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“Freedom”

April 14, 2005
from the series

Wildlife Along Our Rivers
by Stephen Hassler

Click on “Photo Galleries,” and select an option from the list. There’s Country Scenes, Farmsteads, Wildflowers, Autumn Leaves, and Winter Snow, as well as Wild Geese, Sandhill Cranes, and Eagles. This is a start. I will spend more time using my new telephoto lens to bring you pictures of wildlife that you may not have seen in your back yard. And you can refer your relatives and friends to my online edition of *Your Country Neighbor*. Just let them know the web address above.

Whisler's

Hunting

&



Fishing

Report

by Josh Whisler
Photos Provided by Author

Fishing:

The Missouri River opened up some very good fishing opportunities this last month. After the recent rains and the rise in the river for the barge traffic, the river levels look more like they should for this time of the year. Several local fishermen have caught their limit of channel cat in the last couple weeks. The fish aren't as aggressive or as big as they are in the summer's warmer waters. So you have to be patient and catch them on the downbeat as they tap on your line. Lighter tackle is almost a must to realize that the fish are even biting at all. I recommend lighter weights and hooks on your rig too. They seem to mouth your bait a lot, instead of just swallowing it. Many times you'll find that you're catching them in the lip more than deeper in the mouth. Other species are hitting pretty regular also; the sturgeon, carp, and skipjack herring. So it seems you have plenty of action even if it isn't something you're going to take home. The bait of choice is night crawlers, with fair action on dough and stink baits. And I have had some reports of Big Blue Cat being landed on live bait just of late. So that's good news, makes you want to get some bait and go get your line wet.



This month's fishing picture is Jackie Whisler with a Shovelnose Sturgeon.

Mushroom Hunting:

It's that time of the year again! Morel Mushroom harvesting! The hunting season that's not listed on The Game & Parks Web Page. And is very popular in our area and you don't even need a hunting permit. Mushroom Season! 'Morel Mushrooms' that is. Morel Mushrooms grow wild along the Missouri River Bottom and the Missouri River Bluffs. And provide a tasty treat this time of year. The course sponge-looking Morels must have the right amount of heat and the right amount of moisture to pop. You usually find them near the edge of timbers first and you may have to do a little walking to find a mess. But soon (within a week or so) you will find them almost everywhere you look. If there is one thing for sure "You

can't beat fresh mushrooms!" Morels in our area are found earlier on the bottom ground near the river and then a couple of weeks later they show up in the hills (bluffs) and slowly after a week or so they are no longer found anywhere. Thus Mushroom Season is closed and then comes the long wait till next year. For years there has been a local race to find the first mushrooms of the year. The race is not over until they're displayed (proudly) at local gathering places. Thus the only reward is the gloating but it's well worth it to some (That's a whole year of gloating now!). The truth is, you can talk about them all you want but until it's on film it's just a story. I caught Jamie Reeves on film with his bounty.



This month's hunting pictures are of Jamie Reeves with his Morel Mushrooms.

Hunting:

Spring Turkey Seasons is here. Our unit (East Missouri) has unlimited permits this year. There is an early and a late season again this year. So plan accordingly. The hens are out wandering around so that means they are laying. Which in turn means that the Toms are looking for hens – that's where the hunter comes in. The basic call to call in a Tom is a hen call because it's breeding season – make sense now why the hens out wandering around is a good thing for the turkey hunter? So sharpen up on your call and give it a try – the time is now.

Units

Youth Shotgun Statewide	April 9-May 22
East Missouri Early	April 16-April 24
East Missouri Late	April 25-May 22
West	April 16-May 22
Archery Statewide	March 25-May 22

The river is opening up to some good fishing with the water warming up along with the warmer days. And the turkeys are practically there for the taking with the large numbers of them this year, if you can drag them away from the hens. So if you want to get some outdoor activities going, it's not hard to find something to do. Remember I'm not an expert but I have my share of luck. I wonder if the experts are having any luck today? So until next time "Happy Hunting & Fishing."

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Recipe of the Month



Marshmallow Fun

by Ann Yates

Let's have some campfire fun this month. If you have never had a freshly made marshmallow you are in for a treat, and it's easy too.

Let's start with the basic recipe and then we'll discuss techniques. Prepare a pan for the finished syrup as it will set up quickly. You can simply place a lot of flour into a 9x13 inch baking pan, pat it down and form it up the sides. The flour will not be harmed and can be returned to the canister when you are done.

(Now for the recipe.) Make sure all equipment and utensils are completely free of any greasy residues.

2 envelopes (2 tablespoons) unflavored gelatin
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
1 egg white

Soften gelatin in 1/2 cup cold water. In a 2-quart saucepan, combine sugar, corn syrup and 1/3 cup water. Cook to soft ball stage (240) or until a spoonful poured into a cup of cold water can be formed by the fingers into a soft ball that can be picked up with the fingers, stir only till sugar dissolves. If sugar crystals cling to the side of the pan wipe off with a damp paper towel.

Remove from heat; stir in gelatin to dissolve. Let cool 10 minutes. Beat egg white to stiff peaks. Slowly add syrup, beating on high speed of electric mixer till candy stands in soft peaks.

Now for the fun part. Simply pour all the marshmallow mixture into the pan of flour you prepared earlier. Let it set overnight, then cut it into desired pieces with floured scissors. Or you can have some fun. Place the flour into the pan, pat it down, then use objects to make depressions in the flour. You can use a whole egg to press 1/2 egg shapes, or hearts or stars, anything you would like. You can even use dowels to form arms and legs, etc. and create a marshmallow man. Have fun with it. Sprinkle more flour on top so it will not be sticky (or place a chocolate cookie on it while still soft for later dipping). After it has set up simply lift the marshmallows out and shake off excess flour.

Now you can roast or dip or decorate. Get inventive and make candybars by dipping in melted chocolate, drizzle with melted caramel and dip in nuts. Now I know your mouth is watering.

Have a great Mayflower month!

Editor's note: You can visit Ann weekdays 6:00 to 9:00 in the morning, and afternoons 4:30 to 7:00 at **Honey Creek Vineyards Bakery** at 1705 Park Avenue in Peru. Call 872-4865 for favorites or specialty orders. Decorated cakes are now available upon request.

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ELUSIVE MUSHROOMS

by Devon Adams

They wait in shadows or in sunshine, hiding under leaves and logs or standing straight in open meadows. They seem to know that there are those among the human race who want to eat them. So to make the searching harder, these fake sponges choose different places every year in which to grow. They scorn locations where they've grown in masses by the bushel and move somewhere they've never been before. They laugh when hunters with their empty bags pass them by and come again another day to find morels all dried and shriveled like little mummies. They are magicians who can disappear at will. Stupid people stand and turn in circles in a swift survey and then they turn around again and see the fist-sized mushroom that wasn't there before. But, now and then, hiding doesn't work, and bags fill up with scores of succulent treasures that will be rolled in beaten eggs and cracker crumbs, then sizzle in a skillet. It's enough to keep those wild-eyed mushroom hunters hunting, even in their dreams.

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We don't ride horses as much, or walk miles to learn history
Like we did years ago when our Senior Citizens were young.
We hop in a vehicle and in a short time have crossed the states
Searching, questioning, where so many worked among.
Or we fly through the air like a bird on the breeze
Over clouds and treetops while jotting down notes galore.
Even watching on a monitor our plane flying over the ocean below
Read from it the altitude, distances, weather, and more.

You wonder why we mention such minor, minute things
When there is huge and powerful history out there.
It's simple indeed, someone started a trend to be sure
It was not the elite of the day, but our Mothers so fair.

Recently a friend and I visited Glenn Miller's Museum in Iowa.
It brought back memories of Miller, and a favorite movie star,
A lady. When still glancing at her picture, you know
June Allyson was the sweetest female performer ever, by far.
Call us old-fashioned; times have certainly changed
And all have their opinion and are free to choose.
But for some it's so easy to make a distinct choice
Remembering my Mother, I just can't lose!

SUDDEN NOTICE

by Devon Adams

The morning light was new
as it painted the barn with gold.
Fog had been sleeping on the ground
through the quiet night of stars.
Now the sun was lifting the gray scarves
into the warming air, leaving drops of water
on the tender grass that were prisms
full of shattered colors.

Over the chorus of bird songs
that hung across the meadow
came a staccato flash of chirps
from high above the trees.
Then, dark bodies flashing,
black wings came on bomber runs,
doing roll-overs and sudden drops
in altitude, giving sudden notice
that the barn swallows had arrived.

ANGRY FISTS

by Devon Adams

Through the long night of the winter,
flowering plants and trees dreamed
of when they'd be alive again.
Below the frozen soil
only the roots kept the memory
of fragrant colored petals.
Above the ground, iron branches
were barren and without warmth.
Anger grew against the cold
and the whiteness of the snow,
and tiny fists begin to form
inside the dead gray twigs.

When spring came running
back, wearing sheets of rain,
buds begin to grow.
They swelled with life
and longed to kiss the sun.
But they were still fists
clenched in angry energy,
wanting to reach out
and smash the face of winter.
Instead, the petals swelled
and opened fingers to the light.
No blows were struck
and peace was sweeter
than the dream of war.

Diary of an Unemployed Housewife

by Merri Johnson

I arose at 3:00 a.m. to answer the nocturnal call of nature heard by every woman of a certain age. Immediately I remembered that the second floor bathroom was out of order. Just the evening before I had assisted my husband in the installation of a new Fluidmaster toilet tank fill valve. (Does the name "Fluidmaster" bother anyone but me?)

Anyway, the toilet had been behaving suspiciously and my husband had determined to get the jump on the situation to avert the soggy mess we were just asking for by not replacing the old valve. According to the Fluidmaster box, the old parts were most assuredly disaster-prone by virtue of being older than we were.

As we worked, my husband mentioned, with some regret, that the old toilet no longer had any original parts. Up until yesterday, our Standard throne had been all original. My husband appreciates antiques, as do I, but I can't help believing that the bathroom floor would rise at least half an inch if we replaced the cast iron fixtures. My husband says they add resale value to the house. Maybe. If you collect cast iron.

I suppose it's a testament to the sturdiness of the overall construction of our Sears home that the upstairs bathroom hasn't landed in the kitchen under the weight of all that cast iron. The claw foot tub must weigh 500 pounds alone. The sink and toilet are the type that bolt to the 2 x 4's in the walls. (Believe me, our house has genuine 2 x 4's.) The sink and toilet are on opposite walls, and I sometimes fear that when I'm vulnerable in the shower the walls will finally implode in a fog of plaster dust and steam.

But, back to the matter at hand. Even though it had been ten hours since the new toilet parts had been installed, we were giving the sealant 24 hours to set, just for good measure. While my husband had rightfully felt a certain amount of masculine pride in performing the plumbing fix himself, he still felt the sting of prior failures. Rushing the process of proper adhesion of the silicone sealant had been his downfall before. Plus he doubted the integrity of the connection between the tank and the bowl: the weak link, as it were.

So, I stepped lightly down the carpeted stairs in the dark. One, two three, four, five; then three steps around the landing; nine more and my foot tapped reassuringly on the vinyl floor at the bottom. I turned right into the kitchen. Three steps. Then left into the dining room. Three more steps. A hard right into the piano room.

By now my eyes had adjusted to the dim light of the street lamp on our corner. It's always a little risky to navigate the piano room in the dark. But you have to pass through it to gain the bathroom. If your bearings are off just a little you can get a nasty bruise on your right thigh cutting too short around the Baldwin upright. Or worse, the bathroom door (solid oak) could be ajar at just the right angle to split your forehead. I always proceed in blind-man's-bluff fashion, arms out ahead of me.

Once I safely reached my goal, I relaxed enough to realize that our dog, Annie, had followed me. Now *she* would have to be taken out, being a dog of a certain age and somewhat disaster-prone herself in the plumbing department.

Before I even opened the back door I heard rain pattering on the brick patio and King meowing to be let in. By the time I had dealt with wet pets and felt my way back upstairs, I was pretty much wide awake. But my husband was snoring lightly, so apparently my ramblings hadn't disturbed him.

The bed was warm, and a perfect cool rain was watering the spinach seed I had planted the afternoon before. It seemed like the "Fluid Master" of the heavens was smiling on me.

Now, if the toilet just doesn't leak....



Roadside Poetry

The 'ricochet' call of the Red-winged Blackbird is a familiar melody that carries through the rushes along many of our country roads.

The Old Lady Caldwell story—

by Frieda Burston

As long as I stayed on the block, I was free to visit wherever I wanted. Mama could step out of the front door and call “Frieda!” and I’d come running back. It might not be real freedom to go anywhere and do anything, but I was happy with it. I might be like a chicken tied with a rag to the back porch post, but like the chicken I was happy not to be kept in a cage. My cousins who lived on The Boulevard, stayed in their house all day, practicing piano and painting on dishes. I had a few chores in the house and yard, but when they were done, I was free.

I could visit anyone I saw out on the porch or in the yard, talk to everyone, eat anything they offered, or deliver sharings from Mama’s garden.

I had that freedom, until Old Lady Caldwell got married.

After she married, her house was out of bounds for me. Not just for me, but for all the neighbors. Nobody said. We just did.

What my mother thought, everyone else thought too. I didn’t know enough to think anything about it, I just felt. And what I felt made my stomach drop down to my knees. Nobody told me not to go into her house. I just didn’t.

Helen-Across-the-Street was younger than I was, but she was agreeable to anything I did or said, so we got along with each other’s company very well. Both of us liked Old Lady Caldwell’s stories of her early life, so when we saw her out on the porch swing, we always headed over there and swung with her while she talked.

Sometimes she took us inside her house and showed us things she had made—she was always pleased when we found something new to admire in the embroidery pictures she had made with people’s hair. (We were surprised to find that she and her dead husband had once had golden blonde hair— we had thought she was born grey-haired, and we couldn’t imagine a young husband at all.)

Helen and I thought she was maybe, well, say about a thousand years old, but Mama said no, she was probably just in her eighties, because hair pictures were popular for young ladies to embroider back in Queen Victoria’s days.

Old Lady Caldwell was a widow. Her husband had built their house himself, but had died early in the marriage when a signal light failed on the railroad and the train ran him down. They had no children. She had not remarried but lived comfortably on her husband’s insurance, which would take care of her until she died or remarried. Her husband had been a wonderful man, she said, she had never found another like him, she would never marry again.

We were not terribly surprised when a small Pearcey Delivery truck drove up to her house and a young man jumped out with a bunch of buckets and boxes and boards, and went up to her door. From that, we understood that he had come to wash her windows. She was too old to wash her own. She always hired someone to do the windows twice a year, nail up loose boards, and paint where the paint had crackled off. But we were a little surprised that it was such a young man. Usually the company sent out a middle-aged man who did his business in one day, and left the place looking new again.

This one looked like Sir Galahad, Apollo, and the Angel Gabriel all rolled into one. We dreamed him up to be a Fairy Prince, and dreamed up a beautiful long-wavy-haired-golden-blond princess to match. He took a whole day to do just the windows, and then started to paint the whole house. The first day or two we could see him talking to Old Lady Caldwell, so it didn’t surprise us that he took so long. But painting the house took forever, we felt. He certainly didn’t take his painting seriously, because after three weeks he was still just working on the back of the house— if he was. We couldn’t see back there. And we didn’t see Old Lady Caldwell, either.

Helen and I had no excuse to talk to her if she wasn’t out in the porch swing or the yard, and we fretted about it. The neighborhood wasn’t quite right, something made all the neighbors uncomfortable, not just us. Helen’s mother thought it was having a stranger there, but not there, so to speak. Then Mama’s peonies bloomed all at once, and she sent me around with

big bouquets of peonies to all the houses on our block. When I knocked on Old Lady Caldwell’s door, she didn’t come to open it. He did. He was still there, weeks after he had come to wash the windows.

He said, “You can give them to me— I’m Edith’s husband..”

What! This prince among men had married an old woman? Not a beautiful young princess with long wavy hair? And after the old woman had said she’d never remarry?

“Can I talk to her?” I asked, but he answered impatiently, “She’s resting now. You wouldn’t want to disturb her, would you? She needs a lot of rest. Her granddaughter is coming tomorrow to take care of her.”

He took the flowers out of my hands and shut the door in my face.

I left without seeing Old Lady Caldwell. When I told Mama, an odd expression came over her face. I added, “How could she have a granddaughter if she never had any children?” and Mama looked at me and said, “There are some things you’re too young to understand.”

Sure enough, the taxi that let off Old Lady Caldwell’s granddaughter stopped at her house the next day. The young woman who got out had long wavy hair, but it was dark red hair, not golden blonde like the Caldwells had. I figured maybe the Caldwells had adopted a child when they didn’t have any, so the red hair came that way. I might have been too young to understand what was happening, but I knew that two tiger cats didn’t have fluffy white Angora kittens.

Two days later, a hearse stopped in front of Old Lady Caldwell’s house, a casket went in, and a casket came out. Later, a taxi stopped there, and the handsome window washer and the widow’s red-haired granddaughter stepped into it. After a few weeks, there was an auction there. None of the neighbors went.

That summer a new family moved in. When spring came again and the peonies bloomed, Mama sent me around again with bouquets. The new people invited me in, but like the rest of the neighbors, I couldn’t get my feet to cross the threshold.

Not that any of us believed in ghosts. Not that any of us believed that Old Lady Caldwell still lingered there, trying to tell us something. But nobody went to her house.

And when I was old enough to understand, I still didn’t.....

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snap with the loop, and the next thing I saw was this horse way down there bucking away.

I landed on one knee still holding the loop of the rope. He was bucking around me and I was hurting bad with that knee, so I jerked the rope and he turned toward me and stopped bucking. I made it back on him and rode him back to the pens at Brinker's, put him up and went home. I had told Norman not to use spurs on him. He came out on the first calf and was a little slow (my, that rings a bell) so I think he put his spurs on. Anyway Norman came flying out of the chute but Cap stayed in there. He threw him seven times in a row and he had to unsaddle him so he would leave the chute.

If you've heard of Chili's restaurant, Norman Brinker started the company. I've kidded him about Cap several times. Here we have this expert horseman and a mustang horse that got the best of him. And he was a excellent horseman, just not the mustang type.

That summer I went to work for Walter Jones out on Pine Lodge road about 25 miles west of Roswell. He had both cattle and sheep. When I got out there I was working Cap up and down the fence and he got ticked off and started bucking. He must of bucked for minutes (seemed like), I couldn't let him throw me because Walter was watching. I finally got him settled down and all was okay then.

One day we had a bunch of big cows in the corral west of the ranch house. Walter wanted one heifer roped for some reason so I roped her. She turned right back down the fence toward me and Cap stepped over the rope. I couldn't pull the slack up fast enough. I knew what was about to happen so I bailed off. I knew there was fixing to be a wreck and I wanted out of it. Cap went straight up as usual and kicked with both hind feet, one of which went through my straw hat that had been on my head just before that. Lucky for me it had left my head when I bailed off.

The wreck ended up with the horse and the cow looking at each other and the rope tight as a bow string. We did what we wanted with the cow and turned her loose. That is why you use a neck rope tied around the horse's neck and run the lariat through that. It turned out OK , just another day at the office. Cap worked good the rest of the day. Later I worked for the New Mexico Institute in the stables. Kenneth was running the stables and hired me for a while. They had indoor polo fields there and we played polo there . Cap got so good that I sold him to Kenneth's brother. Marta and I were married at that time and I needed to settle down and stop playing cowboy.

Cap only weighed about 850 lbs soaking wet, dark bay with black legs and mane and had a white C on his nose. His feet were so hard we never had to shoe him even in the rocky country. He was lean and mean (sometimes). Joe Smith



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