

WILDLIFE

## Lake Minatare to reopen this weekend

Officials still determining cause of fowl die-off.

By DANIELLE PROKOP  
Star-Herald

State officials don't have all the answers to what caused a waterfowl die-off of 1,200 birds, but they are moving to reopen Lake Minatare State Recrea-

tion Area this weekend. Federal laboratory results determined the deaths were not caused by avian influenza or fowl cholera, a serious bacterial infection that can be highly contagious to other birds. Will Inselman,

who heads the wildlife research agency at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, said neither of those are too dangerous when it comes to humans, but can pose some risks. "What we've determined now is the cause

was of low risk to the public and wildlife. That it's OK to open up," he said.

Inselman said multiple laboratories are running tests to determine what killed the host of birds at Lake Minatare in mid-March, causing officials to close the park as a precaution for the past two weeks.

"The lab is continuing to look at the potential for some toxic substance that might have caused this," he said, adding that results are expected in about another week.

He said the state sent six Mallard ducks to the federal National Wildlife Health Center's laboratory in Madison,

Wisconsin, for the initial tests. He said they sent samples to additional labs to continue narrowing down the cause.

Inselman said the current hypothesis rules out contaminated water. "Based on what we're hearing from the folks

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CALIBRASKA ARTS INITIATIVE



Artist Rachel Seropian, right, helps Regan Mader, left, and Sullivan Johnson, middle, with their animation project during the 2017 Calibraska animation workshop.

COURTS

## Worthman sentenced to 3 years

Former client acted as informant, testified against attorney.

By MAUNETTE LOEKS  
Star-Herald

A district court judge sentenced a former criminal defense attorney to three years imprisonment on a drug charge Friday.

Judge Richard Birch, an 11th District Court judge assigned to preside over the case, sentenced Jon Worthman, 53, of Gering, to the mandatory minimum on a charge of possession of cocaine with the intent to distribute, 10 to 27 grams, a Class ID felony.

Worthman's case involved an unusual set of circumstances. Authorities arrested Worthman on Jan. 7, 2020, after investigators with the WING task force recorded Worthman and an informant exchanging cocaine after Worthman arranged to purchase two eight balls of cocaine.

The informant turned out to be Jeff Lujan, a man with an extensive criminal record, and a client of Worthman's. Worthman had represented the man in the past and, according to testimony at trial, represented friends and relatives of Lujan. Lujan testified during a bench trial in September that he provided cocaine to Worthman as payment for services. In exchange for drugs, Lujan claimed in his testimony, Worthman told him he had arranged favors for Lujan and his associates, such as getting charges dismissed or even not filed.

At trial, Worthman's attorney, Maren Chaloupka, didn't dispute the man had been in possession of cocaine, but focused on whether or not he had been distributing cocaine. In her sentencing argu-

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# Coming back to Nebraska

Early registration is now for Calibraska Arts Initiative.

By OLIVIA WIESELER  
Star-Herald

After the pandemic forced Erica Larsen-Dockray to think outside the box, the former Nebraska woman has been working on a bunch of new initiatives to reach even more people across the state of Nebraska with her Calibraska Arts Initiative this summer.

Larsen-Dockray, who grew up just outside Scottsbluff, began the summer program back in 2013 as a way to bring professionals in the creative art industry to Nebraska to teach various classes to students of all ages. Classes include everything from animation to creative writing to hip hop and more.

Larsen-Dockray uses her connections in Los Angeles and at CalArts, where she earned her master's degree in experimental animation and integrated media, to bring fellow teaching artists to the Midwest.

"I just work with these really amazing people out here in LA, and they love the idea of coming to Nebraska," she said. "They're just really excited to connect with folks in the Midwest. ... Such a big part is this

cultural exchange aspect of the program.

Last year, Larsen-Dockray moved the entire program online due to the coronavirus

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