

# Trout



# Talk

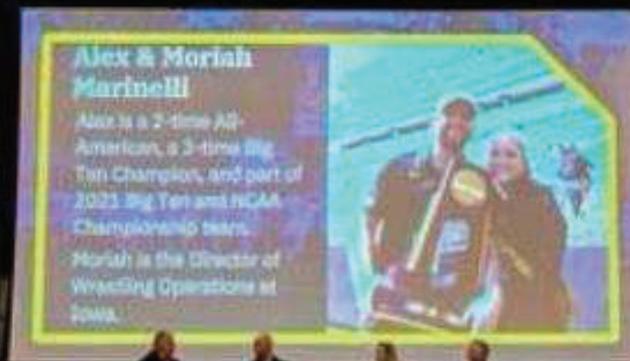
**Family, friends  
and fishing**

**Page 3**

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# Family, friends & fishing

The Shaws are sharing their love for Bennett Spring with the next generation of anglers

**LAURA VALENTI  
FOR TROUT TALK**

As teenagers, Jerry and Denise Shaw, who both grew up in Columbia, Mo., came to Bennett Spring State Park regularly—with their individual families.

“My father, Ruey, who passed away in 2009, brought us,” Denise reminisced while seated in her favorite state park getaway beside the Spring Branch on a sunny August afternoon.

“I started fishing with my Uncle Jack and my cousin, Vernon ‘Jack Junior,’” Jerry added.

Denise’s family actually lived next door to Jerry’s same uncle and cousins. And then, the new couple spent their honeymoon at Bennett, in her father’s RV in one of the nearby campgrounds. Until this summer, the Shaws had their own camper at the recently closed Fort Bennett for many years in one of the most hidden campgrounds at Bennett, tucked in behind the store on Missouri 64, near the park’s main entrance.

“We were lucky to find another place at Peaceful Valley,” Denise shared.

She and Jerry now live at Hallsville, approximately 20 miles outside of Columbia.

CONTINUED on next page



**Jerry and Denise Shaw** are passing their love of fishing at Bennett Spring on to the next generation. They like to take their grandchildren fishing with them at the state park.

Submitted photo

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“Columbia has grown up so much over the years, and so has Bennett over the many years we’ve been coming here. It has really been busy this last year since COVID and people realized that camping and fishing were something they could do with their families,” Denise said.

Family, friends and fishing are what has kept Jerry and Denise coming back to Bennett for over 30 years now.

“We have four daughters—Lisa, Brooke, Kerri, and Hilary—all of whom are now married and two of them have their own RVs at neighboring Bennett Spring campgrounds,” she said.

Their eight grandchildren have also been here, sometimes all at once, like last year.

“I really liked that,” the proud grandmother added.

Their daughter, Kerri, and her sons also fish with them at times.

“The boys are learning,” Denise added. “Still playing more than anything right now.”

Denise is retired after 28 years as a civilian employee with the Columbia Police Department and now works as an attendance secretary at West Middle School in Columbia. Jerry is in construction.

They both enjoy fly fishing and split their time between Zones 1 and 2 on the Spring Branch and despite their affinity with trout fishing, they do not care to feast on their catch or even keep them.

“We just enjoy catching them,” Jerry said. “It’s a great place to just come and relax with friends and family,” he said.

Right after the interview, he and Denise scurried off to make a few more casts for those elusive Bennett Spring trout, before heading back to central Missouri and the Monday morning call back to work and the day-to-day world.



Submitted photos  
**Left, Denise Shaw of Hallsville, Mo. helps** her grandson, Emmett, pull in a trout while fishing at Bennett Spring State Park this summer. Above, Denise and Jerry Shaw lean on each other while fishing from the banks of Bennett Spring. The couple has been fishing at the state park for decades, first coming to the area when they were teenagers.



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# From Eggs to Lunkers

Bennett Spring Hatchery raises about 350,000 trout every year

**CHRIS RODEN • FOR TROUT TALK**

**I**n the wild, only one percent of trout eggs survive long enough to grow into trout.

At the Bennett Spring State Park Hatchery, the percentage is much higher but still not 100 percent.

Hatchery Manager Ben Havens said he and Assistant Manager Mike Perry and their crew would be ecstatic if 40 percent of the eggs successfully made it out the door to the raceways.

It is a cycle that begins each fall when spawning happens in the hatchery.

Havens said he keeps a couple thousand brood stock on hand, a mix of three-year-old females weighing in at three to five pounds and two-year-old males at a pound and a half.

The females produce an astonishing number of eggs, one thousand for each pound of body weight.

"A three pound female can give us 3,000 eggs," Havens said.

Consequently, a season's egg harvest is impressive.

"We look to take somewhere between one million and a million and half eggs during a production season," Havens said.

That helps him meet his commitment of 350,000 12 and a half inch fish for stocking the park, the Niangua



TroutTalk photo/Chris Roden  
**Greg Lambeth** holds the basket that Clayton O'Quinn will fill with trout. Lambeth emptied each basket load into another basket on the lower side of the bridge. From it, the trout are quickly pumped through a pipe to lower section where they will soon enter the fishing stream.

and some urban areas.

Of the 350,000 fish he must produce, 315,000 go to the Park, 30,000 goes to Kansas City for urban fishing and about 10,000 into the Niangua.

Spawning begins in September and runs through December. In January through April, he receives spring spawn eggs from other partner hatcheries.

Thanks to the spawns and existing fish, Havens said the park could have somewhere around 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 fish of different sizes from an inch to stocker size at any given time.

How many trout are stocked in the stream is determined by a simple formula.

The anticipated number of anglers times 2.25 pounds of fish determines how many stocker fish of a certain weight are needed.

The anticipated angler total is figured by looking at the average number of anglers in years past.

Weather and area events may make hitting the correct number of fish difficult. However,

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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HATCHERY, FROM PAGE 5

shortfalls are corrected the next day while anglers get to enjoy any overstocking.

After the March 1 opening, Havens and his crew prepare for the year's three big fishing events: Veterans' Fishing Day in April, Kids' Day on the first Saturday in May and Ladies' Fishing Day on the last Saturday of September.

When Havens began at Bennett, only Kids' Day was observed. He implemented the other two signature events.

Havens said participation for Kids' Day is unpredictable because of weather and competing weekend activities.

"Most of the season is pretty laid back. We're just in kind of a groove. We stock every night for the next day, we move fish, we clean fish, we take of the fish growing in the building until they're about four inches and are ready to come outside," Havens said.

They are placed in the race-

ways where they have ample space, feed and water. As they grow and crowd the raceways, the park crew moves them to other raceways for more space.

How much feed the fish receive is based on their weight.

"If they're not growing enough, we feed them more. If they're getting too fat, we might cut them back and put them on a little bit of a diet. It just depends on what's going on," Havens said.

Havens said he and Perry have the job of overseeing the crew in the day-to-day operations. Perry more often manages the crew while Havens juggles the paperwork, orders supplies and handles PR for the hatchery.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, Havens has hatchery tours on the first and third Saturdays of the month for individuals and groups.

Havens said he and his crew get in a groove and get surprised by how quickly the big events

arrive.

The heaviest stocking months are in the summer when from June until August the crew stock from 45,000 to 60,000 trout.

Once the fishing season ends on October 31, the "trout harvest" begins with urban area stocking.

Warm water hatcheries bring in stocking trucks and the park uses its own stocking truck for the harvest.

"Over the course of a day and half, we'll bring the trucks in, we'll load them up with stocker size trout and they'll disperse those fish in the mid-Missouri and Kansas City areas of the state," Havens said.

Havens said the trucks have oxygen and aerators to distribute the oxygen throughout the tank.

"We can haul about 2,500 big stocker size rainbow trout on that truck. I'm sure it's a wild experience for them," Havens said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden

**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 both eyes and will soon hatch.

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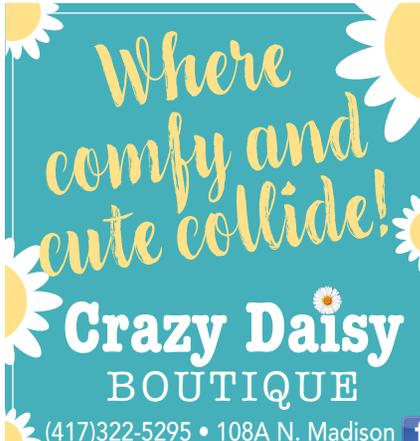
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# Get in the zone

Take a look at the state park's rules and regulations

## FISHING REGULATIONS

The spring branch is stocked daily during the regular fishing season, which is March 1 through Oct. 31. Daily permits are required to fish on the spring branch and zones are set aside for different kinds of lures. Permits are available at the park store. For more information, call (417) 532-4307.

**ZONE 1:** From the hatchery dam upstream to the end of the area. Only flies are permitted.

**ZONE 2:** From the hatchery dam to the whistle bridge. Only flies and artificial lures are permitted.

**ZONE 3:** From the whistle bridge to the Niangua River. Only soft plastic bait (unscented), 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

**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

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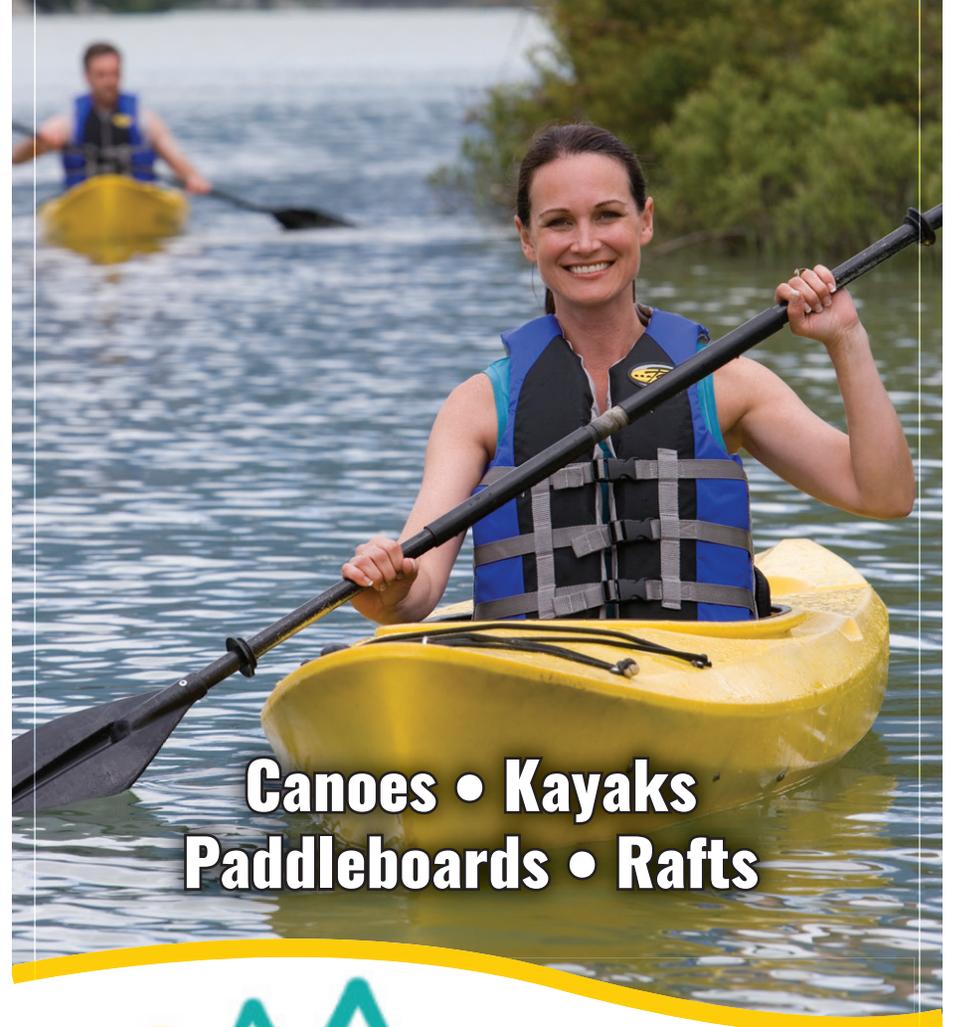
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## STORE HOURS

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*- Jim Harrison*



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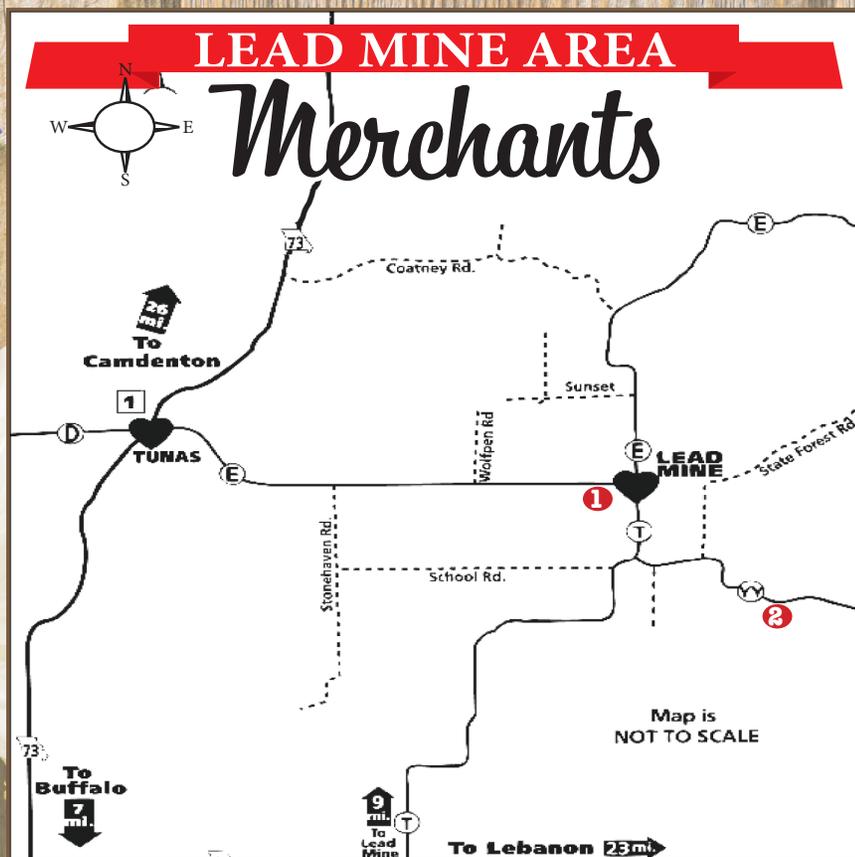
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## Fish Stories



Photo courtesy of the Bennett Spring Park Store  
**Holtin Gander, 5, and his brother, Craytin, 2, show off Holtin's catch of the day on Aug. 21. Holtin caught this 3.5 pound trout in Zone 1 with a black and yellow rooster tail.**

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HATCHERY, FROM PAGE 7

Havens said because the fish are in complete darkness, they are not agitated by passing cars and trees and lights that a windowed truck would allow.

"There's things we can do to calm them down. You can put a little salt in the water at a certain percentage. It's kind of like an aspirin. It calms the nerves a little bit," Havens said.

Havens said the trout are transported once or twice a month November through March for the urban winter fishing season.

Friday through Monday beginning the second weekend in November to the second weekend in February, the winter fishing season happens in the park.

In those cooler months, catch and release fishing with a fly rod is allowed from 8 a.m. through 4 p.m in any zone in the park.

"There are some anglers that that's they only time they come to Bennett because they don't want to hassle with the crowds of people that they perceive we have," Havens said.

However, even in the park's peak fishing season in the summer, crowds can be avoided.

"There's been a few mornings that I've walked over to come to work this week and there's been no one fishing at all," Havens said.

The Niangua River continues to be stocked twice a month the whole year round with 500-900 fish per month. The trout that avoid park anglers' lures join them.

Havens said he trades fish with other cold water hatcheries as needed because of flooding and such.

"We work together and try to help each other out as best we can," Havens said.

Havens lives in the park and shares on-call duties with Perry. They respond to requests by the crew in the park.

Havens said some of his nine-man crew is the park 24/7 throughout the year to see to the trout, including holidays.

"We rang in the New Year during a flood. We were all up at the intake and we honked the horn a couple of times and kind of looked at each other like 'Man! There are so many other places we would rather be,' but we were here helping the trout and keeping them safe," Havens said.

Anglers reap the benefits of Havens and his crew's work ethic.

While the percentage of trout eggs that survive in the wild is just one percent, the percentage of anglers who come to Bennett Spring State Park and enjoy themselves runs high.



**Trout Talk photo/Chris Roden**  
Hatchery Manager Ben Havens checks on the occupants of a Heath tray. The eggs are treated with a fungicide to keep them healthy. A day and a half after their first eye develops, they are moved to an upwelling jar.

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# Trout Talk

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