

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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CHRISTMAS AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

IOWA'S BIG SNAKES

By Kenneth D. Carlander
and Robert B. Moorman
Iowa State College

Iowa's large non-poisonous snakes are mostly "ratters," i.e., they help keep rat and mouse populations down. Occasionally they may take a small chicken or a game bird or destroy a nest of eggs, but most of their food consists of small rodents.

Most of these large snakes are spotted or blotched and are rather difficult to identify without close observation. Two species, however, are not blotched, the blue racer, (*Coluber constrictor flaviventris*) and the pilot blacksnake (*Elaphe obsoleta*).

The blue racer is steel grey with a blue or green cast on the back and the belly is yellow. This snake is long and slender—streamlined—and, as its name implies, is fast and graceful in its movements. It can and will climb trees or bushes and can usually avoid capture. If caught, a blue racer will usually fight viciously, but its teeth are so small that even a large snake will barely puncture the skin. Blue racers are usually extremely nervous, but some individuals become quite docile when handled and petted. In spite of its scientific name, it is not a typical constrictor. It kills its prey not by crushing, but by coiling rather loosely around the victim and biting and chewing.

The pilot blacksnake is a nearly solid, shiny black with a suggestion of blotching on the front part of the body. The belly is light with square black blotches. The undersurface of the tail is black. This snake seems to prefer wooded areas and spends much of its time in trees and bushes. The belly plates are turned up on the sides so that there is a sharp angle along either side of the belly and the belly is flat or even concave. This shaping of the undersurface aids in climbing trees. The movements of this snake are usually slow and the snake will often

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Jim Sherman Photo

The Christmas tree is a symbol of many things to many people, and as a delegate from the forests it brings to you a breath of the out-of-door living things.

PHEASANT HUNTING IN THE NEWSPAPERS

(Editor's Note: With the opening gun November 11, our pheasants turned into smart wild game birds. They rapidly recovered from the first shock in the unpicked cornfields, and a majority lived to run another day. Below are representative comments from newspapers in open territory. Take your pick.)

It seems to have been better pheasant hunting since the opening days than it was on the first and second day of the hunting season. Those from a distance seem to be of the opinion the birds were not here for the reason they didn't get the limit and did not see many birds. The birds are here all right, but they soon learned to keep under cover. There has been some good hunting the past two days, but not so many out after the game. It will take a snow to get them out where they can be seen. Right now the hunters say they are in the unpicked corn and they don't flush

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with ease. Even those with dogs did not do so well.—*Estherville Enterprise*.

According to reports, bag limits of three roosters per hunter were rather few, and even fewer on Sunday, the second day. With quite a number of cornfields still unpicked, the birds were just too clever to be routed into flight.—*Lake Park News*.

The majority of pheasant hunters admit that there are a lot of birds in this vicinity, but often had difficulty getting shots because of so much unpicked corn and other cover. However, many nimrods got their limits and other groups averaged two birds each.—*Storm Lake Register*.

By M. A. Ellerhoff
Superintendent of Forestry

"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box, together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."
(Isaiah 60:13)

Many Christmas customs are an evolution from times that existed long before the birth of Christ—a descent from pagan religious and national practices. In the beginning, many of the earth's people were sun worshippers because their lives depended on its yearly round in the heavens. To these people, mid-December was a critical time, for the days became short and the earth was cold since the sun was weak and far away. They built great bonfires in order to give the sun god strength, and when it became apparent that the days were growing longer, there was great rejoicing because of the promise of lengthening days to follow. Thus the central idea of beginning of the winter months—the return to light—became the hope of the world in the birth of Christ, the light of the world.

The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been definitely settled, but when the leaders of Christianity in A.D. 340 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely chose the day the winter months began. Owing to a change in man-made calendars, the time when winter begins and the date of Christmas vary by a few days.

The transition from paganism to Christianity was gradual but became apparent after the fall of Rome, A.D. 476. For several centuries Christmas was solely a church anniversary, observed only by religious services. But as Christianity spread, so did the practices—becoming both religious and worldly, at times reverent, at

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DATES SET FOR 1951 IOWA TEACHERS CONSERVATION CAMP

Dates have been set for the 1951 Iowa Teachers Conservation Camp to be held at Springbrook State Park, near Guthrie Center, Iowa. The first three-week session begins on June 17 and ends July 7. The second session begins July 8 and ends July 28.

As in 1950 the camp will be sponsored by the State Department of Public Instruction, Iowa State Teachers College, and the Iowa Conservation Commission. Teachers will earn five quarter hours of college credit for the three weeks course.

A total of 50 Iowa teachers attended the first Conservation Camp in 1950. Daily field trips to study natural resources, nature study, and outdoor recreation are featured at the camp.

Teachers wishing to make reservations for the 1951 camp should write to Dr. G. W. Mouser, Science Department, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

WARDENS AT WORK

Speaking of wardens, those fellows come in for some rough words, even though their job is to protect your future hunting and fishing.

So it was a pleasure to watch the Sioux County wardens work.

Tuesday afternoon we were stopped by game wardens for the first time in our hunting and fishing experience.

The men were courteous, thorough in their check, efficient, and did not waste your hunting time in needless conversation.

The hunter who is obeying the law has nothing to fear and should welcome the fact that there are men out to restrain the fellow who cares nothing for the future of hunting.—*Sioux City Journal.*

WHITE-TAILED DEER—QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Robert D. McDowell

(Briefed from *Pennsylvania Game News*)

When do deer breed?

Normally from October to December.

When are the fawns born?

Normally in May and June. The peak about Memorial Day.

What is the gestation period of the white-tailed deer?

205-212 days.

How many fawns does a doe bear?

This depends upon the quantity and quality of food available to the mother. Normally a doe has a single fawn the first time; after



Jim Sherman Photo.

White-tailed deer fawns generally lose their distinctive spots at about five months of age.

that twins. If food conditions are extremely good she may bear triplets. If food conditions are poor she may continue to bear but a single fawn.

How old must a doe be to bear fawns?

This, too, depends upon the quality and quantity of the food available to the doe. Research workers in New York found that 36 per cent of fawns born in May were

carrying a fawn in December of the same year where food conditions were ideal. Only 4 per cent of the fawns in poor ranges were found to be pregnant.

Is there such a thing as a barren doe?

Due, perhaps, to an injury, disease, or infertility at birth—yes. Due to old age—no. Does held in captivity have borne fawns, year after year, for 13 years. It is very unlikely that many deer live this long in the wild. Mature does not carrying young simply haven't been bred.

When do fawns lose their spots?

When they are about five months old.

Do deer change the color of their coats?

Yes. They have a short, reddish summer coat and dark grey heavy winter coat.

What do deer eat?

Deer eat grasses, ferns, and other green herbaceous plants. This is called grazing. Primarily, however, deer are browsing animals. This means that they eat the tender twigs, buds and leaves of trees. Deer also rely upon acorns and nuts. These foods are called "mast." Deer also, as too many farmers know, will raid vegetable gardens, grain fields, and orchards.

What is good browse?

Browse that will permit the growth of an animal and the maintenance, or nearly so, of the body weight during the winter. Such browse is provided by the maples, apples, white cedar, viburnums, oaks, aspen, birches (except black birch), ash, hickory, etc., in proper balance.

How much food does a deer require daily?

To maintain itself during the winter months a deer requires about two pounds of superior browse per day for each 100 pounds live body weight.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Contrary to popular opinion, doe white-tailed deer as well as bucks bleat or snort when startled or when in communication with one another.

How can a hunter know the age of a deer he has shot?

Only by tooth development. This is a highly specialized technique. Anyone interested should read Bill Severinghaus' article in the April, 1949, issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Can a hunter tell the age of a buck he has shot by its antler development?

No. Antler development is dependent upon the quality and quantity of available food. If food conditions are poor, a male fawn's "buttons" may never break through the skin. The next year this same under-nourished animal may have small spikes and have only spikes or a scrubby rack for life. On the other hand, a well-fed male deer will usually never bear spikes. He may have a ten-point rack when 18 months old. The presence of a large number of spike bucks in a deer herd is an indication of poor range conditions.

Do bucks shed their antlers every year?

Yes. When shed, their antlers are eaten by porcupines, mice, and other rodents.

When do bucks shed their antlers?

In our experimental pens we found that well-fed bucks retained their antlers until May. Poorly-fed bucks lost their antlers during the winter, some of them before, or during, the open deer season. The better-fed bucks rubbed their new racks "out of the velvet" before the other bucks.

What governs the weight of a deer?

Age and food conditions.

What is the weight of the heaviest deer shot in Pennsylvania?

There have been heavier deer shot than our official record of 207 pounds indicates. Let us know of them.

What is the average weight of our legal bucks?

About 115 pounds, hog-dressed.

What percentage of the deer herd may be taken each year without reducing the size of the herd for the following year?

If food conditions will support a herd, that is with no starvation losses; if the sex ratio is near balance, that is one buck to two or three does; if hunters crop the deer without regard to sex or age—we should crop 33 to 44 per cent of the pre-season herd each year. These are three big "ifs" but they must be reached, or approximated, if Pennsylvania hunters are to enjoy, and reap, the full benefit of our deer herd. To reap the maximum of the harvestable surplus should be the goal of all hunters and is the objective of the Pennsylvania Game Commission under its deer management program.

Does inbreeding produce runt deer?

Absolutely not. If the parents are small, due to inferior food, the fawn, or fawns, will be small. If these same fawns are quickly given good food, and lots of it, they'll grow into large animals. The reverse conditions also hold true.

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Bill Ayers Photo.

Almost 70,000 school children were given instruction in gun safety during Gun Safety Week, November 6-12. Here Conservation Officer Bill Ayers is giving a schoolyard gun safety demonstration.

GUN SAFETY WEEK PAID OFF

Iowa's first Gun Safety Week, observed November 6-12, is credited with saving the lives of five Iowa hunters.

Not a single hunting fatality was reported in the three-week period beginning with the opening date of the statewide educational campaign for safe handling of firearms.

By contrast, gun accidents during the comparable "danger period" of the past three years had caused an average of five deaths.

Results of the safety campaign were reviewed by Chairman Harry Linn of the state Gun Safety Week committee in a special report Saturday to Alfred W. Kahl, chairman of the Iowa Safety Congress.

The campaign, coinciding with the peak danger periods of the pheasant and duck hunting seasons, was sponsored by the Safety Congress with the cooperation of the Iowa Conservation Commission, Izaak Walton League, and other organizations.

Commenting on the success report, Linn said:

"This means we have gone through the three weeks of combined pheasant and duck hunting season without a fatal gun accident. And this included the first two days of the pheasant season, November 11 and 12, when it seemed like practically all of Iowa's 350,000 licensed hunters were out in the field with their guns.

"While there is no way to measure the results exactly, we have no reason to doubt that the lessons learned by Iowans during Gun Safety Week actually saved five lives, just as the statistics indicate in comparison with past years."

The week's observance included 415 speeches, 362 demonstrations and 134 showings of movies on gun safety by state conservation officers and cooperating firearms experts. Audiences totaled more

than 100,000, including approximately 70,000 school pupils.

For two weeks, safe handling of guns was illustrated in the Safety Congress' "Safety Sake" posters, displayed in more than 11,000 public places in 350 Iowa communities.

Newspaper cartoons and editorial material, as well as radio and television, gave practical suggestions on gun safety to hundreds of thousands of readers and listeners. More than 80,000 pieces of gun safety literature, supplied by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, were distributed over the state by Conservation Commission officers.

Kahl said the report was "new and gratifying evidence" of what can be accomplished in safety education by "cooperation and coordination of the efforts of interested organizations."

Appointed by Murray Russell of Newton, chairman of the Safety Congress' recreational safety section, the Gun Safety Week committee included Chairman Linn, Secretary Harlan, Bob Allen, Herbert E. Betts, Howard Hass, R. W. Nebergall, Howard O. Smith, Ries Tuttle and Jim Zabel, all of Des Moines; A. A. Anderson of Bloomfield; and Frank A. Lee of Adel.—*Iowa Safety Congress.*

PHEASANT HUNTERS FIND WEATHER BALLOON

The Stewart Osterholm and O. C. Osterholm families of Glenwood visited with Ed Mardesens on Saturday.

Of course, Stewart had to try for a few pheasants so he got Merlyn and Leon Mardesen to help him comb the fields.

In a ditch on the Mardesen farm they found a weather balloon and its cargo of instruments. The balloon had been released at Omaha October 30. As per instructions, the instruments were mailed to the U. S. Weather Observatory at Joliet, Illinois.—*Elk Horn Review.*

Wildlife is a harvest to be perpetuated, not a gold mine to be exhausted.

OUR RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Across the face of the world, most houses are made of stone, adobe, brush-and-mud, or some other substance mined from the earth. Only in the United States can we afford a majority of houses built from precious wood, from a material that is not cheaply plentiful.

Around the terrestrial globe, food is scarce and must be carefully preserved for future meals; pigs do not grow fat from the garbage cans of Europe, Asia and Africa—or of South America or Latin America. Only in the United States can we toss away the specked apple, the spotty potato.

Where else than the United States is there enough game that 20,000,000 may hunt and even more may fish? Here is the highest standard of living that history has ever seen. And here is the most profligate waste that history has ever known.

Perhaps we thought we could afford wanton destruction of our natural resources a few decades ago, when they seemed inexhaustible. But surely we have seen the error now; now that a great war has gouged deep into such of our native treasury as remains; now that we are mobilizing for another great defense effort only five years after the last one ended.

Let us not delude ourselves: the greatness of the United States has been based upon our natural resources, on forests and rivers and coal and iron and oil, on the fertile earth and its products. We did not create these things; we are simply

the beneficiaries thereof. How long can we continue to draw upon our account in nature's bank without depositing anything to bolster our unearned inheritance?

This editorial column has quoted him before; now it would like again to quote Mike Hudoba, in a recent editorial in *Sports Afield*. He wrote:

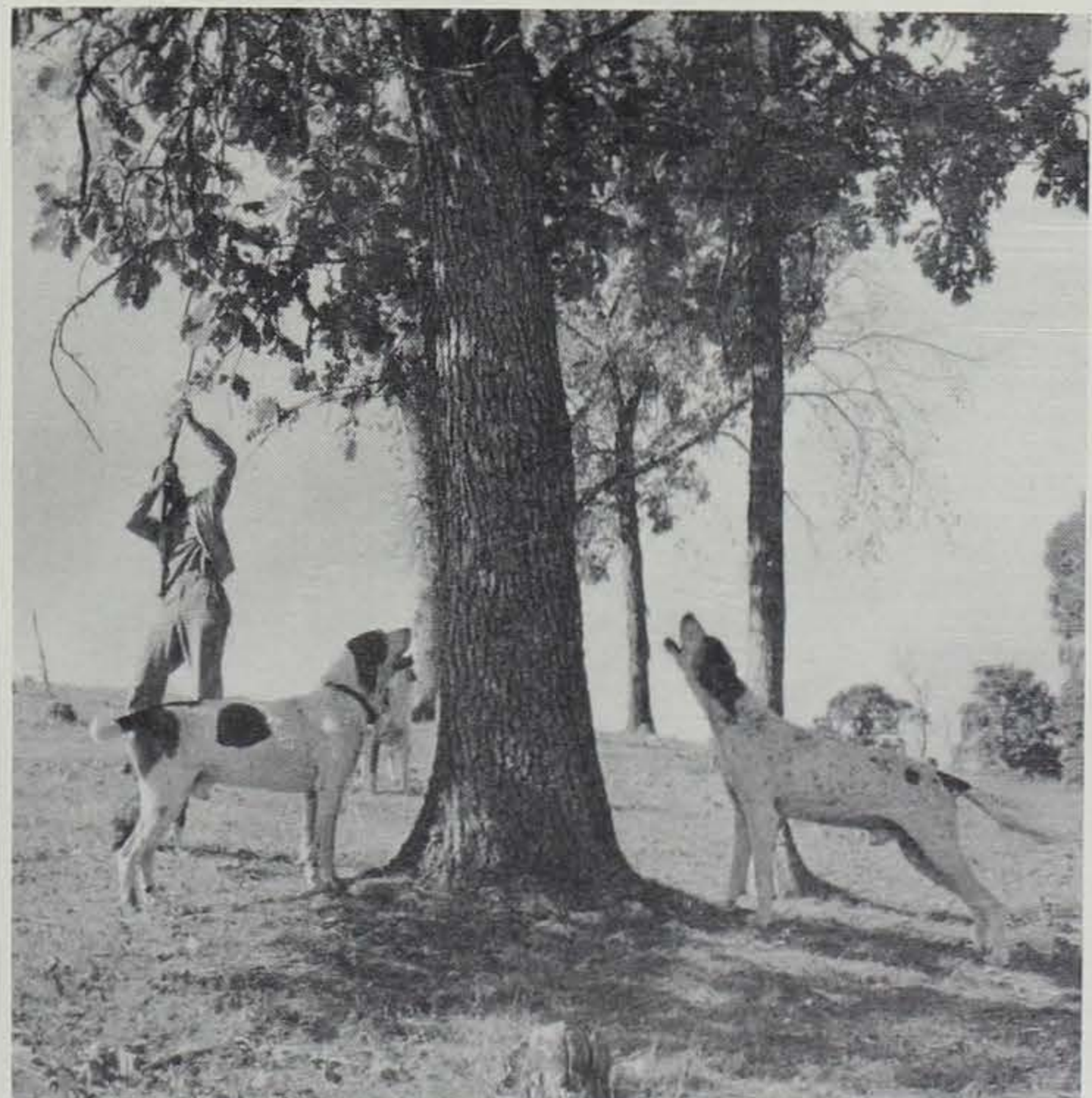
"While we pour billions into costs of past wars, and . . . future wars, we virtually neglect the defense of our nonrenewable resources. While we spend more than 71 per cent of our multibillion-dollar budget for defense, only five per cent goes toward conservation of the natural resources, which is the basis of our whole existence. *And wrapped up in that five per cent are pseudo-conservation programs that dabble in after-effects of resource ills, without attacking fundamental issues.*"

And he said further: "Before it is too late, this nation must aggressively undertake and expand its resource restoration and conservation programs . . . this is not all dam building, nor all subsidy payments. It must deal objectively in basic restoration of soil, water, land and forest resources."

We—all of us in the United States—must remember that the restoration and preservation of natural resources is as vital to long-range defense as cannon, tanks, airplanes—and men.—*Dan Saults, Missouri Conservationist.*

A systematic study of the fossils found in the successive layers of rock reveals that animals have been present on the earth during at least 550,000,000 years.

Strip cropping increases ground nesting birds.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Where else than in the United States is there enough game that 20 million may hunt and even more may fish? Here in America is the highest standard of living that history has ever seen.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Wilma Boswell and Lois Recknor, commission employees, filling orders for free multiflora rose seed. More than 6,000 individual written requests for more than 10 million multiflora rose seed were filled during October.

OH, OH, MY ACHING BACK!

It is scant comfort to my aching muscles at the moment, but I have been consoling myself for a few hours of hard work by thinking of the monumental multiflora rose hedge I may have in a few years. I have even, as I slaved, allowed my thoughts to race ahead 50 years.

"Here," visiting tourists may be told (oh, come now, don't take me too seriously) "is the multiflora rose hedge started in the fall of 1950 by an Iowa newspaperwoman. The hedge was started from seed."

Tourists—can't you just see 'em sprinkling beer cans and sandwich wrappers around? They will be expected to gaze with admiration at the hedge. Dogs will be expected to cross it not, and boys will be unable to hurdle it at a leap (we hope).

The hedge will provide a fence for the property, a nesting place for birds, and a horticultural detail of interest for my small plot. At least that's what I've been led to believe from publicity handed around by the Iowa Conservation Commission. I begged 'em for the seed and promised some publicity.

I am keeping my word. I am giving the Conservation Commission some publicity. But I shall tell ALL.

The packet came some weeks ago, but since I am less handy with the spade than I am with the typewriter and the dishcloth, I had to wait until a spade-hand came to help.

I had received, I discovered, a small envelope containing 1,000 seeds of *Rosa multiflora* and a four-

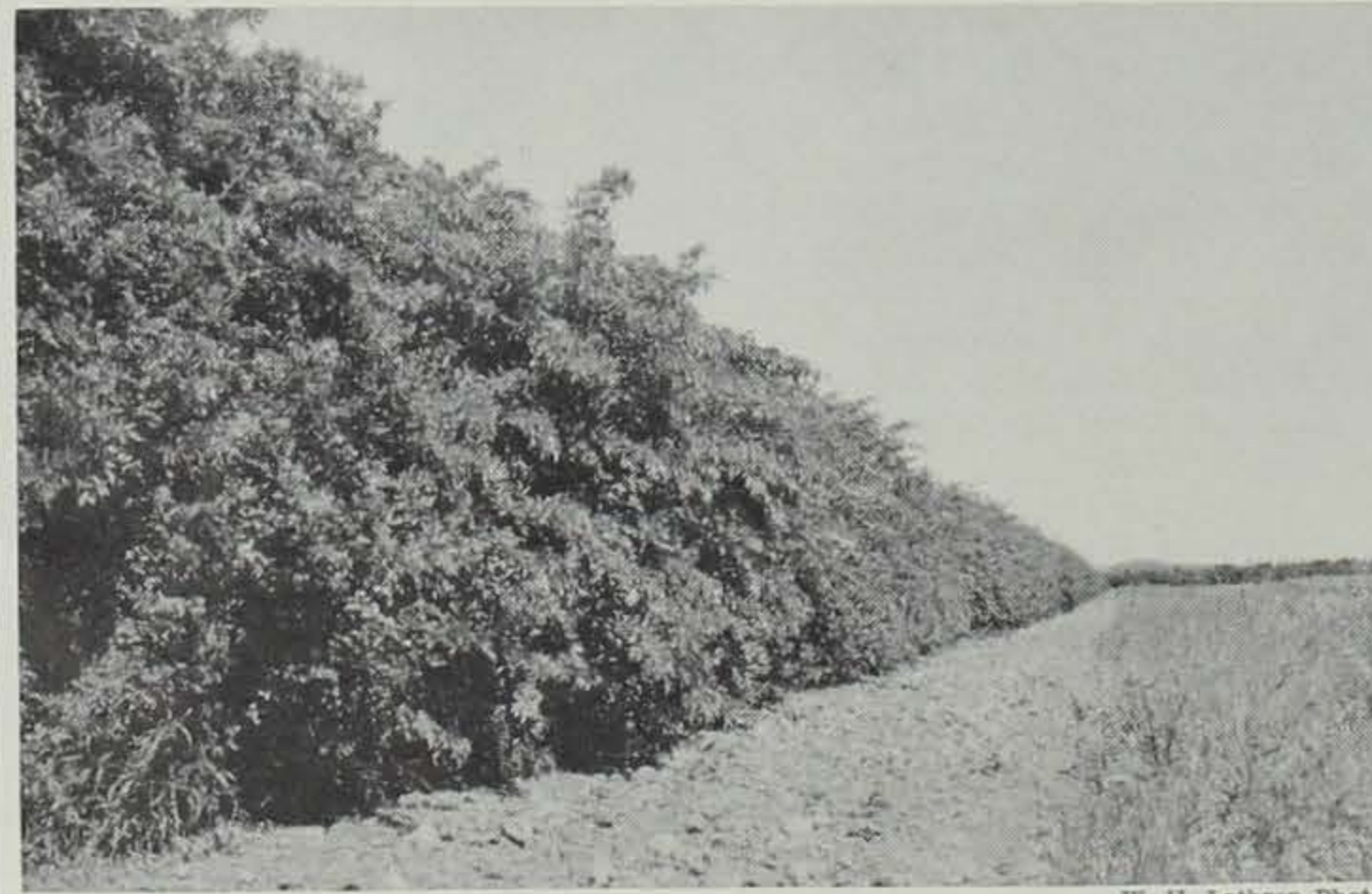
page folder which made interesting reading.

"Prepare seed bed 12 feet long and three feet wide for each 1,000 seeds," it began in an authoritative way. I took a string and the yardstick out to the vicinity of the stone wall. I used the hammer to pound in stakes. I looked at the border with some distaste. It could be three feet wide, all right, but it almost had to be 24 feet long in order to present itself as a single unit.

Immediately I was involved in fancy arithmetic of the kind favored by eighth grade teachers. If the border should be 12 feet long but had to be 24 feet long, how many rows of seeds should I plant? I soon gave this part of the project an ignoring treatment.

"Plant 30 seeds per foot in row." These directions seemed a little bossy. I found a quarter teaspoon measure handier than counting.

I made the rows straight. I



W. H. Lathrop Photo.

Multiflora rose fence, stock-proof and man-proof, eight years after the seed was planted.

CHRISTMAS GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

Do you enjoy your IOWA CONSERVATIONIST?
Do you have a friend who would enjoy reading it?
Do you send Christmas gifts?
Do you wonder what to send?
Would you be remembered 36 successive months as well as Christmas morning?

If the answers are "yes," fill in the blank below, enclose in an envelope with a dollar bill, and mail to the Conservation Commission. We will send a Christmas greeting for you and begin the gift subscription in January.

Iowa Conservation Commission
914 Grand Avenue
Des Moines 9, Iowa

Date

Enclosed is \$1.00 for a 36-month gift subscription to the IOWA

CONSERVATIONIST for
(Name)

.....

.....
(Address)

This gift subscription is sent by
(Name)

.....
(Address)

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY

parceled the seeds out with care. I set them nine inches apart (the rows) and covered with a quarter inch of soil (quarter inch, did you say, pal? I didn't have a caliper or anything handy just then. I just sifted soil over the seeds and firmed it down with my feet. I've gardened before, kid.)

Of course the first steps were more or less complicated. After the spading was done I needed a harrow. I took a hoe, then a rake, then my hands, to prepare the seedbed, quick, because it looked like rain and the wind was beginning to snarl out of the northwest.

The final step for autumn, 1950, according to the demanding little booklet, was to cover the seeds tenderly with six inches of straw.

There wasn't a wisp of straw on the old plantation so I substituted a warm blanket of leaves. I laid the last of the gladioli leaves, like sheaves upon a grave, over the border and left it to the devices of an oncoming winter.

Comes spring, 1952, the directions say to plow, disk and harrow the transplant site eight feet wide and top-dress with 8-8-8 fertilizer. I am not acquainted with these procedures. They have nothing to do with my familiar activities among the zinnias and the parsley. But I have two winters to think about that. I can worry about it when that spring comes.

Then I'll have to transplant the seedlings, cutting the tops back to four inches—imagine that—and in five or six years I'll have a hedge that is stock-proof.

In 10 to 12 years the hedge will be fully matured. It will be eight or ten feet wide and six to eight feet tall. It will go well with a moat if I want to install one. To trip tourists, you understand.—"The Passerby,"—*Waukon Republican Standard*.

KILLS WHITE PHEASANT

One of Shell Rock's hunters came in with something very unusual for this part of the country. Pat Waddell shot a white pheasant near the Ernest Avery farm. It was a rooster and it didn't have any color but white.—*Shell Rock News*.

Dogless hunters lose twice as many pheasants as hunters using dogs.



Jim Sherman Photo.

The Romans ornamented their temples and homes with green boughs and flowers; the Druids hung mistletoe in their homes.

Christmas Trees . . .

(Continued from page 89)

other times gay. From the pagan emphasis on light, it is not difficult to trace the rise of lights and open fires to the many customs centering around the candle and its legends of light and the Christ child.

Many customs besides those of light and fire date back to some of the pre-Christmas origins, among them Christmas decorations. The Romans ornamented their temples and homes with green boughs and flowers; the Druids hung mistletoe in their homes; the Saxons used holly, ivy and bay.

It is generally believed that the first Christmas tree was of German origin, dating back to the eighth century. The custom was gradually adopted in Europe and allegedly reached America during the Revolutionary War, when Hessian soldiers erected evergreen trees in celebrating their Christmas.

The evolution of a tradition so widely accepted as the Christmas tree could not help but have many versions. However, regardless of the origins of the custom, it is so firmly imbedded in our holiday celebrations that few persons consider Christmas complete unless an evergreen tree, sending pungent odors through the house, stands guard in dressed-up splendor over the children's gifts.

The supplying of Christmas trees to the families of the United States is a big business. Over 21 million trees are harvested annually. Nationally, balsam fir and Douglas fir share almost equal honors in making up the first 60 per cent of the total, black spruce and red cedar split the next 20 per cent. The states bordering Canada furnish most of the commercial Christmas trees, although about five million are imported annually from Canada.

Thinnings from national and

state forests furnish about 13 per cent of the annual cut. The rest comes from privately-owned timberlands, generally from stands of conifers which nature has planted.

In the United States, some 100,000 acres of land are devoted to growing Christmas trees. Christmas trees can be raised and marketed at a good profit on most any farm. The highest returns, however, are made by farmers who are near the larger cities where they sell on the retail market. They plant and harvest their trees on regular rotations of from six to ten years.

Any well-shaped evergreen produces an acceptable Christmas tree. The spruces, Douglas fir, and Scotch and Norway pines are the species most commonly planted, although locally red cedar and most of the other pines are marketable.

The shape and not the species is the most important factor in marketing. Some farmers develop symmetrical-shaped trees by pruning and have found that the increased value of a well-shaped tree gives them good returns on the extra labor involved. Trees are acceptable from two to ten feet in height, the most popular tree being that which is six to eight feet high.

Here in Iowa there is little sale of home-grown Christmas trees. It could become a farm crop contributing a high rate of return on eroded and timbered lands. If properly done, Christmas tree culture could help control soil erosion and water run-off besides providing wildlife food and cover and a future forest resource. Trees could be raised either as a continuous crop from a plantation by replanting after each harvest, or they could be selected from a stand of trees, some of which are left to reach sawlog size.

And so on this Christmas Eve, after your tree has been set up and the youngsters have in excited protest gone to bed, remember that the Christmas tree is a symbol of many things to many people and, as a delegate of the forests, it brings to you a breath of the out-of-door living things which serve both the spiritual and physical needs of man.

Deer . . .

(Continued from page 90)

How do deer communicate with each other?

By snorts and vocal bleats, by stamping the ground, and by use of the scent glands located on the inside of the rear leg near the hocks. The hair surrounding these glands stands erect when a deer is "talking" to another deer. Other scent glands are located at the hoof.

Do only bucks, or do only does, snort?

Both snort. Don't ever shoot at a deer, or disregard another deer, upon the advice some "old timer" has given you regarding this mat-



"Anyone watching a scull boat approach cannot help but wonder what kind of motive power it has, as the oar movement cannot be seen from directly in front of the boat."

SCULL BOATS ON THE MISSISSIPPI

Scull boat users are almost always the most successful of the duck hunters on any given day. These boats are propelled by one long oar operated through a hole in the transom. Anyone watching a scull boat approach can't help but wonder what kind of motive power it has, as the oar movement cannot be seen from directly in front of the boat.

These scull boats are rounded in shape, riding very low in the water so that they are very easy to cover with brush or other camouflage material. One or two hunters usually lie down in the forepart of the

boat while the oarsman crouches low as he propels the boat.

"Bun" Laurer proved that scull boats can be successfully used to sneak up on waterfowl when he and his pals sculled and took eight geese in one day. Andrew Rube of Otis Road, southeast of Cedar Rapids, with two passengers in his scull boat, one day caught up and passed me when I was rowing a boat without passengers, and I consider myself a fair to middling boatman.

Maybe sculling or the idea for sculling originated in the canals in Venice, Italy, but duck hunters will tell you that it originated along the Mississippi River. The making of scull boats today is almost a lost art. (Continued on page 96)

ter. His school of thought has a 50-50 chance of being wrong.

Do deer trample snakes to death?

Perhaps a doe, in defense of her young, may. However, every penned deer we held, regardless of age or sex, exhibited the utmost terror of all snakes. A piece of rope, held in the hand and moved to simulate a snake, would prevent a buck from charging when a club wouldn't.

Can a deer distinguish colors?

Evidently they can distinguish between shades of colors but not colors, as such. You're perfectly O.K. in a solid red outfit.

Which of the deer's senses are the keenest?

Hearing. Air movement governs their sense of smell. Deer have very poor vision regarding stationary objects, but are quick to catch motion.



Jim Sherman Photo.

An average white-tailed buck deer in Iowa hog-dresses at about 115 pounds. A 200-pound white-tail is a heavyweight.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Iowa's large nonpoisonous snakes are for the most part gentle and timid. A few individuals, however, immediately after capture display a mean disposition.

Snakes . . .

(Continued from page 89)

"freeze" to avoid detection. They may occasionally be approached and picked up without making any effort to escape. The pilot blacksnake is the largest snake found in Iowa. A specimen eight feet five inches long is the largest reported for this species. None that long has been found in Iowa, however. Blacksnakes over six feet long are not unusual.

Even the blue racer and pilot blacksnake are blotched when young and until they are about 30 inches long may be difficult to distinguish from some of the other snakes. The pilot blacksnake can be distinguished at any age by the sharp angles on the edge of the belly. Young blue racers can be distinguished from fox snakes, which they most closely resemble, by the fact that they have 17 rows of scales, up one side, over the back, and down the other side, whereas the fox snake has over 25 rows.

The fox snake (*Elaphe vulpina*) is a yellowish grey snake with 36 to 56 dark brown blotches on the back and additional blotches on the sides. The underparts are pale yellowish with irregular, sometimes rather indistinct, blotches. The fox snake gets its name from a musky, fox-like odor it secretes. When approached in the fields or woods the fox snake will usually present a threatening appearance and will vibrate the tail rapidly. In dry grass or leaves this vibration may sound startlingly like the rattle of a rattlesnake. Blue racers, bull snakes, king snakes and milk snakes also have this habit of vibrating the tail. The fox snake seems to prefer moist habitats, but may also be found in the drier habitats where the bull snake is more characteristic.

The bull snake looks much like the fox snake except that on the front third of the body the pattern is less distinct than farther back, whereas the pattern is equally distinct throughout the length of a fox snake. The center scale on the snout is raised and is twice as long as it is broad, giving the head a different profile than that found on other snakes. When startled this snake hisses loudly—like an engine blowing off steam.

The milk snakes and the brown king snakes also are large blotched snakes which can easily be confused with the fox snake. However, the milk and king snakes are the only Iowa snakes with the following combination of characteristics: an undivided anal plate and smooth scales on the back. The anal plate is the plate just in front of the anal opening and this is divided into two plates on most Iowa snakes. The bull snake, garter snakes, and poisonous snakes have a single undivided anal plate, but they can be distinguished from the milk and king snakes because the scales on the back have ridges, which extend down the middle of the scale like the keel on the bottom of a boat.

Iowa has two king snakes and two milk snakes. The king and milk snakes are secretive snakes, often moving about and feeding only at night. They are usually found under logs or stones. The king snakes get their names from the fact that they eat other snakes, including the poisonous species. They seem to be more or less immune to the venom of rattlesnakes and copperheads. In many places king snakes are protected because they eat the poisonous snakes. The speckled king snake (*Lampropeltis getulus holbrooki*) is strikingly marked and easily identified. The back and sides are bluish black with a small white or yellow spot

in the middle of each scale. They are often referred to as "salt and pepper snakes" because of the pattern.

The brown king snake (*Lampropeltis calligaster*) is light brown with 45 to 80 dark brown or reddish blotches down the back, and smaller blotches on the sides. These blotches have a narrow black edge accentuating their outline. The blotches on the back do not extend lower on the sides than the upper margin of the fifth row of scales, whereas on the milk snakes, which are similarly patterned, the blotches extend to or below the fifth row. The brown king snake is perhaps less nocturnal than other king and milk snakes and is usually found in prairies, pastures, or open woodlots. The two king snakes have been found in Iowa only in the southern half of the state, except for one record of the brown king snake from Hardin County.

The milk snakes get their common name from the fable that they drink milk from cows. Their mouths have fine teeth and their lips are hard and horny and not suited to extracting milk. Furthermore, a slender snake can hardly hold enough milk to milk a cow dry as the snakes are supposed to do, according to the stories. There appears to be no basis for this story except that milk snakes are frequently found about barns, where they kill mice.

The eastern milk snake (*Lampropeltis dolia dolia*) has 35 to 60 blotches on the back and often two rows on each side. There is a dark band from the eye to the angle of the mouth and usually a light Y-shaped spot on the back of the head. The eastern milk snake is found only in the northeastern portions of Iowa.

The red milk snake (*Lampropeltis dolia sypila*), which is found in all sections of Iowa, has from 23 to 35 blotches on the back and these extend down on the sides to the third row of scales or lower. There is only one row of spots along each side, and the head



Jim Sherman Photo.

In Iowa the bullsnake very rarely reaches a length of six feet. It is an excellent ratter and mouser.

markings of the eastern variety are usually missing or indistinct.

These large snakes are often killed whenever they are found because of a general fear and dislike of snakes. Yet these snakes serve a real purpose and are valuable in controlling mice, ground squirrels and other rodents. Dr. Guthrie at Iowa State College in 1926 estimated that every adult fox snake or bull snake was worth at least \$10 to \$15 on a farm. He reported several cases where farmers caught these snakes and placed them in corn cribs and in squirrel infested fields to control the rodents.

Many of these large snakes are also killed along the highways and roads when they are crossing or are out to sun themselves. Some people go out of their way to run over them. Give them a break and avoid hitting them when you can.

STATE TREES AVAILABLE FOR 1951 PLANTING

Landowners who wish to obtain forest seedlings, multiflora rose and wildlife plants from the State Forest Nursery for 1951 spring planting may place orders now with local county extension directors, soil district farm planners, and conservation officers.

The Iowa Conservation Commission reports that the supply of multiflora rose is larger than last year. Tree seedlings available include: black locust, green ash, black walnut seeds, red pine, Virginia pine, and jack pine. Also available are wildlife plants which include wild plum, wild grape, Siberian pea, dogwood, and Russian olive.

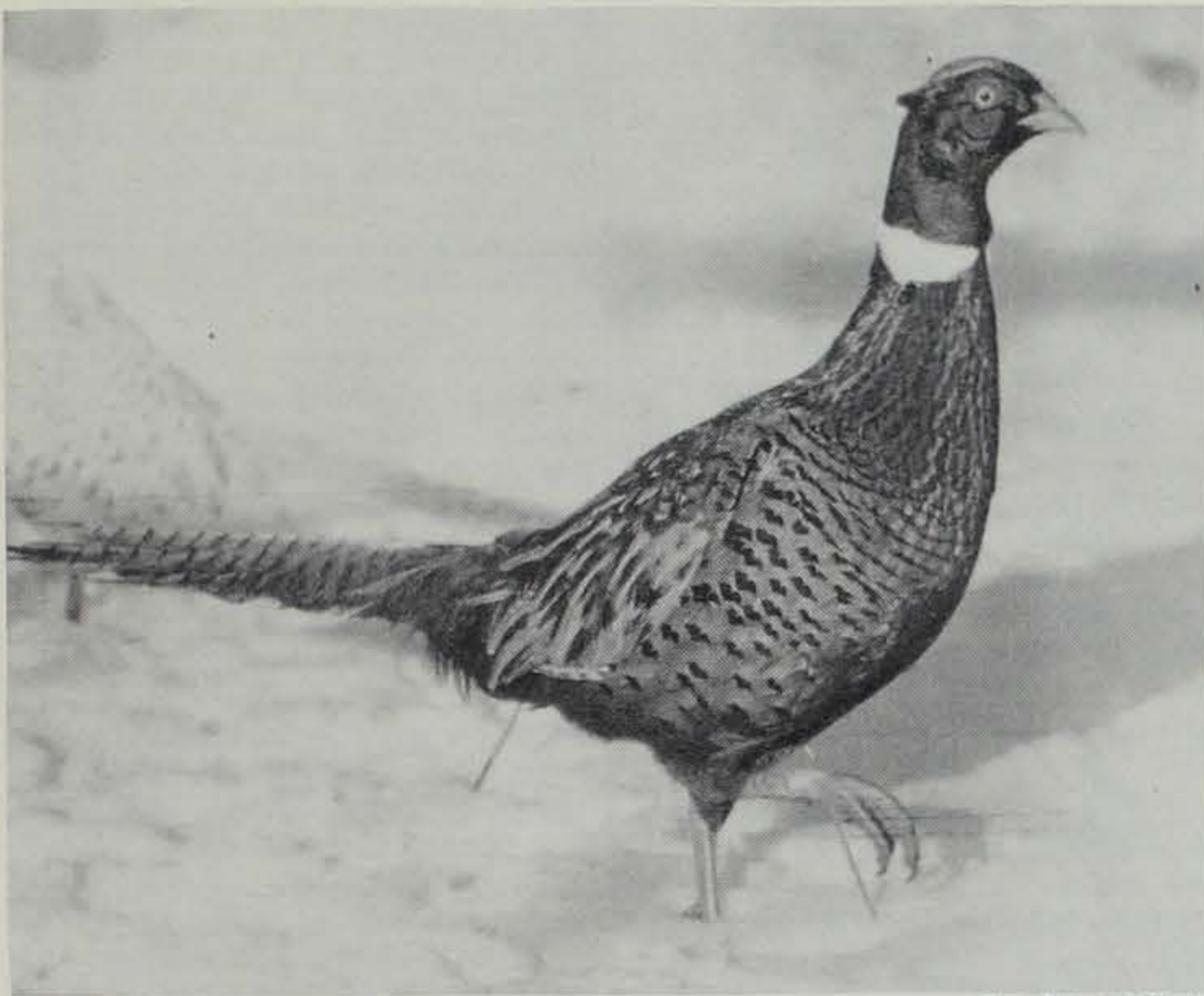
Prices are \$15 per thousand for multiflora rose and pine seedlings; \$1.25 per 250 black walnut seeds; \$8 per thousand for all other plants. Plants cannot be purchased for landscaping or ornamental purposes, but are available for erosion control and wildlife plantings.

Applications will be received up to March 15, but those who wish seedlings are urged to place orders early. Planting stock will be delivered C.O.D. express. Applicants will be notified when the stock is shipped from the nursery.

INDIAN COUNTRY

A trio of hunters from Illinois came out here to hunt and failed to even get a license. Then they took more than the limit of birds. And they shot hens, too! What in the world are those fellows thinking about? Do they think this is still Indian country and game is for the guy who happens along? The psychology of that kind of hunter is a bit difficult to understand. It's not only unsportsmanlike, but it's stupid. A term in the poky is proper in the circumstances so they could meditate on the way pheasants are provided for them.—*Algona Advance*.

The skin of the gar is so hard that before the days of the steel plow, the skin was often used to cover plowshares.



And still champion—*Phasianus colchicus torquatus!* Jim Sherman Photo.

pheasant hunters as careless as ever of the landowner's property rights.

One farmer living south of Hudson told us that a total of 16 hunters invaded his fields last Sunday without asking permission.

In this case, the farmer had a cornfield that he felt was so dry and badly tangled that hunters couldn't walk through it without knocking a good many ears off the stalks. Consequently, hunters who took the trouble to ask permission were permitted to hunt anywhere on the farm except in the cornfield. Those who didn't ask permission were ordered off the farm.—*Waterloo Courier*.

Chasers after the ringneck, numbering by the scores hereabouts, had a wild session locating cock pheasants last Saturday, November 11, opening day. From lips of returning nimrods, they would mightily have appreciated (for

once) the arrival of the Iowa Conservation Commission, or some officer thereof, to locate what was previously estimated to be a "bumper" crop. A few succeeded in securing birds that afternoon, but ranged alongside last year's successes, the season apparently fell below grade.—*Cascade Pioneer*.

The 1950 pheasant season opened with a real bang here in Iowa last Saturday afternoon. The majority of hunters who took to the fields with gun and dog reported that if they didn't get their limit it wasn't the birds' fault, because there certainly were enough of the roosters around waiting to be shot. Most of the hunters got at least two birds and a fair share of them got the legal limit of three male pheasants.—*LeMars Globe Post*.

Opening day hunters reported from fair to very good hunting; one group of nine had the limit before three o'clock. The weather favored the birds, and the road hunters did not have too much success. Hunters with dogs, as usual, had good luck.—*Manly Signal*.

A few hunters got their limit, a few ended up with two birds apiece. The chief complaint grows out of the many fields of standing corn which provide plenty of cover for the ringnecks.—*Hardin County Times*, Iowa Falls.

The pheasant season opened with a large number of hunters in the fields. Unusually heavy coverage was on the side of the pheasants, but nevertheless many of the pheasant hunters did fairly well Saturday and Sunday. Most of those going through cornfields and sloughs in groups of six to ten report getting their limit in a short time.

Smaller groups had more difficulty in obtaining their limit, as (Continued on page 96)

Pheasant Hunting . . .

(Continued from page 89)

Many hunters who traveled here for duck and pheasant hunting have been disappointed. The lakes were frozen and many fields have been posted. No one can blame the farmers for posting the fields, but it certainly makes it difficult for outsiders, which is perhaps all right, too. A surprising feature of this pheasant hunting is the ability of the birds to disappear from their normal areas. One field which by count had more than 30 birds in two acres was barren Saturday. The land was posted and not hunted prior to the opening hours.—*Emmetsburg Democrat*.

They found plenty of birds here. For the most part, they didn't encounter too much trouble and had their limits bagged easily by the closing hour—4:30 p.m. But some who had large parties were forced to go to the fields the next day to round out their bag and possession limits.

Several hunters reported that many birds were winged and subsequently lost, since few had dogs with them. But those who did have dogs lost few pheasants which were knocked down.—*Swea City Herald*.

We are beginning to be suspicious of the Iowa Conservation Commission. The pre-season propaganda that pheasants are plentiful sounds as if it might be directed to the sale of hunting licenses.

While there are lots of birds and anyone who can hit them should be able to get some pheasants, we don't believe that they are as plentiful as the commission count indicated, at least not in the Wright and Hancock sections.—*Eagle Grove Eagle*.

According to reports the first of the week, hunters who went out after their bag of pheasants Saturday afternoon, the opening of the



Typical roadside scene in the pheasant territory at a quarter till 12, November 11. Jim Sherman Photo.

annual pheasant season in Wright County, had better than average luck. Many obtained their limit in a short time, while others averaged at least two.

Hunters report that those who used dogs were having far better luck getting their birds this year due to the large amount of corn still in the fields. The cripples found it quite easy to escape in the unhusked corn.—*Clarion Monitor*.

Fewer pheasants than last year was the general opinion of hunters last Saturday, which was the opening day on these birds in this state.—*Ruthven Free Press*.

The pheasant season has lived up to advance notice. Hunters are finding pheasants in large numbers, although the heavy cover has made it more difficult than usual to get them up in the cornfields within shooting range.

Farmers, too, have found many



Hunting dogs again proved of great value, cutting down the loss of cripples and flushing many of the running birds. Jim Sherman Photo.



Jim Sherman Photo.

"... Then we suddenly realize that our fingers once more are supple and warm, our feet have returned to us—and we're warm and comfortable."

COLD IN FRONT, WET BEHIND

There is one sport we rate above all others and that is duck hunting. And the peculiar thing about the sport is that it is the most uncomfortable one we know of.

Many a time we have sat in a duck blind when the sleet was being driven into us by a northern gale, the melted sleet dripping from our gun clothes, wet and uncomfortable, with our fingers so numb we could hardly bend them and our feet long lost to us by the near freezing temperature—and then—in the distance a long thin line appears—a flock of ducks coming in. We watch them closely, they circle and circle—then finally slant in against the wind. Up we get and blaze away at them. One usually drops, sometimes two, and as we start out after them we suddenly realize that our fingers once more are supple and warm, our feet have returned to us—we're warm and comfortable!

There's nothing quite on a par with hunting ducks.—*Humboldt Republican*.

Scull Boats . . .

(Continued from page 93)

art, as none of today's boat factories are putting out scull boats. These boats are always long, narrow and sleek and were handmade by master boat craftsmen who usually spent from six months to a year in making one boat.—*Russ Graham, Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

A concentration of spawning suckers have been known to deposit eggs which accumulated to a depth of 18 to 24 inches over an area of 1500 square feet.

Although Iowa has large earthworms in the form of 12-inch night-crawlers, Australia has giant earthworms that often reach 12 feet in length.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Duck hunters, bemoaning the drouth conditions this fall and the drying up of many favorite duck marshes, can sympathize with the coot in this tale.

HOW DRY I AM

Duck hunters have been moaning and groaning about drouth conditions this fall, and the fact that there's not enough water inland to attract the migratory fowl to their usual stops in the marshes and ponds—but nobody knew it was quite THIS dry.

When Clarence Conover, 1510 Sheridan Avenue, drained the radiator of his car the other night, he simply let the water run out on the ground, then went into his basement to procure the anti-freeze. On his return, he found a real live MUDHEN frolicking in the puddle—apparently the first water the poor bird had sighted in quite some time!

Mr. Conover approached within several feet of the fowl before it reluctantly took off down Sheridan Avenue, narrowly missing a crash into a city bus before it gained enough altitude to disappear into the wild blue yonder.—*Iowa City Press Citizen*.

Pheasant Hunting . . .

(Continued from page 95)

the pheasants took advantage of the coverage and disappeared—some, as usual, after they were shot and crippled.—*New Hampton Economist*.

Pheasant hunters in this area seemed to have their share of luck as this favorite fall sport got underway last weekend. Many came back with reports of luck, and several claimed bag limits for everybody in their party despite the short session. The ones who left their business places, for the most part, were back on duty by mid-afternoon.—*Sheldon Sun*.

There are some people who claim that an owl is a wise old bird. On the other hand, a lot of pheasant hunters in the Strawberry Point vicinity will argue that a pheasant is a lot wiser—and twice as elusive.—*Strawberry Point Press Journal*.

Results are various. Some boys did well, others didn't even see a legal bird. Areas that were barren on Saturday were well-stocked on the second and third days; the birds must have migrated or laid low the first day. Dogs were of invaluable assistance every day. Wounded birds were brought back by fast and clever dogs.—*Bellevue Leader*.

During the first few days of the current pheasant hunting season

hunters found that the plenitude of pheasants and a generous bag limit of three cock birds was not a guarantee that they would all return with their quota.

Hunters literally blanketed the fields of Floyd and Butler Counties on Saturday and Sunday. Those who came home short of limits or empty-handed were the first to realize that the wily pheasant is still king of the game birds and a species of wildlife that is well qualified to hold its own.—*Greene Recorder*.

The cream of the pheasant season was skimmed off Saturday, and from now on out it's going to take plenty of leg work and some luck to get birds. The take in Palo Alto County was big the opening day, due to the great number of hunters that poured into this area.

Many shooters failed to bag their limit over the weekend, but just about everybody got a rooster or two. Parts of the country were crowded to capacity with hunters, particularly the Lost Island Lake area, for a radius of several miles. We hunted territory east of the lake, and we have never seen more shooters, even during those heavily hunted three half-day seasons years ago.—*Emmetsburg Reporter*.

A red cloth or piece of red cellophane over your light while hunting nightcrawlers will often be a big help. Nightcrawlers are less sensitive to red light than other colors.

Hen pheasants are persistent nesters, but subsequent nests will contain fewer eggs.

THE HUNTING SEASON BRINGS OLD FRIENDS

We like to see the hunting season roll around each fall, for it always means that some old friends will drop in again, some chaps that we haven't seen for months or even years will stop in to say hello.

There is many a note on our desk that says, "Higgins called," or "Dwight says to tell you hello," or we greet in person some of the

fellows we haven't seen for a long time.

We are getting tired of tripping and sprawling through those corn fields and those impenetrable swales that are so popular as pheasant hideouts, but we welcome the season anyway for the old friends it brings.—*Humboldt Republican*.



Jim Sherman Photo.

The opening of the pheasant season sees the renewal of many friendships. Those hunters who maintain year-around contacts with farmer friends are invariably assured the best hunting.