

Community Connections

College Days

by Scott Moeller, Aquatic Education Specialist

November 2011

[Download this article](#) 



Ryan Puncocar of the Mankato Bucket Riders fishing club helps Alicia Smith take a bass off her line at Duck Lake.

In the fall of 2011 MinnAqua helped college students from **Gustavus Adolphus** learn new outdoor skills. **MinnAqua** and the **DNR Outreach Section** partnered with Madison Lake's **Key Cities Conservation Club** to provide an outdoor skills day for college students. Held on a warm mid-October day at **Duck Lake County Park** and the Key Cities Club headquarters, the College Outdoor Skills Day gave Gustavus students a chance to try several outdoor skills: Trap shooting, canoeing, archery, fishing, and fly casting.

Because it was promoted as a beginners-level 'sampler' event, the day was full of memorable 'firsts' for many of the students. One student had the distinction of not only going fishing for the first time in her life, but also catching her first fish. Other students found empowerment in trying shooting sports for the first time. "I loved it," said one student, after the trap shooting session. "I'm no longer afraid of guns."

The instruction for the various sessions was carried out by experts in their particular field. The trap shooting and archery sessions were instructed by members of the Key

Cities Conservation Club who are certified instructors. Fly casting was taught by certified **Federation of Fly Fishers** instructors. Fishing was instructed by a member of the Mankato State University "**Bucket Riders**" Club. And, canoeing was led by members of the **Mankato Paddling Club**.

"I loved the instructors," said one student participant. "They were passionate, energetic and engaging, and took the time to learn and call us by name."

The event was well-received by participants and instructors alike. "We want to do whatever we can to get more people interested in shooting sports and other outdoor activities," says KCCC president Barry Braun. "We've got a real active club, and we make education events like this a high priority."

Special thanks to Blue Earth County Parks for the use of the Duck Lake facilities and canoes, to the Key Cities Conservation Club, and to all instructors, guides, and organizers.



Crystal Martiarena learns canoeing techniques on Duck Lake in a canoe provided by Mankato Paddling Club members Dean Peterson and Mark Bosacker.



Jenna Wagner prepares to take a shot at the Key Cities Conservation Club trap shoot range as certified instructor Steve Peterson looks on.