

Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge celebrates 2nd anniversary

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The second anniversary of the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge was celebrated Saturday with a fishing and community event at Caddo Lake State Park. About 50 children took part in the fishing event with many of the state and national parks employees attending.

“We are delighted so many attended since this was a first attempt on behalf of all the organizations to host this,” said Leta Kay, spokeswoman for the CLNWR. Celebrations for the refuge coincided with those for National Public Lands Day as members of the Friends of CLNWR, local master naturalists and Caddo Lake supporters turned up. Cooler, autumn temperatures, made the green if not lush areas of the channel feel lighter as if everything were breathing a sigh of relief. “This is the 17th annual Public Lands Day,” said Ms. Kay. “We hope to working with our sponsors to have this event again and hopefully with more people.”

The beautiful sunny weather and gentle breezes brought many families out for the first time including Mark and Jonna McDonald of Marshall with their sons, Trent, 6, and Josh, 2. “This was our first trip to Caddo Lake and it has been real neat,” said Ms. McDonald. “Josh caught his first fish today, and Trent won a fishing pole as soon as we arrived.”

Among the sponsors was Academy Sports and Outdoors of Longview, with store clerks out to help children with their fishing lines and to display merchandise. “We have had fun watching the kids fish,” said Zach Blevins at Academy’s booth with Kimberly Lucky, who also caught her first fish on Saturday.

“I think there has been good participation for a first-time event,” Marty Vaughn, who along with husband Paul Vaughn, brought out six Boy Scouts with Troop 239 to take up a pole and line.

Girl Scout Carolanne Brannon also made a presentation for her Silver Award deep into the trees and along a trail that is losing its interpreter, possibly due to state budgets. “I have grown up in this state park, and I decided my Silver Award should be a trail guide,” said Miss Brannon. “I studied the trail and shadowed Chuck Hubbard, who gives the tours.” Miss Brannon’s guide is in printed form and available, with information on topics of interest to the trail coordinated with markers and previously only heard on the weekend tour. She is also planning to establish a geocaching location along the trail for those who enjoy this form of treasure hunting and leaving. Many others who were in the state park Saturday were just doing what comes natural as they took time out to enjoy the day with a bit of canoeing, fishing or sunning along the river banks.

Oct. 9 through 15 will also mark National Wildlife Refuge week, another reason to celebrate the refuge and Texas’ only natural lake.