

Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area hosts an annual tournament where competitors let 'em fly and hope they stick.

Summer Fling

Story By Kathy Andrews
Photos By DNR Staff



Professional and amateur archers—1,300-plus shooters a day over the six day event—will flock to southern Illinois this June to compete in Illinois' eighth annual Matthew's Illinois Pro/Am Tournament, one of the largest archery tournaments in the country.

Organized by the Archery Shooters Association and hosted by the Southern-Most Illinois Tourism Bureau and Department of Natural Resources at Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area north of Metropolis in Massac County, the Illinois

Classes are varied and competition is fierce during the six-day archery tournament at Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area.




event is one of seven competitive tournaments held each year. More than 24,000 people attended the 2004 tournament.

Archers compete in more than 20 different classes, ranging from amateur to semi-

professional to professional and senior professional. Classes also are organized for women, children and traditional shooters.

"The tournament circuit consists of 200 targets varying from 25 to 40 yards and spread throughout 10 ranges," Chris McGinness, site superintendent at Mermet Lake, said. "Teams set up for shotgun starts at 8 a.m. or noon, getting one shot per target and three hours to complete the circuit.

"At other areas, moving targets pop up at random locations along a rail line or a moose target standing at a distance of as much as 110 yards," McGinness explained of some of the popular specialty shoots that take place throughout the weekend. "Archers hitting a dime-sized dot on the moose back-to-back get a \$100 bill. Several people walked away a little richer last year.

"June is a great month to explore some of the many parks in southern Illinois—and while visitors are in the area, they can stop by Mermet Lake to observe some of the nation's best—and some of the up-and-coming—archers in action," McGinness concluded. 

Plan to attend

The Matthew's Illinois Pro/Am Tournament is free to spectators and will open daily June 24-26, 2005 at 6 a.m. for open practice on the range. Tournament shooting will commence at 8 a.m. and finish at 6 p.m. Pre-tournament activities are conducted June 21-23.

Interested in receiving some coaching? With advanced registration and a \$25 entry fee, amateur archers can work with a team of professionals. Youth activities include basic shooting skills at a children's archery range, open throughout the weekend, and on Sunday, children under 15 can receive instruction from a pro.

Plan to spend a little time in the Tournament Village, open for the entire six-day run and a great place to get geared up with bows, arrows, targets, binoculars and more. Food and beverages are available daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Primitive camping accommodations are available at Mermet Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area only during this event. Additional camping facilities may be found at nearby Ft. Massac (Classes A, B/S, C and Y) and Ferne Clyffe (Classes A, B/E, C, Y and equestrian) state parks. For information, visit www.dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/PARKS/index.htm.

For more on the June 2005 Matthew's Illinois Pro/Am Tournament, including registration information, visit the Archery Shooters Association website at www.asaarchery.com or call (770) 795-0232.