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# IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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Volume 20

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Number 3

## OFF SEASON ARTILLERY PRACTICE

Malcolm K. Johnson

Some of the best shooting of the year is yet to be done—even with the shotgunners griping about the lack of activity. Guns are cleaned and oiled, decoys are repaired and the shells are reloaded, boxed and stored. Young hunters and old are restless; just plain fidgety waiting for spring and summer to pass until opening day gives them excuse to pull on the old boots. There's one thing wrong with this philosophy; they have forgotten the crow!

Demons of the night or disciples of the devil, as some say, are a perfect target. They make the expert a little better and, if consistently practiced, crow shooting can train the eye and reflexes of the novice and make him real competition in a year's time. This doesn't mean an occasional pot shot while hunting for something else, but finding the flyways, building blinds, luring them in and burning up several boxes of ammunition every trip. This may sound like propaganda for shot-shell manufacturers. If you think so, just remember that practice is the surest route to perfection.

A hunter can shoot at a lot of things to improve his aim. Skeet, trap-shooting, cans and corncocks are all possible targets. Only you can decide what will do most to build the confidence and skill that brings home a satisfying bag of ducks, pheasants, quail or whatever you're after. The aerial gymnastics of crows around an owl decoy set on a pole simulate most any kind of shot you'll ever have to make at game birds. Wheeling, diving, and sideslipping in their harassment of a hated enemy, crows can make an already good wingshot look pretty silly the first time out.

### Finding a Flyway

Most of the tremendous roosts of central Iowa have been split up. Where formerly 10,000 or more birds could be found, now 2,500 congregate. Actually it is estimated that we still have as many around, they've just been scattered from shooting the rookery where

(Continued on page 117)

### WOODS PROFITS, SATISFACTION, OR BOTH

C. R. Witmer

District Forester, Farmington

It was about a hundred years ago that the editor of the *Farmer's Almanac* gave this advice to landowners even when the total wealth of the forest resource was yet unknown.

If you want your name to be in grateful remembrance—plant trees; if you want to improve the roadsides in your town—plant trees; if you want to add to the beauty of the surroundings of your home—plant trees; if you want to give your children something to look at—plant trees; if you want to have your house and grounds more valuable to keep or to sell—plant trees; if any of your land is well adapted for cultivation or pasture, or if you want property that will grow like money at interest, will grow while you are sleeping—plant trees."

It is time for planning next year's tree planting is now. If you have considered putting in trees but haven't done so for lack of technical assistance, this problem is solved. Farm Foresters of



George Tovey Photo.

Here's the target, now let's go get him. The crow's suit of black is befitting for his habits make him a bad actor; robbing the nests of others is his great joy in spring.

the State Conservation Commission's forestry section are operating in every part of Iowa. Their help consists of surveying planting areas, recommending tree species best adapted to your soil types and exposures, and aid in obtaining cost sharing payments, finding a tree planter to use and help at the time of planting.

### No Ornaments

The trees and shrubs available from the State Conservation Forest Nursery at cost cannot be used for ornamental or other non-agricultural plantings. Windbreaks can be established only if the area qualifies as a woodlot (minimum size of 200 by 300 feet) or as field shelter belts for wind erosion control. Trees for shade or street planting and shrubs for landscaping must be obtained from commercial nurseries.

### Why Plant

The soil is our greatest heritage.

When we manage it by establishing the most suitable vegetative cover then run-off is controlled, the soil itself is stabilized (stays put) and homes are re-provided for wildlife. On many Iowa farms there are a few acres denuded of topsoil and useless for producing grain crops. Before these spots grow back to brush put in some pines and bring them back into production. There is no soil so poor that it will not support pine trees. Even cultivated land will often be unable to yield a commercial growth of our native hardwoods, but with pines you will have a tree that grows faster than any hardwood species and loses no time in taking over the site. After five to eight years the idle acres can produce Christmas trees and greens. Before a quarter of a century has passed posts and poles can be harvested in the next thinning, and by the fiftieth year small saw logs can be cut.

(Continued on page 116)



George Tovey Photos.

Two lads are admiring the first step in planting a new woodlot. Though they have a slight head start, the pine strip them before many years pass adding dollars of interest to this investment. See your forester soon.



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**THREE R's PLUS ONE**

Malcolm K. Johnson

Schooling, education, and the three R's are practically synonymous. The addition of the fourth R for resources was a late starter, but is rapidly gaining acceptance in Iowa. Colleges have for several years taught conservation in one way or another, but seldom included every aspect of the broad topic. The great need is in the grades and high schools for expansion of the natural sciences to take in resource use and preservation. Some schools have made a step in this direction, one of which is the Maquoketa Valley Community School at Delhi in Delaware County.

Every Tuesday afternoon in this eastern Iowa school over 45 students meet to learn about our outdoor heritage and what can be done with it. The students have formed a club whose creed reads in part:

"We believe in the wisdom of nature's design.

"We believe that every generation should be able to experience spiritual and physical refreshment in places where primitive nature is undisturbed.

"So we will be vigilant to protect wilderness areas, refuges, and parks and to encourage good use of nature's storehouse of resources.

"We dedicate ourselves to the pleasant task of opening the eyes of young and old that all may come to enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world and share in conserving its wonders forever."

The program followed by this coeducational group is an active one. It includes studying the natural sciences from astronomy to zoology—plus learning through experience: safe gun handling and hunting techniques, camp cooking, animal tracking, the fine points of fishing and hunting, safe boat operation and identifying birds and plants.

Enthusiasm and interest in the activities are high; this club is getting an education that they deserve.

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Held in Des Moines, February 1, 1961

Travel authorization was granted for three people to attend the North American Wildlife Conference in Washington, D. C., in March.

Authorization was granted for two people to attend the Missouri River Inter-Agency Meeting at St. Paul, Minnesota, February 8 and 9.

A Resolution of Necessity was passed regarding a low-head dam located near Little Wall Lake in Wright County.

**County Conservation Activities**

Davis County Conservation Board was given approval for a 20-year lease on an area located in Drakesville to be used as a recreation park.

Clayton County Conservation Board was given approval for land acquisition of 75 acres for \$2,000 on Bloody Run Creek two miles west of Marquette.

Approval was given for land acquisition by Hardin County Conservation Board of 21.2 acres located near Steamboat Rock at a cost of \$1,385 to be used for picnicking, camping and fishing access.

Howard County Conservation Board was given approval for acquisition of 40 acres of marsh land by lease at a cost of \$75 per year, located approximately three miles north of Cresco.

Wright County Conservation Board was given approval for acquisition of three acres of land by gift, located on the Iowa River about two and one-half miles north of the town of Dows, to be used for a county park.

Wright County Conservation Board was given approval for the acquisition of .8 acres of land in the town of Woolstock at a total cost of \$200 for the development of a county picnic and recreation area.

Hardin County Conservation Board was given approval for acquisition of 20 acres of land on the Iowa River, approximately six miles northwest of Steamboat Rock at a total cost of \$1,300. This area is to be maintained as a wilderness area.

Delaware County Conservation Board was given approval for acquisition of 3.6 acres of land, located on the south edge of Manchester on the Maquoketa River, at a total cost of \$350. This area is to be used as a site for the conservation board's shop and part of the area is to be developed for picnicking, playground and fishing access.

Benton County Conservation Board was given approval for a master development plan and report on a 160 acre park located in the southern part of the county approximately four miles southwest of Blairstown. This area contains a 45 acre artificial lake which was the first such lake built by a county conservation board.

Fremont County Conservation Board was given approval for a master development plan and report on a 48 acre recreational park and school forest area located approximately two and one-quarter miles west of the town of Tabor. This school forest will be the first of its kind developed by a county conservation board in Iowa. Two small lake areas will be included in the development.

**Fish and Game Activities**

Authorization was granted to the Director to open promiscuous fishing in those areas in the state which are determined to be suffering from an oxygen deficiency due to winter weather.

A Resolution of Necessity was passed for a low-head dam at Big Marsh in Butler County.

Approval was given for an option for land purchase of one acre at Sweets Marsh in Butler County at a cost of \$320 to be used for windbreak planting.

Fishing regulations were approved for the 1961 season.

Approval was given for the placing of two-way radios in conservation officers' cars by county sheriffs, if they so wish, at no cost to the Conservation Commission.

A road easement was granted at the Cutshaw Bridge Access Area in Buchanan County.

Earl Rose presented a report on farming activities in the Lake Odessa Area with regards to the waterfowl food available in the fall at that area.

**Forestry Activities**

Approval was given for an option on 384 acres at \$70 per acre located in the Paint Creek unit of the Yellow River Forest Area in Allamakee County, subject to completion of financial arrangements.

**Parks Activities**

Approval was granted for an increase of one to two and one-half dollars in the rates of seven out of the 19 lodges operated in state parks.

**Waters Activities**

A bid of \$7,415 for two double-planked inboard lake patrol boats was accepted.

A discussion on water safety training was held by the Commission with Commander Payne of the Coast Guard Auxiliary making recommendations for such a program.

**MOURNING DOVE**

The mourning dove, often called turtle dove, is not much smaller than the domestic pigeon and weighs in at about six ounces. The dove is classified as a game bird in thirty-one of the fifty states and ranks among the top three birds in the U. S. according to the number of shotshells expended annually.

During 1959, more than 20,000,000 doves were taken by hunters in states with open seasons on them.



Jim Sherman  
Your best friend, in fair weather or foul

**YOUR DOG IS YOUR BEST FRIEND**

George Vest

The best friend a man has in the world may turn against him and become his enemy. The son of a daughter he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest, those whom we trust with our happiness and our good name, may become traitors to their faith.

The money that a man has he may lose. It flies away from him perhaps when he needs it most.

A man's reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action.

The people who are prone to fall upon their knees to do us honor when success is with us may be the first to throw the stone of malice when failure settles its clouds upon our heads.

The one absolutely unselfish friend that man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him, the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is his dog. A man's dog stands by him in prosperity, poverty, health and in sickness. He'll sleep on the cold ground, where the winter winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side.

He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer! He will lick the wounds and sores that come in counter with the roughness of this world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.

If routine drives the master for an outcast in the world, friendly and homeless, the faithful dog will go with him. And when the last scene of all comes, no matter if all other friends pursue their way, there will the noble dog find, his head between his paws, his eyes sad, but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even in death.—Wildlife Crusader





Jim Sherman Photo.

Fishing crappies is an early season angling activity that is often more rewarding than on in the summer. Crappies do well on flies, light jigs, and natural baits.

## APRIL IS FOR CRAPPIES

Stan Widney

Last fall when I was at Lake Odessa for the opening of the duck season, I noticed that there were almost as many crappie fishermen as duck hunters. It was all I could do not to join them, for if there's anything I dearly love, it's a mess of crisp crappies the way Aunt La fries them.

I did take time to visit with some of the fishermen, though. Every one of them said the same thing. "Crappie fishing is good in the fall, you ought to be here in April!" When they'd go on to tell how much crappie they came in April—up to five or four pounds; how much crappie they bit and that they even cleaned better.

All my crappie fishing has been done in inland lakes and mostly in the south half of Iowa. I knew they were best in April down to the most any place—Green Valley Lake Keomah, Allerton Reservoir—even some farm ponds. Big crappies are common there.

But those men and women at Odessa talked about two and three pounders being commonplace. I've been counting the days all winter long till I can take my annual vacation at Odessa. Meanwhile, I've been talking to my friend, Newt, who was practically raised on the Mississippi and knows the upper half like he knows the palm of his hand. He tells me that crappie fishing around the Harper's Ferry-Lansing area just can't be beat. He's never been down to Odessa so how can he be sure? Maybe it's just as good as Odessa. I've ice-fished up there and it's great fishing country all around and the people are sure friendly.

Anyway, Newt knows HOW to fish those backwaters around there and anything that swims so I asked him how and he told me—for two years.

He says that crappies are always hungriest in early spring because their larder of natural foods is nearly empty. Same goes for all game fish. The first thing to do is find where they are and once you find them, the rest is easy. You can get your limit of 15 in practically no time—with the right bait, gear and boat.

The boat should be anything that will float safely, a good anchor and (for me) a seat cushion. Bank fishing for crappies works good too if you can find where the school is.

Best spots are around stumps, logs and brush in quiet sloughs and Newt says the gear you lose to snags will repay you in fish. Try one such spot for seven or eight minutes. If nothing happens, try another bunch of logs and brush pile. Leave your bait in the water while you're changing. Crappies hit moving bait, you know.

When you do get a nibble, don't set your hook too soon with crappies. Count to ten slowly, and let the critter run a ways unless it's taking it under the brush, then set. You'll lose more crappies by setting the hook too soon than any other way.

If you're using minnows, let it run even longer, but the best bait in April is nightcrawlers or common old fish worms. String them through the middle and let them hang down on both ends so they wiggle good. Later in the year, minnows are best, but try worms first.

Use a long cane pole so you can maneuver across and around the stumps and brush. Split shot is enough sinker and you'll want a light monofilament line and one of those quill type bobbers. With gear like this Newt says you can drop a line right smack in the middle of a brush pile or the center of a rotted stump.

Now I'll bet your worried to death about snags. If there's anything that gets my goat it's a snag. I've given up fishing time and again after losing a bunch of tackle in the trees above or the brush below.

Newt says snags are unnecessary with a cane pole, a short line and the right kind of hook. "Ah," I told him, "there's the rub, as Bill Shakespeare would say. The hook's the thing. Bill was quite a fisherman himself, you know."

"Never heard of him," Newt replied, "but I bet he never tried an aberdeen hook in the brush. It's made of thin, light wire that will straighten out when you get snagged. It bends back into shape easy. I always use 'em for crappies in brush."

Like I say, Newt has brush and stump fished along the Mississippi backwaters for more years than he will admit and I've never known him to be completely skunked. Mostly he has his limit of what he's fishing for long ahead of the rest of us whether it's crappies,

## BLUEGILL POPPER

Roger Fliger

Like the gun enthusiast that loads his own ammunition the fisherman that produces his own flies has gained a great deal more appreciation and confidence in his favorite sport.

For a few dollars and a couple hours time even the novice will be turning out flies that will take fish. A vise, hackle pliers, cork, thread, clear nail polish, small rubber bands and paint are all the components of turning out a bluegill popper that will prove a killer in any section of Iowa—lake, river or farm pond.

When spring evenings turn warm and bluegills move into the shallow waters to spawn and feed they are easily caught. A light rod, line and leader deliver the bluegill killer to the edge of a weed patch or log. As the bug hits the water let it rest a second then give it a gentle twitch. Let it rest a second then repeat the process. You can bet those rubber life-like legs will be giving a big bluegill the shakes.

If the water is shallow you'll quite often see a wave as the fish cuts for the lure. Hold off that urge to strike too soon and let it disappear in a swirl before setting the hook. With a tight line and by raising the rod tip a foot or two the bluegill will practically hook himself.

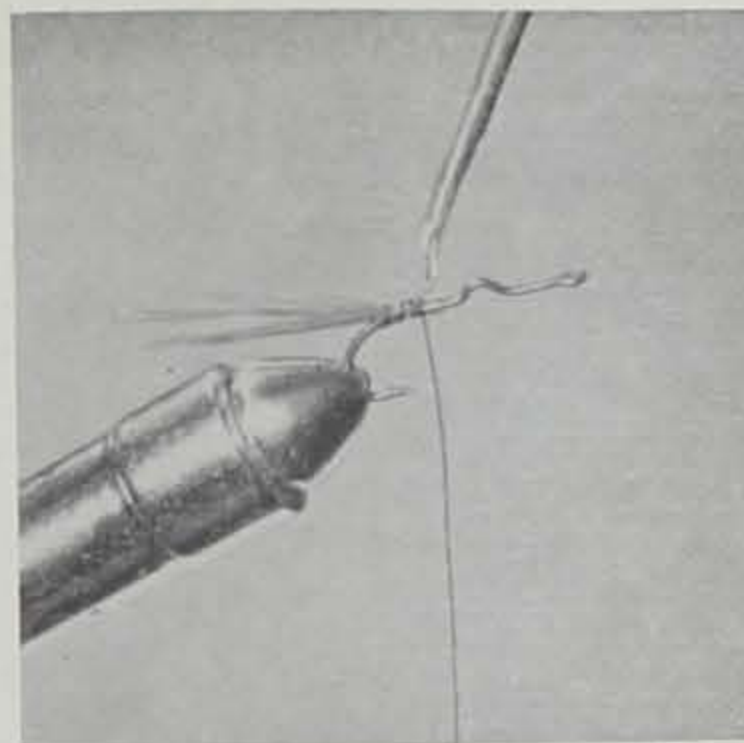
Ripples under the water, slight splashes or waves often lead a fisherman to feeding fish. Casting the lure in the proximity of a rise will often produce a strike instantly. Don't be over anxious to cast to a new rise but fish out each cast. Frequently the pan fish will follow the lure for several feet if it sees that no other competition is about to take it from him.

The little popper will take a lot of abuse but one evening's fishing may require it being hit fifty or a hundred times. A good supply in size number four, six and eight hooks would seem ideal. The larger ones would be very effective for lakes or ponds that have surface feeding crappies or large-mouth bass.

It won't be long before the winter is a thing of the past and we'll be stringing up that little jewel of a fly rod. Be sure that you have a couple dozen of those bluegill poppers ready to go.

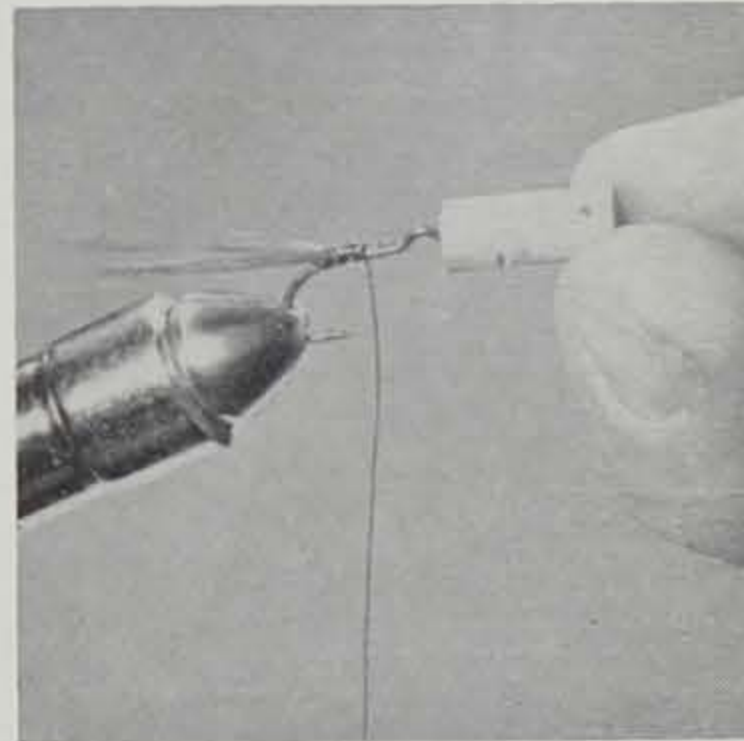
bluegills or bass, so I'll take his word, even to a bend-easy hook.

I'm going to try Odessa crappies first, then go on up the river and spend a couple of days at Harper's Ferry. Then I'll come back home in time for some darn good crappie, bass and bullhead fishing around central Iowa. When you live fishing and have the kind of nightcrawlers that grow right in my backyard, any April day on a lake, pond or slough will be heaven on earth.

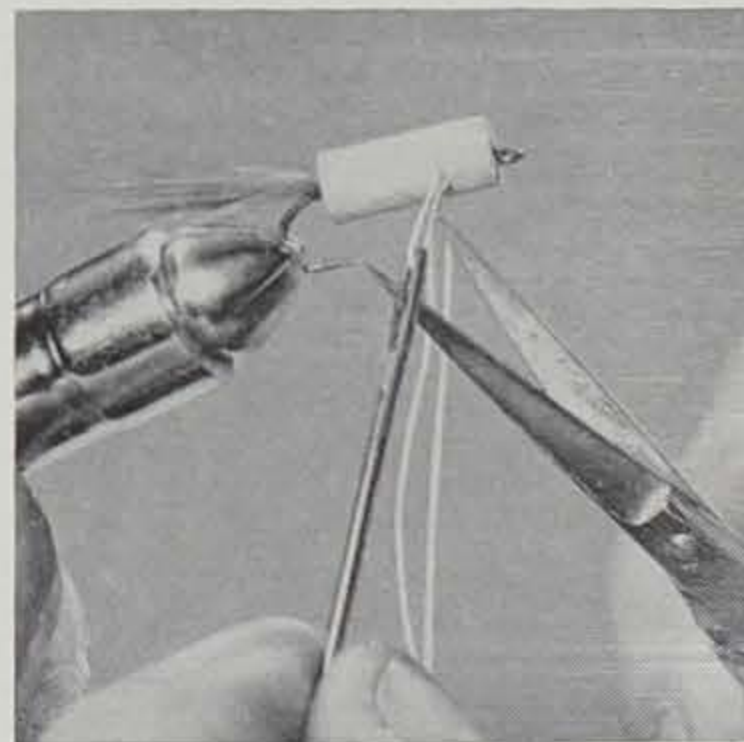


Jim Sherman Photos.

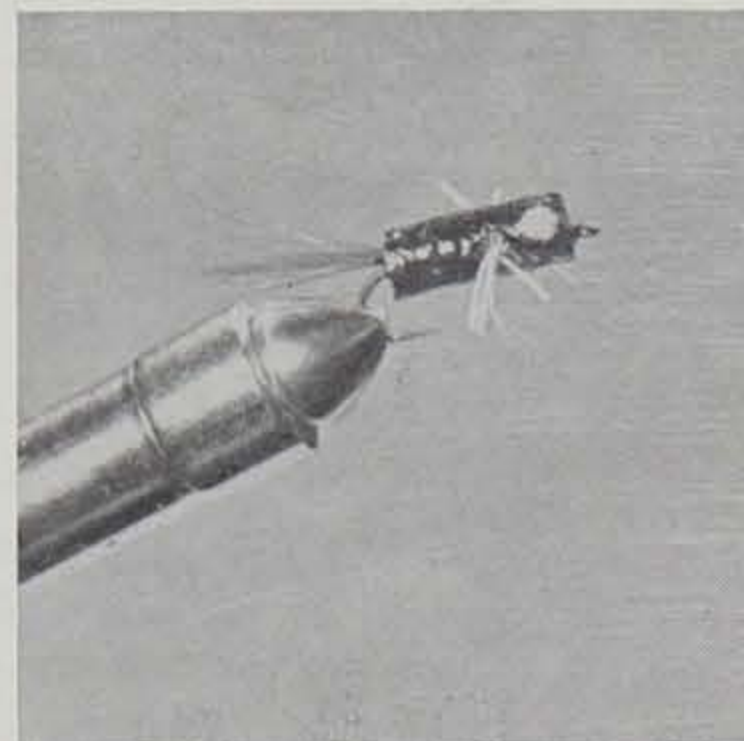
Start popper with red bucktail. Put drop of clear nail polish on half-hitch tie off.



Bore cork and slip over bent shank hook. This is what makes it float on the water.



Pull rubber through body with needle, four legs on a side. Legs are one-half inch.



Paint body black and make red and yellow eye to finish simple and effective popper.



## THE CASE FOR BINOCULARS

Malcolm K. Johnson

*Sales have zoomed some 2,000 per cent in the past 20 years. What is the reason for this turn to high-powered glasses?*

On the duck marsh, in the squirrel woods, on the trap line and on bird hikes binoculars are becoming more common around the necks of outdoor people. Tourists have long been addicted to field glasses along with their shiny cameras. As a matter of fact, there is hardly an outdoor job or recreation that doesn't benefit from the use of the handy eye helpers.

Basically, binoculars are a pair of tubes with lenses at either end. Low powered opera glasses that magnify the image about three times are short, light, and inexpensive. They are fine for their purpose and not much use outdoors. Six power and above, running up to a magnification of 16 to 20 times are more useful in the field. At the bottom end of this scale, six and seven power glasses are still fairly light and easy to use without support. Above seven power, it takes a mighty steady hand, especially if you've been walking hard, to hold the glasses and see clearly. In binocular terminology the numbers indicating their strength are written: 6x30, 6x15, 7x35, 7x50, etc. The first number tells the magnifying power, the second the diameter of the objective or front lens. Both magnification and size of the objectives need to be considered before deciding which glasses suit you best. There are many people who are ready and willing to tell you which combination or type of glass you need—because it suits them. Figure out for yourself these details in light of what the glasses will be used for, where, how often or for how long at a time, what time of day, and how much you want to pay.

### What Power

High magnification, eight power and above, is desirable for long distance viewing as in the mountains, or for bird study where fine details of anatomy and color are important, but often some sort of support is necessary. These sizes include 8x30, 10x50, 16x50, etc.

Medium magnification, 7x50, 7x35 and 6x30, is the type most generally used by the person who wants flexibility. The 7x50's are heavier and offer excellent viewing after dark or during twilight. The 50 part of the symbol refers to an objective lens diameter of 50 millimeters or about two inches. This amount of glass can, of course, gather more light than objectives of 35 millimeters or 30 millimeters, about one and one-half inches across. Glasses for good all around use should have a quotient of five or more when the magnifying power is divided into the objective size (for 7x35's, 35 divided by 7 gives this quotient of five. Likewise 6x30's.) Seven by fifties, often

called night glasses, have a quotient slightly over seven and would therefore have more light-gathering quality for use when daylight is negligible. The 6x30's are very light around the neck and also fit easily in a coat pocket.

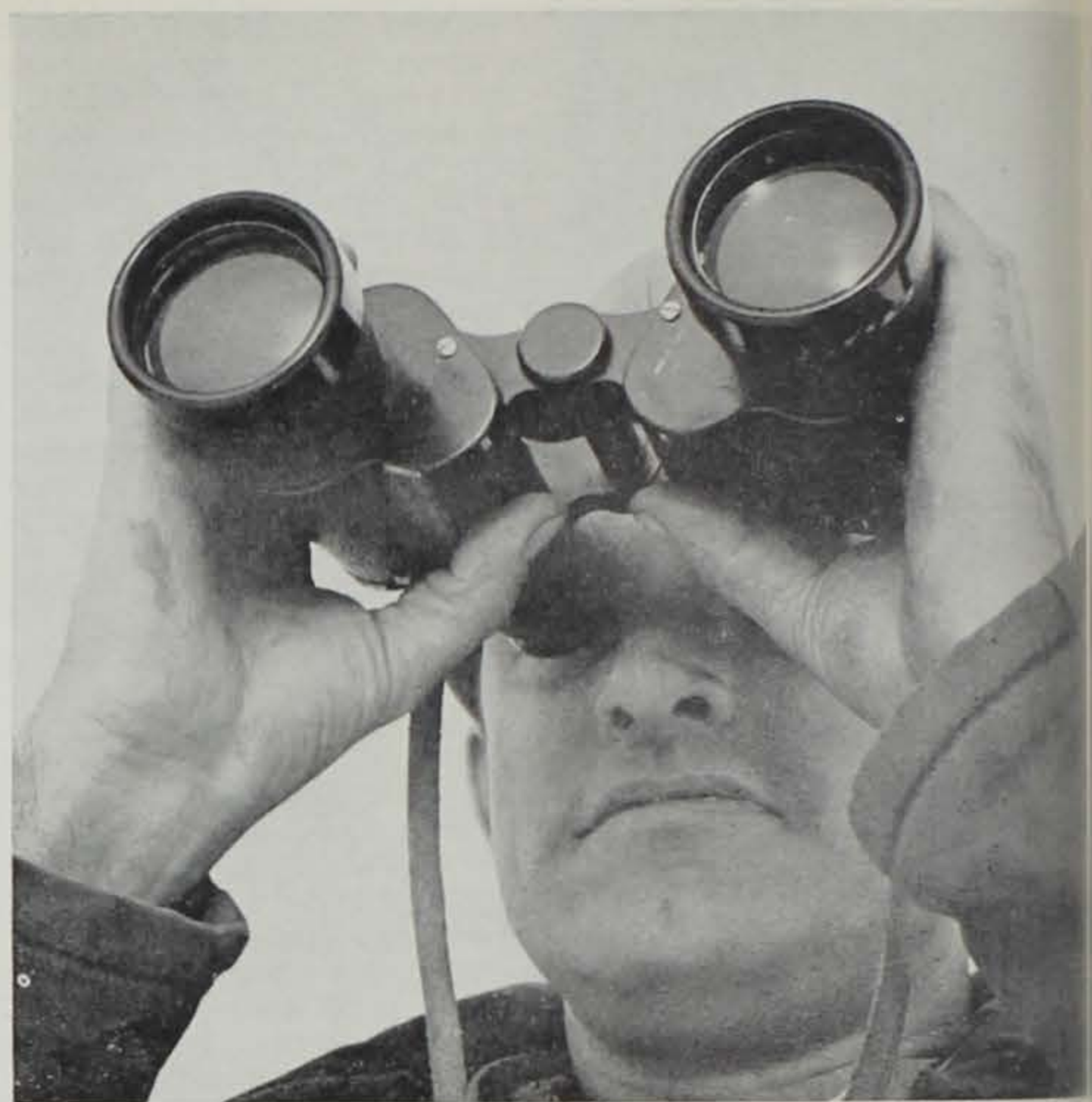
### Other Aspects

In the matter of price, quality of materials and construction are the determinants. The most inexpensive glasses have no prisms, an important point to consider. Those with a diaphragm between the objective lens and eyepiece have a very limited field of view and are otherwise constructed so cheaply that your eyes will suffer with any amount of use. Some manufacturers have used mirrors instead of prisms which reduce clarity. Where prisms are present, make sure that they are held in with clamps or bands. Those just glued in fall out when dropped or suffer a hard shock. As the price goes up tolerances in the lenses, prisms and alignment become finer. Proper alignment (collimation) of the glasses is necessary to prevent eye-strain. Good binoculars should be checked for this quality even though some inexpensive brands are aligned well enough for comfortable viewing. Poor collimation can give the viewer nausea, dizziness, and severely strain his eye muscles. The finer the tolerances, the longer the glasses may be used at a time without discomfort to your eyes. As with most everything, you get what you pay for.

Center focus binoculars cost a few more dollars than those with individually focusing eyepieces. Again, it's a matter of preference. The individual focus type has an advantage in that less dust will find its way into the tubes. If a rapid change from viewing near and far objects is what you want then the center focus fills the bill.

### Waterfowling

For the duck hunter glasses are getting to be a near necessity unless he has exceptionally sharp eyes. Identifying incoming birds in poor light is difficult, but should be done to avoid taking the protected canvas-back and red heads. Looking over large flocks of coot to see if ducks are hidden among them, spotting diving ducks on broad bodies of rough water, checking river bends or pot holes from a distance, and locating ripples on the water that are made by feeding ducks hidden behind reeds or rushes are all uses made of field glasses in the search for ducks. Probably those few hunters who annually take swans, cormorants, and pelicans, thinking they're geese, could avert this difficulty by availing themselves of a little higher powered vision.



A pair of 7x50 binoculars helps to make any excursion outdoors more satisfying. This size is ideal for looking into shaded areas while squirrel hunting in the fall.

### Fox Hunting

The fox hunter would be practically lost without binoculars; one expert claims that they double his effectiveness and enjoyment of the sport. From the car window a fox can be seen lying on a hillside a quarter of a mile away; standing up or moving at a mile with relatively low powered 6x30 glasses. There are a million reddish and buff colored rocks in Iowa that look like a sleeping fox, but not one fox that looks like a rock.

### Bird Watching

Practically every ornithologist, amateur and professional, uses binoculars. Close study of feeding and hunting habits and distinguishing the features of small birds such as warblers and sparrows demands high magnification. A few ardent watchers use spotting scopes with enlargement powers of 20 or 30 diameters.

### Trapping

Checking sets from a distance to see if any disturbance has occurred such as fresh dirt showing, chewed twigs, or torn leaves is easy with field glasses and doesn't put man's scent in the vicinity of the traps.

### Summary

In general, sight deficiencies or eye trouble make binoculars a must for those who want to see. The knowledge that you can improve your vision and sometimes exceed the sight of wildlife gives genuine pleasure while in the field and adds something to every trip. Polish up that old pair of binocs in the cupboard and see what you've been missing.

Red fox dens are often remodeled woodchuck burrows or recesses under the base of big trees.

### WOOD PROFITS—

(Continued from page 113)

The crop of trees can be harvested again and again if man and nature work together. It's true that only periodical cuttings can be made, but in between times each tree is growing, adding more wood every day of every year. This annual growth is like money in the bank drawing interest. The harvest amounts to cashing in the accumulated growth as interest and yet retaining some of the initial stock to produce future interest.

### Time Less Than You Think

Trees do grow slowly. It is often this thought that stops people from planting them because five or ten years seems so distant. But when you look back five or ten years the picture changes; it's more like yesterday.

To best manage our soil, we must put in the crop most adapted to it. In every farm plan there is a place for trees and they should be planted this year, not next. The odd lot plantings soon become beauty spots, each acre an acre of pride. Wildlife is attracted to such sites, songbirds, game birds and animals come into the shelter and life is abundant the year around.

Don't let marginal and unproductive acres become a growing problem of insecurity. Seedling trees grow into dollars of future income; in a sense, money does grow on trees.

### ASK THE MAN WHO KNOWS

When little Johnny Nimrod was asked by the teacher if he knew what the four seasons were he said, "Sure. There's the duck season, pheasant season, deer season and rabbit season."





George Tovey Photo.

Even the simplest of set-outs will bring in some crows. A few dead birds propped in the roadside brush attracted the attention of roost bound crows in the evening.



George Tovey Photo.

White clothes are a great help in the snow. Camouflage is important, but movement reveals even the best hidden hunter to the sharp-eyed, raucous-voiced crow.

**SEASON ARTILLERY—**

(Continued from page 113)  
 collect in the evenings. This happens when beginners think that the more birds, the more shooting. In fact the case is quite the contrary. Firing into the roost scares the crows to the four winds. In some instances farmers are distressed by huge numbers of crows in groves close by dwellings. This is the only plausible reason for killing crows at the nesting time. The man who truly loves the sport sticks to the flyways where many more can be taken without dispersing the main body.

If you know of a roost, drive the roads in late afternoon. A couple of hours before the sun goes down crows start returning home. Before too many miles you should find a place to set up if you are early enough that day or some time in the future. A ridge setting or a field shelterbelt has an advantage of being seen from both sides of the hill and attracting more birds. This though isn't often food and may be considered real game.

Crows leave the roost with the first light of dawn, a time that hunters prefer because they know the birds are well rested and eager for deviltry than in the evening. If the weather is cold, crows spend more time at the roost in nearby areas. When windy, crows fly close to the ground and are easier to knock down.

**Best Decoy**  
 Stuffed or imitation great horned owl is an irresistible lure. Little owls are even better but harder to obtain. Mounted on a slender pole (some hunters make by the telescoping type) and put up either in the open or in a tall, bare tree, the first and most important part of the set-out is finished. A few dummy, stuffed, or live crows complete the set. You can, of course, just use a few live crows, but it's not as effective as an owl. The crows need something on which to focus their attention so that the booming guns

and falling companions don't disturb their rage. Get the first one that flies to the set and others will soon be milling overhead.

**The Blind**

Making and positioning a place to hide near the set-out is fully as important with crow shooting as with waterfowl. All birds have excellent eyesight, far exceeding that of humans, and the crow is no exception. A good blind is one in which the hunter's outline is well broken up and yet offers adequate room to manipulate the gun. The fundamental principle and easiest way to remain unnoticed by birds is to simply not move. A man's face and eyes, especially if in motion, immediately spell danger to wary game. So gather materials from around the blind site, keep low, and move as little as possible until ready to shoot. If you can, dig out a little pit, put your feet in it and sit on the edge. With weeds, brush, or fallen timber around you, you're set.

Wear white if there is snow on the ground and fasten a handkerchief to your hat for more camouflage. Most blinds are constructed about ten yards away from the set-out, within easy range and out of the immediate vicinity of the decoys. A blind can be built anywhere on a flyway. Next to a pine grove, in a dumping ground, or even next to an open field where the crows gather on the way back to the roost. If possible make the blind upwind of the set-out for a little easier shooting. Save your Christmas trees, they make a good blind any time, on snow or bare ground.

**When to Go**

Any season is a good time to kill crows. Most shooters prefer late winter for want of anything else, but in spring and fall when the waterfowl are moving the migrating blackguards are very susceptible.

**Calling**

The first thing to remember is that a well-hidden caller can do a lot better than a caller out in the

open. The second is that a little calling at the right time does more good than constant noise. Many flocks are educated to calling and already give wide berth to the portable hi-fi units. The only way to find out is to give it a whirl if you're so inclined. Experienced crow hunters can tell you it is just like duck hunting—more birds are scared than attracted by indiscriminate calling. Crows communicate danger or alarm to their fellows with a series of rapid caws. Avoid such sounds! The call should sound plaintive as if a black rascal is in trouble and pleading for help. If you've never raised a crow call to your lips pay heed to the way

live birds sound. Just the passage of wind through a call won't give the required effect. It takes a guttural growling with the expulsion of air to make a realistic raucous caw.

The crow is a most intelligent being. He's wary and suspicious and seems to be able to judge gun range if he knows you are after him. Without a doubt crows take a terrible toll of game and song birds. Crafty, he looks for the food easiest to obtain and during the nesting season, this is the eggs of other birds. Hunting the apparently indestructible crows can sharpen your wits as well as your aim.



"He's just out of range and he knows it."



## FACTS ABOUT HUNTING

Once upon a time there was an expert hunter.

He read all the outdoor magazines and Deepriver Jim's Trailbook, listened to the sages around the barber shop, compared notes with other experts (so classified if they agreed with him) and was top gun in the local weed patches.

That hunter was me and it was some time ago and I'm no longer an expert. A quarter-century afield has made me discard most of the things I've read and heard about hunting, and today I'm almost back where I started from. But if I still don't know much about hunting, what I do know is for SURE.

This store of outdoor wisdom gathered over twenty-five years of boondocking and chore-dodging, falls into four broad categories:

### People

1. A hunting partner usually oversleeps.
2. A wife sleeps deepest when her duckhunter wants his breakfast.
3. The guys in the next blind are game hogs.
4. If you wonder where to hunt ask a barber.
5. Beware the quick shooter, for thou shalt inherit his quickly shot birds.
6. Blessed be the camp cook, the wife who cleans game and the partner with two candy bars.

### Equipment

1. A knife can't be too sharp.
2. Hip boots leak only in cold water.
3. When matches are fewest, firewood is wettest.
4. For a drippy nose, a wool glove beats any bandanna.
5. Never be the only man in the party with a game pocket in his coat.

### Critters

1. Foxes are not fit to eat.
2. While a duck is still coming at you, shut up.
3. Squirrels can't lie still for over 20 minutes.
4. I can't sit still for over 19.
5. Geese aren't smart; they're just smarter than most hunters.

### Other Things

1. Fences are always two inches higher than my legs.
2. Your shot was lucky; mine was skillful.
3. Only the men who build farm gates can understand them.
4. Bird dogs are optimists; pheasants are pessimists.
5. There is no greater faith than a small boy's defense of his birdless dad.
6. The last hills are the highest.

These are the only hunting facts that I'm dead sure of, for I've never seen exceptions to them. There's lots of stuff I'm half-sure of. It seems fairly certain that wives save up the year's odd jobs for October and that small boys like to carry rabbits or empty shotgun shells just as much as they ever did.

Every year I salt away a few

## THE ART OF SEEING

George Tovey

"There's a pheasant."

"Where?"

"Right over there."

"I didn't see it, you must have sharp eyes."

How often have you heard this sort of conversation while driving? While everyone in the car might be blessed with 20-20 vision, one of the party may see wildlife and the others not. It becomes apparent that mere acuteness of vision is not the determining factor. The answer lies rather in the mental process which directs our vision and interprets the image transmitted by the eye. We see what we are interested in seeing and practice develops this faculty. Whoever saw the pheasant probably noted the cover was favorable toward the pheasant population and expected to see the bird before it was actually sighted.

Much success in seeing wildlife comes from knowing where and when to look. It comes from recognizing suitable habitat; it comes from knowing the habits of game, and it comes from tiny bits of information stored in the memory and used subconsciously. For example, a pheasant may be almost invisible due to his protective marking, but the white ring about his neck may be recognized from a distance by one who is accustomed to looking for it.

A person interested in birds will notice birds. He will note a projection on a limb which to the uninitiated may appear to be part of the tree, but from his past experience he will know that it is the outline of an object in which he has an interest. Experienced observers may be able to tell the species of a bird at a great distance, not from being able to see the markings in detail but rather from the characteristics of flight.

Many times an animal will "freeze" or sit motionless and the eye will pass by leaving it unnoticed. When moving it at once comes to our attention no more visible before movement than after—but more noticeable.

Indications of wildlife may lead us to search for the animal itself. Waves on a pond may tell us a muskrat is swimming there, invisible except for a black speck of a nose, and if we remain still—animals are quick to detect the slightest motion—we may see him climb out on the shore of the pond.

Successful squirrel hunters may not see the entire squirrels, the

more hunting truths. Trouble is, I'm getting smarter slower and older faster, and my list is starting to bog down. But wisdom begets wisdom. I'm passing this list on to my son, and with a head start he may even be able to find easy ways to open field gates and climb barbed wire fences.—*Pringhar Bell*.



Knowing what to look for and where is more important than 20-20 vision when looking for game or birds. The white ring around the pheasant's neck is prominent anytime.

hair on a tail waving in the breeze, a silhouette of pointed ears will lead to the identification of the entire animal. A fox can be seen from the car in the wintertime if one knows where and when to look. After a snow when the sun comes out he will sometimes appear as a black speck on the southern slope of low rolling hills. Binoculars will often turn the black speck into a fox, out to gather what warmth he can from the wan winter sunshine.

Trees are mostly humped into one large category by the casual traveler but travel can be made more interesting by being able to sort out the various kinds. One or two varieties might be picked out to start with, and as an instance the scotch pine, planted in various places by early settlers can be readily identified by the picturesque twisted branches and the light cinnamon color of the bark.

From a rapidly moving vehicle little but a blur is seen of the immediate roadside, but along in July the prairie wildflowers come into bloom and are invisible to us unless we look for them. It is well worth the time to take a slower trip down a side road and see beauty blooming in the ditches; if the mower hasn't gotten there first. For real masses of wild bloom take a few moments to walk down an abandoned railroad. These flowers take an added interest if you can identify some of them—try spiderwort as a starter.

Plants too like to select their living conditions, Cattails and blue

flag (or wild iris) are to be found where the water stands in the low spots.

Looking for wildlife takes a sharp alert mind rather than sharp eyes. And why look for wildlife? To look for wildlife is to look outward and away from ourselves. A healthy curiosity about nature is a sign of a mature and growing mind. The ability to see and recognize animals and plants is not to be developed overnight. Start looking for wildlife and with practice you will see more. A hike along a nature trail with someone to point out things otherwise missed is an experience to be remembered.

Members of the pigeon family drink by suction. Other birds take the water into their mouths and throw their heads back in order to swallow.

## Publications Available

Several new pamphlets are ready for distribution at the Commission office in Des Moines. They are Fox Trapping, an Iowa Game Bulletin that shows pictorially how to do the job; another Bulletin on Channel Catfish Research that tells the story of how fisheries research benefits catfish propagation; a leaflet on the Bays Branch area in Guthrie County and one on Willow Slough in Mills County. Send your requests to: Public Relations Section, State Conservation Commission, East 7th and Court Ave., Des Moines 8, Iowa.



# HISTORICALLY SPEAKING



By Stan Widney

## THE FIRST SPIRIT LAKE HATCHERY

The famous Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery on the isthmus between Elk Okoboji and Spirit Lake has been the scene of fish propagation for most a century. As early as 1877 a private hatchery was maintained there. The State Fish Commission, by a law of the legislature of '78, bought the private enterprises, ponds, buildings and all, hired its former owner to manage it, and established a carp hatchery. Yes, a carp hatchery on approximately the same spot where a building dedicated to the eradication of that very species now stands. Times do change!

Besides the carp hatchery, the crew at Spirit was engaged in making plans, models, etc., of fishways. Another law passed by the legislature of '78 proclaimed that a dam should possess a fishway so the fish that wandered down the river would have a way to get back home and vice versa. The crew was undermanned for the amount of work to be done and Commissioner Shaw wanted something done about it. In his report to Governor John H. Gear Biennial Report of '79-'81, he

...of this (referring to the duties) added to the numerous ordinary duties of the Fish Commission have made the past two years a time of extreme activity.

...fully was the time occupied during the fall of 1880 that it was impossible to attend to one of the most essential and important works for Iowa that has ever been undertaken by any fish commission. I refer to saving from destruction millions of young native fish that usually die each fall in the drying up of sloughs of the Mississippi, and planting them in the usually barren, once fruitful waters of the lakes and streams of Iowa.

...that Shaw objected to the case of the Spirit Lake Hatchery. He was all for the propagation of carp and thought the waters of Spirit Lake would be an ideal spot. Nor did he oppose the plan. What he did object to was the time and money being expended for such endeavors when the need to rescue and distribute native fish was so evident. The hatchery at Anamosa, Shaw's headquarters at the time, would do very

well for the time being while the pressing matter of re-stocking was accomplished.

He goes on to say, in the report of '79-'81:

"Too much can scarcely be said in favor of Assistant Commissioner Mosier (in charge of Spirit Lake) for his persistent and determined efforts to build and complete the work in spite of all obstacles interposed by the law and outside unfavorable circumstances. He not only was able to do the tasks required of him by law, but was able to prove, under the most unfavorable circumstances, that most of our native fish can be artificially propagated under favorable circumstances to any extent desired. He made it possible for an abundance of fish to be maintained in formerly depleted waters through re-stocking with those species raised at his hatchery."

E. D. Carleton, in his report to Governor Larrabee in 1887, noted as the first order of business that the removal of the State Fish Hatchery from Anamosa to Spirit Lake, as provided by acts of the Twenty-first General Assembly "required much labor and quite considerable expense."

The men of Spirit Lake Hatchery lived up to tradition. They were willing workers. They have carried on in spite of often negative legislation, political footballs and the vagaries of weather and depression.

Improvements came slowly. In 1916 one of the best fish hatcheries in the entire country was completed there, along with new ponds that covered 25 acres. From time to time, other buildings have been added until the hatchery is one of the show places of the Great Lakes Region.

The men of Spirit Lake are just as hard at it today and the needs of the lakes and streams are greater than ever, what with access areas to be created and maintained, silt-filled lakes to be cleansed and rough fish to be controlled. They need and deserve the faith and support of every fisherman in Iowa.



"He claims he's not fishing through the ice, so doesn't have to quit at six p.m."

## SOME CATFISH

Probably the largest catfish ever taken from the waters of an Iowa river was pulled out of a deep hole at the foot of the dam being built at Oakland Mills. It weighed 176 pounds. Workmen who were excavating for the concrete foundation dug down into the monster fish and at first supposed that it was a big rotten log. They were astonished, however, when trying to pull it apart with shovels, to have the old log quiver and wriggle. It was some little time before it could be determined as to its nature, but finally some courageous and inquisitive men got busy and dragged the old fellow up to the banks. His mouth was lined with scars and several old hooks were still in his mouth.

He is supposed to be the famous "cat" which has been seen and hooked so many times and about which so many fisher tales have been told.

The fish will be skinned and stuffed and presented to the museum at Iowa Wesleyan University.

A few days later the News reported that a deputy fish commissioner had come to Mt. Pleasant to investigate. In that connection the report stated:

It is understood that the deputy

fish commissioner went home in a rather disturbed frame of mind, and that he had not dropped the case by any means.

Hereafter, when piscatorially inclined gentlemen discover a 200 pound catfish grounded in the river bed, they should carefully insert a hook in its mouth, attach a rope, and hitch to a windlass or pair of mules and thereby catch him according to law. This digging game fish out of the river with pickaxes must cease.

There is no longer any doubt that the fish is the same old fellow about which local fishermen have been telling tales for a generation. It is claimed that one hook and a piece of line have been identified as having once been the property of Tom Shirley, thus confirming a wild-eyed story told by Shirley years ago, of having hooked a fish that weighed not less than 500 pounds. Another peculiar shaped hook still embedded in the jaws of the monster looked like a peculiar hook that George Luberger used when he was devoted to the art, and in a way, also confirms a now nearly forgotten tale of a dreadful and losing struggle with a deep sea monster down near the old Woolen mill wheel pit some years ago.

The catching of the big fish ends for all time the long line of fish stories that have emanated from Oakland for many years and the last story is the biggest fish story of all, truth always being stranger than fiction.—From the Mt. Pleasant News, January 23, 1911.

## STUNG ON THIS DEAL

Unusual phone calls are commonplace in the Conservation Commission's office in Des Moines, but this one was a little more so. Seems that a local fisherman out on an ice fishing expedition bought some larvae for bait in eastern Iowa. He didn't use them all so brought the remains home to save for the next trip. After a few days in the warm basement the leftover bait got mixed up about the season and hatched—into honeybees. That poses a good question, just how do you drive bees out of the house in mid-winter?



Built in 1916, the Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery doesn't look much different today although you're not liable to find many "tin lizzies" parked out in front. A new one is planned.

Rorebock Studio.



## PIKES PEAK IN MARCH

Roger Fliger

Pikes Peak State Park near McGregor can turn a usually drab March day into one of the most interesting of the whole winter. Although I had visited the park many times in all seasons of the year, it took a snowy, late-winter hike to appreciate its true worth as one of our most interesting areas.

From the top, overlooking the Father of Waters, the snow-covered bluffs and blue shadows gave the meeting place of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers a special serenity and grandeur. I didn't tarry there long because a path at the extreme northeast corner of the recreation area had caught my eye.

A little way along the path I came across a sight that excited my imagination with a flood of questions. A sign identified a huge mound as one of the Effigy type in the shape of a bear and I wondered what lay buried beneath it.

Endless questions, still unanswered, bothered me as I moved on to other mounds of simpler, conical shape which make this area so attractive to the archaeologist. Now and then the trail would break through the trees on an overlook with superb views of picturesque McGregor, Marquette, and historic Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

Narrow steps carved into the limestone rock descended into the valley. The trees swallowed me up and I began to notice botanical wonders, such as a witch hazel tree in bloom in the midst of a world of leafless hardwoods—oaks, maples and hickories. No, the witch hazel wasn't really alone in its tiny greenery. The rocks and tree trunks had a variety of lichens and moss, just as green through the melting snow as they were last summer. Tiny strawberry plants and coiled ferns, like the oaks and hickories, will have to wait for spring to become active.

The limestone steps had turned to sandstone as I wandered on, engrossed in the study of plant life. And what sandstone! The first view of the outcropping revealed a hint of what was to follow. I flaked away a little of the red, yellow and lavender sand and discovered the utmost uniformity of grain. I realized that this was the formation from whence came the colored sand in bottles that are sold in McGregor.

The path cut up from Bridal Veil Falls and I was soon in the solitude and penetrating silence of the deep woods once more; a silence that was broken by a piercing, almost laughing call seldom heard by Iowans—two pileated woodpeckers, the largest and most interesting of our wood boring birds. Dead trees, half chiseled apart by their powerful bills, showed them to be regular residents of this secluded area.

Other birds captured my attention. Red headed and red breasted woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches flew from tree to tree. A red-tailed hawk and a bald eagle circled endlessly and a great-horned owl fled from me on noiseless wings. I discovered that it was already nesting this time of year.

Back at the park's recreation area I realized that hours of what would otherwise have been a dreary winter day had slipped away like minutes. Stopping for a minute, I scanned the panorama of bluffs, river and forest bathed in the last rays of the setting sun and thought of all the natural phenomena I had witnessed in this area of less than 150 acres. I began to understand why the mound builders buried their dead and worshipped high on this hill. Certainly this visit to Iowa's Pikes Peak will stand out as one of my most interesting outdoor adventures of 1961.



The view from Pikes Peak State Park in northeast Iowa includes the juncture of the Wisconsin River with the Mississippi River. A few campsites will be ready this summer.



Jim Sherman Photo

This meeting of teacher and crayfish at the Conservation Camp is an education for both. Close association with nature is one of the features of the summer course.

## TEACHER TRAINING—OUTDOOR STYLE

Duane E. DeKock

Swimming, fishing, hiking, boating and living in Springbrook State Park is only a very small part of the enjoyment at the Iowa Teachers Conservation Camp. The real attraction of this camp is the tremendous satisfaction that students obtain from absorbing the concepts of conservation in the field from some of the top instructors in the state. This course is organized with the Iowa school teacher in mind and offers the practical material she or he can use to teach conservation to Iowa students.

Classrooms and laboratory space in this unusual school are unlimited. Students use a redecorated C.C.C. building, a state park and all of Iowa in their studies. Close to 1,000 miles are traveled while visiting various parts of this outdoor laboratory. Sloughs are visited to study wildlife, another state park is used to study geology and roadside ditches are explored to study soils and their components to see what makes each type different.

To best use these facilities, five permanent instructors and over 25 resource instructors pool their efforts to develop, in three weeks, enough background and enthusiasm to last the teacher a lifetime.

Enthusiasm for this school is found in groups other than teach-

ers. County Soil Conservation Districts, sportsman's clubs, Woman's Federated Clubs and other organizations furnish scholarships to teachers and college students needing financial assistance. The State Conservation Commission, State Department of Public Instruction and Iowa State Teachers College cooperate with other state agencies and state schools to furnish instructors, equipment and materials necessary to keep this project in operation. More state agencies, independent organizations and individuals unite to encourage teachers and students to attend these three-hour courses than any other course in the state. It is the largest and most successful of its kind in the country with a nationwide reputation.

Camp alumni sometimes call this course a wonderful vacation. It is more of a change of pace; working, studying and playing hard in the out-of-doors. If a person is not afraid of being enthusiastic about a course, graduate or undergraduate, he should write for further information to either of the following individuals: Bernard Clausen, Director I.T.C.C., Science Department, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, or Duane E. DeKock, State Conservation Commission, East 7th and Court, Des Moines 8, Iowa.