

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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IOWA'S BEAVER, AND HOW THEY GREW

IS THE FOX BEING FRAMED?

John Carlton
Outdoor Editor
Dubuque Telegraph Herald

Is the fox truly responsible for decline in pheasant populations? Circumstantial evidence has produced a growing number of accusations from sportsmen throughout the nation, but conservation officials have come up with findings to the contrary.

For many years observers have been content to accept the surface indications of simple population comparisons, and when it is discovered that an increase in fox abundance was accompanied by a corresponding decrease in pheasant numbers it is understandable that they would jump to the obvious conclusion.

As a result the fox has emerged as a cold-hearted killer who is responsible for the evident drop in the nation's pheasant population as well as a downward trend in the number of other upland game birds and various species of small mammals.

But still wildlife technicians stick to their guns and declared adverse weather during nesting and early brood periods as mainly responsible for the drop in pheasant ranks.

Moreover they recognize that a surprisingly large number of pheasants fall victim to motorized equipment, changes in crops and increased hunting pressure which unfortunately includes both legal and illegal means.

But here's the point: Conservationists in the state of New York spent two years carefully executing a study to produce some concrete facts regarding the relationship between pheasants and foxes. The New York Conservation Department proceeded to choose an area well suited to the interests of the study, central Seneca County embracing 88,650 acres of land similar to Lake Plain, the best pheasant hunting country in New York.

Divided by Seneca Lake, the region included both red and gray



With his powerful incisor teeth, a beaver wrenches out large chips and easily fells good-sized trees in a few hours. The tender, succulent bark of the upper branches is a staple winter food, and the wood itself is not eaten.

CLOSER LOOK AT IOWA'S FORESTS

This seems to be the year for surveys, and for taking stock of Iowa's natural resources.

The latest study is one released by the Central States Forest Experiment Station, a regional research unit of the U. S. Forest Service. Taken in 1954 and released this summer, the survey is concerned with Iowa forest statistics, and reveals figures surprising in a state generally assumed to be cultivated, cash grain land.

The survey figures answered many questions but created others,

for they present a picture of a vast land crop that is being little used by the owners.

In our heavily agricultural state, which includes 36 million acres, there are 2,600,000 acres of forest—7% of the total land area. All but 25,000 acres of this timbered total is classed as commercial forest land from which sawlumber and other forest products may be harvested. Of the total noncommercial forest acreage, the state owns 23,000 acres on which timber cutting is restricted (parks and

John Madson
Education Assistant

Back in the time when Halloween and Fourth of July were noisy and dangerous and interesting, a small sideshow came to Ames.

The advance publicity had most of us boys pretty excited. As I recall, it touted shrunken heads, Jesse James' guns, and all sorts of marvelous things. But what shook us more than anything else was the stellar attraction: a living, 50-pound rat. We'd never seen anything like that.

For several days the Tribe swiped every milk bottle in sight—our coin of the realm—until we had the price of ten tickets. Never has a dollar been so well spent.

Sure, it turned out that the giant "rat" was a fat beaver that slept most of the time. Somewhere along the line the show owner had learned that rats and beavers were distant cousins in the order *Rodentia*, and with a little teleological reasoning rats became beavers and beavers became rats. But it didn't make much difference to us. We'd never seen a beaver, either.

Nor had many other Iowans. In the early 1930's, beavers were strictly for the story books.

But even then, unknown to most of us, a few of the huge rodents were reappearing in northwestern Iowa. In 1932, some of their sign was found along the Little Sioux, probably made by a few beaver wandering downstream from the upper Missouri. Wherever they came from, the beavers took hold, and in the mid-1930's a population eruption occurred along the Little Sioux and other northwestern rivers.

From Interest To Anger

At first, the novelty of beaver dams excited great interest. Then, concern. And finally, anger, as the animals flooded low pastures and fields with their dams and felled trees along ditch banks and lake-shores. Within ten years after their reappearance, beavers became so numerous in some areas that they were trapped under special permits.

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Iowa Conservationist

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Sportsmen to be Proud of

Some Nebraska sportsmen dipped their guns in a grand salute to the whopping cranes in mid-October, and merely watched while hundreds of white-fronted geese grazed peacefully along the shores of a Nebraska reservoir.

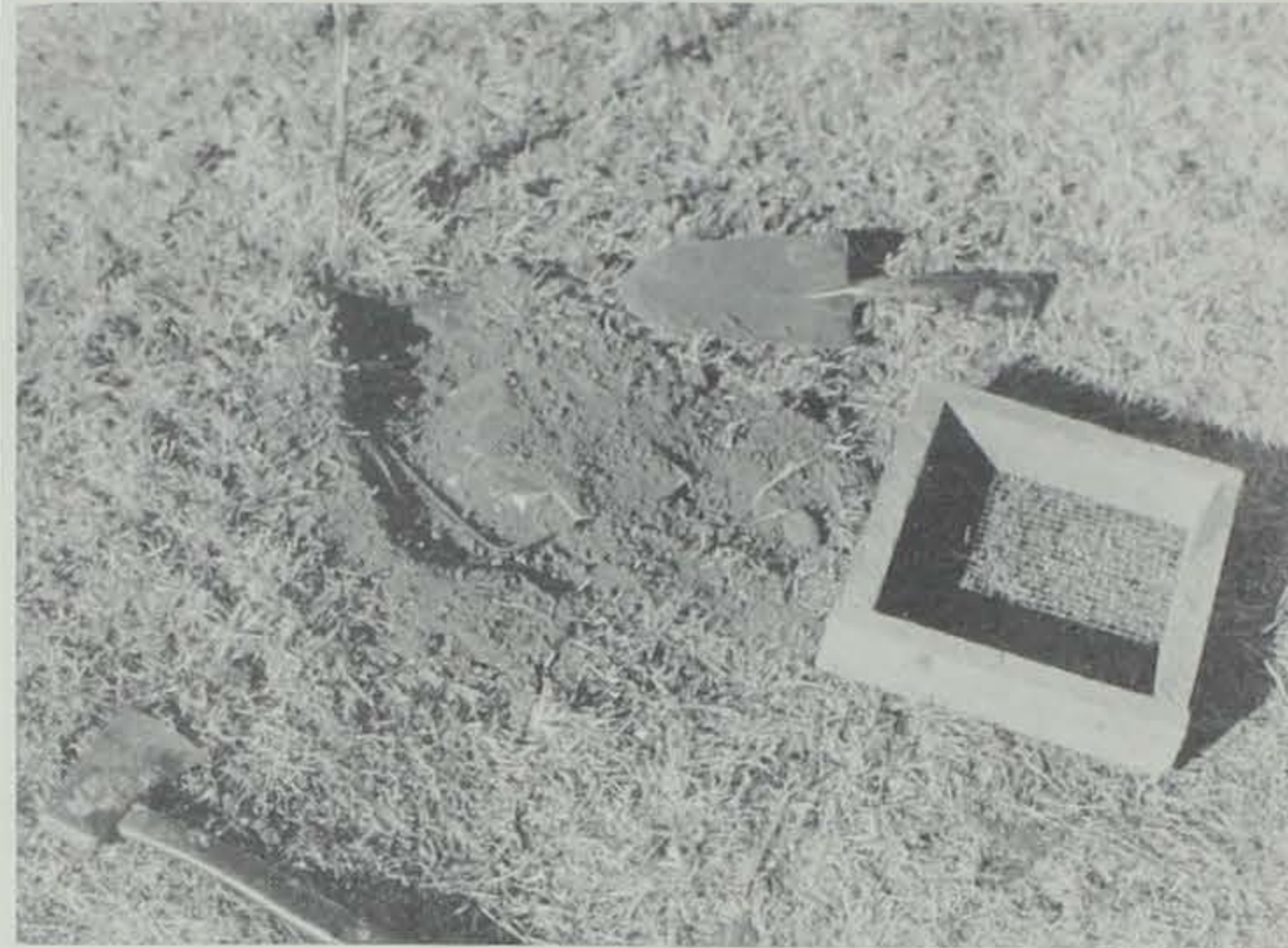
It was the presence of two of the few remaining whooping cranes, stopping in the goose flock to rest on their southward migration, which caused the hunters to stay their fire. With only two whooping cranes in a flock of several hundred geese, the chances of killing a crane by trying to bag a goose were very small—but the hunters declined to take even that small chance of hitting them.

At the same time an advance guard of five weary whoopers arrived at Aransas Refuge in Texas—so tired, observers say, that for a long while they huddled in the marsh with wings drooping and heads down, apparently exhausted from the long flight which started days before near Great Slave Lake in the Canadian north.

One of the five was a young-of-the-year. A sixth whooper, the one which did not migrate north last spring, is still at Aransas, and eight more adults since have completed their migration, bringing the total up to 14 by late October.

One other brightening bit of news came out of Nebraska. The bird which had been killed by striking a power line was not a whooping crane as first reported, but a white pelican. This leaves the known casualties of the flock this year to one wounded or injured bird which has been seen at several places along the migration route lagging behind some other whoopers but gamely making progress toward its winter resting grounds at Aransas.

There were 28 whooping cranes at Aransas last winter. Only 25 of these went north in the spring. One crane disappeared during the winter and is presumed to be the victim of a predator. A second was injured and captured, and now is doing well in the zoo at San Antonio, Texas. The third is the one which remained at Aransas.



One of the simplest fox sets, the "dirt hole bait set" is also one of the deadliest. It must be carefully watched during winter weather to prevent the trap from freezing in.

FOR FOXES: THE DIRT HOLE BAIT SET

At the past two Iowa State Fairs, a surprising number of visitors to the Conservation Commission Exhibit Building have been stopped by the trapping exhibit.

The display showed several methods of taking foxes and coyotes, and included many standard traps and trapping equipment. The officer on duty struck up a conversation with one farmer, and asked him, "Going to make a little money this winter? What are you going to trap?"

"Nope and foxes," the man answered with a grin. Then he explained: "I don't expect to much more than break even this winter on foxes. But what I like is that it helps give me something to do. It fills the gap between hunting season and fishing, gets a man out of the house and into the open. At least, that's the way it started. Lately, it's gotten to be one of my favorite sports."

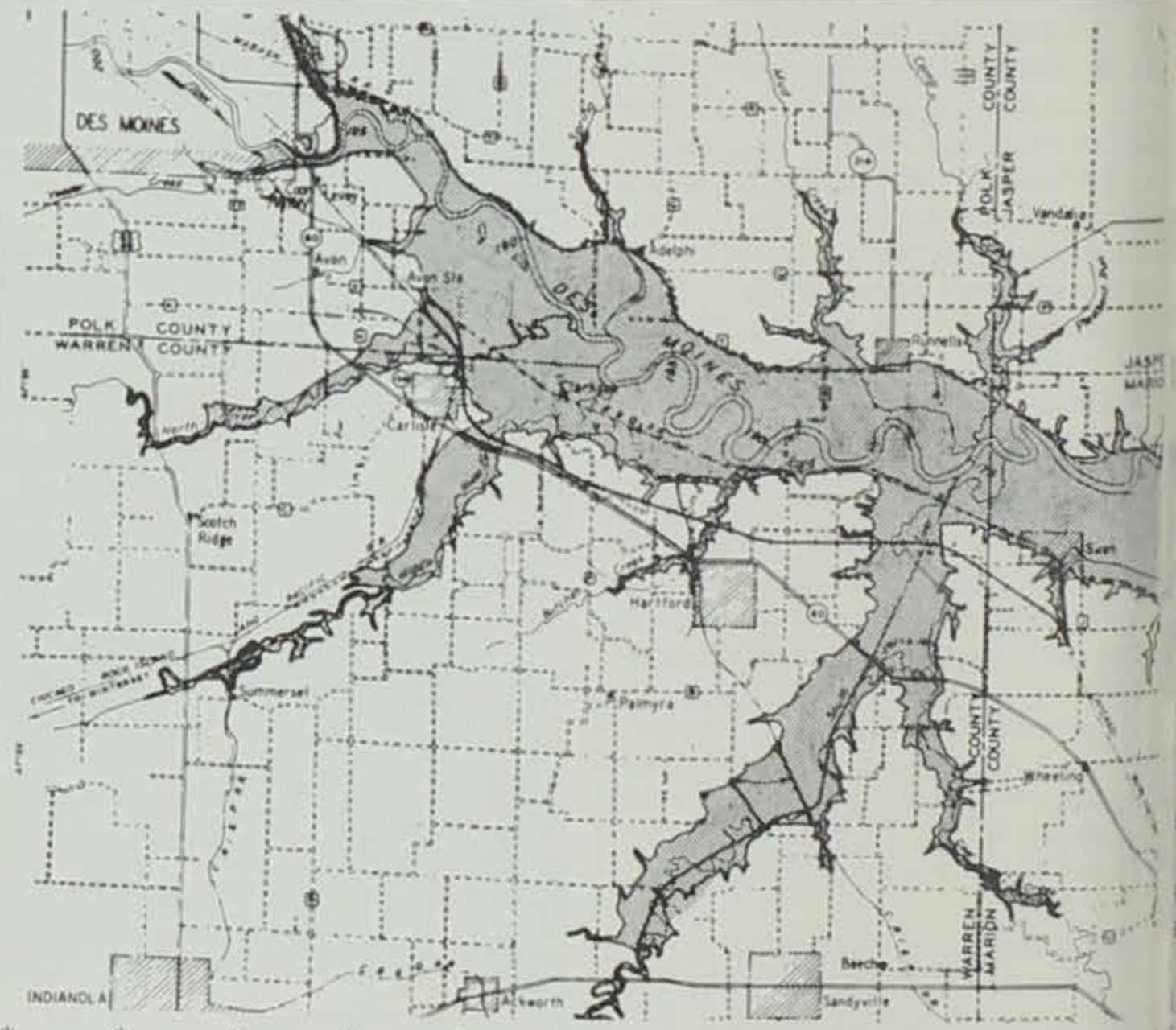
A lot of Iowans will go along with that. Foxes are becoming an important game species these days, for they fill the gap between Christmas and spring, brightening those gloomy days of late winter. In recent years, many farmers have attended state trapping schools and local sportsmen's clubs have carried on active winter programs by 1) furnishing traps to such farmers, and 2) by conducting club trapping programs with all members active.

No Mystery

There's no deep secret about trapping foxes, and most good trappers consider it a simple procedure. Tom Berkley, Area Game Manager who has held many trapping schools and taught hundreds to outwit foxes and coyotes, sheds some light on a particularly effective method.

"If there's any secret in fox trapping," Tom comments, "it's in setting the trap in the proper place."

Berkley believes that the best location for a fox trap is either within a few yards of a fox trail or in an area being used by foxes for hunting. The veteran trapper scouts his territory carefully, watching for signs such as tracks, droppings, or spots where foxes have dug out mice.



PART OF RED ROCK'S FLOOD POOL

Shown above is part of the Warren and Marion county area the federal government will buy as an emergency flood pool for the proposed Red Rock dam on the Des Moines River in Marion County.

However, not all of the land will be permanently flooded. It will be purchased by the government and then can be leased back to the owners, who may put it into crops with the understanding that the government is not responsible if the land floods. In the upper reaches of the emergency flood pool, where the Army Corps of

One of his deadliest fox sets is the time-honored dirt hole bait set, a method regularly taught and used by Berkley and other Area Game Managers and Conservation Officers. This set is supposed to convince Br'er Fox that some other fox has either been digging out its dinner, or has buried a fragrant morsel in a small hole.

For this set—as well as other fox sets—Berkley prefers either No. 2 fox traps or No. 2 or No. 3 double spring traps.

Other equipment used includes:

- Trap stakes
- A hatchet for cutting and hammering, and a small trowel for digging.
- A ground cloth of clean canvas about three feet square, to be used for kneeling while making the set and for removing dirt that is excavated.
- Several 5"x7" clean cloth trap pan covers, and/or waxed paper for covering trap pans.
- A dirt sifter made of 1/4" hardware cloth.
- Bait, and a small bottle of fox scent.

Drags may be used, or the trap may be staked in place. A staked trap does not require special drags but will often result in the trapped fox's destroying the set area. Fox scents are available from many sources.

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Engineers estimate the probable frequency of flooding at less than once in three years, the government will buy only flowage rights. That is, the government may leave the land in possession of the present owners and pay a lump sum to cover damages that may occur from flooding, or enter into agreement as to damages to be paid for crop losses due to flooding.

—Indianola Record Herald

At present, the Red Rock impoundment is being intended for flood control purposes only. According to engineers, there are no plans to hold an impoundment of any size for recreational purposes nor for water storage except under flood conditions.—Ed.



CHRISTMAS MEMO TO A SPORTSMAN'S WIFE

My favorite helpmeet.

From: Her loving man.

Subject: Yuletide gifts.

Hi, honey! Just a brief note to help you out at what I know is a busy time of year. You know me, sweetheart. I've always hated to see you under strain. Like the other day, when I hunted up the snowshovel for you. Or when I canceled your charge account at the store so you wouldn't worry so much about debts.

Well, Christmas being what it is, confusion and all—I thought I'd relieve you of some burdens. Poor thing; what with planning Christmas dinner and trimming the tree, you're probably wondering about your last-minute Christmas shopping.

Worry no more, old darlin'! Here are some last-minute Christmas presents I'd be pleased to see in my stocking, and they're available almost anywhere at low cost:

1. New hip boots: standard, large ankle, or ankle fit. Take my word, size off my old pair.
2. Walking boots, either all rubber or all leather, insulated or non-insulated. Should be at least one size larger than my street shoes.
3. Game calls: crow, duck, goose and "varmint."
4. A suit of the new insulated underwear for cold weather.
5. Good woolen socks with nylon reinforced heel and toe. Buy the best and heaviest available.
6. A zipper duffle bag for carrying extra hunting clothes and other equipment in the car.
7. A good rainshirt of parka length and with attached hood. Preferably a pullover model.
8. Boat cushions for next summer's boating. Or, a swivel boat seat that clamps in the boat.

9. A small oil-burning stove for duck blinds and winter fishing shacks. Portable.

10. Electric or gasoline lantern.
11. A nylon web block and tackle outfit for the car. Can be used to pull car out of mud, etc.

12. A rubber-covered anchor for use in metal boats.

13. Gun cases and shell boxes.
14. A good tackle box with plenty of divided, cork-lined compartments. The bigger the better.

15. A lunch kit, including a good thermos bottle and sandwich boxes. I prefer plastic drinking cups that don't get too hot.

16. Good wool shirts!
17. Insulated vest to wear over shirt, but under coat.

18. A good windproof cigarette lighter.

19. Soft soleless camp moccasins. Or, lowcut canvas sneakers to wear around boats and waters.

20. A bolo knife—or machete with sheath—for cutting light firewood, duck blind materials, etc.

21. An auxiliary gas tank for the outboard motor.

22. An electric razor that can be plugged into the lighter outlet of the car.

23. A roomy mapcase for the car.

24. A complete first aid kit for car and camp. Should contain tourniquet, scissors, plenty of iodine, bandages, compress, inhalants, swabs and adhesive tape and burn salve.

25. Zipper reel covers to mount over fishing reels while driving down dusty roads.

26. Light poplin jacket for cool, windy weather.

27. Pair of heavy duty kitchen shears for tough game bones and

skin. Eases wifely kitchen burden.

28. Good shooting glasses.
29. Pair of small, wide-angle binoculars that are carried easily in the pocket.
30. Light, thin buckskin gloves for hunting in mid-fall weather.
31. A light training rope for my hunting dog; about 50 feet long.
32. An extra spool for my spinning reel (be sure of make and model), equipped with a lighter line than the one I'm now using.
33. Miscellaneous stuff for the toe of the stocking:

powder solvent
gun and reel grease and oil
aerosol waterproofing solution
bootlaces
handwarmer and fuel
fingernail clippers for cutting
leaders and knots
hone for fish hooks
small longnose pliers and screwdriver for tackle box
ferrule cement for fishing rods
good mosquito dope and head net
shear pins for outboard motor

Well that's about it for now, old buddy. I may think of some more later. Don't buy anything like guns, fishing rods, lures, reels or similar items. I prefer to choose them myself and besides, I don't want you worrying about their cost. You've got enough on your mind.

All my love,
Your happy husband



WARDENS' TALES

The story of a boy and his hunting dream that came true has been sent in by Duane Luchtel, Woodbury County's new conservation officer.

Gary Fender, 15, of Sloan, has nursed an ambition for several years to kill a deer with a bow and arrow. Earlier this year he had earned extra money selling cobs, and his windfall had been earmarked for school clothes. But the temptation was too much, and Gary bought a deer license instead.

Until the time he purchased his license, the young bowman had been practicing with a 60-pound bow, which was just a little too much for him. An older friend loaned him a 42-pound bow for the hunting season. This was much better, and Gary took to the woods.

On his seventh hunting trip this fall, he was hunting a Missouri River sandbar that was overgrown with willows when he saw a large

buck and four does some distance away. For some unknown reason, the buck left the does and trotted to within 40 yards of the hidden hunter. Gary gave a low whistle and the deer turned to give a clear broadside shot.

The boy's first arrow struck the deer in the head, putting it down for a "4-count." While the animal was still groggy, Gary ran closer and put a fatal arrow into its chest.

Gary is the youngest hunter known to have killed his deer with bow and arrow, and possibly the youngest successful Iowa deer hunter with any weapon.

Paul Leaverton, Superintendent of Game, had a call the other day about another successful hunter also named Gary. This nimrod was Gary Buel of Diagonal, who was recently allied with a fox on a successful goose hunt.

Gary was sneaking on a flock of geese in a cornfield but the birds flew just before the hunter was within gun range. Just as Gary thought his hunting efforts were in vain, he heard a lone goose honking wildly some distance away in the cornfield.

The hunter sprinted over to the sound, and found a goose caught by a fox and complaining mightily. As Gary yelled and ran toward the fighters, the fox dropped the goose and ran off.

Gary didn't get the fox, but he collected the goose.

BITTEN BY "CUTE" FLYING SQUIRREL INSIDE APARTMENT

"He was so cute and cuddly."

That's the way Sally Jane Huddy, 24, of Des Moines, described a small gray flying squirrel that climbed in her open third-floor apartment window late one night recently and bit her on the right ring finger when she tried to put it out.

Miss Huddy said she was watching a late television show when she heard a noise by her window. She investigated, and the small squirrel darted into her apartment. She chased it around the apartment for an hour before catching it.

Police were called after the squirrel bit Miss Huddy. They took her to Broadlawns General Hospital, where she was treated and released.

The officers took the squirrel to the Animal Rescue League where it died. Authorities said it would be examined for rabies.—Des Moines Tribune.

Flying squirrels are quite common in Iowa, but are rarely seen because of their nocturnal habits. Unless extremely frightened, they may be handled safely. However, such handling often results in the death of the little animals. They are quite delicate, and a slight squeeze that would not harm a fox squirrel may have fatal results for a flying squirrel.—Ed.



Jim Sherman Photo

Beavers are big, and weights of fifty pounds are not uncommon. The large, flat tail is not used as a hod for carrying building materials, but comes in handy as a rudder, a prop, and for sounding alarms. The large hind feet are webbed, an unusual feature in mammals.

Iowa's Beavers . . .

(Continued from page 89)

Some Iowa farmers waged pathetic, lopsided battles against the big woodcutters. When one farmer's cows couldn't cross a large beaver pool from their pasture, he tore out a section of the dam to drain the pool. The next morning the dam was rebuilt, so the farmer tore it out again. And again the structure was repaired overnight. Finally, in a fit of stern resolution, he dynamited a large portion of the dam and placed a scarecrow nearby to insure the job. In a few days he found the dam completely rebuilt, with the scarecrow used in the repairs!

100 Pounds

The creature responsible for all this is North America's largest rodent—a sleek, dark-brown creature with a head for woodcutting and a paddle for a tail. It's a large mammal, and some very old, fat beavers may weigh as much as a hundred pounds. Iowa specimens weighing 87 pounds have been taken. It is said that beavers never cease growing, and their ultimate size is limited only by diet or death. One extinct beaver species was larger than a black bear and measured 7½ feet in length.

Most scientists debunk the beaver's intelligence and point out that its animal I.Q. is only 50 as compared with 100 for horse or dog. But in spite of his glazed

expression and low-gear mentality, the beaver does pretty well in his own province. For example:

Whenever possible, beavers dam up small streams, using the impounded pools as pantries for sunken food supplies. Their main winter diet is succulent tree bark, cut from the streambank. However, streamside trees may peter out, and many cases are recorded of beavers digging long canals to groves of inland food trees. Such canals may be built on several levels, with the lower ones filled with backwaters of the main pool and the upper levels fed by springs or other ponds. So these canals, extending hundreds of yards on occasion, may have several different "locks." The beavers swim up the canals, cut trees limbs into easily-handled sections, and float the billets down the canals to the home pond.

Master Builder

To most people, the dam is the beaver's trademark and masterpiece. Usually built up in a shallower portion of the stream, it is a solid structure of mud, stones, poles and waterlogged wood. As the dam is built, breaches are plugged with stones and mud. The animals do not carry mud on their flat tails, but with their forepaws. A beaver plastering a dam will sweep up an armful of mud, clutch it closely to his breast, and walk easily up the face of the dam on his hind legs, his trailing tail help-

ing to maintain balance. Even good-sized rocks may be moved in this fashion, or may be rolled and tugged into place. In some Iowa streams, limestone slabs weighing 20 pounds or more are built into the dams.

The completed dam is almost watertight, and may be strong enough to drive over. The longest one on record was on the Jefferson River in Montana, and measured 2,140 feet. It was twenty feet thick and twelve feet high—the patient labor of several generations of beaver.

On shallow streams, such dams are a life and death proposition. They provide pools deep enough for escape, and places to store winter food supplies of unpeeled limbs which are anchored to the pool bottoms with stones or mud. When winter seals his pool and cuts off other food supplies, the beaver swims under the ice to the bottom of his pool, selects a succulent aspen or poplar pole, and tows it back to his warm lodge for supper.

Escape From Indians

Beaver pools may contain at least one home lodge, a dome-shaped heap of sticks and mud perhaps seven feet high and 20 feet in diameter. An underwater entrance leads to a single room about five feet across and three feet high. Mountain man John Colter is said to have escaped from the Blackfeet in 1809 by diving into a beaver pool, swimming up the underwater entrance of a lodge, and hiding in the structure until the Indians gave up the search.

Not all beavers build dams or live in lodges. Iowa has many "bank beaver" that burrow into streambanks like muskrats. This is particularly true on bigger rivers where dams are not feasible, or in ponds or other waters where they are not needed. The entrance to the bank den is usually under-

water, and is connected to an underground chamber by a long tunnel. This high-domed room may reach to within a few inches of the earth's surface, and the roof sometimes breaks through. In which case the hole is thatched with poles, sticks and earth. Although such an exposed situation might be thought dangerous, remember that beavers are Iowa's second largest wild animal, immensely strong, and can take care of themselves.

Trails and Trees

A few years ago a western Iowa hunter heard one of his beagle hounds raging at such a riverbank den. While the hunter watched, the dog screwed up its courage and went charging into the hole. There was a scuffle, sounds of pained regret, and the dog came charging back out minus six inches of tail. With one slash, Ma Beaver had converted him back into a rabbit dog.

She made this conversion with the most powerful cutting teeth in the world. The beaver's great incisors never stop growing, but are so arranged as to wear the opposite teeth down. Each of the four incisors in the front of the mouth is faced with strong, tough enamel; the back of the tooth is softer dentine which wears away rapidly. This inequality of dental material causes the teeth to wear unevenly and results in razor sharp chisel edges that are always ready for cutting. The more they're used, the sharper they become.

Most of the beaver's woodwork is done with the powerful lower incisors; the upper teeth serve as an anchor point. Sitting at the base of a tree and steadied by his incredible tail, the beaver cuts a notch at a convenient height. He then shifts his teeth a little lower and with a powerful, cutting wrench tears out the intervening slab of wood. Seton claimed



Jim Sherman Photo

Many Iowa beavers are "bank beaver," which burrow into the banks of larger river. Such tunnels may be almost large enough for a man to enter, which isn't a very good idea.



Small streams Iowa beaver often build stout dams to impound their "living pools." Iowa, such pools can provide good fish habitat. In western mountains, beavers have been stocked to build reservoirs on summer cattle ranges.

aver can cut through a three-inch sapling in less than three minutes. It takes longer, but the animal can also fell cottonwoods over four feet in diameter.

And he even carries a toilet kit! The two inner toes of the hind feet have special combing claws with edges evenly divided into symmetrical, comblike teeth. They may be used to clean mud from the thick fur, and to redistribute that helps waterproof the rich felt. The second claw of each hind foot is split, and someone once suggested that after a meal the beaver could use these nails to pick the splinters from its teeth.

Blow Up 40 Dams

Since 1935, Iowa's widely distributed beaver population has multiplied in all parts of the state and has become a nuisance in a few areas. Game managers of the Conservation Commission are still allowed to dynamite beaver dams that endanger property, and from 1954-56 they blew up 40 dams in problem areas.

The first Iowa beaver season in over 75 years was set in 1949. It lasted only seven days, but in spite of the brief season and low price Iowa trappers netted 2,000 in a single week. The average price per pelt had dropped to \$10.50, as compared to the 1945 average of \$35.73. Last year's price for beaver pelts dipped to \$9.94. A reason for this drastic price drop was supply and demand; a few Iowa pelts that were sold in the early 1940's commanded premium prices because of the scarcity. As the national beaver population continued to rise and the take increased with lengthened seasons, high market prices for beaver collapsed with the demand. In spite of the lower price, values of beaver pelts may be well stabilized, and offer one of this year's best bets for trapping. The season will extend until March 1

to take advantage of late, prime pelts, and there are good beaver populations along Iowa's larger rivers.

It's interesting that Iowa deer and beaver made their comebacks together, and that both "wilderness species" came home and prospered long after the state was thoroughly civilized. But venison had been forgotten as a regular family food supply, and beaver hats were passé in the world's style marts. Under rigid game laws and the attitude of a public still numb from the swift disappearance of other native game species, deer and beaver returned to stay.

So even now—in a plowed, cultivated, supermarket Iowa—there are finer beaver streams than the ones Colter risked his hair for in the loud, red days of the Rockies.

Historical Note: In 1856 the Iowa legislature, having noted the vanishing game in the state, passed a law forbidding killing of wild turkeys between February 1 and July 15. It was the first game law, and also protected elk, deer, prairie chickens, grouse, and quail during the same months. In 1836, two decades earlier, hunters in Scott County had been selling turkeys at 25 to 50 cents and giving away prairie chickens as inducements to buy turkeys. "Wolf hunts and the chase for deer and turkey helped fill the dreary winter days," a Scott County pioneer wrote. Soon Iowa wild turkeys fell prey to market hunters who sold them as far away as St. Joseph. By 1881 turkeys were rare in most of Iowa counties, but in 1898 conservationists were still making efforts to prohibit killing wild turkeys in Iowa.—*Ottumwa Courier*.

A brightly colored marker with 25 feet of strong line and a sinker is never amiss in a boat. It would save much time and worry if it were a MUST.—*J.S.*

Fox . . .

(Continued from page 89)

foxes in equal proportion on both sides of the lake. The foxes averaged four to five per square mile and some portions had as many as nine per square mile.

The department chose to conduct its study on the region east of the lake where the pheasant population was estimated at three times that of the western half.

Started in the summer, the study followed a simple plan. Foxes were to be reduced to a minimum on the eastern section while they were to be untouched on the check area. Banded pheasants were released in each region in equal numbers through the summer.

Hunter check stations were established to compare banded stock and the proportion of native birds taken in the trapped area against the birds killed in the check zone to measure the effect of the removal of the foxes.

Aerial surveys of hunter density, winter pheasant trapping, pheasant crowing censuses and fox track counts were also included in the study.

Fox trapping operations were begun intensively in August of the first year until the hunting season began in October. Then trapping crews worked the fringes of the area to prevent infiltration.

Efforts ceased in March because the negligible number of foxes remaining did not justify the cost. During the period of control operations 607 foxes were taken on the trapped area, thus reducing the population of foxes from 75 to 80 percent in the first six months. Continued trapping maintained that reduction. Fox abundance on the trapped area was maintained at little more than 20 per cent of the level on the untrapped area.

Data for the following year were in close agreement with that for the first year.

Note the results:

Comparison of the data for



Pheasants have more than one enemy. Maybe the red fox is a scapegoat, being blamed for a pheasant toll caused by highway traffic, severe winters and mowing machines.

pheasant hunting success did not show any benefit from the control achieved. Neither could a significant difference be shown by adjusting the data to compensate for certain disparities in conditions which tended to decrease the relative rate of return on the trapped area.

In other words, even by leaning over backward as far as could be justified in favor of fox control, no appreciable gain in terms of pheasant abundance could be demonstrated.

Thus fox control in the area did not increase pheasant abundance appreciably and certainly not to a degree commensurate with the costs.

Findings in many other states are verifying defenses for the fox. Illinois reports that predators account for only 13 per cent of unsuccessful pheasant nests while mowing machines and other farming operations claim 42 per cent.

There is a growing feeling that Mr. Reynard is taking the rap for a crime he is not committing while the real culprits are laughing up their sleeves.

BIG STORY

Hunter with limit of Canadian Honkers:

"I went out the night before I got them, watched their feeding habits, tested the wind, dug a pit, slept in it all night and then this big flock came in the next morning. I picked this beauty out and let him have it. Then I picked the next biggest and dropped him within 10 feet of the pit."

What he was thinking:

"I couldn't hit a barn with a bucket of BB's. These two fell on the plowing beside my car as I was trying to get up courage enough to get out of the warm car. Some guy across the field must have hit them."—*Rock Valley Bee*.

Jim Sherman Photo



By measuring log diameters and lengths, foresters can estimate the total volume of a tree harvest. District Forester Gene Hertel, now head of the State Forest Nursery, jots down calculations for the volumes of oak logs.

Forests . . .

(Continued from page 89)

other recreation areas) and the remaining 2,000 acres are in municipal or other public ownership. The rest is a valuable—and largely neglected—resource.

Three Iowas

Such forest lands do not include small windbreaks and plantings around farmsteads. To qualify as "forest" in the survey, an area had to be at least one acre in size and strips of timber had to be at least 120 feet wide to be included as forest lands. "Commercial forest" was defined as that capable of producing usable or marketable crops of wood, usually sawtimber.

For the survey, Iowa was divided into three geographical units, the divisions being made on the basis of similar forest, soil or

economic conditions. The three zones were:

Northeastern Iowa: A 19-county area including northeastern and eastcentral Iowa. In the rugged uplands near McGregor in Allamakee County are remaining stands of northern hardwoods and remnants of the outliers of northern softwood species such as white pine and balsam fir. Since this area is often extremely rough and broken, and its soil acid, much of the land has remained in forest which occurs as typical woodlots relegated to poorer ground, and on the rough breaks and bottomlands bordering streams. Exceptions are on the bluffs along the Mississippi, where there are extensive tracts of continuous forest. By county, the percentage of land area occupied by forest ranges from 32

per cent in Allamakee County to four per cent in Benton County, which is a prairie climate.

Southeastern Iowa: This includes a 26-county area that contains fewer valuable forest species than the northeast, and lower timber volumes per acre than the rest of the state. Covering southeastern and southcentral Iowa, the amount of forest area in this district ranges from 26 per cent in Monroe County to 6 per cent in Webster County. Much tree planting has been done for windbreaks and to halt erosion of old fields.

Western Iowa: This is the Iowa of the geography books, a 54-county unit including the northern, northwestern and western flatlands of the state. Its soils are mostly of recent glacial origin, all of which developed under open, prairie conditions. The bulk of this area is in cultivated fields, and forests are confined almost entirely to watercourses, and much timber exists in "stringers" of trees along small drainages too narrow

hontas counties each contain less than 1 per cent of timber in their total land areas. On a state basis, the most heavily forested counties are Allamakee, Clayton, Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren and Lee.

Not all of this forest is top-grade timber. Years of highgrading—skimming off only the cream of the most valuable trees—have hurt timber stands in many areas. This, coupled with fire, poor harvesting methods, and grazing of woodlands with destruction of seedlings, have reduced the market quality of forests in many parts of the state.

Throughout Iowa, two forest types predominate: the elm-ash-cottonwood community typical of stream borders and lowlands, and the oak-hickory community of the uplands. These two types make up 87 per cent of Iowa's commercial timber. Our total sawtimber volume is about 5,100,000,000 board feet, of which two-thirds is in large sawtimber stands with the elm-ash-cottonwood types comprising



A modern chain saw makes quick work of a mature tree that's already past its prime. Heart rot has begun, reducing total board feet and the value of the log. An earlier cutting on the advice of a trained forester would have brought a better price.

or small in area to really qualify as forest land. On the loess soils of the Missouri River bluffs, bur oak grows in pure stands but consists mostly of small, scattered trees with little lumber volume. Bottomland hardwoods—cottonwood, American elm, and silver maple—are the predominant species throughout the prairie. The forest area averages only 3 per cent of the total land area, but rises as high as 11 per cent along the rugged Missouri River bluffs where bur oak forests predominate.

Strong Contrasts

These three geographical divisions show strong contrasts in tree cover. In Allamakee County, for example, over one-fourth of the total land area is in forest. Of its total land area of 409,000 acres, 132,000 acres are in timber. Neighboring Clayton County also contains over 100,000 acres of forest. By comparison, Grundy and Poca-

about 56 per cent. Northern red oak and white oak, two of our finest hardwood species, each contribute about 10 per cent of the total sawtimber volume.

A Doubled Yield

The survey report stated: "Saw timber stands in Iowa average 4,230 board feet per acre, and with a reasonable degree of management, these average volumes could probably be doubled. Stand composition of trees could benefit by the removal of overmature, poor quality and cull trees."

And what does all this mean to the owner?

Most tree management would be in farm forests, for Iowa farmers own more than two million acres—88 per cent of the total—of the state's timber. In many places, considerable portion of this is in valuable woods such as white oak, red oak, hard maple, walnut and others. But although the majority

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Jim Sherman Photo

Over one-fourth of Allamakee County, one of Iowa's most rugged and scenic areas, is forested. While other counties may have only scanty woodlots, the Iowa timber total is still 2,600,000 acres!



Jim Sherman Photo

ch fall sees more feminine hunters in the field, and many of them are expert shots. They are often quicker than men, have faster reflexes, and their mates—though they'd never admit it—are deeply proud of them.

NEVER TEACH YOUR WIFE TO HUNT,' SAYS DOCTOR, WHO'S LEARNED HIS LESSON

Dr. H. A. Somers

Never teach your wife to hunt. Experience is a painful teacher, but also a valuable one. It would seem that I had better pass along to other married men what I have learned.

Here I am. There are 23 years of happy married life behind me. I am the father of two husky teenage boys. I'm tolerated in some of the accepted circles and belong to some of the best clubs.

To find myself pushed 'way back to the chimney corner is rather hard to take. So, just in case some other male won't find himself in the same spot, let me tell you this story:

I started to hunt elk in 1945. Each year when I got back to civilization, nearly always with my wife, my wife listened respectfully to the tales of how we stalked, shot, dressed, transported and brought home the game, but the enthusiasm was lacking.

Also, the outlay of considerable money each fall for the hunting trip was rather hard to justify. A reasonable solution seemed to be to teach her to hunt and then all the making of excuses to go hunting each fall would not be needed.

Woe to any man who thinks like that.

A gunsmith friend of mine made a custom 30-60 for my wife, fitted it to her exact measurements and then spent several hours with her on the range until she was getting to be an average shot, which I thought was very good. This summer we fixed a running deer target at the base of a dirt cliff and shot close to 50 rounds apiece each weekend.

That practice was what really got me in trouble. She got so it was no trouble at all for her to put bullets in the front of the deer target.

This fall my wife, my sister, who never even shot a B.B. gun, my brother-in-law and I made arrangements with a cattle rancher to pack the four of us into elk country. The first day of the season saw us in good elk territory. While we were saddling the horses to ride out scouting for signs of elk, I happened to look up. There on the rim of the basin about a mile away was the biggest elk I have ever seen.

Well, I should have kept still but, like a lot of married men, I never know when to shut up. I casually mentioned that there was a bull elk on the horizon and that I was

going to give him a blast of my elk whistle.

That darn elk bugled right back and started down the mountain. I guess he must have had poor eyesight and thought all the horses tied to the trees were elk. Anyway, he came right on down.

The rest of us began to be a little excited, scurrying here and there behind trees so that we would be less visible and seeing that shells and guns were in the right places.

Everyone but my wife. She sat down calmly by a big tree and waited. The old elk kept coming down the mountain, stopped about 400 yards out, bugled, snorted and then came on, walking stiff-legged, head up, nose questing the light breeze for any telltale scent that might warn him, right on down to 125 yards and then stood still in some dwarf spruce trees.

I looked at my wife, expecting her rifle barrel to be going in circles, but she just raised her gun, took aim and . . . whammo! . . . down went the elk.

We were all pleased as everything that she had killed her first elk. We took pictures, helped dress it out and hung it on the meat pole.

The story should end here, but it doesn't. We kidded her, telling her that she had to stay in camp, no more hunting for her, she was all done and so on.

The next morning, my brother-in-law and I were hunting out pockets along a ridge about a mile from camp when we heard shots, apparently from the campsite. We thought she must have become bored and was doing a little target practice. We didn't think much about it.

But, when we came back to camp, my wife met us at the tent. She informed me that I was all through hunting elk, too, because my tag was on a big bull over by the dead trees.

Sure enough, there was the bull and there was my tag. She had started to dress him, so we finished the job and hung him on the meat pole.

The fact that she shot my bull would be bad enough, but add to it the fact that it was a seven-point, a royal head, bigger than the horse I was riding. It made things just a little worse.

Men, did you ever think of how it might feel to come home from hunting and have your friends say, "Gosh, too bad you are so feeble that your wife has to do the hunting?"

And, when you want to give someone a package of tough, old bull meat, you have to ask your wife first if you can give away some of her elk?

Now, men, I warn you. This thing could get out of hand.

Really, down deep, I am kind of proud of her and, while I am way back in the chimney corner, it is

MAY THIS FAMILY THRIVE IN IOWA

A little ceremony the other day near Salem, Iowa, signaled a pioneer effort of great significance to Iowans interested in diversifying and establishing new and basic industries.

That event was the dedication of 23 privately owned forest tracts as Iowa's first Tree Farm family their certification as tree farms to produce for the industrial market. The new tree farmers, in return for forestry services and other aids from the forestry industry give the participating companies first option to buy their output at prevailing market prices.

Thus 1,517 Iowa acres have been added to the nation's 40 billion acres of tree farm managed timberland. This beginning contribution for Iowa is not great but located as those 23 tracts are, in 12 counties of eastern and southeastern Iowa, they provide valuable pilot operations for other farmers who have substantial terrain that is best fitted for permanent timber growth.

For industrial growth, Iowa needs substantially more timber production. The price of lumber is eloquent evidence that tree growing can be a profitable use for lands that are otherwise worthless or of low productivity and high cost cultivation for other crops.

Despite Iowa's vast expanses of level lands, the state also contains considerable areas that could grow valuable trees, the kinds depending upon climatic variations. Sponsored by the Iowa Forest Industries committee, the Iowa Retail Lumberman's association and the Iowa Banking association, the tree farm program is going ahead. It has the co-operation of the state conservation commission. More than that, the soil bank program of the federal government promises additional aid in putting new acreage in timber and restoring timber growth to areas that should never have been cleared.

Siouxland has many areas where tree farming would fit well into water-soil conservation and watershed programs. Owners and operators of such areas now have before them an Iowa example, in the first Tree Farm Family, of what can be done to get conservation and profit through timber growing on such tracts. A considerable Tree Farm family is entirely within the realm of possibility for the areas in the vicinity of the Missouri River if conservation plantings are guided by that thought. —*Sioux City Journal*.

warming to think I had a little something to do with making my wife happy.

It gives me a tingle in the middle of my chest.

Just a little. . . —*Waterloo Courier*.



Many Iowa farmers have discovered an exciting winter sport: fox trapping. Harry Renaud, a farmer near Bondurant, took forty foxes last winter in his second year of fox trapping.

Jim Sherman Photo

Dirt Hole . . .

(Continued from page 90)

good companies. One widely used in Iowa is made by the National Scent Company of Chilhowee, Missouri. Good baits for foxes include parts of muskrat, rabbit, mouse or chicken.

Steps Into Trap

The dirt hole bait set is always made near a gopher mound, low bush, or clump of grass that has nearby fox sign—the sort of places where one might expect a fox to dig for mice or other food items. Also, if the set is made at the base of a gopher mound or bush, the fox is “forced” to approach the bait over the trap rather than coming to the bait from the rear and escaping the set.

To make his dirt hole bait set, Berkley first spreads out the canvas ground cloth, kneels on it, and with a trowel digs a hole two inches wide and five inches deep at about a 45° angle at the base of grass clump or gopher mound. He then digs a shallow hole directly in front of this slanting bait hole. This larger, shallow hole should be big enough to take the trap and its stake. Once at work, Tom touches a few objects on the ground as possible, and stays on the ground cloth. He does not spit or smoke while traveling to the set area, and avoids leaving any evidence of trapping activity.

He drives the trap stake in the center of the trap hole, and sets the trap so that the pan will be

about 6 inches from the bait hole. The trap is placed so that the line of the jaws point toward the bait hole. The fox must then step over the hinges of the jaws, and not over the jaws, which might then throw his foot from the trap as it is sprung.

The ground under the trap should be level and firm. A cloth

pan cover or square of waxed paper is placed under the trap and jaws and over the pan to protect it during freezing weather. Berkley believes that one of the biggest headaches is our on-again, off-again winters. Alternate freezing and thawing can cause a trap to freeze in solidly. So it is wise to completely reset traps after thaws or freezing rains, covering them again with fine, dry dirt that has been prepared at home.

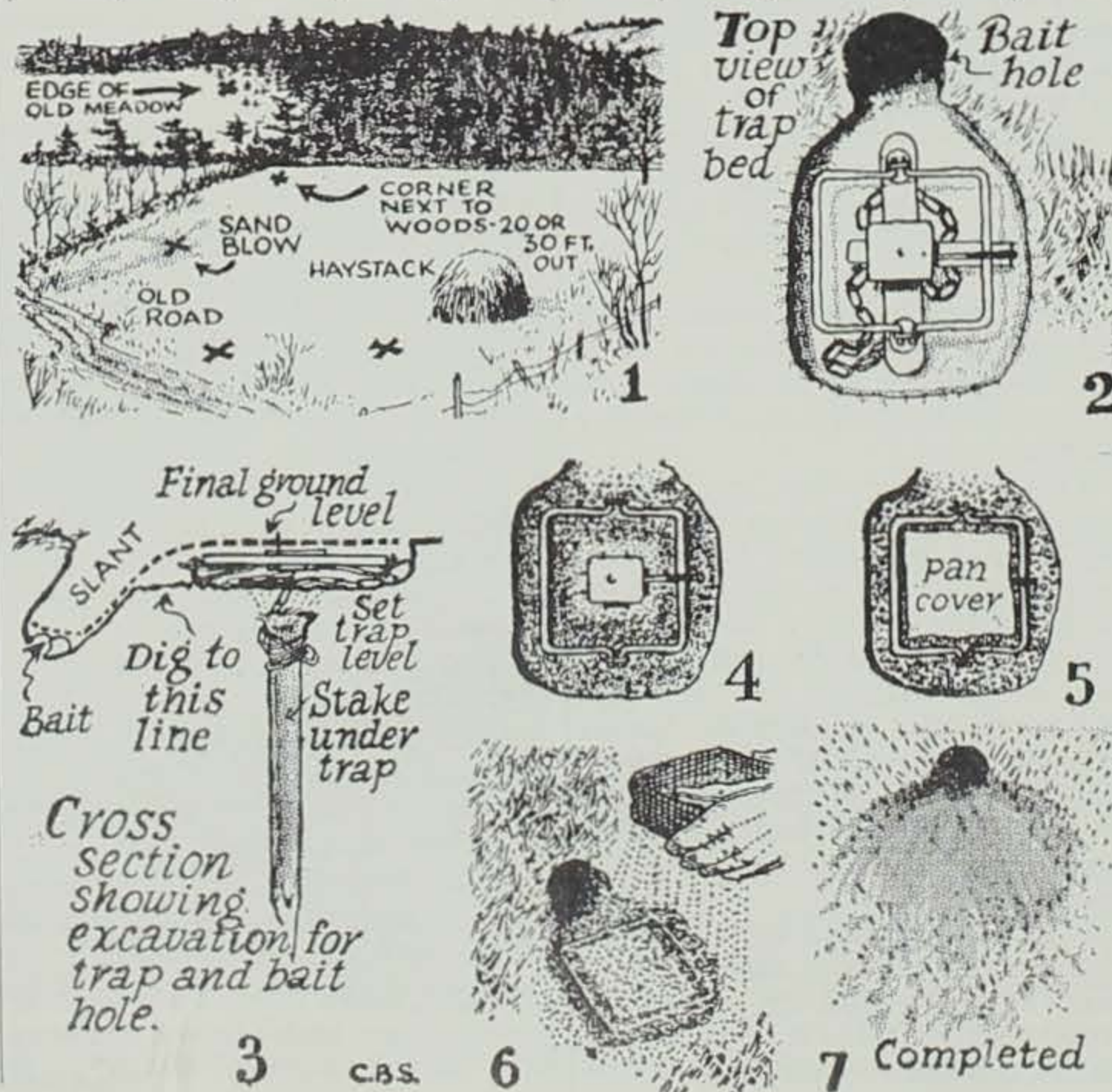
Final Touches

With the sifter, cover the trap with ½ inch of fine dirt, smooth with a twig, and bait the set. At the bottom of the bait hole, place a small lump of the bait. Some trappers may sprinkle a drop or two of fox scent nearby, but it should be used sparingly. All excess dirt should be kept on the ground cloth and carried some distance away to be discarded.

Tom usually finishes his bait hole set with a few touches of his own. He likes to scratch a little around the bait hole to simulate fox activity. He may then bunch his thumb and first three fingers and make some very credible fox “tracks” in the soft dirt over the trap and around the entrance of the bait hole. So far, he’s never trapped himself. If he ever does, his friends will be the last to find out.

The current price of fox pelts isn’t very high, but there is a \$2 bounty in all counties. With any luck, you’ll defray expenses, and break even. Even if you don’t make any money at winter fox trapping, you’ll at least be getting a free ride to one of our most exciting winter sports.

One last point. The traps should be run every day. It’s the only humane thing to do, and if you can’t inspect your traps at frequent, regular intervals, don’t set them at all.—J.M.



Forests . . .

(Continued from page 94)

of Iowa’s sawtrees are elm, cottonwood, ash and similar species with less commercial value than others, they may furnish needed lumber for general farm use. In addition, important commercial uses are being found for elm, cottonwood and other species formerly not considered as our best trees. Bullpens need not be made of clear pine, and the average hog doesn’t care whether he’s housed in walnut or elm.

With no damage to the timber stock, a steady harvest can be realized from much of this two million acres of farm forest.

The State Conservation Commission has five farm foresters ready to help the landowner—to cruise his timber, set up a tailor-made management plan, mark trees for harvest, and advise in marketing logs or using native lumber on the home farm. For the 1954-56 biennium, these five foresters advised 272 sawmill operators and helped them in locating sawlogs for their mills. The foresters also gave assistance to 787 landowners in woodland management. Some of these landowners sold timber on the stump for a total gain of \$68,998. Some felled and dragged logs for pickup by sawmill operators, and grossed \$78,824.

Not much of a crop income as compared to cash grain, but it was a boost to many farm incomes. Timber will never be one of Iowa’s primary crops, but why overlook sawtrees that can mean cash or savings in farm maintenance? Trees cannot be “saved”. Like any other land crop, they reach a harvestable maturity and if they are allowed to pass this peak they will steadily decline until they are worthless. Trained farm foresters can determine the peak condition of trees, and will provide all the harvesting and marketing information necessary to insure the best, long-run returns to the owners.

These foresters, and their stations, are:
Allan D. Allyn, Box 218, Fairfield, Iowa.
Don Campbell, Shimek State Forest, Farmington.
Robert Matheson, 614 N. 5th, Chariton, Iowa.
William Ritter, Yellow River Forest, McGregor.
Duane Stoppel, Adel.

This preliminary survey report did not reveal lumbering income and total tree harvest, but we suspect that only a small percentage of Iowa timber is being properly managed, and a staggering number of board feet must be wasted through neglect and indifference.

We’re anxious to see the complete study. Perhaps it will reveal why many farmers do not manage their timber as they do their croplands, and why they are passing up additional farm income at a time when it’s so badly needed.—J.M.