

A Bear, Where? Game Fish and Parks Expert Discusses Sighting

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

There is no doubt that the Missouri River front that acts as the southern and border along Clay County is a favorable destination for wildlife. Whitetail deer, turkey and a plethora of other species call the trees and brush along the riverbank home and have prospered there for centuries. Recently, it was speculated that a black bear had decided to join the fray and stake claim in this corner of the earth as well.

"I worked with black bears in Minnesota," said Dr. Julie DeJong. "About the southernmost portion they generally go is around St. Cloud."

Dr. DeJong is with the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks department where she specializes in wildlife and game management for the South East Region. She has been with the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks department for two years, and previously served as a biologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Her experience with black bears is extensive.

"In Minnesota they are monitoring a lot of the black bears," DeJong said. "They have radio collars on and are tracking them. We used to go into the dens during the winter months and sedate them and do a

health check on them."

DeJong can't say for sure, but using her experience, she weighs in on the possibility of a black bear venturing this far south.

"They don't seem to like open fields very much," DeJong said. "When they do cross a field it's usually at night."

Habitat is the number one driver for black bears who are exploring new real estate.

"Around here there just isn't much bear food," DeJong said. "Any wild bear would have a lot of highways and fields to cross before it made its way to Clay County. We just don't have them in that area."

While not completely unheard of, bear sightings in South Dakota are extremely infrequent.

The Game Fish and Parks department does a good job of tracking a visiting bear when it does happen.

"The last confirmed black bear we had in South Dakota was in the upper northern portion of the state and it was very brief," DeJong said. "None of the people I work with have gotten any reports on a black bear in the state right now."

DeJong is quick to point out that it would be rare to see a bear during the late fall and winter months.

"They start hibernating in November," DeJong said. "It's really rare to see a



When bears are sighted in the upper Midwest, it is often along thick tree lines and shelterbelts. The State of South Dakota has had very few black bear sightings.

KATIE CLAUSEN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

bear after that time roaming around."

The Game Fish and Parks department appreciates getting tips on wildlife sightings that are abnormal. This is because there are a handful of scenarios that should be addressed when unconventional wildlife has been sighted.

"When we get a report of an unusual or odd animal we like to get down right away and check it out," DeJong said. "We look for tracks and do some investigating."

Aside from an animal experiencing wanderlust, there are instances where unusual creatures are spotted because they have escaped from captivity.

"Another resource we go to if there is a sighting is the Animal Industry

Board," DeJong said. "They keep track of animals kept in confinement. Sometimes there are escapes or releases."

The Game Fish and Parks department is a diversified entity focused on maintaining the health and wellbeing of South Dakota's unique landscape and its inhabitants.

The local conservation officer for Clay and Union Counties is Tony Stokely, who is based in Elk Point.

"If anyone confirms they have seen a bear or other odd wildlife I encourage them to contact the regional wildlife office," DeJong said. "Then we can begin our investigation and filter down from there."

The Regional Wildlife Office can be reached at 605-362-2700.

MEET CITY COUNCIL MEMBER: PARKER ERICKSON

By Zach Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Parker Erickson, member of the Vermillion City Council, dedicates his time and energy to helping the community grow.

"I believe my biggest goal is to be a voice for my district and keep the Citizens of Vermillion informed on important events happening in the community," said Erickson. According to Erickson, there are many ways to strengthen the local community.

Erickson is working on many projects as a City Council member. He wants to improve the Bliss Point area and make it a success, as well as help the university students and community members have a better relationship.

"I think a lot of emphasis is placed on the city and the University of South Dakota but I think it should also include the students," Erickson explained.

Erickson found his way to USD through his interest in the athletic department.

Initially, Erickson was interested in the football program, but his sister Emma helped steer him in the direction of the track team instead. Emma was also a member of the USD track team.

According to USD's sports website goyotes.com, Erickson participated in sprints such as the 400-

meter dash and the 4 x 400 meter relay. He competed in these events during the indoor season for the track and field teams.

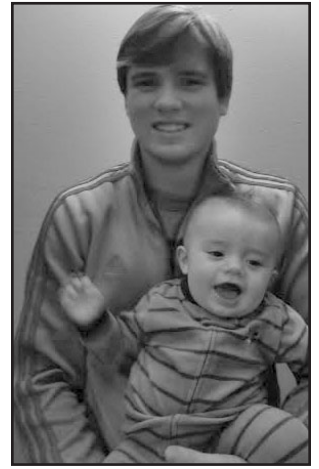
Erickson ran at the GWC Indoor Championships and placed fifth in the 400-meter dash. He was also on the USD team that finished fourth in the 4 x 400 meter relay.

At Gayville-Volin High School, Erickson played football and basketball.

Erickson was a prominent member of the track team, and received the MVP title for the state track meet in 2009.

Erickson has a Bachelor of Science degree from the School of Education at the University of South Dakota.

For an extended version of this story please visit www.plaintalk.net



As a member of the Vermillion City Council, Parker Erickson brings many unique ideas to the table.

COURTESY PHOTO

JOLLEY

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now I know pretty much every word I come across that I wouldn't know if I didn't read."

Bodie offered a tip to those also looking to discover the meaning of new words in a book.

"There's normally context clues like you can look around the passage to see what the meaning is," he said.

"I think reading is important because you want to get into a good college," Basmala, grade five, shared. "Reading helps your grades in spelling and writing."

Basmala wants to attend Harvard in the future and study law.

Anna, grade five, pointed out that reading isn't just useful in spelling and writing.

"You use reading in every single subject," she said. "In math you use story problems and in science you're reading out of the textbook, same in social studies. You use reading everywhere all the time."

Bodie agrees with Anna. "You really don't notice this but all around you there's words everywhere and if you don't know these words it's hard to get around," he said. "There's words on trucks, there's words at school. Like Anna said there are words in books you need to read. Reading helps that you understand it a little bit more."

Movie or book? In an age of book-to-movie entertainment, the readers shared their thoughts on books vs movies.

Hannah, grade four, said she prefers the written word. "I like reading the book more because it might have more in the book than the movie," she said.

Bella agrees. "I like reading the book more because there might be some secrets in the book that you don't even know about in the movie," she said.

Breanna, grade four, also said that in her experience books give you more knowledge.

Rollie, grade two, prefers books with some exceptions. "I would read the book because it might have some more juicy details," he said.

"How to train your dragon 2 is really good so I'm going to have to go with the movie on that one."

Mackenzie enjoys the unique perspective that is offered by reading that you don't get through movies.

"When you read the

book you get a feel for all the people instead of just one person's point of view," she said. "So you get the feeling and you get deeper into it."

What if someone doesn't like reading?

The students at Jolley are committed to sharing their love of reading especially with those who have not discovered the joys of it yet.

Rollie finds it unbelievable that someone could not enjoy a good book.

"If someone comes up to you and they say, 'Do you like reading?' and you say, 'Yeah,' and the other person says, 'No,' you say 'What?!? I love reading!'" he said.

According to Bodie, he would turn into a teacher.

"If someone told me that [they didn't like to read] I would take out a book and say 'Here's your homework,' and shove it in their chest and say 'You have to read that by tomorrow,'" he said.

"Once you start reading books you get interested in them. You might think at first it will be boring just looking at words on the page but really once you start reading books more and more often, it gets more fun and you can actually experience it."

"You grow more attracted to it."

Anna would use more of a persuasive channel to convince someone to pick up a book.

"I would say to them, 'Well if you don't read you might not get into a better college and then you might not make as much money,'" she said.

Bella would point out that reading can be productive as well as enjoyable.

"Some books, like nonfiction books, you can learn from," she said.

Characters to admire According to the students, there are many characters they have connected with through their reading experience. They shared who they would like to meet if the books came to life.

Mackenzie would turn to the Hunger Games.

"Katniss Everdeen because I really admire her and think she's a really cool person for what she does," she said.

Basmala would like to meet the star of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series.

"Percy Jackson because he's really awesome because he fights monsters and he says funny things," she said.

"I would say Daisy from the Candy Makers because she's a spy and I really look up to her in different ways," said Kara, grade five. "When she's feeling sad she tries to

boost up her confidence by reading or doing something else."

Anna would like to meet Sabrina from the Sisters Grimm.

"She does really cool stuff and she's really brave," Anna said.

Readers on a Roll As Mackenzie mentioned, the students at Jolley school are keeping track of how many minutes they read with a goal to reach one million minutes collectively.

It's looking good because halfway through the school year the students are over 500,000 minutes, the half-way mark.

The top readers at the school are definitely pulling their weight.

Bodie, Anna and Basmala all reported reading up to 3 hours daily with the other students close behind.

According to Principle, Sue Galvin, Hannah and Breanna both read over 8,000 minutes during Christmas break alone.

That's over 133 hours or five straight days.

As the students at Jolley count their minutes, they have come across books that have come to be their favorites.

"Mine would be the Alex Rider series," Bodie said.

"The reason why I like it is because there's a thrill to it and you wonder what's going to happen next and that keeps you on the edge of your seat and that makes readers want to read more and more. It's just cool connecting to it."

For those who have never heard of the series, Bodi broke it down.

"In the series he has little gadgets because he's a spy," he said. "Sometimes he'll have a bobble head that will explode or something like that. With the next book you're curious because you wonder what kind of mission he's going to go on and sometimes I think about what kind of gadgets he's going to get too."

"My favorite book is Magic Tree House," Rollie said. "Morgan the Fly who owns the treehouse, she has two kids and they cast a spell on someone's penguin and he's turned into stone and Jack and Annie they need to go find four riddles or something like that. One one of them, Twister on Tuesday, they go to a school and there are like three people. When they find the thing that they need, there was a tornado so they had to go help the school and say there was a tornado shelter to stay alive."

Hannah has a more personal reason for naming her favorite book.

"A Gabby Douglas story because she has a dream

about becoming an Olympic gymnast and she doesn't give up on her dreams so she inspires me to not give up," she said. "I want to become an Olympic gymnast too."

How did they learn to love reading?

The students all caught the reading bug in different ways.

For Bella and Breanna, it came through a teacher.

"In kindergarten my teacher gave us these little books so that we could color in and then you would have to read them and they were really fun to read," Bella said. "She really inspired me to start reading and I started to love it after that."

"I was the same as Bella," Breanna said. "When I was in kindergarten my teacher would give us a packet that we'd do and then I got attracted to reading animal books."

"Eventually I read all the cat books then I read other ones and just got attracted to them."

Sometimes the book itself is enough of a pull for kids to love reading.

"I grew attached to reading because I started the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series," Bodie said. "Once I read the series I thought it was fun to read and it was sometimes even better than watching TV so that's when I got attached to reading and doing it more."

According to Anna, it was a matter of just finding the right book.

"When I was four my mom used to read to me and she was always like 'You read a page' and I was like 'No!' I really didn't like reading when I was little," she said.

"Then I started reading animal books that I really liked because I love animals and then I started reading more and more and then I started reading other books."

Kara learned to love reading by following the example set by her mother.

"When I was little my mom would read to me a lot and one day I asked her to teach me to read," she said.

"When I got into kindergarten, first and second grade I started to love reading even more."

Basmala became an avid reader through a friendly family feud.

"My sister was in fourth grade; I was in second," she said. "She had a new book every day so we kind of did a competition."

Sometimes the best time to read is on the go according to Mackenzie.

"A lot of the times I would read in the car and it would make the time fly by," she said. "I thought I can make time fly all the time. I started reading and I got hooked onto all the books I read and it started to be really fun."

Future authors With all this reading, these kids all have ideas should they ever decide to author a book themselves.

"I would probably write about cats," Breanna said.

Rollie also said he would go the non-fiction route.

"I really like sharks," he said. "I would write a book about sharks kind of like shark week."

"I want to be an actor when I grow up," Mackenzie said. "I would write a biography if I got there on

how I got there."

Basmala said she would stand up for the lesser-known characters in her favorite series.

"In the Heroes of Olympus there's Jason," she said. "I would want to write a series about him because it doesn't really seem fair that Percy gets a series."

"I really like mysteries so I want to write a mystery when I grow up," Kara said. "I love trying to figure out who did it and where."

Anna is in the same boat. "I like mysteries too," she said. "I would like to write a mystery that's really fun because when you start writing the book you don't even know what the answer to the mystery is going to be."

Bodi was also inspired by his favorite series.

"I would probably do the spy thing," he said. "The Alex Rider series kind of inspired me and like they said mysteries are fun to write because you don't know what's going to happen and you're the one writing the book and once you figure out who did it you're surprised yourself."

"The thing I like in the Alex Rider series is that sometimes the person that actually did the crime, it would be someone you wouldn't ever expect and that excites me."

Bella said she would write a little more real-life.

"I would want to write a book about a middle school girl who thinks that no one likes her," she said. "But then she finds out that middle school isn't all that bad and she makes a lot of new friends."

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed bids will be received by the Vermillion School District 13-1 at the Office of the Superintendent, 17 Prospect, Vermillion, SD 57069 until 3:30 PM CT, Monday, February 2, 2015 for labor and materials to perform asbestos abatement of thermal system insulation, floor tile/mastic at the Vermillion High School.

Combined Bids will be received for abatement of asbestos materials in the High School (1965 Addition). No pre-bid walk-through will be conducted but contractors must make arrangements with the school district to familiarize themselves with the scope of work and verify conditions. Submission of a bid assumes the contractor has verified conditions.

Copies of the Plans and Specifications may be obtained by bidders at the District Office. Anyone requesting, reviewing, or copying plans and specifications for this project (such individual is hereinafter referred to as "bidder") agrees that they are doing so for the sole purpose of submitting a bid on the project. In consideration of the District and for the purpose of preparing a bid, bidder further agrees:

Each bid in excess of \$50,000.00 must be accompanied by a certified check, cashier's check or draft in the amount of 5% of the base bid and all add alternates and drawn on a State or National Bank or a 10% bid bond issued by a surety authorized to do business in the State of South Dakota and made payable to the Vermillion School District.

The District reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any irregularities therein.