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Enjoy the great outdoors

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

The upcoming holiday season and Garrison’s Dickens Village Festival draw visitors to Garrison as well as an important McLean Electric Cooperative member – Fort Stevenson State Park.

The park, located three miles south of Garrison, is fully engaged in the festival with free park admission, Fort Stevenson guardhouse tours and a unique geocaching opportunity – not to mention its version of a gingerbread house.

The “gingerbread house” greeting visitors all three weekends of the festival is actually its entrance station decorated in true repurposing fashion.

“The toy soldier greeting people in the front is an old swim buoy that we found and his hat is a garbage can,” described Fort Stevenson State Park Manager Chad Trautman. “We have a fake roof, with buckets that look like gumdrops.”

A colorful toy soldier and gingerbread house will greet Fort Stevenson State Park visitors when they visit the park, which is located three miles south of Garrison, during the community’s Dickens Village Festival.



PHOTO COURTESY FORT STEVENSON STATE PARK

Its candy canes are PVC plastic pipes with foam swim noodles, while other candies are Styrofoam boxes wrapped in cellophane with “cupcakes” at the bottom, Trautman continued.

The gingerbread house came about as the park staff searched for ways to tie the park with the festival. “We thought it would be a cute way to do it,” he explained. He invites visitors to share photos they may take of family and friends with the park’s toy soldier and gingerbread house.

The guardhouse is open during the festival. It’s part of the Queen Elizabeth tour of the Garrison area during the 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. bus tours.

However, a unique geocaching event is becoming increasingly popular: The 2018 Dickens Village Festival marks the third year the park will place 12 hand-carved wooden ornaments throughout

the park. “They’re (the ornaments) unique, no one is alike,” Trautman described.

Each weekend of the three-week event will find four ornaments somewhere in the park. The GPS coordinates will go live Friday of each weekend, he continued. Geocachers can call the park, 701-337-5576, to get their coordinates, but they are also listed on the “geocaching” smartphone app.

The first person to find an ornament is allowed to keep it, Trautman added, and the Garrison CVB is also providing winners with \$5 in Garrison Bucks.

Participation is easy. “All people need is a GPS unit,” Trautman explained. The park has GPS units it will loan to participants if they don’t have one.

Smartphones with geocache apps work, as well. Just a word of advice, though, from Trautman: “The event

has become very popular and people tend to find them the first day they go live. ... We do get people who will find all 12.” Forty-seven people logged on to participate when the ornament geocache event began in 2016, he added. That number grew to 126 last year.

Trautman said a woman credits the ornament geocache for getting her, her daughter and granddaughter involved with geocaching as a hobby. Another Valley City family told him they have a goal of participating in every Dickens Village Festival geocache and find an ornament. The park also hosts an Easter geocache event, he concluded. ■

Trails groomed for winter hiking

Tucked on the downward side of Garrison Dam and Lake Sakakawea, Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery raises a variety of sportfish species for stocking throughout North Dakota and neighboring states. It also plays a key role in endangered fish species efforts.

However, a different world emerges in the winter. While its staff is still busy with an array of duties, a subtle tranquility emerges outside. True, its summer hiking trails are still hike-able if there isn’t snow.

When there is snow, though, Manager Rob Holm takes to the trails with a groomer to provide visitors with miles of cross-country skiing opportunities stretching all the way down to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Downstream Campground.

The hatchery’s trails journey along a wetland and creek adjacent to the Missouri River, which remain open in the winter because they’re heated by water from the hatchery’s fish rearing operations. Like the

river, they provide areas for wintering waterfowl and a wildlife viewing blind is available. Informational kiosks and resting benches dot the trail.

The trailhead begins near the hatchery’s parking lot, which is where skiers and snowshoers can park when the hatchery isn’t open. While the main groomed cross-country ski trails run more than five miles, Holm hopes to add more trails this winter if snow conditions permit.

More information about Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery and winter use on its trail system is available by calling 701-654-7451 or go to their website, www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/fisheries/garrisonDam.php. “Our hours are 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., weekdays. Tours are available weekdays, but people need to call in and schedule them,” Holm suggested. Cross-country trail condition updates – snow conditions permitting – are also on the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/GarrisonDamNFH.

JUNE 15-21, 2019

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ESSAY QUESTION:

Electric cooperatives are member-owned and controlled. As a future member-owner of your cooperative, describe ways that smart technologies and social media might be used to communicate with young adults. How might they be used to increase awareness and interest in the many career opportunities with electric cooperatives?

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YOUTH TOUR

Emphasizing safety – at work and afield during hunting season

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL



One of the "10 commandments" of hunter safety is "identify your target and what is beyond." In addition, hunters should never use rifle scopes as binoculars.

Autumn is a favorite time of year for many North Dakotans – an eclectic blend of football, hunting and fall fishing action – combined with the culmination of harvest and upcoming holiday preparations.

McLean Electric Cooperative proudly serves residents in what is one of the most popular counties in the state for hunting and fishing. However, for all of the enjoyment and healthy exercise hunting provides, all it takes is a lapse in judgment or moment of inattentiveness for someone's world to come crashing down because of a hunting or firearms-related accident.

McLean Electric emphasizes safety for all employees – on and off the job. It's a theme the cooperative encourages for anyone recreating: Have that same sense of safety in mind, whether pursuing a walleye, sitting in a duck blind, big game hunting or trekking after a glitzy rooster.

When it comes to hunting safety, though, an increasingly popular form of hunting is also creating an increase in hunting accidents – hunting blinds and elevated stands. "That's where we're seeing an uptick (in incidents)," N.D. Game and Fish Department Outreach Biologist Pat Lothspeich described.

More waterfowl hunters are using "coffin blinds," long camouflaged blinds allowing hunters to lie on their backs,

completely concealed while still observing waterfowl movement or when birds come into decoys.

Incidents occur when the hunter takes the shotgun safety off and inadvertently has his or her finger on the trigger, accidentally discharging the firearm as they lay in the blind or when they move upright to shoot.

So, the Game and Fish Department is receiving reports of increasing numbers of situations where hunters injure themselves in the foot – or another hunter in an adjacent blind.

Other times, Lothspeich continued, hunters leave a blind to retrieve a bird, move decoys or adjust ones that blew over. As they move about, they tend to rest the shotgun across their arm. In the process, the shotgun is also moving in different directions and swinging toward other hunters lying in their blinds or sitting on the ground.

At any time, a shotgun could be pointing at another hunter. Or hunters still in their blinds might

not see the person out among the decoys.

It's a potential accident in the making.

Waterfowl hunters need to develop protocol among themselves, especially when hunting out of any type of blind, Lothspeich stressed. Don't carry a shotgun when leaving a blind to move among decoys, for example. Announce to others that someone is getting out of a blind so other hunters are aware of the situation. Above all, "keep that muzzle up," he added.

Waterfowl hunting blinds aren't the only blinds where hunter safety can become an issue, Lothspeich continued. With the increasing popularity of archery deer hunting, more hunters are afield throughout the lengthy four-month-plus archery deer season, including during deer gun season in November.

Many deer gun and muzzleloader hunters are also enjoying the comforts of hunting from a ground blind where they're sheltered from

the weather.

The problem with camouflaged ground blinds is they are exactly that – camouflaged.

They can be difficult to see, especially if another rifle hunter is focused on a deer and has no idea a blind is in an area – let alone if someone is in it.

The combination of more archery deer hunters out during deer gun season and more rifle hunters using ground blinds increases the potential for a hunting incident. Lothspeich recommends anyone occupying a ground blind identify that it's occupied by placing something "hunter orange" on it, such as tying a hunting vest to the top. It's more readily identifiable to someone in the area and if another hunter is swinging on game, it could be a flash of orange that might catch his or her eye.

Injuries – or worse – can also occur inside ground blinds. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- Never enter or exit a ground

Hunter education commandments

If every hunter followed the "10 commandments" of hunter education, there wouldn't be any hunting incidents or fatalities.

That's the best advice N.D. Game and Fish Department Outreach Biologist and longtime hunter education instructor Pat Lothspeich offers hunters or anyone handling a firearm – regardless of their age.

Years ago, Glenfield volunteer instructor Noel Drummond created a word association technique to help students remember the basic firearm safety rules. It's still used today:

A CHUM SPORT

- **Alcohol:** Avoid the use of alcohol or other mood-altering drugs before and while shooting and hunting
- **Climb:** Never climb a fence or tree or jump a ditch or log with a loaded firearm.

- **Hard:** Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water.
- **Unload:** Unload firearms when not in use.
- **Muzzle:** Control the direction of your firearm's muzzle (at all times).
- **Store:** Store firearms and ammunition separately.
- **Point:** Never point a firearm at anything you do not intend to shoot.
- **Obstruction:** Be sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions and that you have only ammunition of the proper size for the firearm you are carrying.
- **Respect:** Treat every firearm with the same respect due a loaded firearm.
- **Target:** Identify you target and what is beyond.



While this deer hunter is walking a shelterbelt, an increasing number of hunters are taking to ground blinds or various types of elevated blinds and tree stands. Regardless of one's favorite hunting technique, safety should always be in the forefront.

blind with a nocked arrow – it's too easy to stumble or trip over the edging or catch an arrow tip.

- Never rest a loaded firearm along the corner of a blind – it's too easy for it fall over.
- Always keep the safety on and never put your finger on the trigger until you're ready to shoot.

Those same suggestions apply to hunters using yet another increasingly popular form of hunting concealment – tree stands and elevated “huts.” Even though more permanent elevated hunting stands may appear to be visible from a distance and elevated in the air 10 to 20 feet, they still can be difficult to see, especially when another hunter is focused on a deer,

Lothspeich suggested.

Again, he recommends hunters in elevated stands identify it's occupied by tying something “hunter orange” on the exterior. They can be especially difficult to see in woody draws.

The use of an elevated stand of any type also requires additional safety considerations, just as a ground blind:

- Never carry a loaded firearm or nocked arrow up or down an elevated blind.
- Secure yourself with a safety harness to the tree if it's a tree stand and not a completely enclosed blind – and know how to properly use it before going up a stand. Don't use waist belts or upper body-only harnesses – they can cause

serious injury or death.

- Always inspect steps, straps and all parts of the stand or enclosure. Make sure legs on an elevated tripod stand are secure and in good condition.
- Wear non-slip soled boots.
- Use a haul line to carry equipment up and down and never attach the line near or around the trigger and trigger guard of a rifle.
- Carry emergency equipment – cellphone, flashlight, whistle, knife and other items.
- Clear debris away from the base of the tree and only use sturdy, straight trees.

In addition, always tell someone where you are going when hunting – that applies to any type of hunt, any time of year. ■



A new underground cabinet located west of Garrison was added when McLean Electric Cooperative upgraded an overhead line to underground. The trencher in the background buried the new cable.

McLean Electric Cooperative service upgrades continue

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Dozens of McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) consumers will experience better reliability in their electric service with completion of a line upgrade near Garrison.

Engineering design work began in 2017 to convert 20,000 feet of overhead line to underground cable serving Garrison Creek Cabin Site on the west side of Garrison Bay of Lake Sakakawea.

Coal Creek Construction, Underwood, began construction in late July and early August, McLean Electric General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl explained. The last service on the project was completed in late September.

The upgrade provides an array of benefits to the consumers it serves: “The voltage level was getting low at the ends of the line on this circuit,” Dahl described. In addition to solving that issue, it addresses a large difference between loads on each phase from the substation.

“This project will allow us to balance the loads, which also helps with voltage levels,” he added. That,

in turn, balances the load on the main backbone feeder. A larger conductor size would have been necessary had the load not balanced out, he continued.

Perhaps the third benefit is one that might be most noticeable to those on the line – an overall improvement in power quality. “You will see less blinks and outages from the new line,” Dahl suggested.

The line is located about two miles west of Garrison and runs south

to Garrison Creek Cabin Site. “It also helps to provide better voltage west toward Hideaway Point and farther west,” Dahl continued. Hideaway Point is a cabin site about two miles west of the Garrison Creek development.

In addition to converting from overhead to underground line, the project includes a larger conductor to serve existing and future loads in the area. That helps McLean Electric meet increasing electric demands associated with increasing interest in recreational property along the lake. Some lines were also moved to other phases to balance the load and provide better power quality, Dahl added.

New easements were obtained for the project.

The upgrade is part of McLean Electric’s ongoing efforts to improve service reliability to its members. Earlier this year, a similar upgrade was completed near Crooked Lake in eastern McLean County.

The Snake Creek Cabin Site along Lake Audubon was also upgraded. Plans are underway to complete a similar project serving Totten Trail on the west end of Lake Audubon as well as one south of Mercer in eastern McLean County. The recent Garrison Creek upgrade costs an estimated \$327,000, Dahl concluded. ■



A trencher sets at rest after burying underground cable to feed a longtime cabin site west of Garrison in Garrison Bay. The project involved 20,000 feet of underground. The upgrades are part of an ongoing effort to improve reliability and reduce outages.

Save energy this Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving is a great time of year to bring friends and families together. It also means spending time in the kitchen to prepare the traditional Thanksgiving feast.

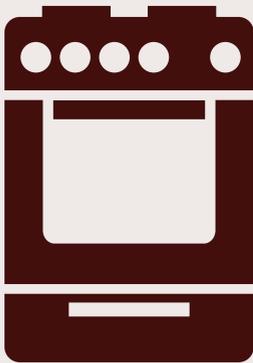
According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, cooking accounts for 2 percent of U.S. residential electricity consumption. If you add the energy associated with refrigeration, freezers, water

heating and dishwashers, the kitchen accounts for about 23 percent of a home's energy consumption.

There are ways to keep the kitchen from gobbling up more energy during the holidays.

Here are some tips from your local electric cooperative to help keep your energy costs down:

Cooking tips



- Keep the oven door closed. While you may want to check on the progress of a dish you've got cooking in your oven, use the light instead. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, delaying the progress of your dish and, more importantly, costing you more money to get that pot roast perfectly cooked.
- Don't preheat for more than five to eight minutes.
- Clean your burners. If you have an electric range, one great way to keep your stovetop cooking efficiently is to keep the reflectors

under your burners grime-free. They can be a pain to clean, but regular maintenance can go a long way. You can also invest in some better reflectors that can decrease your stovetop cooking times, which will save you energy (and money!) over time.

- Cook as much of the meal as possible at the same time to decrease the use of your oven.
- Make contact. Electric stovetops can only transmit heat to pans they are in direct contact with. If cooking with your warped pan is taking longer than it should, it may be time for a flat-bottomed update.

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