

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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Iowa Beaver — Unharvested Plenty

Roger R. Fliger

OPENING DAY AT ODESSA

Stan Widney

When the boss told me to go to Lake Odessa to observe the opening of the duck season I thought, "What the hell? There are a lot of fine duck hunters in our section that would jump at the chance and I was a football game on TV the afternoon I wanted to see. I told the boss I never could hit anything that was flying. I always have been a good shot with a rifle and a pistol at anything sitting, but a flying object has me completely flummoxed. He replied gently that it was to observe, not hunt and when I saw the other boys oiling their fowling pieces Friday evening getting ready for Saturday morning I knew it wouldn't do any good to argue.

But that I objected to going to Lake Odessa. I remembered the wonderful boat trip last spring when Bill Aspelmeier, area game manager, showed me more wildlife than I ever saw before. Besides, I knew where I could borrow a transistor radio. I got out to the headquarters at Shaffers Point around 10 o'clock Saturday morning and promptly saw that this was no ordinary observation assignment. The Iowa Conservation Commission was trying something new here and had Controlled Waterfowl Shooting and a whole bunch of hunters crowded into a building checked "check point." Officers of the game section were checking their hunting licenses and duck stamps and issuing permits to that day.

That's the only way you could observe waterfowl on Odessa this season by permit. I looked around and scowled because I thought a permit like this would cause a lot of confusion in as good a hunting area as this, but nary a frown did I see. On the contrary, they were all smiling and joked as the Commission men on duty issued permits and licenses and stamps. One fellow who had saved duck stamps as long as they've been issued



Jim Sherman Photo.

Button bushes behind the duck hunter immediately identify Lake Odessa, 4 1/2 miles east of Wapello in Louisa County. This state-owned shooting area is so popular that a system of controlled placement of hunters was necessary to prevent crowding hot spots.

pawed through his billfold till he found this year's and wondered if he shouldn't have a premium for saving so many. Another said, "Oh-oh, I left my license in my other pants." The checker said, "tough luck." The man grinned. "Not so tough," he said, and went to the window. "Hey maw," he said, "bring my license out of my dress pants." A minute later a lady walked in and handed it to him. They were camped in a trailer just outside the check station.

At ten o'clock Bill Aspelmeier walked in and asked if I would like to go with him around the lake to see how the plan was working. I looked out at the neat "John" boat that had a cabin and comfortable seats in it and said, "Sure."

When we got outside, Bill started putting things in a little sports boat that is half canoe. "We'll take this one," he said. It was too late to back out so I sat in the bow of that thing from 10:30 till 3:00 like Old Chief Running Water himself.

It was worth it though. The boat had a real fine motor that Bill said would go anywhere and it sure did. Fallen trees and stumps meant nothing to that craft. While we were crossing the lake and wending our way through the lateral ditch to Swarms Pond, Bill explained the Plan:

"In past seasons," he said, above the motor's roar, "opening day, and any good day of the season, has been pretty rough. Hunters fell all over themselves trying for blinds in this area. This year we allow them to hunt at staked out blind sites only."

"What's a staked out blind site?" I yelled over my shoulder.

"We're coming to one right now," he said, swinging to our right into Swarms Ponds. "See those posts with wooden ducks on top?"

I saw them; steel fence posts about five feet above the water with a life size duck carved out of a half inch piece of wood on top, painted black and white. "What's

Pierre Radison, a French explorer of the 17th century, on his endless wilderness travels noted with wonder the extreme numbers of the industrious beaver. Its ingenious canals, dams, and lodges seemed to span the continent. The adventurous history of the fur trade stands out as prominently as the gold rush and cattle wars.

As the fur trade expanded, the beaver neared the point of no return in its battle for survival. Then, as a fashion trend slackened the demand, the beaver was saved from the fate of the passenger pigeon. Long years of carefully protecting the survivors, then restocking and finally the permanent reestablishment over a widespread range followed.

Today if one were to float any of Iowa's water courses he would find ample evidence of the activities of the beaver. Corn fields have replaced the forests and farm houses stand where the Indian tepees stood but the cutting and slides of old flat tail are here in abundance.

It is hard for us to realize that the once fabled ghost of the past is returning to Iowa in such numbers that they might create a problem. The beaver has adjusted himself to civilization and now it is civilization's turn to adjust to the beaver. While public sentiment may be against harvesting a species of wildlife, what if an entire corn crop was left in the field or Iowa's livestock were allowed to die to natural deaths. Criminal waste? Yes, but such is the case also with the majority of short-lived game birds and animals. Wildlife cannot be stockpiled. Predation, weather and disease will take the surplus if the hunter or trapper doesn't. Flooded corn fields, plugged culverts and prostrate shade trees were balanced against aesthetic value, flood control, and increased wildlife habitat. After analyzing the situation the Conservation Commission opened a limited season. Proper management, harvest and law enforcement make certain history won't repeat itself. And the beaver's pelt is a

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ARCHERY ANECDOTES

The coincidental opening of the duck and bow-deer season brought a couple of hunters of both kinds together, one of which was most happy to leave post-haste. On the scene near Dudgeon Lake, north of Vinton in Benton County, came first the latter day Robin Hood. He was camouflaged completely, even bow and arrows were of drab appearance. After liberally dousing a rag with strong smelling buck lure he then climbed to his perch in a tree to wait for results. Hardly settled in the tree stand, he heard noises down the trail and made ready. "Shuffshuff," the sounds came louder and closer, then in full view from sheltering brush walked a duck hunter. The commercial deer scent was so strong that even man's poor sense of smell could pick it up; and he did. With a puzzled expression on his face the tired duck hunter followed the odor to its source, sniffed the cloth, looked sick and hightailed it to parts unknown. The bow hunter later that day had another visitor, this time a fine doe deer who eventually accompanied him home.

A second archer standing on a tree limb had spotted two deer and watched them with high-powered binoculars as they began to cross the river in his direction. When he put down the glasses to reach for an arrow his vision didn't readjust soon enough and he lost his balance. It would have been funny if an injured back hadn't spoiled the day.

In the same general vicinity, though later in the season, another bow-strung hunter shot his deer and began tracking only to find that the animal collided with a car on the road just up ahead.

There's no doubt about it, archers take their share of the bumps as well as the glory while pursuing game in the way of our ancestors.

The newborn rabbit is hairless and has his eyes closed for a week or more.

EDITORIALY SPEAKING

COMMON SENSE IN GUN LAWS

There have been wild shots in hunting. Occasionally an inexperienced Nimrod will mistake his father-in-law for a moose, with tragic results. These unfortunate episodes echo in legislatures all too often in the form of bills as misdirected as the shots. On the perennial issue of firearms control, state legislators may be swamped by emotional appeals.

Some of these movements spring from genuine and legitimate concern. Frequently, however, they involve widespread repression of American sportsmen because of a few isolated accidents. In other instances campaigns against firearms have resembled arbitrary total disarmament programs. One such, in a large Eastern state, was launched by a seemingly hysterical radio commentator. He whipped up more than 10,000 signatures to petitions for a bill which would have very nearly prohibited peashooters. The bill was killed in committee only when thousands of hunters and target shooters reminded their legislators of their constitutional right to possess firearms.

Much of the immediate problem over firearms arises from the overflow of our large cities, east and west, into what have been traditional hunting areas. Some hunters jeopardize the rights of 15 million decent and thoughtful sportsmen by gunning around the fringes of schools, parks and the playpens of small children. Local measures should be sufficient to cope with the persistent few.

Any discussion, to be effective, should avoid emotional excesses and statistical misguidance. One figure, widely circulated of late, is that 14,000 Americans were "killed by guns" in a single year. Actually, as Government sources confirm, more than half of those "killed by guns" either committed suicide or were shot down while committing serious crimes. Homicides or deliberate killings by firearms decreased from 6,995 in 1930 to 4,010 in 1957 despite the great population increase. Nor can the decrease be directly attributed to stricter gun regulations. New York State, with one of the earliest and most rigid firearms laws, still reported proportionately more gun slayings than the New England states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and a dozen others.

As for accidental deaths, 2,369 in 1957 were blamed on guns. The fatality rate from all forms of accidents was 56 per 100,000 persons. Motor vehicles caused 22.7 of these deaths, falls accounted for 12.1, fires and explosions for 3.7, and drowning for 3.1. The rate for fatal firearms accidents was only 1.4, scarcely above the 1.2 deaths from suffocating or choking on food.

No one seriously suggests banning automobiles, stairways, water, matches or eating because they sometimes cause deaths. To attempt to place blanket restrictions on firearms would be equally farfetched. —Reprinted by special permission of The Saturday Evening Post, Copyright © 1960 Curtis Publishing Company.



Honest, officer, he's just tired.



George Tovey Photo

When you see a slide like this on a stream bank, you know that flat-tailed engines are working close by. Other obvious evidences are drag marks and chewed stumps.

BEAVER—

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welcome addition to the trapper's income as well as providing hours of winter sport when other trapping and hunting season are closed.

True, when one looks at the average price paid per pelt, the figure is low, between four and five dollars, but it is the second highest priced pelt in Iowa today; exceeded only by the mink. With proper processing and trapping for the mature or blanket beaver while passing up the sets that take young, the big pelt average would be higher. Trapper's sets in den entrances and on dams and slides near the dens take the young ones. The wise trapper checks all beaver cuttings and trees by tracks and size of the feet markings on cuttings to determine where the big ones are operating. A bait set a hundred or two hundred yards from the main den will miss a high percentage of kit beavers. At times old blankets can be found in tin drainages and marsh areas far from the customary colony locations.

While beaver are no harder to trap than muskrats, some of those old blankets that have lost a toenail or two can tax even the most skillful steel spreader. A number two coil spring trap with a fifteen pound stone or piece of iron wire to it and anchored solidly in three feet of water or more will hold the large beaver, but number three and four traps are needed for a hind leg catch. The new killer type trap would be ideal for den sets.

Trapping Equipment

Heavy No. 9 wire or double bailing wire should be used to hold the beaver trap out in deep water. Hip boots or waders and a hand ax and ice chisel are essential after freeze-up. A flashlight with a string loop of cord taped to it will

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BEAVER—

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up it from dropping into the creek. Nothing is more discouraging than to see your flashlight shining up from seven or eight feet of water at three a.m. with mercury hovering around the zero mark.

A Few Tips on Trapping

A beaver colony can become very inactive at times, especially after a freeze or when they become frightened from chopping or trapping activities. If sets are made properly and do not produce the bait a few nights the trapper should become discouraged. Beaver trapping usually runs in spurts. In some localities it's difficult to locate them if they have many dens and logs, but by walking quietly on ice they can be heard gnawing, splashing in the water or making man-like low moaning sounds. A bundle of willow sticks wired together with the cut ends stuck into the stream bottom and a pair of number four, long spring traps set out eight inches from the base of the willow bundle should produce.

While problems of modern society, H-Bombs, and space age tend to whirl about in one's mind, it is a pleasure to let the gray matter go back to the days of Bridger, Custer and Radison in pursuit of beaver. Maybe some cold December evening just at dusk after you've put out your last beaver trap you'll almost make out the dark skin clad figures snow-shoeing along the river's edge and feel for yourself the freedom and independence of the beaver trapper of yesterday.

WILD BIRD MAKES DOMESTIC PREDATOR TURN TAIL

Recently, near a cabin situated along Elk Creek in Pennsylvania, a lady of the house heard a commotion outside. She investigated and saw a normally timid wild turkey hen chasing a large house cat down the road, clearing the locality for her brood of young.

FOR NUT STORAGE

While processing a redwood tree through a mill, California lumbermen recently uncovered a hoard of acorns neatly stashed away in the heart of the tree. The nuts were perfectly preserved despite the fact that the squirrel who placed them there lived before the time of Columbus, as indicated by the age of the tree.

A TRUE SPORTSMAN

Last year at Lakin Slough near Panora a flock of some 19 lesser Canada geese flew over—poohed out and ready to drop. When they came in range it sounded like the Boer War and 17 dropped to the water. An old duffer went out in his boat, picked up six of the birds, and delivered each at a blind saving none for himself. When asked by the game warden why he didn't keep one as most people would, he merely stated that he was sure he didn't hit one. This guy deserves an award!

The fastest upland game bird is also the largest—the wild turkey.

A YARN

A hunter and his dog were in the hunting area on Rock Creek Lake. After being in the blind for some time the hunter got up, stretched and signaled his pooch to take off for some exercise. Shortly afterwards the dog swam up to the blind and in his mouth he had a drake mallard. The hunter put the bird in his jacket and then he and his four-footed friend again snuggled down in the blind. Time moved on and no ducks in flight. The considerate hunter stood up again, pulled the duck from his coat and tossed it out in the lake, at the same time calling on his dog to swim out after it just for practice. Imagine his astonishment when the mallard took wing and skittered down the lake only a few feet above the water. It had to run a gauntlet of hunters who blasted away but still the migratory wildfowl continued its certain but uncertain flight southward. The hunter and dog shortly after returned to their car which was parked near the bridge and here the hunter met up with a fisherman and told him the story. The fisherman grinned and pointed to a clump of weeds about 15 or 20 feet within the restricted game area and said "that's where the duck landed and I've been watching and he's still there." The bird was safe from both hunter and dog.—John Garwood, Marshalltown Times-Republican

BRIEF OBIT

A rabbit hunter climbed through a fence after a cottontail with his gun cocked and loaded. He is survived by his wife, children, and one rabbit.



George Tovey Photo.

Fleshing out a beaver pelt properly pays off when it comes time to sell. This fur buyer would rather do the job himself than have pelts come in sloppily done.



George Tovey Photo.
This is one way to actually see how the fish react to your bait. From the number of fishermen and shacks on Spirit Lake and Okoboji during thick ice, it appears that winter fishing is fully as popular as the warm weather kind. Tried it yet?

TIPS ON WINTER FISHING ON NORTHWEST IOWA LAKES*

The sport of fishing is now a year around proposition, not just a fair weather sport to be enjoyed during the open water season. We can now go fishing any day of the year, and with a little know-how we can expect to catch fish. Now is the time to be sure you have your gear in shape for taking fish from Mother Nature's outdoor ice box.

Although angling through a hole is similar to other types of fishing, a little know-how about the what, where, and when will pay off in more fish on top of the ice. We would like to give you the benefit of several years of experience both in fishing and from facts gained by contacting fishermen.

Remember, not all winter fishing in the State of Iowa is done through the ice, but in the northwest Iowa lakes region, 99 per cent is carried on in this manner. Ice fishing requires some specialized equipment not normally used or found in your gear during the summer. You need to have appropriate clothes for the trip. Nothing can spoil your day any quicker than a bone chilling wind blowing across a couple miles of ice and snow covered lake. Remember, it is a lot colder out there on the ice than it is walking down main street of your home town. After you have rounded up some warm clothing you can begin thinking about the other essentials.

The Spud

A good, sharp ice chisel or "spud" can save a lot of wear-and-tear on your back and on your disposition. It may be necessary to cut several holes before you "find" the fish and a good chisel will easily pay for itself. Later in the

season this becomes even more important as the ice increases in depth. Ice augers, both hand operated or motor operated, are now available, but we advise checking with owners of these outfits before buying. A good chisel is our choice at the present time. Don't try to open a large hole. A six to eight inch hole is plenty big. Either a chisel or auger will make a lot of chipped ice that needs to be removed before dropping your bait through that hole. This can be accomplished with almost anything that will strain water and retain small chunks and chips of ice. However, we advise that you ask your wife before you borrow her fruit strainer.

Tackle for winter fishing can be as varied as that used during the open water season, but with one important item to keep in mind—you will be fishing "straight down" most of the time. So keep your pole relatively short, preferably six feet or less. Some ice fishing enthusiasts prefer a miniature pole 15 inches to 2 feet long that has all the parts of a standard pole but length. These can then be operated inside a fish house as well as out in the open. Any reel that will operate in below freezing weather will do nicely. Many spinning reels are now in use. The spinning reel is usually filled with monofilament line of four to eight pound test, though some prefer to use slightly stronger line in case they hook a big walleye or northern pike. The monofilament is essential to trouble free ice fishing. Although it may stiffen up slightly in cold weather, it remains relatively ice free and any ice that does form can be wiped off with your fingers. The older cotton lines will tend to give you trouble.

Bait

What you use for terminal tackle will depend largely on what species

you will be fishing for and what you intend to use for bait. The relative merits of artificial baits as opposed to live baits are discussed by the ardent winter fishermen just as violently as these fishermen discuss this topic in the summer. Several things should be taken into consideration as to what bait produces the fish. We would like to present our side of the argument by discussing each species. The three most important species taken from the natural lakes during winter fishing over the past three or four years have been walleye, yellow perch, and bluegill. A few northern pike, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and crappie are also taken.

Walleye: Day in and day out the fisherman using minnows will catch more walleyes. Large chubs, stone-roller minnows (blue chubs), or any of the species of shiners that might be available can be used for walleye. Use a medium hook (6-0) with enough weight to hold the minnow near the bottom, and bobber large enough to float the weight and to prevent the minnow from pulling it under. Although walleyes can be caught all day long the best fishing will occur during the twilight hours of early morning and evening. During these two peak periods of activity, flashy, artificial baits of the jigging type can be very effective.

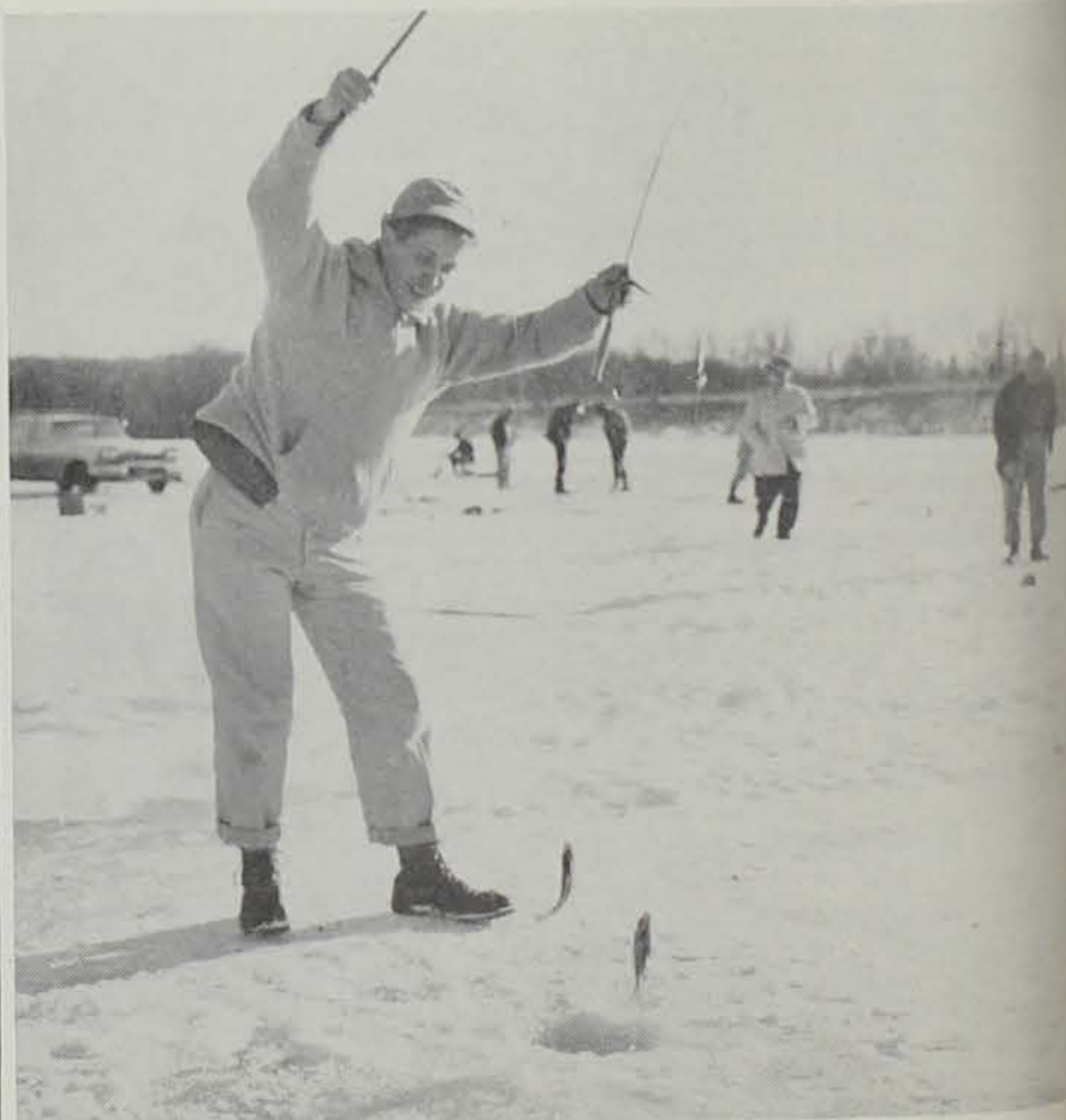
Yellow perch: Again the live bait fisherman will consistently take more perch but during the period of good fishing there are several kinds of artificial baits that will be attractive to perch. When using minnows for bait, use a small minnow. Most of the perch will be caught near the bottom, so

use a small split shot about one foot above the hook to be sure your minnow stays down. For perch fishing, a rather slender bobber is often used to provide a more easily submersed float. Some fishermen fish with one pole and do not use a bobber but use the tip of the pole to signal that a fish is biting.

Bluegills: This species was neglected during the early years of winter fishing. On West Okoboji, where most of the bluegill fishing is done, this species has increased from about eight per cent of the total catch in the winter of 1957-58 to about 50 per cent of the catch in the last two winter seasons. These are largely insect feeders the year around. Thus the best bait is some kind of insect larvae, corn borers, wood grubs and gall worms. If you fish bluegills from an ice house where you can see the fish you can use flies but these flies are not too effective while fishing in the open unless you lay on the ice with something over your head in order to observe the action of the fish.

One important fact that has consistently shown up in tabulating winter fishing success is that the best fishing occurs during the first six weeks of the season; the success drops off fast after the first of January. This applies particularly to walleyes and perch; the bluegills will continue to bite on nice days right up to the time the ice breaks up. But play it safe at both ends of the season, be sure you know the ice conditions before venturing out over deep water.

*Authored cooperatively by Fay Froese, Tom Moen, Charles O'Farrell, Bob Pulver and Bill Tate, all connected and concerned with the state's fishery in northwest Iowa.



Pulling two palm-sized bluegills out of the water is just as much fun as it looks.



Jim Sherman Photo.

is the way of life. Even the mightiest of trees, as this white oak, must someday fall to make room for others of its kind. In this case, white pine will fill the gap.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Growing the forest floor with its low greenery is the American yew, a cousin of the many varieties of yews grown commercially for use as ornamental plants.

WHITE PINE HOLLOW

Land of Green Giants

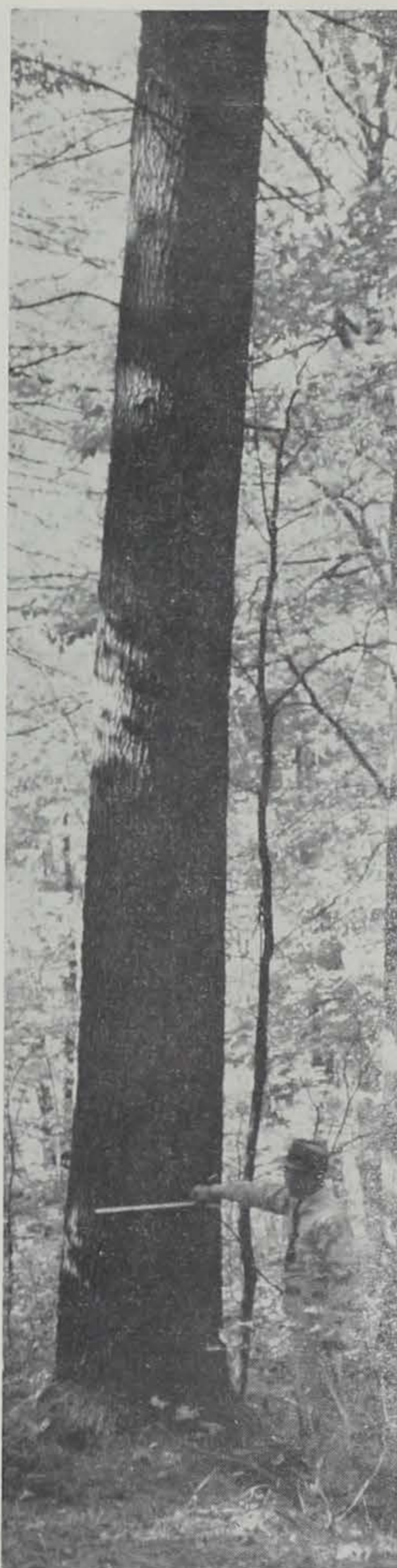
Malcolm K. Johnson

If you're of a mind to see some of Iowa's really big trees, why then leave it to yourself to walk the ridges and ravines of the state forty miles northwest of Luxembourg in the northwest corner of Dubuque County. Covering a little over 650 acres, the forest land is drained by Paint Hollow Creek which rises there. Several springs contribute to this hush of the Little Turkey River's waters. White Pine Hollow—the name rings of back countried shaded slopes, flitting birds singing from tree to tree and the rustling stillness of woods never found.

Inside the dense brush at forest's edge, where most wild-
ves, huge white pines, oaks,

basswood and walnut trees are interspersed with new growths of young pine. In this section of Iowa's roly-poly, topsy-turvy countryside where corn and other grain crop production is restricted are some of our finest examples of mature timber. Many of the pines rise higher than ten story office buildings. For more than one hundred fifty years these giants have been relatively undisturbed, adding stature to themselves and to the scenic value of the area.

The transfer of White Pine Hollow from private to state ownership has a history that stands as a tribute to the activities of a local conservation and nature study group. Long recognized as a spot of unusual beauty, it was singled



Jim Sherman Photo.

Standing taller than a ten-story building, this white pine was beginning its life about the time of the War of 1812.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Though not intended to be cut, this black walnut was appraised by foresters at \$500. Its main value would be for veneer.

out years ago from the many existing forests as an area that should be preserved. In 1932 the Dubuque High School Nature Club conceived a twofold plan for the locale. Adults of the community, impressed with the enthusiasm shown by the youngsters for the project, formed the Dubuque County Conservation Society whose purpose was to organize a drive for funds to support the program. The double edged plan of the student group included construction of a cabin to serve as a nature school headquarters, and to stimulate enough public support of the area to assure its preservation under state

ownership. Permission was gained from the owner to put up a cabin and at the height of the depression, funds and materials were solicited from interested people to begin working. They were hindered by the lack of a road to the proposed site so everything used was carried or dragged by a borrowed team of horses and wagon. Several years ensued before the rustic lodge was completed, during which time the original 80 acres was purchased co-operatively by both the club and the Conservation Commission and then enlarged to the present size by the Commission.

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THE BACK YARD AVIARY

Duane E. DeKock

The upside-down nuthatches, the brilliant cardinal, timid junco, noisy sparrow and bully blue jay, all can be your guests for the white and windy winter days to come. These and many more will be visiting town and country bird feeders to enjoy dry bread, suet, seeds, peanut-butter, apples and anything else you might put into your bird feeder.

The main purpose for feeding the birds in the winter time is not to keep them alive, although in unusual circumstances this may be the case. The main value is the great amount of entertainment and education you can obtain watching birds while you're eating meals, washing the dishes or just smoking a pipe.

There is nothing which frustrates wildlife experts more than to have people attempt to explain the actions of wild animals by comparing them with human behavior. But the more time a person spends actually studying the habits of wildlife, the more difficult it seems to keep this simple fact in mind.

The crow, considered by many as the most intelligent of birds, has a very strict system of government. One crow in a flock is the "king of the roost." His decisions are seldom doubted except, of course, by an occasional young independent. Their various calls have definite meanings to them and a person who knows these calls well can call them in again and again even after they have had shot flying around them.

Most of our song birds have definite habits of migration. Many years ago it was thought that the large birds flew to the moon and the smaller ones rode on their backs. You would think that after many years of bird study we would have solved the mystery of migration, but there are many questions still unanswered. Some researchers seem to give conclusive proof that they are guided by the stars, others that they are guided by magnetic fields, and still others that they are guided by a hereditary memory for landmarks. No doubt it is a combination of these and many other factors which we have yet to discover. The reason why one bird will migrate up and down a mountain, covering only a few miles, while a close relative of his may travel thousands of miles north and south, is another problem as yet unsolved.

Possibly the fact that we know so little about the birds is the very reason we enjoy studying their habits. Placing a bird feeder just outside of the kitchen or dining room is one very good way of making every meal more enjoyable. If you are not a "do-it-yourselfer," and don't feel capable of constructing bird feeders as shown in the



Jim Sherman Photo.

Keeping tabs on the creatures of the wild is a simple task in midwinter by use of a feeding station. It also often offers a better opportunity for a close look at some birds that keep their distance from humans during the warm months of summer. How many times have you seen the downy woodpecker (left) and the white-breasted nut hatch (right) this close without the allure of a suet cage mounted near the house?

January, 1960, issue of the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST, you will find a short piece of hollow log hung horizontally a good rustic bird feeder for seed and bread crumbs. Another log hung vertically with holes drilled in it makes an excellent feeder for suet, peanut butter and mixtures of grain and suet. An old discarded Christmas tree with pieces of apple, bread and ears of corn hung on it will attract many of our winter birds. If a feeder is placed in a "cat-safe" place, close to a tree, brush or other type of cover which the birds frequent, you will be assured of many visitors. Placing such a feeder outside of a bedridden friend's window would be one of the finest gifts of all.

One word of warning, even though you may have a bird such as a blue jay chase the other birds away, you are not permitted to dispose of them. All song birds are protected by Federal law with the exception of the crow, great horned owl, sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper's hawk, English sparrow, and starling. These "protected non-game birds shall include any wild bird other than game, either resident or migratory, including the plumage, skins, body, or any part thereof and their nests and eggs."

Get out your bird guide, set up and maintain a feeding station and you will be on the way toward enjoying one of the most interesting and educational wildlife shows in town.

WHITE PINE HOLLOW—

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An inventory has been made and a management plan developed from this for the area. Present plans for the forest are to preserve as many as possible of the big trees and perpetuate the white pine. Thinning brush around a plantation of stunted pines proved its worth as the previously under-nourished trees more than doubled annual growth in the following years.

From towering pines and walnuts it is a long way down to the diminutive wildflowers that peep out here and there from the rock-studded forest floor. In season, trails through this island of pines lead past hepatica, nodding trillium, yellow lady's slipper, the relatively rare amethyst shooting star and by the low American yew clinging to abrupt slopes.

Because of its backwoods nature, there are many species of birds, wildflowers, and shrubs living in the forest that aren't usually found close to roads and where many feet tramp. This is what makes White Pine Hollow such an ideal study area. Also the occasional squirrel or deer hunter who passes this way is rewarded with more than just his quarry. An hour spent beneath the century and a half old trees makes a day worth while.

The chameleon has a tongue twice as long as its body.

EYES IN THE NIGHT

Bright pin-points of light stare back at your headlights as you make a nocturnal trip in the car. More than likely you've wondered why so many night time prowlers exhibit this optical feature. Although the characteristic is common to many fishes as well as various carnivores (flesh eating animals) we hope no readers have been exposed to the under water effect while driving.

The colors seen may be yellow, green, or red, with gradations in shades between them. It is caused by light passing through the iris, lens, and retina, to a layer of the eye just behind the retina called the tapetum lucidum. Here light is reflected back through the eye and the color imparted to it. It is purely a reflective process; without light eyes will not shine.

It has been said this characteristic helps animals to see better at night because the light reflected back on the retina gives further stimulus to that light receiving part of the eye. It may be a logical deduction for it is most evident in animals that are active after sunset.

ITCHY DUCKS

Sabotage, that's what it is. The pestiferous chigger has gone to sea. Not content with plaguing you and me and other terrestrial types, a skin-diving, skin-digging has come to light. On Chesapeake Bay, about 10 per cent of 50 ducks trapped for banding were quacking off key. It sounded like "A little lower and scratch harder." Biologists scrutinized the fretful captives. Sure enough *Womersley strandmani* (the villain was drilling itch pits in *Anas platyrhynchos* and *Anas rubripes* (mallards and blacks). Unlike run-of-the-mill chiggers, this sea-going specialist imbeds himself below the skin surface. He constructs a tough, leathery sleeping bag which is weather and scratch-proof, then settles down for a long meal at rest. The bottom of his protective bag connects to a tube which penetrates deeper into the skin. Do this he pumps digestive enzymes which dissolve the tissue. And the same tube he pumps liquefied meals of duck epidermis.

Being no larger than a grain of pepper, all of this makes for a modest operation. But the resulting itch is king-sized. Even with you and me, the effect of ducks appears to be limited to comfort. After a meat meal the larval mite, it's the usual ha of the chigger clan to abandon animal host and to live as vegetarians during adult life. So, come fall and winter, the ducks get relief. Then scratching chiggers ends and it's back to the old grind of scratching for a living.—*Reington News Letter*.

COMMISSION MINUTES Held in Des Moines

General

Motion was made and carried to send four field employees to Lake in Missouri to observe controlled shooting.

Motion was made to proceed with the work necessary to accomplish recreational development on the Missouri River areas. Carried.

Report was made on planning for construction at Pine Lake.

Approval was given to sell to the Army Corps of Engineers 115 acres of abandoned Des Moines River channel for \$2,785.

Three fish and game people were authorized to attend the Midwest Hereford and Game Association meeting December 5, 6 and 7 at Toronto, Canada.

Approval was given for the sale of 851 acres of land in Harrison and Pottawattamie Counties bordering on the Missouri River which declared undesirable for conservation purposes for the sum of \$38 to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Approval was given for the use of \$7,000 of dredging funds, left over at Little Wall Lake, for use in pumping water into Little Wall Lake and for the construction of a head dam on the Skunk River adjacent to Little Wall Lake.

County Conservation

The Wayne County Conservation Board asked for approval of a lease of an area for use as a roadside near Seymour for ten years at a cost of \$300. The approval was given with a stipulation that the well be provided that the well be lined in the condition in which received except if prevented by an act of God.

Marshall County acquisition of 25.9 acres at a cost of \$3,000 near and called "Three Bridges" was approved.

Acquisition of 25.9 acres located on the west shore of Eagle Lake in Jackson County for use as a school and outdoor classroom area.

Clayton County received approval for the purchase of the Joy Area, three miles west of Berry Point bordering on the Oketa River for development of a camping area and fishing access at a cost of \$10,000 for 80 acres.

Linn County received approval for the acquisition of 15 acres on Cedar River one mile southeast of at a cost of \$575.

Linn County also received approval for the acquisition of 112 acres on the Cedar River for use as a public shooting area at a cost of \$520.

Approval was also taken to relinquish the lease on an area in Linn County known as the "Lewis Area" which is now used by Fish and Game Division and to be taken over by the Linn County Conservation Board.

Plans were approved for Fremont County for a museum at Old Manti School.

An agreement was approved for the Hamilton County Conservation Board to maintain and operate pumps in the Skunk River adjacent to Little Wall Lake to pump water into Little Wall Lake.

A motion carried to remove dredge barrels and pipe and other apparatus from Little Wall Lake Area.

A motion was made and carried commending the handling of the County Conservation Board information.

Fish and Game

Approval was given for the acquisition of 146 acres for \$26,500 near Christopherson Slough in Dickinson County.

A motion carried to accept an option to purchase Big Springs Trout Hatchery near Elkader for \$65,000.

A request was denied to the Spirit Lake Protective Association to hold a fishing contest on Spirit Lake.

An option to buy 57 acres at the Otter Creek Marsh in Tama was carried.

Approval was given for a land trade to straighten the boundary lines on Nobles Lake in the DeSoto Bend Area. Agreement was with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

A claim for damages to crops in the Big Marsh area was denied.

A report was given on the Walnut Woods lease with the city of West Des Moines by Superintendent of State Parks, Ray Mitchell.

A request for access through Echo Valley State Park was denied.

Approval was given for awarding a concessionaire's contract at Palisades-Kepler State Park near Cedar Rapids.

A new price list on nursery stock at the State Forest Nursery near Ames approved.

Approval was given for a land trade in the vicinity of the Yellow River Forest Area in Allamakee County.

Approval was given for a land trade to straighten property lines on Towhead Lake in Calhoun County.

A request for permission to build a boat launching ramp 30 by 25 feet on city and state property in Clear Lake for public use was approved.

A report was given on the planning for a new hatchery building at Orleans in Dickinson County.

Approval was given for Gus Glaser to run drain tile into West Okoboji Lake to handle surface drainage.

Heifer is the modern spelling of two Anglo-Saxon words, heah-fear, meaning "high ox" as the heifer seems to stand up extraordinarily high on her legs compared to a grown cow.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING



By Stan Widney

THE PIKE WAR OF THE '80's

A. W. Aldrich, State Fish Commissioner back in the mid-eighties, was not only a very fine conservationist who labored long hours at work that required physical as well as administrative ability; he was a darn good journalist and prophet as well. Witness how he reacted to those who were against the rearing of pike in those days.

"I am not in harmony with a prejudice against the common pike or pickerel, which is gaining ground.

"The pike is dainty food for lovers of gastronomy. He's eager and game in the presence of the angler's bait. To take him from his home in the still waters among the lilies and sedges puts the angler's nerve and skill to the severest test. His vesture is not as bright as that of the trout or sunfish. He is a handsome fish in subdued colors. Conscious that he is natural monarch of the tide, he puts on no airs. Except in certain coteries in the United States he is esteemed. When the pike became scarce in the British Isles, during the reign of Edward I, that ruler fixed the price of the pike higher than that of the salmon, and ten times higher than turbot or cod. The pike is sought after and regarded with favor in Continental Europe, with but little dissent. The fish commissioners of Canada are solicitous for his preservation as they are for the salmon and white fish. But in the United States some very reputable gentlemen have issued an edict against the pike, and they have found many willing to join with them in their wish to exterminate him. With all due respect to these enemies of the pike,

I cannot but express the opinion that they are seeking to exterminate one of the best fishes in our streams. His voracity, his diligence in getting a living is the chief objection made to him. Though the pike's hunger is never appeased, he grows in proportion to his great feeding ability, and far exceeds bass and trout in this respect. His industry does not detract from the delicate brown that can be given his savory flesh in the frying pan.

"I notice that the persons that depreciate him in their opinions worship him with their stomachs. I have yet to find a pike going begging in the market place.

"The waging of a war against the pike seems wasteful and foolish to me, and ought not to be encouraged.

"Prof. Baird has pregnantly said, 'the people of the United States may yet see the day they will be glad to get a pickerel.'

"During the incumbency of my predecessor pike were seined out of the shallows of the rivers in the spawning season and left to rot on the shores. I regret that any person of intelligence should, by any radical stress of opinion, deem it good to destroy the pike in such a spendthrift manner.

"The destruction of other kinds of fish in our rivers because they are not suited to the palate of man is another foolishness. Fish that are not the food of man are invariably the food of other fishes, and thus play an important part in the economy of nature.

"I do not hesitate to lay it down as one of the fundamental truths that whenever a scientist issues an edict for the total destruction of a fish as toothsome and plentiful a breeder as the pike, he is making a serious mistake, and the people will ultimately condemn him for it."

And they did. Just when the fish we presently call northerns and walleyes became popular "game fish," I have been unable to find out. I have a hunch, however, it was about the time carp became "rough" fish. Who knows what the next "cycle" may bring. When carp becomes scarce enough, if it ever does, it may become a "game fish" while others, now favored, become despised.



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OPENING AT ODESSA—

(Continued from page 89)

the idea of having the decoys so far above water?" I asked.

Bill grinned, "Those are the stakes that mark the boundaries of this blind site." He pointed to what I at first thought were real geese just as we rounded a bunch of evergreens and bullrushes. "The decoys have to be within a certain distance of each blind—"

He stopped and laughed at my very apparent amazement when I saw two men and a woman rise up out of the "evergreens and bullrushes" and wave to us. They were in a very cleverly disguised boat and the "evergreen" was made of undertaker "grass." I saw later that many of the blind boats were covered with real evergreen boughs though.

Bill continued, "and we allow only so many blinds to a site. Here's another blind."

I saw that one, mostly because a beagle was sitting on top of the bullrushes. "How come they're using goose decoys?" I asked.

"Duck season doesn't start till noon today," Bill said, patiently. "You'll see plenty of duck decoys already out though. No law against trying to pull them in ahead of time."

We wended our way past site

after site, through timbered islands and rushes, and saw every kind of floating duck blind you can think of. Everywhere we went though, people knew Bill and they'd wave sandwiches and thermos bottles at us and shout kidding insults or brag about other season openers. There was an air of gaiety, almost festive, about the whole thing—until the zero hour approached. At around ten minutes till twelve, I noticed that most of the goose decoys were pulled in and replaced by ducks. The people in the blinds still waved and grinned but they didn't shout as much and there was a tenseness in the air that could be felt. It was a grey day with a light fog and the temperature was around 50. A northeast breeze kicked up wavelets on the open places.

At seven minutes till twelve the blinds didn't open as we passed by with the motor cut down to a mere whisper.

Six minutes—five—we saw a low flying flock of "woodies" cross the line of blinds and knew the temptation that must have gripped the waiting guns. Four minutes—we crossed a pond where a thousand or more coot were feeding and they took off with flailing wings and feet just in time to miss our boat.

Three minutes—and then "BOOM," a shotgun roared nearby sounding like the crack of doom itself. A second shot, then a volley. I looked at Bill who was looking at his watch and shaking his head "I suppose a guy's watch could be a minute or two fast," he said. We turned and went toward the shooting. Before we could find the blind that had shot early it was noon and bedlam. Ducks rose from every direction and we couldn't hear a word we were saying although we kept saying something, anyway I could see Bill's mouth moving and he doesn't chew. It was all pretty exciting.

Eventually, we found the "early birds," three grinning men in a blind who held aloft three young male snow geese, still warm. Another blind told us that they had seen the low flying geese just as the hunters were starting to take their guns out of the cases.

Closing time for hunting at Odessa this season was 3 p.m. and Bill and I stayed out until that time, then worked our way around to the south check point at Sand Run Landing where some of the camouflaged boats were already in and the men from the game section were busy checking their ducks for species, age and sex and filing permits. By four o'clock the boats

that had left from that check point were all in (four is the deadline) and Bill and I started to leave for Shaffers. At that time the score was tied between Iowa and Wisconsin and a dozen hunters had gathered around my transistor radio so we had to stay till the game ended for the sake of public relations.

By the time we pulled in at Shaffers, the men there had their hunters checked out and Arvo Game Manager Gene Hlavka was putting one of his prize winning retrievers through her paces with dummy ducks. I swear that dog could do everything but yell "here it is" and it was easy to see why a good dog can reduce cripple loss to almost nothing.

I was so tired I could hardly get out of the boat and so chilled took four cups of scalding coffee to warm up, but it was worth it. Now I know why duck hunters can wait all night long to be the first to check out in the morning. I know the thrill of an opening day and why so many sportsmen are not all displeased when the Commission wants to try something that might improve their favorite autumn sport.

Anyone got a good, used, "sweet sixteen" for sale at a reasonable price?