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Hunting & Fishing

By AUGIE ENGELS

Forest Preserves

Few counties in our state, or in others, can boast of a county program that in its short history has given so much to its peoples to enjoy as has Rock Island County.

After a conference with Ardo Gaetjer, superintendent of the county's forest preserves, some of his enthusiasm must have rubbed off.

We had to make certain that all of his proud remarks were facts, so we visited the areas set aside some 20 years ago for the sole purpose of preserving these wonderful wildlife areas.

Located near Port Byron within sight of the Mississippi River is the Dorrance Preserve. This is one of the outstanding developments in the group and as is well attested by the great number of persons who utilize the facilities. The entire upper Rock Island County activities are centered here with church groups, the high schools, and the Upper County Recreation Association.

Perfectly planned ball fields for softball are laid out, as well as a diamond for hardball, a lake area and a specially-flooded rink during the winter months for skating.

Picnic tables are plentiful and areas for family picnics are plentiful. The place covers 70 odd acres and this is the smallest in acreage of the group. Despite this fact, it is one of the most popular and useful of the preserves.

Heading back towards the cities, the next stop was Illiniwek at Hampton in the northern section of our county.

This is the real eye pleaser and one you should not miss. The picnic area is located near the hilltop and has ample room for everyone.

Here the efforts of the Tri-City Ski Club, along with the Supervisors of the county, have resulted in two coasting areas with an electric lift for the ski activities. The powered towline extends up a 350-foot hill and saves a lot of walking and climbing for those interested in winter sports. Also included in this area is three-quarters of a mile of shoreline, 2 boat launching ramps (all concrete) and a well-kept sand beach.

From this point, access to good fishing at Dam 14 is available. Mostly, we noted that the entire river area is accessible by car and is most popular with the senior citizens who must consider this fact. Shoreline fishing along the entire area is above average. Comfort stations are located at all of the areas.

The acreage set aside here is 180 acres, and it is hard to believe so much has been done in so little time. We learned many facts about Illiniwek that we had not been familar with. It takes a drive into the area and some time to actually inspect these facilities, as they all lay well within the area itself.

Golf and Picnics

Continuing around the Quad-City area, to the south of Moline, in fact, we find Indian Bluff Forest Preserve and Niabi Zoo.

Golfers, particularly are familiar with Indian Bluff, located south of the Quad-City Airport. It's 18 hole golf course is one of the toughest and most popular among golfers. The setting, like all of the preserve places, is a beautiful area set back from the highway.

All modern conveniences are available at the golf course, and here again, the theme of spacious picnic areas is noted. A large area that will accommodate up to 500 persons is set aside at the northeast section of the 175-acre area for huge gatherings.

Many political outdoor events are scheduled here, as well as the annual chamber of commerce outing. Hugh fireplaces and cooking areas are maintained for this type outing. Baseball for family groups and reunion activities is also enjoyed.

Again the natural settings are blended with modern facilities, creating another point of pride for our county.

We shifted activities to the old Route 6 that leads to Niabi Zoo. This is one of the more recent developments, and, unless you take the time to actually see what has been accomplished it is hard to believe.

Here, within a stone throw of our modern cities, are bear, lions, tigers, jaguars, monkeys, badgers, ocelot, deer, and even an elephant. This is only a mere mention of the some 130 species of animal life that are housed in the zoo.

This is a Disneyland special for the children but no matter what age bracket, there are attractions that will be new to almost everyone. An added feature for the future will be the recently-remodeled Hunky Dory Coal Mine that actually was used for many years at the site.

A concession stand with hot dogs and lunches is open most of the time. The tract set aside for the zoo and future developments is 228 acres. The zoo closes nightly at 7 and is open to the public all year. Monday is free day and through the week the small charge for admission is 50 cents for adults and 25 cents children.

You can spend a day on this one and the entire family will love it.

In the meantime, I'll prepare a report on Loud Thunder and other recreation areas.

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