New Attraction at Chicot Park

A BOBCAT stalks a heron, a rattlesnake poised to strike an advancing mink, and a wood duck stands guard over his mate's nest.

No, you're not in the woods. You're in the Chicot wildlife museum at Chicot State Park, looking at dioramas created by W. Clay Watson, museum specialist for the state parks and recreation commission. The recently opened museum is situated six miles north of Ville Platte.

The diorama exhibits are now housed on the second floor of the park's administration building and hospital. "Eventually," says Watson, "we hope to expand the exhibits to such an extent that they will fill the entire building. The administration section would then be transferred to new quarters."

IN ALL, there are five dioramas, and they are the main feature of the museum. But there are other exhibits, too.

"One case holds eggs of North American meagrets and waterfowl," says Watson. "This collection was presented to the Chicot wildlife museum as a gift by Dr. George Lowery, director of the zoological museum at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge."

"We also have an Indian exhibit, containing items collected at Prehistoric Indian Park, near Marksville, and various other displays on topics ranging from water-lily control to conservation."

Chicot Park, a popular vacation spot in Central Louisiana, covers 4,500 acres, of which 3,000 are occupied by Lake Chicot. Thousands of persons visit the park each year to make use of camping facilities and overnight cabins.

Will the popularity of the park rub off on the museum? "It's much too early to tell how successful the museum will be," says Watson. "But I think the potential was indicated by the results of a short story in the Ville Platte paper which announced that the museum was nearing completion."

"Over 20 cars drove up the Sunday after the story appeared. Ironically enough, I couldn't get anybody in. I was spreading poison in the dioramas to protect the stuffed animals and birds."

"But that will probably be the only day in the history of the museum on which visitors were not welcome."

Photos by Fred C. McPherson

An item of interest in museum is display of 18-inch-long alligator skull that was found in Lake Chicot

Stalking bobcat eyes green heron lunch in this realistic diorama, one of five which are featured at wildlife museum in Chicot Park. The wood duck guards nest. Trunk turns to show female nesting.