

# IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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## STUMP DUNKIN' FOR ROCK BASS

### THE HUNGRIEST HUNTER

By John Madson  
Education Assistant

In the quiet places of Iowa, where leaf mold is heavy and old leaves decay on the forest floor, lives the world's most savage mammal. Even the weasels and great cats can't match its ferocity, for each day it must devour its own weight in food or starve. However, your shrews are safe. This terrible hunter—the shrew—may weigh less than a dime. The world's most hungry, savage mammal, it is also the tiniest.

But what the shrew lacks in size, it has in gumption. It's a hunter to the end of its brief life, and is the only mammal with a poisonous bite. From the salivary glands of the short-tailed shrew, *Sorex brevicauda*, a secretion flows into wounds made by its sharp lower incisor teeth, quickly swelling the heart action and paralyzing the victim. Once paralyzed, the victim is completely devoured.

#### The Ancients Knew

Centuries ago, Europeans knew that some shrews packed a toxic wallop, but over the years this knowledge faded and was dismissed as an old wives' tale. In an 1858 copy of Buffon's *Natural History*, the great naturalist wrote: "the aversion of the housecat to the shrew mouse gave rise to the notion that this is a venomous animal, and that its bite is dangerous. The truth, however, is that it is neither venomous nor capable of biting."

Scientists have recently extracted saliva from the lower jaws of the shrew and injected it into mice. The animals quickly lost alertness and began to breathe heavily. As their hind legs became partly paralyzed, they moved with great difficulty. Stronger doses induced convulsions, lung failure, and death. The effects of this salivary extract were similar to the effects of the elapine snakes; the bras and kraits.

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A rock bass is lifted from his hollow stump home; this fish was taken with an angleworm, and two other rock bass were hooked at the base of the stump.

### Eisenhower Calls Stiles to Youth Convention

Bruce Stiles, Director of the State Conservation Commission, was one of the few midwesterners recently invited by President Eisenhower to the Convention on Fitness of American Youth held in Annapolis, Maryland on June 18 and 19.

He was called to the meeting as head of the International Association of Game and Fish Commissioners, and was the only representative of a fish and game department.

About 150 delegates attended the two-day convention to confer on the fitness of American youth. The President is reportedly concerned over the physical and emotional fitness of the nation's youth, particularly in the 5-17 year age bracket, and has termed it the most vital and neglected of our national assets.

Headed by Vice President Richard Nixon, the convention was divided into nine discussion panels. Delegates included Charles S. Thomas, Secretary of Navy; Major General Lewis Hershey, Director of Selective Service; Rear Admiral Bradley, Deputy Surgeon General

of the Navy; J. Edgar Hoover; Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner; Rogers Hornsby, former baseball great; Roy E. Larsen, President of *Time* magazine; William MacPhail, Director of Sports, CBS; David Sarnoff, Chairman of the Radio Corporation of America; Gene Tunney; Kenneth "Tug" Wilson, President of the U.S. Olympic Committee; and Darryl E. Zanuck, President of 20th Century Fox Films.

Although originally slated for last fall, the convention was postponed because of the President's heart ailment. His recent operation caused him to be absent from the June meeting, but he was represented by the Vice President.

Selective Service data presented at the convention revealed that of 4,465,000 young men given preinduction examinations, 2,348,000 were rejected. The highest percentage of rejections occurred in eastern and southern states. Iowa was well below average: a "healthy" state.

Stiles said that physicians at

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Few Mississippi River anglers actually call it "stump dunkin'," but the term fits well and lies easily on the ear. So that's what we'll call it.

The only things needed are a boat, a flyrod or long cane pole, and a broad expanse of upper Mississippi backwater liberally dotted with old stumps.

The channel dams of the Mississippi did much to change the river's features. With the advent of these dams, broad bottom lands of heavy timber were permanently flooded, but before the huge pools were filled most of the trees were cut down. The result was thousands of acres of stump water at the margins of the navigable channel, dangerous to boating but ideal for fishing.

The stump dunker moves his boat slowly among the stumps, fishing with a long pole, a short line, and a small hook baited with angleworm or live minnow. Some fishermen even use dead minnows, claiming they're just as good.

Approach a stump and drop the bait beside it or even within it, if it's hollow. If there are rock bass around, there may be fast action, especially if you've approached the area quietly.

These fish as similar to bluegills in size, shape and temperament. Like bluegills, 10-inch rock bass are just about tops in size. The fish also work like bluegills, seldom wasting much time nibbling, but hitting the bait in a quick spurt of appetite. A 10-inch rock bass feels good on a light flyrod.

Although bobbers may be used, many anglers prefer fishing without them. The depth being fished will vary, and is usually "felt out" with the bait and light sinker. Some anglers prefer light, soft wire hooks that bend easily, for snags are frequent. Such hooks can be freed from a snag without loss of the terminal tackle. While stump dunkin', you'll catch stumps as often as you'll hook fish.

Try dropping your bait first within the hollow, water-filled stump. If this doesn't produce, fish around the stump. Sometimes sev-

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## AN OLD HUNTER REMEMBERS THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN

By John Madson  
Education Assistant

There are only a few hunters today to remember the Iowa prairie chicken, and how it looked rising in front of the gun. Such men are becoming fewer each year—the market hunters who filled spring wagons with birds, and the city sports who wore knee-high leggings and neckties.

Max Stempel was neither; he was an ordinary hunter who took his bird shooting where and when he found it. Since 1884, when he first moved to Macedonia in Pottawattamie County, he's found lots of hunting. In his early years, most of it was for prairie chickens.

There was still some market shooting and trapping of prairie chickens when Max began hunting. The birds liked corn wherever they could find it: hog lots, cattle yards, fields and cribs. A common corn

crib in the 80's was made of willow poles, with a pole floor and a thatched roof of bluestem or marsh hay. Some farmers made tip-up traps on these roofs, capturing prairie chickens that tried to enter the cribs. Stempel tells of one farmer near Macedonia—fellow named Jim McGee—who caught as many as 50 birds at one time. They were cleaned, salted, and sold in Council Bluffs for 25c apiece.

But most of the prairie chickens were taken with a shotgun. Max recalls three general types of hunting: pass shooting, roost shooting and jumpshooting in open fields and meadows.

The pass shooting was usually done between roosts and feeding grounds in the evening. The birds often flew from ridge to ridge; high above the low swales. The hunters took their stands on the ridge tops and took the birds at close range as they rocketed over the open prairie.

The prairie chicken often roosted in dense prairie grass, scattering in its cover. A favorite hunting ground of Stempel and his friends was on flat land about 1½ miles south of Macedonia. After sundown, they would kick the birds out of roosting cover and shoot them as they were silhouetted against the darkening sky. Since the birds usually flew low, and because it was necessary to "sky-light" them, the shooting country had to be flat with no hills to interfere with vision. It was tough shooting, and even with a good dog many dead birds were lost in the thick cover.

Stempel sometimes shot prairie chickens in fields and meadows, much as we hunt pheasants now. This was most effective early in the season, for during the fall older were quite wild and often got up far ahead. A hunter might watch a flock enter a distant cornfield, wait until the birds were

An 1890 portrait of young Max Stempel with his retriever and his new "Bonehill Special." Now 84, Stempel still does some hunting.

filled with grain, and then move in on them.

Those were mellow times, those days of black powder and miles of wild hay. Some hunters took trains to the best chicken grounds, and unhurried train crews would stop in the country and let the hunters get off. Other hunters used horses, or shot from spring wagons or buggies.

Max's wife owned a Morgan mare that became used to gunfire and would stand to shot. If Mrs. Stempel held the reins, that is. When the Stempels drove through the open fields and raised birds, the horse would stop and Max would shoot from the buggy. Then the dog would retrieve the birds. Handsome hunting.

Mrs. Stempel's brother liked the idea, and one day he and a friend borrowed the Morgan and went bird hunting. Birds flushed and the buggy-borne nimrods went wild with their repeating shotguns. The mare went wild, too. Without Mrs. Stempel to steady her, the Morgan took the bit in her teeth and headed for home, dumping the two hunters on the prairie.

As Stempel remembers it, the prairie chicken behaved much like our modern pheasant in many

ways, and didn't always hold well for a bird dog. Sometimes, however, young birds in August or early September would lie tightly in cover and give a pointer a chance to work, holding well until they were kicked out.

The old hunter believes that many of the prairie chickens in the Macedonia area moved in seasonally from other places, usually in the fall. He often noticed an influx of old, wise birds when crops were reportedly poor in Nebraska or farther north in Iowa. He associated cornpicking with prairie chickens, and much of the hunting took place in late October and early November.

Those latter-day prairie chicken had much in common with present-day pheasants. Stempel recalls that old birds would fly one-half to three-fourths of a mile before landing; you could sometimes get within range for a second shot but if you missed you were through for the day.

Max remembers that the bird often followed this routine:

"It seemed like the old bird preferred to preen from daylight until 9 or 10 in the morning, and would then head for picked corn fields to feed. After their meal

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Prairie chicken cocks court on "booming grounds," where they inflate their throat sacs and force out the air with a resonant booming sound. This bird was photographed by Jim Sherman in Appanoose County as the photographer hid in a blind.



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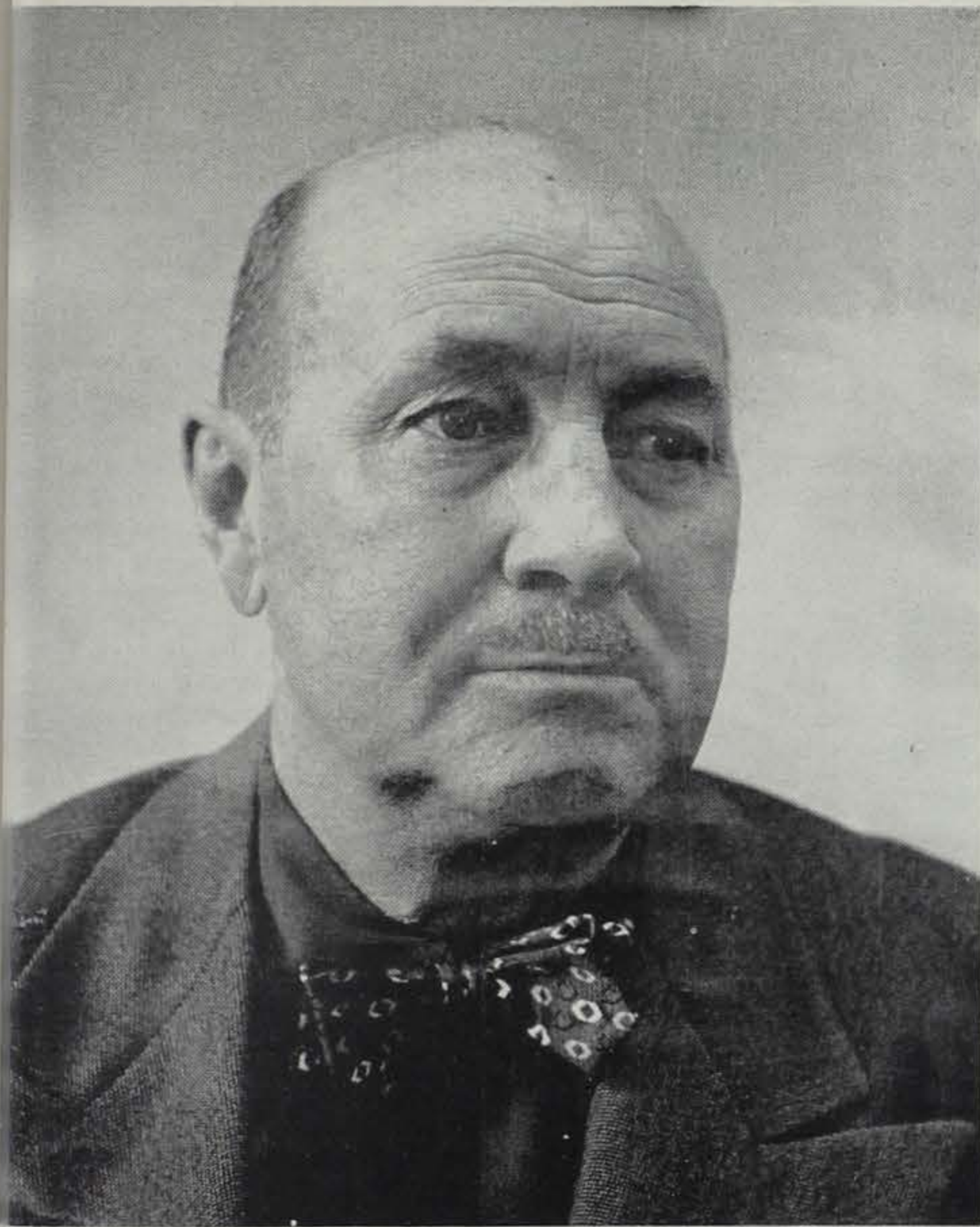
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Conservation Commission Director Bruce Stiles.

Jim Sherman Photo.

## tiles . . .

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the convention believed children up to 5-6 years of age do not get enough exercise, partly because of parents' fear of injury. The doctors thought that danger of physical injury was often less than the dangers of underdevelopment. It was also thought that many young people lack fitness and need additional emotional and physical development and social adjustment.

One recommendation was against competitive sports for children below the junior high school level, and against body contact sports such as football in the lower grades. Criticism was levelled not because of physical injury, but because of emotional effects of defeat in the youngster participating in organized sport.

The delegates agreed that hunting, fishing, camping and related activities were of high therapeutic value in decreasing tension and nervous strain, as well as providing good general exercise. Stiles said that everyone he met at the convention was "greatly interested" in the potentials of outdoor recreation, and that most of the delegates were hunters or fishermen.

Stiles commented that organized sports may not be of lifetime value to the child, but must often be given up as he grows older.

"Unlike football or baseball, the knowledge of hunting, fishing and similar outdoor sports will serve a person all his life, enabling him to

participate in physical activity long after he must become a spectator of organized sport," he said.—*John Madson.*

## DEEP WADING PAYS OFF

If you can master the art of stepping around in deep water, you'll soon find that "Deep Wading Pays Off." That's the contention of Claude M. Kreider in the May issue of *The Fisherman Magazine*.

In swift water, wade with shuffling steps, legs spread wide and body parallel to the current for less resistance. Ample leg length and free movement is essential here. Keep one foot solidly on the bottom while exploring by thrusting forward, not lifting, with the other foot. Thus, you will encounter that slick rock or log, a deep hole, or crevice in a ledge while you are still balanced and able to avoid it.

Stiff current is not in itself particularly dangerous, but it can upset you quickly if you go off balance. When the current is strong, as you face upstream or down, turn the body at right angles to it, the legs always parallel and wide apart.

At first thought, downstream wading may seem more difficult than when you forge up against the current, but with the water pushing you along, it is easier to feel your way and place your feet without being upset. With practice, and a bit of confidence, you can shuffle—almost tip-toe—along and feel for a good spot to plant your feet.—*The Fisherman.*

## CATFISHIN' TRIPS

By Joe Mathers

When pole fishing for catfish use line and terminal rigging as light as possible, with one or two split shot or a small sliding sinker on a light leader from three to eight feet long. I prefer a small sliding sinker. Catfish are often sensitive to line drag, and may feed delicately except when feeding greedily at night or in turbid waters. So, for security, get rid of that "drag" and you will catch more catfish.

With an 8-foot leader I use a half-split shot or tie a small swivel about 18-24 inches from the hook for a stopper if using a slip sinker. The latter is good when drift fishing, and prevents the line from twisting.

### No Drag

When using a 2-3 foot leader—usually in twilight, at night, or in roily waters—put the half-split shot just above the leader-line knot or tie the swivel at this point for the stopper. Sometimes in swift water it's best to set the sinker only a foot from the bait in order to hold it to the bottom.

Use a small, sharp hook. A number 1 or 2/0 is usually large enough. However, when fishing with big baits for big fish use a number 3/0 or 5/0. When using treble hooks use a number 10-8 for smaller catfish and 6-4 for larger catfish. If you're after big fish, increase the test of your line and leader, but not the sinker size unless you use a sliding sinker. A lunker is often more sensitive to bait drag than a fiddler. A 4-6 pound test leader is right for general purposes, but use up to a 15-20 pound test for lunkers or while fishing in snag-filled waters. Your line should be 2-3 pounds heavier than the leader.

### Baiting and Hiding

If your bait is of the tough,

natural variety, use a good-sized bait; if a softer dough bait or prepared catfish bait is used, put on just enough to cover the points of your treble hook. Small catfish can't take large, tough baits but will nibble at them and serve as decoys for larger fish.

When fishing for catfish, as well as all other fish, always try to conceal yourself and prevent vibrations. In normal daytime waters keep low; stay out of sight of lolling or feeding fish. Since much catfishing is done at night or in roily waters, and because catfish have poorer vision, "hiding" from catfish is not as essential as when fishing for other fish. Also, personal concealment is not as important in high, turbid spring waters as in low summer stages.

### Don't Rattle and Bang

However, in the spring you often run into some "touchy" days, so practice personal concealment from the start and you will increase your catch. Suppression of vibration and stomping is vitally important at all times. Catfish are timid and very sensitive to even slight vibrations in the water. Don't bang your tackle box or oars on the bottom of the boat; when wading, don't clatter rocks on the bottom and don't stomp your feet on shore or on a log or fallen tree near or in the water. Fish slowly and carefully!

### Bottom-Feeders

Catfish are normally bottom-feeders, feeding chiefly on slow-moving forms of animal life but also on animals and plant matter carried by streams. The most productive methods of catfishing are bottom-drifting and bait manipulation.

The latter is a modified form of still-fishing in which you carefully twitch, pull or drag your bait every few minutes. When drifting bait during the day, present your baits to the fish in places where

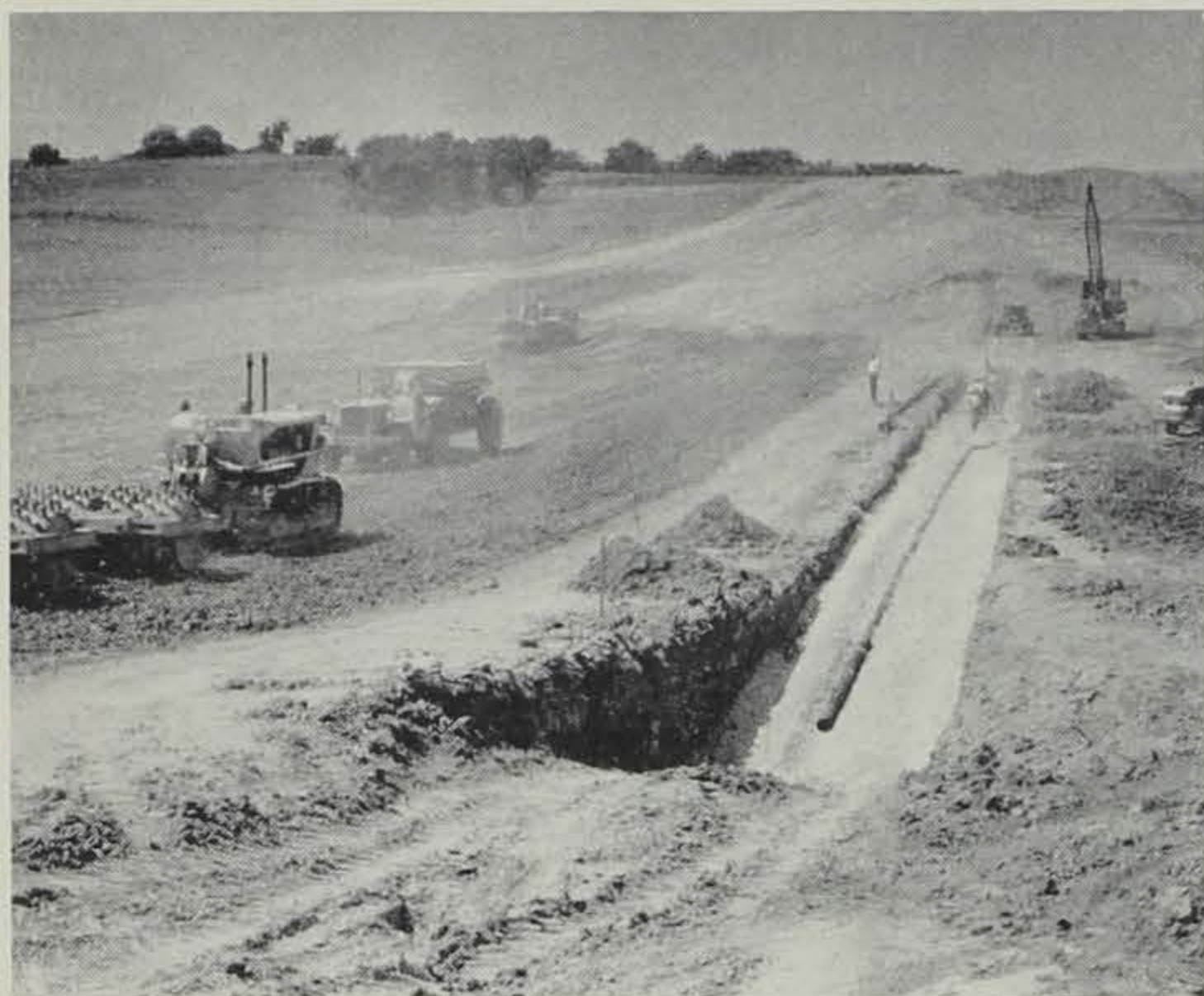
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Jim Sherman Photo.

The author cautions anglers against making noise while catfishing. Many boaters beach their crafts and quietly fish from the bank.





By late June, the "Stanton Lake" was about 30 percent completed. Shown here is the toe filter which will prevent damage to the dam by seepage water. Large basin at left will be the lake bed.

## FORMING IOWA'S NEWEST LAKE

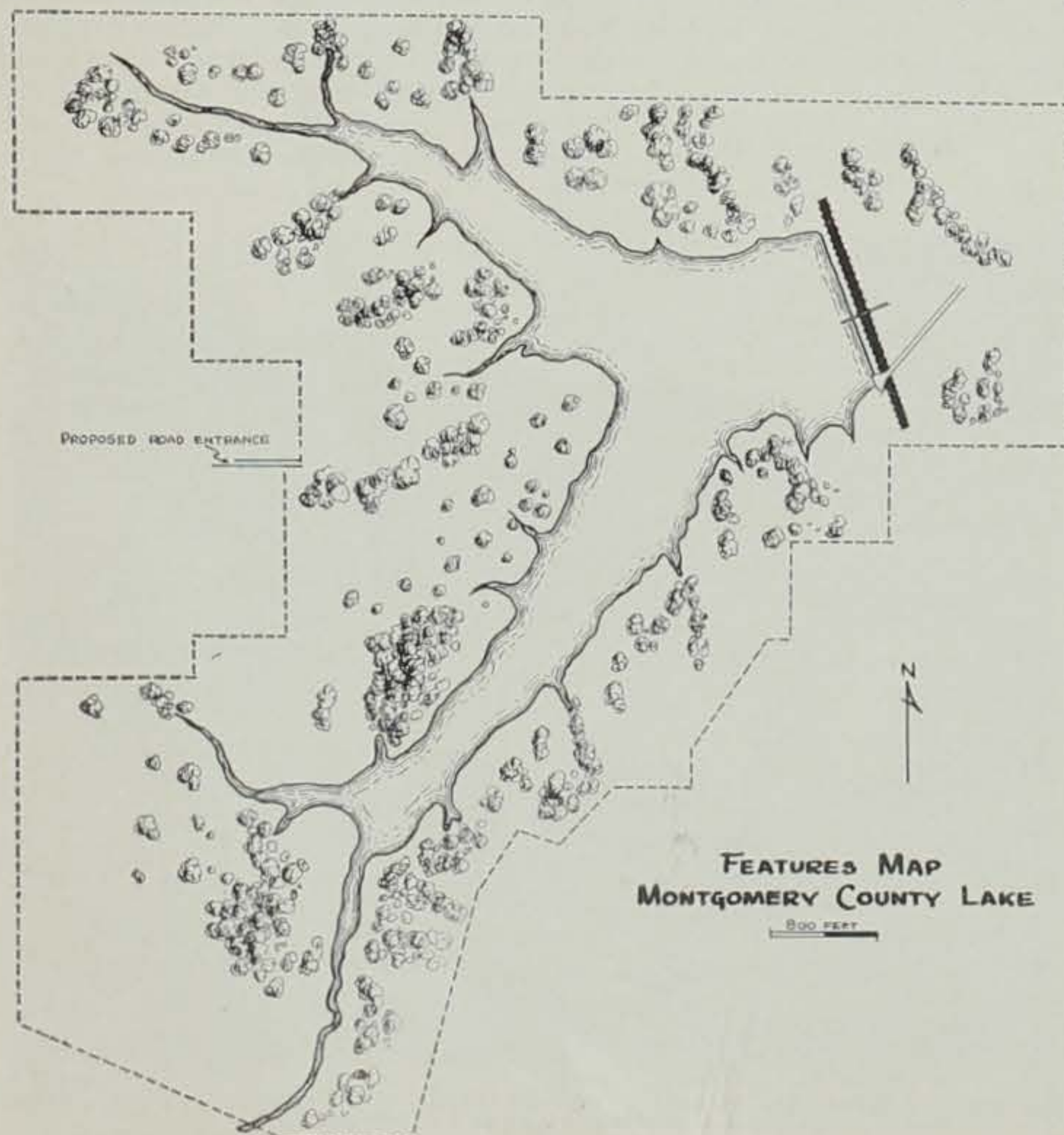
Construction is progressing on southwestern Iowa's newest artificial lake, a 150-acre impoundment in Montgomery County just southeast of Stanton.

Still nameless, the project has been dubbed the "Montgomery County Lake" or "Stanton Lake." It is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles east and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Stanton; about nine miles southeast of Red Oak. A naming contest is being conducted by the *Stanton Viking* to determine the top name prospects, from which a final name will be selected by the Conservation Commission.

The lake and surrounding area will comprise a 900-acre state park that will offer boating, fishing, swimming, and picnicking. The lake itself will be roughly Y-shaped, with 150 acres of surface and over six miles of shoreline. It will have a maximum depth of about 45 feet at the dam, and an average depth of 13 feet.

Work on the spillway, basin and dam is now about 30 per cent completed, and the project is expected to be finished this summer. In the event of successive dry periods, engineers believe that it may be two or three years before the lake is filled.

With a surface area of 150 acres and a watershed of 2,173 acres,



the lake-watershed ratio of  $14\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 is slightly less than the ideal ratio but quite satisfactory under normal rainfall conditions. Silting of the lake is expected to be held at a minimum since 98 per cent of the property owners on the watershed have signed agreements for farm plans with the Soil Conservation Service.

Such control of watershed is vital to new lakes, for heavy silting can destroy a lake's recreation potential almost before its "life" has begun.

The new lake is part of the long-range plan to bring an artificial lake to within 25 miles of every home in the lakeless parts of Iowa. In 1933, the Iowa 25-Year Conservation Plan recommended that 12 major artificial lakes and 13 secondary artificial lakes be constructed in southern Iowa. Thirteen of these lakes were built from 1933 to 1939 under federal work programs, and since 1939 seven additional artificial lakes have been constructed.

Final development of the park area, bathing beach and roads in the Montgomery County Lake area will depend on available funds. The lake will be stocked with game fish when water levels permit, and fishing will be allowed when the fish are "biologically stabilized" and reproducing.

Work on the new lake this spring and summer has proceeded with few hitches. However, workmen were stalled in late June by an amazing development: rain!

## A TURNOVER IN DUCK HOUSING

On May 12, photographer Edwin Meyer of Davenport was drifting in a boat through Grant Slough near Princeton, closely watching a dead snag above the water.

The object of his attention was a wood duck nesting box that had been erected four years before. Although intended for wood ducks, Meyer had discovered that the box had been taken over in mid-April by a female hooded merganser.

Meyer and his companions drifted past the dead snag several times before getting the right angle and action for a photograph. The result was the merganser leav-

ing the box at high speed. It was an unusual picture, for hooded mergansers have nested rarely in the Davenport area in recent years.

At that time, the box contained 15 merganser eggs. On a later trip to the area, Meyer found that the eggs had hatched and that the merganser family had departed.

When the merganser left, another tenant moved in. This time it was a female wood duck, and on May 19 the box contained three wood duck eggs.

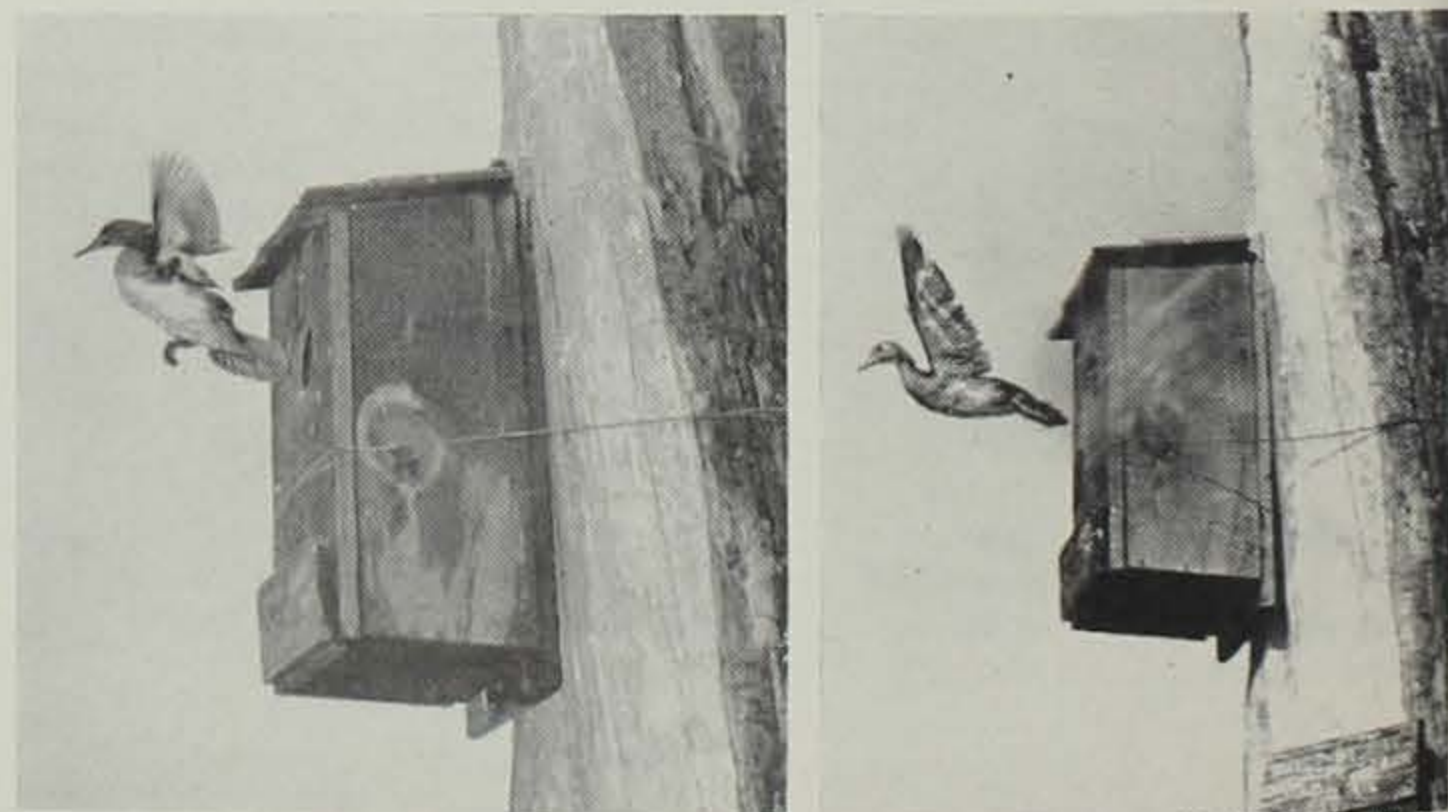
So Meyer made another try, and on June 25 succeeded in taking an almost identical picture of the wood duck leaving the nest. On that date there were 11 wood duck eggs in the nest.

Generally, wood ducks prefer hollow trees and snags for nesting, and some biologists believe that a limiting factor in wood duck production is the lack of suitable nesting habitat. Hundreds of nest boxes have been placed around Iowa lakes and rivers by the Conservation Commission and sportsmen's clubs in an attempt to make up for this lack.

Few sportsmen have been more active in this program than the Davenport Izaak Walton League. Charley Adamson, State Conservation Officer at Davenport, writes that about 140 wood duck nest boxes have been erected by the Davenport Ikes along the Mississippi and Wapsipinicon bottomlands. About 85 of the boxes were furnished to the club by the Pittman-Robertson program of the Commission's Federal Aid Section.

Plans for making wood duck nesting boxes and instructions for placing them are available free of charge from the Conservation Commission offices in Des Moines.

Abrupt sounds and sudden movements startle fish. A fish that will let an idling motor move past his face without so much as turning a fin will often go into a tizzy if the motor drifts in dead and is then started right in his front yard. A sudden turmoil upstings him, whereas he may accept a motor calmly if it approaches gradually and continues the same monotone. Know your motor and how to use it with a minimum of sudden noises.—*The Fisherman Magazine*.



On May 12, mother merganser—on June 25, mama woody.

Edwin Meyer Photos.





## Hungriest Hunter . . .

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In these experiments, 6 milligrams of saliva killed small mice, and the entire salivary glands of the shrew contained enough poison to kill 200 mice.

An eastern naturalist once held a shrew in his hand while it bit him three times. The punctures hardly drew blood, but the bitten finger burned and began to swell rapidly. The skin near the bites turned whitish, and shooting pains extended to the elbow and persisted for almost a week. This was an unusual case, and most scientists believe that a shrew's bite—exclusive of infection—is harmless to a creature as large as man.

Other naturalists have had little discomfort from these bites. Jack Misgrove of the State Historical Building tells of a shrew bite that "nagled", but which caused no prolonged discomfort. However, evidence does show that Buffon and his contemporaries were wrong, and that the old-timers were right.

### Not A Mouse

The shrew is a highstrung little mammal somewhat resembling a tiny mouse. It has a long, sharp nose that twitches constantly, small eyes, and ears that may be hidden in the thick, velvety fur. Shrews are often mistaken for mice, but are not related; a mouse is bulkier, larger, and has longer legs and bigger ears. The fur of a mouse is also comparatively coarse. Superficially, a shrew might be taken for a mole, but it is much more active and its forelegs are not greatly developed for digging.

### Anything Goes

Equipped with sharp, reddish-brown teeth and a supply of poisonous saliva, Iowa's short-tailed shrew is a perpetual butcher. Its life is dedicated to killing and eating, even its own kind. If it lives as long as a year it is usually a married veteran, often lacking a tail or tail.

Dr. C. Hart Merriam, the noted biologist, once confined three shrews under a water tumbler. The little warriors began scrapping at once. In a few minutes one had

been killed and eaten by the others, and one of these later killed and ate his companion. In a calm resumé of the carnage, the good doctor blandly observed that "having eaten two companions within eight hours, the abdomen of the survivor was much distended."

A hungry shrew will eat anything it can kill, and if it doesn't eat it can starve within a few hours. Shrews trapped alive at sunset may die of starvation during the night. They undoubtedly have the highest metabolic rate of all mammals. The masked shrew is reported to breathe 850 times a minute, and has a pulse rate of about 800 beats.

Favorite foods are insects, grubs, worms, small salamanders, mice, and other creatures to be found in leaf litter, surface soil, logs or stumps. Not a strong digger, the shrew does excavate wandering passages in loose soil and hunts beneath fallen leaves where it doesn't hesitate to attack and kill a mouse much larger than itself. Although not quick enough to catch a mouse in the open, it can corner mice in burrows and kill them easily. The thick skin of the shrew—particularly in the neck region—is mouse-proof.

### English Biscuits

A shrew's favorite diet is small living creatures, but it will eat vegetable matter when hunting is poor in winter or other times.

During the winter of 1943-44 I lived in an R.A.F. barracks in



England, a loose building of sheet metal, tarpaper and wooden framing. On shelves above our bunks we kept English biscuits, bread, and anything else we could scrounge. The building had a flourishing population of common shrews, largely sustained by our rations.

A waist gunner from Oregon—a little worse for wear after twenty bombing missions—decided to take up his peacetime hobby of trapping. He bought a dozen mouse-traps in town and started a shrew trap line in the barracks. Trapping was good, and he carefully skinned the animals and baled their tiny pelts, each about three inches square.

We don't know what he ever did with his peltry, but the trapline kept him out of trouble. The war was tough on shrews.

### Smelly and Little

The shrew has plenty of natural enemies, but some predators are repelled by the strong, musky odor emitted from two glands in the shrew's flanks. Housecats often kill shrews, but have to be pretty hungry to eat them. Raptorial birds evidently aren't so easily offended, for the bones of shrews appear frequently in the pellets of hawks and owls.

Some scientists place at least four species of shrews in Iowa: the pygmy shrew, *Microsorex hoyi*; the short-tailed shrew, *Blarina brevicauda*; the least shrew, *Cryptotis parva*; and the masked shrew, *Sorex cinereus*.

While some volumes list pygmy shrews in this state we've never seen an Iowa specimen. They are fairly rare everywhere, or maybe it's just because they're so easily overlooked. An adult pygmy shrew weighs about as much as a dime, and may be less than three inches long. It can easily travel in the holes of large beetles, and the hole dug by this shrew in leaf mold has been reported as too small to admit a pencil.

Just as amazing is the northern water shrew, found in some northern and western states but evidently not in Iowa.

This is the only mammal that can walk on water. According to Cahalane, it holds air bubbles in its feet and runs easily across the surfaces of quiet pools. It swims, dives and walks on stream bottoms in its search for food, and since the thick fur traps small air bubbles the swimming shrew appears to be sheathed in silver.

### Object Lesson

Night and day, winter or summer, the shrew must hunt. It has no time to hibernate. It is driven mercilessly by a raging appetite and a fiery metabolism, eating too much too often, and living too fast. This pace is impossible for any creature, and shrews have been found dead without mark of injury or violence—dead of old age at 16 months!

Think I'll go fishing tomorrow, and take it easy—

## HOW IT ALL STARTED

Ever wonder how the expression "hook, line and sinker" originated? Here's Webb Garrison's version of the beginning of the term as published in the June issue of the *The Fisherman* magazine. (Garrison's article, "How It All Started," also deals with the origin of many other terms associated with fish and fishing.)

Records are lacking, but it is likely that fishermen of ancient times had devices to weight their hooks. American Indians developed a practice of shaping special stones for such use. Hand-rounded with great labor, they attracted the interest of woodsmen and explorers. Admiring whites called the Indian device a sinker; the name had never been used in Europe.

It was not only an era of good fishing and hunting; men tried to outdo one another in telling tall tales of their adventures. Davy Crockett legends are typical; it was an age when the fellow who could tell the biggest lie was regarded with awe and admiration.

A tenderfoot from the East sometimes bit on a frontier yarn. He was compared with a hungry fish and said to swallow it "hook, line, and sinker." By 1844, the colorful American phrase had reached England and was being used on both sides of the Atlantic to describe gullible, uncritical listening. —*The Fisherman Magazine*.

## DANGER: CHARCOAL BURNERS IN CLOSED CABINS

Six Independence men who were enjoying an evening at a cottage at the Wapsipinicon Golf Club recently learned the hard way not to use a charcoal burner inside a building.

Due to the cold weather, the men moved the burner inside after eating supper to provide heat while they were playing cards. About 10 p.m., the host, believing to be tired, lay down on the bed. A short time later, another of the guests went into the bedroom to see if the host was sick, and feeling tired also lay down on another bed.

The rest of the guests then decided that if the two men were that tired, they would break up the party and go home. When they stepped outside into the fresh air, two of the men fainted.

It was then decided that the men weren't tired, but that something was wrong. The charcoal burner inside the building, burning up oxygen and throwing off other gases, was the only explanation.

Two of the men remained home from work the next day, feeling the effects of the burner. The cause was discovered in time, however, to avoid any tragedy.—*The Independence Conservative*.





## "WHEN I'M FISHIN' "

By

Charles Irvin Junkin

*A wicked world, an' weary! An' mostly  
woes and night! An' while the parson's preachin'  
I almost think he's right; but when I'm just a-fishin';  
I can't! No feller could, if he's got bait aplenty  
an' the fish is bitin' good!*

*I know there's lots of troubles an' cussedness  
around; an' rocks, an' thorns an' briers, all pesterin'  
the ground; but still, there's lots of dumplin's an'  
gravy in the dish, and I'm not pessimistic when I'm  
pullin' in the fish!*

*Some days I fish with minnows, an' then with worms or  
flies; it keeps a feller guessin' just where he'll get  
a rise! You've got to use some judgment, it's half  
the game an' more—what kind of bait you're usin' an'  
just what you're fishin' for!*

*Now, mind you, I ain't denyin' the preacher's talk is  
right. But when you're always readin' some things are  
out of sight. There's cricks an' lakes an' rivers, an'  
skies that's often blue, an' lots of fish—an' big ones!  
An' I'm goin' to ketch 'em, too!*

—Nuggets Magazine

## Wardens Tales

Shop Talk from the Field

From Lester "Dutch" Lemke, the massive conservation officer for Adams and Taylor counties, comes a wild fish story. Dutch writes that he saw the fish, but that's as far as he'll go.

"It seems that a fellow here in Bedford was fishing a farm pond with a bass plug. He hooked a good fish and the battle was on. After a time he decided he needed some help, so he tied his line to a tree, went home, ate his supper, did the milking, and took a couple of friends and a shotgun back to the pond."

"He untied the fish line and continued the battle, with the aid of friends and gun. When they landed

the fish, it was a 30-pound carp that had been hooked just ahead of the tail."

—That sun's been pretty hot down there, Dutch. Have those fellows been wearing hats?

Howard Lovrien, Conservation Officer at Clinton, has a story about a big catfish, two practical jokers, and a mad fisherman:

"Recently on the Mississippi at Clinton, a couple of local fishermen caught a 30-pound mudcat. Instead of disposing of the head, they sneaked out on the river and placed the head on another fisherman's trotline. With the action of the current, the head appeared to be alive.

"The pranksters were watching from the bank when an oldtimer ran the trotline later in a boat. As the head of the catfish broke water, the old fisherman excitedly

reached for a dip net to land the big fish, and the boys on the bank had a good laugh when he discovered it was only a head weighing nine or ten pounds. But they hadn't expected his reaction.

"Mad enough to chew nails, the fisherman raged 'Some sneaky rascal cut and stole the body right off my big catfish!'"

With the new dove banding program getting under way, even the doves want to cooperate.

Pheasant biologist Dick Nomsen recently spent a day in the Conservation Commission's Des Moines office, leaving his car on the parking lot.

When Dick returned late in the afternoon and opened his car door, he found a young dove inside. As far as Nomsen knows, the bird flew in through an open window.

So the biologist produced a leg band and banding pliers, banded the obliging young dove, and released it.

Commissioner Deg Reynolds of Creston comes up with another

story of an angler making a multiple catch. Deg writes that Carl Barstow of Creston recently hooked two 1¼-pound largemouth bass on one plug at the same time while casting in Green Valley Lake. He landed both fish.

Deg also notes that Green Valley Lake had terrific fishing during June, with good catches of bass, panfish and catfish in spite of low water levels.

A great horned owl can not turn its head all the way around while watching a person walk around the bird. The owl, however, can turn its head far to one side, and then snaps its head so rapidly to the other side that it may appear to have turned completely around on the owl's neck.

Some fishermen complain of the strong flavor of largemouth bass taken from warm, shallow lakes and rivers in midsummer. Much of this strong flavor can be avoided by skinning the fish entirely rather than just scaling it.



At a fishing clinic in Pella, Conservation Officer Harold Carter shows the kids how it's done. Designed to make better fishing through better fishermen, such instruction is an important fish management tool.

## FISHING FEVER AND FISHING CLINICS

With warm weather, summer rains, and a rise in fishing fever, requests for Conservation Commission Fishing Clinics have been on the upswing.

Special outdoor schools on fishing methods, these clinics are conducted by state fisheries personnel and conservation officers, usually on streambanks or lakeshores.

About 25 of the programs were given last year, and several have been held this summer. They include instruction in the use of bait-rods, spinning rods, fly rods and cane poles, as well as surface, sub-surface and bottom baits and lures. The clinics also cover material on fishes, their habits, water conditions, and other angling sidelights.

Such clinics evidently pay off.

On Monday, May 28, a fishing clinic was held for a group of Soil Conservation Service technicians near Osceola on the shore of a small lake.

A conservation officer, demonstrating correct use of the spinning rod, cast a lure into the lake and turned to speak to the group. As he spoke, a 15-inch bass slammed the lure. This was positive to the students, and the afternoon 20 of them went fishing in the lake, and putting their newly-learned knacks to use, caught 50 bass.

Fishing clinics are usually held for groups ranging from a dozen to 30 or 40 persons.

Any group interested in holding a fishing clinic is urged to contact their local state conservation officer, who will help arrange a program.





Stempel congratulates his dog for retrieving a prairie chicken while his hunting dog holds a brace of quail. The shotguns burned black powder, and the well-dressed nimrod wore a coat and knee-high leggings.

## Prairie Chicken . . .

(Continued from page 50)

They would dust, and might return to the same dusting area for weeks."

"Our good hunters would bide their time after they saw a flock of birds alone for several hours until their craws were filled with corn. Once they were fed up, they weren't too anxious to fly, and would get up one at a time. The birds were usually well-scattered through a field, and it offered good shooting sometimes."

"We seldom hunted them in bad weather. I think that they spent many days near their roosting grounds, and seemed quite wild. In any weather they fed late in the day, if they fed at all."

He estimates that during an average October he could kill a half-dozen prairie chickens in one afternoon. On a late October day in 1904, Mrs. Stempel saw about 200 birds wing high over the house. Instead of heading on east as they usually did, they swerved and lit on a flat hilltop nearby. Max took several birds from that flock.

Max Stempel still lives in Macedonia. He's now 84, with over 60 years of hunting to look back on.

He's burned a lot of powder in those 60 years, and has gun dogs buried from Macedonia to Hastings, all on their old hunting grounds. Although he still does some hunting, he hasn't killed an Iowa chicken since an autumn afternoon in 1910.

Even when he killed his first prairie chicken around 1888, the birds were already on their way out. A prairie species, they couldn't withstand the impact of agriculture, and the vast pinnated grouse populations were broken up with the native sod. Every patch of prairie plowed under destroyed another niche of grouse habitat.

Today, prairie chickens still cling doggedly to a small portion of southern Iowa. In 1946, biologists reported about 200 chickens in small flocks or as stray singles within the area from Lamoni to Pulaski, and from the Missouri line up to the vicinity of Hume-ston.

Since 1950, a record has been kept of a resident flock using booming grounds in Appanoose County. In that year, some birds remained in a few sections of land on the Missouri line in a range southwest of Cincinnati and near Corydon. These birds seemed to

be living in both Missouri and Iowa.

In 1955, no birds were using the Appanoose County area, and none were reported near Corydon. This spring one cock bird was heard on the old booming grounds south of Corydon.

The great flocks of prairie chickens had to go. There wasn't much choice: either agriculture or the prairie chicken. We couldn't have both in quantity.

But although prairie chicken hunting is finished in Iowa, the birds survive in fair numbers in other prairie states and growing

interest in their welfare will undoubtedly result in their increase.

If Iowa hunters ever feel nostalgia about the passing of our pinnated grouse, they should count their blessings. The niche vacated by the prairie chicken was filled—and superbly—by a tough, gaudy old immigrant.

It was a lucky trade in the nick of time; one fine game bird for another. We'll never be that lucky again. Because if the ringneck pheasant fades from Iowa for lack of habitat, there probably isn't another upland game bird in the world that can fill the gap.



Jim Williams of Harper's Ferry does most of his stump dunkin' with a long spinning rod. In the background, Ben Quillan uses a fly rod. The men were fishing near the channel dam at Lynxville on the upper Mississippi.

## Stump Dunkin' . . .

(Continued from page 49)

eral good rock bass can be taken in one location. If nothing happens, there's always another stump.

Like all Mississippi fishing, you're never quite sure what to expect. Messing around stumpy backwaters may result in rock bass or bluegills; then again, you

may catch something else. There's nothing like catching a good black bass when you're after panfish.

And, like fishing anywhere, you won't always find stump dunkin' productive. In that case you can soothe your disappointment by working the running sloughs for bass, or fishing the channel or wing dams for walleyes, catfish or saugers.—J.M.



Rock bass closely resemble bluegills in shape and size, but have red eyes. With "blood in his eye," the little scrapper readily takes worms, minnows and flies.



# NEW FISH BOOK AVAILABLE

The new edition of "Iowa Fish and Fishing," the handbook of Iowa anglers, is now available from the State Conservation Commission.

The 377-page book, written by Assistant Director James Harlan and Biology Superintendent Everett Speaker of the Conservation Commission, has twice as many color illustrations as previous editions. The book now contains a total of 18 color plates by artist Maynard Reece, covering 63 species of Iowa game fish, rough fish, minnows and darters. A total of 39 new fish are included in the additional color plates.

## New Chapters; Revisions

New additions in the text total 140 pages.

There are new chapters on the distribution of Iowa fish, the use of natural baits and baiting, and a summary of Iowa fishing tackle. There is a new identification key by Dr. Reeve M. Bailey of the University of Michigan and a new section on the state-owned accesses to fishing waters. The sections on angling have all had major revisions and extensions.

## Early Praise

One of the first comments on the new edition came from Russ Graham, outdoor columnist for the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* and president of the Iowa Writers' Association. Graham wrote: "Beyond a doubt this is the best book bargain offered anywhere in the country."

John Garwood, outdoor columnist for the *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, wrote: "Every Iowa fisherman and fisherwoman should have a copy of this beautiful new book in his or her library. Besides pride of possession of a wonderful edition, it's chock full of fishing lore and fishing information, making it all the more valuable."

## Scientific and Popular

"Iowa Fish and Fishing" is the only book of its kind, a volume published by a state fish and game department containing full scientific and popular information on fish and fishing. Although written by and for Iowans, it has proven valuable to midwestern anglers

## Trips . . .

(Continued from page 51)

currents slacken and drop their loads. This is where catfish are, filling up on an easy supply of food. These places will usually be in deep holes and in tailwater holes below rapids, riffles and dams. Also twitch, pull or drag the bait or combine these methods with drift-fishing in and around these deep water haunts.

When catfish are on the move and feeding at twilight, night, or in turbid waters, driftfish, twitch, or drag baits in or near these deep holes and on adjacent gravel bars

where catfish go to forage on minnows, small fish, crayfish, insects and dead foods.

If you do still-fish sluggish or quiet holes during the daytime and shoals at night, don't leave your baits on the bottom for long intervals. Fish a hole or shoal area no longer than 15-20 minutes and then move if you have no strikes. Find the hungry fish instead of waiting for them to find your baits. This is particularly true when fishing deep holes during the day. At twilight, night and in turbid water, the fish will often find your baits. But even then the best tech-

nique is to move your bait occasionally. After the first 10 or 15 minutes, carefully and quietly twitch, drag or pull the bait, usually by a jerky turn or two of the reel handle every few minutes. This is true for any type of fishing, fish or bait.

Even though a bait is living or appealing to the smell-taste of fish, a movement of the bait sets up vibrations readily sensed by fish. A combination of smell-taste and vibration appeal is hard to beat for attracting catfish to a bait.

Many new colorplates are contained in the new book, some of which are shown here. Included are plates of minnows and darters—species seldom depicted in good color illustrations.

and is widely used as a sportsman's reference and a school text throughout the nation.

The new edition may be obtained by sending \$2.50 in cash, check or money order to the State Conservation Commission, East 7th and Court, Des Moines. Copies will also be available at the Fish and Game Exhibit Building during the State Fair.

## Color Plates Available

The 18 color plates contained in the book may be obtained separately from the text. They are available in two forms: poster and portfolio.

The full set of 18 color plates on two poster sheets, each 22½ x 34½ inches, may be purchased for \$2. Suitable for framing in schools, clubs or other public places, the

posters are mailed postpaid in heavy mailing tubes. Both sheets will be sold, and may not be purchased separately.

Also available is a portfolio of separate color plates, each mounted on heavy green paper. They are ideal for personal use, as gifts, or for framing in home or den. They are mailed postpaid in heavy manila envelopes for \$2 per set.

## OPENING DAY

One of the best of many opening day comments was one from a column by Red Smith in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

"It is an article of faith that fish are by no means essential to fishing, but evidence of their presence does add something to a sport that is almost perfect without them."

Sticking or stubborn zippers on outdoor clothes can be made free-running when lubricated with stick paraffin.

