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# 1,000 BIRDS TO SOUTHEAST IOWA



This is part of the 724 young birds released in early October. Jack Kirstein Photo.

## An experiment in mass stocking

Eugene D. Klonglan  
Game Biologist

A mass stocking of 1,000 pheasants, 435 cocks and 565 hens was made this summer and early fall in northeastern Henry County between Winfield and Olds. Ninety-three adult cocks, the spring surplus from the Wildlife Research and Exhibit Station near Boone, were liberated in late April; 18 cocks and 165 hens, the 1962 brood stock at the Wildlife Research Station, were released in mid-July; and a mass planting of 1,000 young birds was made in early October. The release of these birds is another step in a program aimed at increasing ringneck pheasant populations in the southeastern part of the state (see "Ring Necks Invade Southeast Iowa" in May 1961 *CONSERVATIONIST*). First emphasis is on placing the birds on the block of seven counties in the far southeast corner of the state which now has a closed season on pheasants. It is hoped this experiment will result in huntable populations here in the not-too-distant future.

During the past decade there has been a rapid build-up of pheasant numbers in Adair County and vicinity in southwestern Iowa. On the chance the birds' recent success here may have resulted, at least in part, from the development of some hidden trait, or adaptation, en-

abling them to better survive in the heretofore apparently unfavorable southern Iowa environment, all birds in the current program are being raised from this southwestern Iowa stock. As yet, there is no definite proof that a different strain of pheasant exists in the southwest. Several research projects are underway right now at the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State University, Ames, in an attempt to answer this question and to unravel the mystery of why pheasants have never really taken hold in southern Iowa.

About half of the full-grown young birds liberated in October were raised from brood stock wild-trapped last winter near Creston. The remainder were from stock raised in captivity from birds wild-trapped there two winters ago. Consequently, none of the birds were more than two generations removed from the wild, an important feature of the present program. Such birds retain more of their inherent wildness and their capacity to survive after being released than birds which have a pen-raised history of many generations. Young chicks raised from the wild-trapped stock have proven to be much wilder than chicks raised from stock held over in pens year after year.

Another important concept in the present experiment is the idea of repeated mass stocking. Though putting out 25 or 50, or even 100, birds on an area sounds like quite an accomplishment, it does not look

(Continued on page 87)

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CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE 53,000

**STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING IN MCGREGOR, IOWA October 3, 1962**

**General**

Travel was approved for six people to the Tri-State Fisheries Meeting at LaCrosse, Wisconsin, October 24-26.

Authorization was given for nine people to attend a meeting concerning the proposed Lewis and Clark Recreation Area at Omaha, November 11 and 12.

One man was authorized to travel to the Johnson Motor Service School at Waukegan, Illinois for two weeks, October 20.

The Commission agreed to the request of George Aschom of Lansing for fisheries personnel to clear trees and driftwood from some backwater channels on the Mississippi to help provide and maintain more fishing and boating area.

It was decided to reuse the Trout Stamp design for the coming license year.

Commission Policy on Departmental Purchases and Contracts was reviewed and revised.

A resolution was passed concerning the creation of the Lewis and Clark Recreation Area in which the Commission affirmed its support for this project.

The Director was authorized to request travel permission at his discretion for meetings in Omaha and Rock Island Engineering Offices.

**County Conservation Projects**

Cherokee County received approval for acquisition of the Riney Knob Sioux Access Area consisting of 50 acres of land at a cost of \$2,800 located on the Little Sioux River near the town of Washta.

Cherokee County also received approval for the acquisition for ten acres of land for \$50 for a fishing access area on the Little Sioux River, one mile northeast of Cherokee. Approval subject to the acquisition of needed access to the nearest public highway.

Floyd County received approval for the acquisition of the Ellis Area consisting of 6.04 acres of

land at a cost of \$604 located in the northeastern part of the county on the Little Cedar River.

Winnebago County received approval for the acquisition of Ambrosion Pond Area consisting of 18 acres of land at \$60 per acre located one mile south of the town of Leland.

Linn County received approval for a 48-year lease on 22 acres of land from the Linn County Fair Association for an area called the Wakpicada Addition located on the Wapsipinicon River subject to a ruling concerning the legality of one clause in the agreement as to liability.

Ida County received approval for the acquisition of 215 acres of land at a total cost of \$18,250 located one-half mile northwest of Ida Grove.

Woodbury County received approval for a development plan for a 32-acre area on Snyder Bend to be used for general park purposes.

Black Hawk County received approval of a management plan for the Elk Run Area. The town of Elk Run Heights is to maintain and operate this area.

The Commission recommended to the Executive Council that the Soper's Mill Access Area in Story County be transferred from the Fish and Game Division to Story County Conservation Board for county park purposes.

**Lands and Waters**

The Commission met with a delegation from Dubuque concerning the possibility of acquiring and developing the Julien Dubuque Gravesite. The Director was instructed to investigate and prepare cost estimates for development of this area.

A strip of land on the east end of Mill Creek Park was reconveyed to the town of Paulina subject to Executive Council approval.

A permit to construct a bridge over the Des Moines River within the City of Des Moines by the Highway Commission was approved.

Approval was given to request a legislative appropriation to provide funds for a boating channel in Lake Macbride in Johnson County.

Construction of an access road in the Paint Creek Unit of the Yellow River Forest Area was authorized at a cost of \$20,000.

An option was accepted for the purchase of 118 acres at a cost of \$6,521 from Forest and Mabel Henderson located in the Little Paint Creek Unit of the Yellow River Forest Area.

Approval was given for use of the same price schedule for nursery stock at the Ames Forest Nursery as last year.

**Fish and Game**

An option was accepted for the purchase of 1.3 acres at a cost of \$182 on the Elk Creek Marsh Area in Worth County.

**THE BEST HUNTING PARTNER**

Jim Sherman

Many writers dwell at length on the qualities of the ideal hunting companion. How to qualify as a sportsman, how to come home from the hunt alive, and how to shoot the most game are common considerations. My nomination for a good hunting partner is a working dog.

Pointers, setters, beagles, coon hounds, Labradors, and various other hunting dogs are commonly used in Iowa fields and marshes. Many hunters still fail to enjoy the multiple satisfactions which come to the hunting dog owner.

Conservationists value a dog for its ability to find most of the game which has been shot. Dead or crippled game left in the field is disgusting to any thinking person.

The unquestioning loyalty and friendship of a dog is familiar to all. When the hunting gets tough, a working dog often makes the difference between a feeling of success or failure. As a man gets older, less energetic, and smarter, his dog is allowed to do more of the hunting. Ground scent or air scent will provide information which no man can receive except through his dog.

The thrill of the chase satisfies basic urges within the individual. This satisfaction comes fully to coon, beagle, or fox hound owners. The owner of a hound enjoys the chase even when seasons are close. Dog training provides fine year-round outdoor activity for all who appreciate the out-of-doors.

The cost of feeding a dog can be a deterrent to some. However, an accurate analysis of travel, equipment, shells, etc., proves the cost of a dog the wisest investment a hunter can make.

The ultimate thrill in hunting comes to the man who has spent time in the field preparing his dog for the open season. One pointer's master says, "I never knew another hunting partner like old Mac. Just to see him in action is enough for me. He may make mistakes but he always pays off before the hunt is over. At the end of the day I'm happy."

**Gun Casualties for July, August, September, 1962**

	Number of Casualties	
	Fatal	Non-fatal
Victim moved in line of fire	0	1
Victim mistaken for game	0	1
Ricocheting bullet	0	2
<b>UNINTENTIONAL FIRING</b>		
Shooter stumbled and fell	3	3
Trigger caught on brush or other object	0	1
Horse play (didn't know gun was loaded)	1	1
Crossing fence or other obstacle	2	0
Loading or unloading weapon	0	1
Defective weapon	0	1
Gun discharged while handling	2	2
Removing weapon from case or rack	0	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>

	CASUALTIES BY MONTH	
	Fatal	Non-Fatal
July	1	2
August	0	1
September	7	11
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>

KIND OF WEAPON USED	Number	KIND OF GAME HUNTED
Shotgun	7	Target
Handgun	5	None

Twelve casualties and six of the fatalities were victims of their own weapon. Thirteen casualties were non-hunting accidents. Only two of the shooters involved in these casualties had Hunter Safety Training.

An option was accepted for the purchase of 80 acres at a cost of \$3,200 from Rebecca Wright in the Brown's Slough Area in Lucas County.

A list of State Game Refuges was approved to be filed with County Recorders.

An option was accepted for 32 acres at a \$160 per acre on the Elk Creek Area.

Approval was given for the purchase of 500 fiber glass refuge signs.

Approval was given for the removal of 1,000 cubic yards of dirt from the Dunbar Slough Area in Green County by the County Engineers.

A small lake site in Adair County was not approved. The Director was instructed to prepare engineering estimates for at least three additional small lake sites to be considered with the Adair site.

The Director was authorized to survey and advertise construction of an access to the Mississippi River from New Albin consisting of 1.8 miles of road.

## IOWA MAMMALS

Eldie Mustard

Game Biologist

## EASTERN COTTONTAIL

*Sylvilagus floridanus*

**Identification**—Upper parts are brown with a tinge of reddish on sides of neck. Underparts are white as is underside of the famous cotton-puff-like tail. Lengths range from 15 to 18 inches and weights vary from 2 to 4 pounds. Ears measure 2.5 to 3.0 inches.

**Range**—Throughout Iowa.

**Habitat**—Almost anywhere, but prefers areas affording thicket, brush and piles for escape cover.

**Reproduction**—Extremely prolific, cottontails breed from late winter in the fall and may produce 2 to 3 litters each year. The gestation period is 28 days and the female may be bred again before the young are one day old. The litters, averaging about 4 to 5 young, are placed in a small well concealed cavity or depression which is lined with grass and dry fur from the mother. She returns at intervals to nurse the young which are on their own when about 15 days old.

**Notes**—The cottontail is speedy and agile; it relies on bursts of speed to gain escape cover in a thicket or brush pile so it can evade pursuers. Its food consists of a wide variety of vegetation including corn, alfalfa, clover, apples, and bark of trees. They are most active in evening and early morning and are also fairly active at night.

**Status**—Iowa's most widely hunted mammal, the cottontail rabbit furnishes more recreation than any of our other game mammals. Its abundance is of primary importance in the management of nature because it serves as food for many of our wildlife predators which takes the "pressure" off some of our less productive game species. While many predators prey on rabbits, this in itself is not usually serious because they are so prolific; the removal of protective cover is a greater threat to a rabbit population than are predators. Cottontails can do severe damage to ornamental shrubs, and such losses can usually be avoided by wrapping or using repellents. Properly prepared rabbit is a gastronomic delight and is itself an ample award for a hunter's hunt. Iowa has a long open season on the cottontail rabbit each year to allow for sport and harvest of the annual surplus.

## WHITE-TAILED JACK RABBIT

*Lepus townsendii*

**Identification**—Large size with long ears and long legs. Has black-tipped ears in all seasons and a nearly all white tail. Grayish brown upper parts with whitish underparts in summer, but almost all white in winter. Lengths range from 21 to 25 inches with 3.00 to 5 inch tail. Ears are 5 to 6 inches long. Weights vary from



Jim Sherman Photo.

The ears of the jackrabbit are normally twice as long as the ears of cottontail.

5 to 10 pounds, with females larger than males.

**Range**—Most abundant in northwestern Iowa, but has been found in all counties except Davis, Van Buren, Lee, and Henry in southeastern Iowa.

**Habitat**—Primarily in more open country, cultivated fields, and pastures.

**Reproduction**—Breeding season lasts from April to August and there may be 2 to 3 litters per year in Iowa. Litter sizes range from 1 to 7 with an average of 3 to 4. The gestation period is unknown, but is apparently over 40 days. Jack rabbits do not construct nests and young are born in the open.

**Habits**—One of the animal kingdom's fleetest runners, jack rabbits run to escape enemies instead of attempting to hide like cottontails; however, they may "freeze" until they think they are sighted before they run to escape. They are most active in early morning, late afternoon, and night, with most of the daylight hours spent in forms or shallow depressions on the surface of the ground. The diet consists primarily of grasses, legumes, and various farm crops, but bark of trees may also be taken when more choice food is not available. Chief predators in Iowa are the red fox and great horned owl.

**Status**—The jack rabbit is a relatively important game animal in Iowa and furnishes winter sport for many hunters. Although a delicacy if properly prepared, many of the harvested jack rabbits are sold for processing into mink food. The fur is commonly made into felt. Extremely high populations can result in depredations on ag-

ricultural crops. Iowa has an annual open hunting season on jack rabbits.

## MINK

*Mustela vison*

**Identification**—Uniformly rich dark brown with short legs and a white spot on the throat. Males are 20 to 28 inches long with a 6 to 8-inch tail and weigh 1.25 to 3.0 pounds. Females are about 25 percent smaller.

**Habitat**—Around waterways, marshes, and lakes. May be found in wooded areas after water freezes over.

**Reproduction**—Mating occurs in February-March with males breeding promiscuously but helping one female rear young. One litter of 4 to 10 is born each year after a variable gestation period of 39 to 76 days. The family disbands in late summer.

**Habits**—Minks are excellent divers and swimmers and can catch even swift fish. They are excellent hunters and use for food such items as muskrats, frogs, fish, rodents, turtle eggs, birds, aquatic invertebrates, rabbits, ducklings, and incubating ducks. Excess food may be stored in dens. Mink are primarily nocturnal creatures. They are almost fearless and when cornered may emit a strong musk odor.

**Status**—Mink are considered prize catches by Iowa trappers and their pelts usually command high prices. Iowa mink are of especially high quality. Mink are never too numerous and restrictions on trapping are needed to prevent over-exploitation of this valuable fur resource. Iowa has an annual trapping season for mink.

## STORAGE CHECKLIST FOR CAMPERS

Now is the time for all good campers to come to the aid of their tent, stove, lantern, . . .

Jack Kirstein

At the end of the camping season, our fall hunting schedule is usually interrupted to prepare for the coming winter. This is the time you should give thought to proper care and storage of your camping equipment. Right now is the time to make all those repairs and replacements that you thought of during the camping season, but couldn't find time to do.

**TENTS**—check for rips, snags, tears, etc., and don't overlook repairs to zippers, tent-pole grommets, stakes, frames, screens, and ropes. If you have wondered about waterproofing your tent or dining fly, do it now. Perhaps you may want to add some ideas of your own such as an additional window for ventilation, or a canopy for better outdoor cooking protection. Do it now when there is plenty of time for it to be out of use. Then make sure it is completely dry; sweep out sand, twigs, and leaves; roll and put it in your tent bag. Store it with other canvas items away from areas where mice may break in and cause damage and if possible away from damp areas.

## LANTERNS AND STOVES—

Here is an item that can occasionally stand a coat of paint, also check for worn leather in your pressure pump. Generators too become fouled and need replacement. Dump all the gas out of the tank. Leaving gas in the tank provides an opportunity for the volatile parts to evaporate leaving an oily gum residue which may put your stove or lantern out of commission and cause later repair bills.

**COOLERS**—Pledge now to replace leaky drains and repair loose hinges on your cooler. It is also much easier to remove food stains now before they have time to harden. A little paint here may stop expensive rusting later.

**SLEEPING BAGS**—wash or dry-clean your sleeping equipment now before storage. If you need to repair zippers or snaps, do it now and then store them in the same place you reserve for your best blankets and other bedding.

**ALL THE REST**—Check every item that needs paint or repairs. Clean and lightly oil metal items such as axes, hammers, tent stakes, grills, etc. Paint, varnish, or stain items such as cots, food boxes, trailers, and car-top carriers. Check ropes to remove frayed portions and coil them. Empty gas cans, and paint them a new bright red. Leave no piece of equipment unexamined.

Do this now and when the first blush of spring invites you to go camping, you'll be ready.

## TALL CORN

*What does it mean to Iowa Wildlife?*

Paul D. Kline  
Game Biologist

Ask anybody, what is Iowa? Chances are his first thought will be "corn." We take for granted our agricultural economy based on corn. We realize the impact on our livelihood of "corn culture," but do we recognize a similar effect on our wildlife species?

Game, no matter the variety, is a product of environment. It must be adapted to living within the confines of its immediate surroundings (soils, climate, vegetation, and other animals) else it can never survive as a species. Individuals may survive for a time even though they are not adapted; but they will not perpetuate the species.

When the settlers first came to Iowa they found game species adapted to the environment presented by the region. Prairie chickens abounded in native prairie habitat. Ruffed grouse inhabited the native woodlands. Since then, there have been some changes.

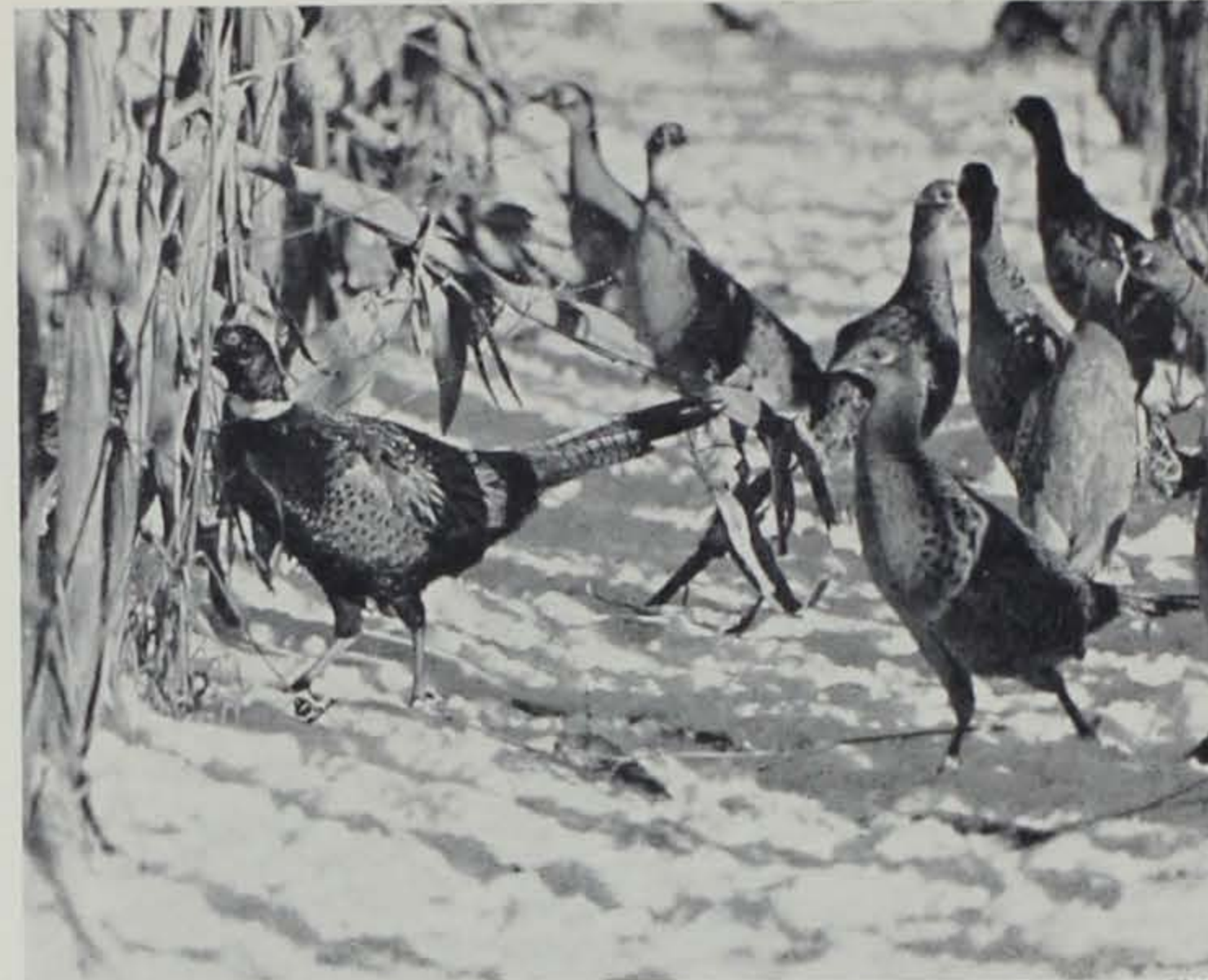
The native prairies have been replaced by "tame" grasses and legumes such as corn, oats, blue grass, soybeans, etc. The woodlands have been altered by clearing, burning, and intensive grazing. These changes forged our "corn culture."

Were the prairie chickens adapted to "corn culture"? The answer is obvious. Were the ruffed grouse able to withstand changes in their native habitat? To a great extent they were not. However, under recommended forest management practices which tend to eliminate overgrazing, fire, and wholesale cutting, ruffed grouse may return to much of their original range in Iowa. Prairie chickens as a species were not so fortunate.

Just how important is a "corn culture" to our game? There can be but one answer to that. Corn, while important to people, is even more significant in the lives of wild game. They are tied even more to the soil and its products than are we.

Some farmers at times become painfully aware of this. They discover their sweet corn raided by raccoons, "just as it was ready to pick." Or, beaver have flooded an acre or two of prime bottomland corn for their own access and use. Such flagrant encroachment may be sorrowfully greater than mere "use." But it does serve to demonstrate the fact that game animals are presently adapted to our "corn culture" in Iowa. They are dependent on corn in many ways less obvious to the general observer.

Standing corn from mid-July until corn picking in October or November provides adequate es-



The impact of our corn culture has made great changes in wildlife composition.

cape cover for cottontails, quail, pheasants, and deer. This may be especially true if foxtail and other weeds are present. As a matter of fact there just isn't much better escape cover available than a slightly weedy corn field. If you don't believe it, sometime try to keep in view a cottontail running around inside a cornfield during August. Now that is a challenge.

There's just one trouble with corn as escape cover. When the corn is picked most of its value is destroyed. And so is the value of weedy fencerows, ditches, adjacent crop edges, etc., where most cover is knocked down by turning tractors or other machinery during the picking operations. When all this occurs, the rabbits particularly must find somewhere else to go or succumb to predators. Our cottontail studies demonstrate a very real drop in rabbit population occurs at this time. "It just ain't right, but it can't be helped."

But there's one side benefit. Corn picking by mechanical means as presently practiced in Iowa is not entirely efficient. It gets the crop out early, weather cooperating. But most farmers, I believe, will admit that it is just a little wasteful. Those rollers just have to shell a little bit off each ear.

Maybe the farmers worry some about this (maybe they don't); but surely wildlife does not. The wasteful harvest provides a major, perhaps the greatest single, source of winter sustenance. During winter when food is relatively scarce shelled corn, or whole ears, left on the ground is utilized by cottontails, jack rabbits, pheasants, quail, squirrels, and probably other species. Many individuals doubtlessly rely almost entirely on waste corn to carry them through the winter. Even deer seem to

utilize waste corn as a primary winter food, although they are capable of reaching ears on upright stalks (as are squirrels).

Migrating and wintering mallards and geese use our corn fields for feeding. Many waterfowlers, professional and otherwise, believe the availability of waste corn may determine whether or not waterfowl stay long in Iowa during fall and winter. Mallards have been known to stay on frozen lakes providing cornfields were available where corn (not snow covered) could be found.

Our "corn culture" is of primary importance to most of our game in Iowa. The fact that our harvest methods are wasteful is exceedingly important. Now sounds an ominous note. What happens if these harvest techniques are improved? There are trends by agricultural interests toward revolutionary corn harvest methods which will among other considerations eliminate most waste.

These trends are fine. They demonstrate advancement in our "corn culture." What effect they will have on our native wildlife remains to be seen. Chances are they will not be catastrophic as was the destruction of native grasses to prairie chickens. We could have reduced winter populations, however. Notice how little use by pheasants a fall-plowed corn field receives. All the goodies have been plowed under.

When you get the feeling we live in a corn state try the wildlife point of view. They are not interested in state culture or even prestige. They are interested in pure corn.

Bobwhite quail are found in small coveys and prefer fairly open, cultivated or pasture land with patches of brush for shelter,

## QUAIL HUNTERS' LEXICON

Quail hunters speak a language all their own, its understanding made more difficult by the fact that a term may be either complimentary or derogatory, depending upon how it's used. Also identical work by two different dogs may be described differently—depending upon ownership of the dogs. If your dog covers a lot of ground he's "big running"; if he can't keep up with the other dogs he's "thorough." If your dog flushes birds he's "aggressive"; if someone else's dog does the same thing he's "headstrong."

And since all the bird hunting terms are over-worked, we suggest that the bird dog men pick up some new ones from the new commentators, still retaining their right to put their own interpretation on what the terms mean. For instance:

Missile malfunction—didn't cut a feather.

Missile lag—didn't lead him enough.

Diplomatic immunity—he's no your dog so don't whip him.

Diplomatic concession—admitting you didn't shoot at the only bird that fell.

Diplomatic deadlock—refusal to admit you didn't.

Peaceful coexistence—you don't talk about my dog and I won't talk about yours.

Situation unclear—dogs pointing all over the place.

Review of strategy—which side of the ditchbank will they fall down?

Gold drain—boarding your dog along that unbroken puppy.

Domestic crisis—one of your wife's nieces getting married on Saturday afternoon in the bird season.

Cold war parley—explaining why you won't be able to attend the wedding.

Mutual trust—"Since you're my friend, you can have him for \$300."

Meeting the challenge—"I'll give you old Joe for him."

Wide diplomatic experience—has bought and sold many bird dogs.

Momentous decision—can the jeep get across this ditch?

Fiasco—it couldn't. Where's the closest tractor?

Liberal—hunts on anybody's land.

Conservative—won't let anybody hunt on his land.

Price differential—what you pay for the dog and what you pay your wife you paid.

Coalition—taking all the dogs.

Seizing initiative—"Did you shoot?"

Faulty evaluation—"And I paid \$250 for the so-and-so."

Trade potential—"Wonder what I could unload him on?"

Stiff note—bill from the vet.

—Reprinted from South Carolina Wildlife.

RETRIEVER FEVER

Photo feature by Jack Kirstein



The dog's name is the cue to retrieve. The hand signal indicates the direction of the dummy. The whistle signals the dog to go. These are yellow and black Labradors.

When taking the dummy from the dog it is important to keep moving back so the dog will make a fast retrieve and come in fast. This is a matter of show primarily.



By stopping the dog with a whistle, his master indicates the new direction. This is useful to control the dog after he leaves your side, especially when you have cripples that are moving.

Although we don't recommend standing in a boat, in this case the boat is tied to stakes in the water so it won't tip. Working from the boat comes only after intensive dry land work.

A dog pays off on the hunt

Jack Kirstein

Every fall, when the colors run vibrant on the distant hills, many dogs take to the woods and fields. This is the time of excitement, of splashing water, nearby distant gunshots, rustling leaves in the tall grass, and great satisfaction for the hunter and retriever.

To get the utmost from your dog, however it is necessary to spend additional time training in the field. Time spent here can mean the difference between a successful hunt or a mediocre effort.

Beyond the range of standard training—the obedience and retrieving end of the business—the hunter can help himself and his dog by using his imagination. By visualizing actual hunting

situations and trying to simulate them in field training, many problems can be virtually eliminated.

For instance, it is much easier to teach the dog to retrieve among decoys on dry land than it is in the water. Many hunters have had their dog bring in a decoy, instead of the bird. On dry land this can be overcome by throwing the retrieving dummy into a setting of decoys and correcting any tendencies to fetch the blocks.

A little thought on the kind of hunting you plan to do may help you decide whether to practice retrieving from high points, such as lake and pond banks, set blinds, over the side of a boat, or any other such obstacle.

If your pooch is a little rusty on hand signals, it stands to reason that extra training is needed to

forestall the need of voice or whistle signals when you are actually in your blind and the birds are flying. You'll get no thanks from nearby hunters in the fall if you find it necessary to stand up in your duckboat and shout at your dog during a retrieve. Whistles are another great aid to the dog and the hunter.

Your dog can learn to be a gentleman in the field just as you have. Remember that his patience is greater than your in this training phase. If you can spend the time from your schedule now to enjoy your dog, he'll more than repay you in faithful service when the time comes. To you it may be hunting fever, but to him it's retriever fever.

An elephant's brain weighs ten pounds.

DUCK SOUNDS

One of the best ways to learn duck calling is to listen to ducks resting on a refuge or wherever they may be loafing and feeding. One thing you will notice is that few ducks sound alike. Some have deep quacks; others relatively high. Others are somewhere in between. Something else that will be apparent is the rhythm and number of quacks in the call. This is nearly always the same, indicating that this is perhaps more important than other features of duck calling. Generally speaking, unless you make natural quacks and know when to call, it's better to make only occasional quacks or do no calling at all.

The kit fox is sometimes called the swift fox because it can run faster than other foxes.

## HIT 'ER WITH A FITTER!

**Does your gun fit?****Jack Kirstein**

After knocking down his limit of pheasants, the old man with the ancient pump gun turned and grinned.

"Cain't shoot a gun that don't fit," he said. "If she's a fitter, she's a hitter!"

Apparently, for the old man, his rusty-tubed shooting iron was a fitter. What about you? Is your shotgun right for you? Does it fit?

Bob Allen, the Iowa member of the match-winning four-man U. S. team at the 1951 World's Championship in Monte Carlo gives us these important tips:

A shotgun has two sights, just the same as a rifle. To shoot a rifle, you merely line up the two sights and squeeze-off. The same thing applies to shotguns, however, the rear sight of the shotgun is the pupil of your eye.

You wouldn't shoot a rifle with a wobbly rear sight, so it is important that your eye lines up on the shotgun exactly the same for each shot. Fit of the gun governs this, and more specifically, the placement of your cheekbone on the comb of the stock.

To check your own gun, stand in front of a mirror, close your eyes, throw the gun to your shoulder with your cheek tight to the comb, and aim blind at a point directly in front of you in the mirror.

Now, open your eyes and look down the reflected image of the barrel in the mirror into your own eye.



There are several ways to raise or fatten the comb. Shown are self-adhering comb pads, lace-on pads, and adhesive tape.



The measurement that indicates correct pull or stock length is the distance from the thumb knuckle to the nose.

Do this a number of times and if you find that your eye is consistently to one side or the other, then the thinness or thickness of the comb must be altered to fit you.

If your eye is too low, and you find yourself looking at the back of the receiver, you must raise the comb. If your eye is too high, and you are seeing the front foot or so of the barrel, you must lower the comb.

Raising and fattening the comb can be done by adding a lace-on comb pad, using one of the commercial self-adhering comb pads, or by building it up with plastic wood, adhesive tape and padding, gluing on a wider or thicker comb, or many other methods.

Lowering or thinning the comb can usually be done by sanding.

One error in fitting a shotgun is measuring the "pull" or stock length of the gun by measuring from the crook of your elbow to the first pad of your trigger finger.

Do it if you must, but remember the gun is not used in this position and you will learn little if anything by such an exercise.

Pull or stock length is actually governed by the length of your neck. This applies to fit in the cheek-down gun-to-shoulder position. In this position, the length of the stock is most nearly correct when the distance from your nose to the knuckle of your thumb resting over the top of the stock is between an inch to an inch-and-a-half. A stock should be long enough to keep you from banging your nose with that thumb knuckle and yet short enough to permit swinging the gun quickly and easily to your shoulder.

Measuring the nose-to-knuckle distance is the sure way of doing this.

If the distance is too great, sawing off the stock butt is necessary. If too short, you can try adding a recoil pad which will lengthen the stock and reduce the jolt at the same time.

While working on fit at the butt-end of the stock, you can check pitch by standing your gun, trigger out and butt flat on the

floor, in a nearly square doorway or against a wall.

Measuring at the choke end the barrel from the center of the bore to the wall or doorway gives you the pitch.

If the barrel stands out from the wall, you have down-pitch. If it touches the wall you have zero pitch. About one and a half inches down-pitch is preferable for the average man. The purpose of pitch is to make sure the stock comes up onto your shoulder easily and stays there when you place your cheek down to the comb.

Pitch is governed mostly by the shape of your shoulder. A fat man with rounding chest would presumably take more down-pitch than the skinny flat-chested fellow who might want zero pitch.

There are many other refinements for the advanced shooter consider in getting his gun to fit, such as balance, grip, etc., but you can master-fit yourself on these first important points, your gun will be more of a "fitter" and therefore more of a "hitter."

**PHEASANTS**

Slow is the word when working pheasants. Move through cover slowly and work it thoroughly. Often a pause every now and then will flush birds that may have been tight when you walked near them. Ringnecks will not hold long for man or dog stopping or standing close to them.

Honey bees carry water as well as honey. Special carriers bring water to the hive, dole it out, seal it in the cells, or even act as storage tanks themselves until the water is needed.

## THE RINGNECK IN IOWA

Carol Buckmann



Iowa's first pheasants were displayed in front of Benton's tombstone shop in 1897.

A Shanghai public market in 1882. Judge Owen N. Denny, then U.S. Consul-General at Shanghai, bartered over the price of eight birds for a pair of gaudy males with white necks and four brown-colored females. The long-tailed birds were in bamboo cages surrounded by dried frogs, fish, poultry and other articles.

After much talk and useless negotiations between his interpreter, a Chinaman squatting on the ground and the go-between, Denny's interpreter reported, "Him 5 cents, American money." The deal was closed for 35 cents—17 cents in gold.

These, the first pairs of Denny's ring-necked pheasants shipped to America.

According to Seth Gordon's 1935 article in *Field and Stream*, "The Ring-necked Pheasant," Judge Denny's first live pheasants all died in little after a rough voyage. His next shipment of about 50 birds died in Portland safely to be sent on Denny's Oregon home-

ward in 1892," said Carl D. Shoemaker in a July 1917 issue of *The Oregon Sportsman*. "Denny pheasants as they were called, became so abundant that in part of Oregon an open season of 75 days was declared and 50,000 birds were released on the opening day."

Many also helped Washington and California by shipping pheasants in 1883. The Washington effort was successful and an

open season was declared in 1903. But his 80 to 90 California bound birds ran into difficulty. The consignee died before the ship docked and sailors gave the pheasants away along a San Francisco waterfront. By 1889 the price of pheasants had gone up from 35 cents to ten dollars a pair and the California game agents bought 140 from Oregon farmers. It wasn't until forty-four years later that California sportsmen enjoyed an open season.

In the east, shipments date back to around 1790, but not much attention was paid to foreign game birds until Oregon's successful introduction. The son-in-law of Benjamin Franklin brought them to his Delaware River estate in

New Jersey but mostly for aviary purposes. A century later, according to Seth Gordon's article, Pierre Lorillard imported pheasants from England into New Jersey to stock on his estate. Early in the nineteenth century pheasants were well established in that region.

After the Oregon success became known in the east, pheasant popularity skyrocketed and by 1907, all but nine states had placed the ring-necked foreigner within their boundaries.

In Iowa, the original release was an accident although it is believed the first pheasant freedom flyers had some human help. It all started in 1897 when William Benton of Cedar Falls purchased a few pairs from a Tacoma importer.

These he displayed as curiosities in front of his tombstone shop. The next year he and his wife started a pheasant farm on an acreage near Cedar City and quit chiseling tombstones. By 1901, the Benton stock had built to 690 birds.

By mid-summer of 1902, his pheasantry is believed to have contained 2,000 birds and he appealed to State Game Warden, George A. Lincoln, to relieve him of his overstock.

Late in the same year, a hurricane set the Benton birds loose resulting in the first unofficial release of ring-necks in Iowa. (It is believed that the pheasants had some help from neighbors who thought game bird stocking a good idea.) This completely wiped out Benton's business. He later received a commission as a game warden.

Most pheasant stocking in Iowa up to 1909 was by private individuals. In 1907 and 1908 there were a few successful plantings. Up to 1910, the Biennial Reports are quiet as to pheasants but the 1910 report states that 6,000 eggs were distributed to applicants in 82 of Iowa's 99 counties together with instructions as to rearing and release. The eggs were purchased from game breeders like Benton in Iowa, Pennsylvania and Illinois.

"The ring-neck pheasant and the Hungarian partridge now being introduced into the state will help out the disappearance of game birds and re-stock our state

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### PHASANT—

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repressive when subjected to the impartial analytical eye. It is a long, but true, fact that more than two-thirds of our wild pheasants see their first birthday. And very few of those lucky enough to celebrate the first ever make it to their second anniversary. Any pheasant birds liberated to the unfamiliar perils of the wild will suffer a greater rate of mortality than this.

Suppose 50 pheasants are released on a particular farm in south-central Iowa where ringnecks are absent or very scarce. What are the chances of establishing the nucleus of a new population? Probably slim. Intensive studies of wild populations in both north-central and northwestern Iowa show that more than half of the hen pheasants, including young ones, present in late summer and early fall, the time most birds are stocked, have been lost by the time the next breeding season rolls around. So if the 50 birds released in fall consisted of 25 cocks and 25 hens, only 12 of each sex would be left by spring (assuming no hunting of cocks, as is true in the southeast counties, and the same rate of mortality as wild pheasants—a generous assumption).

Even if these all remained right near the site where they were released, prospects might not be so bad. Unfortunately, such birds frequently forget to read the book of instructions that says they must stay put. Released birds, which are always banded, frequently turn up several miles from the spot of release. But to be conservative and make an argument, let us say none of our 50 birds ever moved more than two miles. This means the survivors would all still be within a circular area four miles in diameter, and thus containing about 12 square miles. But remember, there were only 12 cocks and 12 hens left by spring. So what have we—only one cock and one hen for each square mile!

A wild hen in Iowa normally has only about a 50-50 chance of raising a brood, a pen-raised hen perhaps even less. Many obstacles—disease, predation, auto kills, accidents—take their toll during the spring and summer. Obviously, the odds are stacked rather heavily against any lasting, beneficial effects from such releases.

Those parts of Iowa with the best pheasant hunting usually have 50 to 100 pheasants, or more, per section in the spring. Fall

populations may run as high as 400 per section in good years in "hot-spots," but a range of 100 to 250 birds in early fall would probably include most of our best areas. Good hunting can be had at densities below these, but many hunters will become discouraged, particularly after opening weekend, if numbers get too much lower.

The contrast of the above "good hunting" situation with that of our 50-bird stocking is striking. The futility of hoping small plantings of birds will somehow suddenly provide excellent hunting is self-evident. It can likewise be pointed out that the uselessness of making such releases in areas already having sizable populations is obvious—something like the proverbial drop in the bucket. The objective of the mass releases now underway in southeast Iowa is to try to build up a self-supporting population approaching 50 birds per section in the spring over an area nearly a township in size. This will no doubt require more than one year of pouring large numbers of birds into the same general area.

If successful in this area, the idea can be applied in other promising areas in southern Iowa. Such areas would be selected primarily on the basis of the closeness of their resemblance to the southwestern Iowa region where pheasants are now doing so well, as was done with the Henry County location. Among the many factors considered are soil types, topography, cropping practices, and the availability and arrangement of different cover types for winter protection, nesting and escape from predators.

Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to find the ideal conditions that existed in northern Iowa in the earlier days when pheasants were first introduced. In those days of different farming methods and abundant habitat, centering around undrained sloughs, marshes, and meadows, a planting of 50 birds or fewer had an excellent chance of taking hold. Since then the picture has been steadily changing.

One thing we must remember—the fact that this entire endeavor is labeled an "experiment" means that success is not necessarily guaranteed. However, this slightly different approach to an old problem would not be tried if it were not believed there was a reasonable chance of succeeding. It will take time, so don't start planning hunting trips to southeast Iowa just yet. Pheasants aren't as good at their "multiplication tables" as rabbits, you know!

## SHOW DECLINE SAWMILLS IN IOWA

**John Stokes**  
Assistant State Forester

Since 1953, the number of Iowa sawmills has decreased 42 per cent. Late in 1961, there were 580 sawmills operating in Iowa according to the "1962 Sawmills of Iowa Bulletin," released by Extension Forester Robert Davidson, Iowa State University at Ames. This directory is issued periodically to assist state and private landowners, wood-using industries, and the forest owner who have logs to sell or who desire to purchase native lumber.

In late 1959 a mail survey of Iowa sawmills was begun to update the directory published in 1953. The survey was completed in 1961. Sawmills were identified through the 1953 directory, State Conservation Commission district foresters and the mailing list of the *Iowa Sawmill Operators' Newsletter* published by the Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University. Mill operators were asked to complete a postcard questionnaire asking whether they were currently operating and, if so, their average annual lumber production in board feet.

All 1,008 mill operators identified in the 1953 directory plus mill operators receiving the Newsletter were sent a postcard questionnaire. All sawmills identified by the district foresters were sent a questionnaire except those which began operating within the last year and had not established an average annual production.

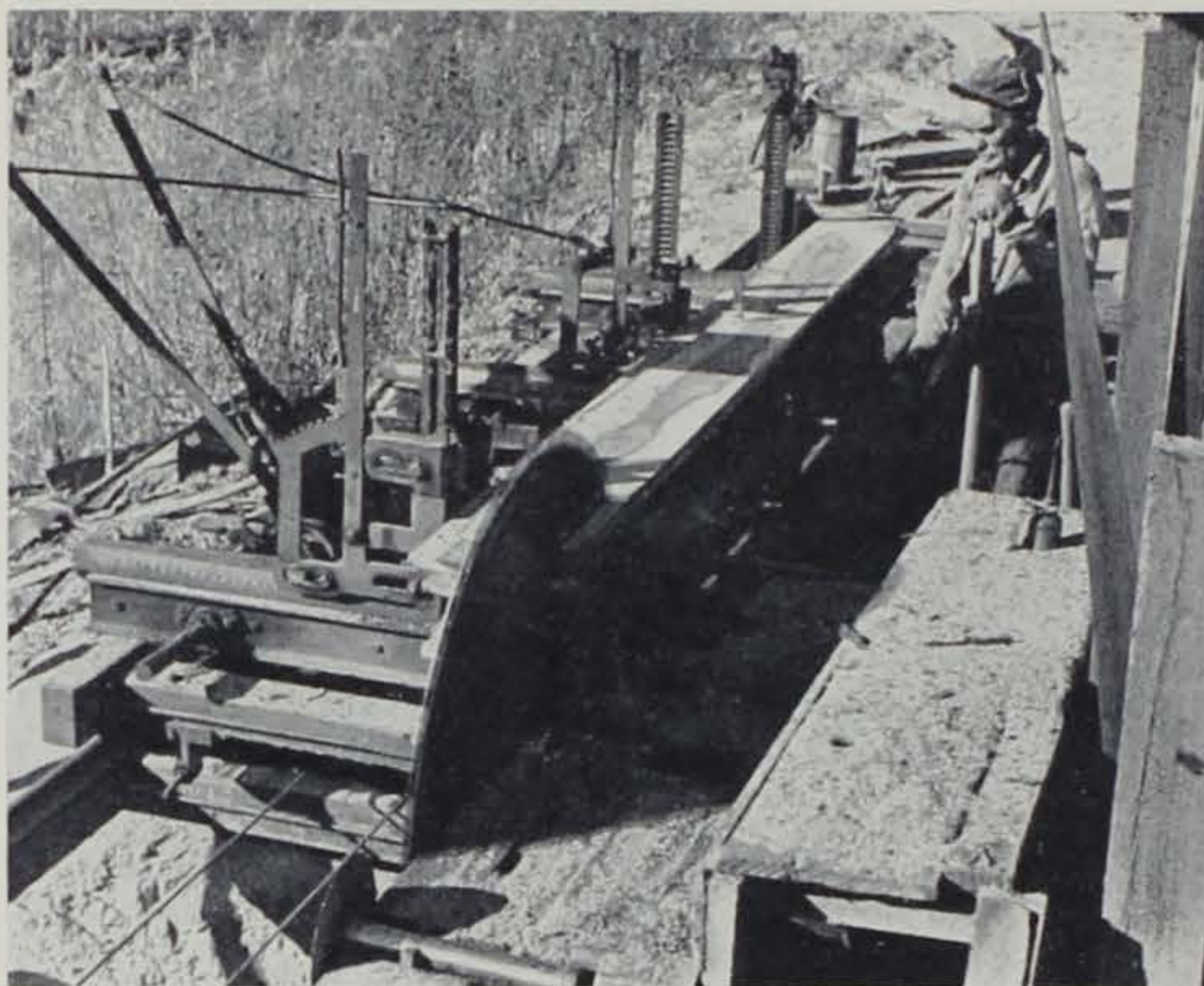
Results on production were obtained for 243 of the 580 mills making reports. A total production of 36.5 million board feet was reported by the 243 mills. Many of the 337 mills not reporting production are mills doing "custom sawing only" for local landowners.

Production classes were broken down into seven groups. The table below shows the production for the 243 mills reporting.

Production Class	No. of Mills
I 0—5,000 bd. ft.	15
II 5,000—10,000 bd. ft.	19
III 10,000—50,000 bd. ft.	76
IV 50,000—100,000 bd. ft.	51
V 100,000—500,000 bd. ft.	59
VI 500,000—1,000,000 bd. ft.	16
VII 1,000,000 and over bd. ft.	7

### Sawmill History and Trends

The first recorded sawmill in Iowa was built in 1829 on the Yellow River in Allamakee County. In 1834 another mill was built on Duck Creek in Scott County to supply lumber to the early settlers in that territory. Other mills followed in 1835 in Des Moines County, in 1837 at Dubuque and in 1838 at Muscatine. The old State Capitol Building on the State University of Iowa campus at Iowa City contains much native lumber cut by the first Johnson County sawmill in 1838. The number of mills increased rapidly from that time, especially along the Mississippi River. These mills were the first



There has been a decline in sawmill operation within the state. Only 580 are now classified as commercial sawmills.

industries to mark the Mississippi towns as manufacturing centers.

By 1859 there were 540 mills operating in Iowa. A large share of the logs for many mills along the Mississippi were rafted down the river from the forests of the Lake States. These 540 mills produced a total of 183 million board feet of lumber. Twenty-two million feet came from native timberlands, and 161 million feet came from white pine logs rafted down the river. In 1877 Clinton, Iowa, was the largest lumber producing center in the world.

The last year that logs in any quantity were rafted down the Mississippi to Iowa sawmills was 1909. Today the lumber produced in the state is from native-grown timber. The demands of settlers pushed the production of native lumber to 68 million board feet in 1899. Then production declined to an estimated low of 3 to 5 million board feet during the depression years of 1932-36.

Beginning in 1937, the production of native lumber began to increase as the nation's economic situation improved. World War II brought a great increase in demand for lumber. Iowa production jumped from 56 million board feet in 1943 to over 90 million at the end of the war. This does not include the 4 to 5 million board feet of specialty logs shipped to processors outside Iowa for manufacture of furniture, veneers and other fine products.

In 1953 there were 1,008 sawmills reported in Iowa. This survey identified 580 mills operating in 1961. More than 583 mills existed in the state in 1961, but this survey sought to identify mill operation rather than mill ownership. Mere ownership with no operation is of little value to people who have stumpage for sale or wish to buy lumber.

In addition to this more restrictive criterion for sawmill identification, recent changes in price and cost relationships have increased the advantage of the larger mills. This is particularly true for mills which have expanded operations from producing only green, rough-sawn lumber to producing surfaced, air-dried lumber and to manufacturing products such as pallets and livestock feeders. For this reason many of the smallest mills operating in 1953 were not operating in 1961, while many of the larger mills have diversified and expanded operations.

The decline in the number of farms in various parts of the state has also had its effect in reducing the number of small custom type sawmills.

At present Conservation Commission Foresters are making field contacts to get production figures for the 337 mills not reporting in the present survey. Records are also being brought up to date on new sawmills and sawmills leaving the state or quitting business.

Sawmill numbers are expected to show a continued decline with fewer but larger year around mills accounting for most of the production of native wood products in Iowa.

Your commission foresters and extension forester are available to help you in dealing with your timber management and marketing problems.

### LANDING FISH

When landing a fish without aid of a landing net, select a spot where the bank slopes gently and is clear of obstructions. Work the fish to that area and, when he is played entirely out, boost him out on the bank with the rod. A fish often will help beach itself if you exert firm and sudden pressure.

### RINGNECK—

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with birds adapted to this climate. While this cannot be done in one year, I am satisfied that with a constant replacing of these birds, in a few years there will be game birds in great quantities throughout the state," said State Game Warden Lincoln, in a 1910 report.

Three years later the first game farm was set up at the State Fair Grounds where a small lamp-headed incubator and Bantam hens were used to hatch pheasant eggs.

With the advancement of the game farm, a new policy was established—distributing young birds instead of eggs to interested people. In 1915, the game farm was moved to Clive, near Des Moines, and three years later, a northwestern Iowa counties were receiving plantings of 200 to 80 birds.

According to the 1916 Biennial Report, they had become so successful that an open season was considered but the idea was abandoned. At that time, people were still saying pheasants would fail and nothing ever come from stocking the birds in this state.

Although an open season was considered again in 1918, pheasant hunting was not permitted until some time later. By 1924, 11 birds were established in nearly all northern counties and the legislature favored a small bag limit of cock pheasants in sections where they were the most numerous, but a season was not declared until the next year. On three holidays in October, Iowa shot approximately 75,000, took advantage of the first open season.

The Chinese foreigners had become permanent residents in northern Iowa but the southern pheasants were few. In '25, a new plan was inaugurated, that of gathering eggs and trapping wild birds with special emphasis on southern Iowa stocking.

The attitude toward pheasants hasn't always been rosy. In the early thirties, northern farmers declared open war on the alleged crop destroyers. Hundreds were killed and nests destroyed by better communities of pheasant haters.

A severe 1936 winter aroused sympathy and interest for the hard-hit birds and a highly publicized feeding program was started. Feeling toward pheasants warmed and farmers realized they might be beneficial. As a result of the severe winter and drought, there was no season for two years.

Although the Chinaman is not a native Iowan, this fall 250,000 hunters will find his mystery of the Orient are still retained. Little did Judge Denny realize the purchase of pheasants in a Shanghai market would inspire such nationwide interest and furnish so much pleasure to American sportsmen.