

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

Volume 11

AUGUST, 1952

Number 8

IOWA'S STATE-OWNED PLAYGROUNDS

OLD OSCAR SHOWMAN EXTRAORDINARY

By E. B. Speaker
Superintendent of Biology

Barring sickness or unforeseeable accidents, old Oscar, the big rock sturgeon, will be staring out of his aquarium at wide-eyed Iowa State Fair visitors again this year. Born in Wisconsin about 50 years ago, he has lived most of his life in the trout ponds at the State Fish Hatchery near Strawberry Point.

Oscar's weight varies somewhat with the seasons but fish culturists advise he tips the scales at something over 100 pounds at this writing. Although his food is lush in the hatchery, he would have undoubtedly been much larger had he had room to grow and expand in his native lakes and rivers.

If Oscar could talk he could brag about seeing more people and being cared for by more fish doctors and nurses than any fish in Iowa for he is by far the oldest fish in captivity in the State. He has been on continuous exhibition for nearly a half century and has made an annual pilgrimage to the State Fair for 30 years.

Most fresh-water fish die when they reach an age of from six to 10 years. A few live past 15, but the rock sturgeons are the Methuselahs of our native fishes and commonly live 30 years or more.

At home, Oscar lives the "life of Riley." Moving slowly about the cool waters of a trout pond gorging on excess food and waste materials which he gleans from the bottom. He is never very anxious to leave his "Utopia" and frequently shows his indignation by thrashing about wildly in the fish nets and tanks. Once acclimated in the State Fair aquarium, however, he is content to lie motionless on the bottom or go through his leisurely antics that have attracted at least two generations of spectators to his window. He is truly a showman extraordinary.

Oscar comes from a long line of
(Continued on page 64)



Jim Sherman Photo.

In thirty years we have unlocked many hidden places of great beauty and have built a state-owned recreation system second to none in the United States.

RURAL MAIL CARRIERS COUNT WILDLIFE

By Richard C. Nomsen
Game Biologist

More than 500 rural mail carriers count wildlife on their mail routes during four periods each year—summer, winter, spring and fall. These counts made incidental to regular duties, when added to other records kept by the Conservation Commission, give a clear picture of how our various game species are faring.

The mail carrier counts began in 1948. The first survey was taken the spring of that year—18 counts have been completed to date.

To enlist the cooperation of the

carriers, permission was first obtained from the Post Office Department. Then the carriers were contacted through their local post office. The project was explained to them and cards were made available for those who wished to volunteer their services.

For each survey, a record is kept of all pheasants, quail and cottontails seen along the regular routes for a six-day period. The count is taken for a week in order to decrease the daily variation caused by local weather and road conditions.

(Continued on page 63)

By John Madson
Education Assistant

There was a time, not long ago, when Iowa was private property. There were no state parks, and no public access to many of our lakes and streams. Iowans who wished to picnic either asked permission from the landowner or were liable for trespassing. Roads were being improved and the land was filled with Model T's but there was no place to go.

The first step in providing public playgrounds was taken in 1919 when the State Board of Conservation acquired the Devil's Backbone now known as Backbone State Park. Other parks soon followed: Lacey-Keosauqua, Pilot Knob, and the Ledges, and in 1922 there were fourteen state parks in Iowa.

In 1933 the stage was set for our modern park system with a survey which resulted in the Iowa Twenty-five Year Conservation Plan. This study, blueprinting future park and conservation programs, was used by the Conservation Commission aided by the CCC and other agencies in expanding and improving our parks. By 1943 there were eighty-six state parks and our system was coming of age.

Today there are eighty-nine state parks and recreation areas. Formerly lumped together as state parks, they have been subdivided into parks, recreation reserves, lake reserves, historical and geological monuments, wayside parks and fishing access areas. Together they contain more than 28,000 acres and 115 miles of road.

Acquired by gift and purchase, these public playgrounds are chosen for geographical distribution and natural beauty. Their naturalness is changed little in development and all buildings and improvements are designed to blend rather than conflict with the natural surroundings. Footpaths and trails are kept as such and park officials believe that sidewalks should be left in the cities, the policy being: do not put in the state parks what people come to them to get away from. In many of the areas, prairies have

(Continued on page 62)

Iowa Conservationist

Published Monthly By The
IOWA CONSERVATION COMMISSION
East 7th and Court—Des Moines, Iowa
(No Rights Reserved)

WM. S. BEARDSLEY, Governor of Iowa
BRUCE F. STILES, Director
JAMES R. HARLAN, Editor

MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

E. G. TROST, Chairman.....Fort Dodge
J. D. REYNOLDS, Vice Chairman.....Creston
C. A. DINGES.....Emmetsburg
W. F. FRUDEGER.....Burlington
FLOYD S. PEARSON.....Decorah
MRS. EMMET HANNAN.....Council Bluffs

CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE.....65,000
Subscription rate.....40c a year
3 years \$1.00

Entered as second class matter at the post office at Des Moines, Iowa, September 22, 1947, under the Act of March 24, 1912. Subscriptions received at Conservation Commission, East Seventh Street and Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. Send cash, check or money order.

A VIEW OF PHEASANT PROSPECTS

Long ago we learned not to get too optimistic about autumn game conditions when summer barely had a good start, but it is beginning to look a bit as though Iowa will produce a bumper crop of pheasants this year.

From the productive pheasant range in northwestern Iowa we glean the information that the birds are doing a good production job.

There was a fine carry-over of stock, good, hardy stuff, and in the early spring the bus drivers, mail carriers, and others traveling the roads daily, counted as high as 25 birds to the mile in some sections. One check of two miles revealed 37 birds. Both of these figures are very good.

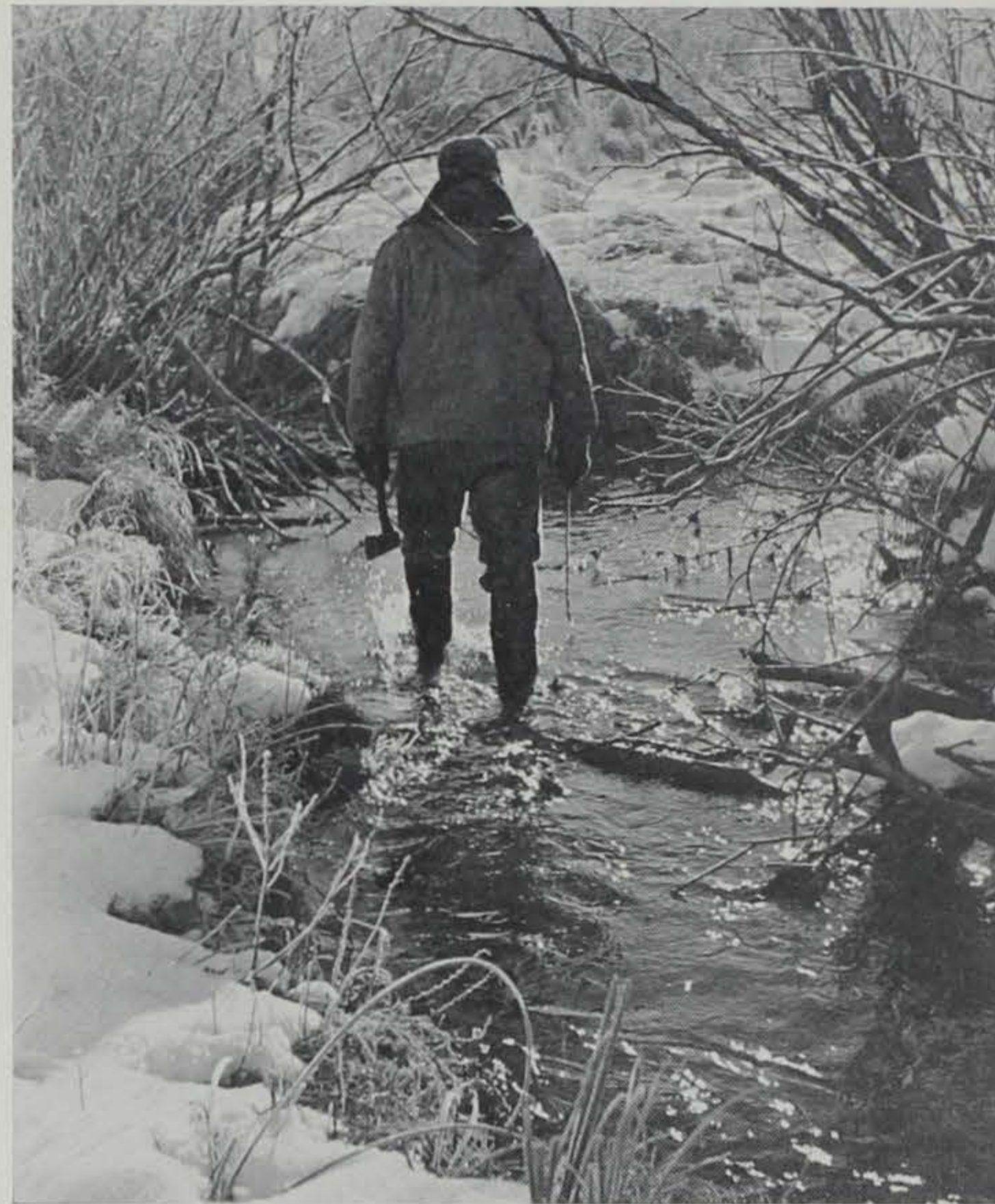
During the winter flocks of birds numbering 50 to 100 were not unusual. It might well be that northwestern Iowa will again become the mecca for hundreds of gunners next fall.

In our travels about Scott County we have come upon only one pheasant hen with chicks, but these were very good looking birds, well developed and husky. We counted eight chicks, but surmise that the wise old hen had a few more in the tall, roadside grass, because we

* * * * *



Jim Sherman Photo. "We have learned not to get too optimistic about autumn game conditions when summer barely has a good start; yet there was a fine carry over of stock last winter."



Jim Sherman Photo. Iowa trappers had the most profitable season in several years with '51-'52 producing \$972,000 worth of raw pelts.

Believe it or not, accepted records show that a pair of purple martins may bring food home to their youngsters as many as 312 times in a single day; the rose-breasted grosbeaks 426 times; while the house wrens are probably the winners with no less than 600 nourishment bearing trips. B.C.

A mammal is defined as an animal that has hair at some period or other in its life and suckles its young. Even the great whales possess hair in early life.

detected movement here and there. Probably a flock of 10 to 12 birds—not a bad piece of production for the first brood, since they got off ahead of the sickle bar.—By The Nomad, *Davenport Times*.

* * * * *

1951-52 TRAPPING RESULTS

In spite of slightly decreased fur prices, the 1951-52 Iowa fur take was the most profitable in several years, totalling \$972,134.08. This represents a considerable increase over the 1950-51 total of \$838,250.13.

Mink pelts constituted the greatest individual value, 23,247 animals bringing \$406,532.36. Muskrats brought in a total of \$361,081.31 for 263,563 animals. The total pelts taken in the 1951-52 season were 369,609.

This high total value of last season's furs in Iowa was due to the large number trapped, since most of the furs have actually decreased in price. Mink, for example, decreased in average value from \$23.50 in 1950-51 to \$17.48 in 1951-52.

The most productive fur catch in Iowa history was in 1943-44, when 979,000 furs brought \$2,961,000.

	Number	Average Value	Total
Raccoon	67,211	\$ 2.67	\$179,453.37
Opossum	2,600	.27	702.00
Muskrat	263,563	1.37	361,081.31
Mink	23,247	17.48	406,532.36
Skunk	2,558	1.03	2,634.74
Civet	1,872	.73	1,366.56
Badger	81	.52	42.12
Red fox	3,703	.39	1,444.17
Grey fox	443	.25	110.75
Weasel	412	.92	379.04
Wolf-coyote	34	.79	26.86
Rabbit	1,410	.05	70.50
Beaver	2,465	7.42	18,290.30
	369,609		\$972,134.08

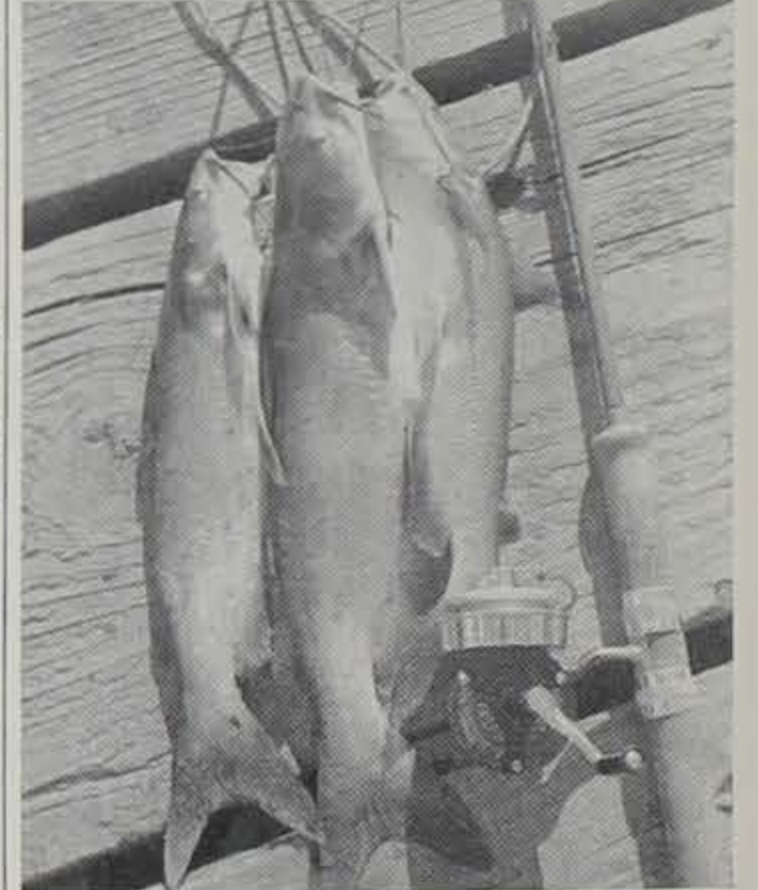
Ducks use their webbed feet not only as a plane does its landing gear when coming down, but also as rudders for flight maneuvering.

BEST BAIT FOR CHANNEL CAT

I hear a lot of discussions about what constitutes the best bait for channel catfish. The other day at Quasqueton, my partner, Curt Griggs, and I used dead minnows exclusively. Other fishermen were using night crawlers, shrimp, blood, live minnows, and prepared baits. Apart from the catfish we got, I saw but one other fish taken.

This is my lowdown on catfish bait: Give me white-mouth dead sucker minnows, from three to four inches long, and you can have all the other baits you can bring along. Away back in history Dad Coon, known to oldtimers in conservation work, was utterly loyal to sour clams. He was a real catfisherman. I've observed Curt Griggs and he's about the champion catfisherman of the living generation—his preference seems to be for cut bait. He has a special way of fixing it that I haven't solved as yet—and if anybody gets catfish, Curt Griggs will get them.

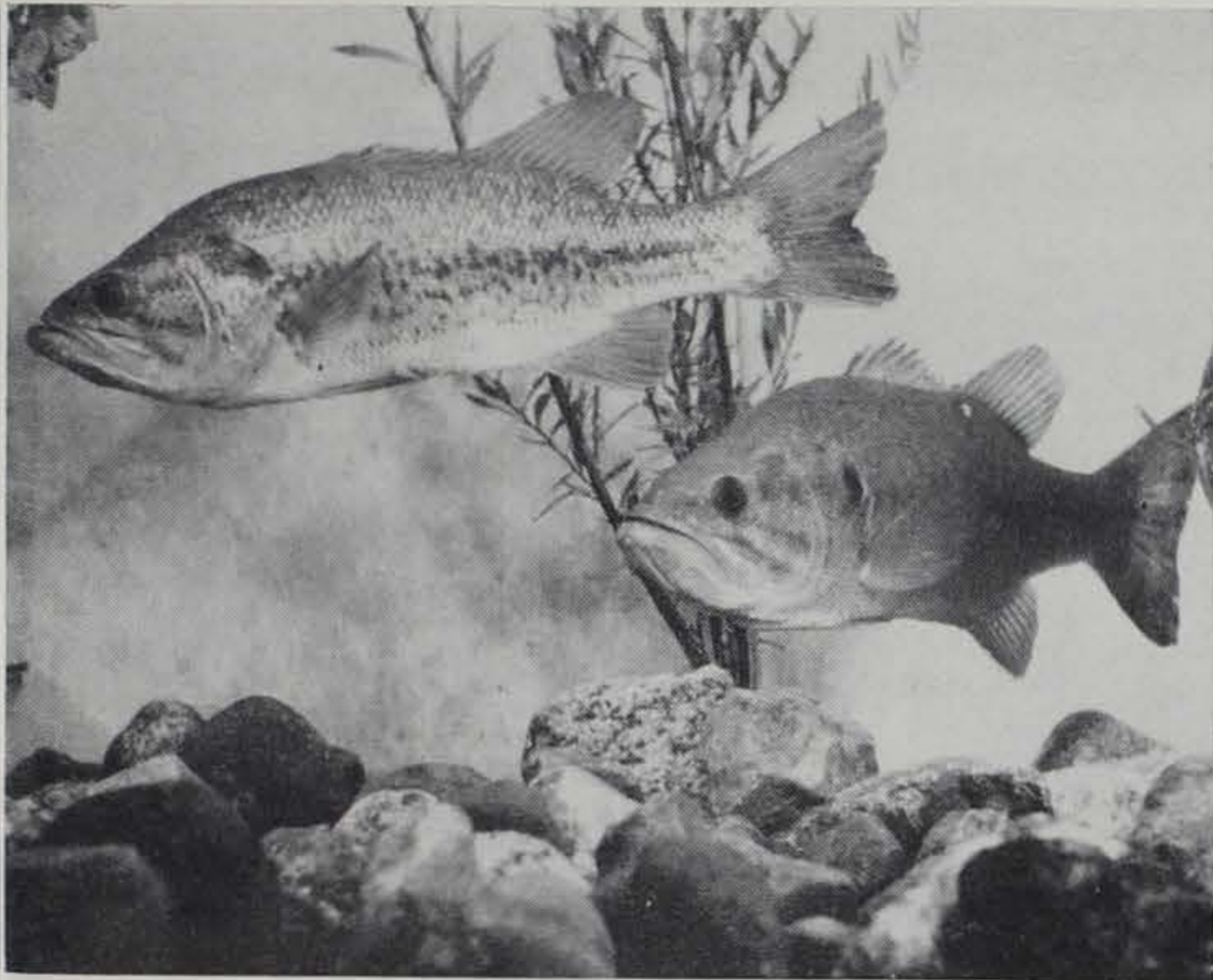
But it's me for white-mouth suckers, from three to four inches long. I want them dead a couple of hours—after four or five hours they go soft so one can't keep them on the hook. I have no difficulty in getting catfish strikes—my trouble is to hook 'em. The other day I had eight or 10 runs before I hooked a catfish. Curt Griggs gets 'em almost every time. Guess I don't know exactly when to set the hook.—Fins, Furs, and Feathers, *Manchester Democrat-Radio*.



Jim Sherman Photo. "Give me dead white-mouthed sucker minnows, from three to four inches long for channel cat and you can have all the other baits."

Water is composed of about 11 per cent hydrogen and 88 per cent oxygen. Fish cannot use the oxygen since water is extremely stable. The oxygen fish use must be dissolved in the water from the air or from aquatic plant photosynthesis. E.R.

The stocking of a species of fish into a lake from another lake to introduce "new blood" is biologically unsound. Growth rates of fish are dependent upon food, temperature and space. E.R.



"We always felt sorry for papa bass. He fixes up a nice love nest and as soon as mama lays her eggs, she's off galavanting around while he stays home and raises the family."

Jim Sherman Photo.

LITTLE KNOWN WILD WAYS

I never could understand the ways of fishes, especially Black Bass, but we always felt sorry for Papa Bass, because he helps Mama Bass fix up a nice "love nest" and soon as mama lays her eggs, she's off galavanting around while papa stays home and does the house work and raises the family.

Foxes and wolves are more old fashioned in their home life. They mate up and stay together until one or the other dies. When the whelps are small mama spends most of her time in the den with them, while papa brings them food. After a few weeks mama helps papa with the hunting, one or the other is always near the home to protect the young, and should a dog come near either of the parents will lead him away.

In the case of wolves, often they will attack the dog, and it takes a real fighting dog to stand up to their combined attack. Foxes seldom attack, but show themselves and the dog gives chase and is led away from the den.

Old Papa Mink lets mama do all the work in raising the family. In fact, except for a few hours courtship with Mama Mink, he is off on his rounds enjoying life. No family ties for him, in fact he don't believe in having families, and Mama Mink has to feed and protect her young and should papa find the den while the young are small he will attempt to kill them—for this reason and danger from floods Mama Mink often has the young in a den some distance from a stream and raises them there until they are a few weeks old.

Mink love to travel and live along the water, but they also live for weeks in the field and woods. They are not dependent on the streams and lakes, as are the muskrats and beavers.

Many sportsmen blame foxes and mink for scarcity of game birds and animals, especially pheasant and rabbits. Fact is, mink and foxes seldom bother to hunt them. They prefer small rodents, frogs, crawfish, etc. Only when raising their young, or in midwinter when food is scarce do they kill pheasant and rabbits.

We have watched foxes dig out pocket gophers. Digging in the gopher's series of underground tunnels and cornering him is quite a feat for any animal. We have seen foxes spend hours at this game, and after they had cornered Mr. Gopher and killed him, leave him laying. It's not always from hunger that foxes hunt ground squirrels, gophers, meadow mice, moles, etc. We think they spend a great deal of their time hunting for the sport of the thing.

We have often wondered how all the untrue stories get started about wild animals, etc. Most everybody has heard that "if a turtle bites you he won't let go until it thunders"—how "bats love to get in your hair"—how "rattlesnakes won't bite unless they coil and rattle first," etc. (We stepped on one once along a bluff and he struck and hooked his fangs in our pants leg—lucky for us he didn't hit our leg. He didn't coil and rattle. We went back after we quit running and got our nerve up and found him laying stretched out and killed him.)

We will say this, we think rattlesnakes will usually slip away if they can and some will not bite unless you step on them, as we have stepped close and never got bit yet. Yes, we have seen them coil and rattle, but they don't always do it.

Now all stories we ever read about foxes told how bad they were—"Tain't so, McGee." Foxes are the farmers' friend. They keep the small rodents caught off. These rodents eat the grain and other

food that the pheasants need to survive the winters. Sure foxes do catch some game birds and animals; so do cats and dogs and we have a few outlaw hunters in every locality. Why blame the fox for all of it?—J. C. Grigg, *Monticello Express*.

PIONEER SNAKE CONTROL

Pioneers in this area of Iowa remember when the country was infested by rattlesnakes. Breaking a patch of prairie sod usually kept the man between the plow handles on the alert. Then came the hog, and that put an end to the venomous-snake era.

One early diary has this paragraph: "Plenty of copperheads and rattlesnakes still remained and no plowman liked to go where they were. Dave bought hogs to clean up the snake-infested spots. The hogs seemed to accept their part of the work as good fun and went at it with diligence and even intelligence." Either the hog is immune to snake poison or his tough hide or the layer of fat beneath protects him. At any rate he seems to like snake meat well enough to take the risks involved.

The hills of northeastern Iowa still harbor some rattlesnakes, and native hunters along the Mississippi bluffs find it profitable to hunt them for the bounty money. One of those hunters gave us a glimpse inside a sack he was carrying over his back. We expected to see fish, and we recoiled at least 20 feet

SPORT'S CLUB A POWER IN CONSERVATION

The Elkader Rod and Gun Club had a fine fish fry recently. The club served over 500 pounds of dressed catfish to some 500 guests. Clubs like this, and ones in Linn and Benton counties, are powers in Iowa which help get things done.

As an example, it was due to action of sportsmen in such groups that the Conservation Commission was taken out of politics in 1935. Manpower from such groups have done most of the game cover planting in the state.

Game cover planting can and should be continued. If it were completed the state could easily produce twice as much wildlife and fish as we now have. Those figures were offered by experts who are in a position to know.

If you are trying to get a game or fish project started in your community on your own you may give up in despair. However, if you organize a small group in the community you'll find the task much easier.—*Cedar Rapids Gazette*.

The life span of most fish is short, around 7 years. Approximately ten per cent of the adult game fish are caught from a lake each year. Most game fish thus die of old age and do no one any real good. E.R.

when we saw the contents—a squirming mass of rattlesnakes! We are willing to leave the snake extermination process to the hogs.—*Washington Journal*.



The hills of northeast Iowa still harbor some rattlesnakes and hunters along the Mississippi bluffs find it profitable to hunt them for bounty.



Some of the small structures in Wapsipinicon State Park are made of local Niagara limestone quarried in the reformatory near Anamosa.

WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK

By Charles S. Gwynne
Associate Professor
Department of Geology
Iowa State College

If you have visited the state parks of eastern Iowa you may have been struck with the resemblance between the rock walls of Wapsipinicon, Palisades Kepler, Backbone and Maquoketa Caves. They are all founded upon the deposits of an ancient sea, the limestone of the Niagara series. The series is named from its occurrence at Niagara Falls, New York. The layers of the series form the rim over which the Niagara River plunges at the falls.

The series also extends as a great sheet of rock from New York to Iowa and even into Canada. In parts of the area it lies at great depths below the surface and is covered with other strata. It comes to the surface in eastern Iowa and forms the top bedrock beneath the subsoil of much of Delaware, Jackson, Jones, and Cedar counties. There are other places along streams in these counties where it forms walls or cliffs similar to those in the parks.

This limestone started as a sediment in one of the ancient seas which spread over what is now North America. This was during the Silurian period. The period was named by geologists who first studied it in Wales early in the last century. They named it after one of the ancient Welsh tribes.

The sea must have covered the land for a long while, because in places the Niagara series is a few hundred feet thick. Some of the limey material was precipitated from the sea water, just as salt is dropped from a concentrated solution. The remainder came from the shells of marine animals. Most of these shells were reduced to a powdery form before the sediment hardened to a rock. The impres-

sions of some shells remain as fossils, but they are hard to find in the badly weathered rock.

The sea water, acting on the soft sediment, replaced part of the element calcium with magnesium. So now the hardened rock should really be called a dolomite or a dolomitic limestone. It is a much more resistant rock than ordinary limestone. It is composed of the minerals dolomite and calcite. Ordinary limestone is made of calcite.

At the park, on the outskirts of Anamosa in Jones County, the Wapsipinicon River has cut a deep canyon through the limestone. Also, a tributary which flows from the south through the park has made a wide valley. Smaller gulleys and ravines along the river have been made by the runoff down them. The road through The Pines is on a ridge between two valleys.

Besides the cliffs, there are two other features prominent in the limestone. One is its pitted character. Some parts of the limestone have more calcite than the rest. These parts dissolve more readily than the parts rich in the mineral dolomite. The rain water, aided by decaying organic matter, acts on the rock, takes out the soluble part, and leaves the surfaces pitted and rough.

The second notable feature is the tendency of the rock to weather away from the main mass in the form of huge blocks. One reason for this is that the beds are thick. Vertical cracks called joints also help the large blocks to separate. Also, even though parts of the rock are soluble, it is nevertheless a strong rock. The large blocks last for a long while. They do not disintegrate into sand, as would sandstone.

The slow down-hill movement of loose material on steep slopes is well recognized. Here in the park the stone steps leading up from the river give evidence of it. Those toward the lower part of the trail have tilted and slid forward. Part

COWBIRD SLICK AVIAN OPERATOR

A Sioux City family has been watching with considerable interest one of the strange phenomena of the bird world—a mother cardinal caring for her own young plus an interloper, a baby cowbird.

Ornithologists long have known that the female cowbird is a "slick operator," laying her eggs in the nests of other birds and then forgetting all about them, leaving it up to strangers to raise her young.

This neat trick worked to perfection on the female cardinal who feeds throughout the year at a window of the Sioux City family. Not only did the cardinal hatch the cowbird egg along with her own, but she now is busy raising Cowbird, Jr., who by the way is not as bright a pupil as the young cardinal.

Although the baby cardinal now has learned to crack sunflower seeds for itself, the cowbird simply cannot make the grade. So the mother cardinal, treating the "bird who came to dinner" with the same tenderness afforded her own off-

of this was caused through undermining by running water. However, actual creep of the soil was partly responsible.

Although this part of Iowa was glaciated at least twice during glacial times, there is little evidence of it in the park. There is a mantle of glacial drift but it is generally covered by loess, the wind-blown silt. Glacial boulders are not common. The pillars at the entrance to the Country Club are made of glacial stone. Examine them, and you will find them far different from the limestone bedrock.

Some of the small structures in the park are made of the local rock. This can be recognized from its delicate bending. The rock was quarried in the Reformatory quarries west of Anamosa. Rock secured from these quarries has also been used in many state parks and other state projects. The foundation of two of the buildings at Iowa State College came from this quarry. Also, more recently, it has been used in retaining walls at the college.

This part of the valley of the Wapsipinicon is a fine place for the development of electric power from the falling water. This is partly because the valley is so narrow. Only a short dam was required to hold back the water. There was probably a falls or rapids over resistant rock layers before the dam was built.

So Wapsipinicon takes its place with the other parks of Iowa whose stories go far back into earth history. Examination of the record—the solid rock, the subsoil, and the "lay-of-the-land"—all goes to show that skillful work by the forces of Nature were required to make the park area the attractive place it is today.



A cowbird often parasites other birds' nests and sometimes as it grows the young cowbird kicks the rightful occupants of the nest out on the ground to starve.

spring, cracks the seeds and obligingly stuffs them into the cowbird's open bill.

All of which indicates that willingness to become a parasite and live off the other fellow is not restricted to the human race. Perhaps the birds have been doing it longer than humans. Yet there are indications that man, the most complex of all living things, accomplishes the "free ride" with greater skill than even the cowbird.

This idea is fostered by those who seek to convince the American people that the federal government owes them a living, that the lazy should prosper equally with the diligent; that the man who works hard, risks his capital and makes a profit should share his money with the loafer who rests in the shade while the other chap toils.

Apparently the mother cardinal's intelligence is not keen enough to recognize she is being "taken" by the lazy cowbird. But let us hope the American people use their highly-developed intellect in such a way as to discourage human "cowbirds" from taking the easy way of living off the other fellow.—*Sioux City Journal*.

READY MIX VS. NATURAL BAIT

Hot weather makes good catfishing better. In general the warmer the water becomes the hungrier the catfish get. It is at this time of year that the handy ready-mixed catfish baits pay off. They can be kept from one trip to the next, and it's a simple matter to take along an extra jar so that you will not run out of bait.

Of course, natural baits or foods such as crayfish, dead or live minnows, worms and clams also work better than ever at this time of year, but it costs you more effort to obtain, keep and use natural baits.

Night time fishing produces more and larger catfish per hour than day time fishing. To catch catfish during daylight hours one must present his bait right into the fishes' resting place, and the bait offered must appeal to him strongly.—By Russ Graham, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*.



The nucleus of the permanent conservation exhibit is the aquarium built in 1921. A large tent that housed the rest of the exhibit may be seen in the background.

FISH AND GAME AT THE STATE FAIR

By John Madson
Education Assistant

Back in the old days it was a good man who could get close enough to the State Fair Fish and Game Exhibit to see anything. The exhibit, prior to 1921, was housed beneath a sort of a revival tent and was bisected by a moat. This moat was created and fed by the fish tanks which overflowed with regularity. The fish tanks were common metal stock tanks and in their overflow a flock of ducks puttered happily about in the mud.

After wading through the mud to get closer to the tanks it was still hard to see any fish. So Mac Coon, who was in charge of the show for many years, would net the fish from the tanks and hold them up for inspection, wetting the spectators in the process. By any standards the exhibit was not a successful arrangement.

W. E. Albert, state game warden from 1919 until his death in 1932, had a great belief in conservation education. He also knew that conservation could not be sold or explained in a muddy tent. With these convictions he planned the modern permanent building now in use.

The permanent aquarium was built in 1921. The next year the walls were built and partly roofed over. By fair time 1923, the structure was completed. Albert and the building were caught in a storm of criticism. He was accused by some of wasting the sportsmen's money and the splendid new building was christened Albert's Folly. Those who called the expenditure folly were soon forgotten and the building, one of the finest of its kind in the country, still has a long and useful life ahead.

Now as many as four hundred thousand visitors crowd the exhibit during fair time, where they are met by courteous and able Conservation Commission employees anxious to answer their endless questions about conservation and wildlife.

The exhibit, with rare exceptions, contains only native species

and since the construction of the building numerous varieties that were extinct in Iowa and have made a comeback are now displayed. Among those now regularly shown that were not found in the state thirty years ago are deer, beaver, bobcat and egret. Others of once-vanished species make occasional appearances.

In addition to the regular exhibits, each year brings its special attraction. In 1951 a large cage was built for 150 baby raccoons, and the resultant bedlam was tremendously popular. Before that there was old Hattie, the snapping turtle, who was once the object of a weight-guessing contest. A housewife gave the correct weight of thirty-nine pounds and as might be expected some fishermen's estimates ran all the way up to seventy.

For many years Sammy, the tobacco-chewing buck deer, was a stellar attraction. With the late Mac Coon as major domo, Sammy was usually the center of attention and made the most of it.

Mac was a show in himself, startling fair crowds by walking among them carrying his pet skunks. He had four of them, all of which were disarmed. But, through a surgical oversight, one of the skunks was still very much in action. One evening, after the exhibit's regular closing time, Mac held a special showing of his animals to a small group of school teachers. Although he had been safely handled for over a year, the skunk suddenly decided he resented something. With the usual unpredictability of a wild animal, he fired a shot for freedom. Mac was terrible in his wrath, accusing the conservation officers of ringing in a substitute. Weak with laughter, the "boys" truthfully denied any substitution, but Mac never believed or forgave them.

Getting the exhibit together for each fair is a big task. Only a small part of the animals and fish are held over each year. As a result the fair demands special collecting. Most of the fish in the aquarium are taken by fish rescue crews from the overflow waters of the Mississippi and brought to the fair in live fish trucks.

Some of the birds and animals in the show are kept at the State Game Farm near Boone until just before fair time. Others are baby animals seized by conservation officers from well-meaning Iowans who have "rescued" them.

The fish and game exhibit is one of the most entertaining shows at the fair. This is as it should be, but it goes deeper than that. If only a few people can meet their wildlife neighbors and learn something of their needs, Albert's Folly was well worth while.

THE PURPOSE OF FISHING

I believe most of our local anglers could get a great deal more enjoyment from fishing if they didn't have "walleyes-on-the-brain."

The walleye is a wonderful game fish but his habits just don't lend themselves to good fishing throughout most of the summer when a majority of us like to get away. To slip many of them on a stringer during the hot months one has to snoop around the shore line and sand bars long after dark or in the early dawn. And even then you have to really know what you are doing, be mighty cautious, and work fervently to catch them consistently.

To me, fishing is such a wonderful sport for two reasons—it is relaxing and I love to catch fish. There is no sense, as I see it, in making work of fishing and setting a permanent kink in your back dunking minnows over the side of a boat from sunrise to sunset.

When you continue fishing after you are tired, especially if the fish aren't hitting, you go home beat and dissatisfied—you have defeated the whole purpose of fishing. As you turn homeward you should be completely at ease with the world and yourself, whether you have caught any fish or not, thrilled at the strike you had on that small spoon, amused at the antics of the

gulls begging your minnows, marveling at the diving performance a majestic loon put on for you, and feeling good over the many other little things that happened in making your trip a wonderful success. Learn to appreciate those little things and get more "kicks" from time afield.

Regardless of how ideal the environment may be, however, nothing can beat catching a good string of fish. That is why I say forget the walleye. Get yourself a flyrod and fish for scrappy bluegills in the glassy-surfaced waters along the shore line at evening. Or move into the rushes and take the greedy little striper that are so abundant at Clear Lake. Let them fight the arching tip of your rod until they roll over on their sides and float in.

Probably the most spectacular fishing we know here in Iowa is surface fishing for bass. Using either the bass bugs with a flyrod or the surface plugs with a regular casting rod, work the shore line and the edge of the rushes with these noisy lures. When a three-pound bass comes out of the bottom in a terrific explosion of water you will forget there ever was such a thing as a walleye.

These types of angling fulfill all the relaxation and sporting elements inherent to fishing. Best of all, the evenings are when they hit and everybody can get away for two or three hours after supper. In the rivers the bass, walleyes, and catfish move into the riffles to prey on the schools of minnows as the sun sinks and shadows lengthen. It can be unbearably hot at home but you will find that the tangy lake breezes or a river gurgling joyfully over a rapids will be quite refreshing and take the edge off a sweltering, sultry summer day.—Palmer Erickson, Jr., *Jewell Record*.

It is the opinion of leading ornithologists that the chief reason that a bird "sings" is to warn all other males of the same species to keep their distance. B.C.



The walleye is a wonderful game fish but its habits don't lend themselves to good fishing during most of the summer when a majority of us like to get away.



Our park facilities are being overwhelmed by recreation seekers and some parks are forced to close gates on heavy use days for lack of parking space and other facilities.

Playgrounds . . .

(Continued from page 57)

given away to tortuous landscapes where nature's ribs are showing, and where deer, beaver and coyote raise their families.

Almost as important as our parks are our access areas. They are the doors to the lakes and rivers which have been held in private ownership. State-owned waters are useless to us if they cannot be reached through public property. Many access areas have been acquired in the past 30 years, and the problem is pretty well solved on the state-owned lakes. There is much yet to be done on the acquirement of access to our streams.

The best ingredients of the outdoors can be found in our outdoor playgrounds; fish, flowers and wildlife, caves, waterfalls, rocky cliffs, and palisades, lakes, rivers and forests. The state has chosen carefully and there is, in our public domain, something of interest for everyone.

Iowans generally have discovered their parks and seem to like what they find. Attendance at our recreational areas has skyrocketed since World War II, rising from 1,500,000 in 1946 to 3,500,000 in 1951.

For comparison, the world famous Yellowstone National Park had a total of one and one-half million visitors in 1951. Iowa's parks had a total attendance of over a million this year during June alone.

Our summer state park crowds are averaging over three million annually, and this is one-fifth the total of all people in the United States visiting the national parks last year. We are currently setting a new park attendance record, and may expect almost 4,000,000 Iowans in our public playgrounds this year.

With the end of the war and the release of materials, several new artificial lakes have been built. In 1950, Lake Darling was completed. Cold Spring Recreation Reserve was dedicated in 1951, as was Lake Geode. Nine Eagles Lake has been

dedicated this year and Iowa's largest artificial recreation lake, 640-acre Rock Creek, will be dedicated August 24. Creston Lake is practically completed and funds have been provided for a lake in Shelby County.

Developments at the new lakes must wait legislative appropriations. When completed these new units will carry their share of the public recreation burden.

In our established parks, facilities are being overwhelmed by recreation seeking Iowans and maintenance costs and problems have risen accordingly. Some of our parks are forced to close their gates on Sunday afternoon for lack of parking space and other facilities. Our park system has room for so many people and no more. Use is approaching capacity.

In 30 years we have come a long way. Hidden places have been unlocked and are being held in public trust. Fences have given way to entrance portals and we Iowans now have built a state-owned recreation system second to none.

THE IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE

An old fellow down in Oklahoma had a very poor farm and a dozen or so coon dogs, then came the oil wells and he found himself a rich man.

Said he to his banker, "I got to get out of this country." The banker replied, "I can understand that, with all your money you don't want to live in that old shack of yours with all of them hound dogs." Old Fellow said, "It isn't that, I like it fine here, but the smell of all them oil wells is ruining them dogs' scent; got to get them out of here or they won't be any good for tracking coons."—By J. C. Grigg, *Monticello Express*.

Many artificial lakes develop thermoclines in summer. Thus, a large part of the lake may be without dissolved oxygen and fish populations limited thereby. E.R.

WITH THE OATS HARVESTED AND THE CORN LAID BY

Shining sickles chatter and the ripened grain falls as harvesting the oats moves to top priority on our busy farmers' agenda. Combines munch steadily along in a constant puff of dust, digesting the long, coiled belt on windrowed grain. Tractors scurry back and forth between field and granary where the golden oats is stored. The emphasis seems to be on speed and "get done" nowadays but there are some long, gruelling hours and plenty of sweat and grime that go into the reaping of the year's first grain crop.

The present country landscape reveals quite a different picture from bygone days when we used to run bare-footed through the stubble behind the noisy binder or following the shockers—more concerned with trying to catch a young cottontail than we ever were with the harvesting. The huge, evenly shocked fields were a stimulating sight, but setting up the shocks, we found out as we grew older, was nothing but pure, unadulterated work.

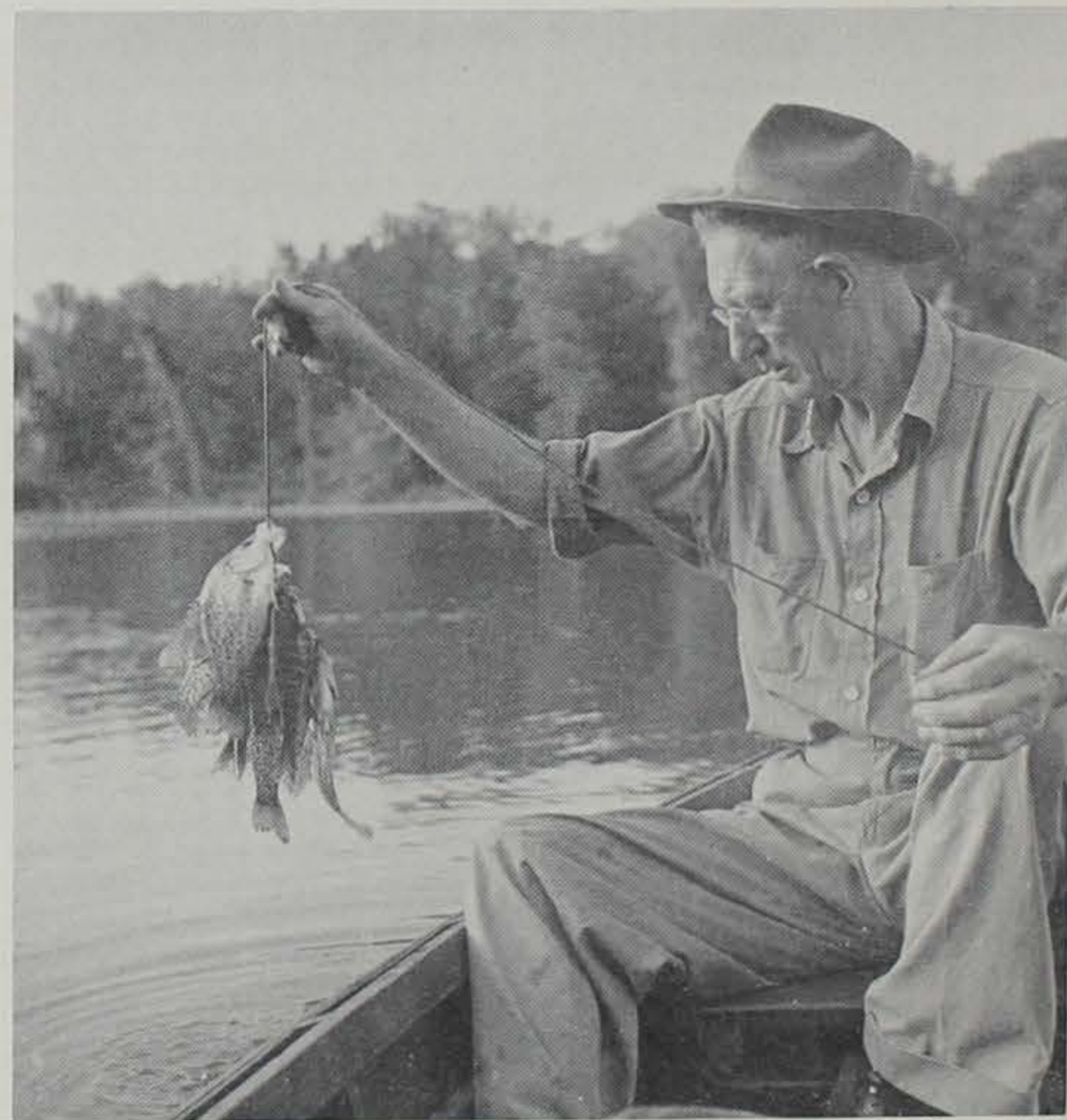
When threshing started it was a festival occasion for us kids for we got to drive the teams on the racks and level the oats off the machine and talk with the "men" in the mornings before the dew went off and argue about who had the best team and who threw on the biggest load of bundles. There was drama in every second once the big old steam engine

chugged at a snail's pace through the front gate and began squaring away on the machine and the big belt. And not the worst part of the festivities was eating time. Threshers work hard in sweltering heat, so they are treated and fed accordingly. Every one ate high off the hog from the waterboy right on through the bundle haulers to the engine man.

Yes, some of the "glamour" and drama and a whole lot of the work have been eliminated in the harvesting operations. The golden shocks sparkling with morning dew and a team jogging down the road in the refreshing cool relief that came with dusk at the end of the day would inspire any artist or poet.

The machine age has certainly speeded up the whole process and where it took weeks before it now takes only a day or two—which leads to one end. With the corn laid by and the oats harvested a lot of farmers like to take a breather and do a little fishing. It's probably too hot to work any way but just right to sprawl under a shade tree waiting for a river cat to gobble up your bait. Like Earl Rose says in "Iowa Fish and Fishing"—"There is really only one best time to go fishing, and that is when you have time. If you don't have time—take it." The old adage, "Allah does not deduct from man's time those hours spent fishing," may not be exactly true, but fishing is good medicine and a sure-fire balm for urban ulcers.

I'm sure it is a pretty darn good remedy for overworked farmers, too. — By Palmer Erickson, Jr., *Jewell Record*.



Jim Sherman Photo.

With the corn laid by and the oats harvested, farm folk have time to do a little fishing and as Earl Rose says, "The best time to go fishing is when you have time."



Jim Sherman Photo.

During four periods each year more than five hundred rural mail carriers keep a tabulation of wildlife seen on their rural mail routes.

Mail Carriers . . .

(Continued from page 57)

The big advantage of such a project is that it covers the entire state with a mass count in a short period of time.

More game, of course, is seen early in the morning or in the evening, but as long as the counts are made during the same time of day for each survey, the results can be compared from year to year.

Winter Survey

More game is reported for this count than any other. Cover is at a minimum, snow usually covers the ground and the birds are concentrated. Results of this survey are used to aid in determining rabbit and quail population densities. For pheasant, it is a sex ratio study. Carriers report hens and cocks separately so that the post season ratio of hens to cocks can be determined. Last winter, this ratio was 2.6 hens per cock.

Spring Count

The spring survey is a population study to obtain an index of breeding populations. The carriers also give the length of their routes in miles so that records are kept on game seen per 100 miles. Distribution can also be checked by comparing results from the various districts of the State. The following table lists the results of the spring count since 1948.

Rural Mail Carriers' Game Count

Year	Game Seen per 100 Miles		
	Pheasants	Quail	Cottontails
1948	10.0	1.5	1.2
1949	10.1	0.7	0.8
1950	12.4	0.6	0.6
1951	14.3	0.5	1.4
1952	12.7	0.4	1.4

Summer Count

Reproduction success of our game birds changes from year to year. The summer count is used primarily to measure the productivity of quail and pheasants. The ratio of young birds to adult hens is used as an index of the reproduction success. For example—carriers reported 727 pheasant hens with broods in 1951, plus 1,156 hens

without broods. The total number of chicks reported was 4,316 which gives a ratio of 2.3 young per hen. Results for pheasant reproduction are shown in the following table. The reports for this year are not complete at this time.

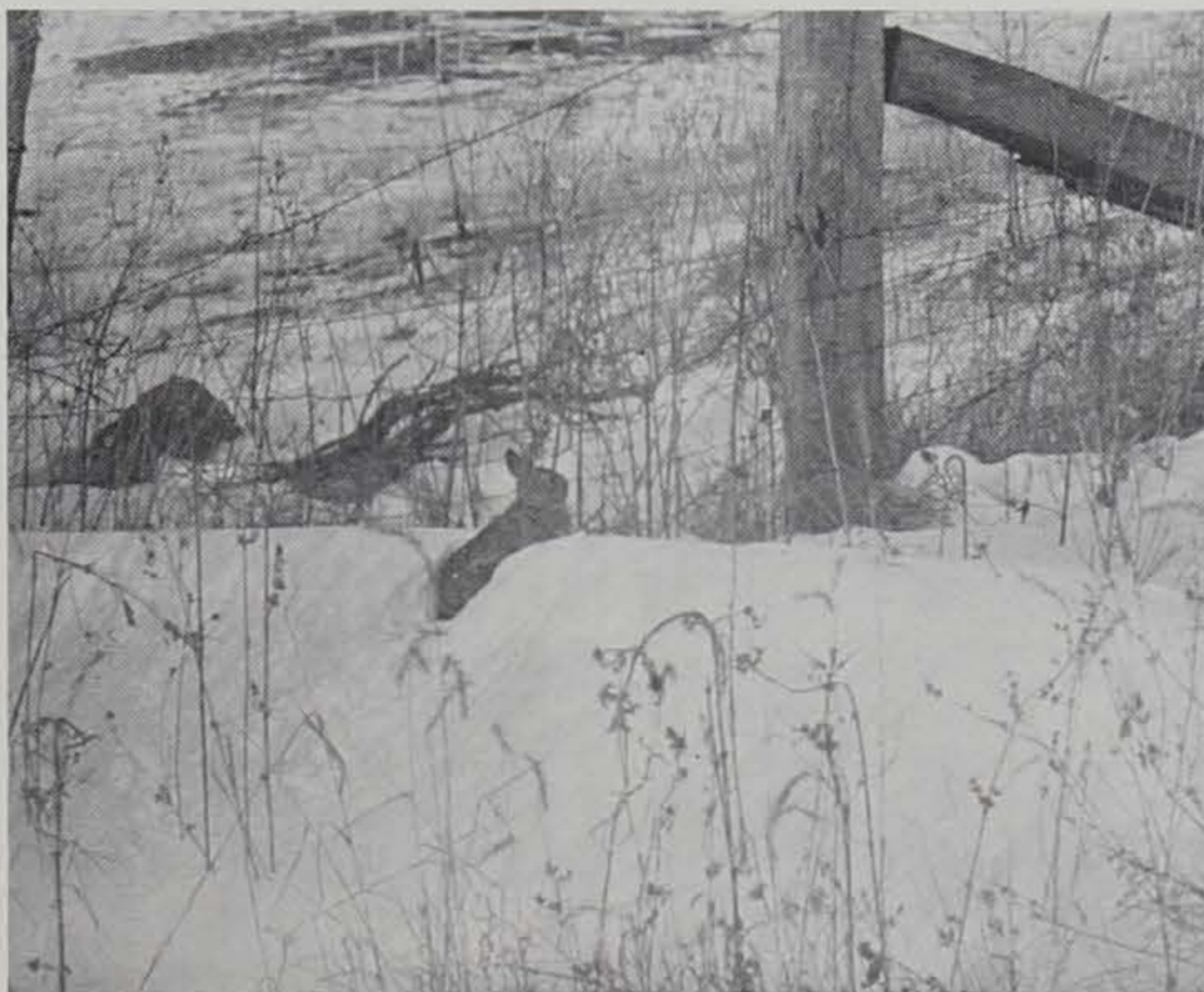
Pheasant Reproduction Success

Year	Rural Mail Carrier	Summer Count	Young per hen
1948	2.7
1949	2.9
1950	3.4
1951	2.3

Fall Count

The rural mail carriers' fall survey is another population study to determine pre-season densities. It is usually taken about the first of October. The fall count concludes the survey work of carriers for another year. Reports of these counts along with results of surveys taken by Conservation Officers are grouped and summarized for the information of the Conservation Commission.

The carriers have done their job



Jim Sherman Photo.

More game is reported in the rural mail carrier counts during the winter survey than at any other period. Cover is low, snow usually covers the ground and wildlife is easily seen.

Wardens Tales

Shop Talk from the Field

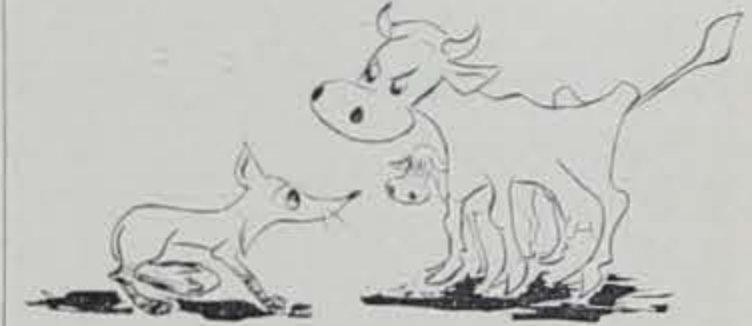
Conservation Officer Wes Ashby, in charge of Dubuque County, writes: "I made a conservation talk at a school party in my territory. After the speech, motion pictures were shown. The projector operator did not show up and after the usual trials and tribulations, including an electrical failure and a take-up reel too small, I qualified as the operator. Then a pie auction was held to raise funds for a school project. The auctioneer, like the projector operator, failed to show and I was pressed into service. Surprisingly, to me at least, the auction was a success and now you can add auctioneering to the six-page list of conservation officers' duties.



Paul Leaverton, Superintendent of Game, tells a tale that occurred while he was a conservation officer. He had arrested a man for spearing fish illegally. The prisoner asked the privilege of going by his home to inform "the old lady" of his predicament. "As the car stopped in front of the house on the way to court, the violator called out to his wife in the yard,

well—an extensive survey such as this adds a bit more information each year. The value of game inventories increases with the completion of each survey. You can be sure that their continued interest and cooperation are greatly appreciated by Conservation Officials.

"I don't know when I'll be home. The game warden's got me."—to which came the immediate reply, "That's all right, we will get along very nicely without you."



Conservation Officer Louis Lemke, in charge of Dallas and Madison Counties, writes: "Last spring I was in Appanoose County on special duck patrol. I was walking through the timber and came to a creek. As I stood there debating where I would cross, I heard a movement on the other side and saw a new-born calf with its mother. At almost the same moment I saw a fox walking toward the calf. I crouched down behind a tree and kept still. When the fox was within about ten feet of the new-born calf, the cow lowered her head and charged the fox, which scrambled out of the way. In a few seconds, the still curious fox came toward the calf again from the opposite direction. Again the cow charged. The fox, his curiosity apparently satisfied, walked over to a dead tree and caught a field mouse. When I stood up the fox saw me and beat it.

PERSISTENT ENGINEERS

I won't vouch for the authenticity of every detail in the following item, but I believe that it is accurate in general and it does make a good story.

It seems that Frank Kelhower, who farms the Wm. Brunskill farm near Horseshoe lake just southwest of Hawarden, has been having beaver trouble.

The beavers have been building a dam which causes a backlog of water which prohibits Frank from moving his cows here and there.

Now, as I get it, Frank and Bill weren't too unhappy at first. They kept knocking the dam out, but the beavers were persistent. Every morning the dam was back in place and the cows were always on the wrong side of the water.

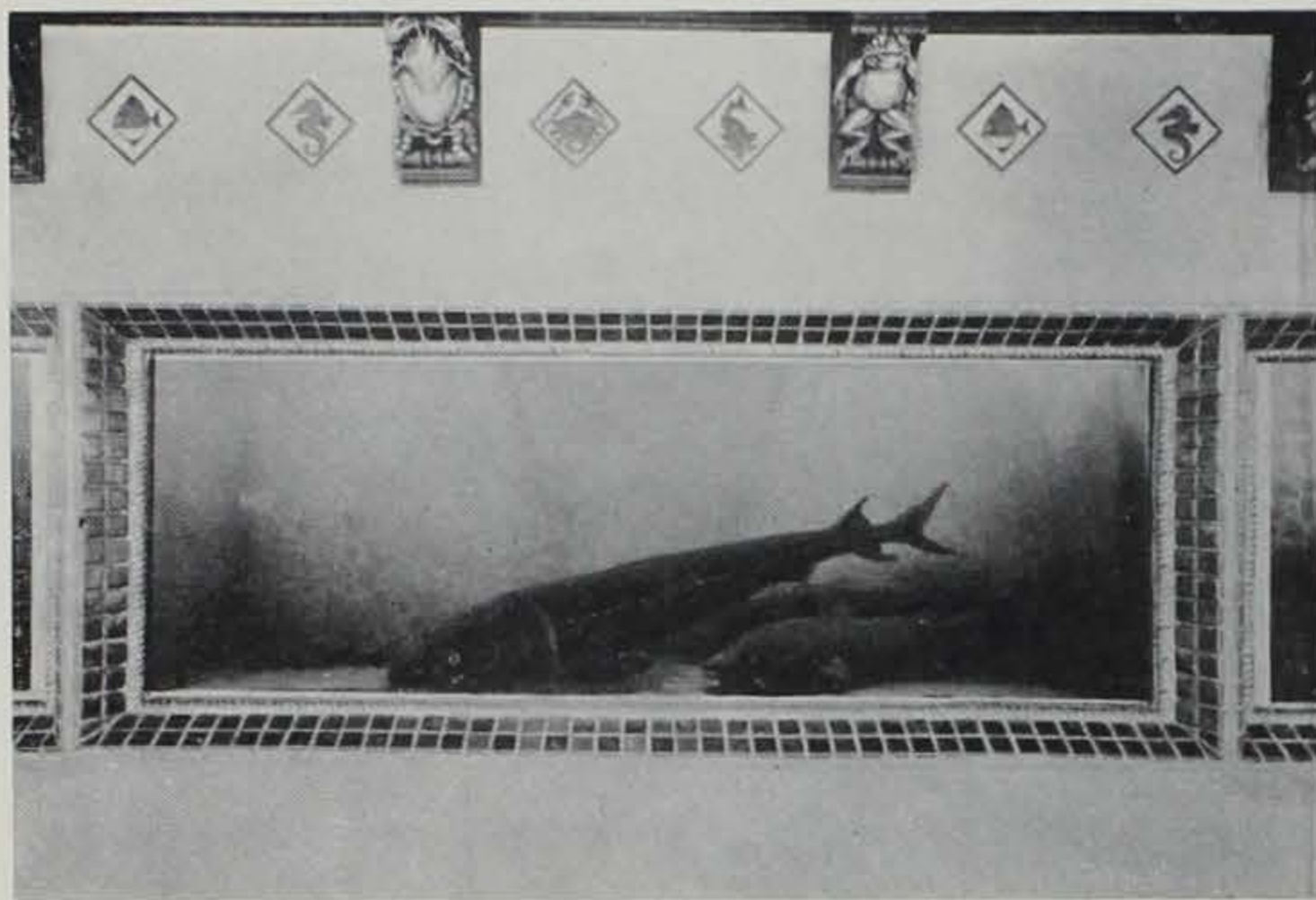
Frank and Bill tried dynamite. They could always get the water to run free, but the dam would always be back in place the next morning.

Finally the men sat up nearly all night to watch the beavers. Nothing happened, so they went home as twilight began to erase the darkness. Next morning—yep, the dam was there again.

The next night Bill thought he had the answer. He put up a scarecrow.

Next morning—yep, the beavers had used the scarecrow to help rebuild the dam.—By R. T. G., Hawarden Independent.

A hibernating ground hog may be placed under water for an hour or more without drowning.



Fifty-year-old Oscar stares back in sullen silence at some four hundred thousand state fair visitors each year from his number one aquarium tank.

Old Oscar . . .

(Continued from page 57)

prehistoric ancestors. Primitive in character, the sturgeon is easily distinguished from our other fishes by rows of armor-like bony plates or scales. The young of the rock sturgeon are buff colored, often contrastingly blotched with dark grey. Most adults grow darker with age and become a deep slate grey or jet black.

Sturgeon are bottom feeders and eat worms, insect larva, aquatic plants, algae, snails and other mollusks from the soft bottom ooze. Fish are also occasionally taken, but comprise a smaller part of their diet.

Sturgeon of this region have been known to attain a weight of over 250 pounds, but these fish are miniatures compared to their Russian cousins that have been known to exceed one ton.

Of the three Iowa sturgeon, the rock shovelnose and pallid, the rock sturgeon is by far the largest family member. A first cousin of our sturgeon was formerly abundant in coastal waters and even today specimens are occasionally taken weighing considerably over 500

pounds.

Fifty years ago sturgeon were plentiful in the Mississippi River. At first commercial fishermen returned them to the water or destroyed them. Later they became an important food fish and both the flesh and roe or eggs were sold in large quantities. Over exploitation, changes of environment and many other factors led to the decline in their numbers.

Today rock sturgeon have all but disappeared from the upper Mississippi River and only occasional specimens are caught in the fishermen's nets. There is a continuous closed season on rock sturgeon in Iowa waters, but even these restrictive measures have failed to bring them back.

Take a good look at old Oscar, folks, he is getting old and his kind are slowly vanishing from our State. Without some unforeseen change, it is probable these fish will vanish like the buffalo and passenger pigeon.

Fish for fun and relaxation. You can buy meat at the butcher shop, but you can't buy your recreation there. E.R.



Lowered into the aquarium in a fish net stretcher, Old Oscar often shows his indignation by thrashing about wildly.

LOSE 30,000 SMALL LAKES PER YEAR

Encouraged by the federal government, hundreds of middle western farmers have built farm ponds in recent years. The number of such ponds and small inland lakes is far larger than at any time in history, and no one can drive through the big farming regions and not be impressed with the additions to the area of open water. These are largely promoted as part of the soil conservation program.

But, the Izaak Walton League of America is blaming these or other government bureaus that are draining away surface water in other parts of the country to the serious detriment of the nation's wild duck population.

An average of more than 30,000 small lakes or potholes are being drained annually by farmers who are being paid subsidies by the production marketing administration and the soil conservation service to bring more land under cultivation. Most of this drainage program is centered in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

The league's protest against this program is based on the fact that

hundreds of wild ducks find nesting places around these lakes or swamp areas. Another organization, Ducks Unlimited, which often does not see eye-to-eye with the Izaak Walton people, is joining wholeheartedly in this fight.

This development is of great interest to wild bird hunters of this area, along the Mississippi and Missouri flyways which migrating wild waterfowl use during the fall season. If it comes to a choice between preserving nesting places for wild ducks and geese and increasing farm production, the wild waterfowl interests may not be able to make their point. Their best argument is that little of the reclaimed land is of high value for agricultural purposes and might just as well be left in the state which naturally exists. Few wild birds will nest around the small, exposed farm ponds being built farther south. There is likely to be some fur flying when government officials and those of the natural resources council get together in Washington to thresh out this problem, as is proposed shortly.—*Sioux City Journal.*



The number of farm ponds and small inland lakes is by far larger than at any time in history. These have been largely promoted as part of the soil conservation program.

PISCATORIAL LONGBOW

The following might be a warning to fishermen who are inclined to pull the long bow. Seems that a local gent and his wife were out fishing last winter on a western trout stream. That evening the gent wrote a friend here in Marshalltown that he had been out that day and caught 10 beautiful trout. Without his knowledge his wife had also sent a card to his friend's wife . . . the same day . . . advising that "Bill just came in from fishing all day and didn't catch a thing." Oho! It can happen here! —By John Garwood, *Marshalltown Times-Republican.*

There is good scientific evidence that fish are relatively near-sighted but are capable of distinguishing color. B.C.

THIRD GENERATION OF BISON AT NORA SPRINGS

A "third generation" of bison is putting in an appearance out at Sherman's buffalo range east of Nora Springs this week. As of Tuesday noon, three buffalo calves were reported. There were originally 10 in the herd; and eight of the nine cows produced calves last year. F. L. Sherman sold one calf, and still has the seven yearlings on pasture. With the three new calves, there are now 20 head on the Sherman range—with additions to that number expected momentarily.—*Nora Springs Advertiser.*

A lake may have a high population of adult game fish, but if food is too abundant fishing is often very poor. E.R.