reduce odors that can attract bears. Put the garbage out the morning of a scheduled pickup, not the night before.

• **Pet food:** Feed your pets indoors. Don’t leave pet food outside. Store it in a sturdy building or the garage. Make sure your garage door is closed at night.

• **Barbecues:** Keep barbecues clean and free of grease. Store them in the garage or a sturdy shed.

• **Birdfeeders:** Hang birdfeeders out of reach of bears, not on your porch or from the house rafters. Bring hummingbird feeders inside every night.

• **Fruit trees:** Plant fruit trees away from your house, and pick fruit as it ripens. Spoiled fruit that falls to the ground should be removed because the odor is a powerful bear attractant.

• **Compost piles:** Keep compost piles away from your house. Don’t put meat, fish, other pungent scraps or fragrant fruits such as melons on your compost pile. Add lime to reduce odors and accelerate decomposition.

• **Talk to neighbors:** Bear problems are community problems. Make sure your neighbors know about bear behavior and how to avoid encounters.

Bears in camp

• **Garbage in, garbage out:** Keep your camp clean and store food and garbage in bear-proof containers if possible. If not, suspend food, coolers and garbage from a tree at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet out from the tree trunk. Do not bury or burn your trash.

• **Stow your cooler, pots and pans:** Keep your

cooler and cooking utensils in a secure place, preferably in a bear-proof container. Vehicles or hard-sided camp trailers usually are secure, but bears have been known to break in anyway.

• **No food in the tent:** Keep your tent and sleeping bag free of all food smells and toiletry items -- even toothpaste. Change your clothes and store the ones you wore while cooking outside the tent with your food.

• **Don’t cook where you sleep:** Your cooking area should be a good distance -- some say at least 100 yards -- from where you sleep, if possible.

Close encounters

What would you do if you suddenly came face-to-face with a black bear on the trail or in your back yard?

• **Don’t run!** If you come across a bear, stay calm and slowly back away while continuing to face the animal and avoiding direct eye contact. Pick up small children so they don’t panic and run, which can trigger the animals’ instinct to chase.

• **Travel in groups:** There is strength in numbers, and most bears and lions will respect that and leave the area.

• **Make yourself big:** Hold out your arms and spread your jacket so the bear doesn’t consider you its prey. Don’t kneel or bend over, which could trigger an attack.

• **Back away:** If the bear has not seen you, slowly back away while making noise so it knows you are there. If it still approaches, stand tall, yell, rattle pots and pans or whistle. If you are on a trail, step off on the downhill side and give the animal room to pass.

• **Don’t mess with mama:** Never, ever, get between a mother and her cubs or kittens.

• **Never offer food:** Offering food to a bear is inviting it to stick around. When it’s done with your friendly offering, it may consider having you for dessert.

• **If you are attacked:** Fight back aggressively, using anything you can reach as a weapon. Do not play dead.



Coati strays far from home

Department of Game and Fish game wardens Bobby Griego and Storm Usery were expecting to find a fox, raccoon or maybe a bobcat when a San Acacia landowner called them about an ornery critter in his yard this spring. What they found was a surprise even to the seasoned wildlife officers.

“We definitely weren’t expecting to find a coati,” Griego said, “especially that far north.”

The mature white-nosed coati – called a coatimundi if it’s a wandering male, found its way to the middle Rio Grande valley from its usual habitat in southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. It was the only one of its kind found that far north in the state, according to Jim Stuart, Department mammalogist.

“They definitely seem to be expanding their territory,” Stuart said. “Thirty years ago, they were known to be in the Bootheel, and that’s about it. Since then, they’ve become widespread in the Gila and in recent years they’ve been verified in Deming, Las Cruces and Hatch. They’ve been observed at Bosque del Apache (National Wildlife Refuge). Now that we’ve seen one in San Acacia,

it suggests some movement up the southern Rio Grande Valley.”

Griego said the San Acacia coatimundi didn’t give up without a fight. When the landowner gave chase hoping to capture it, the coatimundi turned and challenged his pursuer. Griego and Usery eventually shot the animal with a tranquilizer dart and released it back into the wild.

White-nosed coatis grow to 30 to 55 inches long and can weigh from 10 to 25 pounds. They have long white-tipped snouts, short ears and a long, thin banded tail. Males are almost twice as big as females. They are omnivores with a diet that includes insects, lizards, roots, fruits, nuts and eggs. They mate in early spring and often travel in large groups.

Coatis are protected furbearers in New Mexico, but no harvest is permitted.

Stuart and other mammalogists currently are monitoring coati populations and movement in the state. If you happen to see one or more of the raccoon-like animals, please report it to Stuart at (505) 476-8107 or james.stuart@state.nm.us.



Photo: Storm Usery

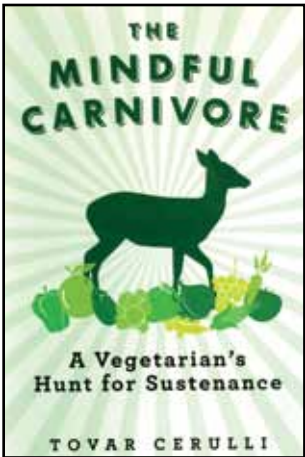
Conservation Officer Bobby Griego holds a tranquilized coatimundi captured in San Acacia.

Vegetarian turned hunter carnivore shares personal journey

By Kevin Holladay

There has been a remarkable trend in the last few years of more and more people understanding hunting as a way to connect with nature and their food in ways that ask us to take a second look at what it means to eat and be human.

One of the latest authors who follows in this vein is vegan-turned-hunter Tovar Cerulli. His book, “The Mindful Carnivore: A Vegetarian’s Hunt for Sustenance,” is a deeply moving, personal journey combined with an informed history of hunting in America, why people hunt and what it means to



be sitting down at the dinner table with a bowl of venison stew.

In “The Mindful Carnivore,” Cerulli holds us close to his heart as he shares his life, the history of hunting and our relationship with the food on our tables. His insight to hunting and wildlife comes from years as an ardent vegetarian. However, as a young boy growing up in

the northeast woods, he had a close adult mentor who regularly took him fishing. He loved fishing and eating fish and bullfrogs, and generally had an idyllic boyhood romp in the woods.

Later in life he turned away from eating any animals but slowly found his way back to his omnivore roots. In the book, he eloquently shares his journey back to experiencing hunting as a “... respectful, holistic way of eating and living.” Although currently in academia, pursuing an advanced degree, he was also a logger and carpenter making a living in the woods.

There is much in “The Mindful Carnivore” to digest and savor. It reads easily even as the author imparts a succinct, accurate picture of wildlife conservation, the public trust doctrine and the importance of hunters and hunting for wildlife. He unfolds a wonderful, ecological history of the decline and rise of white-tailed deer and the role of hunting and hunters in the conservation movement. After a successful hunt, the author comments, “In this half-carved leg (white-tailed deer) on the counter in front of me, I saw history: wolves and cougars, American Indians and colonists, forests and sheep, market hunters and conservationists. I saw a species that had nearly been wiped off the continent.”

Cerulli carefully and with a light, at times even a humorous touch, dismantles the stereotypes of hunters and hunting. All the while, questioning and sharing appropriate quotes from an exhaustive variety of authors.

This groundbreaking book has enormous potential to create a dialogue with differing groups about our relationship with hunting, animals and eating.

In a recent interview, Cerulli shared a story from one of his readers: “I got an e-mail from a lifelong hunter in the Northeast who said that he wanted his sister to read the book. She is a longtime vegetarian and has been quite hostile to him as a hunter over the years. His belief was that this book would allow the two of them to explore some common ground, to bridge their divide and engage in a thoughtful conversation about food, hunting and animals.”

For those who make the journey into New Mexico’s wild country with gun or bow in hand, the words

and explaining often fall away. For this, Cerulli offers, “In hunting, the outcome will always be mysterious.” He goes on to quote Henry Van Dyke, who wrote about hunting having an “enchantment of uncertainty.”

It is this enchantment that Cerulli so beautifully leaves us with, “In late summer, as our venison dwindles, my attention turns again to the forest and I prowl along brooks and stone walls, through stands of maple and hemlock, checking old deer trails for fresh sign. In autumn, I hike into the woods in the predawn dark, Orion high over one shoulder, frozen leaves underfoot. If I kill, I crouch beside the fallen white-tail to give thanks for all that sustains me, then make my way to the kitchen counter to complete the butchering: a meditation with meat and knife.”

Kevin Holladay is coordinator of Project WILD and the Aquatic Resources Education Program for the Department of Game and Fish. He can be reached in Santa Fe at (505) 476-8095 or kevin.holladay@state.nm.us.



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Photo: Karl Moffatt

Heavy equipment worked in the San Juan River from October through December, 2011, diverting water and creating new holes that now attract thousands more trout.

Trophy facelift

... continued from Page 1

“It’s been very worthwhile, judging from the amount of positive feedback we’ve been getting from the angling public,” said Wethington, who grew up in nearby Waterflow and fished the river as a kid. “The first day it opened up, one gentleman from Trout Unlimited told me that he caught more fish that day than he has ever caught before – his best day fishing ever.”

Rave reviews

The project at the Braids impressed even former critics.

“On first assessment, I would say this has the potential of real improvement for that part of the fishery and job well done,” wrote Andreas Novak of Farmington, who frequently posts comments about the river in an online chat room dedicated to the San Juan. A few years earlier, Novak called the project “a huge waste of time and money” that wouldn’t make “a bit of difference” to the river.

Now, Novak is among the thousands of anglers seeing the difference a few tons of well-placed boulders, some downed tree trunks and more than 20 new fishing holes can make.

Heavy equipment dominated the Braids from October through December, constructing a diversion to direct more flow into the area and increasing the water’s depth and velocity. Side channels were blocked to maximize the effect and giant jackhammers carved deep holes into the bedrock to provide new fish habitat. The area since has been reseeded with native plants and shrubs and is expected to look completely natural within just a few seasons, Wethington says.

Within days of the project’s completion, trout were moving back into the Braids, making it their home, much to the anglers’ delight.

“I’d like to shake the hand of whoever’s responsible for all this,” Avery said.

Shortly after the Braids reopened to fishing, Wethington inspected the area and spoke with anglers. Most everyone expressed happiness with the work and some noted the intimacy of the new fishing holes hidden deep among the islands.

“It made that stretch of river a different place,” Wethington said. “I could blindfold someone who has been fishing the San Juan for 25 years, take them to the Braids and remove the blindfold and they wouldn’t know where they were.”

Silt solution

A separate project on the San Juan will help ensure the Braids are as trout and angler friendly 25 years from now.

In conjunction with the Braids work, construction crews built a large stilling basin and catchment dam to protect the Braids and downstream stretches of the river from being inundated by silt and sediment from storm runoff. The dam was designed to catch runoff from Rex Smith Wash, allow the sediment to settle, and then divert the clean water back into the river.

In the past, heavy flows from the wash were



Joshua Jones of Gallup shows off one of many trout he caught and released during a successful day of fly fishing in the Braids area of the San Juan River.

Photo: Karl Moffatt

45 years of great fishing

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish began managing the four-mile stretch of the San Juan River below Navajo Dam in 1966, four years after the dam was completed. Since then, trout and angler populations in the stretch have grown to among the largest in the West.

- The trophy trout waters of the San Juan River contribute an estimated \$30 to \$40 million a year to the state’s economy. In San Juan County, it is a staple.
- Today, the river boasts an estimated 70,000 trout inhabiting the first four miles below Navajo Dam. Surveys indicate an average of 140 anglers a day fish there.
- Anglers catch an average of just more than one fish an hour, with the size averaging 16 inches long. About 6 percent of anglers report having caught a trout more than 20 inches long, according to survey results.

responsible for silting up the popular Kiddy and Texas holes and negatively impacting fish habitat there and farther downstream. The problem was compounded when a berm constructed to protect State Parks Division toilets channeled silt from the wash directly into the river.

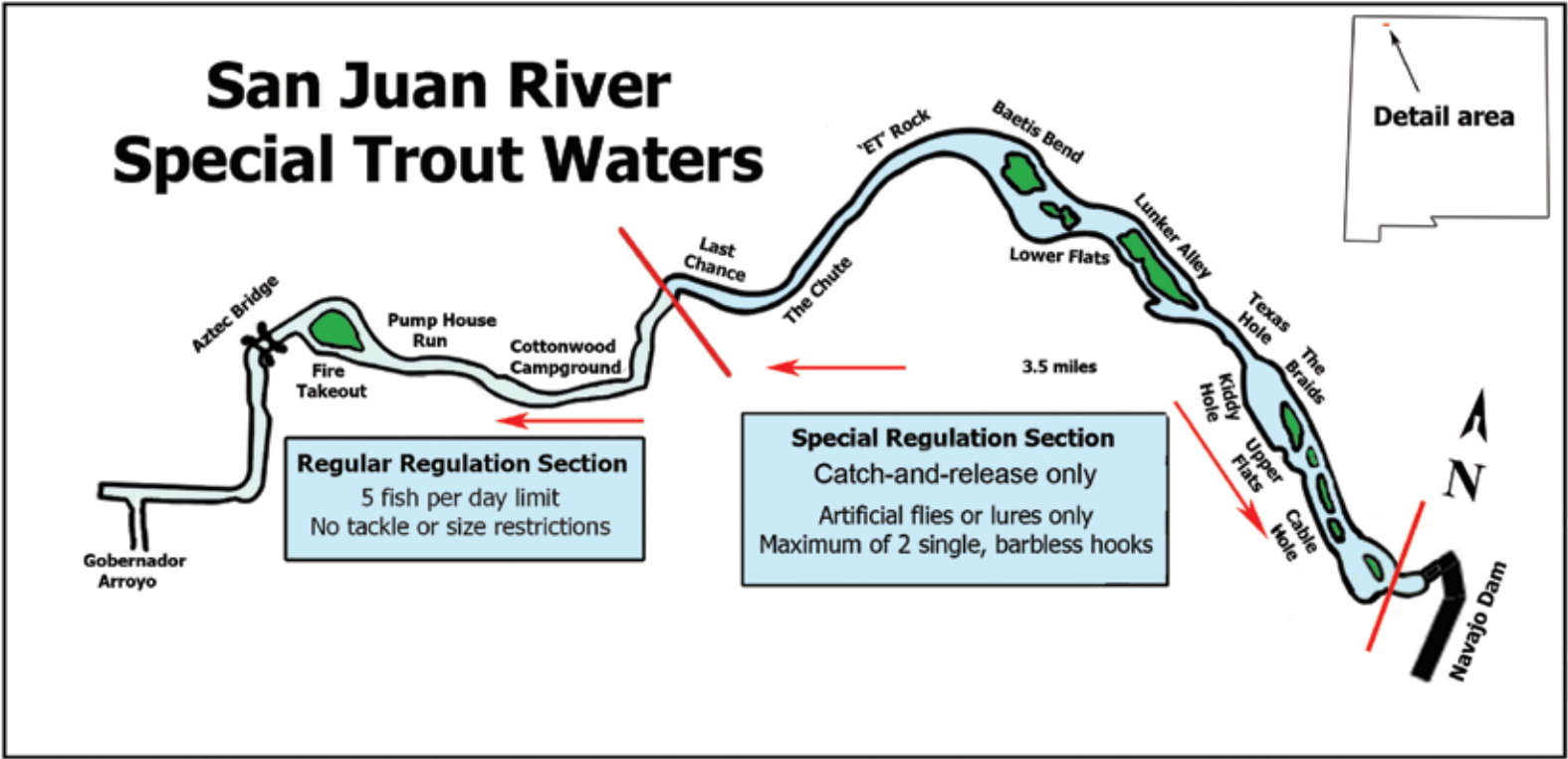
The new catchment dam should alleviate that problem and end a decade-long effort to address it, Wethington said.

Dispersing anglers

The Braids project is the latest in a series of habitat improvement projects designed to enhance conditions for trout and anglers, while serving as a hedge against the possibility of low water flows in the future. Need for the projects became apparent after flows from Navajo Reservoir were reduced during the 1990s to accommodate the downstream needs of endangered native fish. The lower flows contributed to a buildup of silt and sediment and reduced prime fish habitat, which alarmed some anglers.

To address the lower flows, the Department and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management developed a strategy to increase fish habitat and disperse angling pressure. Those





The construction of Navajo Dam in 1962 created an artificial riparian habitat that was almost ideal for trout. Today, the four-mile stretch of river below the dam is home to an estimated 70,000 trout, about half rainbows and half browns.

efforts began in the winter of 2005 with the placement of rock structures in a barren stretch of river below Simon Canyon. The work was completed with \$64,000 in private and public funds, and significant contributions of manpower and equipment from the oil and gas industry.

Dozens of large boulders were placed in the river to keep the water churning, which helped scour the riverbed and carry silt and sediment downstream. Today, what was once a long, slow stretch of sandy streambed holding few if any trout has become one of the most popular sections of the river.

“We’re really seeing dividends from that project,” Johnson of the guides association said. The guides enjoy the stretch of river because it now gives their clients a last chance to catch fish before their trip typically ends just around the corner at the Gravel Pit takeout.

Recently, work continued with \$27,000 of habitat improvements at Cottonwood Campground, where the river is heavily stocked with trout and where anglers can fish with bait and harvest the bag limit of five fish.

“We’ve been seeing great results all over the river from these projects,” said Brian Wagner of the San Juan Flyfishing Federation. “Hopefully there’s more to come.”

More to come

Wethington said he’s not done, yet. More habitat improvements are in the works for the river’s back channels, including one that flows from Texas Hole to the Lower Flats, and another that runs from the Lower Flats to just below Baetis Bend. Those improvements will give anglers seeking solitude more opportunities to catch fish and

get away from the infamous San Juan crowds.

Wethington said help was always nearby when needed for all the river projects. Joining the Department of Game and Fish were the BLM, the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, New Mexico Environment Department and New Mexico State Parks. The local angling industry also participated, along with the San Juan Fly Fishing Federation, the San Juan River Guides Association and many individual fishing guides and anglers.

The oil and gas industry contributed significantly to the projects, providing manpower, funding and equipment. Participating companies included Devon Energy, Williams and ConocoPhillips, Golden Equipment, Volvo International, Aztec Excavation, and Adobe Construction of Bloomfield.

Funding for the Braids project included \$250,000 earmarked by former Gov. Bill Richardson and \$100,000 from federal

sport fish restoration funds. The federal funds are generated through excise taxes on fishing tackle, motor boat fuel and other sporting goods, said Mike Sloane, Chief of the Fisheries Division for the Department of Game and Fish.

The engineering work was done by Riverbend Engineering of Albuquerque and Pagosa Springs, Colo., while AUI of Albuquerque provided construction services with assistance from Aquatic Consultants of Albuquerque.

Wethington said Sloane and State Game Commission Chairman Jim McClintic are “the unsung heroes” of the San Juan River projects, providing vital political support and funding to see them through.

“It wouldn’t have happened without them,” Wethington said.

Karl Moffatt is a longtime New Mexico journalist and avid outdoorsman who publishes regularly at www.outdoorsnewmexico.com.



Anglers from around the world spend about 45,000 days a year fishing the 4-mile stretch of quality trout waters on the San Juan River below Navajo Dam. Recent improvements such as habitat work in the Braids area, left, are designed to help disperse the crowding, often evident in the number of boats using popular Texas Hole, above.

Photos: Dan Williams, above; Karl Moffatt, left



Wild about the outdoors



Photos: above and right, Kevin Holladay

Nothing beats the outdoors in promoting health, education and fun for youngsters.

Children’s Bill of Rights urges agencies to get kids outside

By Marti Niman

Is there a way to make school a lot more fun and still learn the important subjects? Can kids make a difference in the world right now, or do they have to wait until they’re old enough to vote and run for office?

Wild Friends offers a way for students to do both. The program started 20 years ago as part of University of New Mexico School of Law. Students from across New Mexico write legislation that helps wildlife. Some students visit Santa Fe and advocate (support) the new legislation, create songs, dances and artwork and get outside to play and learn at the same time.

This year, Wild Friends helped to write a memorial called the Children’s Bill of Rights. It passed the House and Senate unanimously (everyone voted yes). This year, there were 10 schools with about 400 kids who helped to get the memorial passed.

What is the Children’s Bill of Rights? It’s a long document (report) that asks state agencies to find ways for kids to get outdoors. Why is that important?

“A lot of people die from just staying inside and just eating,” said Gayla Lacy, a fifth-grade Wild Friend from Guadalupe Montessori School in Silver City. “It helps with school work. If kids don’t go outside, they don’t think as well.”

“It’s proven that if you go outside it helps get rid of stress. I learned that a lot of kids in New Mexico have obesity and diabetes,” said Brianna Sanchez, a sixth-grader at Horizon Academy West in Albuquerque. “If you stay indoors you watch TV, the computer and you want to snack all the time.”

“Since we go outside, we are smart,” said another Wild Friend. “It increases creativity and enthusiasm.”

The Children’s Bill of Rights passed as two separate memorials, one in the House and one in

the Senate. A memorial is not really a law. People can’t be arrested or fined if they don’t do what the memorial says. But memorials start new ideas by introducing a need or a problem to the Legislature.

“There’s a pattern of having a memorial one year to educate the Legislature on an issue and then follow up the next year to call for specific action or funding,” said Susan George, who organizes the Wild Friends programs. She works with the schools and arranges the student visits to Santa Fe.

Teachers and parents also come with the students.

“This is not just a field trip; this is a real eye-opener for parents and teachers alike,” George said. “A lot of parents haven’t been to the Legislature and this is their first time. So it’s learning experience for them.”

“The Wild Friends trip took about a month to prepare,” said Rylee Myers, a sixth-grader at the Guadalupe Montessori School. “We study and make note cards for talking with the senators. They thought it was a good idea. They’re going to vote for us and tell others to vote for it. It’s exciting to see if they pass the bill.”



Some students find future careers in Wild Friends. “One former Wild Friend interned with Jeff Bingaman in Washington, D.C.,” George said. “Another is a legislative intern this year. She grabbed me in the hall and said, ‘That’s how I got my start.’”

Wild Friends students really appreciate the outdoors and hope the memorial will help other students, especially urban kids. “They always talk about their new apps; they never talk about wildlife,” said Anita Sosaya, a Guadalupe Montessori student.

“We met someone who didn’t know how to fish! I started fishing at 5,” Sanchez said.

“We stayed at a fancy hotel in Albuquerque and when we looked outside, we just saw roads,” Myers said. “They need to get out and go camping, hiking and study streams for macro-invertebrates.”

“Walking outside can reduce antisocial symptoms such as bullying,” Lacy said. “The memorial asks that state agencies create programs to get kids outside, especially in urban areas.”

In previous years, Wild Friends worked on legislation about wildlife road crossings, poaching fines, butterflies and other wildlife concerns.

Students visit other state agencies in addition to the Legislature while in Santa Fe, including the Supreme Court and the State Land Office. They discover first-hand all the branches of government as part of their civics course work.

“Wild Friends does a great job of teaching our kids about conservation and participatory government,” State Land Commissioner Ray Powell said.

For more information about Wild Friends, contact Susan George at (505) 277-5089 or visit www.wildfriends.unm.edu. For information about the State Land Office, call (505) 827-5760 or visit www.nmstatelands.org.

Marti Niman is a public relations specialist with the State Land Office. She can be reached at (505) 827-3650 or mniman@slo.state.nm.us.



First fish, tons of fun.

Students from Horizon Academy West in Albuquerque examine a seed during an outdoor field trip. As members of Wild Friends, a youth advocacy group that encourages more outdoor education, they helped write the Children’s Bill of Rights, a memorial that passed the 2012 New Mexico Legislature.

Photo: Marti Niman

