

# Fishing is a calming experience



**Kenneth Kieser**

**W**e live in a world of complication. Fake news, disturbing political headlines, threats of war with major powers, rises and drops of the stock market and other happenings that cause sleepless nights. Working a daily job, too, takes its toll in exhaustion and often stress.

Some turn to alcohol or in extreme cases, drugs for release from torturous thoughts. Others turn to the good, clean outdoor experience to clear their mind.

Kim Suzanne Deister learned long ago that life's problems become easier to handle after a couple days at Missouri's Bennett Spring Trout Park and for good reason. This scenic park located by Lebanon, Mo., in Laclede County has become a world class fishery.

Bennett Spring is fed by a single natural spring that pumps 1 million gallons of cold water daily, ideal conditions for trout. The Missouri Department of Conservation state hatchery, located in the park, stocks the stream

with 320,000 pounds of rainbow and brown trout annually. Anglers catch more than 400 rainbow trout each year that weigh 3 pounds or more.

Deister is single and works a job while spending precious time with her kids and grandchildren. When life becomes too much, she loads up fly fishing equipment and waders for a four-hour drive to escape with the family camper at Bennett Spring for peace and quiet and hopefully a few fat rainbow trout. Last season she caught a 3.75-pound rainbow trout on a wet fly.

"I grew up lake fishing but look forward to our trout stream visits," Deister said. "This peace and quiet is priceless. Fly fishing for trout with dry flies on topwater makes the trip even better. It's a rush to see trout rise to take your fly. We once kept trout for dinner, but now most of our trout are released to fight another day."

Anglers find peace and quiet at Bennett Spring where the park sells 400,000 daily fishing tags each year. There is something special about wading into this beautiful stretch of clear water and listening to water flowing over a small waterfall while trying to outwit trout that occasionally are swimming

around your feet.

"I sometimes feel stressed and fishing in the stream all day keeps me grounded," Deister said. "Sometimes my son and I sit and talk in the evening after dinner, quality time that most never have. The next morning, we return to the stream to match wits with trout. I feel like a new person after my trout park outings."

Deister and her family discovered what doctors, scientists and outdoor writers have been saying for many years - fishing has many benefits.

The Mayo Clinic reported that fly fishing has many benefits, including lowering post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and increasing the mood of those who suffer from this terrible disorder. Many soldiers returning from war use fishing as an escape from the horrors they faced.

Fishing, too, is a great release for children escaping peer pressures and the grinding demands of studies. Places like Bennett Spring give children a taste of fishing success, mixed with discoveries of outdoor treasures.

Youth remind older anglers of mysteries long forgotten. Snails, frogs and other wonderments are treasures of nature, noticed by children. A

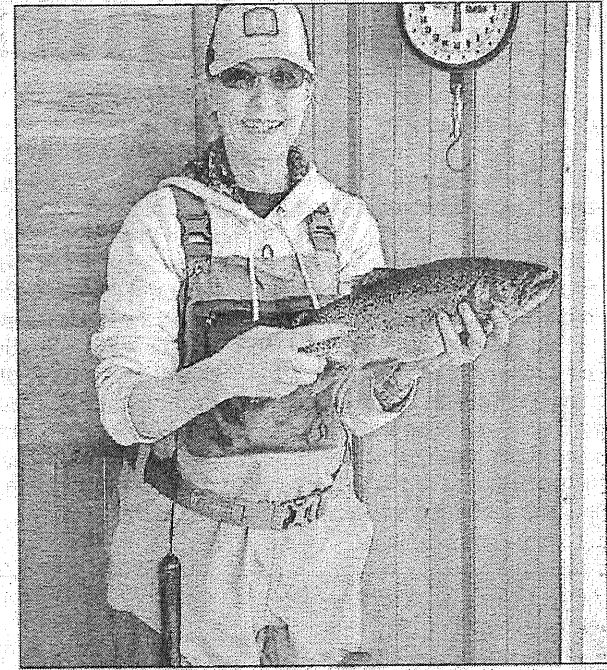
child salutes these sometimes-lowly creatures by paying attention. Bennett Spring is loaded with various forms of wildlife, making the experience even greater. Kids, too, love catching trout.

However, Bennett Springs is not where some anglers consider taking a child to fish. Many experienced anglers wear chest-high waders and wade in holding \$1,000 fly rods with a wide variety of flies in their vest. This is a refined way of fishing their section of the stream. Children, too, have their stretch of the stream.

Bennett has a bait area where you will find kids of all ages. Various brands of PowerBait are fished off the bottom and trout often swim up for a bite. Older children may graduate to spinning tackle and small spoons or spinners.

Benefits to kids fishing in places like Bennett Spring may include developing self-reliance, more confidence in successfully catching fish, planning ways to fool a fish and even motor skills in setting a hook at the perfect moment. More importantly, a day fishing gives children an experience to look forward to.

A favorite memory was catfishing with my grandparents in the summer.



**Kim Deister shows off her trophy rainbow trout.** (PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM DEISTER)

We would find different types of bait in the garden, including worms, crickets, grasshoppers and any other critter a catfish might devour.

I still remember waking up to the smells of bacon frying and coffee brewing before these trips and sitting on the ground with grandpa waiting for the first catfish to bite. These trips took place 50-years ago, and I can still close my eyes to remember those cherished times.

Bet any amount of money that in 50 years Kim Deister's

grandchildren will remember their moments fishing at Bennett Spring with grandmother, a tradition they will likely continue with their children and grandchildren. I can't imagine inheriting a better legacy.

- Kenneth Kieser, a veteran outdoors writer and member of the Waterfowlers Hall of Fame and National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, writes a weekly outdoors column for *The Examiner*. Reach him at [kieserkenneth@gmail.com](mailto:kieserkenneth@gmail.com).