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THOMAS A BARTON  
839 BROOKRIDGE  
AMES IA 50010



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Number 12



Whether it's a new gun, or ol' Betsy, John Ringneck, cottontail, brushy tail and bobwhite quail will be on the Iowa scene to test the holiday hunter's skill.

# HOLIDAY HUNTING

**Bob Barratt**

Superintendent of Game

What better way could you find to use the new gun you received as a Christmas present than to go hunting during the holidays? Or, for that matter, what better way to spend your holidays than to take advantage of Iowa's long hunting seasons and enjoy some of your leisure time in our great outdoors?

The holiday season is normally a period of reunion for families and old friends. Here is an opportunity to join your old hunting companions and relive some of your field ex-

periences of the past. For most of us, there will be at least a few extra days of leisure from the usual work or school activities. Take advantage of this opportunity. There is still plenty of time to make that hunting trip you have been dreaming about all fall.

Iowa's pheasant season does not close until 4:30 P.M., January 2, 1967. This closing date was selected to allow you to hunt throughout the holiday season. Hunter surveys taken after the 1965 season showed that many persons took advantage of this opportunity. Students home from school

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CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE 60,370

## COMMISSION MINUTES

### State Conservation Commission Meeting Held in Des Moines, Iowa, November 1 and 2, 1966

The Commission met with Attorney Mert Eastlick of Council Bluffs and approved a request for Mr. Kaplan of Council Bluffs to place a monument in Manawa State Park in honor of his father and mother.

#### Fish and Game

Approval was given to a policy concerning field trials and retriever meets which would require requests for such meets to be filed at least ten days prior to the meet and would not allow such events to be held on a state area when important seasons were open on the area in question.

Approval was given for a private access from the road in the Princeton area in Scott County to be used only when the road is normally open.

Approval was given to exercise an option from Scherf for 80 acres of land adjacent to the Eldon game area in Davis County at \$30 per acre.

Approval was given to exercise an option from Clausen on 44 acres at a cost of \$16,500, adjacent to Goose Lake in Clinton County.

Approval was given to exercise an option from Moe for 241 acres at a total cost of \$30,000 in Winneshiak County for use as an upland game area.

#### Land and Waters

Approval was given to the city of Ames for an easement for construction of a sewer through the state forest nursery.

Approval was given to a request by the city of Algona for the transfer of an abandoned river channel to that city subject to approval of the Executive Council.

Approval was given to exercise an option from Ingamells and Popham for 28 acres and 12 acres adjacent to the Backbone State Park at a cost of \$100 per acre.

Approval was given to a request by the State Highway Commission for a construction permit to build

a bridge over the Turkey River in Clayton County.

A request by Neff to use car bodies for riprap on the Skunk River in Jefferson County was approved with a stipulation that the car bodies would be crushed and covered with rock according to plans and specifications approved by the Staff.

The Commission discussed the availability of land adjacent to Swan Lake near Carroll.

#### County Conservation Activities

Black Hawk County received approval for an addition to Black Hawk Park of 15 acres at a cost of \$2,500 as part of the Cedar River Green Belt.

Dallas County received approval for the acquisition of 5 acres of land at a cost of \$5,000, located 1 mile south of Perry, to be used as a forest park and museum.

Dallas County received approval for the acquisition of 29 acres of land at a cost of \$3,625 adjacent to the South Raccoon River near Redfield to provide public fishing access.

Johnson County received approval for the acquisition of 217 acres of land for \$52,200 by three options to be exercised in 1966, 1967 and 1968 to develop a multiple use outdoor recreational area and 30 to 40 acre artificial lake 11½ miles west of Iowa City called Oxford Township Park.

Pocahontas County received approval for the acquisition of 12.56 acres at a cost of \$2,815 for the purpose of developing a picnicking, camping and wildlife habitat area with fishing access to Pilot Creek 3½ miles southeast of Rolfe.

Taylor County received approval for the acquisition of 63 acres of land at a cost of \$10,080 to be used for a multiple use outdoor recreational area and 20 to 30 acre artificial lake 3½ miles east of New Market.

Washington County received approval for the acquisition of 0.5-acre of land under a renewable 10-year lease at \$50 per year as an access to the Skunk River one mile north of Brighton, to be known as Highway 1-Skunk River Access.

Washington County received approval for a 25-year management agreement between the State Conservation Commission and the Washington County Board of Supervisors on 10 acres of land called McKain Skunk River Access Area to be operated and managed by the Washington County Conservation Board.

Calhoun County received approval for minor revisions to a development plan for the Highway 17 Safety Rest Area.

Hancock County received approval for a development plan for Torkelson Wild Goose Park to include fishing in a gravel pit, a picnic area, roads and parking areas, reforestation, wildlife habitat and a dike along the Winnebago River.

## Conservation Forum

Dear Sir:

I am interested in falconry and would like to obtain a permit to take a young hawk from a nest.

Sincerely,

R.B.

Grinnell, Iowa

*All hawks are protected in Iowa except the Cooper's and the sharp-shinned. You could not take a red-tailed hawk from the wild.—Ken Kakac, Supt., Fish & Game Conservation Officers.*

Dear Sir:

Please tell me if it is legal to sell pheasant pelts this fall in Iowa.

R.D.

Waterloo, Iowa

*Section 109.55 of the Code of Iowa states, "It shall be unlawful for any person to buy, sell, dead or alive, any bird or animal, or any part thereof, which is protected by this chapter." It would be illegal to sell a pheasant or any part thereof in the State of Iowa.—Ken Kakac, Supt., Fish & Game Conservation Officers.*

Dear Sir:

Would you please be so kind to let me know where the fines go when one is arrested by a Game Warden?

C.C.B.

Waukon, Iowa

*Section 762.40 of the Iowa Code states: "If a fine is imposed and paid before commitment, it shall be received by the justice and paid over to the county treasurer within thirty (30) days after receipt thereof."*

*Section 602.32 states: "The county treasurer shall place all fines and forfeitures collected for the violation of state laws into the county school fund."—Ken Kakac, Supt., Fish & Game Conservation Officers.*

Dear Sir:

I am planning on raising ranch mink. I would like to get a fur breeder's license.

F.G.M.

Nora Springs, Iowa

*A game breeder's license is not required to raise domestic species of mink.—Ken Kakac, Supt., Fish & Game Conservation Officers.*

Gentlemen:

My personal congratulations to Jack Higgins for his very fine article, "What Are You?," which appeared in the Nov. issue of the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST.

Perhaps, because he expressed my own sentiments so exactly, he leaves me with the hope that many others will be equally impressed.

Let us have more articles of this nature. Truly, the best means we have to reconcile recreation and conservation is to continually try to educate the people as to what they can have and what they cannot have.

Let the state of Iowa be known as one which is not going to be lost in the shuffle of the recreation boom, and yet, we must make every effort to provide for the needs of all our citizens.

Sincerely yours,

George L. Marzeck

"Sportsman's Corner"

BURLINGTON HAWK-EYE

#### General

Travel was approved to the Minnesota Forest Research Center at Cloquet, Minnesota and the Midwest Wildlife Conference at Chicago.

The Director was authorized to prepare a statement to be presented at the seven water quality hearings in Iowa giving the position of the Conservation Commission in regards to water quality. He was also authorized to prepare a statement commending the work of the water commission.

Sidearms were displayed for the examination of the Commission and bids were discussed and it was decided to buy .357 magnum pistols for conservation officers from the Jay Sales Company of Des Moines.

#### Did You Know . . .

Early Egyptians made an idol of the cat because their food depended on the annual grain harvest. Cats kept swarms of rats and mice from eating the nation's sustenance.

\* \* \*

A fresh water fish never drinks water because water continually seeps through its gill membrane. The ocean fish drinks sea water, its gills desalting it and making it drinkable.

\* \* \*

Before salmon leave salt water, they store up oils and fats for the journey to the spawning grounds, during which they do not eat.

## LUCKY IOWA

Jack Higgins

If there is an Iowa parent who isn't thankful for the opportunity to rear his family in this state, his stupidity is beyond forgiveness. And if you think that statement is strong, then you, too, had better take a close look at what children in metropolitan America have to use as a substitute for nature in their quest for knowledge.

For instance, following a rain, or a release of water from a fire hydrant, the teacher will take the class to the concrete gutter in front of the school and point out the "physics of running water." She will have the class imagine that the flattened beer cans, soiled tissues and the rest of the flotsam of civilization are trees that have toppled into the "stream" during a flood. With this pretty picture in mind, the children can imagine that the shoals of broken glass and chips of cement or asphalt are bars of golden sand. And if they have imagined properly, they have learned all about soil erosion, naturally.

This learning experience is, supposedly, based on the premise that the class has a knowledge of what soil is. The "master teacher" has taken care of this in advance through a "real field trip" experience. This means that one day on the way to school she noticed a building being torn down to make way for a newer and bigger pile of masonry. So, she faithfully watched the spot for the next few weeks. When she thought the time was ripe, she applied for permission to disrupt the school routine for a trip to the excavation. If she is a sidewalk superintendent of long standing, the day selected was just right for viewing soil: the machines were at work and earth was exposed around the perimeter.

The class is bundled up and walked to the pit. From the safety of a few hundred yards they view "soil." The teacher points out a dim, black line on the far side of the yawning hole and tells the class that it is the "A" horizon, below which is a transition zone called the "B" horizon. The balance is the "C" horizon. After having assured each other that they've seen and identified the horizons of soil, the class will troop back to the sanity of the school—and never as much as touched, smelled, or tasted real dirt!

When it comes to wildlife, even the master teacher is stymied. A



Iowa school children are among the fortunate few who have an opportunity to learn about their natural heritage through firsthand experiences. Jack Kirstein Photo.

zoo trip may be taken, but because the emphasis there is world-wide, it is difficult to teach about native animals. Some teachers do try to supply an acquaintance with basic woodcraft: they use fresh snow for teaching tracking. All the class can really track, however, are other humans, cats, dogs and a few of our citified bird species.

That's how it is in this nation's crowded areas. How is it in yours? Are your children receiving the quality outdoor experiences that are available to them? Or, are they experiencing nothing but "book learning?" If that's the case, they are worse off than the children who are forced to live in concrete canyons.

Whose responsibility is it to see that children are educated in the wise use of our nation's resources? Why, you, the parent, of course. Yet society has to recognize that as more of us rely on sources other than the land for our livelihood, we have less chance to instill a respect for nature in our offspring. Thus it becomes imperative that our school systems assume a portion of this responsibility. And, the school must serve every boy and girl in the district. We cannot afford the luxury of having either our male or female population ignorant of the world in which they live and propagate.

Yes, Iowans can be thankful for living where they do. But, this thankfulness should never be perverted into a complacency that allows young Iowa to be ignorant of its natural heritage.

## NOTES ON CONSERVATION

John Brayton

One of the riddles of rural living has been the rites and customs of those connected with the county weed control program. While I haven't noticed any unusual activity this year, I lay this to my being away from home several times when these tax supported vandals were in the neighborhood.

Over a period of years county spray crews have managed to kill ninety rods of multiflora rose hedge on this place while leaving untouched many good stands of Canada thistle which continue to flourish alongside. This spring a small remnant of the hedge showed signs of reviving, so I accosted the county crew when they came past and asked them to give it the coup de grace. They assured me that this would be done in short order, for the county had just begun using a new and more powerful brush and weed killer. The name escapes me, but it contained several numbers as well as part of the alphabet and was guaranteed to put the blocks to any plant or tree with one application. I noticed the spray operators themselves didn't look too healthy, so I stood clear while they applied this concoction of overlapping hydrocarbons. They were at the scene for some time so I withdrew knowing that the last remnants of the multiflora were finally finished and could be more easily removed.

As it turned out, the hedge languished for a while but is finally coming back with new vigor. Meanwhile our garden put out some interesting mutations, the chickens went into an early moult, and a downwind neighbor took his bull to the sale barn.

One peculiar aspect of the county weed control program is an annual ritual in which each farm operator is served notice for the destruction of noxious weeds. By reason of tradition this notice comes from the county auditor and is delivered in person by a Gilbert and Sullivan version of Paul Revere. He bears the title of weed commissioner and



It's a puny little sign, but perhaps it will allow life to return to this man-made biological desert. Jim Sherman Photo.

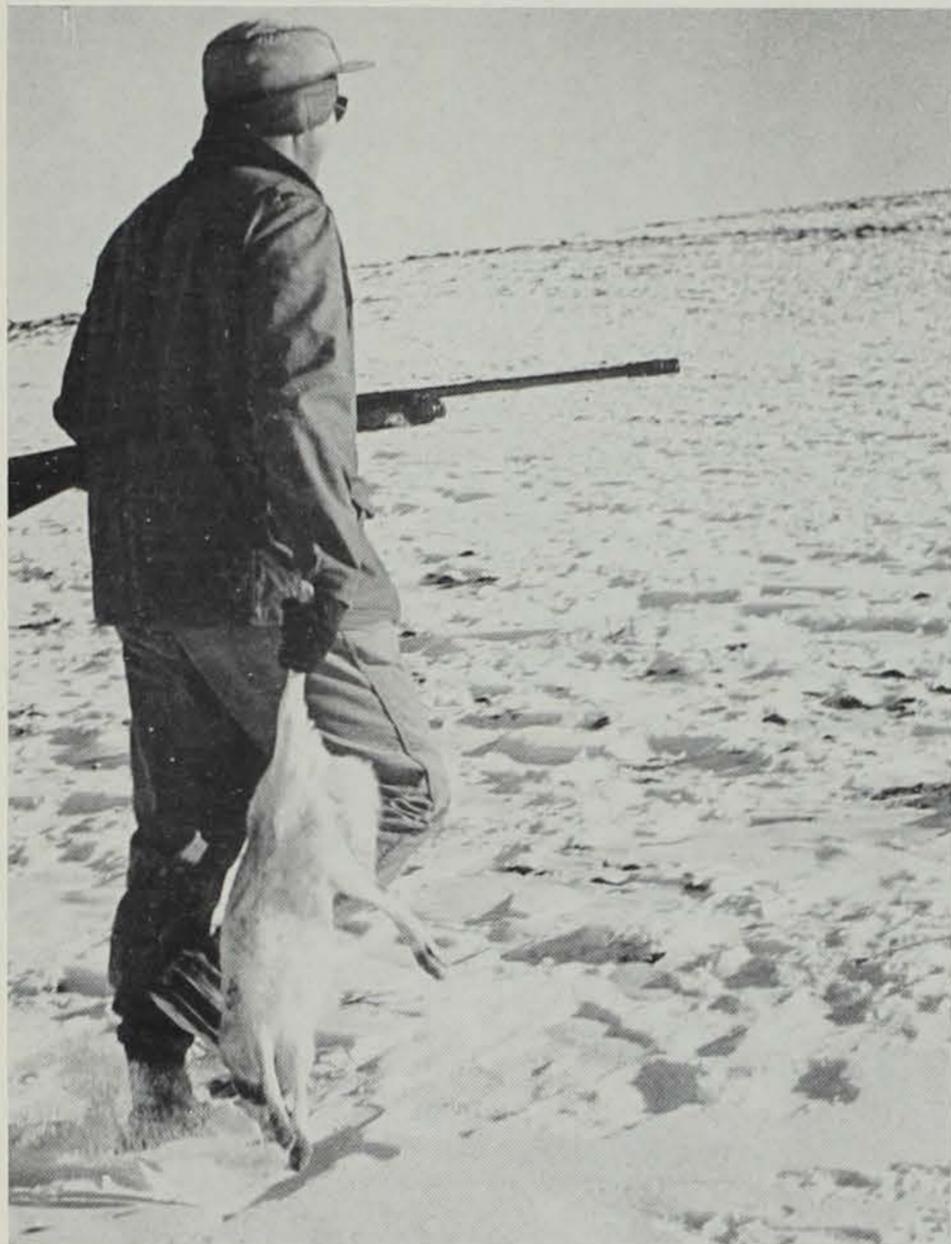
visits every farm, announcing by signed document that weeds are rampant in the area and if found on land owned or maintained by you they must be destroyed. These weeds are placed in four groups, and each group has its deadline for eradication. Most farmers have never heard of most varieties listed and consequently find them hard to recognize and destroy—a fact which may or may not be of interest to the county auditor.

Two notable exceptions are quack grass and the Canada thistle which are both well known and particularly troublesome to every landowner.

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## HOLIDAY HUNTING—

(Continued from page 89)



Some will try for jack rabbits—

visiting relatives and friends, and others with an extra day or two away from their regular work, all combine to make this period one of our best hunting opportunities. Nearly 20 per cent of all pheasant hunting took place during this holiday period. Why don't you join them this year?

No longer will you find the atmosphere of opening day. Hunting pressures will be lighter, but the birds will be a lot smarter. The pheasant hunters in late December don't harvest their limits in an hour or two as they did during the opening weekend. But there are plenty of ringnecks left if you are able to outwit them, and you can still bag your limit of three cocks if you are willing to work for them. Post-season surveys show that we have never harvested cock pheasants to a maximum in Iowa and surplus roosters are always present after the season closes.

Conditions in the field have changed tremendously since the opening day and you will have to change your tactics if your hunt is to be successful. The unpicked corn fields where you found so many birds in November are gone. Many of the picked corn fields have been chopped or fall plowed. Other fields have been grazed by livestock, and, often during this time of year, are covered by snow. In general, the cover is much more sparse as the Iowa landscape takes on the grim look of winter.

Many of the thickets and big sloughs still remain and these often harbor large numbers of birds. But don't expect to saunter casually through the grass and weeds with birds flushing obligingly within easy range of your shotgun. These birds, remember, have been hunted many times and those that continued to get up in front of the hunters have already been taken. Those that remain have learned to match wits with the hunter. They will usually flush well ahead of the hunters or sit tight and let you walk by. Often they will run far ahead of the hunters and fly from the far end of the cover far out of range.

When hunting these large cover areas, part of the hunters should go around and approach from the far end while the remainder move very slowly through the weeds and grass. Surrounding these areas insures against all the birds flushing out of range.

When hunting heavy cover, you can't work too slowly. Many cock birds have learned that they can escape by sitting tight and letting you walk by. Stop every few steps and stand in one spot for a minute or



Others will hope for snow to bunch the ringnecks.



Jim Sherman Photo.

Southern lowans, in particular, will go for bobwhite.

so. This trick will often cause birds to become nervous and flush. A good dog that will hunt close to you is a valuable asset in getting up these roosters that attempt to out wait you.

It is unbelievable how tight these birds will hold at times. I once had a hunting date with some friends from another state. Unable to meet them in the morning, we had agreed to meet at a small town at noon. On my way to the rendezvous, I had taken a shortcut through some back roads. On one of these dirt roads, I saw a cock pheasant dart across the road ahead of me and run into a patch of heavy grass no larger than the average living room. Stopping, I got out to see if I could flush the bird from his hiding place. I had nearly trampled the grass flat without seeing anything when I spotted the tip of a tail feather in a clump of grass. Approaching carefully, I bent down and caught the bird with my hands. Telling my friends about the incident while eating lunch, I noted a look of skepticism on their faces. I suspected that they thought they were hearing another tall hunting tale, but they were too modest to question me. Later the same afternoon we were hunting in an area where about an inch of snow had

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Jim Sherman Photo.

And many a boy with his first gun will go looking for cottontail.

## HOLIDAY HUNTING—

(Continued from page 92)

fallen. Determined to make believers out of my friends, I found the track of a cock bird along a fence row. Following it carefully and watching ahead, I found where it entered a clump of grass and ended. Motioning to my companions, I approached very carefully and for the second time that day caught a normal, healthy cock pheasant with my hands. Seeing was believing and my friends were thoroughly convinced that many hunters walk right by most of the birds without ever flushing them.

Other little tricks work equally well and often produce results in late season pheasant hunting. Often you will find birds in some of the most unlikely places at this time of the year. Once, while hunting in northern Iowa, I walked across a bare field heading back to my car. In the center of the field, several fence posts marked a tile inlet. It was the only cover within a quarter of a mile in any direction and the tiny clump of weeds and grass covered no more than your kitchen table. From this tiny island in the bare field, I flushed and shot two fat ringneck cocks. Undoubtedly this cover had been considered as too small and too remote by hunters who had observed it all season. These two roosters had found it a sanctuary and I'm sure that they had never been disturbed before that day. Many times these unlikely little patches of cover, no matter how insignificant they might appear, will harbor a bird or two, simply because everyone else figured they weren't worth hunting.

I know successful hunters who consistently take pheasants late in the season from fields which have been fall plowed. The wily ringnecks had learned to spend the day under an overturned clump of sod instead of in the weed patches where they were constantly disturbed by hunters. Like a cagey old whitetail buck, the cock pheasant gets mighty smart, and you will often find him where you least expect to see a bird.

Often, late in the season, I have spotted birds walking in an open field. When you stop, the rooster will oftentimes crouch down in an attempt to hide. If you start towards him, he will invariably run or fly. I have often fooled these birds by taking a course that would miss

the bird by about 35 yards. Thinking he hasn't been discovered, the ringneck will often flatten out on the ground and freeze. When he is at right angles to your line of approach turn towards him. Seldom will you take more than a step or two on your new course before he knows he has been duped and will flush. But, by the time he discovers you have tricked him, it is too late since you are now in range and if your marksmanship is good you should add another trophy to your bag.

Late season pheasants don't come easy but they are worth every bit of the effort you expend. Everyone that you outwit at this time of the year is a trophy, and the hunter who can take them consistently can come in from the fields at night with a lot of self-satisfaction. And don't forget—a pheasant or two, with the essential trimmings, makes a grand holiday feast.

Pheasant hunters aren't the only ones who can enjoy the holiday hunting. Quail and rabbits are both legal game species during and after this period.

The quail season runs through the month of January and the birds are abundant. Iowa probably has its highest quail population in history. In contrast to pheasant hunting, quail hunting is usually more productive at this time than during the early part of the season. Weeds, brush, corn fields and timber are heaviest in the prime bottwhite areas of southern and southeastern Iowa and during the warmer fall months the birds might be almost anywhere. Now they are found in the heavier cover and are much easier to locate.

Dyed in the wool quail hunters, of course, will hunt with pointing dogs. Still others will use retrievers or other breeds to help locate and flush the birds. But you can hunt these little speedsters very successfully without dogs if you know a little about their habits.

Look for these bombshells in heavy cover adjacent to corn or soybean fields. Quail prefer brushy cover such as hedgerows, plum thickets, or timber edges, and this type of cover is usually more productive than grass and weeds. They usually feed in the harvested crop fields or on weed seeds near the cover. They normally feed during the early morning and again in the evening, spending the remainder of the day in the brush. Hunt this heavy cover near their food supply and you are almost certain to flush birds.

The covey will usually flush with reasonable effort on the part of the hunter. Ordinarily it is not necessary to literally step on them to flush them. After the covey flushes, mark the birds down carefully. The singles are much more difficult to flush after the initial covey rise and it sometimes takes a lot of tramping in the grass and weeds to chase out these individual birds. When hunting without dogs, you will usually get some shooting when the covey flushes, and, if you watch carefully where they go, some more shooting when you flush the individual birds. After this it usually pays to look for a new covey, since trying to further pursue the individual birds results in a lot of time expended for every bird flushed.

Most quail hunters use an opened bored gun and small shot. These birds are taken at close range and heavy loads are not necessary. Take plenty of extra shells, however, since these little speedsters can make even the best shooters look bad in heavy cover.

Winter is rabbit hunting time. More rabbits are taken by Iowa hunters each year than any other game species. Many a hunter had his first hunting thrills as a boy by searching the weed patches and bramble thickets for cottontails.

Rabbits are plentiful and nearly every weed patch or other area of heavy cover will produce its quota. The southern half of the state, with more cover, has the best rabbit hunting.

Traditionally, rabbit hunters take to the field after the first snow, but don't let the absence of snow keep you at home. There is plenty of good rabbit hunting in the weeds and grassy fields even without snow, and the speedy cottontail darting through the brush is a challenge to even the best shots.

Why not relive some of your boyhood by going rabbit hunting; or, better yet, why not take a boy rabbit hunting and experience with him the thrill of a first hunt? And where could you find better eating anywhere than a fine, fat cottontail?

There is a lot of other hunting opportunity during the holiday season, also. Don't forget such species as the crow, the fox, and the coyote. Sighting in on them will really round out your holiday hunt.

Although they are called "sheep," the most beautiful of American the Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep do not have coats of wool but merely very short hair. In winter a scanty fuzz grows between the skin and outer guard hairs to keep the animal warm against the terrible chilling winds.

The insect's heart lies as a tube along the back of the abdomen.

The most beautiful of American waterfowl, one would think the wood duck would be an import from some exotic country of the East, but it has always been a true resident of North America.

"Blind as a bat" is a meaningless phrase. Contrary to popular belief, most bats can see perfectly well in bright light.



Jack Kirstein Photo.

First introduced to Iowa in 1905, huns now are a bonus for the pheasant hunter in northwest Iowa.

## HUN HUNTING

Richard Nomsen

Most Iowa pheasant hunters have never seen a Hungarian partridge, much less shot at one. But many upland game hunters in northwest Iowa can tell you that this very secretive game bird is indeed a welcome resident of the rolling Iowa countryside in the 'Great Northwest'. Only a few persons hunt specifically for huns—most are shot incidental to pheasant hunting. Pheasant hunters, conditioned to expect the explosive rise of a cock pheasant, are often astounded by the sudden whirr of a dozen pair of wings. While the hunters hesitate, the covey loses no time in flying out of range. Experienced shooters have learned to carefully mark the landing area of a covey in hopes of flushing them again.

The Hungarian partridge or 'hun' was first introduced to the Iowa plains between 1905-1910. Although all parts of the state received some birds, only those in northwest Iowa appeared to be successful in becoming established in their new home. During this same period, successful plantings were made in the Dakotas, Montana, Minnesota

and several Canadian Provinces. The best populations of this exotic species have been reported in the small grain (wheat, oats, etc.) producing areas of the north central great plains. However, this popular little gray partridge has continued to produce well enough in the northwest quarter of Iowa so that at least fair numbers are reported each year. And in recent years, their range has increased slightly to the south and east. Hunting is now permitted in an area bounded by Highway 20 on the south and Highway 65 on the east.

A mature hun weighs about 13 ounces which is double that of the native quail. The overall appearance of the plumage is predominantly gray with brown markings on the sides and back. It is a relatively plump bird best identified by the reddish brown tail when flushed at close range. Primary foods are waste grains, weed seeds and green leaves of grasses, clover and alfalfa. A good supply of grit is necessary for this gallinaceous bird.

Birds pair off early in the spring to begin the mating and nesting season. The bond between mates is very strong and continues throughout the summer and autumn. The nest is built in a shallow depression on the ground and lined with straw, grasses and leaves of small grains. They seem to prefer natural cover with an abundance of dead plant material for the nesting site. The average clutch will contain from 16-18 eggs which will hatch in 21 to 24 days. Both parents share the responsibility of raising the brood. It is not uncommon to see broods of 12-14 chicks. The young develop rapidly and in about 110 days are full grown.

Partridges normally remain in coveys except during the breeding season. They move as a covey each time they are flushed. This differs from the expected scattering of quail after being flushed. A covey of huns is sometimes seen in the middle of a field on the coldest winter day. They appear to be quite comfortable and content. If it gets too blustery, they may move to the lee side of the hill to escape the brunt of the wind.

Huns prefer the wide open spaces—good populations often exist where natural cover appears very scarce. However, their daily movements are quite short so it is important that food and grit, winter cover and undisturbed nesting cover be close at hand.

No other game bird is so well fitted to withstand the vigorous winters of the northern plains. Most observers have noted that huns weathered the recent blizzards better than pheasants. Of course, some protection is necessary to break the wind, but in most cases, tall grassy cover on the lee side of a ditch bank or in a picked corn field is all that is necessary for this hardy game bird.

Safe undisturbed nesting cover is essential for huns. Since they seem to prefer dead residual grassy cover, any delay in mowing or burning this type of cover should help provide additional safe nesting areas. Roadsides, railroad right-of-ways and ditch banks could provide excellent nesting cover.

Hunting the partridge is a challenge most sportsmen welcome. They are strong fast flyers and as often as not will warily flush just out of range. Patience and careful stalking are needed to bag this wary game bird.

## FOREST FIRES IN IOWA

John M. Stokes, State Forester

Each year one reads of spectacular wildfires and forest fires that occur in the Rocky Mountain region and in California. Occasionally some of the more serious fires of the pine forests of the Lake States get national publicity. Of course everyone sees and hears from good ol' Smokey the Bear from time to time, but none of this is of much importance to Iowans—or it it?

This fall finds Iowa in the grips of an unusually dry period. The latter part of October, 46 fires burned over 1000 acres and many of the October fire reports are still to come into the State Forester's office in Des Moines. The high winds have made the damage high to corn fields, wildlife cover and timberland.

Since January 1, 1966, over 190 fires occurring outside city limits,

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Iowa's forest resources need fire lane protection just as much as those in well-known timbered states.

**FOREST FIRES IN IOWA—**

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have been reported to the Conservation Commission by fire departments who cooperate in the rural fire reporting system. Fires have been reported from 55 counties in the state. The total acreage burned is over 5,000 acres.

The Forestry Section of the Conservation Commission, through a cooperative fire program of the U. S. Forest Service, provides fire tools to fire departments who suppress rural fires. The tools are hand implements such as axes, shovels, leaf rakes, root cutting sickle bar rakes, grass fire swatters and 5 gallon backpack water cans. Many rural fires must be suppressed completely by hand since fire trucks cannot operate in the heavily timbered, rough terrain where fire often occurs.

Presently, 123 fire departments have been supplied with such tools and an additional 20 are added annually. A list has been established for interested fire departments so they can be included in the program at an early date.

The Commission maintains hand tools and pumper equipment for use on state lands including Parks, Game and Forest areas. Crews assist local fire departments, where possible, in their local unit area boundaries.

While it is true that wildfires in Iowa do not cover the great areas or cause the complete destruction that they do in some other regions, one cannot avoid seeing some of the many bad effects of wildfires, even in Iowa. Perhaps of greatest general concern is the condition in which a watershed is left as a result of wildfire. Normally the impact of a raindrop is absorbed by the organic matter lying on the forest floor. Upon striking a leaf or twig, a raindrop becomes still water incapable of eroding any soil. This still water can then be absorbed by the humus which acts very much like a sponge in taking up large quantities of water.

When fire has destroyed the organic matter either in cropland, grasslands or forest, a raindrop hits the exposed soil surface with force and breaks soil particles apart so that they may be easily washed away. When the flow of water is not immediately checked by absorption into the humus layer, it begins to run off, carrying with it the loosened soil particles to be later deposited in rivers and streams, causing clogging of channels, a deterioration of fish populations and loss of other recreational values.

Soil fertility is lost forever because of the loss of topsoil and mineral elements left by the ash of burned organic matter. People far removed from the burned woodland or grassland suffer from the results of the mistakes of the misguided woodland owner, careless squirrel hunter, or whoever might have started the fire.

In addition to the watershed destruction, damage is done directly to the trees, both young and old, standing in the burned woodland. Young trees are easily killed by fire and with this resulting absence of reproduction, the larger trees will be replaced only by brush when they are removed from the forest.

The damage to larger trees is most often not evident for some time after the fire occurs. Fires burning uphill or with a head wind will swirl around a tree and create a natural "chimney" on the uphill or downwind side of the tree. This natural flue causes high temperatures to be present very close to the bark of the tree. This kills the cambium layer under the bark which is the living and growing part of the tree and, as a result, within a few years the bark sloughs off in the deadened area. This leaves wood exposed for the entry of insects and diseases. The result is a triangular shaped hole at the base of the tree leading into a hollow tree which is practically worthless.

Needless to say that low forage available to wildlife is destroyed as well as the homes of animals in dead trees. The spread of wildfires into buildings is not to be forgotten either. It happens infrequently, but the fact that it happens at all is reason enough for concern.

**NOTICE**

Our Circulation Department is entering the last lap of the race to change over our entire mailing list to the ZIP code system before the January 1, 1967 deadline.

The whole struggle began over a year ago and will continue right up to the last correction. The most difficult part has been transferring what was worked out in theory and on paper to the 20 some rolls of mailing tapes containing the more than 60,000 names of our subscribers. (Uncle Sam calls it "pre-sorting.")

We made a trial run with the November mailing. Needless to say, there were a few snags. Hopefully, this issue has most of them worked out. If, however, you are experiencing a problem in receiving your copy, or, you are receiving more than one copy, please let us know. Send all such reports to IOWA CONSERVATIONIST, Circulation Department, East 7th & Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50308.



"He's one of our best instructors!"

**NOTES ON CONSERVATION—**

(Continued from page 91)

The weed notice clearly states in language backed up by the board of supervisors that unless these two offenders are destroyed the county will undertake the job and charge the farmer for services rendered. Before I could take the weed commission up on this offer to destroy the quack and thistles for almost any price, he was off down the road alerting the rest of the township and will not reappear until moon phases are again favorable.

While a roadside ditch choked with healthy weeds looks bad, a roadside ditch choked with sick and distorted weeds looks worse. Spraying as practiced in the past has done little to eradicate the more troublesome plants but has done considerable harm to desirable forms of wildlife as well as domestic animals and humans. This is an opinion voiced by many members of the medical profession who will privately tell you that several new and little understood fatal ailments have appeared since World War II, which time-marked the discovery of the hydrocarbons now commonly used as pesticides and weed sprays. The herbicide known as 2-4-D has actually been employed to the extent that it has become a measurable component of the atmosphere in recent years. The sale and manufacture of this and related material is a multi-billion dollar business and even the American Medical Association is reluctant to lock horns officially with an adversary of these dimensions.

Weed control is necessary along secondary roads and on cultivated lands, but it seems likely that most farmers would be willing to maintain their own roadside ditches if left to do so. They could even be paid a fee which would probably amount to a fraction of the tax money now allotted for a job poorly done.—Reprinted from *Sumner Gazette*.

**Did You Know . . .**

The bobcat has eyes that adjust admirably to extreme light conditions. The pupil is small and elliptical in bright light, large and round in dim light.

\* \* \*

The coyote weighs from 20 to 50 pounds. His den is characterized by a semicircle of earth around

the entrance formed by the animal after digging his hole.

\* \* \*

The cottontail rabbits are smaller than the hares and jack rabbits. They do not shed their summer brown coats as do their cousins, the varying hares or snowshoe rabbits, but remain the same color all year long.

## SEASONS NOW OPEN

### Pheasant

Season—November 12 through January 2, 1967.

Bag limit—three (3) cock birds, possession limit six (6) cock birds. Entire state open except the area south of State Highway 92 from Muscatine to Knoxville and east of State Highway 60 from Knoxville to the Missouri line.

### Quail

Season—October 22 through January 31, 1967.

Bag limit—eight (8), possession limit sixteen (16).

### Fox and Gray Squirrels

Season—September 10 through January 2, 1967.

Bag limit—six (6), possession limit twelve (12).

### Rabbit

Season—September 10 through February 19, 1967.

Bag limit—ten (10), no possession limit.

### Hungarian Partridge

Season—November 12 through January 2, 1967.

Bag limit—two (2) birds, possession limit four (4) birds. Hunting allowed only in the area west of U. S. Highway 65 from Minnesota line to Iowa Falls and north of U. S. Highway 20 from Iowa Falls to Sioux City.

### Raccoon

Season—Noon (12:00 o'clock), October 15 to midnight (12:00 o'clock), February 28, 1967. No bag or possession limit.

### Red Fox, Gray Fox, Coyote, Weasel, Ground Hog

Continuous open season.

## SEASONS CLOSING IN DECEMBER

### Deer—Bow and Arrow

Split season—second half—November 26 through December 16, 1966.

Bag, possession and season limit—one (1) deer of any sex.

### Geese

Season—October 1 to December 9, 1966.

Bag limit—five (5) daily and five (5) in possession, neither of which may include in the alternative more than two (2) Canada geese or subspecies, two (2) white-fronted geese, or one (1) Canada goose or subspecies and one (1) white-fronted. The entire bag may be made up of either blue or snow geese or any combination of them.

## OPEN TRAPPING SEASONS

### Mink and Muskrat

Season—Noon (12:00 o'clock), November 12, 1966, to midnight (12:00 o'clock), December 31, 1966. Entire state open.

### Raccoon, Badger, Skunk, Opossum, Beaver, Civet Cat

Season—Noon (12:00 o'clock), November 12, 1966, to midnight (12:00 o'clock), February 28, 1967. Entire state open.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Birds in Our Lives**, edited by the Bureau of Sports Fisheries, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 770 pp., \$9.00, has just come off the presses and is destined to become one of the most authoritative books about birds ever written.

This is a factual volume which places birds and people in proper perspective. To obtain this many-sided viewpoint, 61 nationally and internationally known authors were asked to contribute. Thus, the views of bird watchers, artists, photographers, poets, naturalists, sportsmen, farmers, gardeners, aviculturists, scientists, students, teachers, stamp and coin collectors, as well as a host of others, have been taken in account.

**Birds in Our Lives** is organized in 54 chapters divided into nine sections. This scheme helps complete the major thesis: "if we are to continue to have birds in abundance and variety, their future must be considered in land-use planning at all levels of government—local, State, National, and International.

This book is strongly recommended for school and library use. This reviewer feels such basic work needs the widest readership and study possible.—J. S.

Two more entries in Lippincott Company's Living World Book series are on the book stands now. This brings the total of the series to nine. Continuity in this excellent group of natural history books is provided by editor John K. Terres.

**The World of the Porcupine**, by David F. Costello, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, Pa., 163 pp., \$4.95, examines the peculiarities of this unique citizen of much of the nation's woodlands.

And although the trite is usually true, the old saw "You can't judge a book by its cover," could never stand against the telling photo on this volume's dust jacket—a very small child playfully feeding a docile porcupine. Most people believe that porcupines are dull, witless and nothing but trouble. Costello successfully argues otherwise.

Joe Van Wormer's third contribution to Living World Books is titled **The World of the Black Bear**. (J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, Pa., 157 pp., \$4.95.) And since many Iowans annually vacation in areas where the black bear has managed to compete with men (last known bear killed in Iowa in 1965) they will find the book interesting reading.

Of particular interest is the bear's habit of indulging in deep winter sleep (it isn't a true hibernation). Van Wormer thoroughly discusses this as well as every other phase of their lives.

Both volumes are profusely illustrated. This, along with easy to read and authoritative narration, makes these two new books valuable to outdoorsmen, recreationists and students.—J. H.

The fisher is the fastest treetop traveler in the animal world. It can even overtake the marten which is renowned for its ability in catching red squirrels in the treetops.

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