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DUCK SEASON OPENS SEPTEMBER 20

PRESENT STATE FORESTS

By G. B. MacDonald
State Forester

(Editor's Note: This is the third of five articles on state forestry in Iowa. The first, in the April 15 "Iowa Conservationist" was titled "The Early Period," and the second, in the June 15 issue, "Acquiring State Forests." Subsequent titles will be "Multiple Use of State Forests" and "Administration and Management.")

IT WAS early March. Small patches of snow still dotted the landscape. John Vondracek surveyed his newly acquired farm with a certain degree of satisfaction. His wife busied herself anchoring an ancient trellis which, pendulum-like, was swinging in the breeze. His boy Chuck, six years old, dangled his legs from the tilted back porch. John knew that his down-payment of \$500 did not buy a top-notch farm in southern Iowa, but he reasoned that they surely could make a living—and a better one than in the factory. John gave a reassuring smile to his wife and, turning to Chuck, "Boy, this is what we asked for."

John, with the help of his wife and Chuck, tidied up the place and made ends meet in a way. The land was mostly rough. About half had been plowed and perhaps 40 acres were in trees. The trees were not as good as those in his former neighborhood in Pennsylvania—the best ones had been cut off for mine timbers, but those remaining would be serviceable for firewood and fence posts.

So John and his little family rolled up their sleeves and got the farm into production. Several seasons rolled by before he realized that from the start he had two strikes against him. The soil he cultivated did not produce the crops he expected; the fertile top soil had long since washed away. The timber areas and brush pro-

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No other form of wildlife has more inspired the imagination of man down through the ages or set fire to the primitive instinct left smoldering in his heart than waterfowl in its autumnal migration.

American Coot and Wild Duck Have Much in Common

By Anna Margrethe Olsen

"JUST what is a coot and what does it taste like?" are questions likely to be raised whenever coots are mentioned. How many of you could answer if the commonly used name of "mudhen" were substituted for coot? This misnomer the coot has inherited, no doubt, from its drab, slaty plumage and its preference for marshy lakes, shallow reedy ponds and sluggish streams. The American coots are not mudfeeders, however; 90 per cent of the coot's diet is plant material taken in water and on land, supplemented with insects, snails and other small ani-

mals. A striking characteristic feature of the coot is its white bill with a dark ring near its tip. "Whitebill" has been suggested as a suitable name for the coot replacing the unfortunate name, "mudhen", which should be dropped. The hunter, too, has his special name for the coot, not complimentary either, calling it a fool bird, fool coot, or fool duck.

The American coot, an aquatic bird with the scientific name of *Fulica americana*, belongs to the rail family. It differs from the other rails in having a wider body and more widely lobed toes. In the south coots are more or less resi-

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TRY THESE POINTERS ON YOUR PUMP GUN

By Bruce F. Stiles
Chief of Fish and Game

NO other form of wildlife has so inspired the imagination of people down through the ages or set fire to the primitive instinct left smoldering in the hearts of men as waterfowl in its autumnal migration. It has a grandeur to it that is lacking in the migration of other birds. In spring we watch for with anticipation and then are inwardly elated as the first ribbon-like lines of geese or ducks appear from the south. As they fight their way north into the teeth of a cold March wind, we anticipate with them the feeling of warm sunshine and the smell of green grass and the general contentment and well-being that comes with soft spring days.

To the duck hunter as well as to those who are only casually aware of this northward movement of ducks and geese, the spring migration is pleasant to see and holds a promise for the future; but in no measure does it affect the emotions or so completely grip the souls of men as in the fall. For uncounted centuries man has stood awed each fall as he watched high overhead wedge-shaped flocks of geese and ducks outlined against the lonely glow of sunset. It is a stirring sight; and it does something to duck hunters that is utterly beyond the understanding of upland game shooters. The feeling is not shallow like the thrill of breaking a clay bird or bagging a cock pheasant. It is fundamental and deep, and is tied up emotionally with the primeval.

Duck Hunter a Purist

As the dry fly fisherman is referred to as the "purist" in fishing, so the duck hunter may in all mod-

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SCORN FOR VIOLATORS

In any other sport—baseball, football, boxing and all the others—the player who won't abide by the rules and who plays dirty usually gets boos from the crowd. It should be no different in the sports of hunting and fishing. The fellow who brags about getting game and fish out of season and taking more than his limit ought to draw frowns and scorn of those who find it out.

—Midwest Sportsman.

"Near this spot are deposited the remains of one who possessed beauty without vanity, strength without insolence, courage without ferocity, and all the virtues of man without his vices."

—Lord Byron, in a tribute to his dog.

A canoe is an object that acts like a small boy—it behaves better when paddled from the rear.

Frogleg Hunters to Find An Abundance of Frogs

As the weather cools, countless millions of leopard frogs return from their summer pastures in the shallow marshes, creeks and adjoining fields to the deeper lakes and streams. Nowhere in the state is this movement more spectacular than in the vicinity of the major natural lakes, Clear, Spirit, Okoboji and Storm.

The reason for the movement, which is semi-annual, is obvious. In the early summer frogs move into the shallow water areas and pasture lands where there is an abundance of insect food. After a summer vacation where they banquet at Mother Nature's boarding house on a luscious fare of mosquitoes, crickets and the countless other juicy insects, they get the urge to move back into waters that do not freeze to the bottom. There, after a lakeside loaf of from a few days to a couple of weeks, they dive into the icy waters, swim to the bottom, and with a few kicks of their feet are snuggled for the winter in a feather bed of oozy mud.

The frogs are one of the most hunted of all of the wild creatures. Almost every one of nature's predators, including insects, mammals, birds, snakes, fishes and man, enjoys a feast of frogs. The frog is important particularly in the diet of fishes, and in many areas predators and environment keep the frog population rather low.

With the knowledge of the dangers that face these amphibians, Mother Nature has wisely provided, as in the case of many other wild creatures, that many many times more young will be born than could possibly survive. The ponds in the breeding area by the middle of May literally teem with

tadpoles, a very small percent of which ever reach the frog stage.

However, in the large lakes district many more of the tadpoles reach frog stage, and more of the young frogs reach adulthood because of the large number of marshes and low areas that provide suitable habitat. Thus there is a large surplus over and above those that are needed in the "biological balance" that can furnish sport and food for man.

In the past illegal and commercial hunting of frogs made necessary certain very definite "frog laws." Amid considerable fun-poking, legislators introduced bills designed to guarantee an annual surplus and prevent commercialization. Included in these laws are sections which set seasons (May 11 to December 1), limits (four dozen daily, eight dozen possession), and prohibit sale of frogs except for bait under a bait dealer's license.

These laws have worked, and under them in the big lake areas frog hunting has become a major activity when frogs move into winter quarters in the fall.

Large frogs are again very abundant because of three successive wet seasons, and this year the largest migration of frogs is expected since 1938. The extent of the frog migration in the Spirit Lake region, for instance, may be realized by the fact that in 1938, the last big year, a single illegal shipment of frogs seized by conservation officers contained 7,350 pairs of froglegs.

Froggers are encouraged to crop the surplus this fall; however, they are cautioned against moving the rocks which line the lake shores and under which frogs hide. This practice has removed the natural



A panful of leopard frogs ready for dressing. Epicures claim the leopard frog legs finer grained and more delicious than the giant bullfrog legs found in the markets.

rip-rapping from many of the lake shores and has necessitated replacement of rocks by the Conservation Commission, which is a very expensive and in some places an almost impossible task.

AMMUNITION FOR FOREIGN GUNS

If your G. I. Joe comes toting home a batch of souvenirs (and what American soldier doesn't?) he may find himself in the same predicament as the group of G. I. lads now marking time somewhere in the former land of the Hitlerites.

This group has acquired, by means known only to the American soldier, some pistols of Belgian and German make, and they now write to us to inquire what American cartridge, if any, can be used in their shooting irons, assuming that they can get them home and then shoot them.

Fortunately, a great number of American pistol cartridges will fit the guns of European make. While the designation of calibers for the European weapons is in millimeters, transposition to American calibers is not hard.

For example, the 7.65 mm. Browning, a popular pistol in Europe, takes our .32 automatic pistol cartridge; the 9 mm. Browning uses our .38 caliber Colt auto pistol; the 9 mm. short Browning uses our .380 Colt auto; the 7.65 parabellum is our .30 caliber Luger auto pistol; the 7.63 Mauser is our .30 caliber Mauser auto pistol, while the 9 mm. Luger, famous German piece, has its American counterpart in the 9 mm. Luger auto pistol. These represent about all of the foreign makes in common use during the recent conflict.

For the most part, the foreign pistols are well made. Now and then one appears that is shoddy, but generally speaking, the European gun makers took pride in turning out a well built pistol, and the only thing G. I. Joe will have to remember is to get the proper American ammunition for his trophy of the chase.

—The Nomad, Davenport Democrat.

"How do you tell the difference between ducks and geese?"

"A duck goes quack quack and a goose goes honk honk. Now if you were hunting and a flock of birds came into sight and went honk honk, what would you do?"

"I'd step aside and let them pass."



Frogs are found in almost unbelievable abundance during good frog years. Here a Conservation Commission crew seining in a nursery lake found a net full of leopard frogs in place of the walleye pike fingerling they were fishing for.

Duck Season Opens . . .

(Continued from page 161)

esty take pride in his affiliation with that group of hunters who represent the elite upper crust of the hunting fraternity. To be a duck hunter immediately identifies one with that group of immortals—Fred Kimbal, General Dawes, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Major Charles Askins, Will Rogers, and "Ding" Darling.

Alexander the Great wept because he had no more worlds to conquer, but to my knowledge no duck hunter has as yet yawned and put away his gun because he had learned all of the intricacies of duck hunting.

This little treatise is entered upon with great misgivings and is in no



Mallards are the most sought after ducks in Iowa. They congregate in great rafts on the larger lakes and with time-clock regularity morning and evening leave the protection of the water body to feed on waste corn in Iowa's large flat corn-picked fields.

way intended to completely cover the subject or even to tell with sureness what is wrong. I merely wish to set out in a simple form those fundamentals of duck hunting that have for years contributed to my hunting success and the success of others.

Gun Choice a 12 Gauge

I think it proper that we begin with a short discussion of duck guns. Guns may be selected by hunters for any number of reasons, and to fulfill a wide variety of needs and qualifications. To make my point clear, one hunter may shoot a 410 gauge as a matter of economy, yet cry to the high heavens that he does so merely because it is "sporty" and that bagging ducks with a light gun provides a greater thrill than bagging them with a large bore gun. Another may shoot a double-barrelled 10 gauge with Damascus barrels because his father shot it before him and always insisted that it was the "hardest shootin' gun he ever saw."

Either of these arguments may or may not be sound, but my selection of a modern duck gun would be based solely on its ability to contribute to duck hunting success under modern conditions, and for that

purpose I must select a 12 gauge repeater.

10 Gauge Magnum Most Powerful Modern Shotgun

First, let us consider the ability of different gauges to kill ducks. Eight gauge takes the cake without even a close competitor for the simple reason that of the guns of a weight that the average man can handle, it will throw a greater quantity of any size shot into a killing circle at any range than any other gun. Now we must eliminate this gun, if for no other reason than that it is outlawed by federal law. Next comes the 10 gauge. In killing power it is just below the eight. The 10 gauge magnum is our most powerful modern shotgun, and authorities on ballistics will not question its ability or that, loaded with two ounces of number two lupaloy shot, it will bring down high-flying mallards at 80 yards—if you can hit them.

40 Yards Is a Long Shot

That's just where the trouble lies. Everything else to the contrary notwithstanding, 40 yards is the extreme limit at which ducks can be killed regularly with any gun. I call your attention to the word **regularly**, for I freely admit that a single pellet of number two shot striking in a vital spot will as surely bring down a sky-scraping mallard at 80 yards when fired from a 410 gauge as when fired from an eight.

The point is that when fired from a 410 the scarcity of pellets makes the pattern so thin that even if the lead and aim were perfect, the pattern would be so thin that the successful shooter should consider himself so highly favored by Lady Luck that he would be justified in spending the major portion of his time putting quarters into a slot machine.

We have assumed here that the lead and aim are exact. Let's consider the hazards of inexactness at that distance. The shorter the elapsed time between the initial forward motion of shot and its final impact upon game, the less the margin of error in calculating lead and windage.

According to Wallace A. Cox, ballistic engineer of E. I. DuPont Company, number six shot in a high velocity load having a velocity of 1,435 feet per second at three yards from the muzzle has dropped off to 715 feet per second at approximately 38 yards. As it loses velocity the windage must be greatly increased until at great distances instant calculations are hopeless.

Trap shooters will tell you that in breaking a target on the extreme right angle down a heavy cross wind, they frequently hold just behind or at the back edge of the target instead of giving it any lead. This merely demonstrates what wind will do to shot after its initial velocity has fallen off.

When Better Guns Are Made You Will Hear About Them

After spending hours of time and using up reams of paper on a manuscript designed to set out the ballistic reasons for my choice, I have

given it up as too dry and lengthy and will confine myself to the statement that the duck hunter firing a high velocity load of number six shot from a 12 gauge repeater may at times find himself out-classed, but he will never find himself out-gunned by anything yet manufactured. To paraphrase the Buick slogan, "When better guns are made, you will hear about it." Thus in one short paragraph I have easily disposed of a controversial subject that started when the first shotgun was made and, as the chronometer ticks off the seconds, shows little more evidence of final settlement than the perennial controversy that arises among housewives as to the best method of pickling cucumbers.

What About Decoys?

When I was a kid, we had live decoys. They didn't cost as much as blocks. They had the run of the place and foraged for their own feed. My dad made me take care of them. I will never forget how I hated to set them out—in the icy cold darkness of a November morning, hooking up the harness, fastening them on the line, being scratched by them on cold hands, icy water up your sleeves and down your neck, lugging crates over the sand bars for half a mile—enough of that.

The decoys made an awful clamor on the frosty air of morning; but when the golden sun burst forth in all its resplendent glory over the eastern hills, they were invariably charmed into silence and basked in its warm light while flock after flock of mallards and pintails slipped by just out of range to alight and feed at their chosen spots.

Of course we had shooting, but to analyze the value of the live decoy still has me guessing. I distinctly remember one morning on New Lake in Woodbury County. I had harnessed and set out 30 live decoys supplemented by two dozen blocks. I had the best spot on the lake. Early shooting was good, but about nine o'clock a man came in on the



Choice of retriever dogs is a matter for the individual hunter to decide upon. A good retriever, however, is of inestimable value to the duck hunter, as every nimrod who has waded icy waters to retrieve a downed bird will testify.

other side of the lake, which was not more than 200 yards wide. He set out about a dozen folding paper decoys. That guy was a caller. He was across and about a hundred yards below me.

The ducks would see my spread and start in. They would make a high circle. As they came around in their first turn about a hundred yards out, he would let them have an ear-full. They chuckled right back and dropped in like the next-door neighbors on New Year's Eve to sample your lemonade. He killed his limit, picked up and went home, while I sat there in the blind wondering what it was all about.

Of course, nowadays some optimist with a telescope would pick them out high up among the heavenly bodies and let fire. I never thought of that.

Anyway, to get down to cases, I will take a couple of dozen blocks and a good caller and let you have the live birds.

Duck Call a Must, But—

Now about duck calls—like the favors bestowed by the Gods on Mount Olympus falling upon the just and unjust alike, the ability to call ducks is a gift. Freely I admit that even my most studied and careful efforts at this fine art produce a motley of acoustic reverberations that has been described as closely resembling an old hen caught in a picket fence. Fortunately, I learned this early in my duck hunting career

and, humiliated as I am, I try to pass it off along with my inability to play the piano or operate a yo-yo.

The solution is, make friends with someone who can call ducks and take him with you. Bribe him if necessary, use flattery. The rules are as flexible and fancy free as in fishing. Never admit your weakness. Take your call out of your pocket frequently. Shake it and put it in your mouth. When no ducks are in sight you may even give it a little toot. Then shake your head and put it back in your pocket with the remark that the reed is cracked or that last night you slept in a hay-mow and your call is full of alfalfa.

Much better to do this than to blast out on the crisp morning air a tirade of squawks that will not only convince everyone within a mile of your inability, but in addition will scare away every duck within ear shot.

Blind Important, Motion Fatal

When I was a boy we tried to make our blinds as small and inconspicuous as possible. We tried to blend them in with the surroundings in such a manner that in the half light of dawn we could hardly find them ourselves. Suffice to say that the blinds should be as small and inconspicuous as possible and still function in keeping your movements hidden.

Almost without exception, the eyes of wild birds and mammals are attuned to pick up motion, and they will frequently pay no attention to a hunter in broad daylight so long as he remains perfectly motionless, but will flush at the slightest move.

Keep down in your blind and remain still. When ducks come over or circle, don't crane your neck and twist around in the blind. Better be in a poor position to shoot than to get no shot at all. Keep your face hidden. Don't leave empty shells lying around. If there is more than one person in the blind, designate someone to keep track of the movements of the flock and the rest do nothing more than hold their breath. If your gun is sticking up out of the corner of the blind, don't take it down while the birds are circling.

Distances Deceiving

Don't think that fishermen have a monopoly on tall yarns and be misled by duck hunters who claim to have killed ducks at 80 yards. Many of these hunters are innately honest, but haven't the slightest idea how far 80 yards is. These yarns are at least to some extent stimulated by the manufacturers and distributors of ammunition, who don't want to be outclassed by their competitors even if it is only in print. Even if your ammunition were capable of throwing a killing pattern to a distance of 80 yards, I don't know a single hunter (and I know lots of them) who could hit them.

When you have finished building your blind, take a tape measure with you and measure off 40 yards in several directions and stick a willow in the water. Never shoot at a duck that is outside of that circle. Distance is a deceptive thing. Ducks directly overhead are always closer than they appear. For that reason you may occasionally shoot at an overhead duck that appears to be a little out of range. The more nearly they approach a horizontal plane with the shooter's eye, the farther out they will be in proportion to your estimate. Low circling ducks are always farther out than they look, and you should never attempt

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The duck shack is probably the most exclusive clubhouse in America, and a duck hunter may in all modesty take pride in his affiliation with that group of hunters who represent the upper crust of the hunting fraternity.



Blinds should be as small and inconspicuous as possible and should be blended harmoniously with surrounding vegetation. Motion, even in a well-constructed blind, if detected by a single bird in the flock spells disaster for the hunter.



The Monument

By Eli Waldron

(Reprinted from Collier's, April 21, 1945, by special permission)

MRS. HOOKER was glad when noon came. The morning had dragged slowly even though she had put up clean curtains and given the settee a thorough brushing. Now the hands on the clock pointed at the ceiling and she was glad that the morning had finished with the business of being morning, and had put on the long clothes of afternoon.

She went to the bedroom window that overlooked the garden, but Henry wasn't there. He had finished putting in the onion sets, she noticed, and rolled up the marking lines and laid them on the grass.

"Should have known," she said, with a smile, and she went to the sunroom and saw him then in his customary place beneath the oak tree. He was sharpening a sickle with the little stone he always carried, and when she rapped with her finger he nodded without looking up, spat, put the stone in his pocket and stood up. A little stiff getting up.

They ate without any talk because, after fifty—that is, forty-nine—years, there wasn't any need to be talking much. Anyway, they were both thinking the same thing and thinking about it in more or less the same way. In forty-nine, fifty years, you get to have the same ideas on most subjects.

His good blue suit, then, he put on, and when he called, "Ma," as he always did, she went in and fixed his Odd Fellows pin. The clasp was worn and it wouldn't stay on just right. She had been fixing it for him ever since she could remember.

She dressed next, in the green dress with the white flowers she

had bought when she was installed as secretary of the guild. After that, she and Henry went into the living room to wait.

"Two o'clock, did he say?" Henry asked.

"That's what he said." She took the letter from the desk top and walked with it toward the settee, holding it in both her hands. "I'll read it again."

Henry came and sat beside her.

It wasn't a long letter. There was a seal and a date and "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hooker." Then the part that began: "In honor of your grandson, William T. Hooker, who died for his country, an appropriation has been made for a monument to be placed in your city . . ." There was another paragraph about times and places of William T. Hooker's service, and finally: "I would like to call on you this coming Wednesday afternoon, both to renew our old friendship and to take you to see the memorial before it is brought to Lynwood. It's not far, and there may be some suggestions you would like to make . . ."

The letter was signed: "Senator Roy E. Everett." Mrs. Hooker pronounced the name carefully as she folded the paper and put it back into the envelope.

"Roy Everett," Henry said reflectively.

"Senator Everett."

"I dunno," Henry said, rubbing his chin. "I dunno sometimes. He used to be a pretty nice fellow, Judge Everett, before he got into these politics. Now it seems he's like all the others, throwing money right and left for monuments and what not . . ."

"It's not throwing it away, Henry," Mrs. Hooker protested mildly. "It's not exactly that."

"And another thing, Bill isn't

the only one not coming back. There was others. Good boys."

"He explained that," Mrs. Hooker said. "Bill was . . . well, he was the first. It's for the others, too. All of them. It's . . ." But her voice caught and she stood up and put the letter back on the desk.

Behind her, Henry went on with: "I'm not so sure Bill would like the idea himself. He wasn't much for show . . ." But the words came indistinctly to her ears and she found herself staring through the archway, through the sunroom window, at the oak tree where Henry had been sitting.

It was Bill's tree, too, as much the boy's as his grandfather's. It was a warming place for both of them, a returning place. There they had sat in many suns while Henry had instructed the lad who was his grandchild in the ways of Indians and the ways of birds, showing him the proper way to sharpen a knife, the proper way to make a whistle, the proper way to live . . .

The oak tree was Bill's tree; he was like the oak growing. When he was a Boy Scout he wrote an essay called "The Oak Is the Best Tree There Is." She still had it. He liked things made of oak and was so ready, any time, to praise its virtues that the fellows sometimes kidded him about. It was funny how boys grew and grew and grew . . . and then died.

MAYBE a fancy monument was a waste of money. She could see Henry's point of view; it brought no one back. But it wouldn't do to make a fuss about it now. The first tearing hurt was gone and perhaps the granite and bronze, or whatever it was, would help with the emptiness when they walked by the square as they went walking.

In his hand Henry had the pearl-handled knife he had bought at Anderson's hardware to give to the boy when he came home. He was brushing the blade with the stone he carried and thinking, she knew, the same things she had been thinking.

"It's nearly two," she said.

A faded smile crossed his face. He clicked the knife shut, put it in his pocket, and his knees creaked a little as he got up.

And, "I think this is him now," she said.

They met Senator Everett on the walk. His hair was graying, but his eyes were sharp, and when he put out his hand, he said, "Hello," in a voice that had no falseness about it.

"Hello, Roy," Henry said. "Glad to see you." Mrs. Hooker nodded and smiled.

The senator took them first past the square and showed them the place where the earth was turned back. After that, they drove into the country along the carelessly looped, shining river and into the vacation hills.

She wanted to ask Senator Everett the name of the man who

Outdoor Oddities

BY WALT HARVEY

SPEED DEMON
THE DUCK HAWK HOLDS ALL SPEED RECORDS AMONG BIRDS, AND CAN AVERAGE 175 MILES PER HOUR.



was doing the cutting and engraving, but he and Henry were talking about the government. She felt a little edge in Henry's voice as he got on the subject of taxes and she hoped he wouldn't say what he thought about the monument being wasteful and improper.

Watching the scenery, she heard the senator say, "To hear you talk, Henry, you'd think all politicians were hell bent on ruining the country."

"I dunno," Henry said. "Seems to me they forget the kind of people they used to be, the kind of people they come from."

"Some do," Senator Everett said. "Some don't."

There was silence after that, and Mrs. Hooker was relieved they hadn't got on the subject of Bill and memorials and things of that nature. Senator Everett had been pretty nice, and she didn't like arguments, no matter if Henry was in the right of it.

The car turned into a shaded road and stopped before a small red-and-white farmhouse. A mustached man came out to meet them—a rather old man, but not as old as Henry.

"Do you know Tom Andrews?" Senator Everett asked.

"Why . . ." Mrs. Hooker hesitated. "I've heard the name, I think. Bill used to come out here hunting. Used to mention the name Andrews."

Henry said, "Glad to meet you, Mr. Andrews."

"Glad to meet you folks," the mustached man said. "Yes, I knew Bill. Had some nice visits, we did."

"Is it ready?" Senator Everett asked.

"Yep," Tom Andrews said. "It is. Right by the side of the house here."

Henry looked at his wife quizzically and ran his hand over his chin as they followed the others down the path.

"A monument," Senator Everett said when they stopped, "can be one of several things. Sometimes

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Present State Forests . . .

(Continued from page 161)

duced only scant forage for his meager livestock. The third strike was called in the middle thirties when the dry years came. The mortgage company arranged to take over, and as John glanced back as the family drove away his wife gave him a pat on the shoulder. No words were spoken. Chuck, now a husky lad of 11, remarked, "It's okay, Dad—we didn't have a ghost of a chance."

The case of the Vondracek family is an example of the disheartening results of several generations of misuse of our soil, water, forest and other natural resources and the penalty which must be paid by the individual who does not have the facilities to build up these badly depleted resources into a productive condition. It is under conditions of this kind, where private



Localities where a total of 12,000 acres of state and 4,700 acres of national forests have been acquired. The public forests are on poor rough lands which are mostly unsuited for cultivation.

enterprise cannot or will not keep productive the natural resources, that a public agency should step in and either give the individual landowners the advice and help necessary or in some cases take over the areas for public management.

Iowa, with her magnificent soil resources, already has developed areas where the combined efforts of the soil technicians and foresters will be required to render these areas continuously productive.

It was in the middle thirties that the first move was made by the state and federal government to acquire and take over the management of limited areas of the poorer, rougher lands which did not have promising possibilities for continued private ownership. To date about 17,000 acres have been acquired, approximately 12,000 acres in state forests and 4,700 acres in national forests. The future possibility of these areas depends in part upon the condition of the tracts and the extent to which the soil and cover have been depleted. In order to get something of a picture of these publicly owned areas, an effort will be made to describe them briefly.

Location of the State Forest Units

The limited areas of state forests are located in three districts: the South Central (Lucas and Monroe Counties), the Southeastern (Lee and Van Buren Counties), and the Northeastern (Allamakee and Clayton Counties). In each of

these areas a large part of the land is now partially or entirely covered with timber trees or has been in the past.

With a few exceptions of small areas along streams, the land is not suited for cultivated crops, either because of the steep topography or poor soil, or both. The timbered lands have been cut over for several generations with little or no thought being given to the renewal of the trees. Most of the woodlands have been grazed, but with scant returns from the poor forage produced.

Where the combination of steep slopes and overgrazing have occurred, various stages of soil erosion exist. Some of the worst of the eroded areas have already required corrective measures through reforestation or other types of soil treatment.

The Lucas-Monroe Area

The state forest lands of something less than 4,000 acres in the South-Central area occur in one of the poorer soil districts. A hundred or more years of improper land use has not left these tracts in a highly productive condition.

A good stand of timber originally covered the region. The demands of the coal mining industry for mine timbers helped to deplete large areas. The timber was cut for saw logs, railroad ties and mining purposes, but with no attention to renewal of the trees; cut-over areas and the original grasslands were over-grazed; tracts were planted to corn and other tilled crops with little thought given to the character of the soil or the steepness of the slopes.

The lowering economic condition of the region has generally kept pace with the depletion of the soil, forest and other resources. In the early thirties the economic barometer seemed to hit bottom. Under existing economic conditions many of these areas, at least for the time being, had become unprofitable under private enterprise. Cultivated areas were in the red; grazing lands netted little if any revenue; the timber land in its depleted condition produced only limited fuel and posts; the top soil had been eroded away and even the wildlife, formerly abundant, figuratively speaking, went on relief.

An idea of the general condition of the lands acquired in the Lucas-Monroe area may be gained by an analysis based on a survey of 2,500 acres, soon after being acquired by the state. The accompanying graph (Chart 1) shows what the

LUCAS-MONROE STATE FOREST AREA

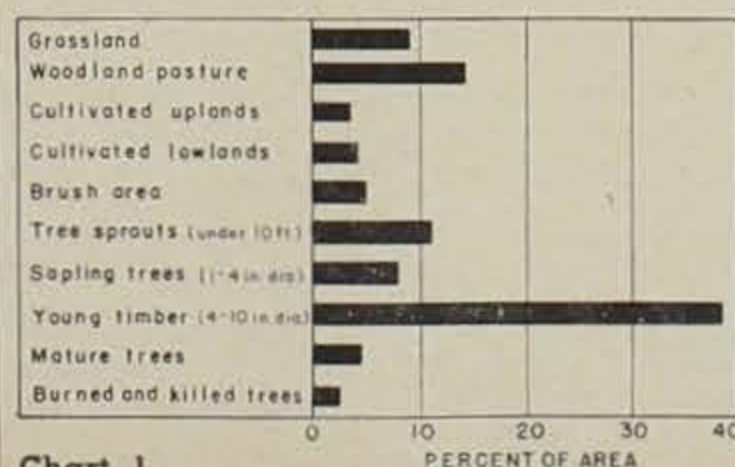


Chart 1.

state secured when it purchased these lands.

The grasslands and woodland pastures were usually on cleared slopes which had lost most of the top soil. The over-grazed grasses, weeds and brush gave limited protection to the soil and little forage for livestock. Considerable areas had come into brush since clearing. Dense stands of sumac, hazel, and snowberry were predominant with scattering stands of hawthorn, wild plum, cherry and chinquapin oak.

About 57 percent of the area examined was classed as timber stands ranging from small sprouts and saplings up to poles 10 inches in diameter. The principle species present were white, bur, red and black oaks and hickory. Most of the trees were of sprout origin rather than from seed. The heavy cutting for mine timbers in the past has left the poorer specimens of white and bur oaks of the larger sizes. The less desired red and black oaks had not been culled so heavily and as a result those remaining were of larger size. The younger stands showed a reasonable percentage of the more desired white oaks. Good stands of white oak poles (four to ten inches in diameter) although limited in extent were not uncommon and gave promise for future production. The black and red oak pole stands, especially on the north and east slopes, were mostly in fairly good condition. The lower slopes were usually covered in varying density with basswood and elm and other species.

The mature trees on the examined area were of rather negligible amount. Some large white and red oaks, usually defective, had been passed by in former cutting operations. The bottomlands contained open stands of the moisture loving, faster growing basswood, elms, boxelder and cottonwood, along with an occasional black walnut.

In general, the Lucas-Monroe state forest areas present a picture of a land resource which has been misused to the place where it will take a number of years to get it back into full production. This will require first of all protection against fires and over-grazing; correcting the serious soil erosion; removing the diseased and defective trees; thinning dense sprout stands; converting useless brush areas to forage or tree crops. This means placing the entire area under good management for maximum production of all the resources, including timber, forage and wildlife.

The Southeastern (Farmington) Area

The past history of the Southeastern state forest area is comparable to that of the Lucas-Monroe area. This part of the state was the first to be settled. Unmanaged cutting and culling of the timber has been under way since the early settlers took over from the Indians.

SOUTHEAST STATE FOREST AREA

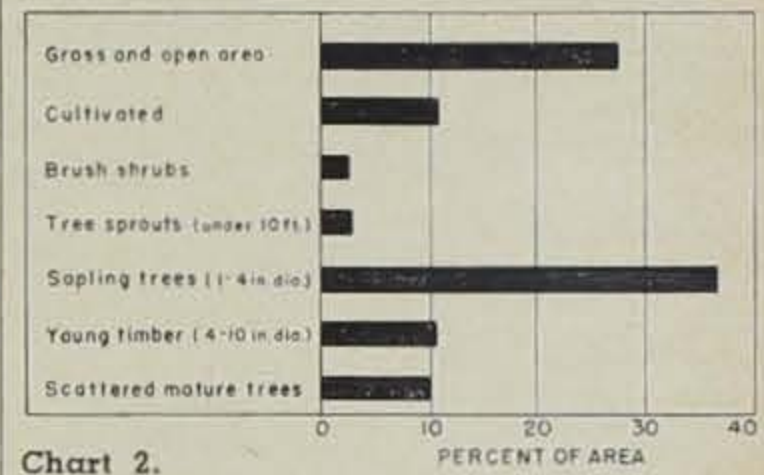


Chart 2.

Grazing has been largely unregulated, and repeated fires have not only hindered natural reproduction but have left many trees damaged by fire scars and subsequent decay.

The present trees, almost exclusively, have originated from stump and root sprouts. The principal species are white, red and black oaks, hickory and elms, with smaller amounts of walnut, basswood, cottonwood, birch, hard maple and black cherry. The young sprout stands with trees up to four inches in diameter, averaging about 20 to 30 years old, made up about 40 percent of the vegetative cover. Future production of posts, railroad ties, and saw logs will depend largely upon the management of these young stands. A survey of the purchase units at the time the lands were acquired showed the condition indicated in Chart 2.

Although mature trees are found on about 10 percent of the area, these were usually the ones which were defective or deformed and not good enough to cut in past operations. To benefit the stand, most of these old over-mature trees should be removed in order to give space for the younger generation of faster growing trees.

Several hundred acres of open and grass covered areas have already been reforested and the worst areas, gullied by soil erosion, have been stabilized by planting rapid growing black locust trees or by other treatment.

Northeastern Area

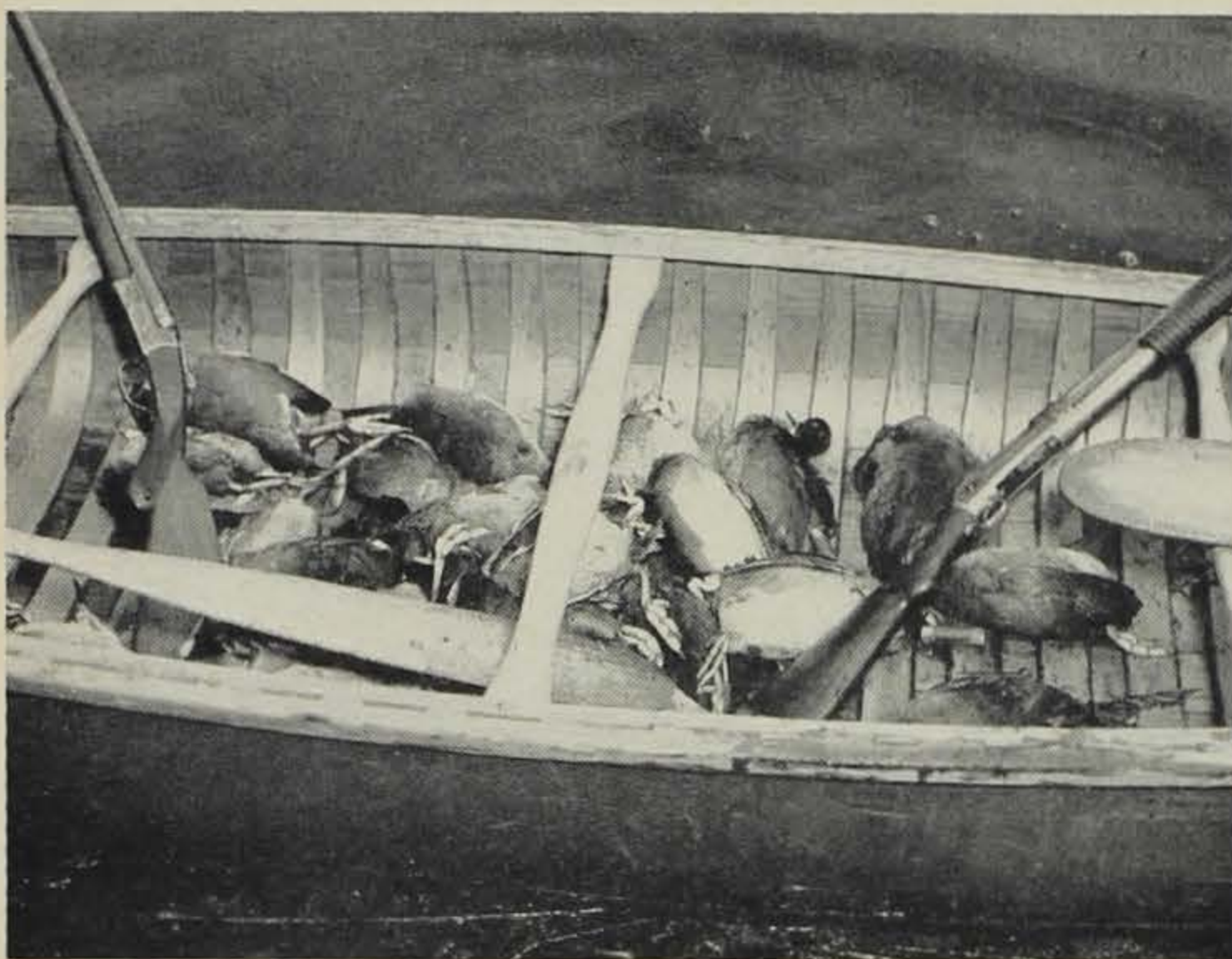
(Allamakee and Clayton Counties)

The state forest lands in northeastern Iowa are located in the section of the state where about 90 percent of the land was originally covered with timber. A relatively high proportion of this part is still classed as woodlots or timber areas. Tree crops have been a good source of revenue and will continue to supplement cultivated agricultural crops and forage production.

The state forest lands of 3,800 acres include both upland and bottomland mixed hardwoods. The oaks, elms, basswood and cottonwood predominate. The timbered areas are interspersed with woodland pastures and small areas of grass land. These state lands, involving 12 separate tracts, occupy the rough, hilly sections along the water courses.

The region offers one of the best possibilities to work out a satisfactory adjustment of proper land use between agriculture, grazing and woodlot forestry. The badly

(Continued on page 167)

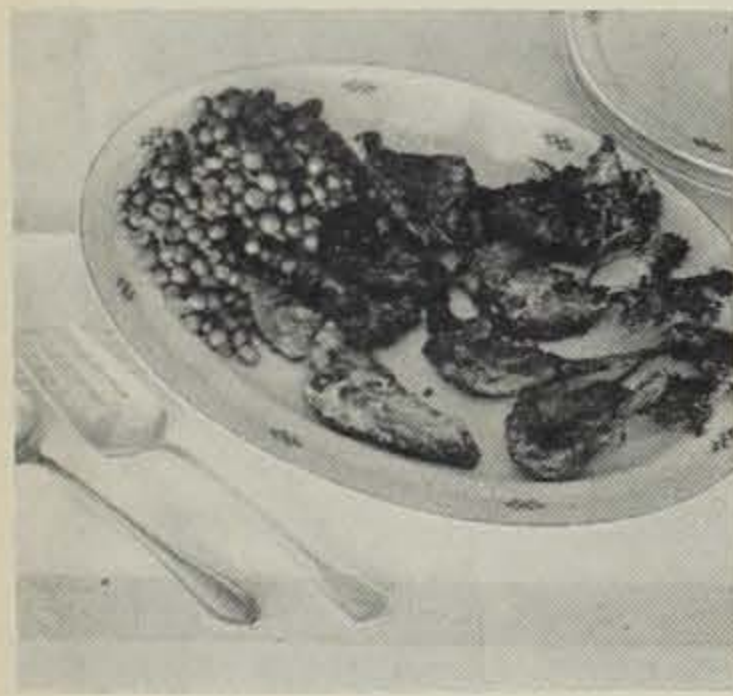


Shoot 'em—don't cuss 'em. A shallow lake, a good boat, and plenty of coots spells an enjoyable afternoon and means meat on the table.

American Coot . . .

(Continued from page 161)

dent; in the north, migratory, arriving in the spring with the early ducks, and starting their journey southward, in small groups rather than in mass, in September at the beginning of the duck-hunting season. They do not have the rapid flight of the duck or goose, but they are said to have great endurance in covering distances. Neither duck nor chicken, the coot is ducklike in shape, plumage, habitat, food and habits. It is about



Fried, braised or smothered coot is both gamy and delicious. Wild rice or fried hominy and tart jelly are usually served with both coot and duck dinners.—Iowa State College Photo.

15 inches long and may weigh as much as two pounds.

The Coot and the Hunter

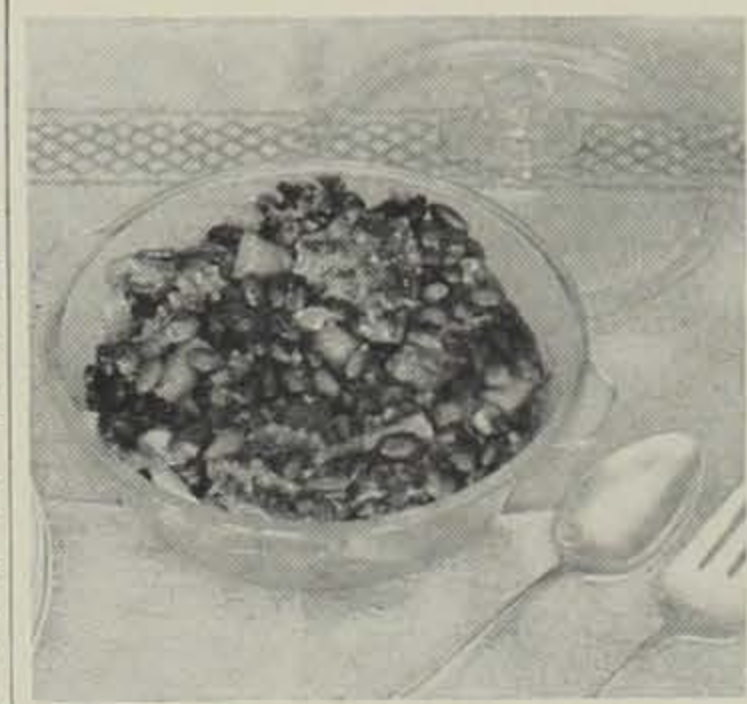
Most hunters have been slow in discovering that the American coots are good to eat. Numerous and widely distributed, coots should be harvested in large numbers for the mutual benefit of other waterfowl and of man. True, the coots are not sporty birds. They lack astuteness of the wild ducks and geese. They are lumbering in rising from the water and slow in their flight; some have been found to make from 25 to 28 miles per hour. They are gullible and stupid, acting too much in flocks to offer any challenge to a hunter. It took one Iowa hunter 28 years

to overcome his prejudices and to discover the possibilities of coots as food. He enthusiastically describes his method of preparing and cooking coots in a letter to the editor of the Iowa Conservationist which appears in the October, 1944, issue under the heading "Mudhen Good for Food."

The Iowa Cooperative Research Unit has been interested in establishing the American coot among game birds. An investigation has been carried on in one of Iowa's slough areas to obtain data on the life history, habits, and characteristics of the coot. Dr. George O. Hendrickson, leader of the project, has reported the findings in the July, 1943, issue of the Iowa Conservationist.

The American Coot and the Experimental Laboratory

To find out what a selected group of 10 staff members chosen from the Science and Home Economics Divisions of Iowa State College might think of coots as food, Dr. Hendrickson supplied us with 20 bird carcasses for experimental purposes in the fall of 1944. Coots are too full of pinfeathers to be worth picking. They had been



Casserole of coot with pinto or calico beans will keep guests guessing. Limas, navies or kidney beans will also do. Adventures with coot and various vegetables and seasonings may be exciting and profitable to the palate.—Iowa State College Photo.

skinned, therefore, soon after they were shot, and drawn and washed quickly under running water. Wrapped in heavy paper and tagged with their weights recorded, they were chilled overnight in the refrigerator. In the morning they were quick frozen and held in storage at or near 0° F. in the college locker plant until used. In most instances the giblets were wrapped together and frozen separately. All coots were thawed in the refrigerator before cooking; from four to six hours was usually allowed.

The Coot Carcass Versus the Duck and Chicken

For a description of the coot carcass see the illustration below. Practically all were young birds with pliable breastbones, not fat but in good condition. The 20 coots averaged one-half pound and varied in weight from 5.3 to 12.2 ounces. All had a fishy odor that clung to the fingers after handling them.

Experimenting With the Cooking of Coots

Because of the limited number of coots available, the experimental work was limited to the preparation of simple dishes using the standard methods accepted for meat and especially poultry cook-



For broiling use only young and tender coot with flexible breast bones and ribs. Split the carcass in half by cutting along one side of the backbone and break ribs as needed to flatten halves. To bone use only breast pieces, thighs and legs as shown on tray at left. Serve whole or half coot to each individual.—Iowa State College Photo.

ery. All prepared dishes were scored on appearance, aroma, flavor, tenderness or texture, and juiciness by the panel. Their final scores have been used in developing the tentative recipes which are given and are the basis for preliminary and brief discussion which follows:

Coots Have a Gamy Flavor

The available results are not adequate to discuss to any extent game and especially coot flavor and how it can be reduced or modified. We had no wild ducks available for comparison. Coots are definitely different in flavor from either the domestic duck or chicken. This gamy flavor is difficult to describe and apparently not too definite in the minds of the judges, even after four periods devoted entirely to coot cookery. One judge thought he was eating wild duck; three, musquash; one, opossum; and another, squirrel. In the spring when musquash, opossum,

cottontail and raccoon dishes were judged in the same period, musquash were identified as coots nine different times; only once was the raccoon mistaken for a coot. Additional work is to be done in the fall on factors influencing game flavor and tenderness by various means such as: aging, freezing, soaking in salt and vinegar solutions, rubbing with soda, and parboiling. Soaking and parboiling removes some of the soluble proteins, minerals and vitamins and should be done only when the game flavor is too strong to be palatable.

Prepare Coots as You Would Wild or Tame Ducks

To preserve the prized game flavor of young and tender coots, fry, boil or roast them. Rubbed with fat and basted generously, whether halved or whole and placed between grills or on racks, or cut in pieces and speared on a green twig or fork, coots are delicious when broiled out-of-doors or in the broiler. In roasting rub generously with fat and cover with slices of bacon or a greased piece of cheesecloth to keep the skinned surface moist.

If likely to be old and tough, braise or stew the coots. A strong flavor can be reduced or modified by a wise choice of vegetables, spices and herbs. Don't cover up the flavor, but subdue it. Be cautious in using celery. It's fun to play with flavors, so do a bit of adventuring. There is no disputing of tastes. The recipes are offered as a guide.

Broiled Coot

- 2 coots
- 1 clove garlic, minced, or
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons fat
- Salt
- Pepper

1. Use only young coots for broiling. Skin, draw, remove oil glands at base of tail and wash well. If fishy and strong, rub with baking soda and rinse well, or soak in salt water (1 tablespoon salt to 2 cups water) 2 to 16 hours. Drain and dry. Split each in half down the back and along the breastbone.
2. Crush minced garlic in fat and leave for 10 minutes or longer; strain and rub garlic-fat over halved coots 30 minutes before broiling.
3. Lay pieces, skinned side down, on greased rack in preheated broiler pan; place 2 to 4 inches below heating unit in moderately hot broiler (350° F.) and broil 20 to 30 minutes, or until tender, turning and basting several times to brown evenly. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. Arrange on hot platter, brush with melted butter and minced chives and garnish with water cress or parsley sprigs.
5. Serve with fluffy rice, buttered peas and carrots, grapefruit salad, corn sticks, wild plum or any tart jelly. Makes 2 to 4 portions.

Fried Coot

- 2 coots
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup flour
- 3 tablespoons fat
- 2 tablespoons water, about
- 1 teaspoon chopped onion
- 1/2 cup coot stock
- 1/2 cup rich milk
- Cooked giblets, chopped

1. Skin coots, draw, remove oil glands at base of tail and wash well. If fishy, soak in salt water 2 to 16 hours. Drain. Cut in pieces for serving.
2. Sprinkle with salt and pepper

(Continued on page 167)

American Coot . . .

(Continued on page 166)

and dredge with flour. Fry in hot fat, turning to brown both sides. Add 2 tablespoons water, cover tightly and bake in slow oven (300-325°F.) about 40 minutes, or until tender, turning pieces once. Add more water if needed. Remove meat and keep hot.

3. For gravy, brown onions and remaining flour in drippings in pan. Add stock, stirring until smooth and thickened. Stir in milk and giblets and bring to a boil. Season and serve in hot bowl.

4. Arrange meat on hot platter and garnish with parsley sprigs. Serve with buttered peas cooked with a sprig of mint, corn fritters, currant jelly, green salad and baking powder biscuits. Makes 2 to 4 portions.

Roast Coot

- 2 coots
- 1 clove garlic
- Salt and pepper
- Crushed sage
- 2 apples, quartered
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- ¼ cup bacon drippings or other fat
- 4 slices bacon
- 2 tablespoons flour
- ½ cup coot stock
- ½ cup rich milk
- Cooked giblets, chopped

1. Skin young coots, draw and remove oil glands at base of tail and wash well. If strong or fishy, soak in salt water or milk 2 to 16 hours; rinse and drain.

2. Rub insides with cut surface of garlic or onion; sprinkle with salt, pepper and sage. Stuff each with apple and onion and truss as needed. Rub outside with fat and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place, breast down, on greased rack in shallow pan. Cover each with greased cheese cloth.

3. Bake in slow oven (300-325°F.) for 1 to 1½ hours, basting several times with drippings in pan. When nearly done, remove cloths, turn on backs and place 2 strips of bacon over each. If bacon is not crisped, place under broiler 5 minutes, or long enough to brown. Remove and discard dressing.

4. Prepare gravy from drippings in pan, flour, coot stock, rich milk and chopped giblets. Place coots on hot platter and garnish as desired.

5. Serve with broiled mushroom caps and pineapple slices, fried hominy grits or wild rice, spring relishes and garlic buttered and baked Vienna bread slices and mint-flavored crabapple jelly. Makes 2 to 4 portions.

Smothered Coot

- 2 coots
- Salt and pepper
- Paprika
- ½ cup flour
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- ½ cup fat
- ¾ to 1 cup top milk or light cream

1. Prepare coots as for frying, season and flour.

2. Saute onion in fat about 10 minutes, stirring to cook and brown evenly. Remove onion from pan. Fry floured pieces of coots in fat, turning to brown both sides. Scatter onion over top, add ¾ cup rich milk or cream and cover tightly. Bake in slow oven (300-325°F.) about 40 minutes, or until tender, turning meat once. Remove meat to hot platter and keep hot.

3. Thicken cream in pan if necessary, with remaining flour, season to taste and pour over meat. Sprinkle chopped chives or parsley over top.

4. Serve with buttered diced turnips and peas, hominy croquettes, cherry relish, tomato salad and toasted buns. Makes 2 to 4 portions.

Coot with Calico Beans

- 1½ cups pinto or calico beans.
- 2 coots
- Salt, pepper, paprika
- ¼ cup flour
- 4 tablespoons bacon drippings or other fat.
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Dash of cloves
- ½ teaspoon mustard
- 2 peppercorns
- 4 tablespoons ketchup
- Hot water

1. Cook beans (soaked overnight) in salted water 1 hour; drain and put in casserole or bean pot.

2. Clean and wash coots and cut in pieces for serving. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika and dredge with flour. Brown in hot fat; remove pieces to casserole or pot. Cook onions and garlic in drippings about 10 minutes. Add ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, remaining seasonings and 1½ cups water. Bring to a boil and pour over beans and meat, adding hot water as needed to cover well.

3. Bake, covered, in moderate oven (350°F.) for 1½ to 2 hours, or until meat is very tender and beans are cooked.

4. Serve from casserole or bean pot with glazed carrots, sauerkraut or creamed cabbage, tomato and cucumber salad, corn muffins and green gage jelly. Carrots may be added to the casserole the last half hour of baking. Makes about 4 portions.

Baked Coot and Rice

- 2 coots
- Salt and pepper
- 4 tablespoons flour
- ½ cup fat
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped green pepper
- ¾ cup rice
- 2½ to 3 cups water or tomato juice
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 teaspoon sage
- Dash of cayenne
- ½ teaspoon bayleaf

1. Skin coots, draw and remove oil glands at base of tail and wash well. If gamy or fishy, soak in salt water 2 to 16 hours; rinse and drain. Cut in pieces for serving.

2. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and dredge with flour. Fry in hot fat, turning to brown both sides. Remove pieces to heated casserole. Fry onion, green pepper and rice in drippings about 20 minutes, stirring to brown lightly and evenly. Add water or juice, and seasonings, bring to a boil and cook 10 minutes; pour over meat.

3. Bake, covered, in moderate oven (350°F.) about 1½ hours, or until done, stirring twice to mix well, and adding more liquid if dry.

4. Serve from casserole with buttered snap beans, coleslaw, southern spoon bread and choke cherry preserves. Makes 4 to 5 portions.

Casserole of Coot and Turnip

- 2 coots
- 4 tablespoons fat
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cups sliced turnips
- 3 cups cubed potatoes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon sage
- Dash of thyme
- Dash of cloves
- ½ bayleaf, crushed
- 2 cups water, about

1. Skin coots, draw and remove oil glands at base of tail and wash well. If strong or fishy, soak in salt water 2 to 16 hours. Drain. Cut in pieces for serving.

2. Saute pieces in fat, turning to brown well. Remove meat and cook onions in drippings about 10 minutes, stirring to brown evenly.

3. Place ½ of turnips and potatoes in bottom of casserole or bean pot; lay pieces of meat on top, sprinkle onion and seasonings over meat and cover with remaining vegetables. Add 2 cups water to drippings in frying pan, bring to a boil and pour over all, adding more hot water if needed to cover.

4. Bake, covered, in moderate oven (350°F.) about 1½ hours, or until well done, removing cover the last 15 minutes to brown vegetables and thicken mixture.

5. Serve from casserole or pot, with fried hominy, glazed apple rings, spring salad and rice muffins. Makes about 4 portions.

HOW MANY POINTS?

Primitive Indians ate practically every part of a buffalo except the bones and hoofs. Even the nose was considered a delicacy. The liver sprinkled with gail was a favorite dish. The stomach was filled with blood and cooked in the coals of a fire. Even the hide was eaten. The hide was generally placed in a hole in the ground, covered with leaves and then a layer of clay, over which a large fire was built. When the ashes were swept away and the baked clay removed, the cooked hide was taken out. The hair slipped off easily, and the hide was tender and considered delicious.

Present State Forests . . .

(Continued from page 165)

cut-over state lands in time should demonstrate good procedure in the management and utilization of forest products. The lack of management practices in the past and the limited mature timber left in the state areas will require a number of years before full timber production will be possible.

National Forest Areas

Along with the state forests the U. S. Forest Service has acquired about 4,700 acres of national forest lands in southeastern Iowa, in Appanoose, Davis, Lee and Van Buren Counties. These lands were secured for the purpose of supplementing the state forest areas, by taking over other lands which appeared not to be profitable under private ownership. The federal forest areas are in the same general locality as the state lands of southeastern Iowa. They are similar in past handling and in present condition to the adjoining state areas.

What Contribution the Public Forests Should Make

The past history and present condition of the state lands may have points of interest, but the important consideration concerns the contribution that these areas will make not only to the immediate localities but to the state in general. Among the contributions, it is hoped that these areas will demonstrate the methods in building up some of our depleted resources and also show how some of our poorer areas may contribute toward a broad conservation pattern of soil and water conservation, involving the forest, forage and wildlife resources.

IOWA'S FIRST SPORTSMEN'S CLUB

Sometime in 1860 the Undubon Club of Johnson County was organized, partly to enjoy the sports of gun and rod, but chiefly to enforce the laws for preventing wanton destruction and extermination of the game animals and birds of the county. The principal members were Walter Curtiss, C. F. Lovelace, T. M. Vanbury, W. D. Berryhill, Harry Sperry and John Seydel. Interest soon waned and the organization practically died out.

—Johnson County History, 1882.

HOW THE SETTER DOG GOT HIS NAME

Before the advent of firearms, birds were caught by means of a net. The ancestors of our present-day setters were trained to find their game and then crouch or "set" so that the net might be thrown over the dog's head. The characteristic persists in some dogs to the present day.

The only domesticated animal found with the Indians when the Pilgrims landed was the dog.

Famous Iowa Trees

From Local Legend and Historical Fact



—Jim Sherman Photo

LONE TREE

For miles along the prairie trail a monotonous sea of waving grasses brushed the sky on every horizon. Then far on a distant crest the outline of a single tree could be seen. "Ne-Te-Qui!" (Lone Tree) and a score of Indian ponies and their painted riders flowed like apparitions to the shelter of the great elm tree's shade . . . Rendezvous.

Heads bowed and panting, the yoke of oxen plodded deliberately along the trail, dragging the squeaking wagon westward, inch by inch through the heat waves of the open prairie. The animal-like cry of a small child came from the canvas-covered oxcart and was quickly lost in the sameness of the grasslands. With the sight of the lone tree the ox team noticeably lifted from its lethargy, and the rasplike music of the axles increased in tempo. Here was rendezvous and shade.

Lone Tree is a mystery tree. How it "happened" and how it missed the ravages of fires that regularly swept the prairies is not known. However, it served for many years as a guide for aborigine and pioneer alike. The tree stood alone on the prairie midway between the Iowa and Cedar Rivers in Johnson County, along a trail as well known a hundred years ago as Highways 169 and 30 are in modern times.

The Lone Tree, standing on a high point of the prairie, near town, was used as a surveyors' landmark. The town of Lone Tree was laid out in the fall of 1872 by John W. Jayne and received its name from this large white elm.

The old tree still stands in perfect health in the farmyard of William Zimmerman.

Exhaustive tests have proved that otter is one of the most durable furs that can be used for clothing.

The Monument . . .

(Continued from page 164)

it's made of marble, sometimes it's merely a picture carried in the mind. It can be something as simple as a bush or a tree. Tom Andrews picked out this because he knew what Bill would like and because I thought I still remembered what you, and others, would want. Not all politicians forget where they came from . . ."

HE SAID some other things, but Mrs. Hooker didn't hear them. She was looking at the little oak tree, wrapped in burlap, that stood in the shadow of the red-and-white house. And the thought came to her that no words on stone could say what it could say, growing in the square for those who had planted it so deep and with such travail.

She looked at Roy Everett with a smile, trying to tell him how sure his instinct had been, trying to say without words the things she and Henry were thinking. Because Henry was thinking right along with her in the same old way.

She could tell by the way he had taken out the pearl-handled knife and was touching it with his stone as he looked at the small, living tree.

'CHUCKS IMPORTANT GAME IN PENNSYLVANIA

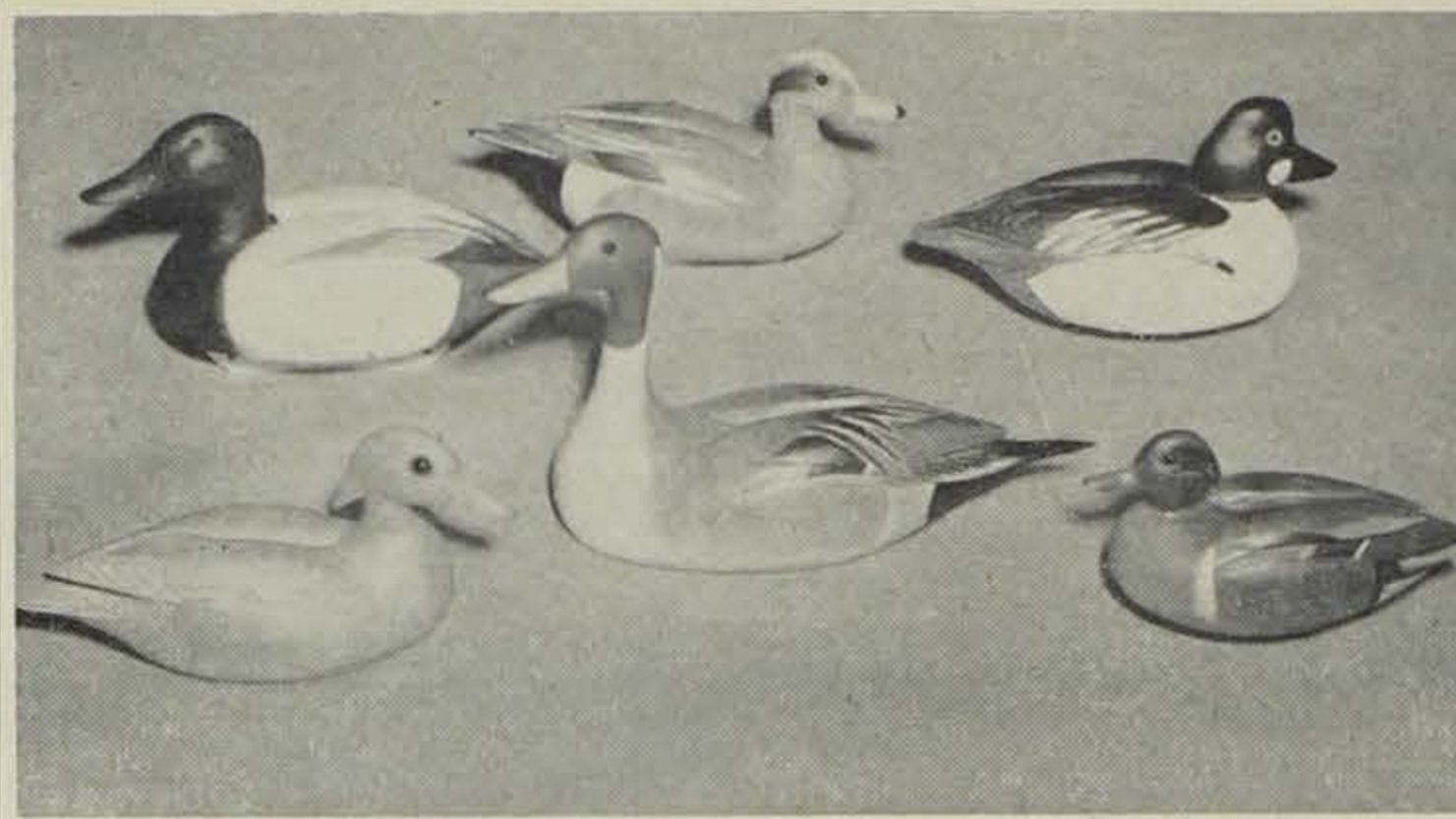
Woodchucks or ground hogs are important game in Pennsylvania, according to the "Pennsylvania Game News." Last year an estimated 134,643 'chucks were bagged during the regular open season which extends from July 1 through September 30. "Final tabulations will probably show an even higher kill," says the "News."

This year woodchuck hunting should prove better-than-ever successful, according to reports during the first month of the season. Already 'chucks are plentiful and continuing to increase.

Properly prepared, woodchuck is savory eating, and even the most fastidious diner should not turn up his nose at the meat of this vegetarian.

The most important thing to remember when hunting, says the "News," is to make sure another hunter won't mistake you for one, and that you do not mistake another fellow for a 'chuck. If you have to conceal yourself to watch a groundhog, mark the spot somehow so another hunter won't send you into the next world. If all 'chuck hunters would mark their positions with a bit of red cloth tied on the end of a stick stuck into the ground nearby, they would always know each other's relative positions and not shoot in their directions.

Gray squirrels warn each other of approaching danger with a flat rasping bark, finally prolonged into a whining snarl which is distinctly heard for an eighth of a mile in calm weather.



Placing decoys correctly is an important part of duck shooting. The decoys themselves need not be carved masterpieces such as these, but must be placed correctly in relation to wind direction, blind, and type of ducks being hunted.

Duck Season Opens . . .

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a long shot at these birds. Wait until they get in at 25 yards. If that seems close here in print, lay down this paper right now, get a tape measure and go out in the street and see just how far 25 yards really is.

Good Shots Are Short Shooters

Most of the difference between a good duck shot and a poor one is that the good shot kills them when they are in close and are easy to hit and the poor shot keeps shooting at them when they are out of range. Yes, I know about that flock that circled. You thought they might be in range, but you decided to give them just one more swing. They flared and went off down the lake. You and your partner glared at each other, vowed that you should have taken them and swore you would never let it happen again. Those things are hard to take, but don't let it discourage you. They were out of range, and you wouldn't have gotten any if you had fired.

Another tip, if you really want to kill ducks, trade off your full choke and get a modified. When ducks are out beyond the killing pattern of number six shot fired from a 12 gauge modified choke, the chances are you couldn't hit them anyway. Leads and windage become so complicated beyond that point that even the experts can't register with any degree of regularity.

If two or more people are hunting together, always shoot on your own side of the flock. Let's suppose three hunters are in the blind and a flock comes in from the left. The man on the right takes the lead ducks, and the one on the left takes the back ones; the one in the middle shoots from the center of the flock. If the birds come from the right, each man still shoots on his own side of the flock, but this time the man on the right takes the tail end and the man on the left shoots the leaders. This prevents duplication of kill and should apply to all game shooting at all times.

Place Decoys Correctly

In setting out your decoys you should keep in mind the kind of ducks you are hunting. Except for teal that may drop in from any direction, ducks will always attempt to light in against the wind. The puddle ducks, such as mallards and pintails, will almost always fly over your decoys and attempt to light beyond them. If the wind is strong from the right, the decoys should be placed somewhat to your left. Then as the birds set their wings and slide down the bannister into the wind, they come over the decoys directly in front of you. If the wind is in your face, set the decoys close in. Otherwise, the birds may drop down a bit too far out. If the wind is behind you, the blocks should be placed well out as the birds will come down in front, over the decoys, and put on the brakes right in your face. However the decoys are set, they must always be so located that a clear view of them may be had by ducks from any direction; and they should not be obscured by high growths of vegetation or by the blind.

Diving ducks such as "cans", red-heads and bluebills will seldom try to light except to large spreads way out in open water. When they do

light, however, their habit is just the opposite of the puddle duck. The divers drop in short of the decoys. These ducks will work up or down the lake flying low, and if your stand is right, they will usually give your decoys a "swing", but will not circle. Spread your decoys well out or string them in a line at right angles to the direction of flight; thus they are more conspicuous and attract the attention of the incomers more readily. For this type of shooting, your decoys should be set at the range where you intend to shoot. If you have a strong wind at your back, the flocks may keep swinging by out of range. In that case you should move the blocks in a little. For the divers you will have to get far out on a windswept point unless you hunt from a boat in open water.

Sit and Hope, or Move?

Permanent blinds are seldom as effective as temporary ones that may be moved at will. If you are set up on a marsh or lake and you see that birds are using the other end of the area, the thing to do is to move. Don't just sit there and hope that before long they will work over your way. You may be pretty sure that there is some reason why they prefer that particular spot. The sooner you get over there and get set, the sooner you will get some shooting.

Ducks usually work along the down-wind side of a lake or marsh, especially if the wind is strong. If there is a strong wind from the north, find yourself a slightly protected spot on the south side. If the wind is from the south, you should usually be on the north shore. If your blind is to be erected on land, try to pick a point that extends far out into the lake.

On an oxbow or horseshoe-shaped lake or river, always set up on the inside of the curve, as you will seldom if ever get any good shooting on the outside of a bend. The inside is usually low and flat. The outside frequently has high banks and often trees. Stay away from trees. Get out on the lowest, flattest and least protected area available.

Now for a Dog

There should be some discussion of retriever dogs. There are many good breeds, and I have hunted with only a few of them. I will say that based solely on my own experience, the Chesapeake leaves little that is wanting in pure retrieving ability. However, the average hunter can seldom select his dog on that qualification alone, and other retrievers may be selected to suit the individual case with better satisfaction. I can see that this subject could easily get a bit hot and I am ready to drop it. Suffice to say that a good retriever is of inestimable value.

To tell when a duck is in range requires practice and varies with the individual and the lighting conditions. I have heard hunters say that when you can tell the drakes from the hens they are in range. Others say they wait until they can see the ducks' eyes. Nothing could be more unreliable, as there is so much difference in the eyesight of hunters and in the light conditions under which they are viewed. In good light I can tell a mallard drake from a hen at 200 yards, but on a foggy morning they often are indistinguishable to me at 25 yards. If you have some acquaintance who owns

live mallards, go over there and look them over carefully. Try and determine how they look to you at different ranges. You will be surprised how this will improve your ability to pick the right time to shoot.

Identification of Ducks in Flight

To distinguish the various species of ducks in flight requires much study. Fortunately, the wood duck is among the easiest to identify at a distance. In flight its tail seems unusually big as if it were a bit too heavy to carry, and they will frequently wobble a bit in flight just as if they had momentarily lost their balance. Also, their bills seem to be turned down somewhat in flight instead of being carried straight ahead as in other ducks. At closer range the coloration is a bit like the baldpate with light silvery belly and dark wings, tail, upper breast and neck. Black ducks can easily be told from mallards by the silvery underwing lining. Except for the American merganser, the baldpate or widgeon shows the most white in flight. The wings from the bend in to the body appear clear white. Pintails are easy to distinguish by their long white necks. In flight they look as big as a mallard. In the air the gadwall looks much like a mallard except that the under surface is light as in the baldpate.

"Can" the Super Duck

Of all the ducks the canvasback is the prize. The power and speed expressed in its flight is a sight to behold. Truly this is the super duck. It is not only the finest eating, but the prize of all game birds. To witness a flock of "cans" in full flight down the wind over your decoys is something to remember. No other duck even approaches them in grandeur. These regal birds often string out in lines like mergansers and may be distinguished by their large size, dark heads and necks and light under parts. They lack the white in the wings of the merganser, which is of the same size. Swans may be told from geese by their long necks. In snow geese the outer third of the wing is black, as it is also in the pelican. The swan is pure white except for the bill and feet.

Teal Decoy Well

Teal decoy well and not infrequently after being shot into they will swing back and give you another chance. The golden-eye will do this, too, and I have had a small group come back three times.

From the hunters' standpoint it is regrettable that Iowa furnishes such limited opportunities for duck hunting. The bottleneck is, of course, lack of sufficient suitable areas in which to hunt. Within my time I have hunted ducks and geese on the Missouri river for an entire season and not seen another hunter around my chosen spot.

It is estimated that during the last decade the population of ducks has increased from around 29 million to better than 150 million. Even if this number could be increased to the estimated 600 million that came south each fall in prehistoric times, we never again could enjoy the hunting of old for lack of undisturbed water areas in which to hunt.

Pheasant hunting is a gregarious affair, but good duck hunting is synonymous with solitude. Present or future generations will never know and cannot visualize duck hunting as it existed during the early part of this century. With 250,000 hunters to accommodate in marshes and lakes of even more limited area than those that in my boyhood accommodated less than a quarter of that number, duck hunting as I knew it then is a thing of the past. We must now make the best of what we have and rest assured that on this earth no hunting experience will ever again remotely approach the thrill that comes in the cold gray dawn of a November morning as we listen to the rush of air through the spread pinions of the pintails as they set their wings into the teeth of a north wind for their last flight down the bannister.

Only three breeds of dogs are considered truly native to the United States — the Boston terrier, the Chesapeake Bay retriever, and the American water spaniel.

"Sorry, Sir, but I'm all out of ducks. I could let you have a fine end of ham."

"Don't kid me. How could I go home and say I shot an end of ham?"