

# IOWA CONSERVATIONIST



ST TRAVELLING LIBRARY  
ST HISTORICAL BLDG  
DES MOINES 19 IA

Volume 15 JUNE, 1956 Number 6

## BANDING MOURNING DOVES IN IOWA

### IOWA'S EVERGLADES: THE GREEN ISLAND BOTTOMS

By John Madson  
Education Assistant

the big bulge of eastern Iowa, where the Maquoketa River feeds the Mississippi about 30 miles north of Clinton, lies one of the wildest areas in the state. This is a 2,000-acre tangle of sloughs, timbered islands and lowlands called the Green Island Bottoms. As a public hunting and fishing area, it has few Iowa equals. This area, formerly under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers, was recently turned over to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in a transfer that included many other migratory waterfowl areas. In return, the Service sublicensed many of these riverlands to the respective states, granting them express permission to manage and control the areas for 25 years. Under this program, Iowa received Lake Odessa near Muscatine and the Green Island Bottoms north of Clinton.

#### Better Than Ever

long famed as a hunting and fishing grounds, the Green Island Bottoms are typical of backwaters that have been bettered by the channel dams and 9-foot channel cuts of the Mississippi. In the old days, such backwaters were at the mercy of a fluctuating water level and in times of low water many of the backwater lakes were more than shallow, weedy ponds. With controlled river levels, shallow margins, a distinct outlet to many fish and game species. Today the Green Island Bottoms are being strengthened and improved by dredging fill from the adjacent Mississippi. A new outlet control structure has been completed, and will permit manipulation of water levels in the levee. During periods



Conservation Officer Wayne Sanders of Sioux City checks a dove nest with a "snooper"—a mirror mounted on a pole to save climbing and time. Like all other Iowa officers, Sandy is helping in the new Iowa dove-banding program.

By Dr. Harold S. Peters  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Mourning Dove is a common nesting bird in Iowa, found in towns and rural areas alike. It nests several times from April to September and has, on the average, about three successful broods from five or six nesting attempts. The life history of the dove was studied intensively from 1938 to 1940 in Cass County by H. E. McClure while a student at Iowa State College. He estimated the breeding population of this County to be 73,000 and computed the production at approximately 228,000.

#### New Project

Last year, Iowa State College began a project to determine the present status of doves in the same county. A considerable number of dove nestlings were banded by McClure and additional ones are being banded under the present study. Aside from these efforts, relatively few doves have been banded in Iowa—only a total of 1,832 at the end of 1955. Forty of these have been recovered, or about 2.2 per cent. Half of the recoveries were in Texas and seven were in Mexico. Others were: one in Louisiana, three in Oklahoma, three in Nebraska, and six in Iowa, indicating a southward movement from Iowa. None crossed the Mississippi. On the other hand, three birds have been taken in Iowa that were banded in other states; one each from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Nebraska. No doves have been recovered in Iowa from any areas to the north.

#### Hunted in 29 States

In all of North America, approximately 145,000 Mourning Doves have been banded since 1920, and 3.7 per cent have been recovered. Three per cent of the banded birds have been reported as taken by hunters. Since an unknown percentage of bands is never reported, the kill by hunters may be several times this recorded 3 per cent.

Last season the dove was considered a game species in 29 states, but there is no open season in Iowa. Classed as a migratory game bird by international treaty,

### Canoeing the Volga River—Osborne to Garber

By Ralph Church  
and  
Harold Allen

If you like canoeing on the tough side, and enjoy pattering along a small out-of-the-way stream, try the Volga. Yours will be one of the few canoes to travel the river since Indian days.

The Volga is a little river. It is a tributary of the Turkey, rising in Fayette County and joining the larger stream at Elkport in Clayton County. It flows through a deep narrow valley, bounded by high rolling hills and precipitous rock cliffs. The hills are heavily wooded, with cedar and hard woods

(Continued on page 47)

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued on page 45)

**Iowa Conservationist**

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

LEO A. HOEGH, Governor of Iowa  
BRUCE STILES, Director  
JOHN MADSON, Editor  
EVELYN BOUCHER, Associate Editor

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**  
GEORGE M. FOSTER, Chairman...Ottumwa  
JOE STANTON, Vice Chairman...Des Moines  
MRS. JOHN CRABB.....Jamaica  
GEORGE V. JECK.....Spirit Lake  
FLOYD S. PEARSON.....Decorah  
J. D. REYNOLDS.....Creston  
E. G. TROST.....Fort Dodge

**CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE**.....52,500  
Subscription rate.....40c per year  
**Three Years \$1.00**

Entered as second class matter at the post office in Des Moines, Iowa, September 22, 1947, under the Act of March 24, 1912.

Subscription received at Conservation Commission, East Seventh and Court Avenue, Des Moines 9, Iowa. Send cash, check or money order.

**PREPARATION CANYON STATE FOREST RESERVE**

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

When the term canyon is used to describe a valley one ordinarily thinks of something tremendous in size such as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River in Arizona; but there are small canyons as well as large ones. Again, even with the smaller ones most people familiar with the term would picture a valley with rock walls. Most of the canyons of the western states have steep, rocky sides and are narrow. They are deep for their width.

The canyon of Preparation Canyon State Forest Reserve lacks any showing of rock, but it is very deep in relation to its width, and it is exceedingly steep-sided for a valley cut in mantle alone. Anyone who has walked down its length will agree that it is an unusual valley and that it may be worthy of the name of canyon. The reserve area as a whole is one of sharp ridges and deep ravines.

There are no rock walls, and there are no stones to be found in all the park except the pieces of pink quartzite at the pump, and the glacial stones that make up the fireplace. These have been brought in from outside. The quartzite forms the bedrock in the vicinity of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

**Wind-Made**

The canyon and tributary ravines, all of the valleys big and little of this section of Iowa, have been carved by running water in loess, the wind-blown silt. Pick up a little dry loess, crumble it in the palm of your hand, and blow on it gently. Away it goes, so one can understand how easy it would be for strong winds to carry it along. Also, try a little on your teeth. You will find that it is gritty, unlike clay, although there are particles of clay size mixed in with the silt.

Most of the silt particles in un-



A deep slash in the loess hills of western Iowa, Preparation Canyon was a gathering point for early Mormon pioneers. The argonauts spent a winter in the canyon's shelter, preparing for the long trek across the great plains.

weathered loess are one of two minerals, quartz and feldspar. Quartz is the principal mineral of sand deposits. There is plenty of quartz in the world, in granite, quartzite, and other rocks. It is very resistant to chemical change or weathering and so it lasts. But it becomes finer and finer with the wear it receives under the action of wind and running water. So it is not surprising that much of it is finally reduced to silt size.

Feldspar is the other abundant mineral of the silt particles of loess. Unlike quartz there is little of it in most sand. This is because it does not endure like quartz but changes chemically to clay. Why, then, should there be so much of it in the loess of western Iowa, where the Reserve is located?

**Glaciers and Dust**

The answer is found in the story of the origin of the loess. Most of the loess of western Iowa is believed to have been blown from the floodplain of the Missouri River during glacial times. The glaciers released great floods of water in the melting season. The bottomland was covered from bluff to bluff. With the coming of colder weather the melting ceased and floods subsided, leaving the valley floor covered with the melt-water deposit. This contained unweathered particles, including those of the mineral feldspar, which the glacier had ground off the granite bedrock of country to the north. Vegetation was scanty or lacking

and as soon as the material dried out the wind got to work on it. The silt and clay were picked up and carried for miles. Some of it was carried even hundred of miles, but much of it was dropped near the source. The loess is thickest nearer the Missouri River Valley.

With distance from the bluffs the loess becomes finer. It contains more clay and less silt. This is as might be expected since the heavier and larger particles would be dropped first. It is worth recognizing that dust may be transported great distance by the wind. In the dust-bowl days of the thirties the sky was obscured at New York City by the dust in the air.

**Not Vertical**

The canyon is mostly the result of the work of running water, as are all valleys, everywhere. The sides are steep and there are many tributary ravines or gulleys, the sides of which are also steep. Not only are they exceedingly steep, but they are also uneven and rough in slope. This is because loess is subject to landslide and erosion by the runoff. Ordinarily, loess tends to maintain a vertical face, as may be noticed along roads in the vicinity of the Reserve. This is related to the fact that it is loosely piled and is porous. In a forested area such as that of the Reserve, the trees have held the loess somewhat and yet have tended to move down slope with it.

Many of the tree trunks are

curved near the base. When small they were tilted because of slow soil movement, while all the while they were struggling to grow erect. Thus the trunks became curved in the lower part.

The Reserve, about 200 acres in extent, is in an area of loess hills, 10 miles or so southeast of Soldier and 3 miles from Moorhead, in southern Monona County. From the picnic area there is a fine view of the Soldier River valley to the east. If we could be suspended in a helicopter above the canyon we would discover that the bluff line of the Missouri is only 3 miles to the west. From such vantage point we could also see the maze of ridges and valleys in this section of Iowa. We would be more than ever impressed with the work of running water in dissecting the country underlain with this easily-eroded wind-deposited material, the loess.

Except for the Florida manatee all mammals have seven vertebra in the neck. This means that the long-necked giraffe and the mighty whales of the ocean have no more vertebra in their necks than do the little mice or tiny shrew. — H.H.

**SEEN YOUR DENTIST LATELY?**

Always eager to promote the concepts of better health, the CONSERVATIONIST offers this picture as a warning to any dentist-shy readers.

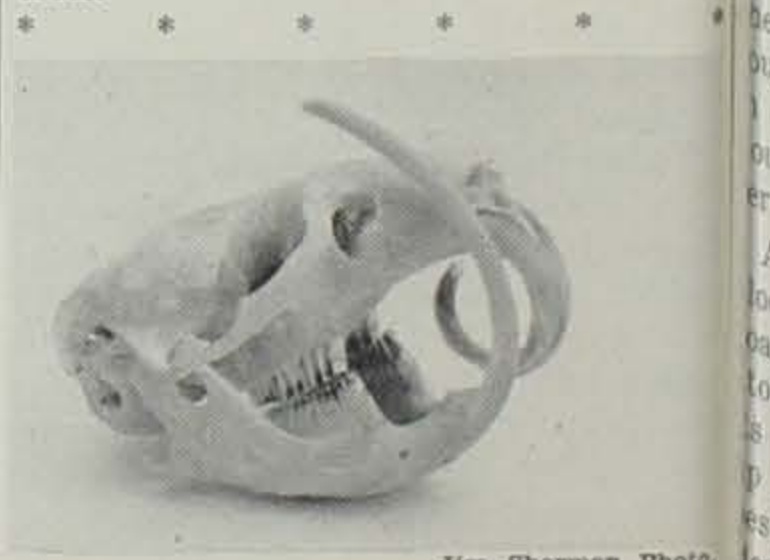
This muskrat was recently found dead near a northern Iowa marsh, and it's not hard to see why.

Uncontrolled growth of its lower and upper teeth probably caused it to die of starvation.

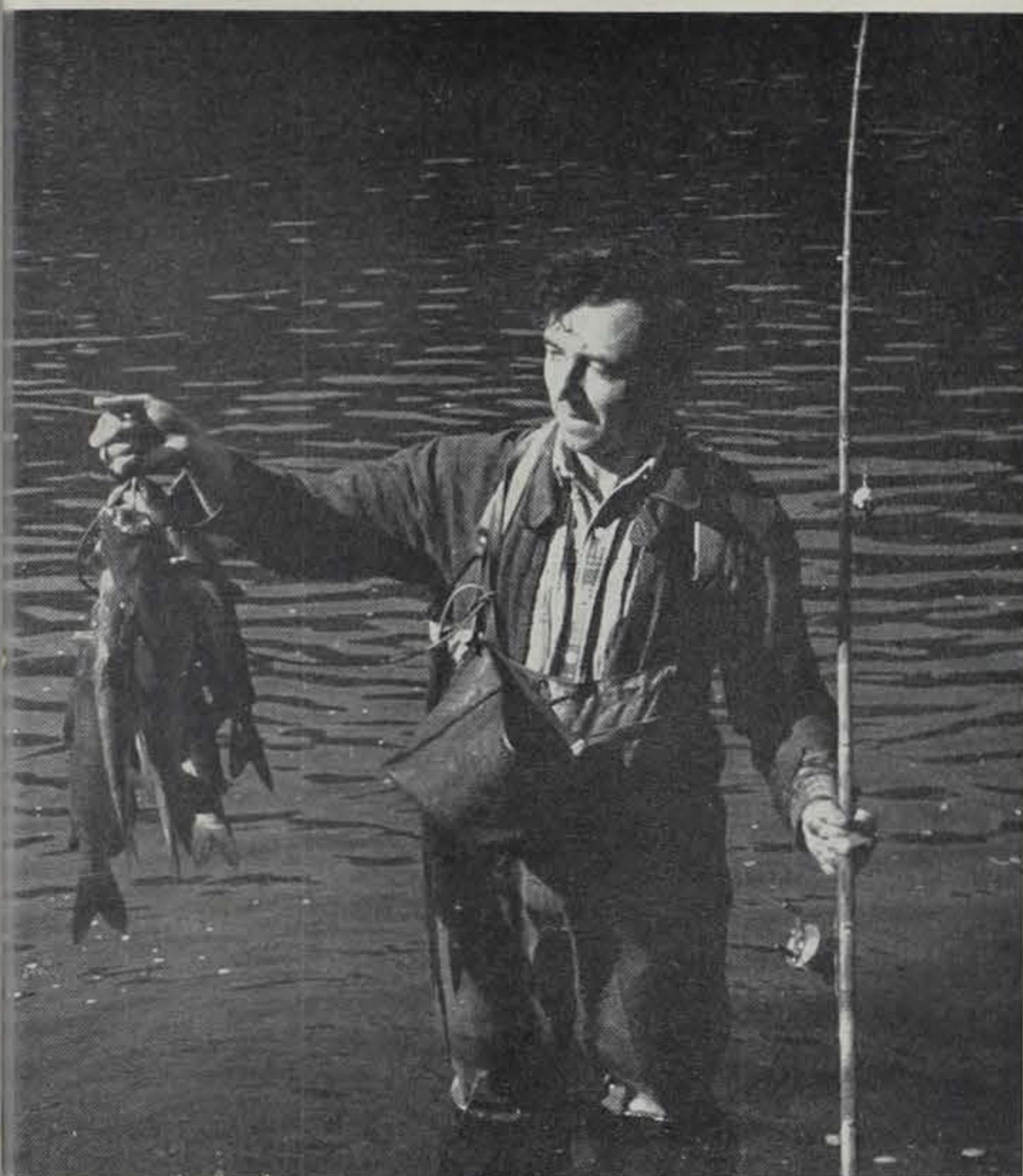
Many animals—such as muskrats, beaver, rabbits and all rodents—possess upper and lower incisors that never stop growing. In a normal animal, this perpetual growth is checked by a grinding action of the upper and lower teeth which serve to wear each other down.

Injury that results in a missing tooth can upset everything, and the opposite tooth may grow beyond control, sometimes even penetrating the brain.

Diet may also help check this tooth growth, and captive rodents fed on a liquid diet and kept in a cage where gnawing is not possible may have difficulty in controlling their fast-growing dentition.



Jim Sherman Photo.



One of Iowa's best blood fishermen is Gus Merton of Charles City. Drifting blood baits in the Cedar River with a long, stiff river rod, Gus has prime catfishing during mid-summer.

is carefully placed on the barbs of the hook. Then a 12-inch piece of grocer's string is lightly wrapped around the blood with a half-dozen loops, being careful not to cut through the blood but simply forming a string "basket" around it to secure it to the hook. The terminal tackle is then carefully placed in the water where the current can take hold. Often it is necessary to strip the first 30 or 40 feet of line from the reel by hand until the drag of the current is sufficient to make the reel free-running.

It is necessary to concentrate intensely on the bobber, and when the bobber disappears or moves abruptly sideways, lean back on the stiff-action rod, taking the slack out of the line and setting the hook. Many of the very large catfish taken by this method are caught from 50 to 100 yards below the angler. It will probably be necessary to rebait each time after retrieving the hook at the end of a "drift", since much of the bait will be lost on the retrieve and act as "chum."

If two or three drifts through a catfish hole are not successful, fishing in that water is usually ended and it is wise to move downstream to a new site.

Preparing blood bait—and fishing it—does require some effort. But if you try it once and hit some feeding catfish, you'll see that it is more than worthwhile.—J.R.H.

And the fish kingdom has not escaped. Most notable are certain fish discriminated against when it comes to edibility. "Ain't-fit-to-eat" apostles, when asked if they have ever tried a particular fish, usually say, "Why, no. But everybody says . . ."

Although there was nothing sensational about it (similar experiments have been done before), a quiet little experiment conducted by a fisheries biologist (Clay Wilson, of Chickasaw, Oklahoma) supports our appeal. At a fish fry for the forty members of his naval reserve unit, Wilson served eight kinds of fish, including crappies, white bass, black bass, channel catfish, flathead catfish, river carp-suckers, carp, and fresh-water drum. Each guest was served one portion of drum plus two other, and different, portions of fish, all three unidentified. After the meal, when the cigars were being passed out, Wilson surveyed the group, asking which serving of fish tasted the best. Even though the group had been exposed to eight different fish, 95 per cent picked the drum as the tastiest—even though this fish is generally regarded as a rough fish, flavorless and soft-fleshed.

In a previous experiment, Wilson had fed channel catfish and garfish to a group. The catfish, taken from a clear, swift-moving stream, took second place to the gar, a fish the majority of us would not consider eating.

While we are not suggesting that everyone will like fillets of garfish, carp, and other rough fish, we would suggest that the eating of such fish be faced with an open mind, untainted by the stigmas of time and convention. What a boon to rough fish control if gar, bowfin, and drum were sought for their eating qualities! Basically, there is no physiological reason why such fish should not be edible. For example, carp are primarily vegetarians, bowfins are predators, and drums subsist on small fish, snails, and worms. As compared to the classic example of the food habits of the popular favorite, the chicken, these fish are gourmets.

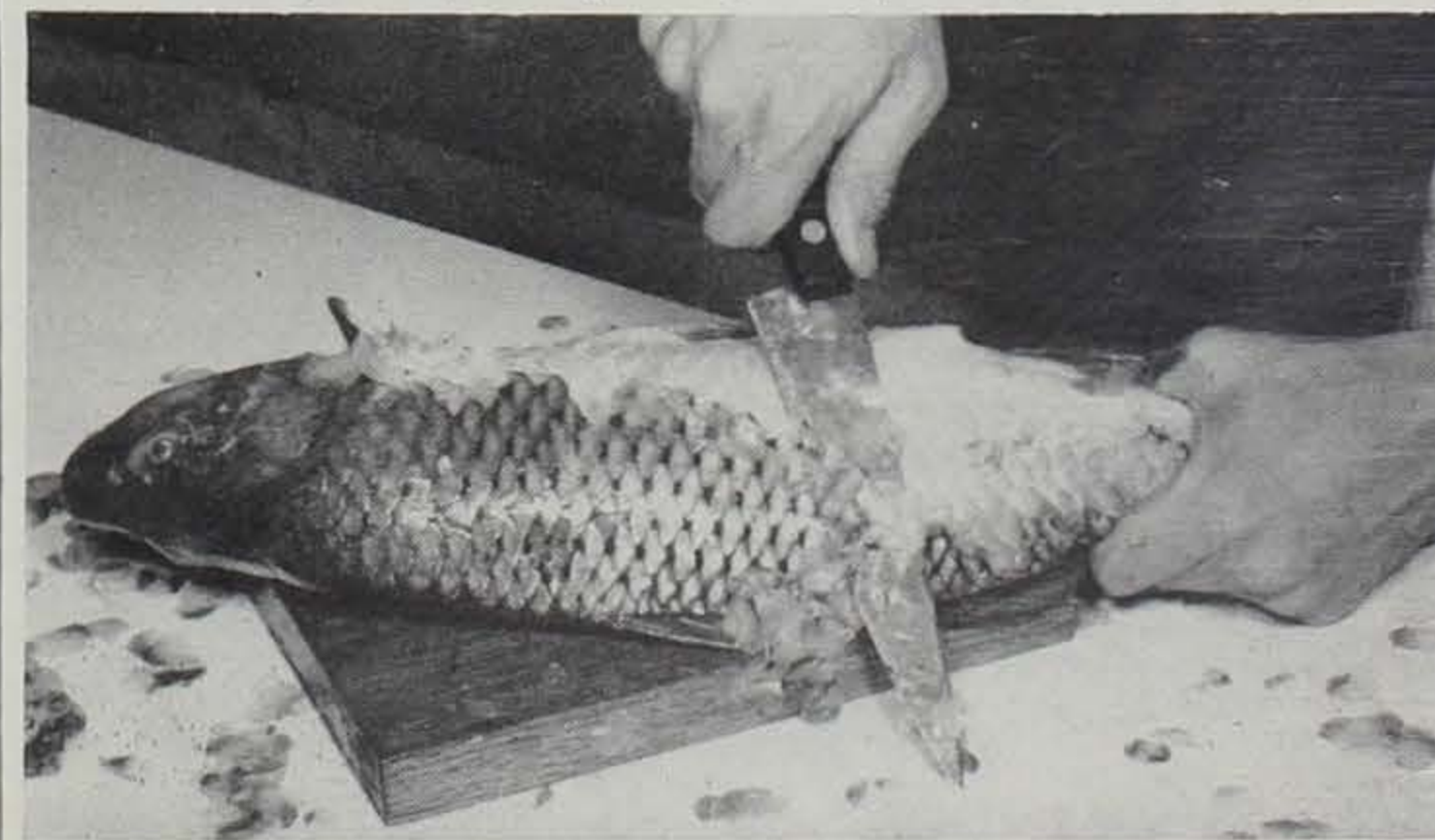
A northern pike is judged about  
(Continued on page 47)

### ROUGH FISH REMEDY?

(An Editorial reprinted from *The Fisherman Magazine*,

If you can't beat them, join them. Maybe we could twist the words a little and come out with an idea for rough fish control. Something like "if you can't beat them, eat them".

Through the years, fish and fowl, man and beast, have been stamped with stigmas that persist for no logical reason whatsoever. Consider the toads that "cause warts," the coachwhip snake that can "whip a man to death," and the "blood-sucking" tendencies of the common bat, to name only a few of the more popular but unfounded beliefs.



Maligned, cussed, and discussed, the carp remains a fine food and game fish in spite of what you think about his private life.

## PREPARATION AND USE OF BLOOD BAIT

The real secret of catfishing with untreated blood is in the preparation of the bait. Many Iowa anglers obtain chicken blood directly from poultrymen, preferring this blood to that of other types of poultry.

In a large poultry house that cans and dresses many chickens, the birds are usually bled on a cement bleeding floor. The blood coagulates rapidly. If it is to be used as bait, it should be allowed to "build up" on the cement floor until it is from one-fourth to one-half inch deep, and then scraped off one side and allowed to cool. It is then placed in a 5-gallon bucket where coagulation continues, and may remain in this pail at a fairly cool temperature for two or three hours.

### Drain At Home

After you pick up the bucket of blood from the poultry dealer and take it home, it may be placed in a muslin bag or pillow case and hung over the basement drain. The watery material in the blood drains through the muslin and the blood further coagulates and thickens. It may be left hanging in a cool basement for 6 or 8 hours, and no salt or other preservative is necessary.

After the watery serum of the blood has drained off, the blood coagulate is placed in a refrigerator, but not frozen. It will keep its toughness under refrigeration to a week, and is at its very best after 48 hours of refrigeration.

### Crushed Ice

For fishing, the blood may be packed in wide-mouthed peanut butter jars which are packed in crushed ice for use on the river. Double containers may be used to keep the ice away from the blood and prevent dilution.

In warm weather, the unrefrigerated blood will become soft and will not stay on the hook after about a half-hour of fishing. The angler should then replace it with a jar of the ice-cooled blood. With the above method, the blood never really becomes tough, but has the consistency of gelatine and must always be fished very gently.

Blood fishing for catfish in Iowa is at its best from about the first of July—after the water is really warm—through August and sometimes into mid-September.

The idea is to keep the blood moving at the speed of the current about a foot off the bottom. It is best to fish exactly in the center of the current, where a catfish will smash a bait just as a bass might.

A treble hook of fairly large size is generally used, as well as a bobber that can be seen downstream as far as 200 yards. Favorite tackle is 12-pound test line with a 8½ or 9½ foot rod with considerable backbone and stiffness.

Many anglers wade into the river with a bucket of blood bait hanging from their necks, often wading into chest-deep water.

### Wrap In "Basket"

A chunk of the coagulated blood

## FREED APPOINTED ADMINISTRATION CHIEF

H. W. Freed, 48, a Des Moines architectural engineer, has been promoted to Chief of the Division of Administration by the State Conservation Commission to succeed the late K. M. Krezek.

Freed's new duties will include supervision of engineering construction, land survey and acquisition, public relations, accounts and records, and personnel.

He was employed by the National Park Service from 1933 to 1942 and was CCC Camp Superintendent during the construction of Lake Wapello and Geode State Park. He was also employed in the Engineering Division of the Burlington Ordnance Plant.

Freed was hired by the Conservation Commission in 1945 as Landscape Architect and promoted to Supervisor of Engineering Design in 1948. He resigned that year to enter private business and was re-employed as Engineering



Jim Sherman Photo.  
Freed Appointed Administration Chief.

Inspector in 1955 and promoted to Architect last February.

The new chief is married and has one son, Gary, 15, and is active in the Tall Corn Council of the Boy Scouts. An enthusiastic canoeist and fisherman, Freed also conducts canoe trips for scouts on various Iowa rivers and Canadian waters.

## BOMBING MARSHES WITH RICE

A new wrinkle in Iowa waterfowl management will be tried this spring by the State Conservation Commission.

Limited amounts of a new variety of domestic rice have been planted on two Iowa marsh areas by Commission game workers as an experiment in attracting and holding waterfowl.

The rice is of a new variety which matures in 90 days, growing up through as much as 8 inches of

murky water and producing heavy yields. It is said to grow well when seeded directly on wet ground. Experimental plantings have been made on Dunbar Slough near Jefferson and Dan Greene Slough near Ruthven.

The rice was sown from airplane, and according to game officials this spring may be an ideal time for such planting since most marsh areas are low and have broad mud flats exposed.

Rice—domestic or wild—is highly attractive to waterfowl because of its great food value and the fact that it is easily accessible to ducks and geese in wet areas.



Bombing Marshes With Rice.

Jim Sherman Photo.

## Wardens' Tales

One of those strange quirks that sometimes occur in fishing was reported in late May by Frank Heidelbauer, special officer and pilot.

At Spirit Lake, Frank saw Mr. L. E. Davis, RR 1, Spirit Lake, hook a fish while plug-casting from the shore. As Davis reeled in his catch, he noticed an unusual amount of activity on the end of the line.

Bringing the fish into shallow water, he saw that the plug had been struck by two bass, an occurrence that isn't too unusual. But in this case, one of the bass was a smallmouth, and the other a large-mouth.

And wouldn't you know it—the seasons hadn't opened yet.

Conservation officer Dick Jacobson of Monona and Crawford counties has come up with another of his famous hunting theories—this time about mushroom hunting.

"Mushrooms are growing cautious with all this hunting pressure," he believes, "and can never be found by tramping noisily through the woods and peering at the ground."

"The thing to do is just amble along in a disinterested way, looking at songbirds and whistling quietly to yourself. The mushrooms won't think you're hunting them, and won't hide."

"As you walk through the woods looking up into the trees, you sud-

denly turn in your tracks and pounce! Nine times out of ten you'll catch a wild mushroom."

Going along the subject of unusual catches, Director Bruce Stiles of the Conservation Commission cites a case he once witnessed on the dock at Gull Point State Park on West Okoboji.

An angler had hooked a bass on a plug but the fish had broken the line. However, it did not leave the area but continued to thrash about on the surface and the fisherman dipped it up in his net.

He found that in its struggles to throw the plug from its mouth, the bass had snagged its tail on the same lure, hooking itself fore and aft and securely "hogtying" itself.

In a recent letter, conservation officer Clair Rausch of Linn County stated: "I'm sending this in because it's a mighty little man who can't laugh at himself. Besides, you probably already know about this little episode—"

Clair often leaves his boat chained and locked to a tree on the banks of the Cedar River, where it is handy and can be used at a moment's notice.

Well—almost at a moment's notice, anyway.

Clair recently purchased a new

padlock for his boat chain, but before he ever had a chance to unlock it, he lost both keys in the Cedar River.

After some embarrassing correspondence between the central office and the cautious manufacturer, Clair finally obtained duplicate keys and got the boat back into service.

But Clair's right. It is a mighty little man who can't laugh at himself.

It's too bad that no names can be told, but a couple of our more famous conservation officers recently decided to do a little crow shooting.

Instead of using an artificial owl or a live bird for a decoy, the officers—in a blinding flash of inspiration—decided to use an embalmed owl.

So they shot a great horned owl and turned it over to an undertaker friend for embalming. It worked pretty well, the crows were hood-winked, and the officers had some good shooting.

Then they received a bill for \$30 from the embalmer, complete with funeral expenses that included items for mourners, flowers, music, inheritance taxes, and the works.

Trouble is, they're still not sure it's a joke.

(Continued on page 47)





Stoupe City Journal-Tribune Photo.  
 Nestling doves are banded while still very young, and are unharmed by their new skeletons. Iowa's dove-banding quota is 3,000, and the banded birds will supply information on migration habits and dove numbers.

**Mourning Doves . . .**

(Continued from page 41)

is hunted under regulations set by the Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the State Game Departments.

**Nests in All States**

The Mourning Dove nests in each of the 48 states, in southern Canada and in Mexico, Cuba and Haiti. In the fall the birds move southward and become concentrated in the southern states, Mexico, Central America and Cuba. A few may winter in the central states, but only occasionally in the northern states.

An annual index to the breeding population is obtained by a census at the peak of the nesting season, between May 20 and June 10. Over 100 biologists, enforcement officers, and other persons count the calling doves over 20-mile routes in all states and under standardized conditions. The results of more than 100 routes are summarized for comparison with similar counts of previous years. Reliable information on production can be secured from random roadside counts taken monthly, beginning in July.

**Doves Increasing**

The dove population has been increasing nationally during each of the past four years. The recent trend to diversified agriculture in the south has benefited the species providing more feeding areas. Feed seeds and waste grain furnish the bulk of the dove's food, and it is considered beneficial to the farmer.

In order to secure more information on the movements of Mourning Doves and to assist in perpetuating the species, the Fish and Wildlife Service is promoting a nationwide program of banding the young nestlings. The goal is to band 150,000 nestlings during the year project. The quota for Iowa is 3,000.

**Ask Aid**

Biologists and conservation officers of the Iowa Conservation Commission, together with students, banders, and other persons are urged to participate in this im-

portant program. The Iowa Ornithologists' Union and local bird clubs might adopt the project, as has the Inland Bird Banding Association. Members of such groups can assist by locating dove nests and reporting them to designated banding personnel. Youth groups such as the Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, FFA, and science classes may be called upon for assistance in finding nests. They will gain valuable knowledge of wildlife and conservation while associating with adults who will band nestlings under federal and state permits.

Information and suggestions concerning the nestling banding program may be secured from field men of the Conservation Commission or the Fish and Wildlife Service. We would like all of you to assist.

**FISHING WITH HELLGRAMMITES**

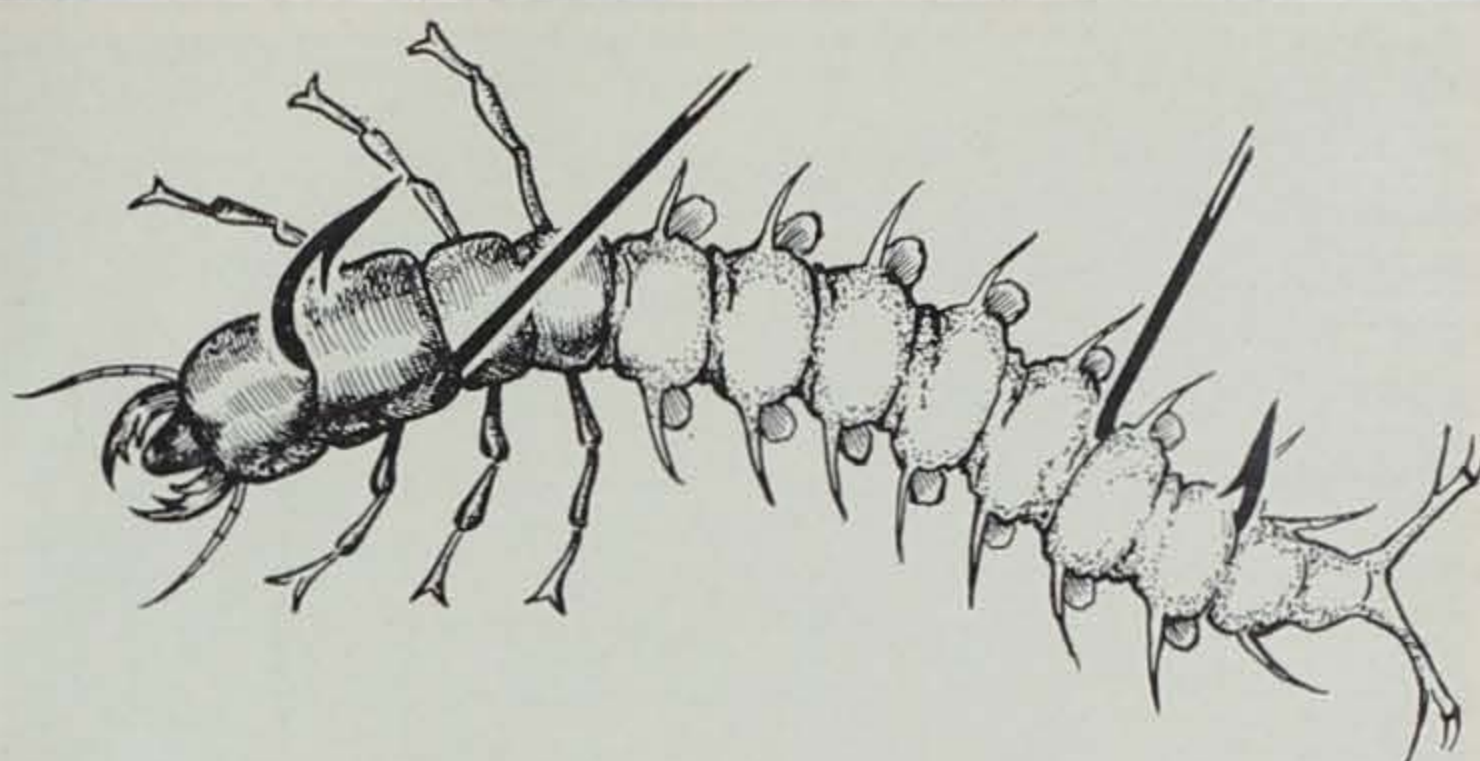
By Joe Mathers

The hellgrammite, the larva of the Dobson fly, which is usually found under rocks in swift rapids and riffles, is best presented to fish as if it had washed loose from these rocks and was being swept downstream.

During this drifting, it continually flashes and contracts the many white, finger-like bunches of gills along the abdomen, which is flip-flapping in a very attractive manner. When it reaches the deep tailwater or eddy, below the riffle, it drops to the bottom and attaches temporarily to a rock, and then crawls back upstream along the quieter edge-water zone to its swift water home.

**Deluxe Bait**

That is the natural, life-like action that the angler should simulate. It will really "pull" strikes. In select areas of streams, particularly in the spring and fall when minnows and other small fish are scarce or beyond forage size and the crayfish are hiding under rocks or in the mud, you



Hooking the hellgrammite under the collar from behind, or through the tail.

have a bait deluxe for smallmouth bass, trout and channel catfish. Hellgrammites will take many walleyes, too.

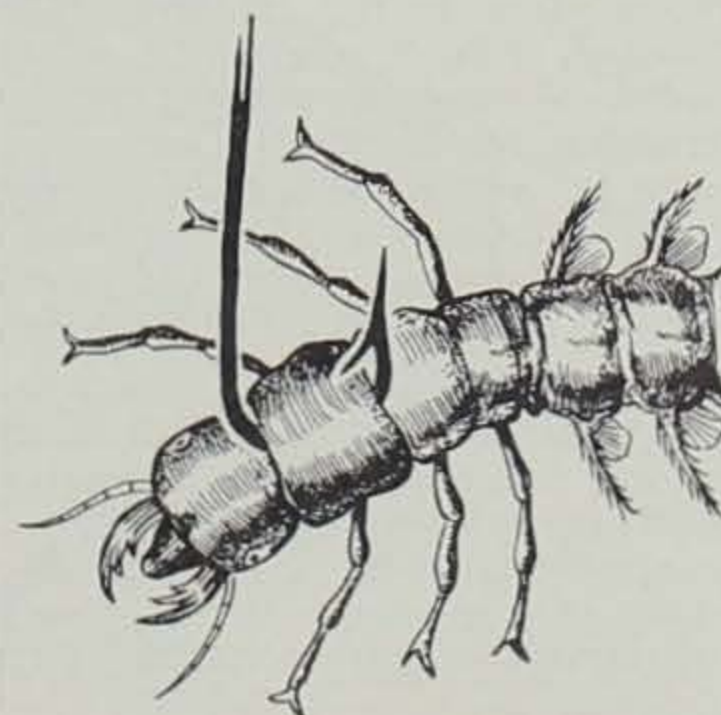
You can best exhibit the action of a hellgrammite on a long (6-8 feet), lightweight leader, but while fishing over rocky or snaggy bottoms the leader strength can be increased to 15-20 pound test so you can pull loose from snags.

A rather small hook should be used, from a number 2 to a 1/0. Push the hook under the hellgrammite's collar, and pinch on a couple of split shot or attach a sliding sinker 18-24 inches from the hook. Clip off the two tails and the first joints of the legs, all of which have grasping hooks or claws. This will keep the bait from clinging to rocks as it bumps along the bottom.

**Riffle Drift**

Upstream fishing usually gives the best results. Stand slightly downstream and cast into swift water where it begins to become smooth and fast and let the bait sink and drift in a long arc, bumping along the bottom to the tail hole or in the eddy where the current slows. That's where fish will be waiting for choice morsels of food unloaded by the slowing stream.

If the bait has come to the end of its drift and you've had no strike, twitch or pull the bait forward and let it drop back with the current three or four times. Then jerk or drag the bait back to your fishing position. This will bring the bait along the edge of the quiet, deep water. In fact, this is one of the very best ways to fish most any bait—minnows, crayfish, leeches, worms, dead baits and



Hooking hellgrammite under collar from the front

concocted baits—in tailwaters and eddies. Dead baits and worms, of course, should not be jerked or dragged back upstream.

When fishing from a boat in larger rivers, anchor so you can execute this drift. It will increase your catch. You can try fishing downstream, but it is very difficult to keep the bait down in this swift water. It will keep coming to the surface at the end of the tight line. The technique of fishing upstream is the secret of successful hellgrammite fishing. But when upstream fishing is impractical, a hellgrammite can be fished downstream by using a heavy dipsey sinker tied to the end of a 12-18 inch dropper which is attached to the line so it will slide.

**Other Areas**

The hellgrammite can be twitched or drag-fished through or along these deep tailwaters or eddies, and can also be drifted through deep channels, under cut banks, under drift piles, and around and under sunken logs and boulders, but try to find such places where there are rocks, riffles or rapids close by or upstream. Fish in these areas are used to feeding on hellgrammites.

Hellgrammites can also be effectively fished in moderate to slow currents by float drifting with a cork.

Any of the other conventional riggings with sinker below the hook can be used to fish hellgrammites, except that this bait should not be fished in standing water where there is no current. With hellgrammites—as with all other baits, living, dead or concocted—don't let the bait "fish itself." Keep the bait continually or periodically moving by drifting, jerking, or drag-fishing, using jerky, start-stop retrieves or slow to very slow retrieves.

**FISHING SEASON IS HERE, BUT REMEMBER:**

Settin' still a-wishin' makes no person great.  
 The Good Lord sends the fishin',  
 But you must dig the bait.  
 —Robin Morrow,  
 Station KJAN  
 Atlantic



Church and Allen Photo.

Most of the Volga is rapid, with rocky bars and cedar-clad banks. In April, the river below Mederville was quite low, but May rains increased the flowage.

### Canoeing . . .

(Continued from page 41)

predominating. The cliffs in many places rival those on the Upper Iowa. The river is clear except after rains and is noted as a good smallmouth stream. The river bed is sand, gravel and rock. Excellent camp sites are plentiful.

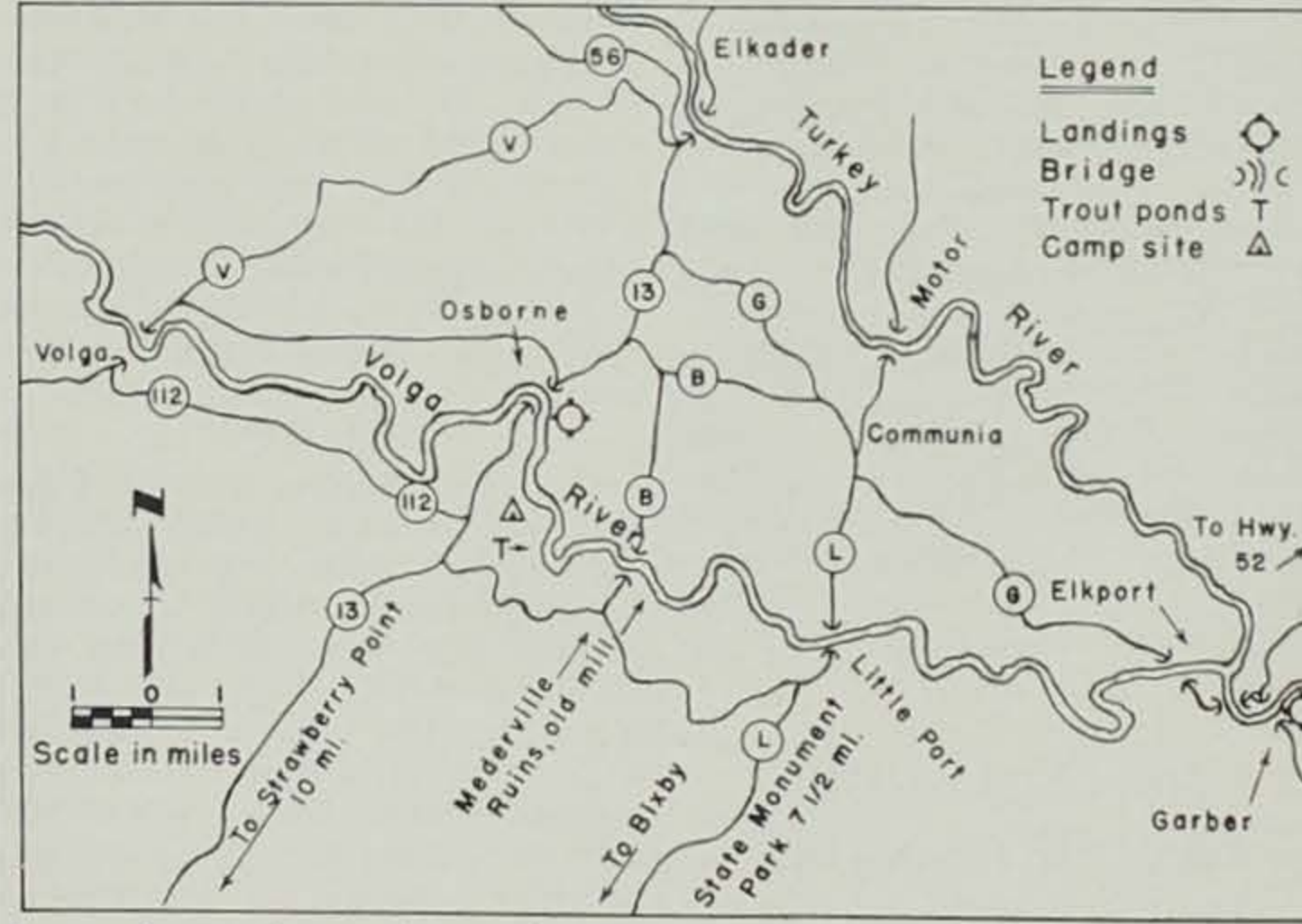
The Volga is moody. It comes up rapidly after heavy rains and, judging by the signs along the banks, the water level commonly varies six feet or more. At normal levels, the river is very shallow, seldom more than two feet deep, and shallow riffles occur frequently. The channel is pretty well choked with sand in the lower stretches. At these levels a constant lookout must be maintained to stay in the main tongue of the current, and it is necessary to step out of the canoe several times each hour to negotiate especially shallow spots. In high water the river can be treacherous on account of the narrow valley, sharp turns, and floating debris. Under those conditions it should not be attempted by inexperienced canoeists.

At numerous places along the river are bridge abutments of the old Milwaukee Turkey River line. This branch ran up the narrow, twisting valley of the Volga from Garber to West Union. It was built in the period from 1878 to 1882. The last train went over the line on February 7, 1938 and the tracks were taken up and the bridges removed in that year. The old roadbed may be seen along the river in many places, first on one bank and then on the other.

A good over night trip is that from Osborne, on Highway 13 north of Strawberry Point, to Garber on the Turkey. This is about 17 miles by river and, under low water conditions, can be made easily in about 10 hours traveling time. There are no portages or dangerous rapids.

The put in place at Osborne is on the left bank below the bridge. From here to the bridge at Meder-

ville is 3 3/4 miles (2 1/4 hours). Mederville was settled in 1838 by Henry Meder who built a sawmill and flourmill there. The old mill burned years ago but its crumbling walls



still remain below the new highway bridge on the right bank.

It is another 4 1/2 miles (2 1/2 hours) from the Mederville bridge to the bridge at Littleport. Littleport is said to be the site of a former meeting ground of the Indians, where councils of war and peace conferences were held.

It is 7 1/2 miles (4 1/2 hours) from the bridge at Littleport to the bridge at Elkport which crosses the Volga just before it enters the Turkey. About 1/2 mile (1/4 hour) below is another Elkport bridge crossing the Turkey. Another 1/2 mile (1/4 hour) will take you to the bridge at Garber. There is a convenient take out place below the Garber bridge on the right bank.

This trip can be extended if desired. It is possible to put in at Volga, 8 miles upstream from the Osborne bridge. And it may be continued on down the Turkey 13 1/2 miles (4 1/2 hours) to Millville, near where the Turkey enters the Mississippi.

Do not plan to make time down

### "I'D RATHER BE A GANDER"

Lacey Gee ran across a story the other day—one that will prompt a chuckle or two from any farmer, hunter or goose raiser. The story supposedly was written by a teenage naturalist and was first printed in the Ducks Unlimited Quarterly and later in an issue of the "Outdoors Unlimited" publication.

"Geese is a low, heavy set bird which is mostly meat and feathers. His head sits on one side and he sits on the other. Geese can't sing much on account of dampness of the moisture. He ain't got no between-the-toes and he's got a little balloon in his stummick to keep from sinking.

"Some geese when they get big has curls on their tails and is called ganders. Ganders don't haff to sit and hatch but just eat and loaf and go swimming. If I was a goose I'd rather be a gander."

Thus ends our discussion of nature for the day.—Independence Conservative.

### EAGLE NOTES

Though man has been the only destructive force the bald eagle had to contend with, he often is pestered by crows, gnatcatchers and kingbirds. Storms have blown down his nests.

Fish are an important item in the food of the bald eagle of Alaska while mammals are only a small item. The eagles of the midwest are frequently seen in areas where waterfowl congregated but it is likely that they confine their predations mostly to sick and wounded birds since the Alaskan study showed that the eagle was partial to crippled prey and to dead animals.

Years ago reports were common of eagles attacking humans. Some times the birds were supposed to have carried children to their young in the nest. A golden eagle of size comparable to the size of a grown bald eagle was launched from the roof of a small building. Eight pounds of weight were tied to his feet. The bird which was being trained as a falcon, flew only 14 yards.

Alaskan bald eagles are a similar species to those in Iowa. In the province while the bird was a victim of the bounty system, many of the birds were weighed: mature males averaged nine and one-third pounds. Females were two pounds heavier, and their wingspread was greater than the seven foot measurement of the male.

Nests of the bald eagle may be on cliffs or in trees. One of the largest nests on record was 12 feet high, eight and one-half feet across the top and its weight was estimated at one ton.

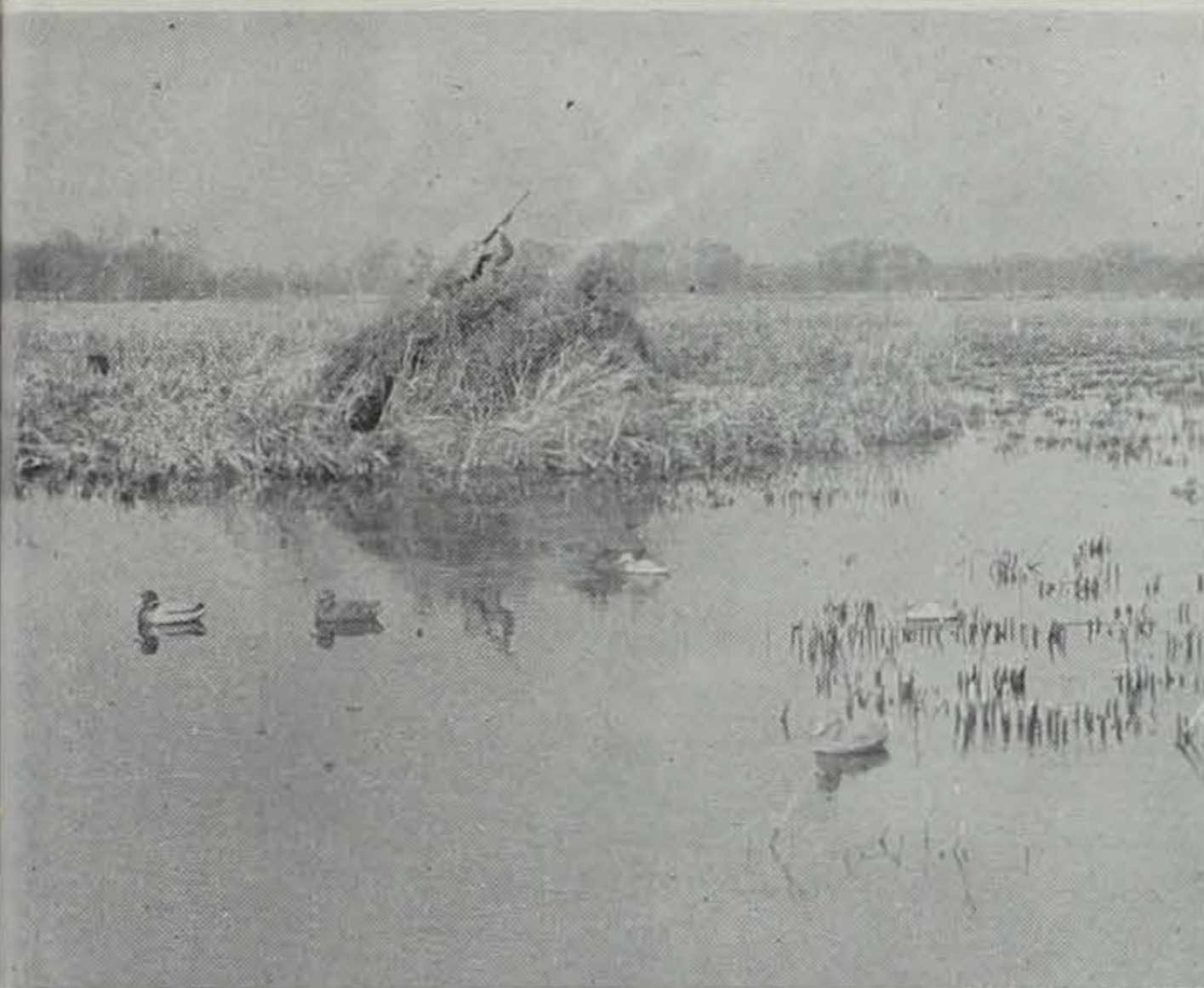
Odds and ends of material found in nests include clods of earth and steel traps.

Some nests have been reported as having other tenants than eagles: one housed a horned owl and another was quarters for a family of English sparrows.—Elde Stempel.



Church and Allen Photo.

Ralph Church found a ready-made lunch table near Mederville—a massive block of limestone. The Volga threads through country where limestone bluffs and fall boulders are common.



Jim Sherman Photo.  
The broad, open marshes of Green Island Bottoms are famed locally as a waterfowl area. Such riverlands furnished superb gunning during the early November flight of 1955.

**Green Island Bottoms . . .**

(Continued from page 41)  
When high river levels, the structure can be opened to fill the Bottoms; during times of river fall, good water stages can be maintained by closing the structure.  
For the fish and game populations that exist in this wet wilderness, the best management is believed to be a careful control of water levels. The Green Island Bottoms abound naturally with muskrats, furbearers and waterfowl, and little stocking. It is felt that the suitable wet habitat is maintained, fish and fur crops will maintain themselves. Thus the new control structure and the present work.

**Not Like Inland**  
To the fisherman used to inland lakes, it's hard to imagine a maze of twisting, hidden sloughs and lakes. The boatman is confronted constantly by dead ends, new channels and cuts that break back on themselves or suddenly break out into large marshes deep pools rimmed with elms and cottonwoods.

And, while the average fisherman won't become hopelessly lost in the area, he can be bewildered. The old Dan'l Boone, who claimed he had never been lost but was sorely confused for three days—

in a good fall, the broad marshy tracts of the Bottoms are heavily populated by waterfowl, particularly during early November flights. This is waterfowl country deluxe, and local hunters reap some fat harvests. Since the Conservation Commission has assumed management of the area, permanent blinds have been prohibited, giving anyone his choice of shooting areas on any particular morning.  
If he gets there first.

Later in the fall, it is worked by trappers for mink, muskrat and beaver. In recent years, beaver have become a headache on the area and could be more heavily trapped than they now are.

**And Fish!**

Don Edlen, head of the fisheries station at Sabula, has fished the Green Island Bottoms for years. He reports that in recent times the area has had excellent bass fishing. The major sloughs and lakes in the Bottoms offer a shoreline of about 60 miles, not including the myriad potholes, cuts and small indentations. Much of this shoreline is stumpy, fringed with dead trees, sunken logs and brushpiles, and is a natural for largemouth bass.

It's also a natural for bluegills, crappies and other panfish. Edlen has hooked a 2 1/4-pound crappie there, and once netted a crappie that went 4 pounds 13 ounces! He says that 1-pound bluegills are fairly common, and recently saw a string of 15 bluegills that weighed 13 pounds—mostly 12-inch fish.

While seining last spring in grassy shallows for bullheads, Don took 14 northern pike in his net. He says the pike weighed up to 14 pounds and came in a wide variety

of sizes, but in only one variety of orneriness.

**Farmlands for Game**

The portions of the area now under state control include about 1,400 acres of marsh, sloughs and wetlands in the northern and eastern parts of the Bottoms, and about 600 acres of low croplands in the western part.

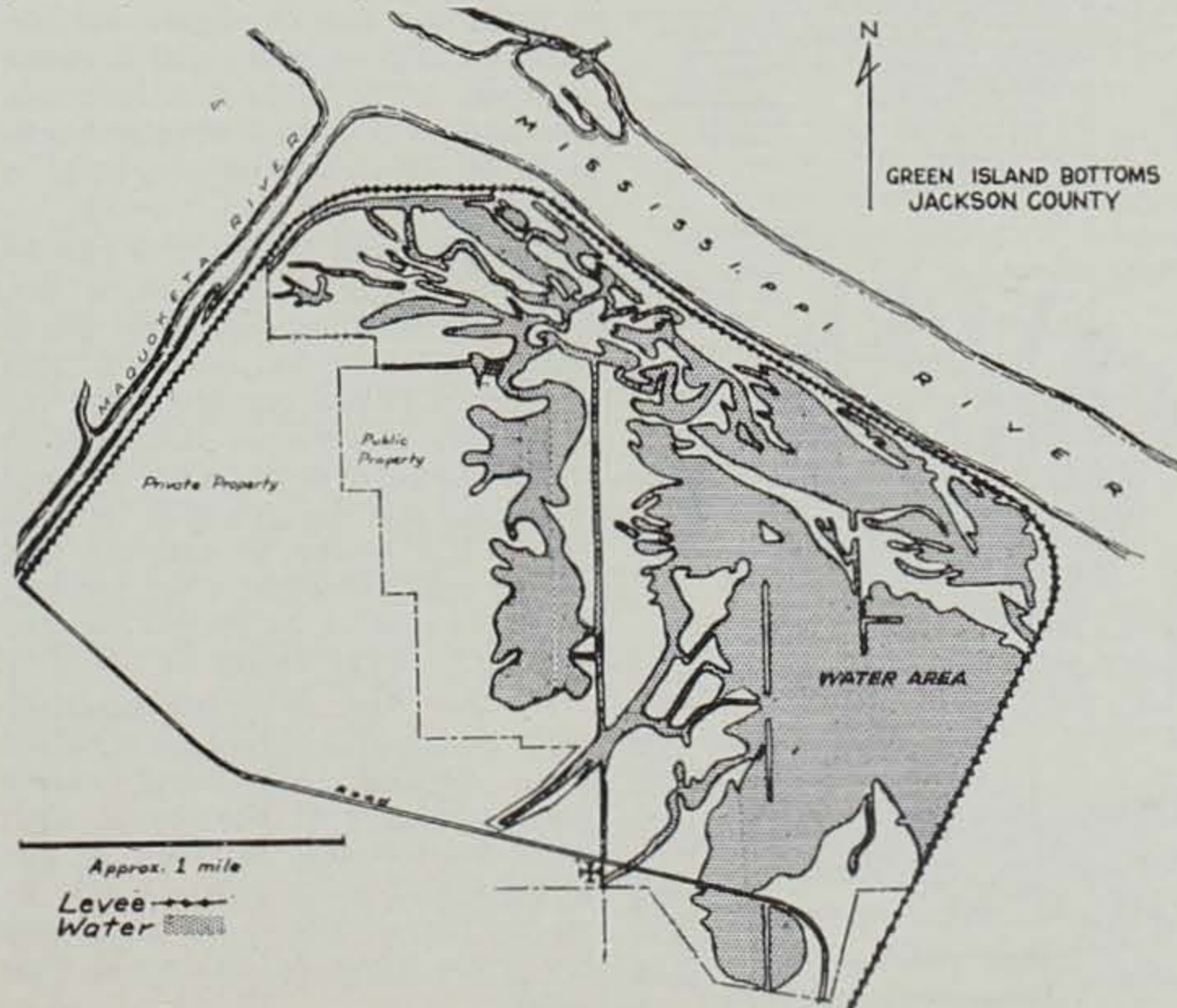
The latter are farmed under agreement with the Conservation Commission, for under the government sublicense all lands not directly used for wildlife and recreation must be in agricultural crops. However, these fields are farmed so that they fit into the overall management plan by providing a variety of food. Although their primary value is to waterfowl, the farmlands were stocked with some pheasants this spring on a trial basis.

But generally, the main management plan will continue to be control of water levels, insuring the Bottoms of a stable water supply. In the future, nearby Smith Creek may be diverted into the area as a further safeguard against low Mississippi stages, but this plan is not definite.

**Heavily Used?**

An access point used by many fishermen is at a small bridge at the south end of the Bottoms, marked by an "X" on the map. From here, the boatman can head up a long, narrow canal to the sloughs and lakes. There are no boat liveries or commercial developments in the Bottoms proper, and the visiting angler should bring his own boat.

Local residents, if asked about the popularity of the Bottoms, might say that they are "heavily used." This is a comparative thing. In relation to most of our big natural and artificial lakes, the Bottoms are still primeval. Although 40 cars might be parked at an entry point on a given day, this backwater wilderness can easily swallow up a lot of fishermen. At



least, no one ever seems to complain about being stifled by crowds.

Like all other outdoor playgrounds in Iowa, the Mississippi and its adjacent areas have had a tremendous upsurge in popularity in the past 10 years. But unlike most other waters, the sheer bulk of Old Man River has absorbed the impact of this increased usage. And even while they are undergoing record use, wild backwaters like the Green Island Bottoms still offer a measure of solitude and watery independence to the outdoorsman.

**Rough Fish Remedy . . .**

(Continued from page 43)

average when it comes to tastiness, but pity the innocence (or ignorance) of an incident we once observed. A man and his wife, newcomers to fishing, came back to the dock with four or five medium-sized northern pike. When the lady asked the sun-wrinkled dock attendant what kind of fish they were, he volunteered, "Them's snakes, ma'am," a local label applied to the northern pike because it is "long and wriggly". Horrified, the wife refused to have anything more to do with the catch—and even friend husband, affected by the terminology, looked pale around the gills. If the dock attendant had said "rosefish," (or better yet, "northern pike") how different their reaction would have been.

Forget dogmas, old wives' tales, and superstitions. Go fry up a carp. Then if you don't like it, well, that's that. But remember that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, not in the well-meant, but entirely inaccurate, nicknames, or reputations that have been handed down through the years.

**Wardens Tales . . .**

(Continued from page 44)

Pat Tilley, officer in charge of Union and Ringgold counties, sends in a quail hunting yarn:

Two fellows pulled up to a farm with two nice quail dogs. They asked to hunt and the farmer says "Okay, but no dogs allowed on this place." When the hunters asked the reason for the dog ban, the farmer explained that "ole paw" did the bird-dogging on that farm.

So—skeptically—the hunters took out "old paw", cane and all. Right away the old man pointed at a grassy clump with his cane, the hunters walked in on it, and killed some quail. This happened all day long. Every time the old man stopped and pointed with his cane, quail were flushed and the hunters had fine shooting.

The next fall the two sportsmen returned to the farm without their fine Pointer dogs.

The same farmer came out and asked "Where are your dogs? You should have brung them along."

The hunters asked "Why, we thought we'd use 'ol' paw' again."

"You can't," the farmer said. "We had to shoot him last fall. He got to pointing rabbits."

# MAKING A BASSWOOD PACKBASKET

By G. A. Ammann  
Michigan Dept. of Conservation

Too many years ago, at a scout camp in northern New Jersey, I happened to cut a whittlin' stick from a clump of saplings. The wood was nice and soft, but while peeling the stick I noticed that the bark pulled off easily and was tougher'n all get out; so my interest quickly turned to the bark.

After trimming several strips to a uniform width, I cleaned off the dark outer bark from the inner layer by slicing and pulling it off in short pieces. I twisted several strands together and even braided three strips like the lanyards we made of rawhide lacings in camp. These ropes proved to be very strong and pliable, though when dried they became stiff and were more brittle.

### "Bastwood"

The tree, I later found out, was basswood (also called linden or bee tree). This name, by the way, is probably a corruption of "Bastwood", referring to the bast fibers which give the bark its unusual strength.

I had not heard of using bass-

wood bark for pack baskets, but it seemed just the thing for this purpose. I'd found that in the center of the bark strip there was a line of cleavage where, if started right, the bark would split readily without cutting. I also found that I could split the inner bark several times to almost any desired thickness, thereby making it more limber to use for places which needed binding.

Spring and early summer are the best times to peel the bark, when the sap is running, but it will peel fairly well at other seasons if you pound it lightly first.

Pick out a young basswood which still has smooth bark or a large sucker which has grown up from the base of an older tree or stump. The best size is from three to five inches in diameter at the base. If you're not cutting on your own woodlot, be sure to get permission from the owner, of course.

Trim you log and cut strips to size before peeling or as you peel. Use a sharp knife or better yet, a heavy linoleum knife and be sure the cut goes clear through the bark. If you're made the cuts deep enough the strips will peel easily without a hitch.

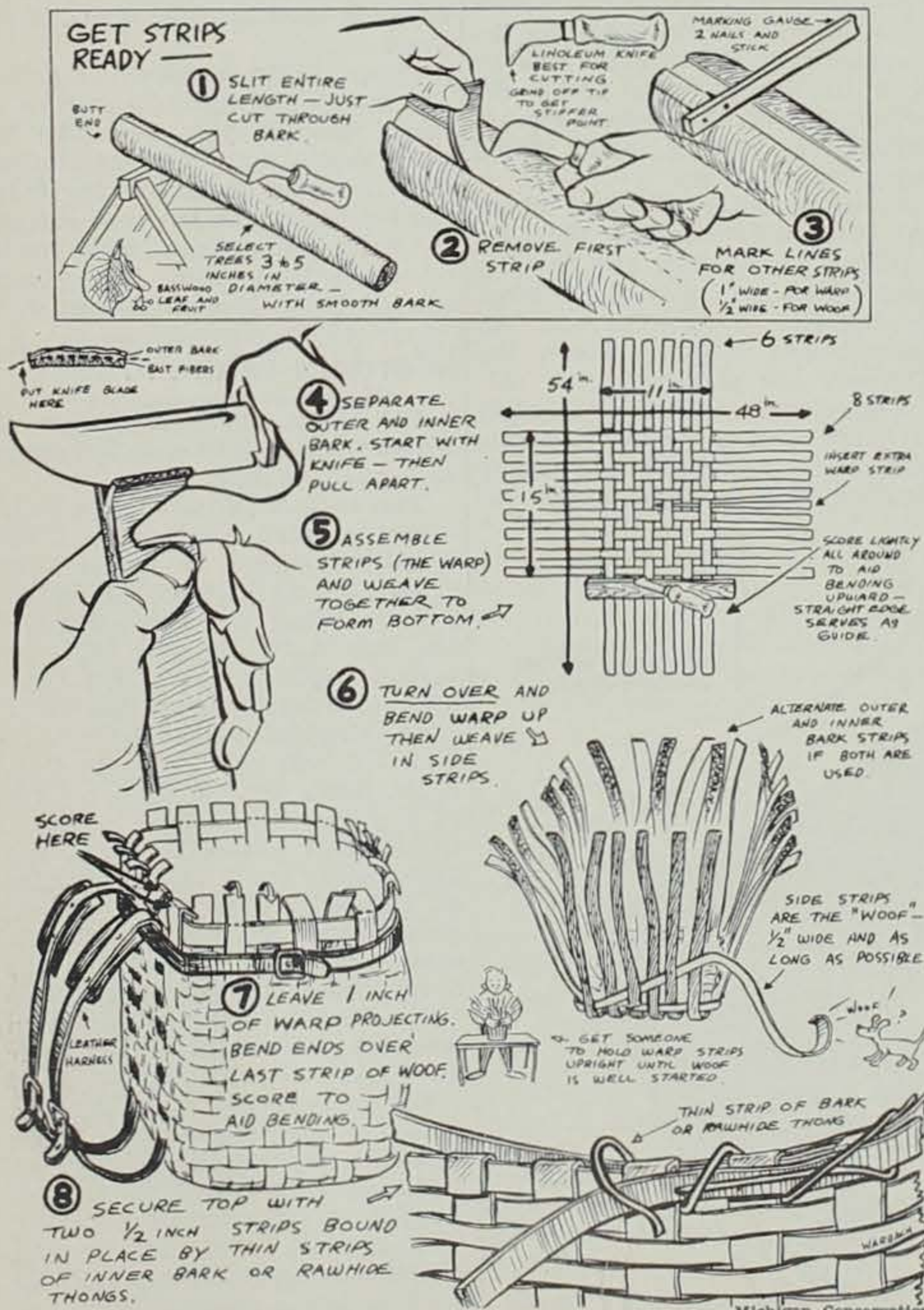
### Inner Bark Tougher

Split the outer from the inner



Jim Sherman Photo

## HOW TO MAKE A BASSWOOD PACK BASKET



Michigan Conservation

bark on the same day you cut it. Take the end which came from the large end of the log, cut it off squarely and insert the knife blade in the center, or perhaps just a shade closer to the inner side of the bark. It will separate easily if you get it started in the right place, except where twigs and other irregularities cause it to stick. Use the knife again where necessary to get the split back into the center if the outer bark begins to get thinner or comes off unevenly.

After some practice you should be able to split most of the strips into two pieces the entire length so you can use them both if you wish. The outer bark is more brittle, for it contains fewer of the bast fibers which make the inner bark so tough, but you can alternate the strips and still have a very durable and sturdy basket.

### Dry In Sun

When you've completed your pride and joy, let it dry for several days in the sun or where air circulation is good, and paint it inside and out with lacquer or varnish. The bark will mold if not thoroughly dried or if left uncovered in a damp place.

The prepared bark strips can be dried and stored for future use, but they must be soaked in water until pliable again. However, this procedure is not recommended for best results because the bark is likely to turn dark, curl up, and it's slimy and disagreeable to work with. It's better to prepare and weave the bark right after peeling, when it's pliable, or leave it on the log until you're ready to use it.

In this age of mechanization, some people still derive satisfaction from making something useful from products of the forest with only the simplest of tools, as the Indians and early settlers did. If you're one of these, by all means try your hand at basswood basketry.

## NEW BOAT CUTS SWATH THROUGH WATER PLANTS

Making a test run across Ingham Lake Area, Manager Bill Brabham tries out the new weed-cutting boat that was recently obtained by the Conservation Commission for experimental water plant control.

The all-steel boat—which weighs 1,000 pounds and is powered by a 6-horsepower engine—is propelled with a paddle device and armed with sickle bars on the bow. These cutting bars are lowered into the water when ready for use.

The craft is expected to work well for cutting bulrushes, cattails and other emergent water plants, but Commission fisheries managers wonder about its ability to cut through thick mats of coontail and other submerged water plants.

The boat will undergo thorough testing in certain state waters in an effort to determine the practicality and effectiveness of such types of plant control.

### AERIAL BATTLE

I saw a battle in the air the other day. A full-grown bald eagle was trying to out maneuver a smaller bird, possibly a hawk, but the smaller bird remained aloft of the eagle. In desperate dives and climbs to get away from the harassing of the little bird, the eagle finally took a straight course from the trees across the river. The battle took place near Carlton Reed's farm, over the blacktop road about 150 feet in the air.—*Bellevue Leader*.

Keep an old inner tube partially inflated in your car; it makes a handy cushion for carrying an outboard motor, and can add years to the life of your motor.