

Walton League cleans up by forming new chapter

By Ruth Schuller
Missourian staff writer

After the last bags of trash were stacked in the pickup truck, satisfied Izaak Walton League members did what seems to come naturally to "Ikes" — they went fishing.

"I used to fish as a kid," says member Rich Ahrens. "I started fishing again about a year and a half ago as a form of relaxation."

Ahrens organized Saturday's cleanup at Ashland Wildlife Research Area. It was the first project of the Greater Ozarks Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America.

Motivation to start the chapter was provided by Scott Christianson, who moved to Columbia in August from Green Lake, Wis. He had been a member of the environmental group there.

Christianson tried to find a local chapter, but there were none. Missouri only had one of 400 Izaak Walton League chapters nationwide, and it was located in Joplin.

Christianson contacted Jon Graznak, a fellow computer bulletin-board buff who shared an interest in the environment. Graznak had researched the Izaak Walton

League for a class and shared Christianson's interest in starting a chapter.

"I was excited when Scott called," Graznak said. "With the tremendous opportunities for outdoor recreation in this area, a local chapter seemed to be a natural thing."

With the help of Joe Barnes, whom Christianson was helping with part-time research, the mounds of paperwork needed to start a local chapter began.

Ahrens and two more members, Scott Gammon and Walter Elliott, rounded out the group of six men, who began organizing the league last February. After much discussion and planning, they held their first official meeting earlier this month.

The local chapter was born just four months after its parent, the Izaak Walton League of America, celebrated its 65th birthday. In 1922, at a gathering in Chicago, 54 sportsmen founded the organization to conserve wildlife resources.

The group of hunters and fishermen named the organization for the 16th-century author whose popular book, "The Compleat Angler," has been reprinted through the years.

Izaak Walton's book is said to be the

See WALTON, Page 5A

Walton League looks for preservation projects

From Page 1A

first book written on fishing, and his name has become synonymous with the sport. League members have good-humoredly dubbed him

"the patron saint of anglers."

A love of fishing is not required for membership in the Izaak Walton League, said Christianson, the group's newly elected president. He said the group's main interest is helping to clean and preserve

the environment.

"We're always looking for projects," he said.

The Izaak Walton League of America has been effective in environmental protection through the years, Christianson said.



Richard Romero

Peggy Elliott and other members of the Izaak Walton League help clean up the Ashland Wildlife area.

America has been effective in environmental protection through the years, Christianson said.

It was largely responsible for creation of the first federally financed wildlife refuge on the upper Mississippi River. It has also bought and protected much land

for national parks and wilderness areas, including Indiana Dunes, Boundary Waters and Glacier.

Missouri's fledgling chapter of 11 members may seem small compared to the 50,000 members nationwide, but Christianson said he has long-term goals for growth.

"I'd like to see the chapter incorporate, buy some land and restore it," Christianson said.

Missouri members will have the opportunity to meet national members in Missouri this November when the Izaak Walton League of America holds its International

Outdoor Ethics Conference at the Lake of the Ozarks.

The Greater Ozarks Chapter welcomes people with an interest in the environment to attend a meeting and find out more about the group, Christianson said.