

## Outdoor recreation in S.D. sees big boost during pandemic

Nick Lowrey, South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota's billion-dollar outdoor recreation economy boomed in 2020, providing a much-needed economic boost in several business sectors while giving hope to wildlife management agencies that they can reverse a long-term decline in the number of licensed hunters and anglers.

As movie theaters closed, concerts were canceled, stores shut down and other indoor activities were curtailed by efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, tens of thousands of South Dakotans turned to the outdoors for stress relief and entertainment in 2020. State park visitation reached near-record levels; online birding groups saw membership skyrocket; campgrounds struggled to keep up with demand and the sale of hunting and fishing licenses boomed.

Despite waiving entry fees and not collecting visitor information for almost two months at the start of the pandemic, state park visitation in 2020 has been roughly 31% higher than it was in 2019, said Al Nedved, deputy director of the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department's parks division. "It was pretty evident early on that the outdoors were going to be a place where people could exercise or just relax or whatever they like

to do and do it safely," Nedved said. The South Dakota Ornithologists' Union, which runs the state's premier bird-watching webpage and social media accounts, has seen a big jump in activity and membership requests, said president Kent Jensen.

"I would say activity on our Facebook page has increased several hundred percent since the pandemic began," Jensen said. "I'm probably getting two or three membership requests a day."

Similarly, the Sioux Empire Paddlers, one of the state's largest canoeing and kayaking organizations, grew to 280 members, a record number. The lakes around Sioux Falls often were crowded with people paddling canoes and kayaks,

### Outdoor (continued on page 2)

WEATHER				
Robert Cole - Official Weather Observer				
	HI	LO	PR	
Dec. 22	40	20	0	
Dec. 23	54	13	0	
Dec. 24	13	-7	.41	
Dec. 25	14	-9	0	
Dec. 26	29	10	0	
Dec. 27	34	13	.03	
Dec. 28	26	10	0	
2020 precipitation to date	18.67			
2019 precipitation to date	38.27			



Clark Elementary School got an early Christmas present on December seventh when 15 Strider balancing bikes from the Strider company arrived. With no cost to the school due to a grant, the bikes will be used in the kindergarten class physical education periods to teach balance and how to ride a pedal bike.

Shown above are students of kindergarten teachers Stephanie Hagstrom and Raegan Florey.

In the front row, from left to right are, Ryker Lamb, Thomas Dandurand,

Allie Schmidt, Alice Ringo, Finley Morehouse, Ashlynn Peterson, Thea Mohr, Peyton Hardy and Aysling Forest.

On bikes in the front are Roland Beving, Santiago Culhuac, Blakely Hallberg, Ana Bokinskie, Luis Altunar, Blake Severson and Kamden Werdell.

On the bikes in back, from left to right are, Willow Lenzen, Declan Ooster, Noah Woodland, Berkley Heer, Erick Arthur, Abbie Olson, Ava Meier and Alayna Reppe.

## Balance bikes are now available for kindergarten P.E.

Clark Elementary School received an early Christmas present this year. Fifteen bikes from the Strider company arrived on December seventh to be used in the kindergarten physical education class.

"It was a really good deal for us," stated Landon Hammer, physical education instructor at Clark School. "The 15 Strider bikes came with helmets and pedal kits to be added later. This grant benefited quite a few schools in South Dakota."

School custodian Chad Thomas had the job of assembling the bikes.

After Christmas break, the school will start teaching balance on the bikes to the kindergarten students.

The strider bikes, popular in recent years, have the main job of teaching balance first to the future bike riders. One uses their legs to move the bikes along as they perfect their balance. There are usually no pedals on a basic strider bike, but the school ones received have a pedal kit that can be put on later

to make them into regular pedal bikes. "That will come at the end of the year after students master balance skills and learn bike safety," stated Hammer. "A lot of students still have training wheels on their bikes at home. We will set up some lanes in the gym, maybe a racetrack type of set-up for them to practice." The bikes have small platforms for the students to help in balancing with maybe one foot on a pedal to get a feel for it. Kickstands also

help with the process if needed.

"We'll work on balance and take it from there," ended Hammer. "By the end of the year, hopefully all will have the hang of it."

With 13 and 14 students in each class, each one will get their own bike to practice on during PE class. When asked, only 11 students in total in the two classes had their own bike at home.

# 2020 was not a normal year - it was a year of a pandemic

## January - June - COVID hit mid-March

PANDEMIC. That is how the year 2020 will be remembered. There will be no sugar coating. No getting around it. No options!

I'm glad there are still newspapers. If one tried to find out what happened in the year 2020 and what didn't happen in 2020, 15 years from now, one would need a historical perspective. That's where the newspaper comes into play.

In Clark County we tried for normalcy and did a much better job than urban areas, but we were far from normal.

If someone asks you what you did in 2020, the answer will either be 'nothing' or 'I stayed home'.

This is January - June, the first six months of 2020. Up until the middle of March - things went on as planned. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit, things got different. Schools closed. School activities closed. Businesses were affected. The CDC pushed social distancing, outdoors, wearing masks, washing hands and isolation.

Here is the first half of 2020, under a pandemic.



Intensity, chemistry, attention to details and execution are variables that go along with winning high school basketball games. In the last decade the Clark-Willow Lake Cyclone boys basketball, under the direction of coach Jerome Nesheim, has a 190-45 record.

During the Cyclones versus Hamlin game, coach Nesheim is shown 'coaching up' the defense. Varsity players on the bench include, left to right, Tate Burke, Mitchell Larson, Hunter Bratland and Wyatt Anderson.

### January

Long-time Dacotah Bank, Clark market president Tom LaBrie, announces his retirement, in April. Brandon Herr replaces LaBrie as the incoming market president.

Hannah Heiman, daughter of Heath and Erin Heiman wins the Junior Snow Queen Talent Contest, in Aberdeen, with her vocal-ukulele solo.

Chris Sass is elected chairman of the Clark County Board of Commissioners.

Trinity Peterson is elected FFA District II president. Grace Peterson is selected reporter on the Dis-



Clark Police Chief Jeremy Wellnitz, second from the right, was honored with The Patriot Award at the Ulyot Building.

South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg, second from the left, was a special guest at the ceremony and said a few words. Nate Nickeson, at right, nominated Wellnitz for this award and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve volunteer, Randy Rakness, left, of Watertown, presented the award.

trict II officer team.

2020 property assessment notices went out to all property owners. Vanguard Appraisals, of Iowa, did the appraisals of all non-ag property in the county.

The Clark-Willow Lake Cyclone boys basketball team has had a 190-45 record in the decade 2010-2019. Coach Jerome Nesheim leads one of the elite high school programs in the state.

Over 100 vehicles come through Clark with the Dale Jones funeral procession. Jones was a tow truck operator, killed on Jan. 4, 2020 while assisting in pulling out a car.

Winter storm Jacob lasts for three days, with lows of -19" and 40 mph winds and six inches of new snow.

Lake Grocery is now in the eighth year as a business, in Willow Lake and is a community meeting place.

Clark Development Corporation disbands after donating \$615,000 to Clark Area Community Founda-



Sully, Archer and Trigg Felberg turned 10 years old on February 10, 2020. Born within minutes of each other, the boys are the sons of Jim and Tia Felberg of Willow Lake. They have a 15-year-old older brother Kaplan.

tion.

Verdon Lamb, after 39 years of serving on the Codington-Clark Electric board, has retired. Lamb was presented with a South Dakota Rural Electric Associa-

tion Leadership award.

Henry One-Act Play advances to state competition.

### February

"Choose Clark County" Economic Development office opens, with Kristin Vandersnick as the executive director.

Hannah Webb, SDSU senior, student teaches at CHS, with Tammie Paulson as the supervising teacher.

Grace Adam serves as a legislative page, at Pierre, sponsored by Sen. Brock Greenfield.

Pastor Jonathan Gossett is the new pastor at First Baptist Church in Clark. Pastor Roger and Suzanne Shepherd, after 19 years at First Baptist, have moved back to North Carolina.

Lanny Flatten is the new Clark County Emergency Management Director. He has since been replaced by David Lewis.



Practicing social distancing and following precautionary pandemic guidelines is now the norm.

President Donald Trump and his CDC COVID-19 team have put in place precautionary national guidelines through April, 2020.

Clark barber Roger Chapin brings a little humor to the situation with his sign, "Sorry. A man with a gun told me to lock it up."

A feature story details the olive wood nativity set of Kathy Larson, who purchased it in Bethlehem, Israel and brought it back to her home in Clark County.

Government Day for county seniors is held at the Clark County Courthouse and Clark American Legion Hall.

The Northern State University band performs at



Rich Foster and Jason Foster of the Garden City area wrangle the first set of triplets they've ever had in their Registered Simmental herd. Born to a third time mother who had them on her own and attended to all three, one weighed 30 lbs. and the other two came in at 35 lbs.

The smallest, Harriet is aggressive and feisty for her size it was reported. From left to right, the calves have been named Howard, Henry and Harriet.

Clark High School under the direction of Dr. Rolf Olson.

Sen. Brock Greenfield, Rep. Lana Greenfield and Rep. Kaleb Weis visit with constituents at the Cracker Barrel, in Clark.

Five Cyclone wrestlers qualify for the state tournament, including: Region 1B champions Gunnar Kvistad, 106; Lucas Kannegieter, 126 and Gage Burke, 160. Taking third in the region and qualifying for State were Charlie Spieker, 145 and Avery Nichols at 285.

The Clark County Commissioners begin looking at a TIF plan for the new Riverview Dairy, LLP, 16 miles southwest of Clark.

Willow Lake second graders win the third annual Souper Bowl.

The Lady Cyclones are 11-9 and the fourth seed in Region 2A.

The Clark-Willow Lake Cyclone boys basketball seven-year reign as Northeast Conference champions has ended.

### March

Clark Elementary third grade teacher Heather Fuhrmann is chosen 'Teacher of the Year'.

Raymond/Logan Township native Alma Hass turns 100 years young on March 5.

Clark Chief of Police Jeremy Wellnitz is honored with The Patriot Award. South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg was a special guest at the ceremony. Clark city policeman Nate Nickeson, nominated Wellnitz for this award, which honors supervisors for

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